

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 אִם־בְּרוּחַי

Zechariah iv 6.

VOL. VIII.

LONDON:
R. GROOMBRIDGE & SONS,

PATERNOSTER ROW.

M.DCCC.LVI.

LONDON
PRINTED BY GEORGE LITTLEWOOD,
93, LONDON WALL.

CONTENTS OF VOL. VIII.

NO.	PAGE
I. Deliverance from under the Law	1
II. Thoughts on the Experience of Abraham and of Jacob	15
III. Death	30
IV. Hardening the Heart	44
V. The Gentile	47
VI. The Living Grace of Christ	49
VII. How to know the Will of the Father	59
VIII. "A Man of the Pharisees."	66
IX. "The Honour that cometh from God only."	75
X. The unequal Yoke	84
XI. The Christian Position as to Life and the Spirit	113
XII. The Child of the Bridechamber	120
XIII. Corrections of the Translation of some Passages in the New Testament	124
XIV. Synopsis of the Books of the Bible—John	132
XV. Heaven: Thy Dwelling-Place	253
XVI. Twilight, ere Day dawned	273
XVII. Divine Names and Titles	281
XVIII. No Man becomes a Child of God by an Act of his own Will	306
XIX. Revelations xxi., xxii.	319
XX. "A Word of Exhortation."	344
XXI. Synopsis of the Books' of the Bible—The Acts of the Apostles	349
XXII. The Fold and the Flock	429
XXIII. Acts vii.	440

	PAG
VERSES:—	
A Hymn ,	2
Poetry	280, 34
Enoch and Noah; or Israel and the Church	44
VARIETIES:—	
Fragments, 46, 48, 65, 119, 272, 305, 318, 343, 348	
Self-examination	5
“No confidence in the Flesh.”	11
Extract	12

E
9
8
4

THE PRESENT TESTIMONY,

ETC., ETC.

8
2
3

Nº. I.

DELIVERANCE FROM UNDER THE LAW,*

AS STATED IN THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

ROMANS V.—VIII.

IN our relationship to God, there are two points of primary importance for us to remark: our responsibility as men, and the power of that life in which we live before Him. Both these were set forth to us by God in the garden of Eden, in the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and in the tree of life. First, as to our responsibility. Man has become a sinner; consequently he has in him no spiritual life at all (John vi. 53). Sin brought in death and condemnation. After the fall, God gave the Law by Moses, in order to prove the state of man. The Law of God must exact righteousness, according to the nature of him to whom it is given; but the Law does not give life (Gal. iii. 21). It is the very nature of the Law to exact and not to give. Since it is the question of righteousness in man, God cannot lower the requirements of the Law, and if we have the divine nature, we shall not desire its requirements to be lowered. The Law is the measure of responsibility of the natural man, but it does not give life, and (because man is a sinner) the Law, instead of being a resource, becomes the cause of death and condemnation. A mixture of law and grace, in so far as this last is found working in us, does not change this state. Grace does not destroy our responsibility, and that which the Law requires is not

* The original of this is in German.

fulfilled. Christ came to be our Saviour and our Deliverer; He is the source of life to those who believe; He became subject to the death under which we were, and He bare, upon the cross, our sins and the wrath of God which they deserved. But this is not all; in the Person of this Saviour, Man enters into a new position; He is the Man who is risen and glorified before God. The righteousness of God is accomplished in Him, and He has received that glory as a reward. Let us now see how we are made partakers of this amazing position before God.

God cannot endure sin. The responsibility of the creature cannot be destroyed. At the beginning of the Epistle to the Romans, the apostle exposes the condition of sin under which both Jews and Gentiles are. *Without law*,—man is without restraint (ungodly), debased by sin; has lost every right thought about God, being given up to things not even suitable to man in nature. *Under the Law*, he not only has corrupted himself, through his lusts, but he is disobedient by reason of his own will, a transgressor. The Law condemns not only sin, but also the sinner. The Saviour appears, born of a woman, and placed under the Law; He shed His blood in order to purify us before God—to justify the sinner before God—the just Judge. Grace, rich and deep, is also presented to us in this work. It is the instruction of the epistle (to the Romans) down to the end of the third chapter.

In the 4th chapter he begins to examine another truth,—the effect and the result of the resurrection of Christ. In the 5th, 6th and 7th chapters, we have the effects of this truth; and in the 8th chapter the result in full.

The history of Abraham is introduced in the 4th chapter. If the Jew found himself condemned by the Law, he could fall back upon the relationship God had established between Himself and Abraham. It was to this end that the apostle set forth what were the foundations of this relationship, and shewed it was built upon faith and the promise. Righteousness was by faith, and it was given to Abraham before he was circumcised—“Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for

Deliverance from under the Law.

3

righteousness." There is yet another principle taught us in this chapter. Abraham was as dead, as also was Sarah his wife. But God had promised to him a seed. Abraham did not doubt His word because of the impossibility to man of the thing, but he believed in the power of God, whose part it was to fulfil His own promise, and that was counted to him for righteousness.

And so it is with us; only with this most remarkable difference,—we do not believe that God *is able to* fulfil His promises, but that He *has* fulfilled them—"We believe in God who has raised up from the dead our Lord Jesus." Observe, the apostle does not say here: We believe in Him who *is* raised, but in Him who *has* raised. It is thus that he teaches us the meaning of this doctrine. In the resurrection, God does not present Himself as the Just Judge, satisfied as such by the work of Christ; but He acts according to His own power in the sphere of Death's power, in bringing forth His beloved Son from under it, and bringing us now, in Christ, into a new position where death and sin are not. It is God who works for us, to save us perfectly, and to set us before Him in truth and in righteousness (man being dead as to that which concerns spiritual life, and living in sin as to natural life); but in Christ he has died and risen again, and finds his place before God in grace, where sin is taken away and righteousness is accomplished: "He was delivered for our offences and was raised again for our justification."

From the 5th to the 8th chapter, is the application of this truth to our own condition. In the 5th chapter, to our justification; in the 6th, to the new life of the believer in Jesus; in the 7th, to the Law, and the 8th describes a soul in perfect liberty.

In the 5th chapter, he shews that the believer enjoys peace with God; that he lives in the sense of God's favour, being heir of His glory, and rejoicing even in tribulations which work for his spiritual good. Much more, he rejoices in God Himself, who is his source of endless joy. As man, he *was* under the first Adam, and, as a necessary consequence, an inheritor of the conse-

Deliverance from under the Law.

quences of his disobedience; the believer is in the second Adam, through whose obedience he is righteous; but because he is righteous through the obedience of another (that is even Christ's), the flesh says: No matter what I do; I can do what I like, but I say: Thou hast already done enough, all that thou hast done has been to destroy thyself; and thou acknowledgest, without being aware of it, that thy will, is to sin. But let us go on with our subject.

The apostle is not here speaking of the all-important motive which the believer finds in the blood of Christ to cause him to cease from sin, nor of the power which he finds in the love of God; but he shows that he cannot live in sin to which he is dead. The Christian becomes partaker of the fruits of the obedience of Christ, because He is dead and risen. How can he live in sin, being already dead to sin? A dead man does not live. He is not a partaker of the blessing which is in Christ, if he has not the life of Christ. Though, as to the natural life, he is still living in the world, he ought nevertheless to reckon himself as dead to sin, since he lives by the life of Christ who is dead and risen.

In the 7th chapter, he considers the consequences of the same truth as to the Law. The Law, he says, has dominion over a man so long as he liveth; he then gives the tie of marriage as an explanation of it. As long as the first husband lives, the wife cannot be to another man, without guilt. The first husband then represents the Law, the second is Christ raised from the dead (Christ when living on this earth was Himself under the Law) and thus we cannot be at the same time under the Law and united to Christ raised from the dead. However, it is not the Law which dies, but Christ died under the Law; for as many as have sinned under the Law, shall be condemned by the Law, and the Law is good if a man use it lawfully (Rom. ii. 12; Tim. i. 8, 9). If it was ourselves who were dead under the Law, we should be lost; but Christ died for us, and because He is risen from the dead, our souls are united to Him, the Law having no longer a hold over a dead man. Therefore, now, Christ, He who is raised from the dead, is our

Deliverance from under the Law.

5

only husband. Thus the resurrection of Christ has delivered us from the Law, as well as from sin and condemnation.

The 5th chapter of the Romans, then, shews us our position in Christ, the second Adam who is risen. The 6th, our new life in Him, a life of which the strength lies in reckoning ourselves dead to sin; the 7th is our complete deliverance from the Law, which hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth. As to us we are dead and risen in Him. It is the new man in Christ which bears fruit unto God, and not the old man under the Law. Yet the fault is not in the Law; but, because sin is in the flesh, the effect of the Law is to bring home guilt upon the conscience, and to become an occasion for exciting the desire to sin.

But to return to the leading subject of the chapter, we see that we cannot be *at the same time* under the Law and with Christ risen. This would be to have two husbands at once. In the second half of the chapter we are given the experience of one who wants to fulfil the righteousness of the Law, and to bring forth fruit to God as standing under the Law—the first husband. Awakened by God, and under the influence of the new life, he understands the spirituality of the Law; he understands its requirements; he desires to keep the Law, and his conscience cannot be satisfied unless he does so. The new nature loves the righteousness of the Law; but by reason of the opposition of the flesh, it does not fulfil it (vii. 14, 16, 22). Sad state of a soul, which, by reason of grace working in it, desires to do good; but because it is under the Law, knows not how to do it. Now, let it be observed, that while in this state the soul is in its relationship with the first husband, and, consequently, has nothing to do with the second. We have seen that no one can have two husbands at once, therefore in this passage there is no mention made either of Christ or of the Holy Spirit. It is the ordinary Christian experience of the spirituality of the Law which we meet with. The conscience of the individual, being renewed, knows that it cannot fulfil the requirements of that spiritual Law. The will renewed makes every possible

effort to do so, but it cannot succeed. All the while it loves the spiritual nature of the Law; it does not desire that it should be less perfect. It knows that God cannot give up His authority, nor lower His holiness. It tries with all its might to attain the end; but it has no power. The Law demands perfect obedience; the conscience and the will assent; but the Law gives no power: the end will never be attained. The awakening of the conscience in one who is sincere never produces in him the accomplishment of righteousness, but, on the contrary, despair. It is much more difficult to know and acknowledge that we cannot do a single good thing, than to know and acknowledge that we have sinned. The experience which the soul passes through under the Law is a means of convincing it of its powerlessness; but Holiness cannot be a subject of indifference, either to God or to the new-born soul; and as we find that we cannot work out righteousness, we are obliged to seek deliverance elsewhere.^b Yet, though God will convince a soul that is sincere of its powerlessness, He takes no pleasure in leaving it in this wretched state; but as soon as it acknowledges its state, and that it is and knows itself to be without any hope in itself, so that it can never attain to the righteousness of the Law, then God reveals to it its perfect deliverance in Christ. Then at once the soul gives thanks to God for what He has done for it; it sees where its new place is in Christ risen—its true husband, that it may bring forth fruit unto God (ver. 24, 25). Henceforth, it is not only a new position (in Christ risen) which is its position, but also strength and liberty. The flesh is there still, its nature is not changed; but our position before God is in the Spirit, and not in the flesh. The power of the Spirit is present, livingly in us, so that we walk, not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. Christ in heaven is the expression of our true position before God. Christ living upon the earth is the representation and

^b The translator would record, from memory, an idea of the author's upon Rom. vii. 24, 25 :—"The soul enlightened and convinced of its incapacity, by means of the Law of God, no longer seeks to *do* this or that. Thirsting for deliverance, it finds it in the grace of the Deliverer."

Deliverance from under the Law.

7

/ example of the heavenly man upon earth. Walking after the Spirit, we fulfil the Law (by loving God and our neighbour), because we are not under the Law.

The close of the 25th verse is brought in by the Holy Spirit, in order to show us that, though we are seen in perfect liberty, the nature of the flesh is not changed; but the Law (which means here a principle acting always in the same way) the Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus has completely set us free from the Law of Sin and Death, which reigns in the old man. In Christ we live in the new man: there the old man has no right; but the Holy Spirit is the power which works in it. As to the question of righteousness, the Christian is in perfect peace, because he knows that God, instead of condemning him, has done what the Law could not do, that is, "condemned sin in the flesh," by means of Christ come in the likeness of sinful flesh, and as the atoning sacrifice for sin. A soul who is in earnest will always mourn more over the sin which he finds working in him, than on account of the sins already committed; but he knows that Christ has died in his stead, not only for sins but for sin itself. So, then, in the 8th chapter we see Christ as the sacrifice upon the cross, then alive in resurrection, and then the blessed testimony, as the living power, of the Holy Spirit is fully unfolded to us.

From the 5th to the 11th verse of this chapter, the Holy Spirit is declared to be the character and the power of the life. From the 12th to the 27th, He is in us, the personal witness of our adoption and of our right of inheritance, and the helper of our infirmity. From the 28th verse to the end of the chapter, the Holy Spirit is proving that God is not only working *in us*, but, much more, He is *for us*, in His own power and faithfulness, so that the happy believer is assured that nothing can separate him from the love of God—a love which he knows by the Holy Spirit which dwells in him.

The height of the glory, the depth of humiliation in death, are in Christ the proof and the means of our being everlastingly blessed in the presence of God Himself; in the blessedness which grace has given us.

But there is still more instruction to be drawn out

Deliverance from under the Law.

of the third verse of the 8th chapter. The three first verses are a summing up of the three preceding chapters, and three things are taught us in them. 1st. The position of the guilt of man when considered in the light of responsibility. The answer to this is His being justified by God. This is the subject of the 5th chapter. 2dly. The nature of the old man and that of the new is the subject of the 6th chapter. 3dly. God, in order to put to the proof the ability of man to work out righteousness for Himself, brought in the Law, and man, through the fall, being a sinner, could not fulfil righteousness. Even before he was a sinner, when his obedience was put to the proof by a law, it became the occasion of his fall. But when, by means of the new birth, he understands the spirituality of the Law, then he knows, not only that he has *committed sins*, but that *the law of sin* is in his members. This is the subject examined by the Holy Spirit in the 7th chapter.

The power and the nature of the new life in Christ, who has died and is risen from the dead, is the answer of God's grace to the wickedness of the flesh. This is taught us in the 6th chapter. The soul set free, through fully knowing the work of God in Christ, is the answer of Grace to the experiences of the 7th chapter. By considering attentively the three first verses of the 8th chapter, it will be easily seen that the first verse corresponds to the 5th chapter, the second to the 6th, and the third to the 7th. The 6th and 7th chapters are closely connected, because the soul that is born again finds out the true character of the old man by means of the Law. We have, then, the summing up of these two chapters in the second and third verses of the 8th chapter. All hope of deliverance is shown in the 5th chapter to flow out of justification. But this is not man's thought. He would wish to deliver himself actually from the law of sin by his own effort, and thus be without fault before God; but God will not have it so, and it never could be according to His truth, because that, on one hand, the work of Christ would have been in vain, and, on the other, man would not have known what is the true nature and sinfulness of sin. If, by efforts in the con-

Deliverance from under the Law.

9

science, we could find deliverance before God, the work of justification, though it might not be by strength of man, would, at least, be by the work of the Holy Spirit, and not by the work of Christ. But God will not, and for man it is impossible to have it so, because the work of the Spirit of God is to show him how intolerable sin is to God, and that the nature of man is not changed. Now his very nature is sin. Man must submit himself to the righteousness of God. Convinced of sin, condemned by the Law, he must find his righteousness in another—in Christ, who died for him, and is now risen and in the presence of God. This is the reason why the 3rd and the 5th chapters of the epistle come before the 6th and 7th, and the first verse of the 8th chapter before the second and third verses.

After the Holy Spirit has described the conflicts of the soul that is born again, and shewn its helplessness, then the "there is no condemnation" (viii. 1), is the first want of the soul and the beginning of God's answer to it, in His Grace. But, because we have this privilege—"no condemnation"—in a risen Christ, this does not separate from life, and cannot be separated from it; so it is not simply a doctrine, upon a particular subject expressing the thoughts of God; but it is a change in what passes in the soul within, a change wrought through the knowledge of this subject, by means of faith. The soul has learned its own helplessness by means of the Law; the Law of God has discovered to it the Law of sin that is in the members; the man sees the sin that dwells in him; he hates it, but he cannot deliver himself from it.

Whilst we are upon this subject of the Law, it ought to be remarked before going further, that there are some who make a law of Christ Himself. They acknowledge His love; they see in His work on the cross, how great is His love. They find in it a reason why they should love Christ perfectly, with their whole hearts, but they cannot find this love in themselves. They ought to love Christ with their whole heart, but they do not love Him thus. Now it is precisely the Law which commands that we should love God with all our heart. We

1*

have found in Christ a new motive, we have, perhaps, given a new form to the Law, but we find ourselves still under the Law though we have clothed it with the name of Christ. The power of sin is still there; it prevents us from fulfilling the Law, which requires that we should love with the whole heart. Sin is in the flesh—it harasses me, and gets the better of me. Where can I look for deliverance from this terrible and skilful adversary? Our very helplessness is our resource. We find that God Himself must come in, because we can do nothing. No sooner have I understood the work of God (not the promises), than I find that God Himself has done the whole work. This is what is meant by the third verse; God Himself has met and conquered the evil which was always too much for me; Christ, who knew no sin, having been made sin for us, has taken away not only the sins which we have actually committed, but also sin in the flesh, in the presence of God, because He died not only for *sins*, but also for *sin*.

In this the love of God has been revealed to us, that Christ came into the world when we were nothing but sinners; but this revelation of His love does not purify the conscience. Moreover, so long as the conscience is not purified, the heart cannot rejoice in His love, because doubt in the conscience causes fear, and this prevents the heart from resting with confidence on His love. It is most true that love is in God, but the heart cannot make this love its own, because conscience tells us that God cannot bear sin.

The Holy Spirit who speaks of love in the Gospel, speaking by the same word is also light to convince of sin, and this convincing brings home to the heart not only sin committed but sin as in itself. A child may be convinced of his father's love, but he fears to meet him if his conscience tells him he has done anything wrong—"fear hath torment." But if we are risen with Christ, not only is it true that God has loved us in our state of sin, but He has also raised us up into quite a new position,—into the same position as Christ is in Himself before God, where we ourselves are the result of the mighty power of God, according to the power by which

Deliverance from under the Law.

11

He raised up Christ from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places (Eph. i. 9—23; 2 Cor. v. 5).

The manifestation of the love of God in Christ whilst we were yet sinners, is recalled to our attention in 1 John iv. 9, but our perfect position in Christ, by being made partakers of His life, is set forth in the 17th verse of the same chapter. Now Christ came into this position after having entirely finished His work, a work by which the conscience is purified, and thus love is shed abroad without hindrance in the heart. Because I am united to Christ who has died and is risen again for me, sin can no more be imputed to me than it can be imputed to Christ; His position before God is quite the same as mine, and, let us remember, it is a solemn thought; to have any other would be nothing short of damnation. There is no middle place between the first and second Adam; and we well know that Christ's position now before God is without sin—not only as to the perfection of His person (which was always perfect), but besides as it regards the imputation of sin. What then? Has God become indifferent to sin? Did Christ do nothing as to it? Did He shrink back on account of the difficulty of the work? Did He claim at His Father's hand twelve legions of angels to deliver Him, or did He follow the counsel of the chief priests by saving Himself as He had so often saved others? No! we know it well; He is the Head, without sin, of those who believe on Him, because as the One who has stood in their stead, He has made an end with sin upon the cross, and, having finished this work, He has united them to Himself by a new life which flows from Him, and by the power of the Holy Spirit which has *made them one with Him*. And, now, what does this truth say as to believers? Not only did Christ bear our sins upon the cross, but He was there personally our substitute before God. For all that which the Holy Ghost now shews us as sin before God, in the light of His countenance, for all that, Christ died upon the cross and He has borne it for us. He is Himself in the presence of God, judged of according to the light of His glory; He is there who knew no sin, yet who was made

sin for us. Now, thanks be to God, all is over—the work is accomplished.

The cloud whence the lightning of God's judgment came forth, the tempest of His wrath has passed away, taking out of the way our sin, and now the sunshine of God's love rests on us without a cloud, that perfect love which gave Jesus to finish the work. The conscience is purified according to the holiness of God, who has Himself judged the sin.

