

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.

לֹא בַחִיל וְלֹא בִכְחַ כִּי אֶם-בְּרוּחִי

Zechariah iv. 6.

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THE PRESENT TESTIMONY,

ETC., ETC.

Nº I.

HEBREWS X.

(Continued from Vol. XI. p. 400).

How wonderful is the grace which we are now considering!

There are two things that present themselves to us in Christ. The attractions to our heart of His grace and goodness, and His work which brings our souls into the presence of God. It is with the latter that the Holy Ghost here occupies us. There is not only the piety which grace produces: there is the efficacy of the work itself. What is this efficacy? What is the result, for us, of His work? Our presentation to God, in the light, without a veil, sin being entirely put away. Marvellous position for us! We have not to wait for a day of judgment (assuredly coming as it is), nor to seek for means of approach to God. We are in His presence. Christ appears in the presence of God for us. And not only this: He remains there ever; our position, therefore, never changes. It is true that we are called to walk according to that position; but this does not touch the fact that such is the position. And how came we into it; and in what condition? Sin entirely put away, perfectly put away; and once for all; the whole question settled for ever before God, we are there because Christ has abolished it. So that there are the two things—this work accomplished, and this position taken in the presence of God.

We see the force of the contrast between this and Judaism. According to the latter, divine service, as we have seen, was performed outside the veil. The worshippers did not reach the presence of God. Thus they

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which there was no entering within the veil into God's own presence in the sanctuary, could no longer subsist—a worship that had its worldly glory, that belonged to the elements of this world and had its place there. Now, it is either heaven or the cross and shame. The great sacrifice for sin has been offered; but, by its efficacy, it brings us into the sanctuary, into heaven itself, where the blood has been carried in; and, on the other hand, it takes us outside the camp into shame and rejection on earth. This is the portion of Christ. In heaven He is accepted, He has gone in with His own blood. On earth cast out and despised.

A worldly religion, which forms a system in which the world can walk, and in which the religious element is adapted to man on the earth, is the denial of Christianity.

Here we have no continuing city, we seek the one which is to come. By Christ we offer our sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving. By sharing also our goods with others, by doing good in every way, we offer sacrifices with which God is well pleased. (17.) He then exhorts them to obey those who, as responsible to God, watch over souls, and who go before the saints in order to lead them on. It is a proof of that humble spirit of grace which seeks only to please the Lord.

The sense of this responsibility makes Paul ask the saints to pray for him—but with the declaration that he had assuredly a good conscience. We serve God, we act for Him, when He is not obliged to be acting on us. That is to say, the Spirit of God acts by our means when He has not to occupy us with ourselves. When the latter is the case, one could not ask for the prayers of saints as a labourer. While the Spirit is exercising us in our conscience, we cannot call ourselves labourers for God. When this conscience is good we can ask, unreservedly for the prayers of the saints. The apostles, so much the more, asked for them because he hoped to see them again.

Finally, he invokes blessing upon them, giving God the title he so often ascribes to Him—"the God of peace." In the midst of exercise of heart with regard to

the Hebrews, of arguments to preserve their love from growing cold, in the midst of the moral unsteadiness that enfeebled the walk of these Christians, this title has a peculiarly precious character.

The Spirit sets them also in the presence of a risen Christ, of a God who had founded and secured peace by the death of Christ and had given a proof of it in His resurrection. He had brought Christ again from the dead, according to the power of the blood of the everlasting covenant. On this blood, the believing people might build a hope that nothing could shake. For it was not, as at Sinai, promises founded on the condition of the people's obedience, but on the ransom which had been paid and the perfect expiation of their disobedience. The blessing was, therefore, unchangeable. He prays that the God who had wrought it would work in them to grant them full power and energy for the accomplishment of His will, working Himself in them that which was well-pleasing in His sight.

He exhorts them to give heed to exhortation—he had only sent them a few words.

He who wrote the letter desires they should know that Timothy had been set at liberty. He himself was so already. He was in Italy. Circumstances which tend to confirm the idea that it was Paul who wrote this letter—a very interesting point, although in nowise affecting its authority.

It is the Spirit of God who everywhere gives His own authority to the Word.

FRAGMENTS.

“Most men think that there is much to be settled by and bye. Their own choice *now* cannot be settled by and bye. It is their own choice now that settles the judgment by and bye. Thus much is settled now. ‘He that believeth not is condemned already.’ The Lord has said it. Confess [*now*] Jesus to be your only true and proper Lord, and believe that God hath raised Him from the dead, and **YOU SHALL BE SAVED.**” L.

Even so! the sanctuary *is* my home. What other place is there for Jabez in this wide, wild, weary world?

Jabez must be a sanctuary-man; and a sanctuary-man must be a Jabez. E. D.

N. II.

I.—RAHAB.

“By faith Rahab perished not with them that believed not.”

How forlorn and hopeless was her condition before the spies had visited her. Death was written on everything. The land and its inhabitants were given over to utter destruction. She believed all this. All hope as to her then condition was over; nothing but judgment was before her. There was, it is true, a turning of heart to the God of Israel, for whoever *bows* to God's judgment (and the woman bowed to it; her people feared but resisted), is drawn irresistibly to the very God whose claim is acknowledged.

But how could she be connected with this God? Where could she find Him? Israel were as yet on the other side Jordan, and, when they should cross, it would be in judgment. Well, God sees this poor woman, and He so orders it, that ere a stroke of judgment falls, mercy should reach her, and the assurance of salvation. The spies are guided to her house, and through them she is bound up with Israel's God and with the fortunes of His people. She transfers all her confidence and all her hopes and expectations to a new scene altogether, which as yet did not exist; for Israel were not yet in the land. But faith calleth the things that be not as though they were, even as God does; and so this woman of precious faith bowed to the judgment and death, her due and portion by nature and by works, and fled for refuge to the God of Israel, and cast in her lot with His people. Sihon and Og she knew were utterly destroyed. They resisted God's claims, and opposed Him in the establishment of his kingdom. But she knew that it was a vain opposition: for He was God in heaven above, and God

in earth beneath. The idols were no gods. So she gives up her whole place, and possession, and inheritance of the land under the god of this world, and looks for a name and inheritance under the God of Israel. For if Jericho is to be destroyed, it is to make way for the God and people of Israel, and, in faith, she transfers herself to a city that hath foundations, to an inheritance that fadeth not away. Moreover, her life she begs from God: "Deliver our lives from death." And in the name of their God does she ask it: "Swear unto me by the Lord."

What a change to Rahab in a few hours! The shadow of death is turned into the morning. The coming of Joshua, instead of being black with judgment is bright with hope; for she has the token of the God of Israel that his coming will be salvation to her.

How this not only changes her prospects, but her life and business! All her plans and pursuits in Jericho are uprooted, and now they all have reference to the coming day. Her one object would be, to get beneath the scarlet line all dear to her. And of what a secret between Rahab and God, and the people of God, was this scarlet line the sign and symbol! Who in Jericho knew its import but herself? So is it with us in all these particulars. The world knoweth us not. It is as really under judgment now as was Jericho then, though heedless of it as they were. But we look for the coming of Jesus, to take us to Himself on that day.

Note also that Rahab risks her life for this people, even before she has any assurance that they will have mercy on her.

The two chief points in this precious narrative, are—First, the tender grace and compassion of God towards this one solitary woman, under judgment, and a harlot, but a vessel of mercy and bright specimen of the sovereignty of His Grace. The spies must find her out; Israel's march must tarry until the scarlet line has sheltered this woman of Canaan. And, Second, she perished not with them that *believed not*. All would have been saved by *faith* as well as Rahab. God will be justified in His sayings, and clear when He judges.

2.—LIGHT AND LOVE.

It is very important to have this one thing ever before the mind, that the Holy Ghost is working steadily towards the separation of the Bride not only from what would defile, but from all that would enfeeble attachment,—to Him who is worthy. Christ cannot be satisfied with divided affections. And if His own personal place is not paramount, no matter who come in between, they are seducers, and corruption is the fruit. If Satan puts saints between, it is all the more dangerous. What ties, for example, are more holy than those which bind to father and mother? And yet the Lord Jesus demands to be followed even to the hating of father and mother (Mat. x.). For if mere nature is the link, it never leads to God, but is the strongest bond Satan has through sin to draw from God. True, I am to love father and mother, and it is a joy and delight to do it, but it is in God; I am not to have affections to any which have not their source in God, and not their source only but their strength and the sphere of their activity. In His presence I am to enjoy and live in all my relationships.

Suppose a relative—a Christian—suffering his spirit to be defiled by fellowship with evil. Am I, therefore, to love Him less? No; but more if possible. But would it be love to admit into my bosom the defilement he has admitted into his? Or would it be love, to start with horror from the contact and entreat its rejection, and, if this is refused, keep separate from it? What blessing can there be if I am away from God? All unrighteousness is sin. And all sin separates from God as to communion. What communion hath light with darkness? *The opposition is absolute.* We cannot suppose it to be modified without degrading and ruining everything. Well, I, as an individual, must for myself be near God, and on no consideration go away, no matter who or what entices. All contact with sin, except in the way of fleeing from it defiles; all palliation of it defiles. Only in absolute separation from it in will and purpose can I be near God so as to be a vessel of His precious grace. God is love, but God is light. And if love gave the Son, it was light that required the gift. If love

Light and Life.

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gathers, it is out of the darkness, it is to be with itself. There only can love unfold itself.

Of course the affections which cannot run out where Christ is dishonoured can turn to Him to restore. And when Christ simply is the object, with the firmness of separation there will be patient grace, and tenderness, and longing for the restoration of the erring one as precious to Christ, for whom He shed His blood.

3.—NEW LIFE.

My relationships with God are entirely on the footing of Christ, the Second Adam. I can have none of my old life, or extraction, or doings,—have anything at all to say to it. *Flesh* cannot be in relationship with God. As a natural man I am only flesh; and not only is flesh enmity against God, and so incapable of relationship, but it is under judgment. The judgment of God rests on it. Now, it is plain, that if this whole condition is not met, I can only suffer the desert of my sins away from God, and that for ever; for how can I escape? Well, when God came to undertake our case, it was no partial deliverance that He accomplished. The whole entire condition I was in He took up, and met in the cross AND ENDED. As to relationship I begin a-fresh entirely out of the old life and condition altogether. I get a new life from God consequent on the *ending* of the old in judgment on Christ; and this new is the very delight and joy of God; for it is Christ. See Galatians ii. I have no existence before God now, except in Christ. There is an everlasting break between the two conditions. I was in my sins; I am made the righteousness of God in Him. I was alienated, I am reconciled. All in Christ. Thus we make our boast in Christ. Thus we joy in God; for all is grace, free grace and love.

The great point is that I cannot be before God at all, except on the footing of Christ; and on that I am before Him in perfect acceptance.

FRAGMENT.

“The longer I live, the more deeply do I feel the value and importance of those mottoes:—‘*The Regions beyond*’—and, ‘*Let us go again.*’”

C. H. M.

Nº III.

JOHN, CHAP. I.

IN none of the gospels is the glory of the Son of God so fully presented to us as in that of John. The blessed name of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, has indeed the very basis of its truth brought out to light in this gospel. *Who* could have understood that new name, that fresh revelation of Divine glory in that new name, of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, without some new, some fresh uncovering of the glories divine. This was done by the presentation to us, in this gospel, of the Son of the Father, as sent to open the way for the Holy Ghost.

He, thus sent of the Father, had a work to do ere the Spirit could come down according to the name of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and much truth to communicate with regard to the new position and its new relationships, which were about to be established,—but Himself was revealed:—and the new name, Divine, the new position, the new privileges and the coming glories, were all inseparable from Himself in that name of Son of the Father.

The First Chapter contains, as an introduction to the whole book, a list of the titles and glories connected with the work He came to do, not indeed unconnectedly following one another, as a paper drawn up by man, to describe one of the great ones of the earth would have done, but beautifully, and in an orderly way flowing forth, quietly and naturally, as a river fresh from God. 'Tis a string of priceless pearls; glorious beads of matchless beauty! Would that the saints knew how the power of their own calling consists in the aptitude, habit, and skill, of counting over such treasures. For truly the strength of a saint is not in the telling forth of my weak-

ness, my leanness, my poverty, but in the treasuring up, delighting in, reviewing and declaring, the riches of the Lord in His grace.

I turn now to these titles of glory in the Lord. 1. "*In the beginning was the Word.*"—The words, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," (Gen. i. 1) evidently respect a time posterior to, or after, the time referred to by the words, "in the beginning was the Word." For the Word *was* before anything which was a result of its power. Indeed, the account given to us, in the first book of our Bible, is only of the generation of our heavens and of our earth. It declares their creation, in the simple yet majestic words: "in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." But it gives us no account of what had been previously created—as of those angelic sons of God who shouted for joy (Job xxxviii. 7), when the foundations of the earth were laid. It gives us no account of the creation of him who kept not his first estate, etc.

In the beginning *was* the Word.^a The word, *was*, here marks existence in our retrospect. We look back, and in thought we can do so before any thing that now exists as a creature,^b in heaven or in earth, or under the

^a The Word—ὁ ΛΟΓΟΣ. The natural extent of the meaning of the word ΛΟΓΟΣ is larger than that of the term WORD, in ordinary Greek—Thus we find in the dictionary: "*λογος—the word or outward form by which the inward thought is expressed and made known: ALSO, the inward thought or reason itself*"; in N.T. "*the word and reason*;"

^b I find an immense difference as a creature, when I try to realize eternity as a future, and eternity in the past. As to the future, I can easily, *naturally*, suppose the life which I have received from the Lord Jesus, with all its instincts, ways, thoughts, feelings, affections, and circumstances (so contrasted as they are with those of the natural life which I derived from Adam) to be without end. Indeed, while continuity of existence is almost an instinct of mere human nature, the human mind, in its fallen state and circumstances, will oft raise questions about it;—for fallen man cannot solve the enigma of sin and judgment to come. But, on the other hand,—the quickened soul has all these questions already solved for it, and finds itself in connection with the Prince and Lord of Life—Himself the fountain of eternal life—and itself a well of water springing up to everlasting life,

earth, did exist: the Word then *was*. This Word is the whole mind—the very intelligence of God Himself.

2. “*And the Word was with God.*” A little consideration will show, that this marks the personality of the Word. If the Word had been a faculty, then we should have had, ‘the Word was in God’; if the word had been an expression of mind only, then we should have had, ‘the Word was of God.’ Both of these expressions may be found in other connections than that which is now before us. But, here, speaking of a person—the Son—the proper expression is found:—‘And the Word was with God.’ And this is again guarded by the expression—

3. “*And the word was God.*”

As to His existence—eternal. As to His person—distinct. As to His abode—with God. As to His nature—God. Such was the Word. Not a mere faculty or attribute; not a mere power or expression of Deity—but the Word was eternal, divine, had individual personality (as man speaks), and was with God.

4. It is added, as giving emphasis and distinctness to the previous statement. “This same was in the beginning with God.” (v. 2), When there was no creation of any kind, or sort, existing, ere ever any commencement

with rivers of refreshing flowing from within it,—and what shall stop the flow of that which begins from the Son of Man, past death in resurrection and glory in heaven? I may be feeble in apprehending what will be; but, as a saint, I can look upward and onward for ever. There is there an eternity for man in a glory given by the Father to His Son, as son of man. 'Tis a home scene, in all its various parts. Would that it were more familiar to our souls! But, when I look back, 'tis God's eternity; His existence before all things, and the unspeakable blessedness, of the who and the what He was,—surely connected with the person of Him who makes the future eternity,—yet apart from His presentation in a way addressed to me as a man. This makes the difference to be immense.

There is Life divine—uncreated and underived: that is what meets my thought in retrospect, meets and stops it. There is Life natural and communicated, such as I have by nature as a man. And there is Life derived such as a saint has from the second Adam: the divine nature, (as Peter expresses it). Communicated to us by the quickening power of Him in whom is Eternal Life.

of creation had taken place, "He was in the beginning with God." How perfect, how guarded, how blessed a marking out of the peculiar separateness, which had, in the beginning, belonged to Him whom men counted, in their gracelessness, the friend of publicans and sinners.

Thus, His eternal, His divine competency for all work, for every exigence, is shown. The Son, Himself the intelligence and the expression of God. From and of everlasting;—without beginning—God; and dwelling with God, for what work was not He competent and equal to?

Next, we have:

5thly. "*All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made.*"

First, the statement that "all things were made by Him, the Word, and Secondly, the guard put upon the statement, so as to enforce its absoluteness, "and without Him was not anything made that was made."

But if the eternal power and godhead were witnessed in Creation; if He spake and it was done; if creation was thus the expression of His own mind yet was there another and a higher glory to be noted, viz.

6thly. "*In Him was life.*" Creation below, Creation around Him, but "in Him was life," and—

7thly. "The life was the light of men."

Things might spring up into existence around Him and below, themselves originating in His perfect wisdom, coming into existence at His bidding, themselves the expressions of His own wisdom and power in their measure—but this was not the life that was in Him.

That Creation was not apart from Him, as the Living One in its origin and testimony, is clear, from the verse already quoted from the epistle to the Romans, (i. 20)—But as the works of a master show his existence and are proofs of his skill, yet fall altogether below, and are easily to be distinguished from, the life which he has; so, though in an infinitely higher degree, while Creation wide showed the existence of its Author, and was and is a witness of His eternal power and godhead; at first fully so in all its parts, and after the fall, still doing the same

in measure, though itself a ruin—still the statement *in Him was Life*, goes altogether beyond Creation. He had a Life of His own, and that life was the light of men. In Him was Life: and this life had moral character, certain traits and ways habitual to it wherever it displayed itself, which constituted the light of men. Alas! the Spirit of God has to add: “And the light shineth in darkness and the darkness comprehended it not.”

Three things have now been brought before us as marking the competency of the One who is the subject of testimony for any work on God’s behalf among men; viz. 1st, His personal essential competency before God, (ver. 1, 2).

2nd, His competency relative to creation wide (ver. 3.)

And 3rd, His competency in essential character (ver. 4), however little men might be able to appreciate that, (ver. 5.)

Here ends, in one aspect of it, the first part of our chapter: blessed and precious setting forth of the essential glory,—dignity,—and moral character of Him with whom we Christians have eternally and for eternity to do in Jesus of Nazareth.

The next part, which begins with ver. 6, and ends with ver. 25, gives us the state of things in John the Baptist’s days, as ushering in his testimony. Each fragment of it, however, glitters with some honour to be rendered to the self-same Jesus, or with some glory to be recognized in Him. The life who was the light of man—in coming into this world had a herald to usher His coming. Thus:

8th. “*There was a man sent from God whose name was John,*”

Among men he might be great—but in nothing did he boast of greatness in himself: no higher honour did he know than to be the unpretending herald sent from God

* Clearly, in their nature, the life and the light are essentially inseparable. They were so to the Divine mind. Every acting too of that life was light, and so, I suppose, that in one sense the light is found in creation and providence, as also in the earthly people and in the church on earth. But there is a limitation in the expression “*in Him was life,*”—for, in this sense which is the most important, the abiding place of life was *IN* Him. All that stands, stands *in Him*. John xv., 1 Tim. v. 21.

to announce Him that was to come. "The same came for a witness of the Light, that all, through him, might believe. He was not that light but (was sent) to bear witness of that Light," (ver. 7, 8.) It was meet, and right, and worthy that such a Light should be announced, and most gracious, too, that man's inability to recognise and appreciate it of himself should be met. If the darkness comprehended it not, there was one that did and could speak of it, and did so faithfully, and the contrast is drawn between him and the light. He was not that light, but had the honour of being the witness to it. "That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." How ineffable the grace and gracious purpose of Him who sent John as a messenger: "that all through him might believe."

Alas! the honour and glory of the Lord was not only marked thus, as we have said (8thly) by having such a fore-runner, but also as we see here by the power of detecting and making manifest man's darkness. Yes;

9th. All glory is His, so, among the rest, that one of being the Detector and Manifestor of man's moral evil. And, alas! it was not only thus generally that the light shining on men, men comprehended it not, but also in particular He made manifest Israel's state of alienation from God.

The Magi of the East, as coming to greet the new-born babe—Egypt, as giving Him a shelter—seemed more to comprehend that there was light, than did his own people, Israel. For the former could give Him some honour though it was written (9th). "He was in the world and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not," (v. 10.)—but the latter, though not only His by creation and upholding, but His in government and worship, knew him not. "He came unto His own and His own received Him not," (v. 11.) He came in the hour of their extremity, in every way in the hour of their affliction; He came full of power, and wisdom, and grace: offered Himself just as He was to them just as they were; for He sought not theirs, but them—but they received Him not.

His truthfulness to God in a world of evil was a glory,

and will prove, hereafter, a bud germinating with blessing, and blessed consequences, to the ends of the earth, and so—

10th. His full sustainment of Messiah's character and place at His first coming—in associating Himself with God, where God was in the end of that time, was His glory and honour, and will prove to Israel hereafter a fountain teeming forth every Messianic and Jehova blessing. Had He not been true to Israel's God and Saviour in the days of His humiliation, Israel would not have been detected in its state of evil: if one had come in His own name they would have received him: but because He came as the Servant of God they received Him not: but then, blessed be God for the unspeakable benefit! if He thus proved, that in the kingdom of Israel there was none righteous, no not one; none that could cleave to the King—that King stood forth then, faithful amid unfaithfulness—mid darkness only light—and the King abides yet to be and show Himself the glory of the house of Israel as well as a light to lighten their darkness. Oh how sweet amid all the failure of man—amid all the ruin of the creature—is it to find this blessed precious One, at once showing why there is no stability *in us*, even because of our untruthfulness to God; and yet, at the very same time, that the contrast in Him which humbles the broken heart in the dust, is a contrast full of light, and peace, and blessing for the poor and needy. And here (v. 12) comes out, another glory. His light not only as shining among men (9thly) detects their darkness, and shows it to be what it will be in blessing to the earth hereafter, the Sun of righteousness rising with healing in its wings: nor (10thly) does it, as the Star of Israel's hope, let Israel reject it and remain in its own sphere to return and bless Israel hereafter; but—

11th. It shows forth its own wealth of glory and resource.

If there to try and prove man wanting; if there to proffer help to Israel and to be rejected by Israel—He was there also with new truth and truth of a higher order and character than pertained to Israel.

Israel was the channel of promises from Abraham

only. Government in the world, under God, was their blessing. He knew about the heart of God and the sons God would adopt, and He came to give power to as many as received Him; to whomsoever might believe in Him—to become Sons of God.

The wisdom of God is perfect. Man and Israel cannot wound the heart of the blessed One without, at the same time, thrusting Him, as it were, home upon God.

And this was indeed not only His glory, but, in a certain sense, God's reply through Him, but to a thankless world non-appreciating Him, and to a non-receiving house of Israel—even this precious grace in Him—the eleventh brightness I have noted: "As many as received him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name."

The world of darkness comprehended not the light, Israel, as such, received Him not—but whosoever did receive Him, *to them gave He power to become sons of God.* "Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God (v. 13.)"^d God knew how to secure His glory in securing rich eternal blessing, relationship to Himself to as many as received Him—to them that believed in His name. It was in Him to give power to become sons of God, and though a thoughtless and senseless world might not trouble itself at the thought of rejecting its Maker, nor Israel in rejecting its prophet, priest, and king, as well as Jehovah—to those that did receive Him He gave power to become sons of God. This object of His coming, when once announced, introduces, most naturally, more truth about Himself, and the Word is referred to in the double glory of what was found in Him: He was a man—yet the only begotten Son of the Father, and the effect of this was to set aside Law and Moses, and freely communicate grace and truth. "And the Lord was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His

^d No words could well be used better than these in a quiet way to trace out to man's mind the entirely new character of people that were His, than either Jew or Gentile as such: their connection was not with earth but heaven, their origin not from a human source, but from that which was divine.

glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth " (ver. 14.) There is thus

12th. "*The Word became flesh,*"

13th. "*And dwelt among us.*"

Man in Eden had been the centre and head of a system; but lost it all through sin. Here was a marvel of marvels—the one, in whom all the glories we have been looking at were found—He became flesh! Himself the the spring and source of all that can be seen or known; He, the Word, became flesh. And this, clearly as Himself, the abiding centre and head of a new sphere and system altogether.

"For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren," (Romans viii. 29.)

"It became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified (are) all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare Thy name unto my Brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto Thee. And again, I will put my trust in Him. And again, behold I and the children which God hath given me (Heb. ii. 10—13.) The Father's house (John xiv.) and the glory given by the Father to Him (John xvii.) given unto us. These verses may suffice as to His place of centre and head, as the Word become flesh.

One amazing consequence and blessing attendant upon this is the nearness, fulness, and completeness of the revelation to us: The Word became flesh. In Him, who is the Head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead;—in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the God-head bodily. In Him there is all fulness. And it is presented to us in Him as in Jesus the man once obedient unto death, the death of the Cross, but now ascended and glorified. What perfectness was lacking to Him the Word? What greater nearness could He give to what He was, and had to present to man than by becoming flesh? And—

"As such He dwelt among us."—It was no passing hurried appearance, as of a man. He made large experiences on the earth in His childhood, youth, early manhood and service; and the disciple that lay in His bosom could say, that, "which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of Life; for the life was manifested, and we have seen (it), and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us" (1 John i. 1, 2.) There was His life in the humiliation; there was, too, the forty days after His resurrection (Acts i. 3), when He showed Himself alive—to the apostles whom He had chosen—after His passion, by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God; and, thirdly, there is that revelation of Him ascended and glorified, which followed. The two first periods, however, alone come into the statement *"He dwelt among us."* Connected with this dwelling of His among us, there are several things noticed. Some of His ways of grace and wisdom are given us in the close of the chapter, but first comes His appearance, the traits and marks by which He was to be known. This gives us—

14th. *"And we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth"* (v. 14.)

True simplicity (or what should be called such if it is not) and true transparency were never so presented. The eye single—God's will and His Father's pleasure were the simple purpose of His heart. And His whole being here below was so in accordance with this, so regulated by it, that this single simple purpose told itself out in every thought, word, or deed. It was a transparency which man could not read, which no saint can apprehend, save by the discovery of the harmony between that single simple purpose of His being and His ways.—But there it was, a glory—an all excellent, all transcending manifestation of moral beauty was His,—the glory as of the only begotten of the Father—full of grace and truth.

And mark the grace of this. The sons of God—this new class of privileged people—get an introduction to God in the character of Abba—and that, indeed, after the very highest mode possible, viz. in seeing the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, yet in a way most suitably adapted to their own standing, viz., He became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory. To the heart that knows Him what induction more natural than one from such a Son to what the Father must be. Blessed and happy must be the Father of such a Son. Wondrous the blessedness of that Father who could show such a Son forth before a world and a people that had no hearts for Him: still more wondrous, if possible, the grace of that Father that shows in Him all the competency to make sons by adoption and the new birth, and then to do all the work needful to clear their way out of the world, and through the all that Satan can do against them, and right in homeward to the Father's home. We can say, indeed, in this connection, more than the old adage—Like Father like Son—Like Master like Servant—for it is written “He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father also—how sayest thou then, show us the Father.” But this glory is not all told out in this that we have looked at, viz. that in Him there was glory—peculiar glory—the glory as of the only begotten of the Father—that He was the very transcript, the express image, the effulgence and the fulness of the glory of Abba; but—

15th. That He as such was beheld by man. I notice this the rather, because my soul finds a great difference between the effects of looking at Him as the Word become flesh, and as according to that title under which He is then spoken of—we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father. “My Lord and my God,” are my words of worship before Him as the Word become flesh. My heart swells with love and confidence, as He calls us brethren, and shows Himself to me as the First-born among many brethren. But, in either and in both the backgrounds, the Rock drops honey and living water, for He is—

16th. “*Full of grace and truth*” (ver. 14.)

Wherever He went, whatever He did, He was full of grace and truth. And the grace and truth, of which He was full, revealed themselves to the various parties with whom He came in contact all through His course on earth, but more manifestly so in the days of His service in testimony, and yet more fully so after His resurrection, though in a more restricted narrow circle.

It is one of the precious fruits of studying the gospels that we learn how that fulness of grace and truth which was in Him, proclaimed itself in circumstances nigh akin to our own, told itself out and let His glory shine out in scenes as dark as those through which we pass to-day. And if we have not the same displays down here as marked the time of His humiliation, we know where He is; where to find Him always; and that He Himself is the same yesterday, to day, and for ever. There is something of a difference to be noticed between this, (16th) His fulness of grace and truth—known as such, both as (in 15th section) the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us; and (as in 16th) and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father—in either and both cases full of grace and truth—and that which follows in vers. 16, 17, 18.^e First—

17. "*Out of His fulness have all we received.*"

The "all we" here, I take it, are the sons of God. John the Baptist could not say this. When he saw Jesus he knew Him—as the one of whom he had spoken, saying "He that cometh after me is preferred before me, for He was before me." The words were weighty, and

^e These verses do not contain the testimony of the Baptist John, their truth was beyond his measure; but of John the Evangelist who, in recording the beautiful humble testimony of the Baptist, helps out his confession by putting forth truth which John the Baptist had not tasted, though John the Evangelist had, about the one common object of their affections, ver. 15. John the Baptist bare witness, "This was He of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for He was before me." Then John (Evangelist) opens up the enigma by verses 16, 17, 18. "And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace. For the law was given by Moses, *but* grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared *Him*."

could apply but to one. Though *He comes after me* He is more excellent than I, for *He was before me*. John the Evangelist knew more than this. The Baptist called back to Moses and the Prophets as witnessing to the coming one. The Evangelist knew Himself as, even during the days of His early service, full of grace and truth. And more than this, for ere he wrote the gospel he knew Him risen and ascended, and had received out of His fulness himself, as himself a son of God by adoption and regeneration.

“Children of God by faith in Christ Jesus,” (Gal. iii. 26,) was not to be said by the apostles until the death and resurrection and ascension of the Lord had taken place. Nor was that word made good to them: “because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father!” (iv. 6) until after the ascension of the Lord, when it could be said: “Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.” Full of grace and truth was He to the Syrophenician woman, to the woman of Samaria; to the Jews; to the seventy disciples whom He sent forth, and to the twelve apostles whom He drew nearer still to Himself—but into none of them did He put forth that power that was His alone by title of right to hold, or right to give, the power of being and knowing oneself a Son of God. How do I know I am a Son of God? Well, not only because I have seen the Lord, but that my knowledge of Him has been by faith—He hid in the Father’s throne, and I down here knowing the revelation of Him to be according to that glory. And according to *that* revelation of Him made in the word, but brought home to my soul by the Spirit—I learn those two words in Gal. iii. 26, and iv. 6, (just cited). This is connected with a new birth in me—He has quickened me, put forth the life that was in Himself to work with the light, and to communicate to me, not a corruptible seed but an incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. I have received out of His fulness.

The next clause adds,

18th. The enlarged range of the blessing so received

out of Him, so communicated unto us—"and *grace for grace.*" Whichever way we render this, whether "grace distributively for every grace in Him," (so connecting the divine nature communicated to us, in its traits and characteristics, with that which He has as Son of man,) or "grace piled up upon grace," (so connecting the first touch of His blessing which gives life with all the free-gift blessings which follow on the first), the clause is surely a most remarkable one, and one pregnant with blessing. Oh, what a portion Jesus is to those who know Him! But there is another thing to be noticed, viz.—

19th. The personal connection of the testimony with Himself.

First, in contrast with the Law which was given through Moses, He was a servant, and handed out what was given to him to give. But grace and truth came as inseparable from the person of Jesus Christ. In Him was life, and the life was light, and He could not but tell what He was in Himself—grace and truth—Moses had told of the Creator's righteous requirements from the creature—Not so Jesus Christ, when He was there, grace and truth in unlimited fulness was there, and it shined out from Him. This, however, was connected with another thing, viz.—

20th. *No man hath seen God at any time ; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him.*

That fulness of grace and truth which His presence brought with it, not only declared itself but declared God and the Father. For "*He that was present was the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father.*"^f

Blessedly interwoven with these glories, we have the

^f It is difficult to present divine things correctly in human language. I am aware of this—but I may just state here, that I question whether some have not overlooked that this expression "In the bosom of the Father," refers to His place as Son of the Father. If we made it to refer to the incarnation, we should, I think, be defective in our views of this truth. The Son of the Father's place is the bosom of the Father. The Son of God came down from heaven to become Son of man, Seed of the Virgin, and as Son of man to be The Anointed One.

Baptist's testimony brought forward. John the Baptist's heart was true; and one cannot but believe fully, that that which he counted his own high calling was the having been set apart and called of God to be the immediate harbinger of the Christ of God. His greatness was to be little, but to do God's bidding and usher in a greater one. It is remarkable how he, in his testimony, gets rid of every thing save of being *a voice, and nothing but a voice*. "Who art thou" said the Jews to him, through the Priests and Levites from Jerusalem (ver. 19.) "I am not the Christ" (ver. 20), was his bold answer. "What then? (said they) art thou Elias?" "I am not," said John. "Art thou then the Prophet?" (said they). "No," is his simple reply (ver. 21). And, when pressed by them, that they might give an answer to those who sent them, and they rejoin, "Who art thou? What sayest thou of thyself?" (ver. 22), he said, "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, make straight the way of the Lord, as said the Prophet Esaias" (ver. 23).

But if John had little to say for himself, and that little negative in character—not the Christ, nor Elias, nor the Prophet, though he was baptising (ver. 25)—he had a testimony to give to them. I baptising with water, what is that when "there standeth one among you, whom ye know not; He it is, who coming after me is prepared before me, whose shoe-latchet I am not worthy to unloose" (vers. 26, 27). And not only thus, generally, but also he had to bear a specific yet blessed testimony to give to his Master, to the personal distinctions that were His, and to the great and new works He ad come to do.

This positive testimony to the Lord by John the Baptist, extends from ver. 28 down to the end of ver. 34.

It contains glories of the Lord to which we must look in detail. But they are glories which attach to the *works* which the Lord came to do—works of so arduous and overwhelming a character, that if He had not been ushered in with all that glorious power and grace that goes before, no heart could trust its all to Him: but as to whom, having seen Him to be such an one as He is,

the believing heart not only says, the works are NOT above Him whom my soul loveth; but, it can add, what riches of grace and love in Him that being such an one as I have seen Him to be, He should undertake these works, and do these things for us. The four things we have to notice are, *as to His works*.

1st. Behold the Lamb of God, *which taketh away the sin of the world*; and,

2nd. He it is which baptiseth with the Holy Ghost. And then as to the honour God put upon Him, 1st, before John, in marking Him out by the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon Him. And, 2nd, by the testimony given thereupon by John, that this is the Son of God.

The works to be accomplished, were the removal of sin as connected with the old things, and the gift of the Holy Ghost as introducing new things altogether.

The first of these two statements is very little appreciated in its fulness. "The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." Atonement or forgiveness through the knowledge of the blood shed on Calvary, is not here the point. From the fall, downwards, sin had been upon the whole system of this world. And whenever the world or anything connected with it came before the Divine mind, sin was the first thought; Adam and Eve, to whom it had all been given and entrusted, had rebelled against God and sold themselves and it under sin. Now it is this redemption of the system as a whole, which is referred to here. Some will here, in time of the redemption, prize and rejoice in forgiveness: others may hear of the blood of God's Son and trample it under foot; but the system, as a whole, is claimed by God, and quite apart from the believer's joy in forgiveness or the judgment of the wicked who will be cast out of it into the lake of fire prepared for the Devil and his angels—the system will be set free from sin—the world will be set free—there will be a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. The Lamb once slain, alive again upon the throne, though sin may yet remain in detail, is the guarantee of this. And the

scope of redemption is seen in this, the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head. Now this is the work the Lamb of God had to do, viz., to introduce it to God in another connection than as of sin being upon it—and eventually to remove every mark of sin from it. Sure I could trust no one but Jesus for my own forgiveness of sins through His blood: surely He alone has loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood—but the work referred to here is of a wider range than that of a conscience purged and made perfect by His blood. Behold the Lamb of God, whose office is to take away the sin of the world. But the undoing of the evil brought into this system by sin, was not all; nor was it enough for the Son of God. The positive blessing is in the baptising with the Holy Ghost. This was the act of One, and one alone to do. Who but He who is the Life-giving Spirit could do so? Here again, as in the taking away sin, the thing is not looked at in its bearing upon individuals as such, but in its sphere. Had the blessing to the individual been in question we should have had the new birth (as in John iii.); the nature and ways of the new gift (as in John iv. 14), "The water that I shall give Him shall be in Him, a well of water springing up into everlasting life"; its full expression (as in John vii. 37) "Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water": but we have none of these nor of other most blessed and precious truths brought before us; but in contrast, though connected therewith, we have the same truth as is brought before us in the Acts of the Apostles, "Wait for the promise of the Father, which (saith He), ye have heard of me. For John truly baptised with water, but ye shall be baptised with the Holy Ghost not many days hence" (Acts i: 4, 5). This, as He explains it afterwards, "Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me," etc., (ver. 8). The new birth; the new nature with its ways and world of its own; and its full expression all of primary importance to man as an individual, and all, together with the rich vein full of blessing in which they lie, expressions as they are of the almighty power and grace of Him of whom we speak, are not the same thing as His being

able to give a power which shall form a system where God can dwell and which shall be associated with Himself in His works. Such is He as He that baptiseth with the Holy Ghost. Two things are connected with this revelation of Him to John the Baptist. John found Him not out by his own wisdom, but by this gracious and glorious mark, and John knew too well in what his own glory consisted, to hide this. "And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon Him, and I knew Him not: but He that sent me to baptise with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, the same is He which baptiseth with the Holy Ghost" (ver. 33). This was the mark given from heaven; a simple one, yet one that had its deep full meaning as to the Lord Himself, who was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners; and it was honour to John Baptist to have been thus singled out as the announcer of this Blessed One.