Before this, though God sent the Law among men, yet He Himself was hidden from them; but the same stroke which tore the veil, so that God was revealed in His holiness, has at the same moment taken away the sin which forbids our standing before His unveiled face. The full light (for the true light has now shined) which shines around us, and in which we are, shews that we are without sin before the face of God; and that our garments are washed in the blood of the Lamb. The nearer we are to the Light, the more clearly will our perfect purity before God be seen.

It is thus, then, that what the Law could not do, because it condemned the sinner without being able to change the flesh; God has done, because Christ has not only borne our sins, but has come in the likeness of sinful flesh, and become the sacrifice for *sin*. Thus God *has condemned* sin in the flesh. Let this be particularly noticed; it is not said: Sin *shall be condemned*, as a thing that is yet to be done, neither is it by the power of the Holy Spirit, but it is by the atoning sacrifice of Christ. Christ has given Himself up as the atoning sacrifice for the sin of which the Holy Spirit has convinced thee, O believer. God has condemned the sin which has been thy constant sorrow; but He has condemned it on the cross of Christ; He has taken it away and thou art free. Thou hatest it—it cannot be otherwise, if the Holy Spirit is at work in thee. Now it is no more imputed to thee than are the other sad fruits borne by this corrupt tree. Thou art before God, in Christ, in Whom sin has been condemned on the cross.

Now, as regards holiness, what is the effect of this truth? What have we to say of the position of the

Deliverance from under the Law.

13

believer? He is set in the light, even before the face of God. He has a life which rejoices in this light; he has the Holy Spirit to enjoy it. Holiness is measured by this light. Since we are in the presence of God, all things shall be judged according to the perfection of His presence. "We have communion with the Father and with the Son." Therefore, when the apostle speaks of sin (in Rom. iii. 23), he does not say, "We have sinned, and we have come short of what men ought to do," but "we have come short of the glory of God." And because we are set on the ground of grace, it is not merely that holiness is *expected* from us, but we *are made partakers* of His holiness; and not only so, but because God is for us, we find power to realise in our life this setting apart to Him; and because we know He is for us, we have the assurance that He will give us this power when we draw near to Him. Holiness is realised by communion with God; but with the conscience of sin, communion is impossible. Where shall we find strength for practical separation to God, unless in God Himself? How can we ourselves walk in this practical holiness if we have not His strength? How can I seek this strength from God if I have not the assurance that He is for me, and if my conscience prevents me from approaching Him. Efforts made after holiness may be sincere before the soul is set at liberty, because the tendencies of the new life are there; but such efforts are always mixed up with the felt need of justification, and thus the true nature of holiness is overthrown and lost, or, rather, it has never been known. As to our rule of life, in accordance with our position of being in Christ, it is His life on earth which is our model. "He that saith he abideth in Him, ought himself also so to walk even as He walked." These two things were seen in Him. He was the righteous man before God, and before man He was the revelation of God's character. Such ought also to be our life upon earth; walking in the presence of God, we ought to manifest His character before men. And the reason for this is, because Christ Himself is already our Life, as the apostle says, "That the life of Jesus might be manifest in our mortal flesh." And

herein is the important difference between the Law and the commands of Christ. The Law promises life if we fulfil its commands. The commands of Christ, as with all His words and works, are the expression of the course of that life which we possess already in Him. And what were the principles of this life in Christ Himself? 1st. He could say, "the Son of man which is in heaven." It was love from which all His service flowed. Even as man, He was born of God; and He could say of Himself, that for the joy that was set before Him He endured the cross and despised the shame. The same thing is true of us, with this necessary difference, which there must be, because of His glorious person, for He is God Himself. United to Him, our life is hid with Him in God.

Then as to our life on earth as believers, it begins with our being born of God. The love of God in our hearts is the spring of our walk; and the glory in Christ, which is set before us, strengthens us in all the sufferings of our pilgrimage on earth; and, moreover, there is the power of the Holy Spirit, by whose fulness He lived and acted whilst on earth, and which is our strength to follow Him. Thus we have two rules by which to measure good and evil: on one hand, the Holy Spirit dwelling in us; and, on the other, the life and fulness of Christ Himself glorified. Concerning the Holy Spirit, by which we are sealed unto the day of redemption, we ought not to grieve it; rather ought we to be filled with it, that we may realise our communion with God with perfect joy. From our connexion with Christ, we ought to put off the old man and put on the new, created in righteousness and true holiness; and in addition to all this, in sight of the fulness of His glory, we ought to grow up unto Him, in all things which is the Head, even Christ, unto a perfect man—unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.

Nº II.

THOUGHTS ON THE EXPERIENCE OF
ABRAHAM AND OF JACOB.*

THE experiences of the heart occupy a large place in the thoughts of Christians. It is, nevertheless, important always to judge them by the word of God. These experiences are the expression of the inward state of the heart, and of our relations with others, as well as of the sentiments which our conduct, in these same relations, produces in our hearts and in our consciences.

It is not necessary here to speak of the experience of an unconverted person, although such a one is, nevertheless, not without experiences. It is true, that he does not know God; but, in a certain sense, he enjoys His goodness in nature—his conscience can blame him—he can be weary of sin, and alarmed at the thought of judgment. He can even forget the latter in the enjoyment of his family and society in a life naturally amiable; but he can do no more.

Nevertheless, there is a great variety in the experiences of men in whom the Spirit of God is working. This difference arises, on the one hand, from the relations in which we stand to God, and, on the other, from our conduct in the same relations. It is true that God has not put us under the Law; yet, nevertheless, an awakened conscience is, as regards its relationship to God, either under the law or under grace. The Spirit of God, who has awakened it, has caused its light to enter, and produces there the feeling of its responsibility. I am under the law as long as I make my acceptance with God to depend on my faithfulness to God, that is, on the fulfilment of my duties. If, on the other hand, the love of God and His work in Christ are, for my conscience, the only and perfect ground of my adoption, then am I under

* The original is in German.

grace. The Holy Spirit cannot weaken the responsibility; but He can reveal to me that God has saved my soul, which was lost because my life did not answer this responsibility.

As long as the awakened soul remains under the law, it has sad experiences; it feels that it is guilty according to the law, and that it has no power to keep it. It is well aware that the law is good; but, in spite of all its efforts, it does not attain its object, which is obedience. The experiences of souls in such a state are the experiences of their sin—of their weakness and of the power of sin. Even supposing such a soul should not be as yet altogether brought to despair by the expectation of the just judgment of God, because it experiences in a slight degree the love of God, and because it hopes in the work of Christ, there will not be less uncertainty as to its relations with God, and this gives place to alternations of peace and trouble.

In the latter case, the soul has indeed been drawn by grace; but the conscience has not been purified, and the heart not set at liberty. These experiences are useful, in order to convince us of sin and weakness, and to destroy all confidence in ourselves. It is necessary that we should feel ourselves condemned before God, and that we should know, that henceforth all depends on His unmerited grace.

It is otherwise when our conscience is purged, and we have understood our position before God in Christ. Condemned in the presence of God, we understand that God has loved us, and that He justifies us by the work of His Son; we understand that sin is taken away, and our conscience is made perfect. We have no longer conscience of sins before God, because He Himself has taken them away for ever by the blood of Christ, and that blood is always before His eyes; we know, that being united with Christ, who has fully glorified God in that which concerns our sins, we have been made the righteousness of God in Him. So the heart is free to enjoy His love in the presence of God.

Thenceforth we are under grace; our relations with God depend, thenceforth, on God's nature, and the

of Abraham and of Jacob.

17

righteousness which Christ is become for us. Our relations with God do not depend on what we are before Him as responsible beings. Our experiences thenceforth ever return to this: that God is love, that Christ is our righteousness, and God our Father. We have communion with God and with His Son Jesus Christ. We enjoy all the privileges of that relation. Nevertheless, the use which we make of our privileges affects that enjoyment. These relations remain constantly the same, as well as the perception which we have of them; but the enjoyment of what God is in that relation, depends on our conduct in such a position.

The experiences are always founded on my relations with God. Am I sad? It is because the communion with God—communion which answers to my relations to Him—is interrupted. I feel that I do not enjoy the blessed communion to which I have attained, and it is this that causes my sadness; but this does not arise from uncertainty as to the communion itself. The flesh has no relations with God; and the flesh is ever in us. And “the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us” (Rom. v. 5). By this Spirit we have communion with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ (1 John i. 7); and we are called on to walk in the light, as God Himself is in the light (1 John i. 7). Our communion with God depends on our walking in the light, although, when we have lost it, God can visit us by His grace, and restore communion. But God is faithful, and does not permit sin in His children. If they do not walk with Him in the light, He will cause them to pass through all the trials and all the conflicts necessary to bring them to the knowledge of themselves, that they may remain in the light, and that their communion may be true and pure.

It is true that these trials and conflicts do not affect our relations with God, because they depend on what God is in Christ, according to His grace and righteousness; but the suspension of communion with God, a suspension which puts us outside of the enjoyment of the light, brings us into all kinds of conflicts, and painful and humbling experiences of what our own heart really

is. God Himself also employs correction to humble us and break our will. Not only is the actual fall into sin an opportunity for the dealing of God with our souls, but all that is hard and rebellious in our souls also affords an opportunity for it. The consequence of these truths is, that the experiences of a soul that walks with God are far more simple than the experiences of an unfaithful soul; and, nevertheless, the knowledge of God and of the heart of man will be far deeper in the former case. As long as we walk in communion with Him, we walk in the light; and we have, in His presence, the continual sense of His fatherly love. Nevertheless, this presence acts upon our soul, to manifest all that is not in harmony with the light.

The judgment of ourselves takes place in the presence of God, in the sense of His love, and in connection with that love. Sin has the character of everything which is not light; and is judged, not only because sin cannot agree with holiness, but also because it does not agree with the love of God.

With hearts purified by the love of God, and strengthened by communion with Him, the grace which acts thus in us, takes the place of sin which has been judged, and thenceforth our walk in the world is the effect of the communion of God in our hearts. We carry God, so to speak, through the world in our hearts. Filled with His love, and living in the power of the life of Christ, that which Satan offers does not tempt us. Our worldly trials become a motive to obedience and not to sin. The presence of God in our hearts preserves us in our relations with men. Thenceforth we experience proofs of our corruption in the presence of God, and in communion with Him. It is thus we judge sin in ourselves, and sin thus judged does not appear in our walk. But if we do not walk in fellowship with God, if sin is not thus judged, we walk more or less in the world with a rebellious will and lusts unjudged. The action of our self-will makes us uneasy, because we are not satisfied. Are we satisfied? Then God is forgotten. Satan presents temptations which answer to unjudged lusts; then the corruption of the heart manifests itself by a fall, and by our relations with Satan, which take the place of our

of Abraham and of Jacob.

19

relations with God. Such a knowledge of the corruption of the heart will be never so deep, never so clear, never so true, as that which we shall have obtained in the presence of God by the light itself. We shall know sin by sin, by a bad conscience, instead of knowing it by the light of God Himself. We shall be humbled, instead of being *humble*. The faithfulness of God will restore the soul; but the continued power and growing light of His communion will not be the same. It is true we shall experience His patience and His goodness; but we shall not know God in the same way as when walking faithfully in communion with Him. It is true, God glorifies Himself by His ways with such a soul, because all things concur to His eternal glory; but *the knowledge of God* grows by our communion with Him.

The life of Abraham and that of Jacob come in the way of interesting examples, in support of what we have been saying. It is true, that neither the law, nor the fulness of grace, had been as yet revealed. Nevertheless, as we see in Heb. xi., the principles of the life of faith on the promises of God were in general the same.

“In many things we offend all.” Abraham himself failed in faith on some occasions; but, in general, his life was a walk of faith with God. This is the reason why his experiences are of another nature, far more intimate with God, and more simple, than those of Jacob. His history is short, and not rich in incidents; while the communications of God to this patriarch are numerous and frequent. In his history there is much about God, and little about man. With one single exception, Abraham always remained in the land of promise. He was indeed a stranger and pilgrim, because the Canaanites dwelt there (Gen. xii. 6), but he was in relation with God, and walked before Him.

At first when God had called him, he had not fully answered this call. It is true he left indeed his country and kindred, but not his father's house, and so he did not arrive in Canaan. It is true, he had given up a great deal; he had gone from Ur in Chaldea, but he came no farther than Charran and rested there (xi. 31, 32). So

it is with the heart that has not learned that it belongs entirely to God. It is only in conformity with the call of God that we can enter into the position of the promise.

After the death of his father Terah, Abraham started at the command of God; and they set out to come into the land of Canaan, and they entered into it (xii. 5). Here we have the position of the heavenly people. Placed, by the grace and power of God, in a heavenly position, of which Canaan is a figure, they dwell there; they have everything in promise, but nothing as yet in possession. The Lord revealed Himself to Abraham in calling him; He reveals Himself anew to him in the place which he now knew, and which he was going to possess: "I will give this land to thy posterity" (ver. 7). Such is, in general, our confidence in God, that we shall possess really in future that which we know now as strangers.

"And Abraham built there an altar to the Lord, who had appeared to him" (ver. 7). He serves God and enjoys communion with Him. Thence he goes into another place and there pitches his tent; he builds anew an altar to the Lord, and calls on the name of Jehovah (ver. 8). He is a pilgrim in the land of promise; and that is his entire history. We dwell in the heavenly places, we enjoy them by faith; and we have communion with God who brought us thither. Abraham's tent and altar in this place give a character to his whole history, and all the experiences of faith consist in that.

His unbelief brings him into Egypt (ver. 10—21). There he had no altar. An Egyptian servant-maid becomes afterwards the occasion of his fall, and a source of trouble to him. She is, as we learn in Gal. iv. 24, 25, a type of the law; for the law and the flesh are always in relationship with each other. The grace of God brings Abraham back; but he does not regain an altar till he has returned to the place where he first pitched his tent, and to the altar which he had built before: there he has communion afresh with God (xiii. 3, 4).

The promises of God are the portion of Abraham. He lets Lot take what he pleases: "Is not the whole land before thee? Depart from me, I pray thee. If thou

of Abraham and of Jacob.

21

choosest the left, I will take the right; and if thou take the right, I will go to the left. And Lot lifted up his eyes, and saw the whole plain of Jordan, which, before the Lord had destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, was watered throughout until one comes to Zoar, like the garden of the Lord, and like the land of Egypt. And Lot chose for himself the whole plain of Jordan" (ver. 9—11). Lot is the type of a worldly believer. He takes that which for the moment appears the better part, and chooses the place over which the judgment of God is suspended. Abraham had given up everything according to the flesh, and God shows him the whole extent of the promise. He gives him a visible proof of that which he has given him; and confirms it to him for ever (ver. 14—18). Lot, the worldly believer, is overcome by the princes of the world. Abraham delivers him. With the servants of his house he overcomes the power of the enemy (xiv. 1—21). He will receive nothing of the world. He says to the king of Sodom, "I have lifted up my hand to the Lord, the mighty God, the Sovereign, the possessor of heaven and earth, saying, Surely I will take nothing of all that belongeth to thee, from a thread to a shoe-latchet, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abraham rich" (xiv. 22, 23).

Afterwards God reveals himself to Abraham as his buckler and great reward. He promises him a posterity at a time when his body was now dead; justified by faith, he receives the confirmation of the promises of God, who binds Himself by a sacrifice, type of the sacrifice of Christ. Then the inheritance is shewn him in its details (xv.).

Following the counsels of the flesh, Abraham desires for a moment the fulfilment of the promise by the law; that is to say, by Hagar. But thus he only learns that it is impossible that the child of the law should inherit with the child of promise (xvi.). Then God reveals Himself anew as God Almighty. He tells him that he shall be the father of many nations, and that God will be his God for ever (xvii. 1—14). The posterity according to the promise is promised again (xvii. 15—19).

After that, God once more visits Abraham, and gives

him positive promises respecting the approaching birth of his son (xviii. 9—15). He looks upon him as His friend, saying, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am going to do?" (xviii. 17). He communicates to him His thoughts concerning the world, and Abraham converses with Him in perfect peace and familiarity. He prays for those who had forgotten the Lord (xviii. 23—33). It was necessary that Abraham should again experience, in the case of Ishmael, that the law produces sadness and anguish; and at the court of Abimelech he learned to know, that when unbelief is in action, it only produces troubles and sorrow. But God, in His faithfulness, watches over Him, as well as over the mother of the posterity.

Afterwards, Abraham was tried in the highest degree, till he had to give up everything according to the flesh, and even the promises. But the promises in a Christ raised in figure are confirmed to Christ Himself, and in Him to all the spiritual posterity of Abraham (xxii. 15—19; compare Gal. iii. 16—18).

Abraham then has learned by a fall that neither the law nor the promise are of any avail for the flesh; nevertheless, in general, his peculiar experiences consisted in pilgrimage and adoration, all the time he continued in the promised land. We have now remarked that his life is characterised by a tent and an altar. The whole experience, the whole life of the faithful Abraham, consists almost entirely of worship, intercession, and revelations from God; so that he learned to comprehend these latter with increasing clearness and accuracy. He passed his time in the place to which God had called him. The revelations of God were for him rich, sweet, and admirable. His knowledge of God intimate and deep—his personal experiences happy and simple—for he walked with God, who had revealed Himself to him, in grace.

Now let us also examine a little more closely the life and history of Jacob.

Jacob was the inheritor of the same promise, and, as a believer, he valued it; but he did not trust in God alone. He did not walk, like Abraham, in daily fellow-

of Abraham and of Jacob.

23

ship with the Lord, and waiting upon the Lord. It is true he received the promise, but his experiences were very different from those of Abraham. Although at the end of his life he could say, "The angel that delivered me from all evil" (Gen. xlviii.16), he nevertheless was constrained to add, "The days of the years of my pilgrimage have been few and evil, and have not arrived at the days of the years of the life of my fathers, of the time of their pilgrimages" (xlvii.9). The variety of his experience is a proof of unfaithfulness.

In compliance with his mother's advice, he employed profane means to obtain his father's blessing; and was obliged, through fear of his deceived but profane brother, to leave the land of promise (xxvii.28). Now his position is altogether changed; his unbelief has driven him out of the land of promise. His pilgrimage is not, like that of Abraham, in the land, but outside of it.

It is true, God watches over him, waits on him, and preserves him; but he does not walk with God. He has no altar till his return, after a course of painful experiences (xxxiii.20). He had no full communion with God till he returned to the place where he had last enjoyed the revelation of God, and where he had been strengthened by His promises. For one-and-twenty years he had to do with men who cheated and oppressed him, while God preserved him in secret; but he could not possibly have an altar outside the land of promise.

We also worship God, and we have communion with God, while we dwell in spirit in heavenly places, there, where God Himself has given us our proper place. But if we get outside of it, we can have no fellowship with Him, although He knows how to keep us by His grace and faithfulness.

At the end of twenty-one years, God orders Jacob to return. He must flee far from his father-in-law like a guilty fugitive. It is impossible to be pure from the world if we have lost heavenly communion with God; and it is difficult not to carry away something that belongs to the world, if we abandon that communion. But God is faithful. From that moment a course of experiences begins for Jacob (as they are generally called), but

which, nevertheless, are nothing more than the effects of his getting away from God.

Delivered from Laban, Jacob pursues his journey towards Canaan; and God, to comfort and fortify him, sends an army of His angels to meet him (xxxii.1). Nevertheless, notwithstanding this encouragement from God, unbelief, which deliverance from danger does not destroy, renews Jacob's fear in the presence of his brother Esau. One does not get rid of the difficulties of the path of faith by trying to avoid them; one must surmount them by the power of God. Jacob had brought these difficulties upon himself, because he had not trusted in God. The host of God was forgotten, and the army of Esau, who no longer cherished in his heart hatred against his brother, frightened the feeble Jacob (xxxii.7). He could then employ all kinds of means to appease the presumed and dreaded anger of his brother. He causes flock after flock to pass; and that does more to show the state of the heart of Jacob, than to change that of Esau. Nevertheless, Jacob thinks of God; he reminds Him that He told him he ought to return; he implores Him to save him from the hands of his brother; he thinks of the state in which he left the country, and acknowledges that God has given him all his possessions (xxxii.9—11). But his prayer discovers an ungrounded fear. He reminds God of His promises, as if it were possible that He had forgotten them. It is true there is faith there, but the effect of unbelief produces a wild and confused picture. The timid Jacob has not only sent forward his flocks to appease Esau (xxxii.13—20), but he sends his whole family across the brook, and remains behind alone (ver. 22, 24). His heart is filled with anxieties. But God, who guides all, awaits him precisely there. Although He had not permitted Esau to touch so much as a hair of Jacob's head, He nevertheless had Himself to judge him, and bring him into the light of His presence; for Jacob could in no other way enjoy the land of promise with God. God wrestles with him in the darkness till daybreak (ver. 24). It is not here Jacob wrestling with God of his own accord; but it is God wrestling against him.

of Abraham and of Jacob.

25

He could not bless him simply, like Abraham; he must first correct the unbelief of his heart. Jacob must experience the effects of his conduct—he must even suffer, because God will bless him. Nevertheless, the love of God is acting in all this. He gives strength to Jacob during the conflict in which he must engage to obtain the blessings, to persevere in waiting for them. He will nevertheless have to retain a lasting proof of his weakness and previous unfaithfulness. His hip-joint had been put out while God wrestled with him (ver. 25). And not only that, but God also refuses to reveal His name to him unreservedly. He blesses Jacob. He gives him a name in memorial of his fight of faith, but He does not reveal Himself. How great is the difference here between Jacob and Abraham! God reveals His name to the latter without being asked to do so, that Abraham may know Him fully; for Abraham generally walked with Him in the power of this revelation. He had no conflict with God; and, far from having to fear his kinsfolk, he overcame the power of the kings of this world. He is there as a prince among the inhabitants of the land. God frequently converses with him; and instead of wrestling with Him to obtain a blessing for himself, Abraham intercedes for others. He sees the judgment of the world from the height where he was in communion with God.—Let us return to the history of Jacob.

Notwithstanding all, his fear never leaves him. Blessed by God by means of his conflict, he still trembles before his brother Esau. He divides his children and wives according to the measuring of his affections, so that those whom he most loved were at the greatest distance from Esau. Only then does he undertake to go to meet his brother. But nevertheless he deceives him again. He evades the offer of an escort which Esau makes him, and promises to follow him a little more gently to his residence near Seir (xxxiii. 14). But Jacob went to Succoth (ver. 17).

Now Israel (Jacob) is in the country, nevertheless his heart having been long accustomed to the condition of a traveller without God, he knows not how to become a pilgrim with God. He buys a field near Sichem, and

settles himself in a place where Abraham was only a stranger, and where, knowing the will of God, he had not possessed a spot of ground whereon to set his foot (ver.19). It is at Sichem for the first time, and after having returned into the land, that he builds an altar; the name of the altar recalls the blessing of Israel, but not the name of the God of the promises. He calls the altar "God, the God of Israel" (xxxiii.20). Thankfulness, it is true, recognises the blessing which Jacob has received; but the God who blessed him is not yet revealed.

We now find corruption and violence in his family (xxxiv). The wrath of his sons, cruel, and void of the fear of God, brings him out of his false rest, which was not founded on God; but again the faithfulness of God preserves him. Hitherto Jacob had not thought of the place where God Himself had made him the promise, from the time of his departure, and where Jacob had promised to worship when he should have returned by the help of God. God Himself sends him there now, and says to him, "Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there, and there set up an altar to the strong God who appeared to thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother" (xxxv.1). God, who had guarded, guided, chastened him, had prepared him to come into communion with Him. But first it was necessary that he should leave his false home, where God was not. He must lodge at Bethel (the house of God), and in that very place build an altar to God who had first revealed Himself to him. We here see the instantaneous effect of the presence of God with Jacob, a presence which he had not yet learned to know, in spite of all his experiences up to that moment. The thought of that presence immediately recalls to his mind the false gods which were still among his furniture. These false gods were the effect of his connection with the world; and Rachel, from fear of Laban, had hid them under the camels' furniture. Jacob knew well that they were there; nevertheless he said to his family and to all those who were with him, "Put away the false gods that are in the midst of you and purify yourselves, and change your garments, and

of Abraham and of Jacob.

27

arise and let us go to Bethel, and I will build an altar to God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and who has been with me in the way that I came. Then they gave Jacob all the false gods that they had in their hands, and the rings that were in their ears, and he hid them under the oak that was by Sichem" (xxxv. 2, 4). The thought of the presence of God made him remember the false gods; it awakens in his soul the conviction that the gods, the objects of the adoration of this world, can never be kept together with a faithful God. Nothing else can awaken this conviction. No possible experiences can ever have the effect which the presence of God produces on a soul. Such experiences are useful to humble us, they are a means of stripping us of ourselves. Nevertheless it is only the presence of God as light which can cause us to condemn ourselves, and give us power to purify ourselves from our deepest and well-known though hidden idols. Abraham had nothing to do either with Jacob's idols or Jacob's experiences.

The fear of God reigned over the enemies of Jacob, so that they did not follow him, notwithstanding the murderous violence of his sons (xxxv. 5). Now God could reveal himself to Jacob; and although he remained lame, all went on as if he had not before passed through any experience. Jacob had come to Bethel, from whence he had started. There he built an altar to the God who had made him the promises, and who had always been faithful to him. The name of his altar no longer reminds us of Jacob blessed, but of Him who blesses, and of His house. It is not called the altar of God, *the God of Israel*, but the altar of *the God of Bethel*, that is to say, of the house of God (xxxv. 7). God at this hour speaks with Jacob, without saying anything at all of his experiences. These had been necessary to chasten Jacob, and empty him of himself, because he had been unfaithful. God Himself appeared to him now without being entreated. We read in Genesis xxxv. 9, God appeared again to Jacob when he came from Padan-Aram, and blessed him. He gave him the name of Israel, as if he had not given it him before, and reveals to him His name without Jacob having asked it of Him. He converses with him

as formerly with Abraham. He renews the promises, and confirms them to him—at least, those which have reference to Israel; and after having ended his communication with him, God went up from him, for He had visited him (Gen. xxxv. 13).

Jacob was then returned, after a course of experiences, to the place where he could have communion with God—to a position in which, by the grace of God, Abraham had almost always kept himself. Jacob is a warning to us, but Abraham is an example. The first has, it is true, found the Lord again by His grace; but he has not had the many and blessed experiences of the other, he does not pray for others. The highest point of attainment with him is Abraham's starting point, even the home of his soul. With the exception of a few falls, this was the habitual state of Abraham, the state in which he lived. "Abraham died in a good old age, old and full of days, and he was gathered to his people." But Jacob said, "The days of the years of my life have been few and evil, and have not amounted to the days of the years of the life of my fathers, even the time of their pilgrimages" (Gen. xxv. 8, and xli. 9). He ended his life in Egypt.

The experiences of Jacob are the experiences of what the hearts of men are. The experiences of Abraham are the experiences of the heart of God.

We have described three kinds of experiences: 1st. Those which take place under the law, the position of a believer not known, or when, without being ignorant of it, he is there, having his heart all the time under the law. 2ndly. The experiences which one has of his own heart, from the time that one walks far from that position where God reveals Himself to cherish and keep up this communion. 3rdly. The simple and blessed experiences which one has in walking with God, in the place where God has set us, to enjoy communion with Him in lowliness and thankfulness. These last are experiences of the heart of God, which bring us into the knowledge of His counsels, and of the faithful love which is contained in them. They consist in a close communion with God Himself; the others are, as it has been said, the painful experiences

of Abraham and of Jacob.

29

of the heart of man, among which the highest degree—and also precious for us—is, that God remains faithful in the midst of our unfaithfulness, and that He is patient towards our folly, by the which we put ourselves at a distance from His presence.

Our privilege is to walk like Abraham; our refuge when we are unfaithful (for God is faithful who does not suffer us to be tempted above what we are able to bear) is that God remains faithful, and draws us out of all danger to the end. May God give us grace to dwell near to Him, to walk with Him, that our experiences may have for their end the growing knowledge of His love and of His nature (Col. i. 9—12).

A HYMN.

O JESUS, let Thy mercy throw
Its guardian shadow o'er me,
Preserve me while I'm here below,
And guide me safe to glory.

I'm weaker than a bruised reed,
And cannot do without Thee;
I want Thee here each hour of need,
I'll want Thee too in glory.

And though my efforts now to praise,
Are often cold and lowly,
A nobler, sweeter song, I'll raise
With all Thy saints in glory.

We'll lay our trophies at Thy feet,
We'll worship and adore Thee,
Whose precious blood has made us meet
To dwell with Thee in *glory*.

N^o. III.

D E A T H.

OF all solemn realities, in the wide universe of God's creation, there is none more awful than that of Death. Looked at in the light which God's most holy word casts upon it, as to its origin, development and termination, the subject is one full of solemn import. And to a creature who is fallen it must be so; because it contains the thoughts and truth of the living, eternal, unchanging God—His explanation of the fallen state of a creature who has cast off its dependance upon Himself.

I desire to say a few words upon this subject, under the guidance, I trust, of God; and desiring that what I write should be received or rejected according to its agreement or non-agreement with the Scriptures of truth. For I write as one who has known Him, through whose word, blessed be God, it is said—"Life and immortality are brought to light by the Gospel."

Scripture, as a revelation of God, is a revelation given to man. This truth limits and checks many an inquiry which the human mind might like to entertain; and it would condemn many a flight which fallen human reason might like to take as to the bearing of certain subjects upon other parts of creation beside man. I have felt this as to Death—but I desire to check myself, and to keep within that field, the field of human responsibility, to which the Word directs me.

"In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Gen. ii. 17), is the first intimation on the subject which is met with in Scripture. It was the warning of the Lord God, in His wisdom and goodness, addressed to Adam, as to the sure consequences of disobedience; and the words were addressed to him as to *a living soul*. For "the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground,

Death.

31

and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul" (Gen. ii. 7). What was the difference, the distinction, between Adam as thus made, and the cattle, the birds, and the fish? Both were expressions of creative power; but how different the modes in which this creative power wrought forth in the two! How different the intentions and objects of the Creator in the two cases! how different this last creature from all the rest! The essential difference, at least, is easily felt, when the peculiar deposit made to Adam in Eden (chap. ii.) is weighed. None but Adam was counted competent to recognise the Giver of all goodness, and to know himself as a creature responsible to Him—able to honour and able to dishonour Him, if it would. This power of recognizing God as the source and upholder, and the alone proper end of one's being, man alone possessed. The Law, looked upon as a standard, and explanation of what man ought to be, throws light upon the subject, and gives us a development of no little importance. To love God with all the heart, mind, soul and strength, and to love one's fellow, as set by God near one, as oneself—this is what man should do and should be. Not to be, not to be able to do, thus—in man—is the proof of his being, as a creature, not in dependance upon God—is morally, as to what he is inwardly, *death*. To be unable to have God in all his thoughts, proves a man to be dead in soul. True, there is the solemn realizing of what such a state is in other ways; but where, from a man's state, God cannot be in all his thoughts—when the energy is such as to put into action thoughts in which God is not, what but death is shown to be there. The creature, made to be dependant upon its Creator, if it ceases to hold that place, may, nay must, be dependant upon another. And in that death "in trespasses and sins," which we read of in the New Testament, we find, as in passages innumerable, that Satan gets possession of man fallen from God, and fills him with all evil and wickedness. Or, again, the effects of this death within may be showed out in more ways than one; "the wages of sin is death," and "He that has the power of death" is the enemy—even "death"

as to the body;—but while this is quite true, and while it is true that there is such a thing as *the second death*, still I judge that the creature (in the widest sense of the term) is dead when it naturally acts, or puts into action, a will, a thought independently of God. To a creature, separation from its Creator is death. The will of a serpent-beguiled Eve opened the door, when she took of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and did eat. The doing so was a practical taking of a place of being without God. The effects of the knowledge of good and evil upon such an assumed place became soon evident, in the sense of nakedness,—of broken responsibility,—of suspicion of God, and a quiet self-complacent assumption of competency to guard against God. But alas! self-complacency which can delude man to think that he is competent, not only to settle matters with God, but competent also to protect himself against God, with whom he feels himself to be at issue, act as it may outside of His presence, has only to feel that he may be near to be forced to confess its own insufficiency. This we see in Adam after the fall—charging God foolishly; and charging his fellow quickly follows; and the stream of delusive lying soon brings in murder also. The likeness and image of Adam the first, as made after the likeness and image of God, soon disappear. And, in the progeny and exile of Adam, we find rather the traces of the hand of him who had been a murderer and a liar from the beginning, than of aught else. Surely *moral* death—death in trespass and sin—may be found in Gen. iii., although man never saw death in a human body until Cain murdered his brother Abel—and although (we may add) man will not see what all this really means, until, before the great white throne, the root of sin, in *all* its shoots and fruits, has been finally judged before the Son of Man. Then shall man, as man, know and see, the second death there fully discovered, what the contrast is of subjection to God, and of subjection to God's enemy.

It is wonderful, but so it is: man's will and man's plan for bettering himself in independency of God—beguiled to it as he was by Satan—opened the way for Satan's condemnation. And when all was ruined in

Death.

33

Eden, it then came out that God's will and God's plans could not be escaped from. Who should anticipate God? Was any one before Him? Creation, ruined by man through the guile of Satan, was to become the turning point of Satan's condemnation, and of the display of redemption among men—the seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent. The question is no longer about Adam, or about his state or his obedience or non-obedience; he is left clean out; Satan and the seed of the woman are the parties between whom the whole is made now to rest by the Divine mind. Creation was exhausted as to a remedy; there was none in creation. But if Satan had shaken creation, and man the centre of the fair system here below, he had not, he could not shake God. Him he could not change; to him he could not say: “In Thy wisdom, and power, and goodness there is no answer.” Irremediable ruin he had brought, but only upon himself, and those who should cleave to his interests among men, and set themselves, and persevere to the end, in opposition to the interests of this seed of the poor beguiled Eve.

A state of severance from its Creator, would seem to me to be death in man as a creature. One may look at the state itself; at that to which it exposes man; morally or bodily, or as to his whole being; and one may look at it as not only what is true as to man, but as that which has become an occasion for God to display Himself by, as to man, between the time of its entering and the time of His fully acting as to man, a sinner, upon the alone ground of this sin, namely, in the judgment; when banishment from the presence of God, banishment in God's own eternity, for ever, of all those who have taken part with the old serpent against the seed of the woman, shall be finally executed; and they that are such shall then be driven to the place prepared for the devil and his angels. And O how justly driven shall every human tongue then confess; for not only is our sin against our Creator, but against a Creator who stooped from Divine glory to the cross, due to us, that He might win us for Himself and for God from Satan.

2*

But if almighty wisdom and almighty power could not be outwitted by Satan or man, none but He who was wise and powerful to perfection could solve the enigma, or show how, without a compromise to His own government and character, yea, to the very rendering of both more honourable, the difficulty could be met. His way we know, a way in which a trait in His character, which never had yet been displayed, but yet was not new in Him—mercy—could be unfolded; a way in which, while stooping down to that which was in its nature and doing the very opposite of all that He loved, He could yet say to it, “For my own name’s sake, and by the power of what I am, be blessed!” and give to it a new life, incorruptible, and, in its source, nature, and tendencies, altogether above all that the mere creature, as set in the garden of Eden, was or had; and He could, and did give it, too, in such a way as to clear Himself in so dealing with the sinner, and to give to the new man—to the divine nature so communicated—perfect freedom from all the consequences of the fallen condition and state of the vessel in which it was put, and power also over that vessel. In the wonders of His own way, too, the blessing should be so given as to leave the receiver free, daily to renounce, not only Satan and the world, but its ownself for the sake of the Redeemer.

What an appeal to the heart of a sinner is found in the picture of the descent of the Son of God, as given us in the second chapter of Philippians! What true moral power! What superiority of self to circumstances! What expression of a just appreciation of the value of mercy as in the Father’s bosom! What a dignity in the recognition that himself was indeed the only one (He the only begotten Son of the Father), who by His own down-stooping could take up the controversy, and, as the champion of God, by humiliation of Himself, turn all the chaos of confusion to a scene in which mercy should yet rejoice against judgment.

Himself he knew no sin; Satan had, not only, nothing in Him; but also He was holy, undefiled, separate from sinners, and there was in Him the full outflowing of that which showed that God was all in all to Him. “Lo, I

come to do Thy will," was the very motto of the being of this faithful servant. Such He was, and such He was proved to be, when most fiercely tried. But what could the world, out of course and full of evil, lay hold of in Him, who, separate from all its evil, was in it to pour forth the streams of blessing to its present need, and was about to die for the sins of those who sought His life. What could Satan do; what hold could even he lay of Him whose heart and mind and soul and strength were all and alone for God? What could God Himself find amiss or short-coming in Him who was ready to be obedient unto death—the death of the cross, in all the full import of the contents of the cup which His Father had prepared for Him to drink there? He was light in the midst of darkness—light as to what man should be and should do—light as to what God was and is. But when all the active energy of His goodness had fully expressed God and His goodness, and been rejected, He was willing passively to be led as a lamb to the slaughter, and to die for the rejector. Was ever perfectness like this? Was ever such a triumph in service, deep, self-renouncing service as this?

And when He came to the cross, He found there, not merely death, not merely a painful kind of death—one to which the Jewish law had attached a legal curse—but He found there that which He well knew He would find there, namely, the effects in full—in full as He alone could appreciate and bear them—of what, in all His perfectness, it was to stand as one who had undertaken to be a substitute for the guilty in the presence of God. His very perfectness, His every apprehension of how His personal position, as forsaken of all below, appealed to God, must have enhanced to His righteous mind the sorrow of heart and soul, when He cried out, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?"

We are sinners; the root of sin bears daily fruit, towards God, of sins, but hitherto God has, in long-suffering patience, refused to act towards us as such. He, the Christ, was not a sinner; there was no root, no fruits of sins towards God in or from Him; but in the very hour when all His perfectness was most displayed, and most

touchingly displayed—perfection toward God and toward us—then Jehovah was pleased to act towards Him as though all our sins and iniquities were laid upon Him. Such a forsaking never had been; never once had God so forsaken any, so effectually withdrawn the light of His countenance from any one.

No adequate measure of God's feelings about sin, no estimate of it can ever be found but this. He that tries to measure sin will find, for he is finite, no just measure. God presents to us here an infinite measure, a perfect estimate. And they that have to do with troubled consciences, will find that nothing but an infinite measure will ever suit conscience when it is in God's presence. But there the Infinite God was perfectly expressing His thought about sin. His own beloved Son and faithful servant could not introduce it, when it was only vicariously laid upon Him, into God's presence, and into the light of God's countenance. God's delight was in His servant; His heart might yearn over Him, but He could not give the light of His countenance where sin was. That God and sin can never meet to be together, was better told in the cross of the Lord Jesus, even than it will be hereafter in the banishment of the wicked from the presence of God.

Worms found in rebellion, voluntary slaves of God's great enemy, in character and works hateful, in every respect the contrast of the beloved Son, to chase them from that presence, where is fulness of joy for evermore, seems natural. They might be left to their own inward feelings without being hurried away by the blast of the wrath of God, to get as far off as possible from Him. His holiness, their position, character, work, the scene then present—all, all seems to make their sinking down in that day into the lake of fire and brimstone natural. How should they not depart? How could they stay? But not so when we turn to the cross—to the cross of the faithful servant, of the beloved Son of God. Sin was but imputed to Him; He was in all His native beauty and perfectness as to Himself; He did but stand as the just one in the place of the unjust to bear the consequences of sin. All the wonder here is on the other

side; and the perfectness of God's holiness, and the exceeding sinfulness of sin, stand fully manifested, because He, even He, could not have light then and there. "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" was the true, deep experience of His righteous soul when thus He took the place of us to bear the judgment due to us.

And how wondrous an anticipation, too, is found in that cross! He who shall hereafter be Judge of quick and dead—who shall, when Judge, bruise the head of Satan, and lay all that has opposed itself to God low—He on the cross tasted death for every man. The infinite and eternal Son of God, as the servant of God, took, as the just one, the place of the many unjust, and bare sin in His own body on the tree. Death was in His case the expression and the revelation of His perfectness and of who He was. It was not the mere letting of Him out of the body into a world to Him known and loved; or, as it is in fallen man's case, into a world unknown and dreaded. His death was, in a certain sense, too, an act of His own; for "*He gave up* the ghost," after committing His spirit unto His Father. He alone had power to lay down His life, and power to take it again; this commandment had He received of the Father. The wrath was past, the judgment had spent itself; that which would have sunk a world to hell, there through eternity to abide, without having exhausted the wrath which assigns to rebellion a lake of fire, where their worm dieth not, and where their fire is not quenched—that wrath against our sins, when laid upon Him, was exhausted, and while upon Him drew forth the most perfect expressions of what He was. Who can read the twenty-second Psalm without being struck with the moral perfectness of the sufferer? and with another thing, too, and that is, that the spring of His communion with, and faithfulness to, God, was not merely that of a creature? A creature, in its dependance, can give back nothing but what it receives from God; it has in itself no springs; but when all inflowing of light from above was interrupted, light flowed out still from Him. If God forsook Him for our sins' sake, He did not forsake God. When most suffer-

ing under wrath, His faithfulness most shined out. He bore the full penalty of our guilt and sins.