Attendant hereon, and closely connected too, with every part of the subject, is the glory which John announced as to the Lamb that taketh away the sin of the world; the one alone that baptiseth with the Holy Ghost—And I saw and bare record that this is the Son of God. And this title is a different one from that of Son of the Father—though both centre in one and the same person. That there is a difference will be readily felt, if we consider that the Jews knew of God, and that the expression, Son of God, is found once and again in the Old Testament, Dan. iii. 25; Prov. viii. comp. xxx. 4. But of the Father and the Son of the Father, they had heard nothing—even an apostle somewhat after John the Baptist's testimony, and after he had been with Jesus, could say: "Lord show us the Father, and it sufficeth us" (John xiv. 3). And the Jews never could make out who Jesus meant by the Father.

These four truths connected with John the Baptist's distinct testimony contain these four more glorious confessions about Jesus, which we might add to the twenty previously noticed, viz.—

21st. The Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world.

22nd. The Baptiser with the Holy Ghost.

23rd. The One marked out by the descent^s of the Holy Ghost.

24th. This was and is the Son of God.

The rest of the chapter forms, in a certain sense, a counterpart to that presented in the first 28 verses. 1st. These first 28 verses present the glories of the Lord, without which He never could have undertaken, 2ndly, these works referred to (29—34); viz., 1st: The setting aside of sin, and, 2ndly: the introduction of an entirely new and divine order of things under the Spirit's presence and power. Then 3rdly, we have (35—51) the blessed Lord presented as a man and among men—conscious of the possession of all those glories, and knowing His own responsibility to do the works which He had undertaken to do, yet now, as a man among men, showing out all the loveliness of humanity and the most attractive grace, complete power, and allwise discernment conceivable. And this intercourse of His, as we shall see, brings into light other titles that belong to Him. For He shows Himself (ver. 41) as the giver of a new name—proof of His knowledge of the Divine counsels about Peter—Philip owns Him (ver. 45) as the Prophet foretold of Moses, and the Messiah, Deliverer, Son of Man predicted by the Prophets: Nathanael finds Him to be a reader of secrets of the heart, and confesses Him (ver. 49) as Son of God and King of Israel, etc.

When, the next day after, John stood, and two of his disciples, and looked on Jesus as He walked, he said, "Behold the Lamb of God!" The Lord laid hold of the two men's hearts by that word, and they followed Him. He turns round after a little, as if He were ignorant, and asks them, "What seek ye?" "Master (they reply) where dwellest Thou?" With what grace, when we think of who He was, and how attachment to His

^s The opening of the heavens is not noticed here, but only the descent of the Holy Ghost to abide upon, to remain with, Him. I do not doubt but that there is a reason for this. Heaven and its plans were not so much in question as the person of the Lord, and the fulness of His identity with God and the Father and His competence to be the Anointed of the Lord.

person and occupation with Himself is the very highest blessing and glory of a man—does He reply, “Come and see.” What is there to a mere human mind in all this, save the strangeness of a man supposing that two men following Him must mean something and that something He would grant. But oh, when the heart knows Him, and has known a drawing after Him, the whole scene is radiant with light, and full of happy experimental reminiscences. And they came and saw where He dwelt, and abode with Him that day; for it was the tenth hour. The watchfulness of His love, the sensitiveness of His kindness, the quietness of His courtesy, and the openness of His hospitality, as a man toward these poor disciples of John, are all quite exquisite. Who would shrink from—who but be attracted by such a lovely gracious bearing of the Lamb of God toward poor sinners!

One of the two, Andrew, was not at all for keeping the good news secret—there is an impulsive power in joy—he goes and finds his brother Simon, and tells him what had struck his own heart the while. We have found the Messias! And he brings Simon to Jesus.

The Lord knew all about Simon, what he was to be, and what his character was; and it is remarkable how, in this first interview He takes up the conversation and reads Peter to himself. “When Jesus saw him, he said, Thou art Cephas, which is by interpretation, a stone.” Truly, if Simon had a future spread before him, such as he knew not of, and had a character such as he had but little measured, he had now met a master who was beforehand in every thing and knew times, and seasons, and persons for to-morrow, better than we know ourselves of yesterday. He gives in divine title, to a stranger too, a new name here.

Next we find Him taking, even yet more decidedly, the initiative, and showing His authority. Meeting a fellow-citizen of Andrew and Simon, viz., Philip, He calmly says, “Follow me.” Philip is His servant and the servant of His work at once. The claim of the Lord to be obeyed formed itself in Philip’s mind differently from what it had in others—each heart is drawn in a way peculiar to itself—to him this was the thought, “We have found Him, of whom Moses in the Law, and

the Prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Joseph." So Philip tells his joy forth (ver. 45) to Nathanael. But Philip had seen Jesus and heard His word, and Nathanael had not. Those that had seen and heard, and felt the drawing power of a living Jesus, found no blot to take notice of in His being of Nazareth. Not so Nathanael, to whom Philip told of his rich discovery. Nathanael was a good man, and a thoughtful—but when mentality is in sway and the heart not yet kindled by a personal knowledge of the Lord, this was felt as a difficulty, and a great one too. "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" saith he. One can sympathise with his difficulty. What! the Hope of Israel—the King of Israel be a Nazarene! And how blessedly too, can one's heart go along with Philip in his answer. Having seen and tasted for himself of the indescribable beauty and blessedness of the power of the Lord, the question, Can any good thing come out of Nazareth—daunts him in no wise—the Lord Himself seems to rise before his mind, and He says simply "Come and see."

Jesus' conduct as to Nathanael is remarkable. Himself surely was drawing Nathanael into His net. He waits not to see what effect the sight of Himself will produce, but goes forward lovingly, and yet aggressively, to make the new comer conscious that he was not coming to judge for himself about Jesus, but to be judged by Jesus. And what a contrast between the graceless questioning of Nathanael, whether any good thing could come out of Nazareth, when Jesus Himself, come thence, was in question; and the Lord's abrupt, but most gracious, estimate of Nathanael pronounced about him as he approached and ere ever he had spoken: Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile! If Nathanael had been merely a mentalist, this would have thrown him back upon himself; but he had a heart, and a heart that was right before God, uninstructed as it might be—a heart which pondered things in secret before God, and therefore not himself and the suitability or want of suitability to himself of the word of commendation given of himself by Jesus, ruled; but the strangeness of the secret power by which One seen for the first time professed to know all

about him. "Whence knowest thou me?" is his reply. He was in light; and whence had this Stranger that light. Jesus answers his enquiry by another statement, "Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee" (48). What is there in this—in seeing a man under a tree and telling him of it—nothing at all. Ah, but when the Lord is at work, and conscience is alive, a little word that has nothing in it, is full of light and life. So was it in this case; and Nathanael answers, "Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God; Thou art the King of Israel."

Jesus said unto him: "Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? Thou shalt see greater things than these. And He saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, hereafter ye shall see heaven open and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man" (vers. 50, 51.)^h

How perfect are all His ways! Those whom He sees exercised in secret before God—to them He reveals Himself as knowing them; as Son of God and as King of Israel; and as Himself able to connect these secret hidden exercises of their hearts before God, with entrance into and perception of the glories which heaven shall open upon and pour down on Him as Son of man—the centre, end, and aim of all divine counsels.

This is the Man whom God delights to honour! Let the happy setting to of our concurrence, that He alone is worthy, be found in a hearty AMEN AND AMEN.

^h We may, I think, fairly use the Bible history of that of which Nathanael is a type, to suggest what was on his mind at the time. The remnant in connection with Israel to which he points will, with many a thought of the glory that pertains to Israel's Messiah, be puzzled and perplexed from not seeing that *moral* glory takes the lead of and is above all external glory. They will find it hard to recognise the Son of God and the King of Israel in the Nazarene—in the Lamb that was slain. They will have a fearful conflict in secret, ere they will be able to renounce creature-righteousness in favour of divine. Some exercise, I doubt not, common to Nathanael and the anti-typical remnant—had been Nathanael's under the fig—and there he met one who knew all about the claims of God and how they were to be met, just as much as He knew all about Nathanael's heart, and life, and private walk.

No. IV.

THE HOUSE OF GOD,

AS SEEN IN I COR. viii.—xiv.

THIS divine discourse on the House of God, the House of this Dispensation, is brought forth by reason of an enquiry made of the Apostle by the saints at Corinth, touching their further fellowship with idol sacrifices.

How commonly has the wisdom of God been brought to us, through our ignorance! In various ways we erect our altars to “the unknown God,”—but He, upon that, in grace declares, Himself to us. Just as new and fresh blessings have come to us, by reason of our own failures—or, as redemption itself has been displayed because of our sin, our great apostasy, our condition of self-wrought ruin.

“Now as touching things offered unto idols,” writes the Apostle, at the opening of this fine and weighty scripture; and these words intimate, that he is addressing himself to some communication he had received from the Corinthians on the subject.

He then takes up this matter, “eating things offered in sacrifice to idols,” beginning, however, to consider or discuss it, on the *lowest* ground, as I may say.

In the progress of chapter viii., he shows the Corinthians, that, by their eating of idol-sacrifices, they were breaking the law of love; inasmuch as by their using their own liberty in this case, they were paining and tempting those who had not the like liberty.

Then, in chapter ix., he enforces this duty of considering their weak brethren, by showing them what *his own ways had been*, how he had never used his liberty in the Gospel, lest he should offend others, or hinder their acceptance of blessing.

Now, this argument, I may say, was taking the lowest ground upon which this grave subject of eating sacrifices

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in idol temples could be met and discussed. But, I ask, was not this the method of the Lord Himself in His teaching? Did He not begin with the simplest and least peremptory argument, when answering questions and matters brought to Him, and then, from thence rise to the more solemn ones? Take as an instance of this, the progress of His words in Mat. xv. 1—9, when replying to the Pharisees on the subject of traditions—and so also, as another instance, His method with them again, in Mat. xii. 24—37, when they had said that He cast out devils through Beelzebub. On each of those occasions, did He not begin to convict the gainsayers by the simplest argument, and rise gradually to the most awful and peremptory? Does He not use the less startling or alarming rebuke at the beginning, and then solemn condemnation and very awful warning?

And so, the Spirit of God in the Apostle here. He begins by showing, that this eating in an idol's temple would be a breach of the law of love. But, resuming this same subject in chap. x., he does not merely repeat the argument drawn from the breach of brotherly love, but he lets them know, that if any of them persisted in being at the idol's temples, they were provoking the Lord Himself to jealousy, and that the door of *His* house must shut itself against them.

This was His method in this argument. And thus we begin, in this divine discourse, contained in this portion of the first Epistle to the Corinthians, to get the House of God first presented to us. The *door* of that house is here commanded by the Spirit in the Apostle to be watched and guarded. The avenue to the house, as I may express it, must be kept clean. No foot is to tread it that has been inside an idol temple; the contact would defile.

Having been thus introduced to the subject in this way, we shall find that the Apostle keeps it before him to the end of chap. xiv. It is "the House of God" he is still considering.

Here, however, I will pause for a moment, to call this to mind—that under Moses, the House of God, as it was in his day, was strictly watched; the character, and order, and services of it, were all jealously guarded.

That house, under Moses, had been raised in the wilderness first, and then in Canaan as a land set apart and purified for the presence of Jehovah. Neither Egypt, nor uncircumcised Canaan, as I may express it, was a fit place. The land must be separated or sanctified, or the house of Jehovah could not be reared. But being reared, all was ordered with great carefulness. The outer and inner courts were distinguished, the places of the Levites and of the Priests, and then the sanctuary of the Glory or the divine Presence.

Now, in these chapters which are at present before us, I mean 1 Cor. viii.—xiv., we get a very complete exhibition of the House of God as it is in this present dispensation; and it is edifying to look at it, and inspect it. We shall observe a strict rule enjoined as to it, as we have just observed, was the case under Moses.

We have already seen the avenue to it, or the door of it (the same thing) watched by the Spirit in the Apostle. He would not allow one to enter there, who had come from an idol temple (x. 21).

We are now to look inside the door, at the interior of the house itself, and the Apostle shows us the *seats of the guests, the table* spread in the midst of them, and *the servants* and their services.

As, then, respecting the *seats* of the guests, we now observe that they are guarded and watched with the same jealousy that had sanctified the door. Males and females are to be seated together, but only under certain conditions, such as the character of the house demanded. No trespass on this order can be allowed, the Apostle peremptorily declares, even on a plea of ignorance. The house *must* maintain its order. There are mysteries, divine truths and principles, in all the parts of that order; and they cannot be sacrificed to the ignorance of foolish men (xi. 1—16.)

This is much to be observed. The jealousy that watched the door, inspects the seats of the guests; or the guests themselves as seated at the table.

The *table* itself, as in the midst of the guests, is next shewn us. And here again we get the same holy care to watchfulness.

The Apostle rules it expressly, that if any of the

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guests would defile the table by turning it to another use than that appointed by the Lord of the house, such an one must be judged. There is to be no exception as to this. The table was the Lord's—the table of His house; and they were not to dare to treat it as they might their own table in their own house. The Lord would avenge the wrongs of His table now; for of old He had avenged the controversy of His temple (xi. 17—34).

Surely, all this is still of the same character. The door of the house, the sitting of the guests, and their partaking of the table, all were to be kept clean and well-ordered, according to the mind of the Lord of the house.

We then get the servants of the house introduced to our notice. Their *worshipping* service, or the house in its *priestly* character is, perhaps, just for a passing moment, looked at in chap. xii. 1—3; but after this, their *ministering* service is very fully, and indeed elaborately, detailed and presented—as from this to the end of these chapters (xii. 4—xiv.).

Each servant is challenged by the Apostle to know his own proper service or business under the distribution or gift of the Lord of the house—and therewith to occupy himself both for the honour of the common Lord of all, and for the edification and comfort of his fellow-servants, or the guests, or household.

And then we learn, that in the exercise of these gifts or endowments, various moral qualities are to be cultivated, or characteristics cherished. Each, for instance, is to honour the others. And each and all are to be, as it were, busy with themselves, while doing the business of the house—that is, exercising themselves in all Christian virtues, judging their own ways and behaviour as saints, and nourishing the due graces of the Christian.

All this is earnestly pressed by the Apostle in this part of his discourse, looking, as he is here doing, at the servants.

And here let me take occasion to say, there is surely danger of getting into merely gifted service, or into merely gifted knowledge. King Saul was the type of the first of these; the prophet Balaam, of the second.

Saul served, delivering Israel from their enemies. But he served merely under a gift. There was no renewal of mind, or exercise of spirit, in the midst of his service. His conscience was not in action, nor was he in God's presence. Balaam prophesied, telling out wonders and secrets, divine counsels concerning Israel. He was an oracle, and his utterances are beautiful beyond the common measure. But he spoke merely under a gift. There was no subjection to the Lord, or exercise of heart in him.

Such things are solemn.

The world, in spite of his gift, was Saul's object; and the same world, in spite of his gift, Balaam's object. Saul coveted its honour; Balaam, its wealth. Gift did not renew the mind, or implant the new life. There was not even struggle with the world in these men, much less victory over it. Saul, with full deliberation, would give up his interest in God for a little present honour in the presence of his people; Balaam loved the world and sought only its good things, though he was, under the Spirit, pronouncing its judgment.

Can such service, such knowledge, as this be in estimation with the Lord? Impossible. They may be used by Him. The gift has its value—but the vessel that carries it will be put among the vessels unto dishonour, as soon as the Lord of the house takes account of His servants. "We believe and therefore speak," in a short sentence, is the due and proper thing, and the contradiction of merely gifted service. "I keep under my body and bring it into subjection, lest when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway," says Paul of himself; and to his beloved Timothy he says, "Take heed to thyself and to the doctrine; for in doing this thou shalt save thyself and them that hear thee." He that acted and spoke in this way was neither a Saul nor a Balaam.

Now, the saints at Corinth were nearer this state of merely gifted knowledge and service, than any whom Paul addresses in those Apostolic days. Nationally, they were, as we speak, schoolmen—and such a generation have their own snares and temptations. He was some-

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what in alarm respecting them on this behalf. He was uneasy touching the Thessalonians, because of their *sufferings*, lest they should be overwhelmed—he was in great fear touching the Galatians, because of their *judaizing*, lest they should be bewitched from the Cross of Christ—here he is angry and apprehensive touching the Corinthians, because of their *worldly, carnal, intellectual condition*, lest they should, after all, be reprobate.

He may indeed, at the beginning, express his full confidence in the Lord about them (i. 7, 8), but being *gifted* and yet *walking in moral relaxation*, as the whole of the Epistle shews us, he had his fears, he could not but sound the alarm of a watchman in Zion. He tells them, that he could not speak unto them as *spiritual*, though he has to acknowledge that they came behind none in *gifts*. Surely this was an evil and a dangerous state. It is a warning to us. And the Apostle's words in the whole of this Epistle, the first Epistle to the Corinthians, tell us that in a holy, personal, living dispensation, like the present, such a state of things will surely not do.

Chapter xiii., part of the portion we are here considering, coming in where it does, confirms all this. There must be saintly, individual walk, as well as ecclesiastical or corporate service. Surely there must. The conscience of every Saint will tell him so, as this Epistle does. The Corinthians are taught to know, from chap. xiii., that they have a business *with themselves*, as chap. xii. and xiv. would teach them, that they have a business *for others*. Such is the cleanness or required order of the *servants* of the house of God, as we before learnt the required character of the *door*, the *seats*, and the *table*.

I may, therefore, surely say again, if the house of God under Moses was guarded with jealousy, so is it under the Apostles. The framework, the material, the furniture, the services and order of the houses themselves are different, but the jealousy that watches over each of them is the same.

And here let me say, that the first duty of the living house of God (as the house of this present time is), is obedience to the word of God.

It is said at times, how evil a thing it is, to refuse any one who is a saint of God, a place in the assembly of God. But, I ask, Are the saints of God to be received in defiance of the command of God? If the Lord of Israel say, that a leprous Israelite is to be put outside the camp, is the congregation of Israel to say, we will bring him inside, because he is an Israelite and one of us? If the Lord of the present house say, that if any man will go to an idol temple and eat of the sacrifices there, such an one is not to pass the door of the house, is the assembly of the Lord to say, We will take him in, just because we judge him to be a saint, and one of us? Is the watchman at the door to be taught his duty by his Lord; and are the household to give him a dispensation to act in violation of it?

Indeed if the Lord has not spoken, let us be silent. If we are unable to verify and warrant an act, by scripture, we are unable to justify ourselves, or to enforce it on others. Surely indeed. But if God has spoken, and the commandment have enjoined an act, we have only to obey, though it be in the face of all. "Let God be true, but every man a liar."

FRAGMENT.

How can I draw others out of the world, if I am myself lagging behind in it? When in the spirit a man is active in following Jesus and serving Him; and when the flesh is denied for this end, then the life gets filled up with the things of Christ, which are the element in which the new life finds its delight and joy; and, moreover, in which we find the Lord with us. Thus the conscience is kept sweet, and the heart happy. But when this is not the case, there is no power to resist the encroachments of that which defiles the conscience and enfeebles attachment to Christ. Thus, everything is gained and enjoyed in *going forward*, though it is death to the flesh.

No. V.

THE MAINTENANCE OF THE TRUTH AS REVEALED.

THE maintenance of the full revealed truth is the only true testimony, or means of restoration in failure. This is the point which I propose to dwell on for a little; and the principle which I desire to authenticate is this; that man knows nothing of God but from His own revelation of Himself; that, according as this revelation was enunciated, so was the servant of God bound to adhere to the terms of it, and that whenever he failed to maintain those terms accurately, he so far failed to secure his own blessing, and still more, he thereby ignored his ability or title to declare the true God; for he was behind the revelation.

That the maintenance of the full revelation should be the grand and necessary means of restoration, is plain and fitting, so to speak, when we consider the nature of man's alienation from God. Having at the serpent's suggestion, believed a lie, and acted on it, he was deceived into an entire misapprehension of God. He did not deny God's existence, but he accepted from Satan a false idea of Him: knowing His power, but distrusting His intentions towards man.

Hence, the natural mind is at enmity against God; there is really no knowledge of the true God. The fall while it enlarged the human mind, did so at the expense of its previous knowledge of God, and it would have to be deprived of much of its present power of comprehension if it were possible for it to return of itself to a condition in which it could simply trust in God, in a word to a state of innocence, which is impossible, for we are born in another state of nature. The more the human mind

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is exercised to attain a knowledge of the true God, the more is it made cognisant of its estrangement from Him, in the very state of its nature; for the very power which exercises it is owing to the act which corrupted it with respect to Him. The greatest philosopher, after the most intense study, only produced a system, which, while it admitted man's need, declared that the true God was not apprehended. They attributed to the Supreme Being the best attributes which they found active in man's nature; but they did not discover, and could not, the nature of God in His love to man, because their own minds denied it.

GOD THEN MUST REVEAL HIMSELF.

But this revelation is entirely outside the human mind—it is not intuitive, and never could have been derived from it. Thus the voice of the Lord announces to Adam His true mind and interest for man, and Adam's restoration, peace, and blessing depended on his reception and maintenance of this revelation. True, he required a new mind (*i.e.* regeneration) in order to receive and retain it; but the more fully he maintained the scope and spirit of the revelation, the more he not only assured himself of restoration and blessing; but thus alone could he worthily testify of his Creator. Let him depart from an item in the revelation, and not only did he find to his cost that he lost blessing, but he failed to be a renovated witness for God on the earth. Eve, whom Adam had so called in the light of the revelation, departs from the express terms of that revelation—the only chart by which she could steer through the uncertainties by which the natural mind obstructs the course of the new man—and designates her first-born son as the promised man; and how much sorrow and humiliation does she engender for her family! The natural mind is not only ignorant of the revelation, but it cannot be trusted with the interpretation, of it. God's voice must pronounce the one, and God's Spirit must ensure the other. It is all outside man; though all accomplished in the human vessel, sensibly and intelligently. Thus, any variation from the revelation must be of the natural

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mind, and must not only mar blessing, but deny the effect of it in the way of testimony to the true God.

If we see this so distinctly marked, with regard to the first revelation, how much more important shall we find it to be as the revelation enlarges and more fully unfolds to us the God from whom we have departed, and of whom we have presented so untrue an idea in His own world.

Let us trace this subject for a little through the scriptures.

In the close of Genesis viii. and ix., we find an additional revelation; the terms being that God will not again curse the ground for man's sake; that man is to have dominion over everything on earth, but nothing is to have dominion over man without adequate retribution. The bow in the cloud was the witness of the covenant. Had Noah and his descendants adhered to the terms of this revelation accurately, they would have ensured blessing for themselves, and have maintained a testimony for God in the now expurgated earth. But Noah fails. He is subjugated by the fruits of the earth; and his own son declares it; he falls a prey to what was appointed to be subservient to him. His position is thus forfeited, his testimony for God annulled, and a curse falls on his own child for an infraction of a subserviency which his lust had propagated: the revelation was not adhered to, and the tower of Babel was the matured fruit of the aberration from it. In such a state of things, the previous measure of revelation, however valuable, could not meet the exigency of the moment, or supply the testimony God wished to afford of Himself; therefore, in Genesis xii., a new revelation is communicated to Abram, as soon as he had entered on the path which God had called him to; even that of separation from his country and kindred, to be a witness for Him in a world where He was unknown. The terms of it describe the circle of Abram's blessing and testimony. God would make him a blessing, and gave him the land, although the Canaanite was still there. While he maintained these terms accurately, he continued a faithful and happy witness for God in Canaan, but when he lost sight of them

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and went into Egypt, he, for the time, forfeited the one and denied the other. And mark—his restoration is indicated by his return to the terms of the revelation, “he came to the place of the altar which he had made there at *the beginning*.” By adhering to these, he was enabled to refuse the plains of Sodom, to be a successful helper to his deceived and worldly brother in his distress; in short, to be an honoured witness for God throughout his course. Melchizedek can crown with blessing the man walking in the light of the revelation. Lot, in forsaking it, remains unblest; but Abraham, triumphant through the truth, devotes the tithes, the *spolia opima*, to the king of righteousness and the king of peace. How great was the blessing and testimony which the adherence, even by one, to the terms of God’s revelation effected! The promise of Isaac was part of the revelation and the rite of circumcision connected with it. Abraham and Sarah must both avow this truth (Genesis xxi. 4—8), and then their joy and testimony are secured. And the adherence to this continues peremptory even after subsequent revelations; for these do not always confirm previous ones. If Moses in Midian disregard circumcision, the moment he takes the place of testimony he must repent of his negligence, and know the danger of his act. If Israel neglected in the wilderness, the first day in the land is devoted to their submission to it. While it was possible to disregard a later revelation by confining themselves to a former one, the former could never be disregarded by strictly and distinctly maintaining the later; which is very important and naturally follows; because each revelation is only a larger unfolding to us of the true God of whom we are intuitively ignorant. Even as all revelations lead, in the aggregate, to the Lord Jesus Christ who alone declared the Father. But to continue—

Before Moses was able assuredly to undertake the responsibility of leading the children of Israel out of Egypt, his soul was confirmed by a new revelation (Exodus vi.), “And God spake unto Moses, and said unto him I am the *Lord*, and I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob by the name of God Almighty, but by my name Jehovah was I not known

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unto them. I have also established my covenant with them," etc. God reveals Himself to Moses as the Covenant God, and we shall find that by adhering to this revelation depended Moses' success and testimony. In his greatest extremity he could say, "The Lord shall fight for you." And his first altar he called "Jehovah-nissi," "The Lord my Banner," in remembrance of the deliverance of which he was the channel. The truth which was involved in this revelation was ever a ground of confidence and stability to Moses in moments of perplexity, and difficulty, and sin. To maintain the terms of it is the only path to restoration, though it be *by only one man!* Thus, when Israel sinned in the matter of the golden calf, the intercession of Moses for them is on the ground of God's covenant. Still more significantly in their sin at Kadesh-barnea (Num. xiv.), he pleads with the Lord as to how the testimony would suffer if He did not realize His covenant, or in other words be true to the revelation of Himself. And what was the result of *one man* fully maintaining the revelation and pleading it before God? Israel found mercy, and God was vindicated on earth.

Again, I repeat, that no former revelation, however comprehensive, would have suited the exigence, and that in failing to maintain it the most valued servant would be set aside. Moses, after having endured for so many years, failed on the very borders of the land, and is thus disqualified for entering the covenanted land, the land promised by Jehovah. Moses alone, not once or twice, faithful to the revelation, saved Israel, but failing himself he alone is the loser.

To Joshua, the revelation was, that as surely as the waters of Jordan were to afford a passage to the people, so would the Lord without fail drive out from before them the seven nations of Canaan. "The ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth passeth over before you into Jordan." If Joshua adhere to the terms of this revelation, all will be smooth and triumphant for Israel, and honouring to the Lord. All Israel's deficiency in blessing in the land, sprung from disregard to these terms, now first communicated to them. They forgot or

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disbelieved that God was among them and would, without fail, drive out the nations from before them. Joshua just before his death called for all Israel, their elders, their heads, etc., in order to revive and fix in their souls the terms of the revelation which he had dispensed. And again, in Shechem when they presented themselves before the Lord, he renews his exhortation; he labours energetically to rally the people to maintain the truth as it had been revealed, showing them the blessing consequent on their doing so; and the irreparable loss they must suffer by departing from it; and then sums up, by evincing such an appreciation for the truth of God that, assuming all and each will fail in maintaining it, he sets up a stone as a witness against them, lest they should deny their God: "Behold this stone shall be a witness unto us, for it hath heard all the words of the Lord which He spake unto us; it shall therefore be a witness unto you lest ye deny your God."

This stone, the antitype of which was the Lord Jesus Christ, was more to be trusted than any man in Israel; and is the only resource as an effectual and imperishable witness amid the failure of the people. Just as we shall see in the appeal to Laodicea, the church being then in a corresponding condition of failure and ruin, Christ is presented as the faithful and true *witness*, that being the aspect of Him which the times and condition of things required, and He being alone worthy of the appellation. The anxiety of every faithful servant must be to maintain the truth, and nothing short of it; and here Joshua seeks to vindicate the name of God on earth, not by falling back upon any past measure of revelation, but by maintaining intact that which was committed to himself and suited for his times. To this day, the terms of the tenure of the moral Canaan are identical; and dereliction with regard to them entails the same sorrows morally as it did afore time, physically. Now, as then, the faithful servant may singly and alone vindicate God. Christ, as the Faithful Witness can always be reckoned on, and God and His truth must not be denied, though the whole congregation be recusant and Demas-like.

The chief revelation to David was with regard to

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Solomon and the Temple; and he winds up his eventful life preparing and ordering everything in relation to this. The permanency of his kingdom and the glory of God depended on his unswerving adherence to the truth communicated to him, and he remained faithful to it. He terminated his labours on earth working to this end; declaring how devoted his heart was to the revelation committed to him, though he should pass out of the scene before his preparation would be appreciated. It is the brightest moment of David's life, for in it he maintains the fullest revelation that had yet been made known to man, and in this light of it he departs, leaving his kingdom to the type of Him who was to come, in expectancy of that glory which to this moment is looked for. To be a revealer of God was all engrossing to him; and to this object his latest strength was devoted with a zeal never equalled until the true David—the only begotten son—appeared, who could say, "The zeal of Thine house hath eaten me up." I do not believe that this revelation committed to David was surpassed by any subsequent one, until He, the fulness of it, came. Every prophet and servant who filled up the interval was distinguished for faithfulness and service in proportion to his accurate maintenance of the terms of it. Be it an Isaiah or an Ezra, or an Ezekiel or a Nehemiah, a Jeremiah or a Daniel. Each in his measure and line looked forward for the King of glory and the temple, as the enduring relief from their present trials, as well as the surest and unfailing testimony for God. During this dreary interval, long and humbling trials befell the people of God, but as with Haggai, so with all; the truth which restored and renovated their testimony was this revelation; and the more they maintained it, in all their failure, expatriation and powerlessness, the more they surmounted present obstacles, and were found once more God's witnesses on earth. Every measure of truth is valuable in its appointed place, but it is plain that no other line would have effected this for them, either as the amelioration of their condition, or as to their testimony for God on the earth. And how much this wrought for them in the days of Haggai, where we see them rebuilding the tem-

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ple, and listening with eager ears to the words of Zechariah touching the King of Glory, and the glorious sanctuary.

At length, in the fulness of time, He came, who was the sum and substance of all previous revelations. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us; and we beheld His glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." He, the fulness of all revelations, superseded and surpassed all that had gone before. John the Baptist proclaimed His coming; but when He had come, the revelation was "Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining on Him, the same is He which baptiseth with the Holy Ghost; *and I saw and bare record that this is the Son of God.*" Every thing now depends on the faithfulness with which this revelation is maintained. "He that honoureth the Son honoureth the Father," He is the fulness of the Godhead bodily; and if there be any defect in adhering to Him as the full and perfect revealer of the mind and counsels of the Father, there must be great damage to one's own blessing, and an end to testimony for God, inasmuch as its great feature is annulled. Christ being come, the strictest maintenance of any previous measure of truth cannot be the true testimony; for the more zealous it be, the more does it imply that there is no greater or better, and how can a servant presume to imply this with regard to any previous measure; when the fulness of all has come? Christ, the Son of God. He which baptiseth with the Holy Ghost is the only relief to man in the lowest condition of failure, the only sure and speedy power of restoration. But to the Corinthians, overcome by worldliness, "I determined (says the Apostle) to know nothing among you but *Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.*" To the Galatians—corrupted by false doctrine—"Of whom I travail in birth again until *Christ* be formed in you." When we speak of Christ, let us understand what we mean. Christ, the Son of the living God was down here a man, revealing the Father's heart towards men, and in the end so responding to His love, that He endured on the cross the penalty of death for which man was liable;

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and having borne it and satisfied every claim of God, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on High, maintaining the perfection of His people's acceptance in the presence of the Father. He is the one who expressed and substantiated every desire of the Father's heart toward man; the perfect servant of God; the perfect Saviour of men. *This is Christ, the revelation of God*; and to present Him as such I must not mutilate Him. I must not present Him as on earth, however glorious and full His services here were. I must also present Him as He is in heaven. I must present Him now as *from heaven to earth*. And the lower the condition of the church, the more accurately must I (if I would restore it and renew its testimony) maintain the revelation of God, which He is, in all fulness. The fuller the revelation, the better for man; for the better God is declared, the more confidently can man draw near, and the more distinctly can he renounce the prepossessions of nature.

And here let me ask, What is the extent of the revelation now made known to us? Are we acquainted with it? Do we seek to maintain it in its fulness and extent? I do not mean, do we grasp the whole truth contained in it? for that is infinite. But can we trace the outlines of it and aim at nothing short of its full extent? What then are the outlines of the revelation of God unfolded by the incarnation, death, and resurrection of the Son; The revelation itself may be said to be embodied in those words, "No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him;" because, as every previous measure had been but a fore-shadowing of Him, so all that has been declared since His coming is an elucidation of what He is in Himself. The Son is the centre and core of all revelation; the most that any one can know; a knowledge which we find in 1 John ii. 13, is the attainment of fathers or the most advanced.

But in what manner did the Son thus reveal the Father? We know that the answer is, by His life on earth, death, resurrection, and ascension. The life of the Lord Jesus on earth declared the Father in its manifesta-

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tion of His interest for man, the heart of Him whose compassions fail not, was brought near to man. Every human infirmity was relieved, unbelief was rebuked. God was made known. The Lord could say, "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father." In *death* He responded to the love of God. Grace and truth came by Him, He bore the judgment of sin, His words are "The cup which my Father hath given me shall I not drink it." He was once offered to bear the sin of many; still further disclosing to us the true God and His interest in man. The disciples could appreciate the revelation of God, as they walked with Him on earth; but the thief on the cross knew it, as unfolded in His *death* and nothing short of this could have suited his own necessity, or supplied the right testimony.

But not only did Christ walk as a man, and die for man on earth, but He rose again, testifying that He was the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness; and herein is still further the Revealer of the Father.

Delivered for our offences, but raised again for our justification, His death is our ransom and His resurrection our ground of peace. Mary Magdalene, and the disciples going to Emmaus, both knew a measure of the revelation. They knew what He was on earth, and that He had died; but they did not know that He had "risen and become the first fruits of them that slept," and therefore they neither had the blessing of the fuller truth nor were able to express the testimony suited and necessary for the moment, until they are instructed therein by Himself in His own gracious way, and then with what blessing to themselves, and what effectual testimony!

Still further was the *ascension* of Christ to the right-hand of God, the occasion of a fuller revelation of Him who had revealed God, because consequent on that was the descent of the Holy Ghost, whose peculiar mission was, and is, to "testify of *me*."

What this testimony is, comprises the fullest revelation committed to the church; and necessarily includes what the Apostle Paul terms "the counsel of God." "I

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have not shunned (he says) to declare unto you the whole counsel of God." The first great truth of which the Holy Ghost testifies is the perfectness of our acceptance in the presence of God. Christ Himself is the pattern of our acceptance; the Holy Ghost is the seal of it. He testifies that though we were dead in trespasses and sins, we are raised up together with Christ and made to sit together with Him. How wretched and unhappy are souls, and how unable to testify of God's grace, if they are not assured that God so met His own mind and the desires of His heart in Christ, that He can be just and yet the justifier of every one who believeth in Him. The Holy Ghost declares this. He does not work assurance, but He testifies of the risen Christ with the Father to the regenerated soul; and this is a sealing or confirming of the fact, that when He had purged our sins, He sat down on the right-hand of the Majesty on high. The Father's love is satisfied the more I appreciate it:—the more I respond to it, the more I honour Him. The self-same Spirit is to us the earnest of the inheritance which as joint-heirs with Christ we shall enjoy, and therefore the one and the selfsame Spirit seals my acceptance and pledges my future glory with Christ; so that while I am happy in my nearness to God, as a saved sinner, I am also by the self-same Spirit introduced confidently into heirship with Christ; and, therefore, necessarily waiting for His coming and glory—seeing they are indissolubly connected. It is plain, that no previous measure of revelation could by any means confer the blessing, or supply the power for testimony commensurate to or of a quality like this.