Now this alone would change everything as to the article of death, the death of the body. The judgment of the great white throne *has been anticipated*, and is magnified. He to whom men shall give account then and there for deeds done in the body, which were expressions of their association with the old serpent—He Himself, in that day the Judge of all—He has borne the penalty of our sins, and won for Himself by this obedience unto death, the death of the cross, the glory of universal Lordship: “Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil. ii. 9—11). This takes away to them that are His the bitterness of death; for they know Him who hath said, “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. 24). They know Him who said of Himself, “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” (John xi. 25, 26); and they can say, “Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. xv. 57).

Death of the body is a most humbling fruit of sin to man; and it has most justly been looked at by fallen man as the king of terrors. It is the debt which *fallen* human nature owes, and has a sting in it, as the grave has a terror in it, which the human mind can never evade. “All their lifetime subject to bondage through fear of death,” has been the experience of many; and well may it be, for he that has the power of death is the devil. As the tree falleth, so shall it lie; beyond the grave there is no repentance; “death, and after that the judgment,” are all of them truths calculated to make it terrible.

Death.

39

Death is the challenger of men's thoughts. What answer can we render to ourselves about this? Is it only that, in fulness of selfishness, in a world that is godless, a man that is godless can make himself happy? Not caring for God, he cares not that he is morally dead as to God, so long as he can stay in a world which Satan has filled with follies to amuse the godless soul, and make it able to kill time as it flies with a light heart. But when death appears, or is thought of, then the end of the dream is seen too. Aye, death, into what abyss will it let man fall? And as surely as there is a God, then "after death the judgment." Death is in this way the detector of darkness within to many a godless sinner—the shadow cast before it, too, of judgment to come. In the field of fallen human nature, what a humbling fact is death; and what a centre, too, is it to motives, causes, consequences and results, which might well humble the pride of man, if aught in nature could!

There is another thing to be remarked, and it is, the effect which the death of our Lord Jesus Christ had as to the effects of death upon the minds of the people of God on earth. First, until He came and had died, death—death of the body—had not a full answer given to it in revelation. It was not that the soul taught of God did not know His mercy and grace, or could not trust itself blindfold to Him; but the way was not yet made manifest: and, "How shall these things be?"—had not its answer until life and immortality were brought to light through the Gospel. Moreover, God was dealing with a people whose blessings and hopes were, as a people, "of the earth, earthy;" and the eternal blessedness at God's right hand was not the subject of testimony, as it has become since man rejected Christ, and God raised Him again from the dead. Now, in the death of the Lord Jesus Christ we have the full expression of God's judgment, and judgment past, too. God, in wisdom and goodness, had not permitted men to live from the fall to the final judgment. Death had cut down those that were morally dead, and of those in whom moral death was, one individual after another; and as the tree fell, so should it lie. Yet this stroke of the axe was not the last

or the worst of God's wrath against the morally dead; for the general resurrection, where the fullest expression which God can give of judgment against the serpent and his seed will take place, is yet future. But in Christ's death there was an anticipation by God of His full and final judgment against sinners.

But there is another thing to be remarked as a fruit of His death. Not only is there the *negation* of what is bitter, dreadful, dark, and gloomy in the grave found in His death, but there is a positive decking of the grave for us who believe—the lamp of His love has gilded its passage. To the thief upon the cross he said, “Verily, I say unto thee, This day thou shalt be with me in *Paradise*.” A garden of delights to the poor thief it was to be, and good the company in which he should find himself there. How blessedly has that path, unknown to us, of the soul separate from the body, been experimented by Him that has saved us. Not only as Son of God does He know the passage and the state right well, but has made his experience of both one and the other as Son of Man. It was needful, for death was the goal of his course here below. His body lay in the grave—His spirit, commended to His Father's keeping, was in *Paradise*—three days and three nights was there; and when He awoke and arose, He led captivity captive; for the grave was burst to faith, and He would mark it to be so. “And many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after His resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many” (Matt. xxvii. 52, 53). Surely, if we knew no more than this, we could see and say that His death and resurrection have given to the grave a light—shown it to be, for His people, only a place of passing through to blessing. But, as to the blessing, these were but first-droppings of a cloud of fatness. For we have nothing apart from Himself—our clearing from judgment was by His bearing the penalty for us—“our righteousness”—it is Himself; “as He is, so are we in this world.”

What a blessed fulness is in that word, 1 Cor. xv. 20: “But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept.” A Stephen's death is a

Death.

41

practical commentary on the words, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

"He, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God. And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God" (Acts vii. 55, 56). . . . "And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit! And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep" (ver. 59, 60).

So again, we find in Paul no shrinking from death. Taste it he knew he should *not*; Christ had tasted it for him; he, as a believer, should not taste it; his mind was not held by such a thought, but by quite others.

1st. He wanted his death, if he died, to taste to God of Christ, and he had boldness that it should do so. "According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death" (Phil. i. 20). "Christ to be magnified" was the aim of his being; and he had no timid, pious feeling of half hope, half fear, about his own passing through the valley of the shadow of death, and not being lost or terrified by the way; *that* would have been to have lived for himself. Christ had settled all that for him. His eye was on another thing, that all he was should magnify Christ. And as to this, he had earnest expectation, hope, ~~and~~ boldness; and well he might: for, as it is added (and it was no private behest to him, but his as being of the body of Christ, and a consistent member of it), "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you. And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith" (Phil. i. 21—25).

Death is gain. That is settled to a believer. It is to be with Christ, which is far better. Paul, walking in the Spirit, could so act on this as to drop self entirely, and see what as to life or death in his own case would most serve the present interests of the saints, and as that was to live a little longer, he knew he should do so, and was willing to have it so.

How blessedly does the believer's assurance express itself in 2 Cor. v. 6—8: "Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (for we walk by faith, not by sight): we are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord."

And the ground on which this assurance rests is most sure, namely, the desire of Christ, and the call to us of God to be confident, single-eyed, and full of Christ in dying or in living. "He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them and rose again."

In Stephen's case, dying was *an act* of his life: to the believer it is always an act of the new life and not of the old. "For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that He might be Lord both of the dead and living" (Rom. xiv. 7—9).

As sin has reigned to death, so did grace propose to reign through righteousness unto eternal life. And we know that He, who is the Resurrection and the Life, is He that liveth, though once He died, and He has the keys of hell and of death.

In Him life and death, *all* are ours (1 Cor. iii. 22); and though in deaths oft (2 Cor. xi. 23), Paul found that neither death nor life could separate from the love of God which was in Christ Jesus.

There has been, I fear, a displacing of the blessing of the truth that the grave is not now a tasting of death, but absence from the body to be present with the Lord.

Death.

43

Perhaps, in our selfishness, with some of us, the desire to depart was too strong, and savoured more of love of personal, individual blessing, than of fellowship with the Lord's thoughts. If so, one can well understand how the discovery that, not death, but resurrection glory is *the hope* of the individual heart (which came to many of us with the truth of Christ's hope being, to possess His church in the heavens, and to rule the earth for God), should have made one forget the blessedness of absence from the body and presence with the Lord. For selfish hope lives not in the light. But admitting and thankfully owning that Christ is the centre and end of all God's dealings, can one not say: If God's will is for me to leave the wilderness and wait for the Lord's descent to the heavenlies, not here (amid sorrow and sin) but above in the presence of my blessed Lord, how blessed for me the change! Is not a Paul, a Stephen, a Timothy, etc., in more present enjoyment than I? And let me say another word: Can not brethren beloved, after reading 1 Thess. iv., understand a man's saying, "If it were revealed that Christ should come this night; still, if called to fall asleep ere He does come, I shall have experienced, as it were, extra displays of a guardian care on His part in the passage; and I shall be found at His coming in a position not the most unsuited to that faithful love, which ever thinks first and most of that which is weakest of all."

Time would fail me, if I here attempted to enter, in detail, upon one part of the subject. I name it in closing, and a blessed topic it is, to one who is acting now upon God's principle of death and resurrection. I mean the way that "death" is presented as a spoil to adorn the seed of the woman, the Lord of all glory, in that glory heavenly and earthly, which is prepared for Him. It is the Lamb that was slain, alive for ever more, who is, amid all the glories, connected with the Lord God Almighty—the Saviour God.

No. IV.

HARDENING THE HEART.

THERE are Scriptures which contemplate a succession of eras or times all along the course of the earth's history, from the time of the Flood, I may say, to the days of Antichrist, when there has been, or is to be, *a judicial visitation, under the hand of God, upon the hearts, understandings, and consciences of men.*

I might present the following instances:^a

The old Gentile World . . . Rom. i. 28.

Pharaoh or Egypt . . . Ex. iv. 21.

The Kings of Canaan . . . Josh. xi. 20. .

Israel . . . Is. vi.

Christendom. . . 2 Thess. ii.

These scriptures show us this judicial dementation, of which I am speaking; and they further show us, that the fruit or character of this dementation may be very startling, such as we could not easily have believed or feared.

Under it, men of refinement and intelligence may adopt all kinds of religious vanity; rulers and statesmen may be blinded to the plainest maxims of government. Did not Pharaoh persist in a course which, in the mouth of witness after witness, was sure to be the ruin of his kingdom? Did not the nations of Canaan tremble at the report of the conquests of Israel, and of what God had done for Israel; and yet, in spite of all that, did they not madly resist Israel? (See Josh.) And will not whole communities of intelligent, refined, advanced people, by and bye, bow to the claims of one who shows himself to be God, setting himself up above all that is worshipped?

This has been thus, and will be thus still, under this

^a There are other instances of this judicial hardening; but they are of a private and not of a dispensational nature, and, therefore, I do not put them among these cases.

Hardening the Heart.

45

judicial dementation; worldly men violate the clearest and most sensible means of their own interests, and religious men depart from the simplest instructions of the truth. We are not to wonder at anything. The very idols which men have taken as spoils of war, they have afterwards bowed down to as their gods (2 Chron. xxv. 14). For what folly, what incredible blindness of understanding, will not the infatuated heart of man betray. But this dementation is never sent forth to visit man until he has righteously exposed himself to judgment. All the cases show this. Pharaoh, for instance, had, in deepest ingratitude, forgotten Joseph. The Amorites of Canaan had filled up the measure of their sins. The old Gentiles had brought this reprobate mind on themselves (Rom. i. 28). Israel "had not," Jerusalem "would not" (Mat. xiii. 12; xxiii. 37). And the strong delusion is to be sent, by and bye, abroad upon Christendom, only because "they loved not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."

This hardening precedes destruction; but it comes after man has ripened his iniquity. God endures with all long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction, as He fashions by His Spirit His own elect vessels of mercy ere He glorifies them. "Whom He will He hardens," is surely true; but He wills to show His wrath in this way of hardening, or of judicial dementation, only in the case of those whom He has in much long-suffering endured (Rom. ix. 18—22).

Thus, then, we see there is such a process in the judgments of God as the hardening of the heart—that this is never executed till man has ripened himself in evil—and that the fruit of this may appear in such human folly and blindness as we should never have apprehended, or perhaps conceived.

Let this prepare us for things which not only may shortly come to pass, but which have already appeared. Men of learning and of taste, men of morals and religion, men of skill in the science of government, and whole nations famed for dignity and greatness, each in their generation may be turned to fables and to follies enough

to shake the commonest understandings in ordinary times.

I do not say the "strong delusion" has gone forth; but there are symptoms and admonitions of its not being far off. What a voice has this for us, to keep near to the Lord in the assurance of His love, to love His truth, to walk *immediately* with Himself, and to promise ourselves that His tarrying is not long.

FRAGMENT.

"THOSE who fight the Lord's battles must be contented to be in no respect accounted of; they must expect to be in no respect encouraged by the prospect of *human* praise. And if you make an exception, 'that the children of God will praise you, whatever the world may say,' beware of this, for you may turn them into a world, and find in them a world, and may sow to the flesh in sowing to their approbation; and you will neither be benefited by them nor they by you, so long as respect for them is your motive. All such motives are a poison and a taking away from you the strength in which you are to give glory to God. It is not the fact, that all that see the face of the Lord do see each other. It is not the fact, that the misapprehension of the world is the only misapprehension the Christian must be contented to labour under. He must expect even his brethren to see him through a mist, and to be disappointed of their sympathy and their cheers of approbation; *the man of God must walk alone with God, he must be contented that the Lord knoweth.* And it is such a relief, yea, it is such a relief to the natural man within us, to fall back upon human countenances, and human thoughts and sympathy, that we often deceive ourselves, and think it 'brotherly love,' when we are just resting in the earthly sympathy of some fellow worm. You are to be followers of Him who was left alone, and you are, like Him, to rejoice you are not alone, *because the Father is with you*, that you may give glory to God. Oh! I cannot but speak of it. It is such a glory to God to see a soul that has been accessible to the praise of men, surrounded by hundreds and thousands of his fellow-creatures, every one of whom He knows how to please, and yet that he should be contented, yea, pleased and happy, in doing, with a single reference to God, that which he knows they will all misunderstand. Here was the victory of Jesus—there was not a single heart that beat in sympathy with his heart, or entered into his bitter sorrow, or bore his grief in the hour of his bitter grief; but His way was with the Lord—His judgment was with his God—his Father—who said, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.' This was the perfect glory given to the Father by the Son, that in *flesh and blood* such a trust in God was manifested; and this is what you are called to, and you are not called to it as He was, but you are called to see God in Him. God has come near to you in Christ, and here you have a human heart—a perfect sympathy—the heart of God in your nature, and to this you are ever carried. And if there be any other sympathy with you in the wide universe, whether on the sea of glass, or still on this earth, it is only as the *pulsation of the blood that flows from Christ—to His members—that it is to you of any account.* Feed upon it, and remember you are thus to walk in the world not hanging upon one another."

N^o. V.

THE GENTILE.

DANIEL I.

THERE is something much to be observed in the opening of the book of Daniel.

It was the moment when the Gentile was receiving the sword of government from the hand of the Lord; and this Scripture lets us know *with what mind* the Gentile did receive it; and we see that it was a very bad mind indeed.

The Gentile would never have had the sword in this way, if Israel had been true to Jehovah, and the house of David continued in their integrity. But at this moment, when the Chaldean is thus endowed, Jerusalem is a wilderness, and the glory has departed from the earth.

The Gentile, therefore, in taking the sword, should have taken it as with a burthened heart. He should, in spirit, have sorrowfully tracked the way by which power had now come into his hand, and have accepted it as *with grief and trembling*. This would have been the right mind in the Gentile when accepting power from God on the fall of Jerusalem and the departure of the glory.

In such a spirit David accepted power. It was Saul's apostasy that opened the passage to the throne for David. But Saul was God's anointed; and the fall of the anointed of the Lord was before David at that moment, rather than his own exaltation. He lamented with a sore lamentation over the mountains of Gilboa, where Saul and Jonathan had been slain (2 Sam. i.).

This was beautiful, and the very opposite or contradiction of Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel i. Instead of mourning, the king of Babylon triumphs; and the very first

thing he does is to adorn his palace, the seat and witness of his power, with the best-favoured children he could get from among the captives of Judah.

Nebuchadnezzar should not have looked on Jerusalem in the day of her calamity. He may have been the rod of the Lord's indignation against her, but he should have used his commission with a grieved heart. The glory itself, though it had to leave Zion (Ezek. viii.—xi.), left it reluctantly and with reserve, and, as I may say, sorrowfully.

And this Gentile should have known, also, the holiness of Judah, and how near the Lord had been to Israel. If he never thought of this, it was because of the hardness of his heart, and he is answerable for such hardness that blinded him—as the world is answerable for not knowing Him who made it when He was in it. The Gentile should have known that God's house was at Jerusalem; a house, too, made to be a house of prayer for all nations. All this was the witness of God's presence in that city; and the Gentile's exultation in the day of her calamity is the Gentile's wickedness.

All this condemns the Gentile *from the very* beginning. And when we look around and abroad, we see him in the same spirit to this day. Nay, the Gentile has this further sin attaching to him. He is now, in Christendom, exalting himself, advancing, enriching, and adorning himself in the world, though Christ, the King of glory, like the glory of old in Jerusalem, has been grieved and sent away. The present Gentile is careless about the sorrows and the blood of Jesus, just as Nebuchadnezzar, in his day, was careless and thoughtless about the fall and the griefs of Jerusalem. The Gentile is the Gentile still; and God's indignation against Jerusalem shall end in his destruction.

FRAGMENT.

SAUL lost the kingdom of Israel through independence—through want of waiting upon God. He saw his people scattered from him, and his enemies pressing hard upon him; and these proofs of his weakness were too much for his heart unsustained by trust in God. He could not in such a trial wait for God. David gained the kingdom by taking the place of dependence; and by taking as his motto: "My soul, wait thou only upon God."—"My help cometh from the Lord who made heaven and earth."

N^o. VI.

THE LIVING GRACE OF CHRIST.

John xxi.

THERE are two great objects, in regard to man, for which Scripture has been written. In regard to man, I say, because the display and accomplishment of His own glory in Christ, is surely God's highest object in His word, as well as in all His ways. But, *as to man*, Scripture has been written, first, for the communication to dead sinners of eternal life in the knowledge of the Son of God; and, secondly, the ministration to that life, where it has been received, of all the fulness of Christ Himself, He being the object on which that life is exercised, as well as the source whence it proceeds. We have the formal statement of the first object in John xx. 30, 31, "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; *and that believing, ye might have life through His name.*" How blessedly simple! So simple that even a child may, by the teaching of the Spirit, understand it—understand that to which the greatest human learning is a hindrance rather than a help. Numberless deeds and words of the Lord Jesus had not been recorded by the apostle, "*but these are written*"—for what end? "That ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God." "Well," says the reader, "I do unfeignedly believe this—not because parents, or teachers, or ministers have said it, but because God has written it in His word, and all He says is true." You, then, dear reader, are a partaker of eternal life! The fact is, that the believing on the Son of God is the first pulsation of this life. The natural life received by an infant from its parent declares itself in various sounds and motions; and even if it be but the beating of the

pulse, the life is thus surely manifested. Now, truly to believe in Christ is, so to speak, the pulse of the new life; so that, when any one believes *on the testimony of God Himself*, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, *he has life through Christ's name*. "This is the record," as we read elsewhere, "that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son," so that "He that *hath* the Son *hath* life."

Every one knows, however, that a new-born babe is the most helpless creature in the world; it can neither feed itself, nor defend itself, nor go by itself, nor care for itself in any way. It has to be fed, and tended, and cared for, till, as the life is gradually developed, it grows up from infancy to childhood, and from childhood to man's estate. So does the new life through the name of Jesus need to be nourished and ministered unto. And what is its nutriment? "As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby, if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious." Here we have the first pulsation of the new life somewhat differently expressed, "If so be ye have *tasted* that the Lord is gracious." We cannot fail to know in natural things whether we have tasted any given flavour. We may not understand the composition of the substance in which the flavour is found; but if it be salt, or sweet, or bitter, ~~there~~ there can be no question about our knowing its *taste*, supposing we have tasted it. So in the things of God: we have all *heard* that the Lord is gracious, but have you, dear reader—have I—*tasted* that He is so? Do we know the divine *relish* of the Lord's grace, which, to be known, *must* be spiritually tasted? If we have, then are we born of God; for it is the new life alone which is possessed of this spiritual taste. It is through the Word that the Lord has made known to us that He is gracious, and it is in the reception of the Word that we have both received the new life, and become conscious of its *tastes*. "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." And how else should the life thus received be nourished, but by the same Word? By the same Word, moreover, still further

unfolding "that the Lord is gracious"? It is in our first tasting this that we receive life; and it is as we taste it more and more that the new life is developed and grows.

The great subject of John xxi. is the living grace of the risen Saviour—grace, which having met our need *as sinners* in the blood shed upon the cross, now meets all our necessities *as saints* in the fulness here seen to reside in Jesus as risen from the dead. These records of the intercourse between the risen Christ and His disciples, have thus a peculiar interest and charm. Who can fail to be touched by the tenderness, the sympathy of Jesus in all His relations to His disciples till the hour of His death? But death and resurrection might have been supposed to change all this. How blessed, that when, as here, we find the risen Jesus in the midst of His disciples, it is the same Jesus—tender, compassionate, full of sympathy and love, which, if it wield the arm of omnipotence, can yet enter into the most minute circumstances of the disciples' condition and wants!

At the opening of the chapter, we find a cluster of the disciples gathered together. On the night of His betrayal they had all forsaken Him and fled; and they all needed the restorings of His living grace as risen from the dead. Peter had, it is true, by his rashness, placed himself in circumstances which made his fall more conspicuous than that of the rest; but all had forsaken their dying Lord and Master, and had proved, that though the spirit was willing the flesh was weak. And though Jesus had already appeared to them once, and again after His resurrection, we find them here, in ver. 2, in such a state of soul as readily to respond to the proposal of one always the most forward to act—"I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee." They go, and spend the whole night in fruitless toil.

Three years and a half before, they had been called from that very employment by the Lord Himself. Jesus called them to follow Him, and to such of them as forsook their nets He said, "I will make you fishers of men." From that time they had either accompanied Him, or gone at His bidding to preach the Gospel and cast out devils, He caring for all their wants, so that they

lacked nothing. Now they supposed that His care over them was at an end, and that they had become dependent on their own resources and endeavours. They go a fishing: but to what purpose was their toil? "That night they caught nothing." In the morning, however, Jesus, who was cognizant of all their need, though they knew it not, stood on the shore, and said, "Children, have ye any meat?" They knew not that it was Jesus, for such was the manner of His intercourse with them after His resurrection; but there He was, with all the interest in their minutest cares which He had been wont to manifest in the days of His flesh. He bids them cast the net on the right side of the ship, and now they are not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes.

In all this there was, no doubt, instruction both for them and for us, beyond the circumstances of the moment. It is surely the happy privilege of all who know Jesus to testify of Him far and near; setting Him forth, according to the ability given to poor perishing sinners, as their only hope and refuge. But while it is happy, and of all importance, that the heart be ready for this service anywhere and at all times, let us never forget that success depends entirely on our being in the current of God's workings. The disciples might spread the net, and cast it in the sea, but if not in the current where the fishes were, what advantage in it all? It is only in proportion as we individually walk with God, depending entirely upon Christ, and guided by Him, that blessing will attend our labours. It is not on the amount of labour that success depends, but on our being near enough to Christ to have His directions in casting the net on the right side of the ship.

Nor is the same service assigned to all. "There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of services, but the same Lord." The vessels, moreover, of the several gifts differ from each other, according to the wisdom of Him who doeth all things after the counsel of His own will. All have not the promptitude of Peter, or the tenderness of John. We, in the narrowness of our hearts, would often seek to have every vessel cast in the same mould, while, as has been

The Living Grace of Christ.

53

said by another, "Unity in diversity is God's principle, both in creation and in the church." In the chapter before us, we find in John the tenderness and delicacy of spiritual affection which was the first to perceive that it was the Lord Himself who stood on the shore; while in Peter there is the promptitude in action, in which he no sooner understands that it is the Lord, than he girds his fisher's coat about him, and casts himself into the sea. What is recorded of each is beautifully characteristic. It was for the disciple who lay in Jesus' bosom to be the first to discern who He was, and cry, "It is the Lord!" while it was for Peter, forward, energetic, and impetuous, to plunge into the sea, and swim to shore. Neither the Johns nor the Peters can be spared; each has his place and service; and we do well to remember that "all things are ours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, all are ours, and we are Christ's, and Christ is God's."

It was not only that after they had spent their night in fruitless labour Jesus appeared to them, and directed them so to cast the net as to find a full supply, but when they reach the shore, what awaits them there? A repast ready prepared to their hands! "As soon, then, as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread." Who was it that had thus been caring for them while they were toiling hard and without result? True, indeed, we are not told who it was that had kindled the fire and dressed the food; but the silence of Scripture is often as impressive as its language, and the heart needs no testimony as to whose service of love this was! But how could so touching a proof have been afforded of the Saviour's changeless, living love and care? To guide the unconscious tribes of the deep to the disciples' net was an act of almighty power, which might well impress them as it did; but for their risen Lord to be thus personally the servant of their humblest wants, was an answer to their unbelieving fears which none but He could give! And what a testimony to us that nothing which concerns us can be beneath His notice! "The very hairs of our heads are all numbered."

When, at their Lord's invitation, they had dined on

what was prepared to their hand, and on some of the fish they had caught, the Lord addressed Himself to Peter. But if we are to understand the bearings of the conversation which ensued, we must glance for a moment at what had previously occurred. Nothing can be more important than the restoration of a soul which has fallen into sin; and in Peter's case this precious work may be traced from beginning to end. His restoration was provided for, indeed, before he fell. Else how could he have been restored? Jesus knew the danger which awaited all His disciples, and to which Peter, by his impetuosity and self-confidence, was peculiarly exposed. "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: *but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted (or restored) strengthen thy brethren.*" Peter knew not his danger; but the Lord knew it, and thus graciously interceded for him, even before his fall was consummated. What a comfort that we have One who ever lives to make intercession for us! One who intercedes in anticipation of our failing; and not only when we have actually failed!

The circumstances of Peter's fall are well known, and need not be retraced. When self-confidence had betrayed him into rash zeal, distance from his Lord, and companionship with His enemies, warming himself at their fire, the last step, the outward fall, was but the natural result of all that had occurred. Alas! what poor nothings we are when left to our own strength. There may be life—divine life; but if we do not realize that, we have no strength to follow out the impulses and tendencies of this life, and so lean entirely on the strength of Jesus; we may be left, like Peter, to learn by experience the bitter but wholesome and needed truth. But the Lord remembers His unfaithful disciple. "The cock crew, and the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter." That look broke Peter's heart. He "went out, and wept bitterly." Such is the first stage in the restoration of a soul. To be heart-broken under the look of Jesus, recalling to the conscience of Peter the words by which he had been forewarned of the very sin which he thought

The Living Grace of Christ.

55

it impossible he could commit, but in which the eye of Jesus now rests upon him—to taste the bitterness of sin in the presence of the very grace which had thus forewarned, and which now reminds—and penetrated with shame and grief, to go out and weep bitterly, such is the commencement in a lapsed soul of the work by which, in the grace of Christ, that soul is to be restored.

In John xx. we find Peter in company with the disciple whom Jesus loved. Mary informs them that she has been to the sepulchre, and that the body of Jesus has been removed. “Peter, therefore, went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulchre. So they ran both together; and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre.” How was this? In ordinary circumstances, Peter was not a man to be outrun, and especially by one so gentle as the beloved disciple; and even in this instance he was as ready to set out towards the sepulchre. What thought had suddenly occurred to him to cause the slackening of his pace, and lead him to give back, and suffer John to outrun him? Ah! does not the question of itself suggest its only answer? Who can doubt that it must have been the remembrance of the last look he had from Jesus that now occurred to him, producing results so unlike the general character of the man? But between this journey to the sepulchre and the events of our chapter, an interview—a personal interview—had taken place between Peter and his risen Lord. In Mark xvi. 7, the angel says to the women, while announcing the resurrection of Jesus, “But go your way, tell his disciples *and Peter* that He goeth before you into Galilee.” Lest Peter in his despondency should deem himself excluded from a general message to the disciples, his name is thus specifically mentioned. But in Luke xxiv. 34, the two, on their return from Emmaus, find the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them, “saying, The Lord is risen indeed, *and hath appeared to Simon.*” In 1 Cor. xv. 5, moreover, Paul, witnessing of Christ’s resurrection, says, “He *was* seen of Cephas.” Need it be asked what the object of this *separate* interview with Peter can have been? Ah! there are ques-

tions in the soul of a saint who has fallen as Peter did, which can only be settled between that soul and Christ. There can be no third party present at such a moment. The presence of a third party would be felt to be an intrusion. The soul needs to hear from Christ's own mouth the assurance of His unchanged and unchanging love, and to receive from Himself the seal of full forgiveness. This is needed, not because of any change in the blessed Saviour, but to re-assure the soul of His repentant disciple, restoring thus the confidence which sets the heart free and at ease in His presence. Such had evidently been the result of this interview of Peter with his risen Lord. At the sea of Tiberias there is none of the shrinking back which we have noticed on his way to the sepulchre. No, as soon as John says, "It is the Lord," Peter plunges into the sea, that he may the more quickly be at His feet, or by His side.

Was, then, the restoration of his soul complete when he thus swam to shore on hearing that it was the Lord? No, there needed a further process still. Bitterly had he mourned his sin in denying his Lord: fully was he now assured of his Lord's forgiveness and unchanged affection; but he had not yet been led to discern and judge in himself the secret root of the evil into which he had fallen. The process of restoration is not complete as long as this is unaccomplished; and it was to this, accordingly, that the Lord now addressed Himself. Most tenderly, yet unsparingly, does Jesus go to work with His disciple. Not when they were hungry and faint, but "when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?" He first refreshes his heart with all the manifested love and care we have been tracing in this narrative, and then He puts this searching inquiry. It is not, "Lovest thou me more than thou lovest these?" but "Lovest thou me more than these love me?" It is as though the Lord had said, "You did think, Peter, that you loved me more than any one besides loved me. You said, Though all men forsake thee, yet will not I. Are you still of the same mind? Lovest thou me more than these do?" But Peter understands Him not. His confidence, in-

deed, in the love of Him who was thus probing him was not at all disturbed, nor did Jesus wish that it should be. Nay, He does everything to encourage and strengthen it. He confides to his care the precious lambs of His flock as the most tender pledge of His confidence and love; but still the probing must be completed. A second time the question is proposed; then a third; and now, as though the number recalled the thrice-repeated denial of his Lord, and the warning which his self-confidence had previously received, all seems to flash upon his conscience. He is "grieved," not surely with his Lord, but with himself; while his third answer evinces that the probe had reached the bottom of the wound. The root of his sin was now laid bare to his conscience; and in appealing, as he does, to Christ's omniscience, he makes plain that he bows entirely to the warning called forth, not by his sin, but by the self-confidence which was sure to betray him into sin. Instead of protesting now that his love to Christ is greater than that of any one besides, he, in effect, acknowledges, that any one judging by his conduct would not suppose that he loved Christ at all; but, as the Lord knew his heart, he could appeal to Him. "Lord, *thou* knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee." He can be trusted now; for he has learned his own weakness, and the only secret of real strength; and so he is again commanded, "Feed my sheep."

Nor was this the whole. As has been remarked elsewhere by another, there might still have remained one sting—one subject of bitter self-reproach—in the review by Peter of this epoch in his history. One can well understand how he might have said, "Ah! I once had the opportunity of dying for my Master—of actually sharing His cross—but now that opportunity is gone. In my weakness and wilfulness, I have thrown it away, and it can never be restored." "Yes," it is as though the Saviour said, "it can and shall be restored." Grace can restore what sin has forfeited; and surely this is what was implied in the words of Jesus, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and

another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God." Once the apostle had been within view of death, *with* and *for* his Master, and in the energy of his own will he had vowed to go through it. He girded himself, and walked *whither he would*—and, alas! as we all know, he failed. To will was present; but to perform required a strength, the lack of which Peter had now fully proved. But still he was to have the honour and privilege of being crucified for Christ. Not, as before, through any energy of his own will, but in the complete renunciation of himself, and meek submission to the will of another, he should by death, and that, too, the death of the cross, glorify God! "And when He had spoken this, He said unto him, Follow me."

Is not this grace, beloved? What can compare with this living grace of our risen, living Lord? And it is He who says to us, as He said to Peter, "Follow me." Not in the restless endeavour to live up to a certain standard of attainment; but the heart drawn onward by the attraction of this perfect grace, this living love! A love which, while it reaches to the lowest depths of our saddest failures, pardoning, probing, restoring us, sets us again on our feet in the path which He Himself has trod, and says, "Follow me." Shall we not follow Him indeed? Can we decline to follow if His grace, as thus made known, has really touched our hearts?

SELF-EXAMINATION.

PRECEPT is always addressed to a known relationship. I do not tell my servant to behave as my child, because he is not my child; nor do I tell my child to behave as my servant. A Christian is never called upon to examine himself as to whether he is a child of God or not. He is called to examine himself as to whether he walks like one. Suppose my child begins to examine himself as to whether he is behaving as he ought—this is all right and proper. But suppose he sets about examining his behaviour to find out whether he is my child or not?—the thing is monstrous.

N^o. VII.

HOW TO KNOW THE WILL OF THE FATHER.

[EXTRACT FROM A LETTER.]

Translated from the French.

IF a child habitually neglected its father, and did not take the trouble of knowing his mind and will, it is easy to foresee that, when a difficulty presented itself, this child would not be in circumstances to understand what would please its parent. There are certain things which God leaves in *generalities*, in order that the state of the *individual's* soul may be proved. If, instead of the case I have supposed of a child, it were a question of a wife towards her husband, it is probable that, if she has the feelings and mind of a wife, she will not hesitate a moment as to knowing what would be agreeable to him; and that where he had expressed no positive will about the matter. Now you cannot escape this trial: God will not allow His children to escape it. "If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light."

People would like a convenient and comfortable means of knowing God's will, as one might get a receipt for anything; but there exists no means of ascertaining it without reference to the state of our own soul.

Moreover, we are often of too much importance in our own eyes; and we deceive ourselves in supposing some will of God in such or such a case. God, perhaps, has nothing to tell us thereon, the evil being altogether in the stir we give ourselves. The will of God is, perhaps, that we should take quietly an insignificant place.

Further, we sometimes seek God's will, desiring to know how to act in circumstances *in which it is not His will that we should be found at all*: if conscience were in real healthful activity, its first effect would be to make us quit them. It is our own will which sets us there, and we would like, nevertheless, to enjoy the consolation

60 *How to know the Will of the Father.*

of God's direction in a path which ourselves have chosen. Such is a very common case.

Be assured that, if we are near enough to God, we shall have no trouble to know His will. In a long and active life it may happen, that God, in His love, may not always at once reveal His will to us, that we may feel our dependence, particularly where the individual has a tendency to act according to his own will. However, "if thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light?" whence it is certain that if the whole body is not full of light, the eye is not single. You will say: That is poor consolation. I answer: It is a rich consolation for those whose sole desire is to have the eye single and to *walk with God*—not, so to speak, for those who would avoid trouble in learning His will objectively, but whose desire is to walk with God. "If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him." It is always the same principle. "He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." You cannot withdraw yourself from this moral law of Christianity. "For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that you may be filled with *the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding*, that ye might walk *worthy of the Lord* unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing *in the knowledge of God*." The mutual connexion of these things is of immense importance for the soul. The Lord must be known intimately if one would walk in a way worthy of Him; and it is thus that we grow in the knowledge of God's will. "And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ." Finally, it is written that the spiritual man "*judgeth all things*, yet he himself is judged of no man."

It is, then, the will of God, and a precious will, that we should be able to discern it only according to our

How to know the Will of the Father.

61

own spiritual state. In general, when we think that we are judging circumstances, it is God who is judging us—who is judging our state. Our business is to keep close to Him. God would not be good to us if He permitted us to discover His will without that. It might be convenient just to have a director of consciences; and we should thus be spared the discovery and the chastisement of our moral condition. Thus, if you seek how you may discover the will of God without that, you are *seeking evil*; and it is what we see every day.

One Christian is in doubt, in perplexity; another, more spiritual, sees as clear as the day: he is surprised, and sees no difficulty, and ends by understanding that it lies only in the other's state of soul. "He that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off."

As regards *circumstances*, I believe that a person may be guided by them: Scripture has decided that. It is what is meant by being "held in with bit and bridle;" whereas the promise and privilege of him who has faith is, "I will instruct thee, and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye." God who is faithful, has given the promise of directing us thus—near enough to God to understand by a single glance from Him. He warns us not to be as the horse and the mule which have no understanding of the will, thoughts, desires of their master. It is needful to hold them in with bit and bridle. Doubtless that is better than to stumble, fall, and strike against Him who reins us in; but it is a sad state, and such is it to be *guided by circumstances*. Undoubtedly, too, it is merciful on God's part so to act, but very sad on *ours*.

Here, however, there must be a distinction drawn between judging what one *has to do in* certain circumstances, and being *guided by* them. He who allows himself to be guided by them, always acts in the dark as to knowing the will of God. There is absolutely nothing moral in it, but an exterior force drags along. Now it is very possible that I may have no judgment beforehand of what I shall do: I know not what circumstances may arise, and consequently I can take no side. But the instant the circumstances are there, I judge with a full

62 *How to know the Will of the Father.*

and divine conviction what is the path of God's will, and of the Spirit's intention and power. That demands the highest degree of spirituality. It is not to be directed by circumstances, but to be directed by God *in* them, being near enough to God to be able to judge immediately what one ought to do, as soon as the circumstances arrive.

As to impressions, God can suggest them, and it is certain that in fact He does suggest a thing to the mind; but in that case, the propriety of the thing and its moral character will be clear as the sun at noon-day. In prayer God can remove from our heart certain carnal influences, which being destroyed, leave room to certain other spiritual influences to take their place in the soul. Thus He makes us feel the importance of some duty, which had been perhaps entirely obscured by the pre-occupation caused by an object one had desired. This may be even between two individuals. One person may not have enough spiritual discernment to discover what is good; but the moment another shows it to him, he understands that it is the truth. All are not engineers, but a simple waggoner knows a good road when it is made. Thus, the impressions which come from God, do not always remain simple impressions. But they are ordinarily clear when God produces them. I do not doubt, however, that He often makes them on our minds, when we walk with Him and hear His voice.

When obstacles raised up of Satan are spoken of, it is not said that God Himself may not have allowed these obstacles to some good desire—obstacles caused by an accumulation of evil in the circumstances which surround us.

Again, the case should never exist of a person acting without knowing the will of God. The only rule that can be given is, never to act when we do not know what is the Lord's will. If you act in this ignorance, you are at the mercy of *circumstances*; however God may turn all to the good of His children. But why act when we are ignorant of His will? Is the necessity of acting always so extremely pressing?

If I do something with the full certainty that I am

How to know the Will of the Father.

63

doing the will of God, it is clear that an obstacle is no more than a trial of my faith, and it ought not to stop me. It stops us, perhaps, through our lack of faith; because, if we do not walk sufficiently near to God in the feeling of our nothingness, we shall want faith to *accomplish* what we have faith enough to *discern*. When we are doing our own will, or are negligent in our walk, God in His mercy may warn us by a hindrance which stops us if we pay attention to it, whilst "the simple pass on and are punished." God may permit, where there is much activity and labour, that Satan should raise up hindrances, in order that we may be kept in dependence on the Lord; but God never permits Satan to act otherwise than on the flesh. If we leave the door open, if we get away from God, Satan does us harm; but otherwise it is a mere trial of faith to warn us of a danger or snare—of something that would tend to exalt us in our own eyes. It is an instrument for our correction. That is, God allows Satan to trouble the mind, and bring the flesh into exterior sufferings, in order that the inner man may be kept from evil. If it is a question of anything else, probably it is only our "*buts*" and "*ifs*" that stop us, or the effects of our carelessness, which have opened a door to Satan to trouble us by doubts and apparent difficulties between God and us, because we do not see more clearly. For he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not. In a word, the question is wholly *moral*. If any particular question is raised which at the first blush we cannot solve, we shall find that often the question would not lie there at all, if our position were not false—if we had previously been in a good state of soul, and a true spirituality had guarded and kept us. In that case, all we have to do is to humble ourselves for the whole affair. Afterwards, let us examine whether Scripture does not present some principle suitable to direct us. Here, evidently, spirituality is the essential thing—is everything.

The rule that we should do what Jesus would have done in such or such a circumstance, is excellent, *where*

and when it can be applied. But are we often in the circumstances wherein the Lord was found?

It is often useful to ask myself *whence* comes such a desire of mine, or such a thought of doing this or that. I have found that this alone decides more than a half of the embarrassments that Christians meet with. The two-thirds of those which remain are the result of our haste and of our former sins. If a thought come from God and not from the flesh, then we have only to address ourselves to God as to the manner and means of executing it, and we shall soon be directed. There are cases where one has need of being guided, not always without motives; as suppose, when I hesitate about a visit to make, or some such other case. A life of more ardent love, or love exercised in a more intelligent way, or set in activity in drawing near to God, will clear the motives on one side or another; and often, perhaps, we shall see that *our* side of the thing was but egoism.