Again—the Holy Ghost, in a world which rejected the Son of God, is building an habitation for God; the body of Christ, the fulness of Himself. This truth, kept secret until now, is the one most personal and most glorious to Christ. First, that the Holy Ghost, as the fruits of Christ's work, should build souls together as a habitation for God in a world that had rejected Him; and still further, that this building, these monuments of His grace, though composed of many members, should be baptised by the self-same Spirit into one body as the

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fulness of Him who filleth all in all. What *could* be more important or blessed than the revelation that the Body—the fulness of Christ—now in heaven, should be formed by the Holy Ghost?

It is the greatest—the most perfect of all revelations—the most honouring to Christ, the most glorious to *us*. It is the real full scope of the Holy Ghost's mission down here. All His other work is only a means to an end, to *this* end. Thus truly does He fulfil the saying, "He shall testify of me;" and *thus* does He testify, by moulding and fashioning souls into one body, and baptising them thereto, to be Christ's body and the fulness of Him.

If this great and consummate work and action of the Holy Ghost be not apprehended, how can there be the blessing which He is here to confer; or how can there be a testimony at all corresponding to the nature of the counsel of God? Can any previous measure of revealed truth supply the place of this, either as to the effect it has on the soul, or the character of the testimony for God, which it imparts? None surely.—*This* is the fulness of revealed truth. Let us look around, and notice the different measures of life and intelligence among the many believers in Christendom, and ask what truth could bless souls in such a distracted state of things? Could any previous or any partial revelation of Christ? I may be told it is Christ they want, in which I most heartily concur; but, Christ is testified of by the Holy Ghost, first, as to our peace; and secondly, as to our responsibility to Him. If I have not this full and perfect revelation, I cannot know either the one or the other. For, what other revelation could afford me assurance of peace but that which tells me that Christ is at God's right-hand; and of this the Holy Ghost testifies. He alone can make it sure to my perceptions, because He tells me of God's satisfaction, not of my own. Again—What other line of truth could unfold to me my responsibilities as does this—that I am a member of Christ's body, baptised into one body—all members contributing to the blessing of one another—not only to be the habitation of God, but the *fulness* of the rejected Christ?

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Marvellous grace to grant us such a calling! If walking according to the mind of Christ in the light of this revelation, I could not think *only* of the awakening of souls, but while rejoicing at their awakening as a mother would at the birth of her first-born, I should provide with all parental anxiety for their future health and nurture.—Discerning life there, I should, if in sympathy with Christ, seek that it may answer its end as a member of His body. I must see that it be up in heaven *with* Christ, and down on earth *for* Christ, as the filling up of Himself. Does the Holy Ghost desire to see all His members happy in union with Him, and as such united with one another, answering each to his own proper place in the Body? Was the body of Christ personal a matter of interest and care? Assuredly it was. And is His mystical body to be one of less care?

But how can we show our interest and care if our eyes are not enlightened by the revelation He has afforded of Himself? If we be engaged with one previous to it, we are behind His mind and cannot be His witnesses. The awakening or quickening of souls, or the healing of souls is the work of the Holy Ghost, but if we stop there, we neither apprehend nor act up to the full revelation of Christ. There is a declaration of His work, and a certain amount of blessing to souls; but the affections of Christ are not acknowledged or responded to. There is no link to Him as bone of His bone and flesh of His flesh; no testimony for Him as the rejected and ascended One.—In fact the great intent of the Holy Ghost is overlooked, if not set aside. It is true that conversions are for Christ and cannot be without the power of God—yet they are but means to an end. The Holy Ghost is not more interested in quickening souls, than in making them sit together with Christ in heavenly places. He is not content with merely giving them birth; He seeks to advance them to the measure of the revelation of God, which He has unfolded as the proper testimony of the Church for Christ. I may be told, the Church has failed: most true; but the Holy Ghost is still here to testify of Christ, His work is still the same; His aim can never be lowered, or brought to the level of

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surrounding failure; and that aim and work is to form us into a habitation for God as the Body of Christ, as members of one another, because baptised thereto by Himself.

What is failure, but a departure from the revelation communicated? This being the centre, focus and kernel of all blessing, departure from it, is failure; return to it, restoration. By losing sight of it, testimony is marred; by maintaining it, failure corrected and testimony renewed. Every witness that has gone before us has proved this; and a great cloud of witnesses has there been!

One word in conclusion. Every spiritual gift is conferred on the church only. The gifts belong to the church; and that of the Evangelist, as much as that of the teacher. All are from the church, and for the benefit of the church; so that if I am possessor of any spiritual gift, and exercise it without reference to the church, I am denying the true centre of my service; and consequently the church cannot receive help from me; as we often see she does not from very gifted men. They are exclusively occupied with their gift and its effects, and not with the mind of the Lord from whom they derive it. True, they may love and serve Him, but they do not seek His mind and counsel with reference to their gift; and therefore while the gift produces effects, and even to a certain point, blessed ones, the church—the special object of the Holy Ghost's care and interest—is not edified thereby.

May the Lord enable us, not only to apprehend, but to maintain this full and perfect revelation, which, hidden in all past ages, is now made known, as the unerring chart by which to steer in the darkness that is gathering over this earth.

Christ Himself—personal and mystical—being the centre and scope of it, adherence to it, will render our path right and clear though narrow: for it will put us in company with His mind, His sympathies, His relation to things around; and in the direct line of the Holy Ghost's action—who is here to *testify* of Him.—S.

Nº. VI.

JAMES.

THE Epistle of James is not addressed to the Church; and does not take the ground of apostolic authority over the persons to whom it is sent. It is a practical exhortation, which still recognises the twelve tribes and the connection of the Christian Jews with them, as Jonah addressed the Gentiles, although the Jewish people had their place before God. Thus the Spirit of God still acknowledges here the relationship with Israel, as, in the other case, the relationship with Gentiles, and the rights of God, which are unchangeable, whatever may be the special privileges granted to the Church or to Israel respectively. We know that, historically, the Christian Jews remained Jews to the end of the New Testament history, and were even zealous for the law. To us, a strange thing; but which God endured for a time.

The doctrine of Christianity is not the subject of this Epistle. It gives God His place in the conscience, and with regard to all that surrounds us. It thus girds up the loins of the Christian, presenting also the near coming of the Lord, and His present discipline — a discipline with respect to which the Church of God ought to possess intelligence, and activity founded thereon. The world also, and all that makes an appearance in it, is judged from God's point of view.

A few remarks on the position of Christians, *i. e.*, on the way in which this position is viewed with respect to Israel, will help us to understand this portion of the Word.

Israel is still regarded as the people of God. To the faith of James the nation has still the relationship which

so that it acts in all its intensity, moved by the power of that nearness. But if we consider the action of the Spirit, these thoughts are confirmed. The righteous man does not grieve the Holy Ghost, and the Spirit works in him according to His own power, not having to set his conscience right with God, but acting in the man according to the power of His communion.

Finally, we have the assurance that the ardent and energetic prayer of the righteous man has great efficacy: it is the prayer of faith which knows God and counts upon Him and draws near to Him.

The case of Elijah is interesting, as showing us (and there are other examples of the same kind) how the Holy Ghost acts inwardly in a man where we see the outward manifestation of power. In the history, we have Elijah's declaration: "The Lord liveth, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word." This is the authority, the power, exercised in the name of the Lord. In our epistle, the secret operation, that which passes between the soul and God is set forth. He prayed, and God heard him. We have the same testimony on the part of Jesus at the tomb of Lazarus. Only that in the latter case, we have the two together, except that the prayer itself is not given—unless in the unutterable groan of Christ's Spirit.

Comparing Gal. ii. with the history in Acts xv., we find a revelation from God which determined Paul's conduct, whatever outward motives there may have been, which were known to all. By such cases as those which the apostle proposes to the Church, and those of Elijah and the Lord Jesus, a God, living, acting, and interesting Himself in all that happens among His people, is revealed to us.

There is also the activity of love towards those who err. If any one departs from the truth, and they bring him back by grace, let it be known that to bring back a sinner from the error of his ways is the exercise—simple as our action in it may be—of the power that delivers a soul from death; accordingly, all those sins which spread themselves in their odious nature before the eyes of God, and offended His glory and His heart by their presence

in His universe, are covered. The soul being brought to God by grace, all its sins are pardoned, appear no more, are blotted out from before the face of God. The apostle (as throughout) does not speak of the power that acts in this work of love, but of the fact. He applies it to cases that had happened among them; but he establishes a universal principle with regard to the activity of grace in the heart that is animated by it. The erring soul is saved; the sin is put away from before God.

Charity in the Church, suppresses, so to speak, the sins which otherwise would destroy union, and overcome that charity in the Church, and appear in all their deformity and all their malignancy before God. Whereas, being met by love in the Church, they go no farther, are, as it were, dissolved and put away by the charity which they could not vanquish. The sin is vanquished by the love which dealt with it, disappears, is swallowed up by it. Thus love covers a multitude of sins. Here it is its action in the conversion of a sinner.

1 CHRON. XXI.

It is most lovely to see the way in which David takes refuge in God at the very time His hand was upon him in chastening. He had been away from Him for months, whilst the numbering was going on. But God loved His child, and cannot suffer him to be so at a distance. So He must make him feel his sin. And now David finds that he has to do with God. How the thought of God, and of our personal dealing with Him, throws light on all our ways! For alone with Him must the state of our souls be settled. But never is God more precious to His people, than when Himself their refuge against the sin which He must bring to their remembrance, and visit.

N^o. VII.

FRAGMENTS.

1.—COLOSSIANS i. 24.

“I (Paul) now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh, for His body’s sake, which is the church—(Col. i. 24). People suppose that Christ’s sufferings were only for and in making atonement. This is a great mistake. The atonement took place at Calvary; and, though the most awful part of His course, only occupied three hours.

In truth, He suffered not only the wrath of God due to my sins in His own body on the tree, but when He came into the world, He came to display God by His sufferings in humiliation; and all through His course He learnt obedience by the things that He suffered; so that, in that He Himself hath suffered, being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted.

There are two kinds of suffering which the believer now, in his measure, enters into: 1. Directly God was manifest in the flesh, He became the open book in which God was revealed, and in which those who knew aright about God saw the object of their worship.

The babe born (Luke ii. 7) to shepherd’s keeping watch over their flock by night . . . “lo, the angel of the Lord came,” etc. (ver. 9—12) “and then suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men,” (13, 14).

When He came to His public service, and stood in the water to be baptized of John—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost could be set forth together. The Son in the water, the Spirit descending on Him, and a voice proclaiming from on high: “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.” When He came to the trans-

figuration, He is again greeted from on high: "This is my beloved Son, hear ye him." And all this before atonement was commenced. But the glory that gave abroad its fragrance was the marvel of God manifest in the flesh. The Creator tabernacling in the flesh of the holy, harmless, undefiled seed of the woman. But this glory was not separable from the humiliation, from the incarnation.

Answering in its place to this, we get the truth of the church used of God while in the wilderness, "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known by the Church, the manifold wisdom of God," (Eph. iii. 10).

What a difference, when we take our sorrows, our trials, our afflictions, bereavements, needs, temptations, etc., merely as the sorrows of humanity in its present fallen state, and when we take them as parts of our testimony to principalities and powers in heavenly places. "Why should I linger here," said a saint, "I am of use to no one—whom can I serve, and what can I do?" The answer was: "Angels and principalities have been eyeing with wonder, that such a thing as you seem to be should have so much of the attention of Christ, be so much thought about in heaven; they look at you and then confess that mercy and compassion, pity and grace, are very real, very substantial things in God. That the Christ ascended and glorified should bear such an one upon His heart and mind."

But 2ndly: The Son, who had been the object of worship and to whom all were subject, came into the world, and *learned* obedience by the things that He suffered. With this He blended that learning of sympathy as a sufferer. God stooped from governing all things to learn obedience.

Poor Paul had to learn obedience in another sense. Never at the head, but a rebel against the Head, he had to learn to set aside his bad will, and to be meek and lowly of heart. But the lessons which Paul had, not only bowed his own soul to the blessed Lord Jesus who was in very nature, as seed of the woman, meek and lowly of heart, but also his lessons were for the elect's

sake. God taught him, Paul, that he might be able to teach those who are members of the body of Christ. This, too, gives strength to the soul under trial of any kind, to be able to say, "Well, not only am I sure that I want discipline myself, but my gracious Lord is teaching me, both how He was the prince of sufferers, in order that we all might find an answer to our sufferings in Him, and is teaching it to me, too, for the sake of His body which is dear to Him, that I may be able to comfort others with that comfort wherewith I myself have been comforted of God."

2.—HEAVEN, EARTH, AND HELL.

THE Son of God has undertaken, as to the heavens and as to the earth prepared for man, to purge out every mark and stain of sin, and to fill them with a new energy and power, viz., of the Holy Ghost. This redemption of the whole world, as a system, is emphatically His work; and assuredly it is a work that none but He could accomplish. The system of this world, as a whole, does not embrace the universe, nor all the men that have been on the earth, nor all the angels that have been in heaven. There is hell (originally prepared for the devil and his angels) open for those men who prefer the service of him, who, in rebellion against God, is a liar and a murderer from the beginning, to the service of that meek and lowly Jesus, the Redeemer, who—the Son and servant of God—is full of grace and truth.

May we, as saints, be carried in the current of this work of the Son: My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.

3.—"MINE OWN WAYS."

THERE is nothing so sweet to a man as *his own way*. "I *will* have my own way," is the language of the natural heart both young and old. And it shows itself both in worldliness and religiousness. "The way of Cain" was *his own way*: and the many unscriptural ways of God's people, whether in public or private, are only so many indications of *self-will*. These things call for self-judgment, "for if we would judge ourselves we should not be

judged." But even "when we are judged we are *chastened* of the Lord, that we should not be *condemned* with the world" (1 Cor. xi.)

Job was a real man of faith, and patience too. "Ye have heard of the *patience* of Job." God drew the attention of Satan to him as a sincere and upright man. Satan acknowledges that there is "a hedge about him," which if God will but break down and let him get at him, he will *curse* God. The permission is given; and immediately Job's property, Job's children, and then Job's person are all touched by Satan. In the midst of this scene, his wife urges him to *curse* God, as Satan said he would, but Job says "The Lord *gave*, and the Lord hath *taken away*, BLESSED be the name of the Lord."

And now comes the hottest part of the trial. His friends come to him to *comfort* him; but instead of doing this they argue that he must have been a *hypocrite*, or God would never have afflicted him in this way. Conscious of his integrity, he justifies himself to such an extent, that it amounts to self-righteousness, and Job's heart in its faith and failure is fully revealed in this expression (chap. xiii. 15): "Though He slay me, yet will I *trust* in Him; but I *will* maintain, or argue *mine own ways* before Him." This was the dross which God was purging from him, and when He had tried him "he came forth like gold." God's ways are "past *finding out*," whether in *nature* or *grace*; we only *know* what He *reveals*; and this is what is taught to Job by the Almighty's address to him. He had heard of God, he now says, by the hearing of the ear, but *now* that his eye saw Him *he abhors himself*. This is very different from maintaining *his own ways*. And this was Job's blessing. So is it ours. May we learn the lesson.

Elihu, the *youngest*, was the only one of Job's friends who spoke to him according to God.

B.

Job XLII. 5, 6.

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.

4.—GILGAL.

“And the LORD said unto Joshua, This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you. Wherefore the name of the place is called Gilgal unto this day.”—Joshua v. 9.

CIRCUMCISION began not with Moses, but with the fathers. 'Twas their mark in their pilgrim course, of separation unto God and of a blessing from Him; a blessing, however, according to *promise*.

Their descendants observed it while in Egypt; but it seemed to have lost its tone and power on their souls, for they all that came out of Egypt were circumcised, yet they perished in the wilderness, and they neglected to circumcise their children, so verse 9 is introduced.

All the males took upon themselves the marks of separation unto the Lord, each one separately and as an individual. They thus owned their connection with the whole line that had preceded them, up to the fathers. In an especial way they admitted the evil of the Egyptian generations, and of their own wilderness-wanderings, but declared thus that though Satan might have been acting against, and man might have forgotten Jehovah as the God of holiness, they did not; but amid all the evil before and around them, they confessed to it; and confessed too, to all their own disorderliness; but they would give to the Lord honour amid all the failure, commit themselves individually to Him, and receive His mark upon them. And thus the marks of their being one body together were renewed. For the question here, was not that which came out afterwards, viz., the power to trace the pedigree (Ezra ii. 59—63), but whether the people carried the marks of separation to God upon the ground of a hope according to promise given to the fathers.

The Lord was at Gilgal before they were; it was He who ordained Gilgal.

Who gets to Gilgal now? If any has, he has found God there with the sharp knives, that self may be mutilated, if so be that I may be connected with God's house, as set up at Pentecost, and may know how to walk as a pilgrim-conqueror before the Lord until He come.

Later in Israel's history, the "Angel of the LORD came up from Gilgal to Bochim" (Jud. ii. 1—5). To humble and break down the people came He thither; and to recall to them their misdeeds, and to warn them of the consequences. Yet was there a door of hope for the weepers. And he who goes to Bochim now cannot forget the coming up out of Egypt (ver. 1), or the ground of the LORD's complaint against them which revived the past and their fellowship with it.

5.—2 SAM. xv.

OBSERVE the exceeding grace of David in the whole scene connected with Absalom's rebellion. He would flee to save the people, and to avoid the shedding of blood. He would send back Ittai the Gittite, who will not go, and who is, indeed, the expression of that deep reverent affection which never shews itself more than when its object is in distress. He will not check Shimei, though cursing him and following them all the way with stones. He sends back the ark, too, and Zadoc, even now taking refuge as he was wont in the tender-mercy of his God. If he should find favour in His sight, he would bring David back to see both it and his habitation; but if not, if He were to say I have no delight in thee,—well, there he was, entirely at His disposal. O, the exquisite grace of this man of God, never more manifest than at this moment. It is entire up-giving to His *mercy*. He owned it was God's hand in displeasure, but whilst owning the hand he takes refuge in His heart.

How different with Ahithophel! When his glory was touched, by Absalom's rejecting his counsel, he went and hanged himself. He could not outlive his reputation. But David can, for he knew God. Lovely specimen of "subjection to the Father of Spirits."

6. "Of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are *all* things."
Rom. xi. 35.

NOR Satan, nor fallen angel, nor rebellious man, can hinder this word being true. The past, the present, and

the future of all things, also, must each pay tribute of glory to Him. But there is an "of," a "through," and a "to" Him who is here spoken of, which is the indefeasible birthright of each heavenly Christian alone, is already His in principle, and should be his actually in practice.

On *principle*, I, as a Christian, am *of* Him, thus: "They are not *of* the world, even as I am not *of* the world" (John xvii. 14—16). My origin as a Christian cannot be *of* the world (present corrupted state of things upon earth), nor *of* earth at all. It is *of* the Eternal Son of God, as Son of Man, glorified in heaven. My life is in Him, and thus I am of him. I—*of* Him, Himself.

The "*through*" Him, or mode of this being made good, brings in Christ's revealing of Himself to me by faith, and the giving thereby a new nature "born of the Spirit" (John iii. 6). "Born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. . . . The word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you" (1 Peter i. 23—25).

The "*to*" Him (conformity to the blessed One's own principle, who was "obedient unto death, the death of the Cross;" for He came to do God's will), is the secret of all that blessing: "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to (His) purpose. For whom He did foreknow, he also did predestinate (to be) conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren" (Rom. viii. 28, 29). A "*to*" Him which will land us in the glory close to the person of the Beloved.

In *practice*, alas! how do we come short of Paul's consciously attained measure: "To me to live (is) Christ, to die (is) gain" (Phil. i. 21). As to those that subscribe to this confession, may they do two things: 1st. Let them study such words as those in Rev. iii. 15—20; and Rom. xiv. 6—12., etc.

But, 2ndly, May they, at once, take up Paul's axiom for well-doing: "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing (I do), forgetting those

things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of our high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. iii. 13, 14).

When a man works from his own energy, his own plans are sure to come in; and then Will follows—something for himself in the end, which he pursues. It is just this drawing out of human energy, which has been the canker-worm of religious activities in our own generation. It has plunged those that sought to be doers and not hearers only, into worldliness and selfishness; often, I am persuaded, without their knowing *how*.

On the other hand, our deliverance, and our safety are found in humble seeking of a right object. To seek to do God's will, and that only, will bring light whereby to judge all by-paths, and all false energy. And it must be so; for God is faithful, and those that honour Him, He will honour. Those that seek to do His will, who mistrust themselves, and seek to give themselves to God in Christ, they shall have light and purified ways too.

7.—RESTORING GRACE.

As one who has tasted not only *saving* grace, but *preserving* grace, and *restoring* grace—"He restoreth my soul"—I desire to call attention to this last-named subject, as unfolded to us by the Lord in Luke xv. I am aware that many commentators, and others, look upon this portion of scripture as teaching only *saving* grace; and that it may be used in that sense when preaching the gospel, I do not deny; for the word of God is a *two-edged* sword, which cuts *both* ways; but the plain interpretation of the chapter gives one a perfect picture of *restoring* grace. And this we shall clearly see, if we remember that man, as a sinner, is born outside Eden, away from God, an enemy to Him; and that in the gospel, God, by His evangelists, beseeches poor sinners to be reconciled, and that on the ground of Christ's accomplished work (see 2 Cor. v. 20, 21). Now, in Luke xv., the prodigal son *had been* in the father's house; the wandering sheep *had been* in or among the flock; and the piece of money *had been* in the woman's possession. And

when the *son* is found, the sheep brought back, and the piece of silver recovered; there is "joy," not merely among the angels, but *in the presence* of them; joy in the heart of the Father; joy in the heart of the Good Shepherd, Christ; joy in the Church, as symbolised by *the woman* possessing the Spirit, or "light;" for neither God nor Christ are ever symbolised by *a woman*, but the Church always is: a "virgin," the "bride," etc.

The prodigal had tasted the bread of the father's house, and knew the plentiful supply; but he did not know the fulness of blessing, till he had tasted *restoring* grace. Then he knew, not only relationship, but divine righteousness, "the *best* robe," etc. The elder brother is a thorough sample of Pharisaism among saints. He had no idea of what was becoming in his Father, as the "God of *all* grace." And the Father's grace is shown to *him*, for he says, going out to him, "Son, thou art *ever with me*,"—thou hast not wandered from the house—"and *all that I have is thine*." What a foolish thought, that his Father never gave him "*a kid*,"—"all that I have is *thine*;" but here was the point, "it was *meet* that we should be glad," etc. And this is just where saints need instruction now; for, like the elder brother, they are very slow in entering into God's joy in "grace." Paul had to write to the Corinthians to restore the excommunicated person who was sorry for his sin, "lest Satan should get an advantage." Would that we could say "we are *not* ignorant of his devices" (see 2 Cor. ii. 7—11). Many a poor sheep has not only not been "sought after," in this cloudy and dark day; but when it has run bleating to the threshold, as it were, it has been hunted off. This is not exhibiting God. It is making the table *ours* instead of *the Lord's*.

Were I asked for an Old Testament instance of *restoring* grace, I should point to David; if asked for a New Testament one, I should point to Peter.

B.

"I weary? Oh no! I am unwearied: it is the world all around me that is weary—not I." So said one. "A weary one, *indeed*, I am," said another; "but one in whose soul hope ever lives." One spirit, but two different experiences.

No. VIII.

REMARKS ON REVELATION; INSPIRATION;
SCRIPTURE; THE INFALLIBILITY OF SCRIPTURE
AS WRITTEN, ETC.

I HAVE thought that a few remarks upon these subjects might, at the present moment, tend to help some to discern *things that differ*. In conscious weakness (such, indeed, as none but the God of all grace could stoop to use and own), I make the attempt.

I.—REVELATION.

By revelation, so far as man is concerned, I understand the uncovering before man of truth which man is capable of recognising, but which he could never have attained to the knowledge of by his natural faculties as man. The nature of that which is thus made known (whether things past, present, or to come,—persons or doctrines, etc.), matters not; neither, as we shall see, does *the mode* in which the knowledge is communicated, etc., enter into the definition of *revelation*.^a

^a The Jews used to speak of four degrees in divine communications :—1st. Prophecy ; 2ndly. The Holy Spirit ; 3rdly. The Urim and Thummim ; and, 4thly. A voice from heaven. The first two of these may, at first sight, seem to be identical. But while both of them may flow from within man through the Holy Spirit, there is this important difference between the two ; the former are what flow forth before men, whether teaching or prediction. The Spirit may reveal in a man that which was not to go beyond himself as before God. It might not be understood, as a tongue, etc. (1 Cor. xiv. 6, 28) ; it might be as the seven thunders which uttered their voices (Rev. x. 4), or (as 2 Cor. xii. 2—4) things which were blessing to the individual, but not to be reported. The great work of the prophets of old was preaching ; and their labour was, by no means, confined to *predicting*. The prophets of the New Testament time wrote the Scriptures.

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It must be clear to any simple mind, that a man does not, and cannot, *intuitively* know what preceded His existence here on earth, or what will follow after the moment actually present. And man—Adam in the garden of Eden—could not know intuitively, of the creation of that part of the world which preceded his own existence, as the account of it is given to us in Scripture (Gen. i. 1—26). If Adam knew it at all, it was by a divine communication. So, again, as to the revelation given to John in Patmos. The great mass of the things revealed were lying in the distant future. It was only by a divine communication, that John could know them.

Now, *how* Moses learnt about the creation of the world we know not. Were it through a vision, in which the scenes were made to pass before him; or were it by tradition, handed down to him from Adam, of what God revealed to him; or were it by thoughts breathed into him by God, through a “Thus saith the Lord,” as in Old Testament times; or were it that God told Moses himself about it, as one man speaketh face to face with a friend—as, indeed, He did communicate to Moses all about the tabernacle, etc., when on the mount—the *mode* of communication matters not; the *how* the revelation was made to Moses, who wrote the account of it for us, this is not *the* important thing. Again, John, in the Apocalypse, learnt by *seeing* and *hearing*, and so far, the mode of the revelation being made to him was unlike the mode in which the Spirit of the Lord came upon a Balaam, a Saul, an Isaiah, etc., with a “Thus saith the Lord.” Balaam and Saul had, though they were wicked men, a flow of truth *breathed through* them, of truth which no mere man could ever have attained to as mere man. It was a divine^b communication. Now, the *mode* of communication to Moses in the Mount, and to David (as to the patterns of the tabernacle, the temple, etc.) were of

^b 1 Pet. i. 10—12, shews us, that the divine communication of truth to man was quite distinct, in Old Testament times, at least, from the communication of intelligence in that truth.

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other kinds^c altogether from a "Thus saith the Lord." Again, the four evangelists saw and heard all that they wrote, apparently, as following their Master upon earth, and conversant with others that did so likewise. Much of what they wrote about was perfect as a revelation. They had seen and heard; "God manifest in the flesh, full of grace and truth." They had, as men in the body, had the Christ of God as their Leader and Master. He was the revelation of God in the highest sense of the term. But then there were a number of outside facts which were not in themselves revelations (Acts i. 21, 22), which, also, they had to write about.

Enough has been said to shew what revelation is. And, if we consider the person of our blessed Lord while upon earth, we shall see how the purest, fullest, most perfect revelation, even that of God himself in His Son (Heb. i. 1), can exist and be before man in open display quite independently of *inspiration*, or of sacred *scripture*. No man hath seen God at any time. "The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, *He hath declared*^d *Him* (John i. 18; 1 John i. 1, 2).

INSPIRATION.

We have seen, then, that there may be revelation without inspiration. The blessed Lord Jesus was in His own person, as God manifest in the flesh, a pure revelation of *the* truth. Yet because of his very fulness—in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily—we could not say he was inspired. To say so, would be an injurious limitation to His glory; for He was not one merely breathed into; but the One who could breathe upon and into man. Of whom but Himself alone could it have been written, "Then said He to them again, Peace be unto you; as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and

^c God shewed Moses the patterns (Ex. xxv. 9, 40; Num. viii. 4); David gave Solomon "the pattern of all that he had by the Spirit" (1 Ch. xxviii. 12). "All the Lord made me to understand in writing by his hand upon me, all the works of this pattern" (19).

^d The word here is not "revealed" but "declared," ἐξηγέομαι.

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saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained" (John xx. 21—23). Again, I think it may fairly be said, that inspiration is *based upon* revelation; so that wherever there is inspiration, there, of necessity, revelation is presupposed. There may be, as was shewn before, revelation independently of inspiration; but there is never inspiration independent of revelation.

When Paul wrote (2 Tim. iii. 16), All *scripture* is (*θεοπνευστος*) *given-by-inspiration-of-God* (God-inspired; literally, breathed of God), he gave us, from God Himself, a very solemn peculiarity of the scriptures. He is speaking of the *scriptures*, *they* are God-breathed. The essential distinctive quality "*θεοπνευστος*" attaches there to *scripture*; and so is distinguishable from what is written in 2 Peter i. 21, "The prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but *holy* MEN of God SPAKE as they were moved (carried) by the Holy Ghost." For here—in a retrospective view taken of prophecy, and prophecy as *spoken* in olden times to Israel—he speaks of the inspiration of the *speaker*. In the other passages (2 Tim. iii. 16) it is said *the scripture*—all scripture—is inspired. The *words* of a man *God-breathed*, and the *writings* of a man God-breathed, are very distinguishable. To the faith of an individual *believer*, Scripture is much more; for, as used by the Spirit of God, it is, as the breath of God; giving life, nourishment, defence, etc., all *instrumentally* that faith needs (2 Tim. iii. 17). I notice this, here, because it is important, and is connected with inspiration, not in the action of inspiring, but in *an effect* which is of *immeasurable* importance to man. There is a standard measure of truth; standard and touchstone which was given by inspiration, in the highest, and, as I believe, purest sense; there is one Book, the writing of which, and the book as written, is inspiration, and inspiration without alloy. The movement, by the Holy Ghost, of holy men, who spake, was, in itself, both divine and pure; but *over and beyond this*—grace gave A BOOK which contained all that truth which God saw

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was instrumentally needful for His glory—Satan's defeat, and man's blessing.

Holy men of old, and, in later times, Peter and Paul, were, at times, inspired to say things which were inspired ; but, also ! they were able and did say, and do, things at times, which were not inspired.^e I have to judge Peter and Paul's conduct in every way by their doctrine as *written*. Holy men of God were divinely moved to write a divinely inspired record of Satan's antagonistic conduct to the Gospel ; of man's treacherous dealing against God ; and of God's grace, works, and purpose. For the thing written about is not necessarily of God, because the writer is inspired, and his writing inspired too. A record may be pure inspiration ; it may be through a movement of inspiration in a man, who is, however, a man of like passions as ourselves ; and the subject treated of may be of that which is most antagonistic to God, as the world, the flesh, and Satan. All, alas ! all this we wanted.

All Scripture is inspired of God. If God had been pleased to write the Bible, as He wrote the two tables which Moses brake, there could have been no doubt that " God's book " would have been a correct name for it, just as " God's tables " was a correct name for the two tables of the Law (Ex. xxxii. 15, 16). The tables themselves and the writing were both God's in this case. These were they which Moses brake (Ex. xxxiv. 1). But the second edition of the tables of the Law was not less God's when written, and had not less authority and weight than had the first. They were prepared by Moses, but written upon by God (Ex. xxxiv. 1 ; Deut. x. 1—4). They were a divinely accredited transcript of

^e Gracious as the gift of prophets was, it called for great exercise of soul on the hearers' part ; for there were false prophets also, and man might add to what the Lord gave to the prophet (Deut. xiii. 1—5 ; xviii. 19—22 ; 1 Kings xiii. 18 ; Mat. vii. 15). But Scripture gave the measure in a fixed permanent form. The inspiration was fixed, and in man's language, and remained. The Lord called His people to judge who were true prophets, and what was prophecy. The Scripture is the standard by which God judges man ; and that makes all the difference.

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the Divine mind upon the subject then in hand, as much as were the first.

Just so, though God did not write with His own finger the Bible, the book was God's book; the writing was divinely-breathed, and it was thus a divinely accredited transcript of the Divine mind upon the subject in hand, quite as much so as if His own finger had traced it on a rock, and that rock was before us.

It is clear, both as to a Moses and a Paul, that they were fallible men; it is clear, too, that they did speak at times unadvisedly with their lips: but God not only revealed to them thoughts of His own, but also inspired them to write; and, not only that, but inspired the writing. I rest on this, because I find so few mark the importance of the differences alluded to. I could not say of a Moses or of a Paul, that he was the perfect transcript of one single truth in God (*that* can be said only of Him, the Son of Man, who is *the* truth); but of Scripture, given by a Paul or a Moses, I can say, This is as much and as purely the transcript of the Divine mind, as if the finger of God had written it.^f

If God thus wrote, through the instrumentality of man, about Satan, or the world, or man, the record is divine: the subjects treated of might be (as I said, and as we wanted God's explanation of) such as were in violent opposition, as Satan, or a system in which man can intoxicate himself with the pleasures of sin, which are but for a season (and so sin away the day of grace), as the world, or man, in his imbecility, vibrating between opposite influences, yet, like a stone rolled down a hill or cast into a pit, always descending, as man's flesh: subjects in insubjection to God, yet of which He has given a divine exposition in the past, present and future of their histories.

As we have seen, revelation may be without any in-

^f A crowd of questions may here enter, as to the difference of *the modes* of the Spirit in inditing infallible truth through a fallible medium; but they really have nothing to do with *the* question at issue, viz. *Is a divinely inspired writing a faithful transcript of the divine mind*, so far as it goes; and, therefore, I leave them for the present.

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spiration: also, as in the case of a Balaam and an Agabus, it might be through inspiration. The prophetic Spirit might move in a man, and make revelations through him. There is an interesting point to be noticed, and that is, the action of the Spirit in inspiration, when gleaning up for writing revelations which had been made otherwise than by inspiration. It is illustrated in the four gospels, as much as in a Moses, an Ezra, etc. The Spirit brought to the memory of each evangelist the very things which he, in particular, was to record; when Truth, which had been revealed to sight and hearing, was brought *afresh* by the Spirit to the mind of each evangelist who *had to write it*—this bringing to mind was inspiration (John xiv. 26; xv. 26, 27; xvi. 8—11, 13—15, 25). It is often quite separable from revelation, as in the historic facts recorded in the four gospels. But then, as I have urged before, there is another thing here besides that Divine recalling to mind of past revelations and facts, as doubtless Peter had when preaching at Pentecost,—and that is, such a full power put forth, somehow or the other, as to enable the writer to pen down that which contains *nothing but* what God would have inscribed, and yet contains *all that* infallibly present.

The distinction, then, between revelation, inspiration, and scripture, with its infallibility, is evident. A remark or two more on this part of our subject may suffice. One has said, "All scripture, then, is given by inspiration of God. Yet some scripture, but by no means all, is given by revelation of God."

If I look at Peter—a godly Jew, fearing God, and listening, perhaps, like Timothy, to Jewish scripture from childhood; inquiring about Messiah, and then following Him as a disciple—he saw and heard the blessed Master and, all *the circumstances* through which they passed.

If I turn from Peter's case to Paul's, what a difference meets me. He had been a bitter persecutor, ignorant of God, and a blasphemer of Christ—but all was revealed directly to him by Christ in ascension-glory. Then if I think of myself—with nothing but God and the word

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of His grace: no sight, no hearing of the Lord as a man upon earth; no open vision, no fresh revelation; but the means of all my blessing found in God and the word of His grace—I see no difficulty in tracing vast differences in the modes of God's dealing—differences, too, which throw light upon the distinctions of revelation, inspiration, and the characteristic of the word of the Lord, in the light in which we have looked at it.

I would now turn to consider my subject in a somewhat different connection.

There are several deeply important purposes connected with the revealed mind of God. 1st. The revelation of it was and is the vindication of the divine glory in a world of sin; 2ndly, the committing of the oracles of God to a people, however formed upon earth, constituted an intelligible ground of responsibility; 3rdly, the application by divine power of His word, is His means of connecting man with Him in blessing for time and for eternity.