If you say, But if it is no question either of love or of obedience? then I answer, that you ought to show me a reason for *acting*. For if it is nothing but your own will, you cannot make the wisdom of God bend to your will. There also is the source of another numerous class of difficulties that God will never solve. In these cases, He will in His grace teach obedience, and will show us how much time we have lost in our own activity. Finally, "the *meek* will He guide in judgment, and the meek will He teach His way."

I have communicated to you on this subject all that my mind can furnish you with at this moment. For the rest, remember only that the wisdom of God conducts us in the way of God's will: if our own will is in activity, God cannot bend to that. Such is the essential thing to discover. It is the secret of the life of Christ. I know no other principle that God can make use of, however He may pardon and cause all to work for our good. But if there still be a query as to His direction, He directs the new man which has no other will than Christ. He mortifies and destroys the old man, and in that way purifies us that we may bear fruit. "Lo, I

How to know the Will of the Father.

65

come to do Thy will, O God . . . I delight to do Thy will." It is the place of a porter to wait at the gate; but in doing so, he does the will of his master. Be assured that God does more *in* us than we *for Him*; and that what we do for Him is only in proportion as it is Himself who works it in us.

A FRAGMENT.

LEVITICUS XXV.—In the fourteenth to the sixteenth verse of this chapter, we learn that in all the dealings and trafficking of an Israelite he was to have respect to the year of jubilee, when the hand of God would restore in righteousness what the hand of man had disordered in His people's portion. The only way to conduct his traffic righteously was to have respect to the year of jubilee, measuring the bargain and the value of things according to that. In principle this holds now. For all our commerce in the affairs of this world should be ordered with our eyes resting on the return of the Lord Jesus; and our *hearts* acquainting themselves with this, that *man's world* is soon to end, and all present interests to cease.

In Israel, God watched over the worldly dealings of His people in such a way as to provide for the restoration of everything every fifty years:—He then resettled the family estates, and put all in order again. In the church, also, He watches the worldly dealings of His saints; but it is not in order to restore earthly arrangements again, but with respect to the maintaining of *spiritual communion* with Himself. In all their callings He tells His saints, now, "therein to abide with God." This is the rule, this is the only limitation now. The soul, amidst all around that is discordant and disordered, is to be preserved for heavenly citizenship, and exercised in relation to a heavenly life, where the flesh and *man's world* will be gone, and *gone for ever*.

N^o. VIII.

“A MAN OF THE PHARISEES.”

JOHN iii. 1.

THIS expression is singular; it is not “a certain Pharisee,” but “a *man* of the Pharisees,” throwing the emphasis on *man*, and defining what kind of man Nicodemus was, by adding “of the Pharisees.” This will more clearly appear from the context: “Now when He was in Jerusalem at the passover, on the feast, many believed in His name, when they saw the miracles which He did. But Jesus did not commit Himself unto them, because He knew all, and needed not that any should testify of *man*: for He knew what was in *man*. There was a *man* of the Pharisees.” The prominent point is “*man*,” and what is “*in man*.” Man can appreciate miracles, and be forced by them to acknowledge the power and superiority of Him by whom they are wrought, and to render him homage; and in human estimation this would be accredited as faith. But He who knew what was in man, did not so accredit it. The faith which is an inference of the human mind, is not the faith in God which subjects man to God; but, on the contrary, it subjects God to human caprice; at one time acknowledging Him, at another questioning either His being, presence, or perfection. He who knew what was in man, was the same Jehovah who had been with Israel of old, as their Deliverer, Sustainer and Guide, proving Himself to be the only God by a constant succession of miracles. But this is His complaint of Israel: “Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice; surely they shall not see the land which I swore unto their fathers, neither shall

"A Man of the Pharisees."

67

any of them that provoke me see it" (Num. xiv. 22, 23). Miracles so demonstrating to Israel the presence of God, left Israel indeed without excuse for not trusting in Him. But at the same time, the history of this generation in the wilderness, who were witnesses of miracle upon miracle, serves to demonstrate to us, that however the understanding may be convinced, if the heart be not touched there never is confidence in God. "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness." It is "an evil heart of unbelief" which leads "to departure from the living God." God can call heaven and earth to witness that He has left nothing undone to reclaim man: and of this Israel's history is the convincing proof. "Hear ye, O mountains, the Lord's controversy, and ye strong foundations of the earth: for the Lord hath a controversy with His people, and He will plead with Israel. O my people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me. For I have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the house of servants; and I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. O my people, remember now what Balak king of Moab consulted, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him from Shittim unto Gilgal; *that ye may know the righteousness of the Lord*" (Micah vi. 2—5).

Commended as the Scriptures are by the most substantial and convincing proofs of their divine authority to the understanding of men, it is very questionable whether an instance can be found of one who has been brought to peace with God by the evidences of Christianity. The mind may be satisfied with conviction arising from such evidences, but it is still culpably ignorant of God, as a Being to be loved and confided in. "This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God *through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart*" (Eph. iv. 17, 18).

It needs that the heart be touched and the conscience enlightened, as well as the understanding informed, ere a person will confide in God. When many, therefore, "believed in His name because they saw the miracles

which He did, Jesus did not commit Himself to them." The conviction arising from miracles would be as transient as it had been in the days of old. "The waters covered their enemies: there was not one of them left. Then believed they His words; they sang His praise. They *soon forgot His works*; they waited not for His counsel: but lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tempted God in the desert" (Psa. cvi. 11—14).

It was no confidence in Him, but confidence in their present convictions, which might speedily pass away, and therefore "Jesus did not commit Himself to them, for He knew all, and needed not that any should testify of man, for He knew what was in man." And knowing this, however promising the appearance, He knew that none would trust in Him, until convinced that He had not only surrendered His glory, but His very life to win their confidence. To such alone can Jesus commit Himself; and let those whose confidence He has won, by having borne their sins in His own body on the tree, see to it that they keep the sacred deposit of the honor of Jesus, entrusted to them by the Holy Ghost that dwelleth in them.

But Jesus not only did not commit Himself to those who professed faith in His name, on the present conviction produced by His miracles, but when one of character and pretensions came to Him on this ground, He confounds him by proposing to him the fundamental doctrine which resulted from His knowledge of what was in man.

"There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews."

Nicodemus may be regarded by us as a specimen man. He was not an ordinary person, but a religious leader, for so we understand, "a ruler of the Jews." He was, moreover, of the orthodox sect of the Pharisees, holding many important truths in theory, which were denied by the Sadducees, or Free-thinkers, although the Pharisees practically denied the truths they held by overlaying them by tradition. He comes to Jesus at least with respect, and as an inquirer; although, from fear of his co-religionists, he came by night. "The same came to Jesus by night." He addressed Jesus, not in the contemptuous

"A Man of the Pharisees."

69

language used ordinarily by the Pharisees towards Him, but by the conventional title usually given to accredited religious teachers—"Rabbi."

All this was fair and promising; but he goes much beyond this, he acknowledges Jesus to be "a teacher come from God." This acknowledgment set Jesus above the ordinary teachers, and was in itself most emphatically true; for Jesus is *the* Prophet of whom Moses wrote, whose teaching had this solemn sanction—"And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words, which He shall speak in my name, I will require it of him" (Deut. xviii. 19).

But Nicodemus did not at the moment recognise the spiritual glory of Jesus as the one who had "come forth from the Father, and had come into the world." He accredited the mission of Jesus as divine, because he saw the miracles He did. "No man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him." But this acknowledgment would place Jesus no higher than Elijah or Elisha, whose mission was attested by extraordinary miracles. The Lord, therefore, tests this acknowledgment of Him as a teacher by propounding to Nicodemus an elementary doctrine, which, although at first received upon His authority as a teacher, would gather abundant proof from those Scriptures of which Nicodemus himself was an accredited teacher.* "Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus was stumbled at this authoritative announcement.

This is one feature of a man of the Pharisees, orthodox in theory, they practically deny the authority of God, and in this respect differ but little from those to whom they are most seemingly opposed—the Sadducee, or Free-thinker. The "How" of Nicodemus differs very little from the wisdom of the Sadducee, in rejecting the doctrine of the resurrection of the body—"How are the dead raised up?" Both objections arise from want of

* "Master of Israel" (ver. 10). The word rendered "Master" is the same as that rendered "teacher" (ver. 2).

acknowledging “the power of God.” The modern orthodox Pharisee, as really renders the word of God of no effect, by overlaying it with traditional doctrines, as the modern Sadducee or Neologian undermines it by subjecting Scripture to the authority of his own inspiration. To both alike may it be said—“Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, neither the power of God.” The Lord Jesus demands to be heard on His own authority—“Verily, verily, I say unto you.” Such an authority a man of the Pharisees is not prepared to recognise, unless the doctrine propounded corroborates the doctrines which he has already received on the authority of tradition. But this is not to own the authority of the teacher come from God. Men readily recognise traditional doctrines, and support them, too, on the authority of Jesus, when they are capable of such support; but they equally insist on them to resist the authority of Jesus, when His word is brought against them, making the word of God of none effect through their tradition. At this day many are the doctrines received on the authority of the so-called Church, which nullify the plainest teaching of the Lord and His apostles. So that the complaint of Jesus of the men of the Pharisees of His day is equally applicable to men of a like stamp of our own day—“And because *I* tell you *the truth*, *ye believe me not*” (John viii. 45).

The first step of emancipation from Pharisaism is the acknowledging the authority of Jesus as a teacher, however unsupported His teaching may be by traditional authority. Such authority was demanded of Jesus by the Pharisees—“By what authority doest thou these things?” And Jesus, by referring them for an answer to the authority of the baptism of John, plainly shewed that He refused all human credentials, and demanded to be received on the authority of God alone. Nothing is more difficult than to act on the authority of God, unsupported by human credentials; such acting is the acting of faith. “Have faith in God.” It appeals to the conscience of men; and wherever it is recognised, it carries with it far greater weight than the authority which is backed by every attestation which man can

"A Man of the Pharisees."

71

give to it. When the authority of Paul as an apostle was questioned by false teachers at Corinth, he lays more stress on that which directly appealed to their consciences than the most unquestionable proofs which he gave of his divine commission as an apostle—"If I be not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you: for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord" (1 Cor. ix. 2). "A man of the Pharisees" not only teaches or receives for "doctrines the commandments of men," but divine truth itself, if it be acknowledged by him, is acknowledged, because it is accredited by men, and not because it is the word of God. Jesus taught as one "having authority, and not as the Scribes" (Matt. vii. 29); and it is a turning point when one acknowledges Jesus as the authoritative teacher, and receives His word on His own authority.

This prepares the way for the second great act of emancipation from Pharisaism. A man of the Pharisees sees not, with all his pretensions, a present power of deliverance and a present blessing. His religion has attainment in view, always sought but never possessed. This draws an essential distinction between a man of the Pharisees and a Christian. A Christian is and has what the other is seeking to be and to have. A Christian receives every blessing in the way of gift; a Pharisee is seeking it under some form or other in the way of doing. A Christian, by faith, enters into present salvation; a Pharisee can only eye salvation as a contingent future. It is thus the authoritative teacher announces His primary doctrine to "a man of the Pharisees"—"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God;" and if he cannot see it, he cannot enter into it.

This primary truth was announced by the Lord to a candid and well-instructed teacher of Israel, whose study and occupation was, in popular language, religion. But all his religion fell far short of bringing him to the very threshold of that which Jesus taught and presented—a present "kingdom"—a present power of blessing, even in Him whom Nicodemus acknowledged as a Teacher come from God. If a man of the Pharisees fail in acknow-

ledging Jesus as the one authoritative Teacher, he necessarily stumbles at acknowledging Jesus as the one comprehensive doctrine of God. This is the great stumbling-block of ancient and modern Pharisees; for a modern Pharisee will acknowledge, probably, that Jesus is the authoritative Teacher, but he holds back from acknowledging Him as the essential doctrine of God. “ We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God ” (1 Cor. i. 23, 24). There is a point to which a man of the Pharisees may attain, and that point Nicodemus had reached, but he could not go beyond it. It is to the instructed candid Pharisee, and not to a depraved libertine, that our Lord propounds the doctrine of the new birth—the necessity of being put forth by God of a living power on the soul, as real as that which would raise a corpse from the grave.^b Where such a power is not put forth, whatever may be the religious attainments or pretensions of a man, “ he sees not the kingdom of God.” It is a present kingdom, not in word, but in power. It is “ the kingdom of God in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.” It is a kingdom so really entered into, that the apostle uses the strongest language to express the transition. “ Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who *hath delivered* us from the power of darkness, and *hath translated* us into the kingdom of His dear Son ” (Col. i. 12, 13).

In pursuing His teaching to Nicodemus, the Lord, instead of satisfying “ the how ” of his inquirer, goes on to present Himself to Nicodemus as *the only Teacher* of heavenly realities, “ the Son of Man which is in heaven ”; and then confounds Nicodemus with the startling truth of the Son of Man lifted up as the grand object of faith, the present life-giving power of the kingdom, and that the Son of Man is no other than the only-begotten Son of God. All these announcements concerning Himself were so many stumbling-blocks in the way of Nicodemus;

^b Ephes. ii. 1—6.

"A Man of the Pharisees."

73

but they are all plain to him that understandeth. "It is written in the prophets, They shall be all taught of God; whosoever therefore hath heard and learned of the Father, cometh to me," says Jesus. Believers are apt to regard as a test of their being born again, the manifest change they experience in themselves; but this is by no means either so healthy or so satisfactory a test, as for the soul to have before it a new object, in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ; in other words, seeing the kingdom of God. Whilst Jesus as the brazen serpent is the object of salvation, He is no less a new and absorbing object of interest, a new object to live for, because by His death He has made death itself to be ours (1 Cor. iii.22). We thus judge that if one died for all, then have all died; and He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again (2 Cor.v. 14, 15).

The line between a man of the Pharisees and a believer in Christ is one of essential separation. No progress in Pharisism of the most promising kind ever traverses this line. No religion whatever which proceeds from man, or consists in ordinances, ever leads even to the threshold of the entrance into the kingdom of God. The best specimen of Pharisism is presented to us in proof that unless God positively works by His own power, so as to communicate to man that which he never could attain, he must infallibly remain a stranger to the kingdom of God. A man must be born from above in order to see the kingdom of God. This is the elementary doctrine propounded by Jesus as an authoritative Teacher, easily corroborated by the ancient oracles of God, as Nicodemus, a teacher of Israel, ought to have known. But it is a doctrine of far more difficult reception by modern than by ancient Pharisees, because it has been the effort of the false church to set aside, supersede, or obliterate this doctrine by a system of ordinances, so that it has perhaps never been a question affecting the conscience of the vast majority of nominal Christians around us, whether they have or have not seen and entered into the kingdom of God; in a word, whether the kingdom of God is a reality.

"To as many as received Jesus, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: which *were born*, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." No purity of descent, even from the father of the faithful himself, no personal effort of religion, no ordinance performed by another, can give the power and privilege of sonship. To be a child of God, a man "must be born again," "must be born of God." Great, indeed, are the privileges of the sons of God; if sons, then are they heirs of God, then are they priests and kings to God. Yet how often are these but meaningless titles! Few have ever asked themselves what is meant by being a son of God; and those who habitually use the language, too plainly prove that the most trifling worldly advantage weighs more with them than any supposed privilege of sonship. On the other hand, to one born of God, these privileges appear so precious, that no honour is comparable with the honour of being a son of God, no advantages comparable with those which are eternally secured for him in Christ Jesus. One born of God is able to esteem even his present knowledge of Christ as of that surpassing excellency, that to gain any advantage the world could offer in the place of that knowledge would be poverty and loss.

God grant that the essential difference between flesh and spirit, divine and human righteousness, Pharisaism and faith in Christ, may be made known, not by words of human wisdom, but by the powerful demonstration of the Spirit. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord."

N^o. IX.“THE HONOUR THAT COMETH FROM
GOD ONLY.”

JOHN v. 44.

THERE are various lights in which redemption is presented to us in the Scriptures. To follow out any one of these *exclusively* is never profitable for our souls, and tends to obscure the glories of the Lord Jesus Christ. But, in whatever light redemption is presented to us, it is always intended to illustrate “the riches of God’s grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.” Redemption is presented to us as an escape, a deliverance, a rescue by the interposition of almighty saving grace. Sinners are “warned to flee from the wrath to come.” Those who have been turned to God, through faith in Jesus, *are* delivered “from the wrath to come.” We give thanks to the Father, “who hath *delivered* us from the power of darkness.” Or, again, “Christ gave Himself for our sins, that He might *deliver*^a us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father” (Gal. i. 4). In these and similar expressions, the prominent thought is the danger, misery, and condemnation, out of which we have been brought by Jesus, and would place us analogously to Israel at the Red Sea (their enemies being destroyed), and on the edge of the wilderness, but short of entering into Canaan. But whilst redemption is escape, deliverance, and rescue, it is much more. It is entrance into Canaan as well as deliverance out of Egypt, and yet withal the experience of the wilderness. If God has delivered out of the power of darkness, He has translated now into the “kingdom of His dear Son.” God presents to us the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, in all the blessed-

^a The word is rendered *rescued*, Acts xxiii. 27.

76 *"The honour that cometh from God only."*

ness of its results as counselled and known by Him. We are "called out of darkness into his marvellous light"; yea, "called into His own kingdom and glory."

Whilst, therefore, experience of deliverance, and relief from the burden of a guilty conscience, may raise many a grateful emotion in the heart, and call forth praise and thanksgiving; it will be found to fail in practically emancipating from the principles, spirit, and power, of the world. This will hardly be effected where the relation of the Holy Ghost to the believer as the seal of God set on the perfect work of Christ, and as the earnest of the inheritance, is not prominently maintained. It is the doctrine of the "other Comforter," the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of truth, come down in consequence of Jesus being glorified, which gives its true dignity to the present standing of the believer; and explains that enigma how we "see Jesus" when the world seeth Him no more—how Jesus is "manifested" to His disciples without being manifested to the world. The object of the Holy Ghost is to glorify Jesus; and He presents Jesus to the soul as the object of admiration and desire as well as of salvation. It is thus that the Holy Ghost enables the believer to weigh every object of human ambition, however high and noble in itself, with "the honour which cometh from God only," and to see how poor and mean it is. A man may weigh things morally, and estimate justly enough the great variety of human character; but a believer in Christ is able to weigh *objects*, and to see how infinitely short the highest object of human ambition falls when compared with that which is before him. The apostle Paul contrasts men in their objects—those who by "patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory, and honour, and immortality," with those who are "contentious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness." Rivalry and contention are the great principles of human ambition. It is hardly possible to attain human distinction without them. Of Jesus it is said, "Behold my Servant, whom I uphold; mine Elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my Spirit upon Him: He shall bring forth judgment unto the Gentiles; He shall not cry, nor lift

"The honour that cometh from God only." 77

up, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street" (Is. xlii. 1, 2; Matt. xii. 18, 19). Jesus humbled Himself, even to the death of the cross, and therefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and made the name of His humiliation to be the very name which, in due time, shall be universally acknowledged either in judgment or in salvation. Jesus "endured the cross, and despised the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." This path of Jesus from the lowest humiliation to the highest honour, sets forth to us a great principle, "the truth;" and this principle is embodied by Jesus Himself in His memorable axiom: "Whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted." According to this principle, rivalry and contention are disobedience to the truth. And if any one asserts the human principle of strife and vain-glory in order to obtain the favour of God, he is judged before God as one who is obeying unrighteousness; for in the estimate of God every human plea arising from human distinction is the highest act of unrighteousness, as setting aside, or superseding the work of Christ in His humiliation and obedience unto death, even the death of the cross. But not only so, but the object of rivalry and contention is one which, if attained, has only the praise of men, and seeks no higher praise. Contrasted with contention and rivalry is patience: to "them who by patient continuance in well-doing." Patience, or endurance, is necessarily associated with faith. It is the great practical word of the New Testament, corresponding to "waiting" in the Old Testament. "Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord" (Ps. xxvii. 14). "Hope maketh not ashamed." God never disappoints those who propose to themselves the object He presents to them, and who pursue it according to His way. The objects which God presents to us in Christ Jesus are "glory, and honour, and incorruptibility."^b The objects which man pursues are

^b "Incorruptibility," as relating to the body in its resurrection state, rather than immortality. See 1 Cor. xv. 42, 50, 53, 54; and so it should be rendered, 2 Tim. i. 10.

78 *"The honour that cometh from God only."*

honour and glory from men, "one of another;" very fleeting and uncertain here—and they have no incorruptibility in them. Hence the principle on which they are sought is utterly inapplicable to such lofty objects as God presents to us. The moment such objects are before the soul, the impossibility of attaining them by any effort becomes apparent, and they can be entertained on one principle alone, and that is, the riches of God's grace as displayed to us in the cross of Christ.

"How can ye believe who receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only." The existence of faith is morally incompatible with the way of attaining honour from men. That honour can only be accorded on the ground of personal superiority over others; this may be so or not; but if it be so, how can that man, whose object is superiority over others, recognise the humbling truth, that before God "*there is no difference*, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God?" How can he recognise that the essential difference before God is, that which God makes by His own grace, and not that which man can attain by his own effort? How can he realise that everything which is worth having, or seeking, is to be found in Christ and in Him alone? Is there any moral compatibility between confessing Christ and denying self, and seeking honour one of another?

If it be difficult to realise in any measure approximating the truth, "the vanity of man in his best estate," and his real degradation as being at "enmity with God," "hateful, and hating one another;" it is far more difficult to realise the grace of God in Christ Jesus reaching down to where man actually is dead in trespasses and sins, and exalting him at once before Himself to where Christ is. Such exaltation never entered into man's heart to conceive; it is "an honour that cometh from God only." The highest thought of man, if he thinks of salvation at all, is the thought of escape; heaven itself, in his thoughts, is hardly more than negative, that is, not to be in misery—the thought of association with Christ, and witnessing as the joy of his soul the absolute

"The honour that cometh from God only." 79

supremacy of Jesus, never enters into his heart. This honour comes from God only.

One remarkably distinguishing character of the honour which cometh from God only; is, that "such honour have all His saints." The very honour, itself, excludes all thoughts of rivalry, because *the highest honour is the common honour*. It is the answer of God to the humiliation of Christ—if Christ be the common righteousness of His church, the glory in which they will be manifested is the glory to which that righteousness is entitled. "We, through the Spirit, wait for the hope of righteousness through faith." Boasting, then, is excluded in glory as well as in justification. To sit even at the right hand and left hand of Christ in His kingdom, is not so high an honour as oneness with Him, as His bride, as being of that body of which He is the animating and sustaining Head. Let this place, or that place, be assigned to one or another of the Father, such place is still secondary to the common honour which cometh to all saints from God only. No one can take a place more officially distinct than an apostle; yet when the apostle Paul is writing most especially concerning his ministry, although he might have regarded his converts as "his crown and joy" in the day of the revelation of Jesus, yet he loses that object for the moment in the common but higher honour of all saints. "So then death worketh in us, but life in you. We have the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe and therefore speak; knowing that He which raised up the Lord Jesus, shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present *us with you*" (2 Cor. iv. 12—14). How unselfish as an object is the honour that cometh from God only.

If we descend to particulars, there is hardly any honour of which men are more tenacious than nobility of descent; so to be able to link themselves, through a long line of ancestry, with some illustrious personage as their parent stock. But what is this honour compared to the honour of being born of God. "To as many as received Him, to them gave He power (right or privilege, *marg.*) to become the sons of God, even to them that

80 “*The honour that cometh from God only.*”

believe on His name *which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*” Viewed in the light of a divine lineage, the apostle Paul could well afford to forego all the advantages of such purity of descent as he could legitimately boast of as a Hebrew of Hebrews. He considered this, among other advantages, as “loss for Christ;” after the knowledge of Christ, any resting in his hereditary purity of descent would take him away from his real nobility as born of God. In the same strain, he deprecates “endless genealogies” as puerile for one born of God to be occupied about. In the wide-spread corrupt Christianity by which we are surrounded, the withering influence of false doctrine is especially seen. Men are taught that they are born of God, with all its connected blessings of being sons and heirs of God, without ever having had the conscience brought into contact with God, without any acquaintance with the real evil of sin, or any appreciation of the sacrifice of Christ. Such blessings, so cheap in their estimation, are never for a moment considered as realities, and the nominal Christian plainly shows, whenever the alternative is presented to him, that in his heart and judgment he prefers the smallest temporal advantage to all the high-sounding privileges he has been taught to belong to him from his infancy. This, in the language of Scripture, is *profaneness*. This is characterised as “trampling under foot the Son of God.” In the early days of declension in the Church, “they cast their pearls before swine, and gave that which was holy unto dogs”—all the privileges of the redeemed were cast indiscriminately to those who *were not born of God*; and they were either trampled under foot, or used as a weapon to undermine the truth of God. On this principle it is alone to be explained, that the wonderful honour of being born of God, sons of God, and heirs of God, has been considered a mere conventional figment, instead of an everlasting reality on which even angels themselves gaze with reverence.

There is another aspect of the honour, which cometh from God only, and that is, *divine righteousness*—the conscious possession of which alone delivers from anxiety

“ *The honour that cometh from God only.* ” 81

as to personal qualification to commend us to God, or from comparative righteousness between man and man. This honour also have all his saints. “ The righteousness of God by faith of Jesus Christ is unto all and upon all them that believe, for there is no difference ” (Rom. iii. 22). In the conscious possession of such a righteousness, the apostle Paul regarded the highest supposable righteousness attainable by man as loss—“ And be found in Him, not having *mine own* righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness *which is of God* by faith ” (Phil. iii. 9). That the Lord himself should be the righteousness of all who believe in his name, must be an honour that cometh from God only ; for the highest imaginable human attainment must necessarily fall infinitely below divine righteousness. “ *Of Him*, are ye in Christ Jesus, who of (or from) God is made unto us wisdom, *even righteousness*, sanctification, and redemption. That, according as it is written, he that glorieth let him glory in the Lord ” (1 Cor. i. 31).

This great honour is so intimately connected with the honour that cometh from God only in being born of God, that no one, save he that is born of God, “ *sees*,” as a present reality, “ *the kingdom of God*,” in “ righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.”

Another honour that cometh from God only, and which is an honour given to all believers, is the gift of the Holy Ghost, as the seal and earnest of the inheritance. This is a gift as unpurchaseable as Christ Himself. It can come from God only, and is His seal to the divine righteousness in which believers stand before God. “ This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith ? ” (Gal. iii. 2). No legal attainment had ever such a seal set on it by God ; it is that which faith attains unto in Christ, even the reception of Him, as our righteousness, which receives this seal from God, even the gift of the Holy Ghost, the present witness to us of this peculiar glory of Christ. The Son of God himself was sealed by God, as the only righteous and holy one at his baptism by John. And Jesus himself says, “ Labour not for

82 “*The honour that cometh from God only.*”

the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man will give unto you; for Him hath God the Father sealed” (John vi. 27). But this honour in virtue of Christ’s presenting before God all believers “holy, unblameable, and unreprouvable in the body of his flesh through death” (Col. i. 22), is given by God to all believers here. “Now He which stablisheth *us with you* in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God, who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts” (2 Cor. i. 21). It is an honour that came from God only to the meanest Corinthian believer as well as the apostle Paul—“us with you.” The high official honour which the apostle had as an apostle, was not to be compared with that which he had in common with all believers.

But if the Holy Ghost be the seal set by God himself on all believers, He is also the earnest given of God in our hearts. Good society is a very allowable ambition to man; but if he gets the best human society, moral and intellectual, it is infinitely below that into which the believer in Christ is introduced. “For through Him we both have access *by one Spirit* unto the Father” (Ephes. ii. 18). How few, comparatively speaking, have the privilege of introduction to earthly royalty; and thus it must almost necessarily be in all the distance of state. But the Spirit leads through Christ to the Father, and discovers the Father in the Son, thus giving the greatest possible nearness and intimacy with God, in His revealed relation by the Son as the Father. “Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.” These are high and holy intimacies, in which Jesus confides in us as “friends,” instead of commanding us as servants (John xv. 14, 16). God hath “made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself” (Ephes. i. 9). “The Spirit searcheth all things, even the deep things of God.” And thus, by the honour of intimacy with God in His thoughts, as written in the Scripture and taught by the Holy Ghost, the believer in Christ is not left to the hazard of conjecture, and is relieved from

“*The honour that cometh from God only.*” 83

judging by the sight of his eyes, or the hearing of his ears, because, knowing the mystery of God's will respecting the heading-up of all things in Christ, he forms his judgment as to the bearing of all things on that mystery.

Not to go into further detail, there is one remarkably comprehensive statement to our point in the First Epistle of Peter: “To whom coming as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God and *precious.*”

“Unto you therefore which believe he is precious.” The marginal reading is, *He is an honour.* All the preciousness that Christ is to God, it has pleased God to set upon all that believe in his name. This is an all-comprehensive honour indeed. Hence believers are precious to God by reason of the honour He himself has set on them. Worthless in themselves, who can estimate at a just rate the price of believers in the sight of God, “bought with a price,” and all the preciousness of Christ set upon them by God.

It is this that we need to know. Believers in Christ ought to occupy their vantage ground, and show to a world overrun with corrupt Christianity that they cannot help on its course. They have their own riches and their own honour; their thoughts and interests are in things above, where Christ their life is, and they cannot come down to lower interests and pursuits without damage to the instincts of that life which is hid in Christ with God.

If we were but true to our own objects—glory, honour, and incorruptibility—how should we rebuke the infidelity around us, which thinks of adapting Christianity to the exigencies of the age, to help on the course of this world. We are loudly called upon practically to assert, that the glory and dignity of our calling has become all the more conspicuous by reason of the very progress the world has made, and is making the present glory of the world fade away before our own excelling glory “*that remaineth.*”

N^o. X.

THE UNEQUAL YOKE.

No one who sincerely desires to attain, in his own person, or promote in others, a purer and more elevated discipleship, can possibly contemplate the Christianity of the present day without an indescribable feeling of sadness and heaviness. Its tone is so excessively low, its aspect so sickly, and its spirit so enfeebled, that one is, at times, tempted to despair of any thing like a true and faithful witness for an absent Lord. All this is the more truly deplorable when we remember the commanding motives by which it is our special privilege ever to be actuated. Whether we look at the Master whom we are called to follow—the path which we are called to tread—the end which we are called to keep in view—or the hopes by which we are to be animated, we cannot but own that, were all these entered into, and realised by a more simple faith, we should, assuredly, exhibit a more ardent discipleship. “The love of Christ,” says the apostle, “constraineth us.” This is the most powerful motive of all. The more the heart is filled with Christ’s love, and the eye filled with His blessed person, the more closely shall we seek to follow in His heavenly track. His foot-marks can only be discovered by “a single eye”; and unless the will is broken, the flesh mortified, and the body kept under, we shall utterly fail in our discipleship, and make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience.

Let not my reader misunderstand me. It is not, here, by any means, a question of personal salvation. It is quite another thing. Nothing can be more basely selfish than, having received salvation as the fruit of Christ’s agony and bloody sweat, His cross and passion, to keep at as great a distance from His sacred person as we can, without forfeiting our personal safety. This is, even in the judgment of nature, deemed a character of selfishness worthy of unmingled contempt; but when exhibited by

The unequal Yoke.

85

one who professes to owe his present, and his everlasting all to a rejected, crucified, risen, and absent Master, no language can express its moral baseness. "Provided I escape hell-fire, it makes little matter as to discipleship." Reader, do you not, in your inmost soul, abhor this sentiment? If so, then, earnestly seek to flee from it to the very opposite point of the compass; and let your truthful language be: "Provided that blessed Master is glorified, it makes little matter, comparatively, about my personal safety." Would to God, that this were the sincere utterance of many hearts in this day, when, alas! it may be too truly said, that, "all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's." (Philip. ii. 21.) Would, that the Holy Ghost would raise up, by His own resistless power, and send forth by His own heavenly energy, a band of separated and consecrated followers of the Lamb, each one bound by the cords of love, to the horns of the altar—a company, like Gideon's three hundred of old, able to confide in God, and deny the flesh. How the heart longs for this! How the spirit, bowed down, at times, beneath the chilling and withering influence of a cold and uninfluential profession, earnestly breathes after a more vigorous and whole-hearted testimony for that One, who emptied Himself, and laid aside His glory, in order that we, through His precious bloodshedding, might be raised to companionship with Him, in eternal blessedness.

Now, amongst the numerous hindrances to this thorough consecration of heart to Christ which I earnestly desire for myself, and my reader, "the unequal yoke" will be found to occupy a very prominent place indeed. "Be ye not unequally yoked together (*ετεροζυγουντες*) with unbelievers: for what partnership (*μετοχη*) hath righteousness with unrighteousness? (or rather lawlessness—*ανομια*) and what communion (*κοινωνια*) hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath a believer with an unbeliever? (*απιστου*) And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God: as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. Wherefore

come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." (2 Cor. vi. 14—18.) Under the Mosaic economy, we learn the same moral principle. "Thou shalt not sow thy vineyard with divers seeds: lest the fruit of thy seed which thou hast sown, and the fruit of thy vineyard, be defiled. Thou shalt not plough with an ox and an ass together. Thou shalt not wear a garment of divers sorts as of woollen and linen together" (Deut. xxii. 9—11. Lev. xix. 19). These scriptures will suffice to set forth the moral evil of an unequal yoke. It may, with full confidence, be asserted that no one can be an unshackled follower of Christ who is, in any way, "unequally yoked." He may be a saved person—he may be a true child of God—a sincere believer; but he cannot be a thorough disciple; and not only so, but there is a positive hindrance to the full manifestation of that which he may really be, notwithstanding his unequal yoke. "Come out . . . and I will receive you . . . and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." That is to say: "Get your neck out of the unequal yoke, and I will receive you, and there shall be the full, public, practical manifestation of your relationship with the Lord Almighty." The idea, here, is evidently different from that set forth in James: "Of his own will begat he us, by the word of truth." And also in Peter, "Being born again not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever." And again, in 1 John: "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called the sons of God." So also, in John's gospel, "But, as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believed on his name; which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." In all these passages, the relationship of sons is founded upon the divine counsel and the divine operation, and is not set before us as the consequence of any acting of ours; whereas, in 2 Cor. vi. it is put as the result of our getting out of the unequal yoke. In other words, it is entirely a

The unequal Yoke.

87

practical question. Thus, in Matthew v. we read, "But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you; in order that (*ὅπως*) ye may be the sons of your Father which is in heaven, because he causeth his sun to rise upon the evil and the good, and sendeth rain upon the just and the unjust." Here, too, it is the practical establishment and public declaration of the relationship, and its moral influence. It becomes the sons of such a Father to act in such a way. In short, we have the abstract position or relationship of sons founded upon God's sovereign will and operation; and we have the moral character consequent upon, and flowing out of, this relationship which affords just ground for God's public acknowledgment of the relationship. God cannot fully and publicly own those who are unequally yoked together with unbelievers, for, were He to do so, it would be an acknowledgment of the unequal yoke. He cannot acknowledge "darkness"—"unrighteousness"—"Belial"—"idols"—and "an infidel." How could He? Hence, if I yoke myself with any of these, I am morally, and publicly, identified with them, and not with God at all. I have put myself into a position which God cannot own, and, as a consequence, He cannot own me; but if I withdraw myself from that position—if I "come out and be separate"—if I take my neck out of the unequal yoke, then, but not until then, can I be publicly and fully received and owned as a "son or daughter of the Lord Almighty." This is a solemn and searching principle for all who feel that they have unhappily gotten themselves into such a yoke. They are not walking as disciples, nor are they publicly or morally on the ground of sons. God cannot own them. Their secret relationship is not the point; but they have put themselves thoroughly off God's ground. They have foolishly thrust their neck into a yoke which, inasmuch as it is not Christ's yoke, must be Belial's yoke; and until they cast off that yoke, God cannot own them as His sons and daughters. God's grace, no doubt, is infinite; and can meet us in all our failure and weakness; but if our souls aspire after a high order of discipleship, we must,

at once, cast off the unequal yoke, cost what it may, that is, if it can be cast off; but if it cannot, we must only bow our heads beneath the shame and sorrow thereof, looking to God for full deliverance.

Now, there are four distinct phases in which "the unequal yoke" may be contemplated, viz., the domestic, the commercial, the religious and the philanthropic. Some may be disposed to confine 2 Cor. vi. 14, to the first of these; but the apostle does not so confine it. The words are, "be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers." He does not specify the character or object of the yoke, and therefore we are warranted in giving the passage its widest application, by bringing its edge to bear directly upon every phase of the unequal yoke; and we shall see the importance of so doing, ere we close these remarks, if the Lord permit.

I. And, first, then, let us consider the domestic or marriage yoke. What pen can portray the mental anguish, the moral misery, together with the ruinous consequences, as to spiritual life and testimony, flowing from a Christian's marriage with an unconverted person? I suppose nothing can be more deplorable than the condition of one who discovers, when it is too late, that he has linked himself, for life, with one who cannot have a single thought or feeling in common with him. One desires to serve Christ; the other can only serve the devil; one breathes after the things of God; the other sighs for the things of this present world; the one earnestly seeks to mortify the flesh with all its affections and desires; the other only seeks to minister to and gratify these very things. Like a sheep and a goat, linked together, the sheep longs to feed on the green pasture in the field, while, on the other hand, the goat craves the brambles which grow on the ditch. The sad consequence is that both are starved. One *will* not feed on the pasture; and the other *cannot* feed upon the brambles, and thus neither gets what his nature craves, unless the goat, by superior strength, succeeds in forcing his unequally yoked companion to remain amongst the brambles, there to languish and die. The moral of this is plain enough; and, moreover, it is alas! of but too common occurrence. The goat generally succeeds in

The unequal Yoke.

89

gaining his end. The worldly partner carries his or her point, in almost every instance. It will be found, almost without exception, that, in cases of the unequal marriage yoke, the poor Christian is the sufferer, as is evidenced by the bitter fruits of a bad conscience, a depressed heart, a gloomy spirit, and a desponding mind. A heavy price, surely, to pay for the gratification of some natural affection, or the attainment, it may be, of some paltry worldly advantage. In fact, a marriage of this kind is the death knell of practical Christianity, and of progress in the divine life. It is morally impossible that any one can be an unfettered disciple of Christ with his neck in the marriage yoke with an unbeliever. As well might a racer in the Olympic or Isthmæan games have expected to gain the crown of victory by attaching a heavy weight or a dead body to his person. It is enough, surely, to have one dead to sustain, without attaching another. There never was a true Christian yet, who did not find that he had abundant work to do in endeavouring to grapple with the evils of *one* heart, without going to burden himself with the evils of two; and, without doubt, the man who, foolishly and disobediently, marries an unconverted woman; or the woman who marries an unconverted man, is burdened with the combined evils of two hearts; and who is sufficient for these things? One can most fully count upon the grace of Christ for the subjugation of his own evil nature; but he certainly cannot count, in the same way, upon that grace, in reference to the evil nature of his unequal yoke-fellow. If he have yoked himself ignorantly, the Lord will meet him personally, on the ground of full confession, with entire restoration of soul; but, in the matter of his discipleship, he will never recover it. Paul could say, "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; lest, by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be disapproved of." (*αδοκιμος*) And he said this, too, in immediate connection with "striving for the mastery." "Know ye not that they which run in a race, run all, but one obtaineth the prize? So run that ye may obtain. And every one that striveth for the mastery is temperate (self-controlled — *εγκρατευεται*) in all things; now, they do it to obtain

a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air," etc. (1 Cor. ix. 24—27.) Here, it is not a question of life or salvation, but simply one of "running in a race," and "so running that we may obtain," not life, but "an incorruptible crown." The fact of being called to run assumes the possession of life, for no one would call upon dead men to run in a race. I have gotten life, evidently, before I begin to run at all, and, hence, though I should fail in the race, I do not lose my life, but only the crown, for this and not that was the object proposed to be run for. We are not called to run for life, inasmuch as we get that not by running but "by faith of Jesus Christ" who by His death has purchased life for us, and implants it in us by the mighty energy of the Holy Ghost. Now, this life, being the life of a risen Christ, is eternal, for He is the eternal son; as He says Himself, in His address to the Father, in John xvii.: "Thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give *eternal life* to as many as thou hast given him." This life is not conditional. He does not *give* us life, as sinners, and then set us to run for it as saints, with the gloomy foreboding, that we may lose the precious boon by failing in the race. This would be to "run *uncertainly*," as many, alas! are trying to do, who profess to have entered upon the course, and yet they know not whether they have life or not. Such persons are running for life, and not for a crown; but God does not set up life at the goal, as the reward of victory, but *gives* it at the starting post, as the power by which we run. The power to run, and the object of running, are two very different things; yet they are constantly confounded by persons who are ignorant of the glorious gospel of the grace of God, in which Christ is set forth as the life and righteousness of all who believe on His name; and all this, moreover, as the free gift of God, and not as the reward of our running.