1st. By the word of the Lord not only were the heavens made, but, it was by the word of the Lord that Adam's charter of blessing was fixed, and that the continuance of blessing was made to hinge upon his continued subjection and obedience to that *word* so spoken. But, while the higher parts of the testimony were thus fixed by *the word* of the Lord, there was also that—a creation all around—which rendered a testimony to Him in His eternal power and God-head, in the very works which He had previously called into being. When, however, sin had entered through man's disobedience, the creation-testimony did not suffice any longer. It would not have been *per se*, even in its best estate, a sufficient testimony for God Himself when dealing with sinners; and man's rebellion against God left the creation, in a measure, under the power of one who was an enemy; and the conscience of man, when estranged from God, could find no answer in creation to the new need which sin had created. There was, in truth, nothing the voice of which could meet the sinner's need. When God announced that the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent, there was intro-

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duced in this word that which vindicated God fully in His new work, and in the circumstances. It had a testimony, too, in it, before principalities and powers, which spake to man of that purpose of God in redemption, which alone could meet the sinner's need. It was a word spoken by God and spoken to the serpent, though in the presence of man, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel (Gen. iii. 15).

Now this was the germ of that which is the perfect vindication of God and Godhead under the new circumstances, both in itself and in the way of putting it forth; it contained everything that man needed as to his position and self; and it presented that which could give blessing. That God could pass by what had just occurred, was impossible. Creation told of His eternal power and Godhead; His truthfulness was pledged by the word of warning which He had spoken to Adam. He might have vindicated Himself against this new inroad of His adversary the devil, by putting forth destroying power. But He was God; and He drew His motives from within Himself. He had plans and counsels of displaying the exceeding riches of His grace, which would not have been answered by destroying judgments: He took up the question as one of controversy with Satan. Man had lost, thrown up, the first place in that scene—yielded it to Satan. The seed of the woman whom Satan had beguiled should bruise the serpent's head.

Here was a vindication of Himself before all intelligences. Satan, the destroyer and the liar, should find the destruction of his power and the vanity of his own lie, through a feeble one whom he had betrayed to destruction by a lie, and should himself work out his own destruction. The Paradise made to display the eternal power of Godhead in a creation placed by the Word of God under Adam, but which Adam had betrayed, Satan should he allowed to turn to a trap and a snare in which to cage himself. Man had sunk to a place of zero. He must now choose between God and Satan. If he listened to

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self and circumstances, he would go on under Satan, and having made choice of him, would share his fate. If he would, even amid inward and outward ruin, receive and own *the Word* of God, he would find himself rescued from Satan, and identified with God in blessing. Such was the divine plan. But as he had lost all through neglecting God's warning, man could alone be rescued from his lost estate by the God, who, in his hearing, had declared that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head, and by honouring that Word. This declaring things to come—the end from the beginning—is much rested upon in Isaiah (as in ch. xl. xli. xlii. xliii.) as an indisputable mark of divine glory. And if we think of Adam and Eve in Eden, ruined in themselves, under Satan, and of the Lord having then and there dropped a word which was to contain a seven thousand years' history of man upon earth, and then to issue in a new heaven and a new earth; and Satan bruised in the lake prepared for him and his angels, we can well see the propriety of this setting forth of God's consciousness of the worth of His Word, and of His determination that man should bow to it. As to the handing down of the Word of God, doubtless it was handed down from Adam to Moses. But the *writing* of that which had preceded, so far as God was pleased to have it put on record, was quite a new thing, and involved inspiration.

2nd. It was not done, so far as we know, until Israel was owned of God as a people, who were the centre of His governmental plans for the earth. They were made the keepers of the Oracles of God. The deposit to them referred to in Rom. iii. 1, 2, "What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the Oracles of God," is one thing. The consequence of this, in certain dispensational dealings of God with them (as referred to in Rom. xi.) is another. Thus, the nation Israel became witnesses of God upon earth (Isa. xliii. 9, 10, 12; xliv. 8). The responsibility *in time* is quite separable from the question of the bearing of truth upon eternity. This is true in the Old Testament times, and may be proved in various ways.

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“Hear this word that the LORD hath spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt, saying, You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities” (Amos iii. 1, 2). [see also Isaiah i.; Balaam, Num. xxii. xxiv. and Jer. and Ezek.]. So, also, Paul separated between a dispensation of the Gospel, having been committed to him (1 Cor. ix. 17; Ephes. iii. 2), and his own faithfulness (1 Cor. ix. 27), and broadly states that his ministry had an end, independent of the kind of effect which it took upon the souls of his hearers (2 Cor. ii. 14—17): “Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of His knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: to the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things? For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ.” This is, in principle, the same as Ezek. ii. 5: “And they, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear (for they are a rebellious house), yet shall know that there hath been a prophet among them.” This responsibility exists now—little thought of as it is. There is among men a class which has had the Oracles of God committed to it; and those oracles so committed to the nominal church, constitute a responsibility: a responsibility which will be distinctly judged (Rev. xxii. 11—15).

3rd. The application, in divine power, of the Word of God, or His means of connecting man with Him in blessing for time and for eternity.

It will be seen, that I make a distinction between revelation, inspiration, and infallibility. I do so, because they differ in themselves. I must now call attention to another difference. We may not forget that the connections of a truth, often modify, qualify, and affect its force. For instance, if I speak of the Bible, I say of it, absolutely and without qualification: “A revelation from God; a divinely inspired book: infallibly perfect.”

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If I knew *how* to express, more strongly than I have thus done, the absolute perfection of Scripture as a standard of truth; that the Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible is owned by me as alone the standard of truth; that it contains revelations of things, such as none but God could make; that it was (in the writing of it) fully and divine inspired, and, therefore, infallibly perfect; I say, if I knew *how* to express myself more strongly on these matters than I have done, I would gladly do it. But if I have to speak of myself as a man, I cannot forget that a perfect standard of truth, while it is enough to vindicate God, and to condemn men, and every man, is not enough to save a soul; not enough in itself and without the Spirit's blessing, to make me now a servant of God, and hereafter a possessor of glory. And again, if I speak of myself as a saint, I am not, because I cannot apply the terms Revelation, Inspiration, and Infallibility to myself, in the same way as I can apply them to Scripture, I am not, I say, to deny that I am *taught of God*; have an unction from the Holy One, whereby I know all things; that I am dependent upon the inbreathing of the Spirit, and upon his revelations of truth to my soul. True: in all these actings toward me and towards His saints, He who acts is divinely perfect, for the Holy Ghost is God; and He is subserving the present glory of Christ in so acting in me. *But* I am an earthen vessel, with a law of sin and death in me, and much dross. The Teacher is a living^b Teacher, and is infallibly perfect; and, having given a standard of truth, He applies such parts of it to my soul as grace appoints. Am

^b The Holy Ghost as Comforter, or Paraclete, was to take, and did take, toward the Lord's *heavenly* people, the place of guardian of them and of God's interests in them, which Jesus had held toward his disciples in the days of his humiliation (John xiv. 16). As everything, when Israel was in the wilderness, turned upon the presence of the pillar of cloud and fire, so everything in the disciples' history turned upon the presence of Jesus; and now, to the heavenly people, it turns upon the presence of the Holy Ghost; witness down here of the ascension-glories of the Lord Jesus in Heaven; to which we may add, in each case, "and the intelligent association of the people with their centre and guide."

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I infallible then? No. An Infallible Teacher may teach infallibly that which a fallible pupil may learn but defectively. There is the revelation of *the truth* in itself as a whole to a soul, by the Spirit, as giving *life* through the spiritual knowledge of the Lord Jesus. This is a thing done *once* and at once; and there is the development, in detail, of the truth in the affections, conscience, and understanding of the believer. In teaching the saved child, the Infallible Teacher may, in grace, only breathe in parts of truth at a time; and the most fallible disciple may not receive the part so presented to him, perhaps, without adding on something of his own to it, or dropping some portion. But to see the infallibility of the Teacher, His perfect power to breathe in, and His perfect power to reveal fully and perfectly, and in every detail, to such an one as I am—all truth—you must wait a little. God has His own ways of acting. He will not, on the one hand, let you condemn me; because, having taken me up in grace, He has reserved the full expression of what His apprehension of me is, until the Lord Jesus comes; nor, on the other, will He allow me either to accredit myself with having wrought that which He has wrought in me, or to entertain the shadow of a doubt as though His promise were not as sure of fulfilment as it is of having been spoken and written.

The perfection of Revelation, Inspiration, and Infallibility of God's *standard* (among men) *of truth* in the Scriptures is, to any simple mind, easily seen to be quite distinct from the glory of the Holy Ghost as an infallible Teacher, Revealer, and Inspirer of truth to the believer. And pitiful it is to find, that, while they who are babes in Christ find no difficulty, some that count themselves wise, see no alternative for them but to decide that the saints are either infallible in their views, and enjoyers of new revelations, and perfectly inspired, or can have no moral spiritual certainty in their souls, because of their being still in bodies of sin and death. There is but one thing more sad, and *that* is the ecclesiastical fallacy of supposing that both experiences exist. "I, the infallible teacher, and my *fellows*, the taught, dependent upon me." What is man!! Dead in trespasses and sins (Eph. ii. 1); a

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child of wrath (ver. 3); having the devil for his father (John viii. 38—44) and god (2 Cor. iv. 4); at enmity with God (Col. i. 21): and fully under the power of the world, the flesh and the devil, was Saul of Tarsus when grace picked him up. And, truly, in this case Christ was found of one that sought Him not; was made manifest to one that enquired not after Him (Rom. x. 20). Yea, more; there was aggressiveness in love on the part of Christ, towards this poor lost one (see Acts ix.)

Nothing could meet the needs of the case, save the free gift of a new life; eternal life in the Son (Col. iii. 3); free pardon (Eph. i. 7); and acceptance in the Beloved (Eph. i. 6.); the adoption of children (ver. 5.); translation into the Kingdom of God's dear Son (Col. i. 13.); the spirit of adoption, crying, Abba, Father (Rom. viii. 15), sent into his heart (Gal. iv. 6), as a token of the relationship which faith in the Son involved (Gal. iii. and iv.) There is nothing homogenous between God and Satan, or between the state of a child of wrath and that of an adopted son of God. No grace of congruity between a Saul of Tarsus and a Paul. Contrast—well and strongly defined—and not similarity—marks the opposite extremes. When I look at a Saul of Tarsus, the bitter persecutor and destroyer of the faith, and then look at Paul, as he shall be hereafter in glory, most highly owned and blessed, in the glory given by God to Paul's Master, "mercy, from first to last," is all that I can think or say of the golden cord and the divine conduct, that passed him from one position and state to the other.

To originate life, to sustain and uphold life (in any form of it), is not work for a creature, however highly blessed. But to give fellowship with the eternal life that is in the Son of God; to quicken one who was dead in trespasses and sins, is clearly a work pertaining to Him alone, who is the Second Adam, life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. xv. 45). And this life, the source of which He, Himself, is (Col. i., ii., iii.) the communicator of which He is (John iv. 14)—the divine nature communicated (2 Pet. i. 4)—is a blessing of such a nature, that it is debtor in nothing to the party to whom it is given; and, when given, owes its sustainment, preservation, and

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guidance, entirely to God. This, as we shall see, does not prevent God from subjugating all that was in the man to the new nature; nor His using certain things which were in the man for His own glory. Let us not be unstable and unlearned, and wrest scripture to our own destruction: for some, because God dwells and works in man, would accredit the flesh and themselves thereby; so putting self above God and His grace, and that to their own dishonour: for He will not give His glory to another.

The verse, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit (John iii. 6)," proves that the blessed Lord owned not only two sources of being, "flesh," and "spirit;" but also two channels of wisdom, energy, and purpose.

I would now look (first), at the birthright portion of an individual so blessed; and, then (secondly), at his place in the body; and (thirdly, and) lastly, at the bearing of the teacher.

The doctrine of the Lord (Matt. vi. 16—34) teaches us that the purpose of the heart decides its state and its condition. If the glory of God, and subjection to His will, is the purpose of my heart—light, with all its attendant blessings, is mine. If, on the other hand, my inward purpose is to serve myself in any way, then darkness, and want of blessing, is mine. This flows out of the reality of Divine glory: GOD cannot deny Himself. If any have found grace to seek to subserve His pleasure, they hold their proper position as creatures, and they will find that He will not deny Himself. If any man will do God's will he shall know as to the doctrine. How many a soul has found a buoy in that declaration, as well as a just ground of humiliation as to itself, and a complete uncovering of the awfulness of its past voluntary insubjection to God. But, when so exercised, it learns that "this is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent." (John vi. 29.)

"For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which

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hath sent him. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life" (John v. 22—24).

Paul's word (Gal. iii. 26.) settles summarily both the principle on which we are blessed, and the character of the blessing: "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." The principle is *faith-wise*; the position into which we are brought is, that of being *children of God*. This is authoritative, and obliges us to judge all our doubts and fears as being dishonouring to God [Rom. iii. 4, Heb. vi. 18—20], and as proofs of the contrast between us and Christ. All blessing is ours already in Him; and are we too much occupied with our own feelings to think about *Him*? Nay; there is to the ruined, rest in Him. In Him, there is, to faith, Divine certainty of salvation for the lost. So also as to the blessing which they have as children, "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (Gal. iv. 6). The cry of "Abba" comes, even before they know the truth which justifies to their understandings its being addressed by them to God? Whence comes it? The Spirit in them is the spirit of adoption (Rom. viii. 16), and they are all taught of God (John vi. 45). They have, as babes among the children of God, an unction from the Holy One, that they may know all things (1 John ii. 20), and the Spirit has his own thoughts and modes of deduction (Rom. viii. 17): "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together."

2ndly. The believer's place in the body.

Life and blessing are my own: life and blessing too which set me apart in isolate Nazariteship to God, even the Father; to Christ who is the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, the Paraclete; and this, ere ever I have to do with another man. And more than that, the whole flow of my life and service is as an individual before God. I cannot, for a brother's sake, or for a fellow ser-

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vant's sake, forget whose I am and whom I serve. In saying this, I am not losing sight of the Father's heart being upon all His children ; or of Christ being Head of the Body His Church ; or of the truth of the descent of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost making the church an habitation of God, through the Spirit, and displaying the union of the members in one body. Not so ; but I am guarding against a very common abuse of these precious truths, by the which the individual acts towards the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, *according* to the low sunken state of those around Him, instead of acting towards his associates and before the world, according to that which is true in Christ in God ; and true to my heart, at least if I have faith, through the Holy Ghost.

I now cite a few verses, as showing the individual dealing of Christ with the saved people, and the revelation to them of a Father's love.

Matt. x. 19, 20: "But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what you shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you."

John xiv. 19—23: "Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: 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. He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world? Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."

Eph. v. 18, 19: "And 'be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess ; but be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord."

1 Thess. iv. 9: "But as touching brotherly love ye

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need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another."

I must now notice a jealousy which exists in some minds against the use of the word "*revelation*," in one sense and connection in which it certainly *is* used in scripture. Now, clearly all jealousy against what is scriptural, is prejudice and prejudicial, and flows from defective light and knowledge; it is prejudicial to the party under it, and leaves the soul exposed to error. In a day like the present, when the lightness and irreverent levity of man's self-sufficiency has impugned the reality of God's having written a book, which is a revelation—one can quite understand how a reaction has been produced in an opposite direction to that of the current of avowed infidelity; so that I attribute no wrongness of intention; yet, as a matter of fact, Christian men are often jealous of one scriptural use of the word *reveal*, and by their jealousy prepare fresh weapons for the enemy's hand against themselves and others.

My statement, then, is this: not only did God by revelation bring out truth, and place it by inspiration in the Bible, which truth man could never have guessed at without revelation—and this in vindication of Himself, and for the condemnation of man—whether men will hear or whether they will forbear—but, *also*, if the individual is to be blessed, God has *to reveal* the truth to the soul of the individual believer. For man (and much more—fallen man) is not competent to take to himself, to understand, and to appropriate, even the most palpable, most distinct, truth which God has disclosed. But I will give some of the texts.

They are texts which I present to the simple reader, and leave them with him before the Lord, with the single remark, that they seem to me to prove that the use of the words "*revelation*," "*reveal*," etc., is not in scripture limited to God's bringing *out*, or setting *forth*, truth which could not otherwise have been known—but is extended also to the action of Christ, or of the Spirit of Christ, in pouring *into* individual souls truth which had been divinely revealed previously.

Matt. xi. 25, 27: "At that time Jesus answered and

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said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." (Com. Luke x. 22, etc.)

Phil. iii. 14, 15: "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you."

Matt. xvi. 17: "And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven."

Eph. i. 15—17: "Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him."

Gal. i. 15, 16: "But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood."

1 Cor. xiv. 30: "If anything be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace." (See also 1 Cor. ii. 20.)

The reader may further examine for himself, the difference between, 1st, "The shining *out from* God, of truth;" and 2nd, "Its shining *in to* many hearts, and sometimes *out again* therefrom."^c (Luke x. 22; xvii. 30; Rom. i. 17, 18; viii. 18, 19.; Eph. iii. 5).

3rdly. The teacher given of God.

There is, in all true teaching, a present action of the

^c The question is not one of "experience" as men speak, but of the faithfulness of the Spirit of God, in giving power to the Word when man has found grace to turn his back to self, and set his face to seek God. It is this, and no more than this, that I insist upon; but less would not suffice for our blessing.

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Holy Ghost *in the teacher* himself. I say not discernible to him; but still it is there; for, if it be not there, then the energy that is there, is that which is born of the flesh, and is flesh; and human intellect is left to use known Scripture, and the gift of aptitude to talk.^d

It has been quietly assumed by some, that the truth of God is a theory which is committed to man's care to hold, and to the teacher's intellect only to communicate. Because, in natural things, a man cannot give you what he does not possess, or teach that which he does not know, I cannot assume this to be true in divine things. I admit that I could not give the first principles of Hebrew grammar, and arithmetic, etc., unless I possessed them and knew them thoroughly myself. But is this true as to divine things? I say No: a young believer, whose heart and conscience has been reached by truth, through the Spirit of all grace, will often (if he does not go beyond his own experience, but, modestly, presents merely what himself has felt) be found to be a wise teacher. He cannot speak as a doctor; but he speaks of that which he has felt and known. Then, again, some of the best teaching that I ever heard was impromptu; the teacher learning in his chapter as he taught others. The Lord giving quite as much to him in teaching; yea, sometimes, more than to the taught, though all might get a portion. And, again, when I am taught, that which the teacher presents may blend itself with matter previously in my mind; matter which is altogether beyond the teacher's ken, or even standing, and which elicits truth new to me: truth which the teacher never thought of.

To degrade a teacher given of God to a mere com-

^d If it is necessary that I, as an individual believer, should be strengthened with might by the Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in my heart by faith, etc. (Eph. iii. 17); much more, if I am *a teacher* (and not being plenarily inspired as a writer of Scripture) must I have the holy Spirit's leading and guidance (iv. 14—16).

Ex. iii. 11—iv. 16; Jer. i. 6, 7; 1 Cor. ii. 3; x. 10, show with what weakness, and fear, and trembling, and (alas!) even guilty unbelief, the service of the most highly-endowed may be mixed.

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municator of mentally known truth, is not to honour God, or to exalt oneself as His servant.

God has His own way of making a standard of truth—set forth, in vindication of Himself and in warning to all, before all. But He never left that standard to accredit itself, nor His servants (prophets, apostles, or gifted men) to themselves in applying it.

“Paul may plant, Apollos water; it is God that giveth the increase” (1 Cor. iii. 6). “Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit” (Zech. iv. 6). Apollos—how was it that he came to listen to an Aquila and a Priscilla (Acts xviii. 26), disciples of Paul, as they were (ver. 2)—when he afterwards had no ear to hear Paul (1 Cor. xvi. 12)? I suppose, that Paul was not one whit behind the chiefest of the apostles; but he found, with all his knowledge, gifts, and faithfulness, that he could not breathe into any soul, either gospel for sinners or truth for saints. He had to be faithful; and God was honoured, and man’s wickedness was shown out, when he was faithful: for he was a sweet-smelling savour to God, both in them that are saved, and in them that perish. But the being a savour of life unto life; the building up, too, in the most holy faith, supposes *a present action of the Holy Ghost attending the word*, and this may not be ignored any more than the overruling and suggestion, by the Spirit, in the teacher.

NOTE ON INSPIRATION.

In English, the word *inspiration*, usually, and not incorrectly, drops from the lips and pens of common people, and of accurate scholars too, as meaning “a breathing into.”

The Church of England Prayer-book may fairly be quoted in this connection; viz., in proof of what both learned and unlearned mean by “inspiration.”

“Almighty God, unto whom all hearts be open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid; *cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of Thy Holy Spirit*, that we may perfectly love Thee, and worthily magnify Thy name, etc. *See the Collect in the Communion Service.*

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The idea is simple, and, as stated here, is scriptural: we need not only the written word, but, also, the inbreathing of the Holy Ghost, if love and holiness are to be perfected in us. Each believer is a temple of the Holy Ghost—truly: but who can read Rom. viii. 26 and 27, and Heb. iv. 12 and 13, without admitting that the Scripture theory is, that the Holy Ghost does form desires and prayers; and does apply a word to the heart in secret; and that this is not of man but of God. See, also, Phil. i. 19, “through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ;” also ii. 12, 13.

The address to God, as Inspirer and Hearer of prayer, is commonly known; and is not, that I am aware of, unscriptural.

Again, in Bunyan, we find this same idea. He describes one of his experiences, ere he found peace. A thought possessed his soul, which seemed breathed into him, concerning the Christ; the thought was “Sell Him, sell Him, sell Him, sell Him.” Which he endeavoured to outspcak, and speak down by the words: “Not for a thousand worlds, not for a thousand worlds, not for a thousand worlds.” But in vain; for the thought which Satan had breathed-in (it was a Satan-inspired thought) could not be smothered by Bunyan’s words. Satan’s spirit was stronger than his. And are not fiery darts often spoken of as Satan-inspired, breathed into us by Satan.

The damsel possessed with a spirit of divination (Acts xvi. 6) was Satan-inspired. So were the oracles of old. See also Acts v. 3; and 1 Cor vii. 5: 2 Cor. xi. 14; xii. 7; 2 Thess. ii. 9, etc., etc. And what is witchcraft (Gal. v. 20) as still practised in the dark corners of the earth?

What, again, in the better sense, but inbreathing from Christ, does Mat. x. 19, 20 refer to? And who, that is Christ’s does not know what it is, when “sometimes a light surprises the Christian on his road.” How, when heavy and cast down, some new thought will come like a breeze o’er his soul,—thought about Christ and heaven; and how, when fully set upon some coming action, a thought of danger and warning will come over him, which, in the end, proves to have been of God.

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There is nothing superstitious in trusting to GOD *and* the word of His grace. And it is not soundness of faith to despise impression and do violence to impulses *without first* judging them in God's presence by the word. If they are against His word, let them be despised.

I have no doubt that sober Christian men are quite correct in speaking of inspiration in the sense referred to, as a privilege of the believer; and yet, at the same time, dividing, as the intelligent do, between this and that fullest kind of divine inspiration, in which not only God breathes with the truth, but in which He adds quite ANOTHER THING; and that is infallible perfectness; so as to enable a prophet of old to say, and to say correctly, "Thus saith the Lord;" so as to enable a Stephen to be so full of faith and the Holy Ghost, when he was a-dying, that (as I suppose) all that he then said was not only divinely breathed into him, but divinely expressed by him. This is what people mean by *plenary* inspiration. All Scripture is God-inspired (2 Tim. iii. 16).

* * 2 Pet. i. 15—21 brings before us a variety of things connected with this same subject—

(1) Apostolic handing down (2) of teaching, (3) concerning a special revelation, (4) communicated in a most wonderful vision, (5) when Christ was on the Mount of Transfiguration, (6) according with a more sure word of written prophecy, which (7) came through a direct movement of the Holy Ghost as to the speaker.

2 Pet. i. 15—21: Moreover I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance. For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of His Majesty. For He received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with Him in the holy mount. We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

No. IX.

REMARKS, SUGGESTED BY THE ADDRESS
TO THE CHURCHES OF EPHESUS AND
SMYRNA.

Revelations ii.

THERE is a whole class of subjects, connected with that thread of truth that runs right through Scripture, which demands consideration from those who desire full light in reading the Apocalypse.

For instance, "He that holdeth the seven stars in His right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks" (Rev. ii. 1), would raise the question of—

1st. The connection between light and the means of displaying light.

In following this out practically and according to Scripture, we should have to look carefully at the one candlestick of the sanctuary (Ex. xxv. 31); at the ten candlesticks of the temple (1 Kings vii. 49; 2 Chron. iv. 7); at the one candlestick of Zech. iv. 2—14; at the seven candlesticks of the Apocalypse (Rev. i., ii., iii.); at the seven lamps of fire (Rev. iv. and v.); at the two candlesticks (Rev. xi. 4); and at the light and the means of displaying it of the golden crystal city (Rev. xxi., xxii. 5).

What was common to them all? What was distinctive and peculiar to each phase of the one common truth?

I may note here, the difference between three words, which is according to classical Greek, the Greek of the LXX, (speaking generally), and the Greek of the New Testament.

The words for *candlestick*, *candleflame*, and *lamps*, are three—*λυχνία* (*candlestick*) occurs twelve times in the New Testament, and is always rendered "candlestick"

(see Mat. v. 15; Mark iv. 21, etc.; Heb. ix. 2; Rev. i. 12, 13, 20; ii. 1, 5; xi. 4); *λυχνος* (*candle-flame*) occurs about fourteen times, and is always rendered "*candle*" or "*light*" (see Mat. v. 15; Rev. xviii. 23; xxi. 23; xxii. 5); *λαμπας*, *lamp* (Mat. xxv. 1, 3, 4, 7, 8; Rev. iv. 5; viii. 10). Again, that which in Rev. xxi. and xxii. would correspond to the *candlestick* as the means of upholding the *light*, would be the New Jerusalem herself. But the "*candle-flame*" is the Lamb; the *φως*, light diffusable (see, also, Rev. xviii. 23) is the glory of God (xxi. 23 and xxii. 5).

As connected with this subject, the word *φωστηρ*, light-giver (Phil. ii. 15; Rev. xxi. 11), may be compared with 2 Cor. iv. 4, 6. There is, at this present time, a *fountain* of full-bodied light (2 Cor.) which it diffuses; it has reflectors now down here (Phil. ii.), and will have them in perfection hereafter (Rev. xxi. 11).^a

Again, the connections of the word *αστηρ*, star, are of much interest.

Leaders in evil (Jude, ver. 13) are compared to *wandering stars*. See, also, Rev. viii. 10, "There fell a great star from heaven, burning, as it were, a lamp . . . and the name of the star is called Wormwood," etc.

And "I saw a *star* fall from heaven unto the earth; and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit. And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace," etc. (Rev. ix. 1).

So far as to what was evil. A star might be an evil ruler. And mark, here, the connection of the star with the lamp.

On the other hand, as to the seven churches, among which the Lord walked—the candlesticks rested on the

^a Thus we get, not only the lamp, but the candlestick, its light or flame, and the light diffused by it, etc., together with a very blessed thought of the connection between the enlightening given to us in Him, and our being light-givers to others, here and in eternity. The doctrine of a candlestick, or of the candlesticks, includes, of course, not only the formation and inauguration of the light-stand; but, also, the doctrine of their treatment when established, viz., the lighting, feeding, trimming, and caring for them when made and set in their places.

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earth. But the seven stars were His (iii. 1), and held in His right hand (ii. 1).

Himself, in one of His sweetest names, is "a star" (Rev. ii. 8, and xxii. 16). "The bright and morning star."

We read that God made the sun to rule the day; the moon to rule the night, the stars also. A created star (Mat. ii. 2, 7, 9, 10) ushered Himself into the world, and so waited on His grace, that it guided the Magi to the spot where He was.

Himself, ere day dawn, will appear to us that watch for him—harbinger of and guide to the place of full blessing.

The stars would seem to be almost (if not quite) always emblems of *government* (Rev. xii. 1), and that, too, during the night.

Surely, it is the grace of Him who has provided the New Jerusalem to be the light-bearing body (for the heavens, during the thousand years, while Jehovah-Shammah (Ez. xlvi.) shall be on earth; and then for heaven and earth), which alone has kept a record of the light between both man and Himself, throughout the history of man's eventful pilgrimage upon earth. But, secondly, another question might rise theoretically here, viz., "What is light?" It is, however, *in fact*, raised a few verses lower down, in our chapter, viz., in the promise, "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God" (ver. 7).

This passage leads us to two others, the contrasting of which together elicits, as is oft the case in Scripture, much new light.

"The tree of life, also, in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil" (Gen. ii. 9)—a part of Eden's fair scene, is one of these passages, and is obviously connected with the hope held out in the promise (ver. 7), a sort of counterpart, in God's paradise, to something which was in the paradise made for man. On the other hand, by way of contrast, that which was altogether prohibited in Eden, is conceded in this promise *to the overcomer*. But (1 John v. 4, 5), there

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is no means of overcoming but faith; no overcomer but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God.

This leads us, at once, to another verse (John i. 4) "In Him was life; and the life was the light of men," part of the glory of the Son of God. There are two ideas common to both these two passages (Gen. ii. 9, and John i. 4), which are pretty nearly these, "continuity of being," and "intelligence"; in other respects the difference between the two verses is infinite. God, who is a source that giveth unto all, is the Author of order, not of confusion, as saith Paul. He formed a scene, and placed a creature in it, in blessing, with a high measure of intelligence in that which was good; and continuance in that state hung (for his breath was in his nostrils, his life like a vapour, that passeth away, and he is gone) by the fiat of the Maker of all, upon ignorance of evil. This was man as a mere creature.

It gave occasion, however, alas! to one who had broken all order before, and was become a destroyer and a liar, to shew himself. And after he had done his worst, the Son of God, in whom is that life which has not only continuity in it, but the eternity and moral characteristics of God, came in with His light, which has the intelligence of discerning and judging the evil of all that is out of God's order, and is the revelation of a new and a divine system of light and life. The Lamb is commissioned to take away the sin of the world, and is the Son of God; He that baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.

This leads one naturally to the principles of Rev. ii. 7, "Eating of the tree of life in the midst of the paradise of God."

As to Eden itself, I notice that "the tree of life, in the midst of the garden," is named (Gen. ii. 9) *before* "the tree of knowledge of good and evil." Afterwards (ver. 17) the prohibition is merely as to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; and it is not until after man, neglecting the light which he had as a creature (viz. that obedience was his duty) had disordered his whole being, that he is judicially shut out from the tree of life, lest he should eat of it and live for ever (iii. 22, 24), in his then state of sinfulness.

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The connection of these two principles "Life" and "Light," runs right through Scripture, and on the correct application of them all blessing hangs.

With the fall (Gen. iii.) man lost all his intelligence as a creature of God, and forfeited, too, the life he had. His life was a forfeit, and the intelligence of good changed for the knowledge of good and evil.

The expression (John i.) "in Him was life" is to be noted. There was, *IN* Him the Logos, life. As the Logos, or Word, He was the intelligence of God, as well as the One through whom any partial expression of anything in God which He was pleased to make was made, as in creation, providence, economies, etc. But these were not the light, though they gave light to a certain extent, but they were not *in* Him. "*IN* Him was life." In Him was—not what could and would pass away, as the first creation, providence to a wicked world, economies, but what could not pass—life: eternal life. The entity and very being of Him was light. Wherever He was, the who and the what He was gave light. Creation speaks of eternal power and goodness; providence speaks of patient goodness amid rebellion throughout time. But neither of them express and present that which displays the divine character and being itself, or which throws out into full light the enormity of rebellion against him. Rebellion against infinite power and wisdom is madness, although He that has the power be ever so patient and good towards the rebel as a rebel; but rebellion against One that is merciful, compassionate, and full of pity, is base and shameful to the rebel. In His days of humiliation; when upon the cross; in the days between His resurrection and ascension; and, now ascended; wherever He, of whom we speak, is found personally present, there there is the Life which is the light of men.

The shortcoming of the light in creation and in providence is plainly seen; the former is enough to condemn a man in nature; and is constantly so spoken of, as in Rom. i., a man worships his own conceits, surrounded by a circle of testimony to the truth, that there is but one true God. Providence, on the other hand, is the patient goodness of God to a world of sinners, and has for its

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basis, the very fact that caused the destruction of the former heaven and earth, viz., man's incorrigible badness (comp. Gen. viii. 21, 22, and vi. 5, 6, 7).

In Eden, the seat of the life and of the light of intelligence was in man; so, also, the responsibility was in a fallible one, who was only a creature. The blessing was human, and the keeping of it trusted to man.

But *now*, the seat of life is in the Son of God, and so, also, the light shines down from Him; He who is infallible; Who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; the Creator of all, is now the Creator anew, Head and Source of a new creation (Rev. iii. 14), life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. xv. 45), Giver of the divine nature (2 Pet. i. 4), Planter, through the word of His grace, in poor sinners who believe, of an incorruptible seed (1 Peter ii. 23), for He is Redeemer as well as Creator (Eph. i. 10; Col. i. 20, 21). Opener He of wells of living water in the hearts of poor Samaritan women, of water that springs up into everlasting life (John iv.), giving forth, out of the belly, rivers of living water (John vii.)

What can be more exquisite than the Lord Jesus's conduct with the poor woman taken in the very act of adultery (John viii. 1—12)? What more precious to the soul of a poor sinner, of a saved saint, and of Him the Saviour, than that that scene should be the proper scene to introduce the announcement, "I am the *light* of the world" (ver. 13) Ah! what is light to a world which is in darkness, save Himself, in whom is eternal life, and who can give it freely to the poor sinner; who alone could say (John xi. 25, 26) "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." "For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom He will." "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life" (v. 21, 24. See, also, xvii. 3; 1 John i. 5; iv. 15, 16; v. 20).

Note that, in the letter to the church at Ephesus, we have that which corresponds to the two trees in the

garden of Eden. *The light of intelligence* in the address, and *the power of continuance* in the promise: viz., 1st., Christ, as the holder of the seven stars in His right hand, walking in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks; and, 2ndly., the Spirit promising to give to the overcomer to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God. 1st. The light of the testimony of finished redemption spread abroad; and, 2nd., the practical hearer of it to enter into God's joy in the Fountain of life.

These are the termini of the Christian race-course. Behind me is Christ; and I am in the light of His sympathy, risen from the grave, fruit of the finished redemption; that is, the terminus from which I start: the terminus or goal toward which I run is the scene of God's delight in Christ as the tree of life in the midst of His own garden of delights.

Am I in this position as a *mere man*; drawing my strength from myself; trusting to my own intelligence, and the life of the living soul, and the power of its continuance? If so, all will be failure; for it will be, after all, but the trial of man, which always ends in failure. But, thank God, it is NOT so: I have an ear to hear Christ's gift. And, in the power of that grace, I can say, that if the beginning and the ending of the course both tell of creature-failure, both, likewise, tell of how God, in redeeming love, can triumph in the midst of creature-failure.

Light; its connection with life; Christ the alone organon of eternal life to man; and that life, the light of men, we have already looked at. The Christ, life-giving Spirit—or the Organon of eternal life—is not, however, all we have to look at, because we have to ask “Who was this second Adam? Who was, personally, this Son of Man?” The Son of God became Son of Man. And that which the Son of Man displayed, was that which had been, and was true of Him as Son of God.

3rdly. In other words, that which has been under consideration, leads to the question of the connection of creation, providence, and redemption, with the revelation made by God of *Himself*, with his motives, thoughts,

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plans, and counsels therein. This would naturally divide itself into two parts, viz., redemption; 1st., in the gradual *historic* development of its various parts (used as the gradual development of it has been made, in time, for a testimony for God in government and in grace, before men, principalities and powers); and 2ndly. In the display of it when, being perfectly accomplished, it will fill heaven and earth with a fulness of God, that will force down into the pit below all that is not, in spirit, heart and principle, identified with God,—though the moulding of that which will then fill the heavens, will differ from the form and fashion of that which will then fill the earth. The Spirit, all-pervading, in these scenes, will be the power to make God all in all in heaven above and on earth beneath; but this will in nowise prevent the phase of the heavenly sphere, as a whole, telling out a tale fuller than the earth can tell out, and one of higher and more lofty themes too. When I read the address to Smyrna, as from Him that is “*The first and the last, and who became dead and lived,*” (v. 8); who encourages to be “faithful unto death [of the body], and I will give thee a crown of life” [in resurrection-glory]; and who, by the Spirit, promises to the overcomer, that he “shall not be hurt of the second death,”—I get much of this third question suggested to me.

“The First and the Last.” The mercy of the Lord (says David, Psalm ciii.) is from everlasting to everlasting. The eternity behind me is more difficult to realize than the eternity which is before me. For I, according to the eternal life which the anointed Son of Man has already communicated to me, have tasted mercy, and learnt, through grace, many of the rich provisions for the future, which revelation points out by the word, as forethoughts of God for His people. To trace the stream from its source outward, and study its goings, and the amazing benefits it confers all through the wilderness, until it comes to the rich land, its own land, is a pleasant study. But the source, the spring,—there it has been ere ever I was, there it is—who can follow it up, and who can search it out to perfection? I know, however, now, One—a man—a living man, upon the

throne of God and the Father. Revealer He of the Father; and in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. When I go forward into the history of the future—God's history—there, this same One, who is now upon the throne, is to be seen, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever! Inside of all that faith can realize as its own scene, is Himself the Centre of all; above all the wide universe this One is recognized as Head; and beyond all creation wide there He is. I look forward and see marks connected with Himself—and own Him as the last. And because I know Him as He is, and the future is connected with Him as He is, I can apprehend many, many a detail rich and glorious about it. But if in grace he became manifest in flesh so as to be able to say, He that hath seen me hath seen the Father also; and if all that He has been and is, as Son of Man, is the perfect presentation of God and the Father to us—this is only so, because He, as God, was manifest in the flesh; and ere ever He became manifest, so that man could look upon, handle, see Him: "He was with God and was God." I look back, then, and in so far as I rightly know, the only begotten Son of the Father, Him who came full of grace and truth, and who manifested the Father, so far can I apprehend something about Him, as "the first" in the highest thought which it presents. I say *the highest thought*, because "in all things," He has "the pre-eminence." He is first, and has the pre-eminence in every way. It must be so (Col. i. 15—19). He has the pre-eminence in many ways. Who but He could sit upon the Father's throne? Who, but He, as having divine glory, could be worshipped as Son of Man, as our Lord and our God? Who had the pre-eminence in sorrow? Whose sorrows were like unto His? Who will be anointed with oil of joy and gladness above His fellows, save Himself? In all things, in every way, the pre-eminence is surely His. And He can stand now MORE than *half* way across the gulf of time: individually He is altogether on the other side of the gulf: is He not to faith, too, on the other side of the gulf, and we in Him there? There He stands and speaks to a people who are passing through a measure of the experience of

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death and resurrection, through the deep floods of which He passed all alone. He speaks to them of His own strange mystery and experiences: He, the First and the Last (strange mystery, but true) became dead! and (then) lived! And He speaks to them of a crown of life being ready for those who will drop the body in faithfulness for His sake, and how Himself will be their shelter from the second death.

Oh, that we knew better how to see everything in His presence! Knew how to see ourselves (so little in ourselves) the care of such an one as He! Knew how to spread out our experiences of sorrow in His presence who suffered so much! Knew how to see time in the light of eternity; and Satan, the world, and the flesh, in contrast with the sphere in which Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, will fill all in heaven above, and in which faithfulness here unto death will win there the crown of life, and shelter from the second death.

As a practical word I would ask my reader, instead of murmuring to man when under trial and endeavouring to escape the cross, to turn to the Lord Jesus alive, as Son of Man in Heaven, and to enumerate to Him all the contrasts between what His sorrows were, with what ours are. And oh, how little will our own then seem!

FRAGMENTS.

1. To many I would especially commend, at the present moment, the study of the parable of the sower (Mat. xiii.).

The word detected and proved the hostile character of Satan (ver. 4, 19);

the shallowness of the human mind (ver. 5, 20);

the choking character of the world (ver. 7, 22);

as well as (blessed be God, for His unspeakable grace) that it was (ver. 8, 23), a life-giving, fruit-bearing seed in His own people.

2. The conversion of five thousand in a place would in nothing change the responsibility of a gathering of saints, to examine carefully the converts ere receiving them. For no excitement, as of a great and holy movement, can set aside responsibility, as to either the holiness of the House of God, or tender compassion toward the souls of men.

3. Every man's work will be tried of what sort it is: may piety, modesty and firmness increase and abound.

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N^o. X.

THE REVIVALS (SO-CALLED).

WHEN the Lord had, on the day of Pentecost, formed a new people for Himself, He not only added to the Church daily such as should be saved, but, as it was *His* people, He also displayed His own wisdom, and exercised His own grace, in the ways in which He governed, cared for, and enlarged, that people upon earth. His acts proclaimed His heavenly ways.

Our wisdom, as Christians, is to bring all our thoughts into the light of the Lord's presence, and there soberly to lay aside that which is not according to His word, and to take up that which is.

If my reader will open the Acts of the Apostles, and read it with attention, he will see, that not only did divine grace and heavenly power form a people for the Lord on the day of Pentecost, but that this people had peculiar marks upon them. These marks were especially theirs: 1st. The being gathered, through faith in the word about a crucified and earth-rejected Lord; 2nd. The presence among them and over them of the Holy Ghost.

They were a people clean outside of the world, debtors in nothing to the flesh, in direct conflict with Satan; and being such, they had heavenly stores and divine blessing as their portion. Present experiences, as *proper to them*, they had, so to speak, none. Full of faith and of the Holy Ghost; surely fed and cared for by God and Christ from on high; their whole to-morrow merged in the bright hope of their returning Lord; they were pilgrims and strangers here, because sons and heirs of God and joint-heirs together with Christ. If we follow a Peter, or a Paul, or a John, through his course, faith gave, through grace and the Spirit's power,

freshness of joy and bright confidence in God. The keeping up of this, amid all the wear and tear of the camp in the wilderness, and amid all the sorrows of the journey, etc., etc., was the mark of God's presence with His servants. As individuals, they waited on the Lord, and they were not made ashamed; they laboured in the harvest and gathered in; they knew that they were of the church *militant*, and they endured hardness as the good soldiers of Jesus Christ; not discouraged, when faith was put to the test, by persecution or coldness all around; they were steadily bright, as to the hope of their Lord's return. As an individual, too, each one of them would have vindicated the Lord as to all the sorrows and trials of the way. As gold ore for the crucible, so faith for the furnace. They knew, too, the need of the trials for their own individual profiting. God uses the sorrows of the way, as occasions for fresh displays of His own grace toward, and for the development of grace in, His servants.

His ways are all His own, and all are wonderful. In giving blessing, He gives it, not in such wise as to create independance of Him in the blest, but His blessing both supplies the vacuum which there was in nature, and creates new needs in grace. Thus, He formed a people: they are blessed in being so formed; blessed by separation from evil; blessed by the presence of Himself in blessing. But who can care for the *Lord's* people? Who can pretend to direct and govern the people of the living God? The formation of the people creates needs in grace. He has His own way in working, too. He creates a little germ first; then uses them that are in it to gather in more. Next, He meets the needs which Himself has created. He shows His mode of governing them. He shows His mode of caring and providing for them. His tender consideration gives them time for settling in, when He has wrought and gathered in, that His people may be established in the faith. Then, perhaps, He lets trouble come, to put to proof the tone and temper of their faith, and to purify it; and then He brings a time of rich ingathering, recruiting afresh for His Name's sake.

He is the living God ; and, as such, He orders all things, and the order of them; ingathering; establishment; trial of faith by persecution and heresies, etc.; fresh ingathering. All this is seen in the Acts, and He and His ways have never changed since. He knows not the shadow of a turn; is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

Now, forasmuch as we walk with God, the living God, and know Him and His ways, there may be, on our parts, a calm going along with Him in all these exercises; there need be no astonishment when He acts in one way or when He acts in the other. Each act is an act of God's, and all our times are in His hands. If we dwell in His secret, the sense of His presence will keep us from surprises, and also from attributing to ourselves, or one's own portion, in any of the Lord's work, that which would be throwing it and ourselves into a DISLOCATED POSITION, apart from Himself and His wonted actings.

This secret presence of the living God—retreat where all the beauties and glories of the Lamb, past, present, or to come, are seen—is the place where we should dwell; that there the teaching of the Holy Spirit, through the word, may be realised by us, and we be enabled to discern whence and whose are the sundry actings, which rise and surge around us.

I cannot doubt that differences of judgment among Christians tell much more about the difference of state and position in which they are, individually, at the time of forming their judgments, than of any variety or uncertainty in the truth before them. For, in fact, truth judges us; and our judgments contain, at least, the colouring medium of our own state and condition, and they tell it out. For, instance, how differently does a pious member of the Greek Church; a pious Roman-Catholic; a pious Protestant (whatever be his creed); and a simple, or a well-taught Christian, look upon the (so-called) Reformation. The thing they look at is one, and is past. The state, and condition, and position of each, leads to a different judgment upon it. A Protestant establishment, especially if connected with government, *practically*

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dispenses with the presence of God, as a living acting Person; even as much as it has, also, neutralized the keen edge of the written word, and the responsibility of man to be subject to it. The retrieval of the doctrine of justification by faith, will be its estimate of the benefits of the Reformation.

For a well-taught Christian's mind, would not the Reformation rather stand as the time when God showed Himself afresh as the living God, without whose presence and action His own written Standard of Truth (the Scriptures) was powerless among men, to be in blessing to them. The living God, the Justifier, is more than justification by faith. Take another instance:—The coming of the Lord, as thought of respectively in the apostles' days, by an ungodly Jew (as Saul of Tarsus); by a Gentile; by an apostle as Peter; or a Paul (blessed man!); by a babe, a young man, or a father in Christ; and, in the present day, by those to whom, amid surrounding darkness, the Lord has shown it *afresh*.

After thirteen hundred years (at least) of declension, on man's part, from the pristine blessing given at Pentecost, the Lord did begin (and that, also, according to one of His own ways, which were common to all the periods of his dealings with man on earth) to bestir Himself in vindication (not only of His own grace but) of his own *being* and existence, and also among the people who boasted of being His, but, like Israel of old, gloried in the things of the Lord, *so far forth*, and so far only, as they were distinctive honours to themselves. "The Sabbath, it distinguishes us from all the gentiles," was a thought which could go very well along with, yea, lead on to,—“Who is this fellow who talks of his Father working hitherto, and His working, and whose works are causing the fruits of Israel's sins to appear, that He may heal them? Away with such a maligner of us from the earth.” This was done repeatedly as to the Sabbath; and was not forgotten to be renewed as to the temple; the feast of tabernacles; the manna; the rock, etc., etc. That was a generation *that sought to take credit to itself* from what the Lord *had wrought, had given*. This cannot be done in the presence of a living God. For who will say to Him, when recognized as present:

“Not unto Thee, O Lord, not unto Thee, but unto us be the glory.” Unbelief may so act *outside* of His presence; but in His presence there is light.

Has the Lord revealed Himself to us as the living God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, sending down the Holy Ghost as the Guardian of His heavenly people in the wilderness? And have we not found that as He vindicated Himself in the days of Nehemiah, Ezra, Haggai, Zechariah, so now also hath He, from the days of the (so-called) Reformation been vindicating Himself. Salvation, not work-wise as of man, but faith-wise, as of Christ; a finished salvation in Christ; forgiveness through His blood; righteousness inseparable from His own acceptance on high; Himself coming to fetch His heavenly people home to His Father's house; the table spread in the wilderness as their rallying point; the personal presence of the Holy Ghost; God, the Care-taker and Governor of the people in the wilderness; their Purger and Trier; the one that recruits and enlarges their bounds, etc., etc. All these things—and they are blessed truth—He, He has brought out afresh since the days of the so-called Reformation.

They are best learned in the secret of his presence, and the better part of them is not (I conceive) the bits of truth so taught, nor the acts by which He has brought them out afresh and home to us; but the vindication of the activity of His being and of His being for us, and the discovery thus made to us of His ways; and that the whole safety, conduct, and blessing of the flock turns upon the activity of the Shepherd, and upon His being duly owned and waited for.

I have then a place in which I get the Lord's judgment upon everything. The ways of the Lord give me light; but those ways, all pure as they are in themselves, are shown to me as one hidden in His Sanctuary; shown by His acting in a world of evil.

When I speak of evil here, I do not refer to the chaff which may have to be sifted out of the Lord's in-gathering, or of any man's infirmities and mistakes which may be connected with the Lord's workman, or of any false work of Satan added on the true; because so it was in

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the apostles' days, so it is now, and so it will be even unto the end.

But I refer rather to other things; as 1st.—When a work is wrought in the days of an Ezra, a Nehemiah,^a amid failure, I should always expect God *so to act*, as to leave the record of its having been His work (not as in the opening days of an economy, when all was simple and fresh, but) as in the closing times, when man had dishonoured God, and He had to raise a testimony against man, even whilst giving blessing. And 2ndly.—In closing days, God always has *so* acted as to test and try man's discernment, by faith, of His presence, and has used the very presence of God to detect the evil and man's unbelief (see our Lord's days).

What I want is to abide with God in His workings, and actings, and restings, and to be intelligent and fresh in affection while there.

If He gave me a promise in spirit, that one-half of the countries of Europe should be visited by the Gospel, and then (after fourteen years of prayer and expectation on my part, in His presence) He sent out others to labour; or if He kept me waiting for five years for a backsliding soul and then restored it by another's preaching; if I have been in the sanctuary, and am there now; I have neither a less portion nor less faith in exercise, than they who have entered into my labours.

A word to three classes: 1st. To the disbeliever in all these revivals. Drop, if you please, the name of *revival*; and if you are a believer, tell me whether the Lord's ways have changed? Whether the Lord has ceased to send out into the highways and hedges, and at special times to show special power in gathering in souls? He did so through the history of the New Testament. He

^a I have repeated several times "The (*so-called*) Reformation." I object to the term "The Reformation," as usually used. What is meant by it? A "re-forming" of something? Of what? I suspect "The Reformation" is a term which deceives many. I know what people mean when they speak of "Revivals," and of men being "Revivalists;" but the terms are unscriptural, and will not bear scrutiny. Revival of what?

has done so at the times of the so-called Reformation; in the days of Whitfield, Wesley, Berridge, etc. And a Christian must be very young, or his ignorance very great, if he cannot add a list of well-authenticated scenes of blessing. If you deny that people are now turned and turning from dumb idols to the true and living God,—look again. The facts are against you.

2nd. As to the young that may be in the work. May they find grace to live in the sanctuary, and to test and compare all their own ways and doings, with the standard authority of the walk of a Paul. If they know the work they are engaged in, they will know that it is of no private interpretation; but takes its place under the Lord; and that whatever will not bear the light of an apostle's ways in their work is *questionable*, to say the least. Paul reported to the saints what the Lord had wrought; to them He could preach it; but to sinners, he knew nothing to preach save Jesus Christ. To sinners, as such, he did not preach "the work."

3rd. To Believers. The heart is in a bad state, that does not know and own to the want of freshness of soul, in the present day, among Christians. My heart's desire and prayer to God is, that those that know the Lord, and Him working hitherto, and still working, may learn more and more to walk with Him as a living God. For myself, I can only say, that the blessed way in which many have realised, in their own souls, God, as a living Being, and Christ in heaven above, and the Holy Ghost in living presence and action down here, *through* this (so-called) revival, is blessed. They have found God occupied with souls, a converting them; and it has given a place to the word of the Lord in many of them which it had not before. I would like to see the whole of their lives, here below, brought up to practical consistency with that living in the presence of God that is near, and that neither slumbers nor sleeps.

When God is showing Himself and working, there is a light diffused which makes manifest everything which is in its presence. Disbelief and incredulity—if in the heart—show themselves as disbelief and incredulity as to that *which God is doing*. Unbelief and little faith get

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stript of the coverings which *position*, of one kind or another, may have given them; and when stript, they are nothing but unbelief and little faith. Satan, or the devil, either as persecutor or angel of light, will be there, where God is working, and will show himself in one way or another. The low, carnal, the worldly state of the individuals who may be used in blessing to others, perhaps, will show itself in ways, energy, plans, thoughts, and speeches, which tell of their little faith and low state in the Spirit; the state of the churches, so-called, will not be hidden either; but all will stand out in its true real character in the light; for that which maketh manifest is light. A man and human churches look very different when in the light of God's presence, and when out of it. No flesh can glory in His presence: but, according as it is written, "he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."

"BRIGHT THOUGHTS."

My cheerful soul now all the day
Sits waiting here and sings;
Looks thro' the ruins of her clay,
And practises her wings.

Faith almost changes into sight,
While from afar she spies
Her fair inheritance in light,
Above created skies.

Had but the prison walls been strong,
And firm without a flaw,
In darkness she had dwelt too long,
And less of glory saw.

But now the everlasting hills
Through every chink appear;
And something of the joy she feels,
While she's a prisoner here.

Some rays from heaven break sweetly in
At all the opening flaws;
Visions of endless bliss are seen,
And native air she draws.

Watts's Lyrics.

N^o. XI.

THE REVELATION, CHAP. I.

THIS chapter contains a most magnificent chain of glories which are connected with our adorable Lord and Saviour.

As in the gospel of John, so here; — all that we read has Jesus the Christ for its centre; but the glories in the gospel were more connected with Him looked at as the Life-giver; here He is presented rather as the bearer of responsibility before God as to the light possessed by those who are subjected to Him, and pre-eminently so for those that know they have in Him eternal life.

The word of His grace — committed unto man — not only communicates eternal life to those that receive it, but also places man in present responsibility. The Word of God — He in whom the eternal life is — is the great responsibility-bearer, both as to the light and the life which are connected with the word of His grace. The glories of Him in that position are the subjects of consideration for us now, as they form the substance of the chapter before us.

1st. "The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto Him, to show unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by His angel unto His servant John" (ver. 1).

There are two things to be noticed here, viz., 1st. It is the revelation of Jesus Christ according to things *to come*, and not, as in John i., a present salvation. The subject is the glory of Jesus; not as the only Begotten of the Father, etc. — though that He Himself, necessarily, always is — but, according to His title of "the Christ," anointed Son of Man, and the things to come which connect themselves with that name.^a

^a The Apocalypse is emphatically "the book of *the throne*." It shows out *judgment*, also, as flowing from the throne. Judgment of man, who may have had light, and not walked onward into more light, as of the tribes of the land, kindreds of the earth (chap. i. ver. 7); or who may have boasted in full light, and not borne fruit, as of the churches upon earth (chap. ii. and

Jesus the Christ is now hid in God. But there is the revelation of Him; and this, with the object of making known unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass. This is the bright gem which first meets us in the chapter.

2nd. The second is, that it is *given unto Him by God*.

The Lord — and all things that concern Him — must ever be dear to His people, and so, therefore, necessarily, any revelation of Him; but this one has a peculiar mark upon it, one which gives it a peculiar place, too — it is the revelation *which God gave* unto Him.

3rdly. The next thing which I would notice is the full, and fully recognised, association of this Jesus Christ with that which is essentially divine; in ver. 4, Grace and peace from [God described as] the One that is, and that was, and that is to come; and from the seven spirits which are before His throne; and from Jesus Christ. Yes, Jehovah-a-saving, the anointed Man — from whom, and through whom, divine and eternal gifts, as of grace and peace, can and do flow — is God, and is fully owned as such.

4thly. Then we get the cluster of titles under which He is here more definitely presented as being those which connect Him with the work in hand. Each of them is a glory in Him, and, therefore, the subject of admiration for His worshippers.

The Faithful Witness. — The scope and range of the testimony of this, *the Faithful Witness*, is according to the person and position of Him who is *the Faithful Witness*. Everything that He said and did when He was on the earth was as *the Faithful Witness*; everything that He does or says, now that He is in heaven, is as *the Faithful Witness*; and so everything that He will hereafter do or say, in the heavenlies or in the earthlies, will be so too.

iii.) — judgment, too, of the prophetic nations; of the Jews; of the nations which lie beyond the kingdom of the Statue; of the Jews in the future kingdom; of all men at the great white throne. But then there is also the other side of judgment; for not only do we find that the demerits of man, of the world as it is, of the flesh, and of Satan, have their just measure taken and expressed, but also there is the blessed expression, in many various ways, of God's estimate and delight in the Christ, and for His sake, of those that cleave to Him.

That is, His course, run as Son of Man, has been, is, and will be as *the Faithful Witness*. In all the positions in which the Son of Man is found He is *the Faithful Witness*. But, far more than this is true; for not only is He *the Faithful Witness* in word and deed, but Himself in His person is the Faithful and True Witness. In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily; yes, there is nothing that "the fulness of the Godhead" supposes, but is in Him the Son of Man: it dwelt in this Jesus Christ, and shined out of this Jesus Christ, truly presenting in Him a man, and as a man, and in every position and office held by Him at any time, that same fulness. I say not, that those to whom He is presented can understand or receive all that He is; but I say, that wheresoever He is, there is all the fulness of the Godhead bodily; and none but God can be a perfect representation of God.^b The testimony which we receive is one thing, the fulness of that which He testifies—whether by word, deed, or in His own person—is another thing. The next title is—

5th. *The First Begotten of the dead*.—The Holy Ghost settles in a very simple way what the pre-eminence is which belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ (Col. i. 15, 16). He is necessarily before and above all creation, for the very simple reason, that all things were created by Him; "all things that are in heaven, and that are on earth, visible and invisible: all things were created by Him, and for Him."

The Creator is certainly above, as He was necessarily also before, His works.

The truth is, that in all things He has the pre-eminence. Whose sorrows were like unto His? Who was *the Man* of sorrows? Whose joys shall be equal to His? Who shall be anointed with the oil of joy and gladness above His fellows? As perfect in patience as in power. And, if we are predestinated to be conformed to the image of the Son, it is, that He may be the Firstborn among many brethren. He alone is the resurrection and the life, though that glory in Him may need and require *us* also, as those in and by whom its power will be expressed.

^b "Thy name encircles every grace
That God, as man, could show;
There only could He fully trace
A life divine below."

And when we stand around Him on that day, right fully shall we know and own that the Father chose us in Him before the foundation of the world; and that He is the One who, having made ready the Father's house, will then be come back to receive us unto Himself, that where He is there we may be also. But the pre-eminence is altogether His—declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead.

Creation, Providence, Redemption, all pay their tribute to Him; and it is due to Him alone.

6th. *The Prince of the Kings of the Earth.*—The term *Prince* (*archon*) is one that implies relationship. Chief of the kings of the earth. This is more than His Lordship. Now, indeed, and in truth, inasmuch as He is the Centre and End of all the divine counsels and plans, the kings of this disordered world cannot get away from the effect which His glory has over everything. Hereafter, too, He will, as King, put down and lift up those whom He will. But there is a royal priesthood, in direct relationship to which, as its Head or Prince, He will in that day be displayed; and I judge that it is this which is here referred to. He will be the Chief and supporter of the royal priesthood, whose residence is to be in heaven, as also their priestly service, though they are to be associated with Him in His rule over the earth.

This comes out more fully in detail in the two verses which follow, in which, *seventhly*, His grace in having made associates for Himself, and the considerateness of His love in so doing, is opened up. For that which opens up the song of praise, "Unto Him that loved . . . Amen" (ver. 5 and 6), is the mention of Him as *the Prince of the Kings of the earth*.

How should John write to the churches, of grace and peace being to them from Him, as *the Prince of the Kings of the earth*, without the grace in Him, which had displayed itself in giving to John and us a special place in connection with that title, moving his heart, and drawing forth a burst of praise from him.

He is not only, as we have seen, 6thly, Prince (*archon*), but this has, 7thly, a tale of its own as to the kings of the earth.

The Firstborn from among the dead has a place of universal Lordship pertaining to Him (Acts ii. 36, Phil. ii. 11). Title over all is His; title, also, to all, as the appointed Heir of all things, is His. He has also a place of peculiar honour and glory belonging to Him, as Head before God, for the direction of worship and government among men. This headship is His alone; but, in grace, He shares the honours of it with one peculiar class. His will is, according to divine counsel, to have a royal priesthood with Himself, when He, in one aspect of His glory, shall be "The priest upon His throne" (Zech. vi. 13).

When His eye lighted, so to speak, upon the children whom God had committed to Him, sin was in them, and on them; and nothing but sin in nature. To meet their need in this respect, that they might be able to stand before God, He washes in that blood which Himself has provided. By nature, we had nothing but sin. God claimed us, and the sin would have excluded us from His presence; but He loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood. But His love, who had taken us up as at the hand of God, stopped not there; sin set aside was set aside in order that His heart might have its joy in associating us with Himself, as the Priest upon His throne—Head in government and worship in a world yet to come before God. Surely the rays of a glory burst forth here—the glory of His own unselfish, divine love; the light descends in fulness enough to return an answer of praise and thanksgiving from John.

8thly. The glory of His return, as to man on earth, is spoken of—Ver. 7. "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. Even so, Amen."

If man now shuts out His light, and denies His faith, the Lord's coming will be the irresistible answer to this when He rises up; and, if a present faith can rejoice in the glory to come, unbelief may well be alarmed at the thought of that coming, and its effects upon the heart found then in unbelief. Faith has, already, its praise because of Him. Unbelief knows Him not now, but will wail when He comes. The expression, "*Even so*,"

Amen," is the expression of the servant of the Lord's faith. Faith can, and does enter into the *righteousness* of God in sending forth His Son a second time; faith's one great interest is the Christ of God — the triumph of this seed of the woman; and while its own side of the truth is in joy and peace, in believing, and in the tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, yet can the believer be so subdued to his own right place in Christ — be so enlarged in his own soul as to the place which Christ has in the counsels and plans of God — as to take his place with God and with Christ in every glory that pertains to Christ, and say, as to every detail of His counsels, "Even so, Amen!"

FRAGMENTS.

1. LUKE XV.—The truth which was dominant in the blessed Lord's mind at this time seems to me to have been—*neither* that of the privileges or experience of disciples, *nor* that of the way of making man such; and though, doubtless, it had connection with both of these topics, they are so entirely subordinate to it, that if either of them absorb the attention, *it*, in all its magnificent splendour, is, for the moment, necessarily lost sight of.

The goodness of God, which had recognised man (though a sinner) under His governmental way—if, haply, man could so be blessed—having been shown out to be insufficient, through the sinfulness of man, for man's blessing, God, if He would bless man, must act upon the ground of His own immutable character, and position, and rights, as God — upon that which it was meet that He should do, according to His own position, and character, and will.

Sinful man's being satisfied with any *position* of blessing whatsoever, is vanity, unless God, in His own immutable character and grace, fill both man and the position with power.

The governmental ways and dealings of God include, not only the Mosaic economy, but the Noahic and Abrahamic blessing also; for ere ever there was a people for Moses to take up in Egypt, God had separated Abram from among idolaters, and even before that, had given a charter of providential blessing through Noah.

People are so awfully full of self and man, that they can hardly read the Lord's teaching with the thought, that God and the full range of His ways were what occupied Him.

2. "I do not know that the unity of *the House* is stated anywhere in Scripture, any more than the unity of Christ; and are you scriptural in saying, the Spirit dwells in the body? Scripture speaks only of the unity of the Spirit — only says, 'There is one

body' (Eph. iv., and 1 Cor. xii.). The unity of the body is as foreign from Scripture thought as a thing to be *kept*, as is the unity of the house. 'The unity of the Spirit, to be kept in the bond of peace,' is all that Scripture speaks of. 'There is one body:' unity, in this sense, *cannot* be broken. — The use of the term 'unity' is often ambiguous. It means *practical union*, when contrasted with schism; and *immutable oneness*, when used of the Body. But what underlies much of the ignorance on these subjects is the denial of the unity of the body *on earth*; the result would be isolate churches, and unity there alone. The body and the house cannot be separated as to responsible position. No doubt the house is not really the body of Christ—it is another order of ideas; but they who call themselves 'Church' (assembly), take upon themselves the responsibility of the body, as well as of the house. The assembly, which is His body—'how one ought to behave oneself in the House of God, which is the assembly of the living God.' Rome is not the house, nor is a national establishment; the whole is. The question is this: The assembly is the house, the assembly is the body. What is the assembly? He hath set in the assembly apostles; gifts of healing: not in a local body, apostles—not gifts of healing—but on earth."

3. If I were an Englishman, I do not think that I should be able to entertain a thought, which supposed that the three things represented by the kingdom of Great Britain, the Royal Household, and the family of Queen Victoria, were now separable.

Loving and honouring the powers that be, such would be the expression of my heart and moral feeling about my country.

A stranger, as an Indian or a savage, ignorant of the subject, might suppose, on hearing me talk, that the three expressions—"Great Britain," "Queen Victoria," "The Royal Household"—were three synonyms for one and the same thing. At first, I might let this assumption pass; after a time, I might endeavour to explain to him how these three terms were like three circles drawn from one and the same centre, one outside the other; three circles having, indeed, one common centre, and, in one sense, "all one," yet, in another sense, each of them having ideas distinctly peculiar to itself.

Queen Victoria—she, while she lives, is the centre and pillar of the State; her family are separated from everybody else in the nation, the alone right inheritors of the throne.

The Royal Household contains them all and such as are necessary for their comfort and state.

Great Britain is (not herself, nor her family, nor her household, nor the whole of her empire, but) the kingdom more peculiarly hers;—kingdom which owns and puts her forward, the wide world over, as its representative.

Yet, while each circle has ideas peculiar to it—they all go together, and form an inseparable unity in the heart of an Englishman.

N^o. XII.

I PETER.

THE First Epistle of Peter is addressed to believers among the dispersed of Israel found in those provinces of Asia Minor which are named in the first verse. The Second Epistle declares itself to be a second, addressed to the same persons; so that the one and the other were destined for the Jews of Asia Minor; *i.e.* to those among them who had received the same precious Faith as the Apostle.

The First Epistle is founded on the doctrine of the Heavenly calling (I do not say on that of the Church, which is not brought before us here), in contrast with the portion of the Jews on earth. And thus it presents Christians—and in particular Christians among the Jews—as pilgrims and strangers on the earth. The conduct suited to such persons is more largely developed than the doctrine. The Lord Jesus, who was Himself a pilgrim and a stranger here, is presented as a pattern in more than one aspect. At the same time, both Epistles pursue the righteous government of God in all its phases, from the beginning to the consummation of all things, in which the elements melt with fervent heat, and there will be new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness shall dwell.

Nevertheless, in presenting the heavenly calling, the Apostle necessarily presents Salvation, the deliverance of the soul, in contrast with the temporal deliverances of the Jews.

The following is the description which the Spirit gives of these believers. They are elect; and that, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father. Israel was a nation elected on the earth by Jehovah. Here, it is those who were foreknown of the Father. The means by which their election is carried out, is Sanctification of

Nº. XIV.

WORDS IN SEASON.

EVERYTHING is beautiful in its season, and truth is healthful to the soul, when ministered in season and in measure.

New wine must be put into new bottles. The Lord had many things to say to His disciples, while He was with them; but they could not bear them then, and, therefore, He did not say them. When the Spirit of Truth came, they received those things in His teaching, together with a power to bear them.

All this may show us, how the fitting time and proportion are to be observed, when the ministry of the word of God to the soul is waited on. And this suggests to me the remembrance of Apollos at Corinth; for it has long been my impression, that his ministry there did mischief.

His qualities as a teacher suited the Grecian or Corinthian taste, and the Corinthian saints were attracted. Paul was among them a little before Apollos, and Apollos's eloquence seems to have fascinated the natural, human mind of those Grecians; so that Paul, "rude in speech," came to be somewhat undervalued. Not that there was any wrong purpose in Apollos. But he may have gone to Corinth a little hastily, or without due advisement as before God; for we read simply, "that he was *disposed* to pass into Achaia." It was a disposition of his mind that led him to Corinth; and then we may gather, from Paul's 1st epistle to the Corinthians, that he had captivated the minds of many there, and that there ensued division and mischief (Acts xviii. xix.).

Thus, with right desires, we may be very unwise in conducting our ministry. With the Lord, however, as *a minister* (as I need not say), all was perfect; and it is refreshing to mark such perfection, as it is all His glories.

The link between Him and His disciples, in the days of His sojourn among them, was that which *personal attraction* formed. They had no such knowledge of Him through the light and understanding of scripture, as would have bound them to Him. He had, the rather, to rebuke them again and again, for making many a mistake through ignorance of it. Their gathering round His empty sepulchre, among other circumstances, witnesses this to us. Had they been acquainted with the word, they would not have been there; for they would have known that He was not there. But they were there, just because they clung to Himself by strong personal attraction, and just because they knew not the scripture, that He must rise from the dead.

The remembrance of Him was more to them than converse with all beside. The dead body of her Lord was much more to the heart of Mary Magdalene than a crowd of living associates; yea, than the angelic glories of Heaven, as John xx. will tell us. How might such a loving heart breathe out that beautiful epitaph: "*O quam minus cum aliis versari, quam tui meminisse.*" And when we ponder this for a moment — when we think of God forming a personal link between Himself and us, what grace shines before us! what a secret is disclosed! The Lord would have our hearts to know Him as *an object*; and surely, by that, He lets us know that He has us as His objects, and what crowning grace is that!

But though, during the days of His abiding with them, the disciples were thus kept by Him through force of personal attraction, yet, when He had risen from the dead, and rejoined them, "He opened their understandings, that they might understand the Scripture;" and then He gave them (as we speak) a lecture upon scripture, saying to them, "Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." This was the forming of a new link between Him and them. Personal attractions, as we said, have already formed one; Scripture, and the knowledge of it, was now to form another.

What beautiful and well-ordered husbandry, under the ministry of Christ, this is! All was in season; the early and the latter rain doing their service to the soul.

We may also notice the way of the Spirit's wisdom as a Teacher in the Epistle to the Hebrews.

In the day of their illumination, the Hebrew saints were willing to take joyfully the spoiling of their goods. They were happy under a fresh apprehension of Christ; and joy, as it always does, proved to be their strength. But with all this, they were not established in truth, and thus were shaken, as the whole of the Epistle lets us learn; and the apostle has to bring truth to them, that they might have whereby to stand, and wherewith to meet the seduction that was threatening them. They had been already happy and confident—the truth he brings was that which gave them *title* to be so; for the Spirit, through him, would lay firmer foundations than the joy which waited on the day of illumination; *that* was beginning to betray its insufficiency.

And so with the Galatians.

They were so happy; their "blessedness" had been such, that they would have given their eyes to the apostle. But in time, like the Hebrews, they also were shaken. Nay, more; they were "bewitched," seduced from the truth of the Gospel, though their first estate had been so full of blessedness; and the apostle has to feed them with truth, tell them afresh of the grace and liberty of the Gospel, as though the whole work had to begin again.

Surely all this has a voice in our ears. It tells us that the Spirit of God does not commit the saints to mere "illumination" or "blessedness." Such conditions of soul have to be confirmed by truth and instruction. The infant blossom of the soul was beautiful; but it had to be sustained by further husbandry, ripened into strength and fruitfulness.

Now all this, I surely judge, has a voice in the ear of this day, through which we are passing. Many, many souls are now freshly awakened under a ministry that *attracts*, rather than *instructs*. The joy of "illumination" and of "blessedness" is abroad. But all this

which we have been looking at, whether in the Lord's own ministry, or in that of the apostle under the Holy Ghost, tells us that such a condition may soon need the confirming virtue which knowledge of the word imparts. Exercises of soul under the discovery of corruptions, under the accusings of Satan, or of the conscience, from the tendencies of nature, and from the wear and tear of Christian warfare, may set in; and such things will call for "the sword of the Spirit." The danger, I grant, may be feared, lest when the link between Christ and the soul, which Scripture forms, be strengthened, that which personal attraction has already formed should become less earnest. It is delightful to see affection, and joy, and fresh open-heartedness. It is admirable, specially in the eyes of some of us, who know too much of coldness, and narrowness, and formality. Still, knowledge of Scripture is divine provision for the rising exigencies of our onward journey, as for the quickening of the soul at the beginning; the Word being the seed of life, and the milk and meat of it, too. And, surely, our communion with Scripture is to feed, not to supersede, our communion with Himself. I grant that there is danger, as I said — danger lest the fervency and simplicity, which marked the "illumination," the first moment of the quickened soul, the day of "blessedness," the time when personal attraction should be owned by the heart, should be injured by the accession of knowledge. But, though this danger may well be feared (and if it prevail, the loss will be serious indeed), yet we find that neither the Lord Himself, nor His servants under the Spirit, were governed by it. The Lord added an opened understanding, and an interpreted Scripture to them who were already His by personal attraction; and the apostle taught, and taught carefully, those who had been in the joy of illumination, and in the power of their early blessedness.

But I must look for a little at Acts xi. 19—30.

They that were scattered abroad at the persecution which arose about Stephen, went everywhere telling of the Lord Jesus. They were not as ordained or gifted ones; but, in the freshness of their recent quickening, they talked of the salvation they were enjoying. The

elder brethren, official and gifted, remained at home (chap. viii. 1).

The fruit of this service was very happy, but evidently very simple. We see this, as at Antioch, in this chapter, Acts xi.; and tidings of all this reaching Jerusalem, Barnabas is sent to see it—the very man for such service; for he was a man rather of grace than of gift—“a good man”—“a son of consolation,” as he is called; and, coming to Antioch, and there seeing “the grace of God,” as we read, “he was glad.”

Very simple, very lovely, and very easy to be understood, all this condition of things is. The work carried on by simple, fresh souls, was very attractive to a simple, gracious, saint. Barnabas joined himself with it at once; but he did this in a modest, temperate, way, which surely was the wisdom of the Spirit in him. He *exhorted* them: he did not teach them, as though he would add something to them, but he exhorted them, as desirous that they should rather hold fast what they already had. I can suppose that he instinctively felt and judged it would be hazardous to do more just at that moment, considering the condition of soul he had then found them in.

This is simple, and it is significant also; for it easily associates itself with much that is abroad at this moment; for Antioch is again, in this our day, before Jerusalem; and Jesus is again passing by; and though the path of His feet may still be in places of no repute with very many, as Galilee or Nazareth, or the road that lay between Jericho and Jerusalem, it is well for sinners to be in the highway, or on the road-side.

But the scene at Antioch does not yet close. After awhile, Barnabas goes to seek Saul at Tarsus. Saul was a gifted vessel in the house of God. Barnabas, in the grace that distinguishes him, seems to know this and to own it; and, therefore, in due season, desires his presence and help among the new converts. When these converts reach a certain stage, or come to age, as we may say, he appears at once to think of Saul, his gifted brother, in connection with them; and accordingly seeks him out, and then brings him to Antioch, and there, assembling themselves together for that very purpose, for a whole

year, they *teach* the young converts; and the good fruit of all this is quickly gathered, as we read:—"And in those days came prophets from Jerusalem to Antioch; and there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit, that there should be great dearth throughout all the world, which came to pass in the days of Claudius Cæsar. Then the disciples—every man according to his ability—determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Jerusalem, which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul."

This is all, again I say, not only simple and happy, but significant, having a voice for the ear of this present hour. The ministry of some unnamed, undistinguished, brethren had awakened many souls at Antioch: these souls then welcomed first the exhortations of Barnabas, and afterwards the teaching of Saul; and, at the last, and as the end or fruit of this husbandry—this ploughing, planting, and watering—they are ready with sympathy—living practical sympathy—to answer the need and sorrow of their brethren.

Antioch is thus before us, in this earliest notice that we get of her. The activity there is lively, full of freshness, and affection, and simplicity, yielding real genuine fruit; and there the disciples are first called "Christians."

This, as we have seen, is in chap. xi. In chap. xiii., we find it the seat of an energetic body of disciples, animated by a missionary spirit; and forth from it Paul and Barnabas, the companions of an earlier day, are sent by the Holy Ghost on the work of evangelizing. In chap. xiv., we find these brethren returned there, after their mission had been fulfilled; and in chap. xv., Paul a second time, now in company with Silas, going forth from it on fresh labours in the gospel.

Jerusalem, during all this, is rather laid aside, or in the shade, as we speak. She is seen, in chap. xv., as the place where certain disputed ecclesiastical questions had to be settled; but that is far, indeed, from giving her the glowing atmosphere of Antioch; and thus, the last are first, and the first last. The younger Antioch takes the lead of old Jerusalem; but while we say this, we will

not forget Jerusalem as the earliest seat of the Church, honoured and endowed. The Spirit descended there: there the first disciples sold all they possessed, and lived together, the fairest sample of congregational beauty that ever flourished. There, too, we see a suffering Church: prisons and martyrdoms witness this; and there the Holy Ghost *shook* the place, as well as *filled* the place, of the assembled saints.

But in time, Antioch rather than Jerusalem occupies the foreground of observation. We see the last first—a common thing from the beginning hitherto. Sarah got the start of Abraham, in Gen. xxi., though she was so much behind him in Gen. xviii.; and so young converts, like young Antioch, run earnestly along in paths of service, where old disciples are but walking leisurely. In patriarchal, apostolic, and present days, we may thus see the last as first. Be it so; may we older ones of Jerusalem say, “O! that jealousies were watched and mortified! O! that we were not so tempted to judge of things and of persons in relation to ourselves, to the part or measure we take with them, or the interest we have in them!” How should we rejoice in the service and fruitfulness of others! Surely we are not to surrender anything we have of Him or from Him; but as surely we are to value other vessels of His house, and the treasure that is in them, and the use which the Master is pleased to put them to. Eliab will upbraid his younger brother, because he eyed him enviously; but we are to cherish the heart of David, who, if he but served, cared not whether it were among the sheep-folds or on the throne.

I would, however, add another word.

One is very conscious at times of a dread of interfering with the work of the Spirit with a soul, when that work appears to have a fresh character about it, and to have been somewhat immediately as from God Himself. It moves us in measure, like as the first work of the Lord Jesus moved the disciples at the well of Sychar: they felt that they could not intrude: there was a weight and influence in the place which His power and grace had just been so blessedly occupying. It was the same again

after He was risen on the shore of the sea of Galilee. There we read—"And none of the disciples durst ask Him, Who art thou, knowing that it was the Lord."

One is, in like spirit with this, indisposed at times to meddle with the working of God with a soul, to direct it, or to attempt to give it anything of a new shape or character; and this reserve is healthful, I judge. But here, again, I would say, it is to have its measure: it is to be debated with, or it may restrain us too far.

I see this in Acts xviii.

There, Aquila and his wife Priscilla had a fresh work of God under their eye in the person of Apollos—a work, I can assure myself, which had character in it, savouring of the direct, immediate, hand of God. It had fine qualities in it. That man of Alexandria, as a vessel of the divine Potter, was no common one. Apollos was eloquent, fervent in spirit, mighty in the scriptures, and earnest and diligent in testimony to the Lord. All this may well have attracted, and more than attracted, the older disciples. I can suppose that for a moment Aquila and Priscilla were silent in the presence of this new-formed vessel, as Moses for a time listened to Eldad and Medad prophesying in the camp, and old Eli bowed before the word of the Lord in the mouth of the youthful servant of the Temple.

Still, however, Aquila and Priscilla did not, in fitting time, refuse to take Apollos and teach him the way of God more perfectly, as Barnabas and Saul did not, as we have seen, refuse to teach, as well as exhort, the young converts at Antioch.

I cannot but say, that these samples of the various wisdom of the Spirit in the saints and servants of the Lord I feel to be admirable. And I see a vividness now giving character to certain freshly-awakened souls, which I have no disposition to deprive of a certain kind of authority with me. I do not yield a jot of what I have learnt from the word; but I fear lest teaching, if not wise in *season* as well as in *substance*, should do mischief. And yet surely I know and own that teaching is the divine way of growth and fruitfulness, and may be deeply needful to meet the rising exigencies of these dear young converts.

216 *"They that are Christ's at His coming."*

lifts our spirits above the clouds and mists of earth; but we need purified hearts, to be prepared to allow the rays of that glory to reach within, and shed its light abroad there; there should be nothing allowed discordant with that holy scene; it will darken the vision, and confuse the affections; the Holy Spirit will be leading us within, to look after the house, and rid it of its corruptions and intruders, instead of opening the windows of the heart to allow the light of a new heaven to fill and irradiate it with its illuminating glory.

O that our constant position may be, — as those who are "turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God;" — "to wait for His Son from heaven," with the heart purified, and the eye single; with staff and girdle; ready to welcome the shout in the air, whenever it may be uttered; ready! with nothing to leave behind that would retard our upward flight, nothing that may clash with that oft-expressed desire.

"Amen! Even so, come, Lord Jesus!"

FRAGMENT.

Lord Jesus, come!
 Nor let us longer roam
 Afar from Thee, and that bright place
 Where we shall see Thee face to face.
 Lord Jesus, come!

Lord Jesus, come!
 Thine absence here we mourn;
 No joy we know apart from Thee,
 No sorrow in Thy presence see.
 Come, Jesus, come!

Lord Jesus, come!
 And claim us as Thine own;
 Our weary feet would wander o'er
 This dark and sinful world no more,
 Come, Saviour, come!

N^o. XVI.

I JOHN.

THE Epistle of John has a peculiar character. It is eternal life, manifested in Jesus, and imparted to us. The life which was with the Father, and which is in the Son. It is in this life that believers enjoy the communion of the Father; that they are in relationship with the Father by the Spirit of adoption, and that they have fellowship with the Father and the Son. God's own character is that which tests it; because it proceeds from Himself.

The first chapter establishes these two latter points: namely, communion with the Father and the Son, and that this communion must be according to the essential character of God. The name of Father is that which gives character to the second chapter. Afterwards, it is that which God is, which tests the reality of the imparted life.

The Epistles of Paul, although speaking of this life, are, in general, occupied with setting before Christians the truth respecting the means of standing in the presence of God, justified and accepted. The Epistle of John, that is to say, his first, shows us the life that comes from God by Jesus Christ.

Now, this life is so precious, manifested as it is in the person of Jesus, that the epistle now before us has, in this respect, a quite peculiar charm. When I turn, too, my eyes to Jesus, when I contemplate all His obedience, His purity, His grace, His tenderness, His patience, His devotedness, His holiness, His love, His entire freedom from all self-seeking, I can say, That is *my* life.

This is immeasurable grace. It may be, that it is obscured in me; but it is none the less true, that that is my life. Oh, how do I enjoy it thus seen! How I bless God for it! What rest to the soul! What pure joy to the

but a lie under such circumstances, that it excited horror rather than compassion. We can easily understand this in other cases.

Thus far, as to sin and its chastisement. But the positive side is also brought before us. As born of God, we do not commit sin at all; we keep ourselves, and the wicked one toucheth us not. He has nothing wherewith to entice the new man. The enemy has no objects of attraction to the divine nature in us, which is occupied, by the action of the Holy Ghost, with divine and heavenly things, or with the will of God. Our part, therefore, is so to live,—the new man occupied with the things of God and of the Spirit.

The apostle ends his epistle by specifying these two things: our nature, our mode of being as Christians; and, the object that has been communicated to us, in order to produce, and to nourish faith.

We know that we are of God; and that, not in a vague way, but in contrast with all that is not *us*—a principle of immense importance, which makes Christian position exclusive by its very nature. It is not merely good, or bad, or better; but it is *of God*. And nothing which is not of God, that is to say, which has not its origin in Him, could have this character and this place. The whole world lies in the wicked one.

The Christian has the certainty of these two things, by virtue of his nature, which discerns and knows that which is of God, and thereby judges all that is opposed to it. The two are not merely good and bad, but of God and of the enemy. This as to the nature.

With regard to the object of this nature, we know that the Son of God is come—a truth of immense importance also. It is not merely that there is good, and that there is evil; but the Son of God has Himself come into this scene of misery, to present an object to our hearts. But there is more than this. He has given us an understanding that in the midst of all the falsehood of this world, of which Satan is the prince, we may know Him that is true—the true One. Immense privilege! which alters our whole position. The power of the world, by which Satan blinded us, is completely broken, and we are

brought into the true light; and in that light we see and know Him who is true, who is in Himself perfection; that by which all things can be perfectly discerned and judged according to truth. But this is not all. We are in this true One, partakers of His nature, and abiding in Him, in order that we may enjoy the source of truth. Now, it is in Jesus that we are. It is thus, it is in Him, that we are in connection with the perfections of God.

We may again remark here, that which gives a character to the whole epistle—the manner in which God and Christ are united in the apostle's mind. It is on account of this, that he so frequently says "He," where we must understand "Christ," although he had previously spoken of "God." For instance, chap. iii., 2. And here, "We are in Him that is true, *that is to say*, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal Life."

Behold, then, the divine links of our position! We are in Him who is true: this is the nature of Him in whom we are. Now, in reality, as to the nature, it is God Himself. As to the person, and as to the manner of being in Him, it is in His Son Jesus Christ. It is in the Son, in the Son as man, that we are in fact as to His person; but he is the true God, the veritable God.

Nor is this all—but we have life in Him. He is also the eternal Life, so that we possess it in Him. We know the true God—we have eternal life.

All that is outside this, is an idol. May God preserve us from it, and teach us by His grace to preserve ourselves from it. This gives occasion to the Spirit of God to speak of "the truth" in the two short epistles that follow.

FRAGMENT.

THE OBEDIENCE OF FAITH.

Found by God (in His changeless grace, and in His delight in Christ, and in His body the church), amid the ruins of a sevenfold failure of all that is merely human,—I see nothing now left to us but that which I may call, in a peculiar sense, *the obedience of faith*. Obedience (and suffering the will of God is often the highest part of obedience, as it was in the case of

our Lord, Phil. ii.), and nothing but obedience, cost what it may. Yet obedience, not to the letter of texts (which repeated failure on man's part, has made, often, to be impossible; and the attempt to do so, to involve the pride of rebellion), but to the Spirit and mind of God—the living God—His written word taken in connection with His own leading of His people: His word in its real, present bearing upon His people.

If any one will study Acts xx. 29—32; 2 Tim. iii. (note ver. 15); Jude 20—25, they will see plainly enough, so I judge, that the word of God as given through the apostles and prophets of the New Testament, predicted a state of failure of the church upon earth; and that, in the trial so created by man's failure on earth, there would be no succession, no apostles, no official authorities to turn to, no new revelation; but that, to the humble and truthful amid their failed circumstances, God and the word of His grace would be sufficient.

The portions, Lev. xxvi. 40—45; Deut. xxx. (as also many other parts of the Old Testament) bear witness to the same truth: as did, in one aspect of it, our Lord's most blessed walk when He was upon earth.

There are three points in this obedience of faith (of faith as contrasted with obedience *to the letter*) which I have ever found to be of primary importance.

1st. Never to gloss, or cover over past failure, in any way whatsoever.

2ndly. Not to dissociate myself from the sorrows brought upon God's people by failure—be it theirs or my own.

3rdly. When taking, thus, my stand amid failure and its fruits,—a failed one amid failed ones in the circumstances of to-day, not to refuse subjection to God and His word, and the responsibility of caring for His honour to-day because of past failure.

To nature, there oft seems an easy and a short cut out of present difficulties, which really involves rebellion against God, and the refusal to submit to Him.

The testimony given to us in Num. xiv. 39—45, is a solemn warning—a warning which Protestantism, Non-conformity, and Reformers have too generally neglected.

N^o. XVII.A FEW WORDS ON THE FIRST EPISTLE
OF JOHN.

RICH and deep secrets of the divinest character are to be found in this epistle.

At the opening of it, the Lord is called "the *Word* of life," because He is the *manifestation* of the life. He has *shewn* life to us. In His person, St. John heard it, looked on it, handled it.

It has also been imparted to us. In the power of the Holy Ghost, we have been given to receive it from the source of it.

In its nature, or essence, it is infallible, or indestructible, beyond the reach of the sting of death. It is here called "that *eternal* life." Unlike the life that was in Adam, who was "the living soul," which was to be tested; and which, as we know, was lost in the struggle, this life of Him, who is "the quickening Spirit," is invulnerable, and has so proved itself by resurrection. For resurrection is life in victory.^a

But further. This life clothes itself, if I may so express my thoughts, with relationship. It puts itself into relationship. And what would life, even human life, be without that? Were we to live in mere individuality, life would be but existence. But we share a life that is common, and stand related to one another. And so, this eternal life. It was, as we read here, "with the Father"—and, as we read again, it introduces us into "fellowship." "Our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son, Jesus Christ." It introduces us as *children*, thus putting us into nearest relationship to God; and this is our fulness of joy—as we still further

^a Deeply and fully do I own the verity of His manhood. He was "the Seed of the woman." He partook of flesh and blood with the children. God and Man in one Person. All depends on this.

read here; "these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full."

We may be weak and sickly. The workings of unbelief, the force of lust and vanity, the fiery darts of the enemy, may cause various distempers in the soul; but the due condition or attribute of this life, thus introducing us to the relationship and fellowship of children, is nothing less than fulness of joy.

And further still. This life has its *moral* qualities, as well as its nature or essence, and its relationship. It is *undefleable*, as well as eternal. The possession of it is our *moral* restoration. "The Son of God was manifested, to take away our sin, and in him is no sin." The message which He, who is this life, brings to us, is this, "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all." And this is the contradiction of that word which the serpent, the liar, brought to the ear of Eve. He told Eve, that as to God, there was no light at all in Him, neither truth nor love. The Son, the Life, tells us that there is nothing but light in Him; and that to have fellowship with Him, we must ourselves walk in light. And this is our moral recovery—not, however, perfect as yet—for "if we say, that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves." But then, the Son, who has this life for us—this secret of moral recovery, has also remedy for this lack of perfection, and we are to use Him. We are to confess our sins, and God is faithful to the Son our Saviour—just to that work of His which has accomplished reconciliation—to forgive us our sins.

And though it be indeed true, that this moral restoration is not now perfect in unhindered power in the soul, and that we have still sins to confess, yet is it complete in the range or sphere of its influence. That is, it heals us not only as towards *God*, but as towards *one another*. It brings us back into the light, and it makes us to love one another. The moral power of it is the contradiction of both Adam and Cain. Adam, in Gen. iii., represents the ruined nature in relation to *God*, forcing him into distance and darkness; Cain, in Gen. iv., represents the same ruined nature in relation to our *fellow-creatures*.

the First Epistle of John.

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But now, through the virtue of this life, we walk in the light, and we love one another.

All this is told us in the early parts of this epistle. And it is a great discourse. The life in its own eternal infallible essence, in its known and enjoyed relationship, and in its various restoring moral virtues, is the subject of it.

Fathers, young men, and little children, are also severally addressed, addressed, too, in reference to this life, or to Him who has it in Himself for us.

The fathers make Christ their *object*. They, as it were, gaze at Him, consider Him, learn Him, understand Him.

The young men make Him, and the life they have received from Him, their *strength*, using it in conflict with the world, that scene, which "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life," are animating and filling.

The little children make Christ, this life, their *joy*, knowing the Father through Him—knowing Him for themselves, in the free and happy spirit of adoption.

Surely, this exhibits beautiful, varied, moral power in the soul, by reason of this life. And as connected with the condition of the "little children," John introduces a warning against that form of the lie, or that Antichrist, which denies "the Father and the Son." And this is most suitable and seasonable. Because the standing or condition of the "little children," altogether depends on that mystery. They are in the adoption; they know the Father; they *enjoy* it, as I said. But this is taken away from them, by that lie or antichrist which denies the Father and the Son. Relationship is lost to us then. The soul is robbed of it. Another lie, at the beginning, robbed Adam of his innocency; this lie robs the little children of their joy. How rightly, therefore, are they warned against it.

It is said to some one, in another place, "Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." And, in like spirit, John would here tell the children to hold fast what they had, that no lie should take their joy from them.

This epistle takes us back, in spirit and in recollection, to the first chapters of Genesis. Indeed, John is, generally, independent of all merely dispensational truth, and is intensely personal and individualising.

Genesis opens with Creation. This epistle, like the gospel by the same Evangelist, with Him that was before creation. In the system of creation, man, and all things with him, or under him, were in life, order, and beauty. Death was then the *foreign* thing, and consequently it was the *threatened* thing. The revelation or proclamation that was made in the midst of all that scene of life, and order, and beauty, was about death.

In the present evil world, we have death, the wages of sin, manifested. The earth has become the grave of its inhabitants. Sin reigns unto death upon it. Life is, therefore, the foreign and proclaimed thing—and this epistle tells us so. Life is to be received by us, dead as we are in trespasses and sins; as death, on the other hand, was incurred by Adam in his estate of life and perfection. We are now summoned to hear words of truth from the Son of the Father, as Adam heard and received the lie from the serpent. We have to acquaint ourselves with “the Word of life,” personally and immediately, as Eve acquainted herself personally and intimately with the Tree of death, when she took it and ate of it (see Gen. iii. 6). That acceptance of the Tree of the knowledge of good and evil gave Adam fellowship with death in all its sorrowing, degrading results. He lost the garden, and Eve, and God—everything. He lost himself. A disturbed conscience; the apron of fig-leaves; the covert of the trees; the sword of the cherubim; all tell the ruinous details of his condition. Acceptance of “the Word of life,” according to this epistle, recovers everything, and everything, lost though it may have been, and lost as it was, with unspeakable advantage. We get God in the relation of a Father. We get ourselves in fulness of joy. We get one another as brethren. We get inheritance, as in glory. All is now ours, in incorruptible, unassailable, victorious, abiding virtue. We feed on meat taken from the eater, and sweetness gathered out of the strong one.

Thus is it with us in Christ. And after this manner it is, that this epistle, as I have already hinted, keeps us in company, in spirit, and in remembrance, with the earliest chapters of Genesis. It all but closes the volume; but it links itself, morally, with the opening of it.

There are, however, other thoughts that arise in the soul, on reading this epistle, which I would also communicate—in no way, of course, contradictory of what I have suggested above; nay, in no measure, even the slightest, interfering therewith; but still of another kind.

This epistle may be said to exhibit the power of communion, to leave upon the soul the impression of the object with which the communion has been enjoyed.

There are, consequently, three principal thoughts found again and again in it; and these are, *manifestation, communion, impression*. That is, the Lord is manifested in some form or character; the believer has communion with Him as so manifested; a kindred impression is thereby left on the believer's soul.

This is simple.

The epistle opens with a declaration of this manifestation. And the interpretation that is made of that manifestation is this, that it gives the soul communion or fellowship with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ; and it is then further declared, that the result of this upon the soul, the impression produced by this communion is, fulness of joy (i. 1—4).

This is a sample of what, as I judge, is a great leading character of the whole epistle, and as I have already suggested. Here we find our object manifested, a certain communion with that object, and then a corresponding impression produced.

So again. The object manifested is declared to be "light"; and accordingly, it is at once denied that there is any communion with that object, if our walk be still in "darkness" (i. 5, 6).

Then, quite in accordance with what I have suggested, it is said, "he that saith he abideth in Him, ought himself so to walk even as He walked. "And in conse-

quence of this, as *love* had been illustrated in Christ's walk or doing for us, if we take the place of fellowship with Him, or profess that we abide in Him the light, and yet hate one another, we deceive ourselves, and are still in darkness (ii. 7—9).

And still pursuing this epistle, we are told of another quality, or virtue, in this object that has been manifested; that "in Him is no sin." And, therefore, it is also again at once denied, that we have either seen or known Him, if we commit sin (iii. 5, 6).

The same principle is recognised in that passage—that the object will, if the soul have fellowship with it, leave its likeness behind it.

So again, a second time, as to love. Love is perceived or manifested in the Lord Jesus laying down His life for us. If we shut up our compassions from one another, that love does not dwell in us. We can have had no fellowship with it (iii. 16, 17; iv. 9—11).

And further still, as to love. It is a perfect love which has been displayed; communion with it, therefore, believing, intelligent apprehension of it, will beget full assurance in the soul, and cast out all fear (iv. 17—19).

Surely I do not say too much, when I say, after all this, that this blessed epistle gives us various manifestation of God in Christ, "the Word of life," and that such manifestations leave their impressions on the souls that have communion with them.

And this same thing, the power of communion with manifestations to leave impressions on the soul, is incidentally contemplated in two interesting instances.

1st. We are to be *like* Jesus in glory, when He is *manifested* in glory, because we shall *see* Him in that glory (iii. 2).

2ndly. We are liars, if we say that we love God, while we are hating our brother. Such things cannot be. Our brother has been seen—God has not been seen. Therefore, on the principle of the epistle, on the principle that communion with things manifested, leaves impressions behind it, we cannot love God, whom we have not seen, if we love not our brother whom we have seen (iv. 20, 21).

These passages strikingly affirm the general principle.

But there is true blessing from all this. It takes us into real, vital, personal knowledge of the Blessed One. And supposing that these impressions, of which we speak, are but faintly and partially produced in the soul; and surely we know too well that such is the case—we know where to charge the mischief; that is, on the imperfectness of our communion with the object, and not on the object or manifestation itself. And that discovery is our blessing. For God is true to us; it is we who are false to ourselves. The manifestations made of God to us should produce, as this epistle tells us, joy, light, love, holiness, assurance of heart. If, then, we find that all this precious fruit is but partially ripened in our souls, we charge this on the poverty of our communion with our object, and not on the manifestation He has made of Himself. That manifestation is such as would secure all these virtues in us in full measure. We find out, that we are not straightened in Him; but in our own bowels. And surely this is precious. The reflection in us is faint; but the light that has awakened it is unclouded.

The way, however, to deepen these impressions, is, still to be occupied with the manifestation. We are not to be too carefully turning over the shame and the grief of this faintness before the conscience, but to be returning, so to speak, again and again, to the object. And with this judgment, the Spirit in the apostle seems to concur, when He says, “these things have I written unto you, that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and *that ye may believe in the name of the Son of God*” (v. 13). Let the Son of God be still the object of your faith.

I would say a little further on this epistle. In chap. v. 18—21, the apostle gives us three results, and then closes his letter. We get, in these verses, three “We knows,” leading forth three distinct, though connected, truths, each of them weighty, solemn, and precious.

1st. He that is born of God sinneth not, but keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.

Such doctrine had been considered in some of the

previous parts of the epistle. The Son of God had been declared to have been manifested to take away our sin, and to have no sin in Himself (chap.iii.5): such words teaching us, that the life imparted to us by the Son is a clean life, a life according to God in righteousness and holiness. The fountain of it is Himself, without touch or stain of sin; and that which flows from Him in us is of like quality. The same fountain cannot send forth both salt water and fresh. The nature that sins, that yields sin as its fruit, can have no communion with Him. What fellowship has light with darkness? Neither can "the wicked one," the source of the unclean nature, touch that which is born of God, or derived from the Son, as is here taught us. He cannot come in to defile it, as he defiled Adam.

And this is very blessed. It intimates a condition gloriously beyond that of Adam. All Adam's estates and possessions were exposed to the attempts of "the wicked one." The Serpent was no trespasser in the garden of Eden. He had title to be there, so that Adam might be assayed. But it is otherwise with us. We carry a life, and are heirs of an inheritance, that is not thus exposed. Both our life and our inheritance, all our estate in Christ, and through Christ, are drawn from Christ in victory over him. The Serpent is not seen in the city, as he is in the garden (Rev.xxi., Gen.iii.) The Tree of Life is there, but not the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

2nd. We are of God, and the whole world lieth in the wicked one.

Such doctrine had also been previously treated in the epistle. It had been declared, that all that was in the world was of the world, and that the enemy of God was the one that was quickening the world, as its indwelling energy (chap.ii.16, iv.4.). There were, thus, two distinct scenes of action, and two distinct principles of action. There was God in the saints, and there was the wicked one in the world. The saints were of God; all besides were of the world. The one had the renewed faculty of the flock of God, to hear the Shepherd's voice; all besides had taste and intelligence only for the interests and

delights of a system which their own hearts and hands, corrupted and occupied by Satan, had fashioned and were sustaining every day (chap.iv. 1—6.).

This is a proposition of an awful character. It teaches us, that there is no belonging to God among men, but by being drawn out of the world by Jesus. The world may have its varieties and measures; but it is all in the wicked one. All is but varied darkness, and enmity. No deliverance, no translation into light, no return to God, but by the way of Jesus, that manifested Life, which this epistle had declared.

3rd. The Son of God has come to give us an understanding to know Him that is true, and we are in Him, and have the true God, and, in Him and with Him, eternal life.

This likewise is doctrine of wondrous value. The world by wisdom had not found out God. All their learning had left them ignorant of God. The altar at Athens witnesses this. But God had now revealed Himself, and that revelation was in Jesus. The glory of God shines in the face of Jesus Christ. This epistle had already taught us this, that the eternal life that was with the Father had been manifested. The apostles had seen, and heard and handled it. So that knowledge of God was now secured to us. We have been given an understanding to know Him; and we find this knowledge to be eternal life—as this epistle had likewise already said, “he that has the Son has life;” and had shewn the various fruits of being in the knowledge of, or fellowship with, this revealed God.

All thoughts of our own, all conjectures of our own about God, can but make idols or false deities. We are to keep ourselves from all such. We are to know God only in this manifestation of Himself which we get and have in Jesus, and we are to treat all other thoughts of Him as idolatrous. This only is “the true God,” and we are to keep ourselves from all besides as from “idols.”

Thus we have three distinct, weighty propositions. Solemn, interesting, blessed conclusions they are. The saints have knowledge of God, and life in that knowledge; and thus they are separated from a world which

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the wicked one owns and animates, and are in possession of that which that same wicked one can never touch.

And the whole closes with that warning already referred to, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols." The true God being now revealed, let no thought of God, no reasoning about Him, no conclusions of our own wisdom or theology, arise independently in the heart. All this will but end in idolatry; refined it may be, speculative and philosophic; but still idolatry. The notions of man about Him must be false; for by wisdom we cannot know Him. God has been pleased to manifest Himself, and with that manifestation we are to have communion, and by the light of it to walk apart from all idols; ever esteeming it our blessedness, that we are not left to our conjectures about God, but are called to know Him in the light of His own revelation of Himself, and in that knowledge find our life eternally secured to us.

Lord Jesus ! when I think of Thee,
Of all Thy love and grace,
My spirit longs, and fain would see
Thy beauty, face to face.

And though the wilderness I tread,
A barren, thirsty ground,
With thorns and briars overspread,
Where foes and snares abound ;

Yet in Thy love such depths I see,
My soul o'erflows with praise—
Contents itself, while, Lord, to Thee
A joyful song I raise.

My Lord; my Life, my Rest, my Shield,
My Rock, my Food, my Light ;—
Each thought of Thee doth constant yield
Unchanging, fresh delight.

My Saviour, keep my spirit stayed,
Hard following after Thee ;
Till I, in robes of white arrayed,
Thy face in glory see.

N^o. XVIII.

THOUGHTS ON REVELATIONS.

IN pursuing the present explanation of the Apocalypse, I shall endeavour to give all the light which I may have acquired; but with the fullest acknowledgment, that many parts remain obscure; and explaining, what I judge to be clear, without, in all things, teaching it as ascertained truth, as in many parts of Scripture the Christian ought to do. Further, I shall here consider the whole defined period to be one half week, not two. The facts and personages, in this point of view, remain unaltered; it is merely the relationships of detail as to time, and the particular force of certain passages which are affected by it. Many treatises have been published, viewing the Apocalypse as revealing the distinct events of two half weeks; the comparison the reader will be enabled to make of the explanation of the book after the two methods, will lead to a fuller judgment of the connection of the various parts of it.

Besides the direct blessed witness of God's love and of personal salvation, there are two subjects which Scripture presents to us as a whole. The government of this world; and the Church. The latter is now, through the Holy Ghost, the recipient and depository of divine knowledge.*

The Church's portion is heavenly: to be in heaven in spirit now, and when the fulness of times has brought in

* Those who are its members are the means of spreading it. The Church does not teach. Apostles and prophets first, and then teachers in their place, as evangelists in theirs, do that. The Church receives, holds fast, and professes, the truth. The state of the Church may be such as to cast the holding fast and professing the truth, on the fidelity of individuals; but the Church's duty, in her right and normal state, is to be the pillar and ground of the truth.

know what His will is. It is not that there are counsels of perfection, for the discernment of the inward life makes what it discerns at once a delight and a duty; and the perfection of Christ we are not very likely to get above. Yet, that is set before us as attainment; the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ, our measure, our model, our rule, our strength, and our help in grace; the object of our delight, and our motive in walking, and one who has an absolute claim on our hearts.

I see, in reading this over, one thought wanting which may make a point more clear. We must not confound obedience and law. The character of Christ's obedience was different from legal obedience. When a child desires anything, as to go anywhere, and I forbid, and it at once obeys, I speak of its ready obedience. Christ never obeyed in this way; He never had a desire checked by an imposed law. It was never needed to say to Him, Thou shalt not, when He willed to do anything. He acted *because* His Father willed it. That was His motive, the only cause of His acting. He lived by every word that proceeded out of the mouth of God. When there was none, He had nothing to do. Hence the will of God, whatever it was, was His rule; obedience to sovereign will is not a limited law. There may be no revelation to us of particular duties; but such things are recorded in Scripture; and the readiness to do whatever God's will may be, is right; and spiritual discernment becomes a command. St. Paul was not to go into Mysia and Bithynia. He used also the xlix. of Isaiah, and called it a command when it applied. We may have none of the first as He had it, and much less of the discernment; but the principle of readiness to any will of God is right. Again, there is the active bringing forth of fruit to God which characterises Christianity in contrast with the law. The fruits of the Spirit, the bringing forth fruits, and much fruit. Gal. v. 22, which is impossible to ascribe to law. Rom. vii.; John xv.; so Phil. i. 11, "Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God." Surely these are not according to a rule of law.

I would just refer, with more preciseness, to Gal. ii. Its reasoning is this. If I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor in destroying them. Now, I have left the law, argues the apostle, to come to Christ. If I set it up again, I was wrong in destroying it; but Christ led me to do it, and thus He has brought me into what is wrong. Thus, in setting up the law again, you make Christ a minister of sin. It is setting up the law again after Christ that the apostle has to combat everywhere. We have seen that it was not only justification which was in question. They had abandoned the law because it could not justify, but they had left it altogether. And they were charged with Antinomianism. Thereupon, the apostle answers not by setting up the law in another shape again, but by declaring that there is a new nature, and walking according to this rule, Christ, looking to Him, and walking as He walked, and the Spirit, in following which they were not under law, but produced fruits, against which there was no law. Patience with sincere souls, who are under law, is all right. God only can deliver them; but clear scriptural truth is all important for the glorifying of Christ, even for their sakes who are under law.

FRAGMENT.

Adam: innocent and blessed; his creature-blessedness to continue so long as he owned the authority of God's Word and did not touch one tree:

Man: sinful in nature and in works—under a law which cursed every one that was not sinless:

And under Christ, who saves the lost through faith—becomes their life and everlasting blessing:

Give us three very distinct and different positions and states of man.

No. XXII.

JACOB'S LAST WORDS.

A COMPLETE HISTORY OF ISRAEL AS A NATION IN
THE PRE-MILLENNIAL EARTH.

GENESIS xlviii. and xlix. introduce us to a scene of great moral beauty; every element of which tells us how divine is its order, depth and harmony. Not only does it present to us a comprehensive range of the counsels of God, in connexion with His earthly people; but it is invested with an additional interest, if we consider the *one* who declares these counsels, and the circumstances under which he declares them. It was a moment when life was ebbing fast, and earth receding from the view of the dying patriarch; he, whose previous course had not been bright, but whose end is here marked with all the brilliancy of a sunset—calm, blessed, and full of light and glory.

The history of Jacob had been eventful, chequered, and strongly-marked with crookedness; but he had, nevertheless, held fast the promises of God, and grounded his line of conduct thereon—though the means he had taken to reach them were, for the most part, carnal. He had passed from stage to stage in the divine school; Bethel, Peniel, and Beersheba had followed one another;—the anguish of the loss of Joseph had been succeeded by his resurrection from the dead (as it were); and, from thence, a marked restoration is discernible in his soul. The light then waxed brighter and brighter, until such a flood of illumination envelopes his death-bed, that, in company with the mind of the Lord, his gaze, after first resting on the promised land, and then reviewing his own course, and taking his position from thence, stretches *far* out into future ages and dispensations, and rests not till

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it has scanned the whole history of God's people, from the time of their redemption out of Egypt, till Christ shall appear as their Deliverer; in fact, it embraces the whole range of Jewish history, from Exodus to Rev. xix.

Let us review this wondrous scene in detail. It is divided into three parts: the oath, the reviewal, and the blessing, or rather prophecy. The first seems to have taken place shortly before his death (xlvii. 29); the last two are, properly, the death-bed scene, with which we have to do.

Israel is about to die: and, on the approach of Joseph, he strengthens himself and sits on the bed, in preparation for what was to follow; but, ere *Israel* (the prince with God) can declare God's mind, *Jacob*, the man in nature, must review his own individual course, and acknowledge God's faithfulness therein. Thus we read—"God Almighty appeared unto me at Luz, in the land of Canaan, and blessed me." This was the starting-point of his course. Luz (signifying separation or departure), turned into Bethel (the house of God) by the Lord's manifestation to him, was where the Lord had met and blessed him. The scope of that blessing related to the earth: "Behold, I will make thee fruitful, and multiply thee: and I will make of thee a multitude of people, and will give this land to thy seed after thee, for an everlasting possession." And, on the ground of this (dropping the narrative of his own history for a moment), he takes Joseph's two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, as his own; he declares that as Reuben and Simeon they shall be his, and then he defines their relative positions, and marks out their portion and inheritance in the earth. But, ere he proceeds, one epoch more in his own personal history is to be reviewed: one, indeed, which was the pivot on which all the rest turned; and which is introduced here on account of its moral connexion with the moment. He had been detailing the earthly future of his grandsons, mapping out their respective allotments, and, in the midst of it, his own position and experience seems to rise before him *in contrast*: as he turns for a moment from them, and says, "*As for me.*" It was a contrast; for in these Israel, *individually*, had no part. He was passing away

from the earth, after having undergone experiences which had blighted it to him, and he says: "As for me, when I came from Padan, Rachel died by me in the land of Canaan in the way, when yet there was but a little way to come unto Ephrath: and I buried her there in the way of Ephrath." How beautiful are those words "*As for me!*" What a tale they unfold, of a heart which has emerged from the crucible of suffering, which has been brought in spirit to the tomb, and has left there all most dear to its natural affections and instincts, but which is content to leave them there, and seeks no more for an outlet for them below. And how strikingly the manner and moment in which the dying Jacob utters this brief clause throws out into relief the contrast which we have noticed above. It is as if he said—"You have hopes and interests *here*: but, *as for me*, mine were buried at Ephrath." In Rachel all his human affections and desires were centred; he had served seven years for her, and they "seemed but a few days for the love he had for her." In every subsequent action of his life, whether at the "brook Jabbok," or in his extreme fondness for her two sons, it is evident that she commanded his heart. She died, and his earthly hopes died with her. But what then? Almost in the same breath he adds,— "the same is Bethlehem"; the very spot which had entombed his earthly affections was that from whence He should arise, on whom all the promises were based; and who should be the hope and satisfaction of every renewed heart. "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto me, that is to be ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting" (Micah v. 2; Psalm cxxxii, 6.) The royal seed—the hope of the nation did not spring from Rachel. Judah—the royal tribe—was Leah's offspring; but the place which enclosed the tomb of Rachel was the spot from whence that seed arose, and was preserved from generation to generation. Bethlehem was the birth-place of Jesse, who sprang from Ruth the Moabitess; and the blessing pronounced on Boaz, in Ruth iv. 11 (margin), is beautifully illustrative

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of the connexion: "Get thee riches in Ephratah, and proclaim thy name in Bethlehem." There also was David born, and there arose the greater than David, on whom the prophetic eye of Jacob doubtless rested (if not intelligently, the Spirit in him pointed thereto), when he said "the same is Bethlehem;" the tomb of his earthly hopes was the birthplace of his heavenly ones—Ephrath and Bethlehem were one and the same place. Death and resurrection go together in the counsels of God and the experience of his people. As surely as Ephrath does the work of death for us, so surely will it become a Bethlehem to us.

This episode is a precious link in the chain of Jacob's utterances. Standing in remembrance on Bethlehem Ephratah—the scene of death and resurrection, the earth receding before him—he takes the place of a heavenly man, and, from this elevated position, declares "things to come." He can *now* turn again to the earthly expectants, as above them, but still identifying himself with them, as one who has done with *self* best can: "And he said, Bring them near, I pray thee, unto me, and I will bless them." . . . "And he brought them near unto him; and he kissed them, and embraced them. And Israel said unto Joseph, I had not thought to see thy face: and, lo, God hath showed me also thy seed." "And Joseph brought them out from between his knees." It is well to observe the attitude here described. Israel, having arisen at the approach of Joseph, was sitting on the bed while all that has been recounted took place, and, when he desired his grandsons to be brought near, they must have been placed "between his knees" while he embraced them. But, from this endearing position, Joseph now removes them, for Israel is about to worship. He is going to perform that act which the Spirit of God takes special note of in Heb. xi.; and every touch of this scene being in harmony, Joseph, it seems instinctively, draws the children aside, and he (*i.e.* Israel), bows himself, with his face to the earth. Israel had often bowed himself before. In the close of the previous chapter we read, "he bowed himself upon the bed's-head;" but that *this* special instance was an act of faith

is plain, by the Holy Ghost's comment on it. "*By faith* Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph, leaning upon the top of his staff." Moreover, he bowed himself with his *face to the earth*. May we not say that it was at this moment that the counsel of God was imparted to him; at least, that full disclosure of it which his subsequent utterances declare. In the attitude of subjection to God's mind and will, having reviewed his own life, scanned the tomb of his hopes, and discerned in the spring-light the green blade that was to arise from thence—he now worships, leaning on his staff; the emblem of his pilgrimage, in which he had learnt that God whose counsel he was about to declare. His action is emblematic of his mind, will, heart and affections, being in abeyance to God, and he is, therefore, a fit vessel for God's counsels, which the Spirit now reveals to him. *Now* he knows well how to place Ephraim and Manasseh, though "his eyes were dim that he could not see." Joseph is far behind him in intelligence; *he* may place them in the order of nature, but Israel, in the power of the Spirit, will thwart his arrangement, and God's order must be preserved: Ephraim, the younger, must be first.

Israel continues: "Behold I die; but God shall be with you, and bring you again into the land of your fathers." "Moreover, I have given to thee one portion above thy brethren, which I took out of the hand of the Amorite with my sword and my bow." What portion was this? Was it not that parcel of ground in Shechem, which he bought from Hamor? Chap. xxxiii. 19. This seems probable from Josh. xxiv. 32, where we find that this purchase "became the inheritance of the children of Joseph; and again, in John iv., we read of Sychar or Sychem, "that parcel of ground which Jacob gave to his son Joseph." But why does he say, "which I took out of the hand of the Amorite with my *sword and my bow*?" This may be explained, by remembering the quarrel between Jacob's sons and the Shechemites, in Gen. xxxiv., which *may* have occasioned the forfeiture of the possession. And if so, he must have regained it by force; *i.e.*, by "sword and by bow."

This bequest closes the *private* part of the scene, viz.,

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that which took place between Israel, Joseph, and Joseph's sons. But now it enlarges into one of *wider* range, and Jacob, ceasing to address Joseph exclusively, but still retaining the same attitude, summons *all* his sons to hear the purposes of God committed to him concerning themselves. They were the nucleus of the nation; consequently, we have in his utterance a full epitome of the history of the Jewish nation from its call to its future restoration. His words are more a prophecy than a blessing; he is going to tell "that which should befall them in the last days."

"Gather yourselves together, and hear ye *sons of Jacob*, and hearken unto *Israel* your father." Mark! the double appellation he gives himself, indicative of the double communication about to be made. They were, indeed, the sons of *Jacob*; the failing crooked Jacob; the supplanter, and the history of their own evil and corruption, well attested their origin; but it was from *Israel*—the one who had "prevailed with God"—that they were to receive God's counsel, which was to drop from his lips; and in the light of that counsel, they might descry the bright end and consummation of their blessing, though the intervening parts were to be so dimmed and clouded by sin.

"*Reuben* my first-born, my might, and the beginning of my strength," etc. etc. Here we have the nation as Son of Israel.—God's first-born, called and chosen. "Thus saith the Lord, Israel is my son, even my first-born." (Exodus iv. 22.) But immediately failure and defilement comes in, Reuben, son of *Israel*, is God's chosen and first-born. Reuben, son of *Jacob*, is "Unstable as water," etc. And so it proved. No sooner had the people been redeemed from Egypt, and ere the song of deliverance had died away on the banks of the Red Sea, than evil comes in; idolatry and defilement of every form succeeds, and continues during the whole period of their occupation of the land of their inheritance.

Simeon and *Levi* (ver. 5—7). Israel (the nation) a step farther in sin, having committed a deed of murder, even that of their Messiah, of which the bloody deed of

Simeon and Levi towards the Shechemites (chap. xxxiv.) was the type. The penalty uttered consequent on this is, "I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel." This double prediction has been literally fulfilled in the double sense in which it was uttered. As sons of Jacob; *i.e.*, regarded as individuals, men in natural brotherhood; they *were* "divided;" their league, formed in sin, was not kept up by proximity or unity of inheritance. Simeon, we find by Joshua xix. 1—9, had no distinct inheritance; the portion allotted to him being within the precincts of Judah, and Levi's portion was among all the tribes. On the other hand, they were "scattered in Israel;" that is, regarding them, not as individuals but as a type of the whole nation, to which the murder of Christ bore the same relation as that of the Shechemites to Simeon and Levi personally. This deed filled up the measure of the nation's sin, and they were dispersed and scattered from that land, which was their rightful inheritance, not through their *Jacob-nature*, but through their *Israel-calling*.

Judah (8—12). Here we have the nation at that stage of its history which it occupied at the Lord's first coming. Christ personifies the tribe in its royal character; therefore the blessing and prophecy opens with Him, who is the root and offspring of David. "Thou art He whom thy brethren shall praise; Thy hand shall be on the neck of thy enemies; Thy father's children shall bow down before Thee." He is the "lion's whelp"—the "lion of the tribe of Judah," who, after leading captivity captive, ascended and rests at God's right hand. "From the prey, my son, thou art gone up, He couched as a lion; who shall rouse Him up."

Verse 10 drops the personal aspect, and takes up the history of the tribe; and intimates that the sceptre shall not depart from Judah until the Shiloh come. Shiloh is Christ in another character; not as the Lion, but the *sent one*—the Saviour; not as *embodying* the tribe, but *springing out* of it. Thus we learn that the tribe should preserve its tribal character until the Saviour should come; שֵׁבֶט translated "sceptre," literally means "rod";

taken from Num. xvii. where all the tribes had rods, and each rod was emblematic of its respective tribe. Judah, then, should not lose his rod or tribal character until the Lord appeared; and this was what actually took place. "And to Him shall the gathering of the people be." The whole of the present age is passed over between these last two clauses, and the two comings of Christ are linked together, showing their close connection one with the other. The "gathering of the people" ought to have been to Him at His first appearing, but it was not so; He was rejected; and the prophecy, omitting the notice of this, passes on to the day of His power, when it will be so; and still farther (v. 11), to the day of millennial blessing, resulting from Christ's power and rule, of which v. 11, 12, give us a vivid picture. Thus, the prophecy of Judah is that of Israel in its royal character, Christ being the rightful heir to the throne, it opens by the tribe or nation being merged in His person. All who had rightfully occupied the throne of David were but types of Him who is to fill it throughout the millennial age, so that the real gist of the prophecy relates to Him.

Zebulun returns to the historical narrative which Judah had stretched beyond, and presents Israel, mingled with the nations, trafficking among them as they are now, and have been ever since their dispersion.

Issachar intensifies the picture; and shows us Israel in servile submission to the Gentile, "couching between two burdens." For the sake of ease and gain, he has "bowed his shoulder to bear and become a servant to tribute."

The rest of the prophecies reach on to the end; and the remaining five severally personate those who will bear the most prominent part in the scene during the last week of Daniel—"the end of the age" which will wind up the seventy weeks of Jewish history.

Thus we find typified in them the wilful king,—the offspring and antitype of Dan, Christ, the suffering Lamb—the true Joseph. And *between* these two, the godly remnant (Gad, Asher, and Naphtali), under the pressure and persecution of Antichrist on the one hand;

but sustained by the sympathies of Christ on the other. The position which these three tribes occupy, in the order of Jacob's utterances, is indicative of that moral position which their antitypes will occupy during this period: exposed, yet sheltered; crushed, yet sustained; overcome, yet victorious.

We now return to the detail.

Dan, the nation under the wilful king. A fearful phase in Israel's history is now reached, and ere it is unfolded, the Spirit of God, by way of relief, reveals what shall follow. "Dan shall judge his people as one of the tribes of Israel." Notwithstanding the iniquitous picture about to be portrayed, grace shall triumph in the end; Dan shall recover himself and share in millennial blessing and rule.

Thus, we find in Ezekiel xxviii. after the vision of the holy waters and when the earth becomes a scene of peace and blessing, instead of violence and evil, "a portion for Dan" is marked out in spite of his past history. But in the interval—during that period of which these prophecies treat—Dan develops that vein of blasphemy and idolatry which has been discovered early in his history. It was an offspring of Dan who "blasphemed the name of the Lord and cursed" (Lev. xxiv. 11), and who, in consequence, was doomed by the express word of the Lord to be stoned, and "*to bear his sin.*" It was "children of Dan" who set up a graven image (Judges xviii.) while the "house of God was in Shiloh." And it is probable that the "man of sin," the full-blown fruit of blasphemy and idolatry will arise from this tribe, which is the only one of the twelve from which a company of holy ones—"servants of our God"—is not sealed or set apart for preservation in Rev. vii. At any rate, Dan is here presented as typifying that evil one who characterizes and leads the ungodly part of the nation during this fearful period, and is very fitly described as "a serpent by the way," "an adder in the path." Deceit and treachery attend his steps, and entrap all who are not kept by divine power.

At this point the Spirit in the dying prophet breaks forth: "I have waited for Thy salvation, O Lord!"

This is the relief from man's full-blown and matured iniquity;—God and His salvation. This will be the utterance of the holy remnant—that part of the nation which will be exposed through their godliness and faithfulness to the fury of Dan's offspring, and Jacob, in spirit with them, utters this ejaculation; to the human eye, a break in the narrative, but to the spiritual mind, how beautiful a link! This brief clause lifts the veil, and shows us what is so often found in the Psalms, viz.: the inner life, the experience, of these godly sufferers, whose outward position and character then follows:

Gad, Asher, Naphtali—present the faithful Jewish remnant under different aspects. In Gad we see it in its suffering aspects, under pressure and persecution from the evil one, “overcome by a troop” in the first instance, but with the assurance given that he “shall overcome at last.” However the enemy's power may prosper for a time, Gad shall overcome “through the blood of the Lamb.”

In Naphtali we find the same company delivered; the victory promised to Gad is celebrated in Naphtali. He is “a hind let loose, and giveth *goodly words*.” His lips open in testimony and praise. The victory has been accomplished “through the blood of the Lamb, and the word of their testimony,” and on the sea of glass these victorious ones sing the song of Moses, and the song of the Lamb. Rev. xv.

Asher gives us another aspect of the remnant. The fatness of the earth shall be his.

JOSEPH—the Lamb on Mount Sion. (Rev. xiv.) He who has sustained these godly ones through the strife. In communion with Him throughout that week of suffering, they know that He was once “sorely grieved and shot at,” but His bow abode in strength, and the arms of His hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob.” And “*from thence* is the Shepherd, the stone of Israel.” Mark! those words “*from thence*.” The suffering Messiah becomes the glorified Messiah, even as the suffering Joseph became the Shepherd of Israel. “The stone which the builders have refused has become the head of the corner.” Thus we find

this rich cluster of blessings for Christ are all in connexion with His rejection and suffering. They are poured "on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him who was separate from his brethren." All blessings are his, whether of the heights above or the depths beneath. (Ver. 26.) Moreover, the blessings brought on by Him prevail even over those of Abraham. Unlimited to earth and to earthly kingdoms, "they extend unto the utmost bounds of the everlasting hills"—the heavenly regions; and all are centred in Him, the once suffering and rejected, the sanctified and consecrated one.

Benjamin presents to us Christ in another character, not as associating Himself with the sufferers in sympathy, but associating them with Him in victory. He comes for the deliverance of His people; and they, identified with Him in victory, form part of the antitype, that is, the prophecy to Benjamin points on to the nation (or the godly part of it) as victorious, merged in the person of Christ, who bears the character of conqueror and avenger. This is the action of Isaiah lxiii. and Rev. xix. He comes forth "glorious in apparel in the greatness of His strength," &c. "In the morning He will devour the prey, and at night He will divide the spoil."

Thus, we have in this very comprehensive Scripture the whole historical narrative of Israel. It commences with the calling of the first-born out of Egypt, and pursues the history throughout, the subsequent evil and corruption—the coming of Shiloh—the dispersion and mingling among the Gentiles—the nation under Antichrist—the remnant in suffering, testimony, and moral victory; and finally, the whole nation victorious in Christ, associated with Him in the day of His power; the gathering of the people to Him, and full millennial blessing brought in.

We have also the Lord in three different aspects, and in each aspect He is presented in full identification with the people at *that* stage of their history, and as the perfect expression of what they should be. He is the Lion's whelp of Judah (the royal tribe), the Lamb, the Shepherd, the Nazarite of Joseph; the Conqueror, Avenger, and Deliverer of Benjamin.

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Here this interesting scene closes, and the voice of the inspired patriarch is hushed in death, after delivering the oracles of God, oracles which must have surpassed his own intelligence, but with which his spirit was in full company, and his lips a ready and fitting instrument for the Holy Ghost to use in giving utterance to them.

It may be interesting, in connexion with the above, to glance for a moment at Deut. xxxiii., where we find the same people made the subject of dying utterance and blessings, but in a very different aspect and connexion. Moses was about to die *also*, and he knew well the character of the people whom he had led. Their evil and corruption he enters into fully in his song; but in his blessing (ch. xxxiii.) he views them from the height of God's thoughts and purposes, and in contrast to the actual history of the nation in its sin and failure, as declared by Jacob; he travels on in spirit to that age when a king shall reign in righteousness, and the law shall be in the people's hearts.

No doubt this blessing had a partial fulfilment in the possession of the land by the tribes under Joshua; Moses, on the borders of Canaan, views the people as already there, under God's government; but this was but a shadow of that full consummation which his eye of faith saw in the distance.

Thus the sentence on *Reuben* is exchanged for a blessing. "Let Reuben live and not die," etc.

Judah comes next, for the order of nature and of seniority is disregarded here, though carefully preserved in Gen. xlix. He is not viewed in connexion with the Lord as the Lion or Shiloh, but in his place among the tribes.

Simeon is omitted; his guilty league with Levi dissolved (Gen. xlix.), and *Levi* gets the honourable place of priesthood and separation.

Benjamin is in the place of safety, favour, and privilege.

Joseph is regarded in millennial blessing, the result of the suffering and separation portrayed by Jacob.

Zebulun and *Issachar* are freed from the yoke of the Gentile, and rejoice in liberty and plenty.

Gad is "enlarged" and delivered from his distress, and has "overcome at last."

Dan is no longer an "adder in the path," but a "lion's whelp." The simile of the wilful king is exchanged for that of the King of Righteousness.

Naphtali and *Asher*—satisfied with favour, and replete with earthly blessing.

"Israel then shall dwell in safety alone, the fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine. Also his heavens shall drop down dew." The nation is here seen in the enjoyment of full millennial blessing. The Jacob nature is lost in the Israel calling. These are the days in which a "king shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice on the earth." "In His days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely." Jer. xxiii. 5, 6.

FRAGMENT.

Owing to Joseph's two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, being brought-in in place of Joseph—there are thirteen instead of twelve tribes. In speaking of the twelve tribes, one of the thirteen is commonly omitted. Attention may well be called to this; and the enquiry raised on what principle now one, and now another of them is omitted; and why the order is different in different places.

JACOB means Supplanter; ISRAEL, a Prince with God.

REUBEN, Lo! a son; SIMEON, Hearing; LEVI, Union; JUDAH, Praise; ZEBULON, Dwelling; ISSACHAR, Hire; DAN, Judgment; GAD, a Troop; ASHER, Prosperity; NAPHTALI, Wrestling; JOSEPH, He shall add; BENJAMIN, Son of the right hand; MANASSEH, Forgetting; EPHRAIM, Fruitful.

Nº. XXIII.

THE TESTIMONY OF GOD—THE PROBATION
OF MAN—THE GRACE AND THE GOVERN-
MENT OF GOD.

NOTHING, except personal salvation and the soul's communion with our God, can be of greater importance or of deeper interest to the Christian, than the testimony which God has rendered to himself in this world of darkness. Moreover, both salvation and communion depend on this testimony. What would man's condition be without it? What is his condition where this testimony has not penetrated? What an immense privilege to possess the thoughts of God Himself, especially with regard to that which concerns us morally; to be in relationship with God by means of the communication of His thoughts, to be called His friends, and to enjoy this privilege in reality by the possession of the most true, the most intimate testimonies of His thoughts and affections. And observe, that man being here the great object of his affections, these are developed in the ways of God with regard to man; ways which even the angels desire to look into.

In effect, man, according to the wisdom of God, is the being with regard to whom the character of God, and all His moral dealings, are displayed the most completely and in the most perfect and admirable manner. It is in no wise the intellectual capacity of man, or the moral power of man, which rendered him so fit for this; because—even without taking the fall of man into account—it is not the judgment that he can form of what God is, which is the means of revealing God. From the fact, that man is a feeble and imperfect being, his judgment would always be below the truth, with respect to God, in proportion as he is himself

below God. Moreover, innocent man would have neither the need nor the desire to form a judgment respecting God. He would simply enjoy the bounties of God with thanksgiving. On the other hand, sinful man is quite incapable of forming a sound judgment, even of his own state or of his position before God: he has not even the desire to do it. No! *God reveals Himself*, in His own ways, with regard to man. An angel does not furnish Him with the occasion for it as man does. An angel does not need mercy, grace, pardon, divine righteousness, a Priest-power, which, while sustaining him in weakness, raises him from among the dead. An angel is not, in consequence of all this, made like unto Christ, a glorified man, identified with His interests by incarnation. An angel is a testimony to the creative and preserving power of God; he excels in strength; we see in him a creature kept by God; so that he has not lost his first estate. Now, grace and redemption, patience, mercy, divine righteousness, do not apply to a state like this, but suit well with that of fallen man. The angels, therefore, desire to sound the depths of the wondrous ways of God towards man. It is of the heart of man, fallen to the lowest grade in the scale of intelligent beings, resembling, alas! the beast in his lusts, and Satan in his pride; a weak slave to his passions; strong, or rather arrogant, in his mind and pretensions; knowing good and evil, but possessing that knowledge in a conscience that condemns him; longing, by dint of suffering, after something better, but incapable of attaining it; feeling the want of another world than this material world, yet afraid of arriving at it; conscious that he ought to be in relationship with God, the only object worthy of an immortal soul, yet being at an infinite distance from God, through his lusts, and animated with such desire of independence that he will not admit God into the only place that befits Him, if He is God, and consequently endeavours to prove that there is no God;—it is of the heart of man, capable of the highest aspirations (by which he feeds his pride) and of the most degrading lusts, revolting even to his own conscience;—it is of the heart of man that God forms

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the harp which can sound forth, and shall sound forth for ever, all the harmony of His praises.

By the introduction of grace, and of the Divine power, that displays itself in the communication of a new life to man, and by the manifestation of the Son of God in human nature, fallen man is led to judge all evil according to the Divine affections that are formed in him by faith, and to enjoy good according to the perfect revelation of good in God Himself, manifested in Christ; while man joyfully gives God His place, because He is a God of love. Man resumes also the place of dependence—the only one that befits a created being—but of a dependence that is exercised in the intelligence of all the perfections of God, on whom he depends, and depends with gladness, as a son upon his father; like Christ Himself, who has taken this place in order that we might enter into it.

But in order that the character of God, that which He is, should unfold itself in man's condition, and that our hearts and consciences should take knowledge of it, man must pass through the various phases which furnish the occasion for God thus to display Himself in grace. Man must be, on the part of God, an innocent and happy creature; through his own will, a fallen and guilty one, and in a condition in which all the grace of God manifests itself, and in which He unfolds all the riches of His grace, in righteousness; while His sovereign good pleasure raises man to a height which depends entirely on that good pleasure, and which glorifies God Himself in the result produced, but glorifies a God of *love*. The result is, that His sovereign goodness has displayed itself towards the most entire misery, and has brought into communion with Himself the most perfect excellence.

We will briefly examine these ways of God towards man.

God created man innocent; that is to say, having neither malice nor corruption, nor evil desires, and without the discernment of good and evil—a discernment which he did not even need; for he only had to enjoy with gratitude the good that surrounded him. At the

same time, he was bound to obey; and his obedience was tested by his being forbidden to eat of one tree only, which stood in the midst of the garden.

Some have supposed that he had the knowledge of good, and that he gained the knowledge of evil. This is a mistake as to the force of the expression. He gained the knowledge of the inherent distinction between good and evil. He began to judge of that which is good and of that which is evil. To eat of the forbidden fruit was only evil, because he had been forbidden to eat of it; the act was not evil in itself. God took care that, in a state of sin, conscience should accompany man.

When in the state of innocence, man might have opportunity to enjoy visits from God, and to converse with God; but God did not dwell with him, nor he with God.

Man did not fall till he was tempted. The enemy suggested to his heart a distrust of God, and this distrust, by separating his heart from God, made way for his self-will and his lusts, as well as for the pride which desired to be equal with God. Now, self-will, lust, and pride are the characteristics of the present state of the natural man. Thus man separated himself from God by becoming, as to his will, independent of Him; that is to say, so far as sin can make us independent; so far as moral degradation makes us independent, of the sovereign good.

In this state, man could not bear to be in the presence of God. Far from it; that presence which threw divine light on man's condition, and made him sensible of what he had become; that presence which reminded him of his transgression, and of that which he had lost, was necessarily to him the most intolerable of all things. Man might cover himself, to his own eyes, from the shame of sin, but before God he knew that he was as naked as if not a fig-leaf had been found in the garden of Eden.

The question of God: "Adam! where art thou?" was equally touching and overwhelming. Why, when he heard the voice of God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, with the divine familiarity of a goodness

which could enter into communication with an innocent nature, why did not man run to meet him? *Where* was he? In sin and nakedness.

Now the Word of God lays man bare—a terrible truth when the conscience is bad! A truth, before which all pretension to independence vanishes, as falsehood does before the truth; leaving only the disgraceful guilt of the pretension itself, as well as that of the folly and ingratitude which sought this independence—the madness and ingratitude in which they desired to be independent of the supreme good.

Remark here, that the promise is made to the last Adam (not to the first), to the seed of woman; and that it precedes the banishment of the fallen Adam from the earthly Paradise. Thus, we see that man had fled from the presence of God, before God drove him out from the abode of peace in which He had placed him. But the authority of God must be maintained. Sin could not remain unpunished. Judgment must be exercised. The holiness of God abhors sin and repels it. The righteousness of God maintains his authority, according to that holiness, in executing just judgment on the wrong-doer. Man was exiled from Paradise, and *the world began*. Sin against one's neighbour, has been consummated in the world; as sin against God, in Paradise; and the death of the righteous (Abel) presents a striking figure of the death of the Lord Himself.

Driven out from the presence of God, man, in despair, sought to arrange and embellish the world; it was all that remained to him: and civilisation, the arts, and the attractions of a luxurious life, have occupied and developed the intelligence of a being who, no longer having any relationship with divine holiness and perfection, loses himself in that which is beneath him, while boasting in the fruits of his perverted intelligence.

But, without the repression of the human will by a superior force, civilisation—although it may for a moment deceive the judgment of man as to the state of his heart, by occupying his mind,—cannot check the power of his lusts, nor the violence of the will that seeks to satisfy them and to open a way for his passions in

defiance of all obstacles. The world was corrupt before God, and the world was full of violence.

But the grace of God did not leave itself without a witness. The sentence of God upon the serpent, announced the seed of the woman. Abel, who being dead yet speaketh, was a testimony to the power of evil and of Satan in the world, but he testified, also, of the acceptance, on God's part, of the righteous, who come to God by means of a sacrifice which recognises sin and expiates it, and establishes the basis of a hope outside the world in which He, who was accepted of God, had been rejected, and sacrificed to the hatred of the wicked. The departure of Enoch, who walked with God, confirmed this hope, and tended to assure faith (which believes that God is, and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him) that there is happiness for the righteous, in the presence of God who loves them—a happiness which the world can neither give nor take away. This — although obscure — nourished and sustained the faith of those who strove to walk with God, while evil still went on increasing.

When this evil had almost reached its height, another witness was raised up, in the person of one who was to pass through the judgment that put an end to the frightful development of wickedness which took place in spite of the testimony already rendered.

It was a testimony, not for the affections of the saints, to carry them beyond the world, but a testimony of judgment upon the world itself: necessary judgment, according to the principles of divine government; but in the midst of which a little righteous remnant should be preserved in an ark of salvation, which God revealed.

Such was the condition of man, such his history, when, in consequence of the violation of a law, he had been driven out of the earthly Paradise in which God had placed him, and was left to his own will without law, although not without testimony. The deluge had to put an end to a state of things in which corruption and violence had covered the face of the earth, and had left only eight persons willing to hear the testimony which

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God granted them with regard to the impending judgment.

During the period that elapsed between the expulsion of Adam from the earthly Paradise and the flood, men formed but one family, one race. There was no idolatry. Man was left to his own ways, not without testimony, but without outward restraint. Evil became insupportable. The flood put an end to it. After this event, this judgment from God, a new world began, and the principle of government was introduced. He who slew a man was to be himself put to death; restraint was put on violence, a bridle on outward sin: corruption of *heart*, in a world estranged from God, remained as it was. Although there were as yet no nations, the fate of different races, even as it has continued to this day, began to dawn, at least prophetically. Noah failed in the place given him after the flood, as Adam had failed in Paradise, as man has always failed, and every creature which has not been directly sustained of God.

The reader may, in passing, notice Adam as a figure of Him who was to come—the second Adam; and Noah as a figure also of Christ, inasmuch as the government of the world and the repression of evil were now committed to man. Two great principles, which subsist to the present day, characterise the world which develops itself after Noah; they are connected with the tower of Babel. Hitherto, whether before or after the flood, the human race was but one family. Now, in consequence of the judgment on man who seeks to exalt himself on the earth, and to make himself a name, a centre, which shall give him power,—God scatters the builders of the tower, and they become nations, tongues, and peoples. The present form of the world was constituted, with respect to its divisions into divers tribes and nations. Besides this, individual energy forms an empire, which has Babel for its centre and starting point.

Now that the world is constituted, we come to the testimony and the dealings of God. Within this system of nations, there were divers tongues, peoples, and nations. The judgment of God had thus arranged the world; but an immense fact now appears in the history of the world.

The sin of man is no longer only sin against God, manifested in corruptness and in the activity of an independent will, but demons take the place of God Himself, to the eye and imagination of men. Idolatry reigns among the nations, and even in the race that is nearest to God: the race of Shem. Although, at bottom, this idolatry was every where the same, each nation had its own gods. In the system established by God Himself at the time of His judgment upon the race at the tower of Babel, men acknowledge demons as their gods. This gives rise to the call of Abram. The God of glory manifests Himself to him, and calls on him to leave his country, his kindred, and his father's house. He must break entirely with the system which God had established; and that, in his closest relationships. He must be for God, and for God only. He is chosen by sovereign grace; and, called of God, he walks by faith; and promises are made to him.

But this call introduces another principle of great importance. There had been already many faithful ones who had walked with God: Abels, Enochs, Noahs; but none of these was, like Adam, the head of the evil, the head of a race. Now Abram, being called, became the head of a race that inherited promises outside the world. This may be developed spiritually, in Christians, or carnally, in the people of Israel; but the heirs of promise (and this applies to Christ Himself,) possess it as the seed of Abraham. If the nations, peoples, families, and tongues, took demons for their gods, God took a man by His grace, to be the head of a family, the root from which a nation belonging to Himself, should arise. The fatness of God's olive tree is found in those who grow upon the root of Abraham, whether it be in a people who are his seed according to the flesh, or in a seed that receives the promised blessings because it belongs to Christ, the true seed of the promise. This call and this vocation remain firmly established, whatever may be the phases through which the objects to whom they apply, may have to pass. Christ Himself came to fulfil the promises made to the fathers, a witness to the unchangeable truth of God.

The state of the first heirs, changes nevertheless; and in a little while, we find a people almost regardless of

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the promises, and who, far removed from the faith of Abraham, are groaning under the yoke of an unrelenting tyranny.

This state of God's people leads to an event in which a principle of immense importance is set forth, namely, that of Redemption, or the deliverance of God's people from the consequences of their sins, and from the bondage in which they were held. We shall see also, in the fruits of this redemption, facts of the deepest interest to ourselves.

The cry of the people had reached the ear of the Lord of Hosts, and He comes down to deliver them. But the Saviour is also the just judge, and He must reconcile these two characters. To be able to deliver, His justice must be satisfied. A God who is not just, cannot, morally speaking, be a Saviour. It is in this character that God appears, definitively, when He delivers the people. He had manifested His power in inducing Pharaoh to let the people go, in asserting His own rights over Israel; but their deliverance had to be accomplished without the good will of man, and by the judgments of God, by the full manifestation of what He is with regard to evil, and in love also, that he might be really known.

Now, the people themselves were, in certain respects, more guilty than the Egyptians, and God comes as a judge. But the blood of the Paschal Lamb is on their door, and the Israelites escape the judgment due to them; according to the value of that blood in the eyes of God. God judges, and, because of the blood which faith has acknowledged, passes over His guilty people.

But Israel was still in Egypt, their deliverance was not yet effected, although the price of their redemption was paid in figure. Israel sets out. Arriving at the Red Sea, the question of their deliverance or their ruin must be decided. Pharaoh had pursued them, sure of his victory. The wilderness, in which Israel was apparently lost, presented no outlet; and the Red Sea—type of death and judgment—was close before them. On the morrow, Israel saw only the dead bodies of their enemies who had perished in the same sea which had

proved the path of salvation to the people of God. The death and judgment of Christ brings us through, dry-shod, afar from the place of our captivity.

Redemption is much more than the fact, that we are preserved from the judgment of God. It is a deliverance wrought by God. He Himself acts on our behalf, and brings us into an entirely new position by the exercise of His own power.

We have, in this important history, the figures of the great events on which our eternal happiness is founded. It prefigures propitiation, redemption, and justification in a two-fold aspect; on the one side, propitiation by blood, which delivers us from all imputation of sin before the righteousness of God; and on the other, our introduction, by virtue of the value of that blood, into an entirely new position by resurrection. Christ has been delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification.

Some very important principles present themselves to us in connection with deliverance by redemption. God *dwells* with the redeemed, He is in their midst. He did not dwell with Adam when innocent, nor with Abraham when called by grace and the heir of the promises; but as soon as Israel is ransomed and delivered by redemption, God dwells in the midst of the people. Compare Exodus, xv. 2; xxix. 45, 46.

The holiness of God and of His relationship with His people, appears then for the first time. Never in Genesis is the holiness of anything whatsoever presented to us, (save only the sanctification of the Sabbath in Paradise), nor even the holiness of the character of God. But Exodus, xv. and xix; Lev. xix. 26; and other passages, show us that, redemption once accomplished, God takes this character and establishes it as necessary for all in relationship with Him. Compare Exodus, vi. 5.

In immediate connection with this truth, we find another which, moreover, flows necessarily from redemption, namely, that the redeemed are no longer their own. God has taken them for Himself, they are consecrated to God, set apart for him. They are brought to God Himself, Exodus, xix. 4.

Israel enters the wilderness, (the character of this

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world to the people of God who are conscious of their redemption), and in it the faithfulness of God takes care of His people. Afterwards they enter Canaan; where there are victories to be won in order to enjoy in this world the heavenly privileges that belong to us. As regards title, we possess these privileges before gaining a single victory; but to realise them, we must overcome. The wilderness and Canaan prefigure the two parts of Christian life: patience in this world, under the hand of God who conducts us; and victory in our conflicts with Satan, in order that we may enjoy, and lead others to enjoy, spiritual privileges.

But another very important principle comes to light during the sojourn of Israel in the wilderness. If the reader examines Exod. xv. — xviii., he will find that all is grace. But in chap. xix., the people put themselves under the law, and accept the enjoyment of the promises on condition of their obedience to all that the Lord should say. Obedience was a duty; but to put themselves under this condition, was to forget their own weakness, and to secure their own ruin, a consequence which did not fail to take place. Before Moses had come down from the mount, Israel had made the golden calf. The patience of God continued His relationship with the people, by means of the intercession of Moses, until, as Jeremiah says, there was no more remedy. But our present object is to point out the ways of God, and not to enter into detail.

The promises of God had been made to Abraham unconditionally, and, in consequence, the question of righteousness had not been raised. Now, it was raised; and at first, as was reasonable, righteousness in man was demanded on the part of God.

Righteousness was the creature's duty. The question must needs be raised, but the result was — and with sinners it could not be otherwise — that man, having broken the law, had aggravated his sin instead of attaining to righteousness. With a rule that would have made his happiness if he had kept it, he is but a transgressor, and so much the more guilty before God. It

was, however, in order to convince him of his sinfulness, that the law, which led to positive transgression, was given him. God had never the thought of saving man by a law; and man needs to be saved. The law of God must necessarily propose a rule which expresses the perfection of a man, indeed, that of all intelligent creatures. But that can do nothing else than bring sin to light, when man is already sinful. When the law is spoken of, this last truth is often forgotten. Nevertheless, the law of God must necessarily be the perfect expression of that which man ought to be; that is to say, it must condemn sinful man. If a piece of cloth that has been sold me is too short, an exact measure will add nothing to its length; but it makes the fraud manifest. By the law is the knowledge of sin. The question of human righteousness has been settled by the law. Ordained with a promise of life on obedience, it has been, in fact, a ministry of death and condemnation to those who were under its yoke.

This is an immense fact or principle. Human righteousness does not exist. The guiltiness of man is manifested.

We have seen that God has displayed the utmost patience with regard to man under the law; while preparing him for a better hope. He sent His prophets to admonish them, to seek fruit on His vine. They were all rejected. Finally, He sent His Son. All was in vain. His Son was cast out of the vineyard and put to death. But this displays another character of sin. Men have rejected the mercy of God, even as they had failed in the just requirements of the law. God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. But man had no desire for this reconciliation; he would not have God on any terms. For His love, Christ found hatred. When He appeared, they saw no beauty in Him, that they should desire Him.

Thus, the sin of man was completely demonstrated. Innocent, he forsook God. Afterwards, when left to himself (except the testimony of God), he made the world such a scene of corruption and violence, that God

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had to bring the flood over it. Set under the law, he broke it, and worshipped unclean gods of his own invention. God Himself comes in mercy into this world of sin, with the manifestation of the most perfect love, and of a power capable of re-establishing man in happiness on the earth; but the affection of the flesh is enmity against God, and men manifested that enmity by rejecting Jesus and putting Him to death. The cross of Christ served as a proof that man hated God, and they expressed their hatred by the rejection of the Saviour. Morally speaking, this is the end of man's history. Thoroughly tested, he shows himself to be corrupt and violent, a transgressor and guilty; but, more than that, he hates the God of goodness.

That which we have now gone over, is the history of man under probation. There remains the history of the grace of God towards man, and the government of the world on God's part.

There cannot be a more important question for the soul than this: Where shall I obtain righteousness before God? We have said that the law raised this question. It is of consequence to see the position which this question takes when the law has been given.

Ever since the existence of man on the earth, the question between responsibility and grace has existed. In the earthly Paradise, there was the tree of life, which only imparted life; and the tree of knowledge of good and evil, with which man's responsibility was connected. As to the tree of life, man did not eat of it; and, once become a sinner, mercy, quite as much as justice and the moral order of God's government, denied him access to it. An immortal sinner on the earth would have been an anomaly not to be tolerated in the government of God. Moreover, man deserved to be shut out of the garden. He had failed in his responsibility. Before his fall he did not know sin; but he was in the relationship of a creature with God. There was no sin in eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, excepting in that he was forbidden to do so.

When man has fallen, the seed of the woman, the

last Adam, is immediately announced: the hopes of the human race are thenceforth placed on new ground. The presented deliverance does not consist in something which would only have been a means of recovery, founded on the energies of man already fallen; but another person is announced, who, although of the human race, should be a source of life that is independent of Adam; a person who should destroy the power of the enemy; a person who would not represent Adam, but who should take Adam's place before God; One who should be the seed of the woman, which Adam was not; and who should be at the same time an object of faith to Adam and his children,—an object which, being received into the heart, would be life and salvation to all who received it. The first Adam was made a living soul: he lost himself. The last Adam, the second man, is a quickening Spirit. Until the coming of Christ, the promise alone was the source of hope; alone, by grace, it engendered and sustained faith. We have to believe in the accomplishment of the promise. When God called Abraham, He gave him (Gen. xii.) the promise that in him the nations should be blessed. Afterwards (xxii.) this promise was confirmed to his seed. He who was to be the seed of the woman, was also to be the seed of Abraham. Thus the ways of God towards man are established on an indefeasible promise. A promise without conditions, simply a promise, which, consequently, did not raise the question of righteousness, or of man's responsibility.

Four hundred and thirty years after, the law was given, and it (as we have said) raises the question of righteousness,—and that, on the ground of man's responsibility,—by giving a perfect rule of that which man, the child of Adam, ought to be. But man, note it well, was already a sinner. This law had a double aspect, a kernel of absolute truth which the Lord Jesus brought out of its obscurity:—supreme love to God, and love for one's neighbour. This is the perfect rule of a creature's happiness, as a creature. Angels realise it in heaven. Man is as far as possible from fulfilling it on the earth. But this law is developed in the detail of

relative duties which flow from the relation in which man, in fact, stands towards God, and the mutual relationships between man and man here below. Now, in the circumstances in which man was found, these details are necessarily connected with his existing moral condition, they suppose sin and lusts, and forbid them. As a law of God, applying to the actual condition of man, it necessarily states the fact of sin, on the one hand, and on the other, necessarily condemns it. What can a law do in such a case, except condemn, and be, as the apostle says (2 Cor. iii.), a ministry of death and condemnation? It required righteousness according to a rule which man's conscience could not but approve, and which at the same time verified his guilt. In fact, the utility of the law consists in this: it gives the knowledge of sin. God never gave the law to produce righteousness. For this, an inward moral power is absolutely necessary; and the law on tables of stone is not that power. The law demands righteousness from man, and proclaims the righteous judgment of God, renders sin extremely sinful, and brings in the righteous wrath of God. No law produces a nature. Now, the nature of man was sinful. The commandment brings out the fact, that man seeks the gratification of that nature, in defiance of God's prohibitions. The law is thus (and because it is righteous and good) the strength of sin; it entered, that the offence might abound. They who are of the works of the law (these are not *bad* works: the apostle speaks of all who walk on this principle of law), are under the curse which it pronounces on those who disobey it. The flesh is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can it be. The promise of the Lord abideth sure; but man is put to the proof, that it may be manifested whether he is able to produce human righteousness, or not.

The law has been presented to man under two aspects: law unmingled, and law mingled with grace, *i.e.*, given to man after the intervention of grace, but leaving him to his own responsibility after a pardon granted by grace.

The history of the law in the first point of view is very

short. Before Moses came down from Mount Sinai, Israel had made the golden calf. The tables of the law never came into the camp. They were never able to form the basis of man's relationship with God. How reconcile the commandments with the worship of the golden calf? After this sin, Moses intercedes for the people, and receives the law anew. God acting in mercy according to His sovereignty, and proclaiming Himself to be merciful and full of grace. The relationship of the people with God, is founded on the pardon which God bestows; and is established no longer as an immediate relationship, but on the ground of the mediation of Moses: the people, nevertheless, are put under the law, and each one was to be blotted out of the book of God by his own sin, if he should become guilty. At the same time, the law is hidden in an ark; and God Himself is concealed behind a veil, within which blood was to be sprinkled on the mercy-seat, which, with the cherubims, formed the throne of God.

But this blending of grace and law could not serve any more than the unmingled law, to establish between God and man relationships that were able to stand. It could serve to demonstrate that whatever might be the patience of God, man, responsible for his conduct, could not obtain life by means of a righteousness to be accomplished by himself. Also, the impossibility in which man finds himself, of subsisting before the exigencies of the glory of God (however faintly revealed), is shown us in a remarkable figure, which the apostle uses in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians: the people entreat Moses to cover his face, which still shone with the reflection of the glory of the Lord, with which he had been in communication on the top of Mount Sinai. Man cannot bear the revelation of God, when God requires from man that which he ought to be before Him. The veil of the temple revealed indeed the same truth. God had to hide Himself; the way into the holiest was not yet manifested. A law was given on God's part to direct the life of man; a priesthood was established, to maintain the relationship of the people with God, in spite of their transgressions; but the people could not

draw near to God. Sorrowful state, in which the revelation of God's presence—the only thing that could really bless—necessarily kept those at a distance who needed the blessing! We shall see that in Christianity, it is precisely the contrary thing that takes place: the veil is rent.

But, let us pursue the ways of God under the law.

We have already seen, that in the system which we are considering, life was proposed to man as the result of his faithfulness. Whatever may be the patience and grace of God, all depends on this faithfulness; and not only is the responsibility of man in full play, but everything depends on the way in which he meets that responsibility. God has always exercised long-suffering and manifested His grace. He bore with Israel in the wilderness and brought them into the land of Canaan, in spite of all kinds of unfaithfulness on the part of the people. He put them in possession of the land, by giving them victories over their enemies. He raised up judges to deliver them, when unfaithfulness had brought them into subjection to their powerful neighbours. He sent them prophets to recall them to the observance of the law. Finally, with a goodness that would not judge them till every means had been used to win their hearts, He sent His Son to receive the fruit of His vine, on which He had bestowed all His care, and on which He had lavished so many testimonies of love. But His vine had only yielded sour grapes, and they who cultivated it, they to whom He committed it, rejected His servants, the prophets, and cast His Son out of the vineyard and slew Him. Such was the termination of the trial to which man was subjected under the law—all the grace and patience of God having been employed to induce him to obey, and to maintain him in obedience—all was in vain.

This is the history of man under the law. If we examine the bearing of the law upon the conscience, we shall find that it carries condemnation and death into it, as soon as it is spiritually understood; but we must not dwell on that point, as the object of this article is the consideration of the ways of God. Nevertheless, I cannot

leave this subject without entreating my readers to weigh thoroughly the bearing of the law, if it is applied to his conscience and his life before God, if he is responsible, (and truly he is so), if he can but acknowledge the justice and excellence of that which the law requires. If he sees that man ought to avoid that which the law condemns, and that the two commandments which form the positive part of the law, are the two pillars of creature-happiness; if he finds that he has constantly done and loved that which this law, and, with it, his own conscience, condemns, and that he has entirely failed in that which his conscience is obliged to own as the perfection of the creature; if all this is true, where is the life that is promised to obedience? How escape the condemnation pronounced on the violation of the law, if he puts himself on the ground of his own responsibility, and has to be judged according to a rule which he himself acknowledges to be perfect? Another law could not be found. If he is without any law, good and evil are indifferent—this is to say, that man is more than wicked—even the natural conscience is ruined—good does not exist—and man is unrestrained in evil, save by the violence of his neighbour, or the righteous judgment of God, manifested in such an event as the deluge. No; the law is good and righteous, and man knows that it is; his conscience tells him so. But, if the law is just and good, man, on the ground of his own responsibility, is lost. The life which it promises to obedience, man has not obtained; the judgment which will make good the authority and justice of the law, awaits him who has disobeyed it; and will be pronounced at the same time on all the shameless licence of an unbridled will. All the guilty will be reached. With regard to the law, as the apostle, (happily for the awakened conscience), expresses himself, that which was ordained unto life, man finds to be unto death.

Nevertheless, the presence of the Son of God in this world, had not for its only object to seek for fruit in His vine, on the part of Jehovah. This task had, indeed, but the smallest share in the object for which He came; it was necessary, no doubt, in order to manifest the condition of man, the child of Adam, responsible to God;

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but it was by no means the object of the counsels of God in the coming of Christ, nor even the principal thing that was revealed by his manifestation in the flesh. Moreover, the fact, that man has not brought forth the fruit which God had a right to expect, is not that which has filled up the measure of man's sin.—God was manifested in the flesh: He appeared—He is love—love then has been manifested. It has been manifested in connection with the wants, the weakness, the miseries, the sins of man. He was divine in His perfection, but He showed this perfection in adapting Himself perfectly to the state in which man was found. It was a love that was above all our miseries, but which adapted itself to all our miseries, and was not wearied out by any of them. The Lord Jesus manifested in His life here below, a power which entirely destroyed the dominion of Satan over men. He healed all the sick, cast out devils, raised the dead, fed the hungry. As man, He bound the strong man and despoiled him of his goods. And not only this, but — which is still more important — the most abandoned sinner found in Him a path by which he might return to God. God Himself was come to seek the sinner, God, who showed that no sin was too great for His love, no defilement too revolting for His heart. Satan had ruined man by destroying his confidence in God, God neglected nothing that could serve to re-establish it; and that, with perfect condescension: perfect, because His love could not do otherwise; perfect, because it was the true expression of His heart, which found in the miseries, the transgressions, the weakness, of men, the occasion of assuring them that He is Love on which they might always reckon.

We see, in fact, in the case of the woman who was a sinner, and the one whom the Lord met at Jacob's well, how much the love of the Saviour attracted the heart when once the awakening of the conscience had made the heart feel its need of His kindness. A confidence in His loving kindness was then produced which revived the heart and turned it from evil; a confidence which no human being could inspire, and which delivers the soul from the evil influences which surround and possess it, as well as from

the fear of man; in order to turn it towards God with a sincerity that proves it to be in the light with God; but which also proves that the goodness of God has found access to the heart, so that the latter has no desire to come out of a position in which all its evil is manifested, but manifested where all is love, and where one can rest, because all is known. It is a love which inspires confidence—for when all is known, God still is love. It is the divine character of Christ to be the Light which makes manifest all—the Love that loves when all is manifested, that knows all beforehand, that produces complete uprightness in the heart, because it is a relief that such a heart as His should know the whole.

Such was Christ upon the earth. One was *with God*. The sinner who would have been ashamed to shew himself to man could hide his face in the bosom of Jesus, sure of finding no reproach there. Not one sin allowed (had there been, confidence could not have been established, for the holy God would not have been revealed), but His was a heart which, in spite of the sin, received the sinner in its arms; and it was the heart of God. Christ was all this in the world, and He was much more than my poor pen can tell: and man rejected Him! He was all this, in spite of opposition, hatred, outrages, and death; but all was in vain as to man. It was this which definitively proved the state of man. Not only is he a sinner, not only has he broken the law, and resisted the appeals of the prophets; but when God Himself appeared on earth as goodness, man would not have Him: his heart was entirely hostile to God when He was fully manifested; not in His glory, which will crush every thing that rises up against Him, but with all the attractiveness of perfect goodness.

All the grievousness of man's condition does not lie in the fact that God has driven him out of Paradise, but much more in the fact that man, as far as depended on him, has driven God out of the earth, when He came in grace into such a world as the sin of man had made it. "Wherefore when I came, was there no man? When I called, was there none to answer?" "The carnal mind is enmity against God!"—At the beginning of His

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ministry, as we have noticed, Christ bound the strong man, and then despoiled him of his goods. But the result of the exercise of His ministry was the demonstration that man would not even have a Saviour-God, would not have God on any terms. Man, the child of Adam, has been totally condemned by the death of Jesus. There was no more to be done. God Himself had no other resource, no other means to employ, in the hope of awakening a desire for good in the heart of man. Not only was he a sinner, but nothing could bring him back to God. Everything had been tried, save the exceptional means founded on the intercession of Jesus upon the Cross: an intercession to which the Holy Ghost responds by the mouth of Peter, saying, that if, even then, Israel repented, Jesus would return. But Israel resisted this call likewise. God has exhausted all the resources of sovereign grace; He has exhausted them, and the heart of man has resisted them all.

A new nature was needed, and redemption; a justification available for the sinner before the throne of the righteous God, and a righteousness which could render man acceptable, without, on the other hand, there remaining a single sin with which God had to deal in judgment; and which did yet more: which rendered man perfectly well-pleasing in the eyes of God, fit for the glory that God had prepared for him.

An entirely new condition was needed, which should leave no trace in man, before God, of his former sinful condition. A condition was needed which should satisfy the glory of God, and render man capable of enjoying it.

According to the doctrine of Christianity, the question of man's responsibility is settled. That doctrine fully recognises his responsibility, but proclaims that man is lost. It is a message of pure love; but of a love that finds the basis of its exercise in the fact that man has already been put to the proof, and that he is lost. Christianity announces, that "The Son of man is come to seek and to save the lost." The day of judgment, which will execute the righteous judgment of God, has been anticipated to faith, by the distinct and plain declaration of the Gospel. The wrath of God has been

revealed from Heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hold the truth in unrighteousness; but the righteousness of God is also revealed to faith, on the principle of faith.

It is the death and resurrection of Jesus which reveal these things to us. His death closes the history of responsible man, His resurrection recommences the history of man according to God. His death is the point in which good and evil meet in all their strength for the triumph of the former. His resurrection is the exercise and the manifestation of the power which places man, in the person of Christ who has triumphed, and by virtue of His triumph, in a new position, worthy of the work by which Christ gained the victory, and worthy of the presence of God. In this new condition, man is free from sin, and is outside its dominion and the reach of Satan.

In the position in which the resurrection of Christ has placed him, we see man living of the life of God, there where redemption, purification, and justification, have placed him; and made fit for the state in which the counsels of God will place him, namely, for the glory which is linked with that resurrection. Man is also well-pleasing to God, as the new creation of His hands, the fruit of the work in which God has perfectly glorified Himself. Let us examine this a little more closely.

I have said that good and evil met in all their strength, in the Cross. It is well to apprehend this fact, in order to understand the moral importance of the Cross in the eternal ways of God. I will, therefore, repeat myself a little in speaking of the Cross. The Cross is the expression of the causeless hatred of man against God, even when manifested in goodness. Christ — the perfect expression of the love of God, amid all the misery which sin had brought into the world — had remedied this misery wherever He met it. In Him, the love of God was in constant exercise in spite of the evil. He was never wearied, never repelled by the excess of the evil, or by the ingratitude of those who had profited by His goodness. Sin — loathsome as it might be — never stopped the flow of Christ's love; it was but the occasion

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for the exercise of that divine love. God was manifested in flesh, winning the confidence of man by seeking him, sinner as he was; by showing him that there was something superior to the evil, the misery, and the defilement. And this was God himself. Christ, perfectly holy, of a holiness that even remained infallibly untainted and perfect, could carry His love into the midst of the evil, in order to inspire the wretched with confidence. If a man touched a leper, he became defiled himself: Christ puts forth His hand and touches him, saying, "I will, be thou clean."

The man, who might fear, on account of his own sin, to draw nigh to God, found in that grace which sought the sinner with a perfect goodness that made sin an occasion for the testimony of God's love towards man, that which was suited to inspire his heart with confidence. He might find relief by casting the burden of a bad conscience into the loving heart of God who knew every thing.

But all was in vain: the Cross was the recompence of this love. Man would not have God.

But there are other aspects of this power of evil, which display themselves in the Cross. The effect of evil, *i.e.* death, reigns in it. I say that it reigns there. It is true that it displays itself more at Gethsemane than on the Cross; but Gethsemane was only another part of the same solemn scene, and was the anticipation of the Cross itself in the soul of Jesus. "My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death."

Death, as the power of evil, weighed with all its force on the whole being of Christ. Death is the present judgment of man in the flesh, handled by the power of him who has in this way the power of death; but it implies the sin of man, and the wrath of God against sin. It was this that Jesus encountered. It is true, that, by committing Himself entirely to His Father's will, He accepted the cup from His hand in a perfect obedience that left Satan no place. But that was His perfection. He was fully put to the proof. Death was the power of Satan over man on account of sin, but at the same time it was the judgment of God. It was also the weakness

of man, even to nothingness, with regard to his existence in this world. If we go into details, we see evil developing itself under the power of Satan, at this moment of his power:—Is there a judge? He condemns the innocent, washing his hands of the act. Is there a priest, whose duty it is to plead for those who err? He pleads against the just and righteous man. Are there friends? The one betrays, another denies, the rest forsake Him who had ceaselessly displayed His abounding affection. In men at large there was neither fear of God nor compassion for man. The Saviour took so low a place, that even a wretched thief, suffering the penalty of his crimes, could insult Him in death.

In a word, good had been fully manifested in Jesus; and evil reached its moral fulness in the rejection of Jesus. The Saviour dies: but He dies to sin. He had never admitted it into His nature, but he quits the life in which He had maintained the conflict. He gives up all relationship with the order of things in which sin is found, breaking it off by death, which destroys that relationship. There is no longer for Christ any link with man in the flesh. It is this which Paul means (2 Cor. v.), no longer even an outward link, nor the likeness of sinful flesh. Man has cut off every link between himself and God; and Christ has done with these relationships, in which he never allowed sin to enter His holy nature, but in which He had to do with sin and with man. Sin and man were now done with. Man, as in the flesh, is left in sin; and there is a risen man, a man completely outside the condition of the children of Adam; dead, non-existent, as relates to the condition men were in; but alive to God, belonging to God, outside of sin.

Immense fact! Christ, who had a perfect life, who was the Life, and who, tempted in all things like us, went through this present life in obedience and faithfulness; who exhibited nothing but the power of the Spirit in His walk, looking only to God; and who encountered all the power which the enemy had by death over man both in soul and body, — Christ closed the history of man in the flesh, by ceasing to exist in relationship with him: man (led by Satan), having consummated his iniquity

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by putting Him to death. Nevertheless, it is Christ who offered Himself up. Also, to Him it is the path of life, and He rises again, beyond the scene of Satan's power, whether as the tempter, or as having the power of death.

Let us now look at the good manifesting itself in all its perfection, and as *superior to the evil*. First of all, the life of Christ displayed the obedience of man, by the Holy Ghost, in the midst of a sinful world, and in spite of all the temptations by which the enemy can test the heart. His life was according to the Spirit of holiness,—His death, perfect obedience. All that we have spoken of as the power of evil, did but enhance the character and value of the obedience. But there is yet more:—man is now, by death, absolutely set free from evil. He dies to sin. Death breaks his relation with evil; because the nature which can be in relation with evil, no longer exists: that is to say, provided the new life is there. We have seen that Christ, although in the likeness of sinful flesh, never for a moment admitted sin into His being;—but death ended, and ends for us all relation with the scene in which sin exists—with all this sphere of existence—and ends it in Christ in a life which is holy. Christ dies, and we die in Him, by the power of a life which is divine.

Moreover, perfect love has been manifested; and when man rejected it, its strength was not lessened, but it accomplished the work necessary for the reconciliation of those who were enemies. Good—love—God—is shown to be superior to evil, in such a way that, in the very act in which man's hatred to God fully manifested itself, in which the iniquity of man's heart reached its height, in that act, the love of God and of Christ triumphed: triumphed in the act which sin, come to its height, accomplished. This was the death of Christ. The greatest sin of the world is, on the part of God, and of Christ who offers Himself as a sacrifice for sin, the propitiation made for sin.

Thus, for one who is in Christ, for the believer, the sin of the old nature is entirely blotted out, and he lives as risen again in Christ, with a new life in relationship

with God. What wisdom of God! One is dead to sin by means of the very act which manifested that sin in the highest degree, — and the love of God declares itself in that which is the expression of man's hatred. And observe, is it by allowing evil? No; the righteous judgment of God is also manifested in it. If His Son takes sin upon Himself, if He is made sin for us, He must suffer. The justice of God is executed upon sin, in His person; and grace reigns by means of the justice which is glorified in Christ. If the evil has ripened, and has borne all its fruits, the good has triumphed with divine perfection. All our blessing and glory is but the effect of this work which is the moral centre of all the relations of God with men, in judgment and in grace.

We have now to trace its fruits in the ways of God.

The death of Christ had fully glorified God and displayed His love,—had glorified Him in the obedience of man,—had glorified Him with respect to his righteousness and (in the judgment pronounced upon sin) with respect to His holy wrath against sin. And, at the same time, the perfect love of God was shown in it by the gift of His Son, His only Son, for poor sinners; given to bear the sins of all who should believe in Him unto the end.

What, then, are the results of this work and of this love, free now to manifest itself, because that which glorifies love exalts righteousness also?

First of all, Christ raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, all that is in the glory of the Father, that which is the revelation of His nature, love, righteousness, the relationship of the Father with Christ as the Son, His good pleasure in the Saviour's life on earth, His satisfaction in that Christ had glorified Him, and had rendered morally possible the fulfilment of all His counsels, and in particular the glory of those who are His own among the children of men;—all that which answered, in the Father's heart, to the excellence of Him who lay in the tomb, was engaged in the resurrection of the Son of Man. The first fruit of the power of God, in answer to that work in which the good triumphed at the cost of Christ, is the resurrection of Christ. In this,

as we have already seen, an entirely new position is taken for man. Yes, entirely new:—death is left behind: sin, as separating us from God, exists no more; the divine life is the life of man; righteousness is manifested in the acceptance of man, not in his condemnation; and man subsists, not in the weakness of his own responsibility, and mortal, but as the fruit of the power of God who has already been glorified with regard to His justice.

We are speaking abstractly of the position. In applying some of these expressions to Christ, they must naturally be modified. Christ has gained this position for us, we enjoy it as a new position. But He was in it Himself. Divine life was always in Him. In responsibility, He was never weak. He was, even in the flesh, born of God. Nevertheless, His own position was then very different from that which it now is. Before His death, He was in the likeness of sinful flesh; not so, after His resurrection. Before His death, He lived in flesh and blood; not so after His resurrection. He really died, although it was impossible that death should hold Him; now He dies no more. He was the first who entered into the position which He acquired for those that are His own. Now that the Holy Ghost has been given us, this position, and even the glory, is the present portion of them that believe in Him. It is theirs by faith, and by the possession of the divine life and of the Holy Ghost. Actually, we are still in our mortal bodies.

But although resurrection placed the Lord (and, in Him, ourselves), in a position which is the fruit of the power of God, not of the responsibility of man, and which, at the same time, by virtue of the work of Christ, results from the exercise of the righteousness of God; and although Christ was thus declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness; His resurrection did not constitute the whole result, even with regard to His own Person. He had to be glorified with God, and glorified with the glory of God. Marvellous fact! triumphant divine righteousness! a *man* is in the glory of God, is sitting at the right hand of God upon His throne.

In taking His seat there, Christ personally takes the

place which is due to Him, according to the value of His work on earth. "Now is the Son of Man glorified (morally, by accomplishing the work on the Cross), and *God* is glorified in Him. If *God* is glorified in Him, God will glorify Him *in Himself*, and will straightway glorify Him." "I have glorified Thee on the earth, I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do; and now, O Father, glorify Thou me with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was." That which Christ asked for, He has received. The words, "Sit Thou at my right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool," place the Lord at the right hand of God to execute the justice which shall put an end to evil. Viewed, as having entered into the glory of the Father, Christ assures to them that know Him there, all the fulness of blessing which belongs to that position.

But we have here an immense fact: a man, the Son of Man, is sitting at the right hand of God in the divine glory.

We may, before carrying on the consideration of its results, state the import and bearing of this fact. On one side, we see the first Adam, responsible, fallen and in sin; then, law and judgment. On the other side, we see the Son of God, the supreme God, come down from heaven, and, in grace, become man; and, after having manifested the perfect grace of God towards man (grace super-abounding where sin abounded) and after having accomplished the work of propitiation for sin, and glorified God with regard to the position in which man was found, we see Him ascend—according to the justice of God, in virtue of this accomplished work—to the right hand of God; so that man is placed in the glory of God. On the one side, the responsibility of man, and judgment; on the other, the grace of God, the work of God, salvation and glory; the righteousness of God *for* us, quite as much as His love is for us, and this righteousness of God become ours also, by virtue of the work of Christ.

Moreover, the door is open to every sinner; and God—by virtue of the blood of Christ,^a which has glorified

^a If God had pardoned all men without a propitiation, it would

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His love, His righteousness, His truth, His majesty, all that He is,—can receive the sinner to Himself.

Man has entered into his place in glory, according to the counsels of God, to be the head of all created existence (Ps. viii. 5—7; 1 Cor. xv. 25—27; Eph. i. 20—23; Heb. ii. 5—9. Compare Col. i. 15, and the following verses.) This is the truth in full. The Man-Christ is made Head of all things in heaven and in earth. In this view, the first Adam was only a figure of the last Adam. At the same time, as for the first Adam, there was a help-meet, who was like him; so it is with Christ. Eve was no part of the inferior creation over which Adam was lord. Neither was she lord; she was the wife and companion of Adam, in the same nature and in the same glory. So will it be with the Church, when Christ shall take into His own hands the rule over all things. (Compare Eph. v. 25—27, and the passages already quoted). Meanwhile, He is sitting at the right hand of God, and His enemies are not yet made subject to Him. But we have still to notice the different parts of the dominion which He is to exercise. The angels (1 Peter iii. 22) are made subject to Him. (Compare Eph. i. 10.) But His dominion is also to extend over the earth. Now, His rule on earth is sub-divided with reference to the human race. The Jews are to be subject to Him, and the Gentiles also. “King of the Jews,” is His indefectible title. He is also to reign over the heathen, and the nations will trust in Him. All created things likewise are subjected to Him (see the passages already quoted), they are all groaning for His kingdom (Rom. viii. 21). At the same time, all judgment is committed to the Son, because He is the Son of Man (John v. 27). He has power over all flesh (John xvii. 2); and judgment is committed unto Him,

have been to shew Himself indifferent to sin. If He had merely condemned all sinners, He would not have manifested His love. By the death of Christ, justice is glorified, perfect love exercised, the immutable truth of God established in the eyes of all. The wages of sin were there, and the divine majesty was maintained at its highest point.

that all men may honour Him as they honour the Father (John v. 23). In this judgment, there is the judgment of the living and the judgment of the dead. The former is connected with the government of God on the earth, although it is final as regards individuals. The latter is the ending of all the revealed ways of God, when all the wicked will have the secrets of their hearts and their hidden motives brought to light.

Then the Man-Christ, when He shall have brought all things into subjection, and set all in order, will give up the kingdom to the Father (1 Cor. xv.), and God shall be all in all. The giving up of the kingdom—note it well—makes no change as to His divinity. Man, till then, had possessed the kingdom, according to the counsels of God. This mediatorial kingdom ceases. Christ is neither the more nor the less God. He was God on the earth in His humiliation; He will be so, in the glory of the kingdom which He will hold as man; He will be so, when, as man, He will be subject to God, the First-born, eternally, among many brethren, in the joy of the family of men eternally blessed before God.

It remains to make a few observations on the ways of God that are destined to bring in this blessed result, and establish the mediatorial glory of Christ.

While the Lord Jesus is sitting at the right hand of God, God is gathering out the Church by the action of the Holy Ghost on the earth. The glad tidings of grace are proclaimed in the world, to convince the world of sin, and, in particular, of sin in having rejected the Son of God (John xvi. 7—9). It is not the tidings that sin is pardoned, and that *it* must be believed; but, that the world lieth in evil, the great proof of which is, that it has rejected the Son of God; and, at the same time, that the blood is on the mercy-seat, and that all men are invited to come to God, who will receive them according to the value which that blood has in His sight. (1 Peter, i. 12; 2 Cor. v. 20; Col. i. 23; Mark xvi. 15; Luke xxiv. 47; 1 Cor. xv. 3; and a multitude of other passages.)

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But other precious truths proceed from this descent of the Holy Ghost from heaven. Observe, that He comes in virtue of the fact that Jesus Christ is ascended into heaven (John xvi. 7.) Divine righteousness is exercised and manifested in the fact that man (Christ) is at the right hand of God, because He has glorified God, and because a perfect propitiation has been made for sin (John xiii. 31, 32; xvii. 4, 5. Phil. ii. 8, 9.)

Now, Christ has glorified God in the work that He accomplished for them that believe in Him. The Holy Ghost, therefore, comes down (John vii. 39; Luke xxiv. 49; Acts i. and ii.) on those who already believe in Him; and, by their means, announces this glorious salvation, announces to all men that the blood is on the mercy-seat, and invites them to draw near. But besides this, He gives the believer, by dwelling in Him, the assurance that all his sins have been borne by Christ (1 Peter ii. 24), and are blotted out for ever (Rev. i. 5; Heb. i. 3, and other passages); that he, the believer, is made the righteousness of God in Christ (2 Cor. v. 21). For the righteousness of God must accept and glorify the believer; else, the work of Christ has been accomplished in vain, and the righteousness of God is not in exercise with respect to Him, nor would God be recognising the value of that work, nor rendering to Christ that which He has in every way deserved: all of which is absolutely impossible. Moreover, the Holy Ghost, who is in the believer, seals him for the day of redemption (Eph. iv. 30), that is to say, for his actual entrance into the glory of Christ; He gives him, in whom He dwells, the knowledge that he is with Christ, and in Christ, and Christ in him (John xiv. 16—20); that he is the child and the heir of God, joint-heir with Christ (Rom. viii. 16, 17; Gal. iv. 5, 9); in fine, He takes of the things of Christ, and shows them to him, while conducting him through the wilderness, by the path that leads to glory (Rom. viii. 14).

All this is for the individual. But there is only one Spirit in all believers; and He unites them all to Christ, and, consequently, all to one another as one body (Rom. xii. 4, 5; 1 Cor. xii. 13, and following verses),

the body of Christ, who is Head, as we have seen, over all things. This is the church united to Christ, His body;—and Christians the members of Christ and of one another—the Lamb's wife (Eph. v. 25, etc.) The Holy Ghost teaches how thus to expect the Bridegroom, the marriage of the Lamb (Rev. xxii. 17, and xix.). Now this can only take place in Heaven. Believers are, by the Spirit, there already (Eph. ii. 6; Phil. iii. 21, 22), united by Him to Christ who is there; they have a heavenly calling, and are separated from the world to look above. Therefore, they go up to meet Christ in the air (1 Thess. iv. 15—17). Christ, who comes for them according to His promise, raising up, or changing, their bodies, to receive them to Himself, to be with Him in His Father's house, where He Himself is (John xiv. 2). Thus are they ever with the Lord (1 Thess. iv. 17). Believers who have suffered with Him, are^b the sons of the Father in the glory, and form together the Bride and the body of Christ.

This does not establish the kingdom, but gathers together the joint-heirs who are to reign with Christ, and gives them their own place with Him, infinitely above all dominion, be it what it may, on the earth: although the latter is the necessary, blessed, and glorious consequence of the former. Satan is cast out of heaven, which he will never re-enter (Rev. xii.); he incites the apostates, and even the whole world, to rebel against the Lord and His Christ (Rev. xii. 12; xvi. 13, 14; xvii. 13, 14; xix. 18, etc.). The saints then return with Christ (Rev. xix.; Col. iii. 4; Jude 14; Zech. xiv. 5), and the power of the enemy is destroyed on the earth, which is now delivered from evil. Satan, cast into the abyss (Rev. xx. 1—3)—not yet into the lake of fire—is no longer the prince of this world. The Angels, even, no longer govern it as administrators on the part of God. Christ—and His own—Man—is established, according to

^b See Eph. i. the precious instruction of the word on all this subject. Christians, in the same relationship as Christ Himself with His God and Father (John xx. 17), are in spirit like unto God, and are His Sons, in that He is the Father; then, heirs of all things; then, the body of Christ.

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the counsels of God, over all things, over all the works of the hand of God (Ps. viii. quoted in 1 Cor. xv.; Eph. i.; Heb. ii.; compare Col. i. 16—20.) Christ appears in glory, the saints also with Him; (compare John xvii. 22, 23). It is the kingdom of God established in power (compare Matt. xvi. 28, and xvii.; Mark ix.; Luke ix.). Righteousness reigns; and men, and the world, are at peace (Eph. i. 10). It is in this state of things, the fruit of the reign of Christ, all that the prophets have spoken of with regard to peace and blessing on the earth will be fulfilled.

Blessed time! when war and oppression shall entirely cease, and when all men shall enjoy the fruits of God's bounty; while the passions of men—inflamed by the enemy of all good—shall no longer lead them to snatch from one another the objects of their lusts. Christ will maintain the happiness of all; if evil appears, it will be immediately judged, and banished from the earth.

Some accessory facts should find their place here. The kingdom of the Son of David has to be re-established. All the promises of God with regard to Israel will be fulfilled in favour of that nation; the law being written on their hearts, the grace and power of God will accomplish the blessing of the people; a blessing which they could not obtain when it depended on their own faithfulness, and when it rested on the principle of human responsibility. Dominion over the Gentiles will, at the same time, be exercised by the Lord, while these will be subordinate to Israel, the supreme nation on the earth. Thus all things will be gathered together under one Head, Christ—angels, principalities, the Church in Heaven, Israel, the Gentiles; and Satan will be bound.

But, previous to the introduction of this universal blessing, the wicked one will be in open and public rebellion against God. The Jews will have joined Him, the great majority, at least, of the people and the Gentiles will rise up against God. This revolt will bring on a time of extraordinary tribulation in the land of Judah, and there will be a general temptation which will try all the Gentiles. But the testimony of God will be preached all over the world; and then the judgment shall take

place, and shall be executed on the apostates from among Christians, on the rebellious Jews, and on all the nations that will have rejected the testimony of God. This is the judgment of the living; they that are Christ's having already been caught up. The fulness of times commences at this period.

A few words will complete our sketch. Satan will be loosed from the abyss after the inhabitants of the earth shall have long enjoyed the rest and happiness of the reign of Christ, and shall have seen His glory. When temptation comes, they who are not vitally united to Christ, fall; and Satan leads them up against the seat of God's glory on the earth (Jerusalem), and against those that are faithful to the Lord. But all who follow Satan are destroyed.

Then comes the judgment of the dead, and the final state.

There is a new heaven and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells. The kingdom having been given up to God the Father, Christ, who will already have brought all things into subjection, is Himself subject, as man: a truth so precious to us! for He remains eternally the First-born among many brethren. I do not think that the Church loses its place either, as the Bride of Christ and the habitation of God (see Eph. iii. and Rev. xxi.). It is only the kingdom, the existence of which supposed evil that had to be subdued, which comes to an end.

All things shall be made new, and God shall be all in all. We shall enjoy Him in perfect beatitude, and we shall know Him according to the perfection of all His ways, already developed in the history of humanity. His Son will be the eternal expression of His thoughts, and the First among those who have eternal happiness through Him — a happiness founded on the value of His blood, the appreciation of which can never fade in the ever-fresh memory of the blessed.

END OF VOL. XII.