Now, in considering the terribly evil consequences of the unequal marriage yoke, it is mainly as bearing upon our discipleship that we are looking at them. I say, mainly, because our entire character and experience are deeply affected thereby. I very much question if any one

The unequal Yoke.

can give a more effectual blow to his prosperity in the divine life, than by assuming an unequal yoke. Indeed, the very fact of so doing proves that spiritual decline has already set in, with most alarming symptoms; but as to his discipleship and testimony, the lamp thereof may be regarded as all but gone out, or if it does give an occasional faint glimmer, it only serves to make manifest the awful gloom of his unhappy position, and the appalling consequences of being "unequally yoked together with an unbeliever."

Thus much as to the question of the unequal yoke in its influence upon the life, the character, the testimony and the discipleship of a child of God. I would now say a word as to its moral effect, as exhibited in the domestic circle. Here, too, the consequences are truly melancholy. Nor could they possibly be otherwise. Two persons have come together, in the closest and most intimate relationship, with tastes, habits, feelings, desires, tendencies, and objects diametrically opposite. They have nothing in common, so that, in every movement, they can but grate one against the other. The unbeliever cannot, *in reality*, go with the believer, and if there should, through excessive amiability, or downright hypocrisy, be a show of acquiescence, what is it worth in the sight of the Lord who judges the true state of the heart in reference to Himself? But little indeed; yea, it is worse than worthless. Then again, if the believer should, unhappily, go, in any measure, with his unequal yoke-fellow, it can only be at the expense of his discipleship, and the consequence is, a condemning conscience, in the sight of the Lord; and this, again, leads to heaviness of spirit, and, it may be, sourness of temper, in the domestic circle, so that the grace of the gospel is, by no means, commended, and the unbeliever is not attracted or won. Thus it is, in every way, most sorrowful. It is dishonoring to God, destructive of spiritual prosperity, utterly subversive of discipleship and testimony, and entirely hostile to domestic peace and blessing. It produces estrangement, coldness, distance, and misunderstanding; or, if it does not produce these, it will, doubtless, lead, on the part of the Christian, to a forfeiture of his discipleship and his good conscience, both

of which he may be tempted to offer as a sacrifice upon the altar of domestic peace. Thus, whatever way we look at it, an unequal yoke must lead to the most deplorable consequences.

Then, as to its effect upon children, it is equally sad. These are almost sure to flow in the current with the unconverted parent. "Their children spoke half in the speech of Ashdod, and could not speak in the Jews' language, but according to the language of each people." There can be no union of heart in the training of the children; no joint and mutual confidence in reference to them. One desires to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; the other desires to bring them up in the principles of the world, the flesh, and the devil: and as all the sympathies of the children, as they grow up, are likely to be ranged on the side of the latter, it is easy to see how it will end. In short, it is an unseemly, unscriptural, and vain effort to plough with an "unequal yoke," or to "sow the ground with mingled seed"; and all must end in sorrow and confusion.

I shall, ere turning from this branch of our subject, offer a remark as to the reasons which generally actuate Christians in the matter of entering into the unequal marriage-yoke. We all know, alas! how easily the poor heart persuades itself of the rightness of any step which it desires to take, and how the devil furnishes plausible arguments to convince us of its rightness—arguments which the moral condition of the soul causes us to regard as clear, forcible, and satisfactory. The very fact of our thinking of such a thing, proves our unfitness to weigh, with a well-balanced mind and spiritually-adjusted conscience, the solemn consequences of such a step. If the eye were single (that is, if we were governed but by one object, namely, the glory and honour of the Lord Jesus Christ), we should never entertain the idea of putting our necks into an unequal yoke; and, consequently, we should have no difficulty or perplexity about the matter. A racer, whose eye was resting on the crown, would not be troubled with any perplexity as to whether he ought to stop and tie a hundred-weight round his neck. Such a thought would never cross his mind; and not only so,

The unequal Yoke.

93

but a thorough racer would have a distinct and almost intuitive perception of everything which would be likely to prove a hindrance to him in running the race; and, of course, with such an one, to perceive, would be to reject with decision. Now, were it thus with Christians, in the matter of unscriptural marriage, it would save them a world of sorrow and perplexity; but it is not thus. The heart gets out of communion, and is morally incompetent to "try the things that differ"; and, when in this condition, the devil gains an easy conquest, and speedy success in his wicked effort to induce the believer to yoke himself with "Belial"—with "unrighteousness"—with "darkness"—with "an infidel." When the soul is in full communion with God, it is entirely subject to His word; it sees things as He sees them, calls them what He calls them, and not what the devil or his own carnal heart would call them. In this way, the believer escapes the ensnaring influence of a deception which is very frequently brought to bear upon him in this matter, namely, a false profession of religion on the part of the person whom he desires to marry. This is a very common case. It is easy to show symptoms of leaning towards the things of God; and the heart is treacherous and base enough to make a profession of religion, in order to gain its end; and not only so, but the devil, who is "transformed into an angel of light," will lead to this false profession, in order thereby the more effectually to entrap the feet of a child of God. Thus it comes to pass that Christians, in this matter, suffer themselves to be satisfied, or at least profess themselves satisfied, with evidence of conversion which, under any other circumstances, they would regard as utterly lame and flimsy. But, alas! experience soon opens the eyes to the *reality*. It is speedily discovered that the profession was all a vain show, that the *heart* is entirely in and of the world. Terrible discovery! Who can detail the bitter consequences of such a discovery—the anguish of heart—the bitter reproaches and cuttings of conscience—the shame and confusion—the loss of peace and blessing—the forfeiture of spiritual peace and joy—the sacrifice of a life of usefulness? Who can describe all these

things? The man awakes from his delusive dream, and opens his eyes upon the tremendous reality, that he is yoked for life with "Belial." Yes, this is what the Spirit calls it. It is not our inference, or a deduction arrived at by a process of reasoning; but a plain and positive statement of Holy Scripture, that thus the matter stands in reference to one who, from whatever motive, or under the influence of whatever reasons, or deceived by whatever false pretences, has entered into an unequal marriage-yoke.

O, my beloved Christian reader, if you are in danger of entering into such a yoke, let me earnestly, solemnly, and affectionately entreat of you to pause first, and weigh the matter in the balances of the sanctuary, ere you move forward a single hair's breadth on such a fatal path! You may rest assured, that you will no sooner have taken the step, than your heart will be assailed by hopeless regrets, and your life embittered by unnumbered sorrows. **LET NOTHING INDUCE YOU TO YOKE YOURSELF WITH AN UNBELIEVER.** Are your affections engaged? Then, remember, they cannot be the affections of your new man; they are, be assured of it, those of the old or carnal nature, which you are called upon to mortify and set aside. Wherefore, you should cry to God for spiritual power to rise above the influence of such affections; yea, to sacrifice them to Him. Again, are your interests concerned? Then remember, that they are only *your* interests; and if they are promoted, Christ's interests are sacrificed by your yoking yourself with "Belial." Furthermore, they are only your temporal, and not your eternal interests. In point of fact, the interests of the believer and those of Christ ought to be identical; and it is plain, that His interests, His honour, His truth, His glory, must inevitably be sacrificed, if a member of His body is linked with "Belial." This is the true way to look at the question. What are a few hundreds, or a few thousands, to an heir of heaven? "God is able to give thee much more than this." Are you going to sacrifice the truth of God, as well as your own spiritual peace, prosperity, and happiness, for a paltry trifle of gold, which must perish in the using of

The unequal Yoke.

95

it? Ah, no! God forbid! Flee from it, as a bird from the snare, which it sees and knows. Stretch out the hand of genuine, well-braced, whole-hearted discipleship, and take the knife and slay your affections and your interests on the altar of God; and then, even though there should not be an audible voice from heaven to approve your act, you will have the invaluable testimony of an approving conscience and an ungrieved Spirit—an ample reward, surely, for the most costly sacrifice which you can make. May the Spirit of God give power to resist Satan's temptations!

It is hardly needful to remark, here, that in cases where conversion takes place after marriage, the complexion of the matter is very materially altered. There will then be no smitings of conscience, for example; and the whole thing is modified in a variety of particulars. Still there will be difficulty, trial and sorrow, unquestionably. The only thing is that one can, far more happily, bring the trial and sorrow into the Lord's presence when he has not deliberately and wilfully plunged himself thereinto; and, blessed be God, we know how ready He is to forgive, restore, and cleanse from all unrighteousness, the soul that makes full confession of its error and failure. This may comfort the heart of one who feels he has sinned in this matter; and for one who has been brought to the Lord after marriage, the spirit of God has given specific direction and blessed encouragement, in the following passage: "If any brother have an unbelieving wife, and she think proper to dwell with him, let him not put her away: and if any woman have an unbelieving husband, and he think proper to dwell with her, let her not put him away (for the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband, else were your children unclean, but now are they holy) for what knowest thou, O wife, if thou shalt save thy husband? or what knowest thou, O husband, if thou shalt save thy wife" (1 Cor. vii. 12—16).

II. We shall now consider "the unequal yoke" in its commercial phase, as seen in cases of partnership in business. This, though not so serious an aspect of the yoke

as that which we have just been considering, inasmuch as it can be more easily got rid of, will, nevertheless, be found a very positive barrier to the believer's testimony. When a Christian yokes himself, for business purposes, with an unbeliever—whether that unbeliever be a relative or not—or when he becomes a member of a worldly firm, he virtually surrenders his individual responsibility. Henceforth the acts of the firm become his acts, and it is perfectly out of the question to think of getting a worldly firm to act on heavenly principles. They would laugh at such a notion, inasmuch as it would be an effectual barrier to the success of their commercial schemes. They will feel perfectly free to adopt a number of expedients in carrying on their business, which would be quite opposed to the spirit and principles of the kingdom in which he is, and of the Church of which he forms a part. Thus he will find himself constantly in a most trying position. He may use his influence to christianise the mode of conducting affairs; but they will compel him to do business as others do, and he has no remedy save to mourn in secret over his anomalous and difficult position, or else to go out at great pecuniary loss to himself and his family. Where the eye is single there will be no hesitation as to which of these alternatives to adopt; but, alas! the very fact of getting into such a position proves the lack of a single eye; and the fact of being in it argues the lack of spiritual capacity to appreciate the value and power of the divine principles which would infallibly bring a man out of it. A man whose eye was single could not possibly yoke himself with an unbeliever for the purpose of making money. Such an one could only set, as an object before his mind, the direct glory of Christ; and this object could never be gained by a positive transgression of divine principle. This makes it very simple. If it does not glorify Christ for a Christian to become a partner in a worldly firm, it must, without doubt, further the designs of the devil. There is no middle ground; but that it does not glorify Christ is manifest, for His word says, "be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers." Such is the principle which cannot be infringed without damage to the testimony,

The unequal Yoke.

97

and forfeiture of spiritual blessing. True the conscience of a Christian, who transgresses in this matter, may seek relief in various ways—may have recourse to various subterfuges—may set forth various arguments to persuade itself that all is right. It will be said that “we can be very devoted and very spiritual, so far as we are personally concerned, even though we are yoked, for business purposes, with an unbeliever.” This will be found fallacious when brought to the test of actual practice. A servant of Christ will find himself hampered in a hundred ways by his worldly partnership. If in matters of service to Christ he is not met with open hostility, he will have to encounter the enemy’s secret and constant effort to damp his ardour, and throw cold water on all his schemes. He will be laughed at and despised—he will be continually reminded of the effect which his enthusiasm and fanaticism will produce in reference to the business prospects of the firm. If he uses his time, his talents, or his pecuniary resources, in what he believes to be the Lord’s service, he will be pronounced a fool or a madman, and reminded that the true, the proper, the rational way for a commercial man to serve the Lord is to “attend to business, and nothing but business;” and that it is the exclusive business of clergymen and ministers to attend to religious matters, inasmuch as they are set apart and paid for so doing. Now, although the Christian’s renewed mind may be thoroughly convinced of the fallacy of all this reasoning—although he may see that this worldly wisdom is but a flimsy, thread-bare cloak, thrown over the heart’s covetous practices—yet who can tell how far the heart may be influenced by such things? We get weary of constant resistance. The current becomes too strong for us, and we gradually yield ourselves to its action, and are carried along on its surface. Conscience may make some death-struggles; but the spiritual energies are paralysed, and the sensibilities of the new nature are blunted, so that there is no response to the cries of conscience, and no effectual effort to withstand the enemy; the worldliness of the Christian’s heart leagues itself with the opposing influences from without—the outworks are stormed, and the citadel of the soul’s affec-

tions vigorously assaulted; and, finally, the man settles down in thorough worldliness, exemplifying, in his own person, the prophet's touching lament, "Her Nazarites *were* purer than snow, they *were* whiter than milk, they *were* more ruddy in body than rubies, their polishing *was* of sapphire: their visage *is* blacker than a coal; they *are* not known in the streets; their skin cleaveth to their bones; it is withered, it is become like a stick" (Lam. iv. 7, 8). The man who was once known as a servant of Christ—a fellow-helper unto the kingdom of God—making use of his resources only to further the interests of the gospel of Christ, is now, alas! settled down upon his lees, only known as a plodding, keen, bargain-making man of business, of whom the apostle might well say, "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved the present age" (τον νυν αιωνα).

But, perhaps, nothing so operates on the hearts of Christians in inducing them to yoke themselves commercially with unbelievers as the habit of seeking to maintain the two characters of a Christian and a man of business. This is a grievous snare. In point of fact there can be no such thing. A man must be either the one or the other. If I am a Christian my christianity must shew itself, as a living reality, in that in which I am; and, if it cannot shew itself there, I ought not to be there; for, if I continue in a sphere or position in which the life of Christ cannot be manifested, I shall speedily possess nought of Christianity but the name, without the reality—the outward form without the inward power—the shell without the kernel. I should be the servant of Christ, not merely on Sunday, but from Monday morning to Saturday night. I should not only be a servant of Christ in the public assembly, but also in my place of business, whatever it may happen to be. But I cannot be a proper servant of Christ with my neck in the yoke with an unbeliever; for how could the servants of two hostile masters work in the same yoke? It is utterly impossible; as well might one attempt to link the sun's meridian beams with the profound darkness of midnight. It cannot be done; and I do, therefore, most solemnly appeal to my reader's conscience, in the presence

The unequal Yoke.

99

of Almighty God, who shall judge the secrets of men's hearts by Jesus Christ, as to this important matter. I would say to him, if he is thinking of getting into partnership with an unbeliever, FLEE FROM IT! yes, flee from it, though it promises you the gain of thousands. You will plunge yourself in a mess of trouble and sorrow. You are going to "plow" with one whose feelings, instincts, and tendencies are diametrically opposed to your own. "An ox and an ass" are not so unlike, in every respect, as a believer and an unbeliever. How will you ever get on? He wants to make money—to profit himself—to get on in the world; you want (at least you ought to want) to grow in grace and holiness—to advance the interests of Christ and His gospel on the earth, and to push onward to the everlasting kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. His object is money; yours, I trust, is Christ: he lives for this world; you for the world to come: he is engrossed with the things of time; you with those of eternity. How, then, can you ever take common ground with him? Your principles, your motives, your objects, your hopes are all opposed. How is it possible you can get on? How can you have aught in common? Surely all this needs only to be looked at with a single eye in order to be seen in its true light. It is impossible that any one whose eye is filled, and whose heart is occupied with Christ, could ever yoke himself with a worldly partner, for any object whatsoever. Wherefore, my beloved Christian reader, let me once more entreat you, ere you take such a tremendous step—a step fraught with such awful consequences—so pregnant with danger to your best interests, as well as to the testimony of Christ, with which you are honoured—to take the whole matter with an honest heart, into the sanctuary of God, and weigh it in His sacred balance. Ask Him what He thinks of it, and hearken, with a subject-will, and a well-adjusted conscience, to His reply. It is plain and powerful—yea, as plain and as powerful as though it fell from the open heavens—*be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers.*

But, if, unhappily, my reader is already in the yoke, I would say to him, disentangle yourself as speedily as you

can. I am much mistaken if you have not already found the yoke a burdensome one. To you, it were superfluous to detail the sad consequences of being in such a position; you, doubtless, know them all. It is needless to print them on paper or paint them on canvass to one who has entered into all their reality. My beloved brother in Christ, lose not a moment in seeking to throw off the yoke. This must be done before the Lord, on His principles, and by His grace. It is easier to get into a wrong position than to get out of it. A partnership of ten or twenty years' standing cannot be dissolved in a moment. It must be done calmly, humbly, and prayerfully, as in the sight of the Lord, and with entire reference to His glory. I may dishonor the Lord as much in my way of getting out of a wrong position, as by getting into it at the first. Hence, if I find myself in partnership with an unbeliever, and that my conscience tells me I am wrong, let me honestly and frankly state to my partner, that I can no longer go on with him; and having done that, my place is to use every exertion to wind up the affairs of the firm in an upright, a straightforward, and business-like manner, so as to give no possible occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully, and that my good may not be evil spoken of. We must avoid rashness, headiness and highmindedness, when apparently acting for the Lord, and in defence of His holy principles. If a man gets entangled in a net, or involved in a labyrinth, it is not by bold and violent plunging he will extricate himself. No; he must humble himself, confess his sins before the Lord, and then retrace his steps in patient dependance upon that grace which can not only pardon him for being in a wrong position, but lead him forth into a right one. Moreover, as in the case of the marriage yoke, the matter is very much modified by the fact of the partnership having been entered into previous to conversion. Not that this would, in the slightest degree, justify a continuance in it. By no means; but it does away with much of the sorrow of heart and defilement of conscience connected with such a position, and will also, very materially, affect the mode of escape therefrom. Besides, the Lord is glorified by, and He assuredly accepts the moral bent of the heart and conscience

in the right direction. If I judge myself for being wrong, and that the moral bent of my heart and conscience is to get right, God will accept of that, and surely set me right. But if He sets me right, He will not suffer me to do violence to one truth while seeking to act in obedience to another. The same word that says, "be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers," says, also, "render, therefore, to all their dues"—"owe no man any thing"—"provide things honestly in the sight of all"—"walk honestly toward them that are without." If I have wronged God by getting into partnership with an unbeliever, I must not wrong man in my way of getting out of it. Profound subjection to the word of God, by the power of the Holy Ghost, will set all to rights, will lead us into straight paths, and enable us to avoid all dangerous extremes.

III.—In glancing, for a moment, at the religious phase of the unequal yoke, I would assure my reader that it is, by no means, my desire to hurt the feelings of any one by canvassing the claims of the various denominations around me. Such is not my purpose. The subject of this paper is one of quite sufficient importance to prevent its being encumbered by the introduction of other matters. Moreover, it is too definite to warrant any such introduction. "The unequal yoke" is our theme, and to it we must confine our attention.

In looking through Scripture, we find almost numberless passages setting forth the intense spirit of separation which ought ever to characterise the people of God. Whether we direct our attention to the Old Testament—in which we have God's relationship and dealings with His earthly people, Israel—or, to the New Testament, in which we have His relationship and dealings with His heavenly people, the Church, we find the same truth prominently set forth, namely, the entire separation of those who belong to God. Israel's position is thus stated in Balaam's parable, "lo, the people shall *dwell alone*, and shall not be reckoned amongst the nations." Their place was outside the range of all the nations of the earth; and they were responsible to maintain that separation. Throughout the entire Pentateuch, they were instructed,

warned and admonished as to this; and, throughout the Psalms and the Prophets we have the record of their failure in the maintenance of this separation, which failure, as we know, has brought down upon them the heavy judgments of the hand of God. It would swell this little paper into a volume were I to attempt a quotation of all the passages in which this point is put forward. I take it for granted that my reader is sufficiently acquainted with his Bible, to render such quotations unnecessary. Should he not be so, however, a reference in his concordance to the words, "separate," "separated," and "separation," will suffice to lay before him, at a glance, the body of scripture evidence on this subject. The passage just quoted, from the Book of Numbers, is the expression of God's thoughts about His people Israel: "The people shall dwell ALONE."

The same is true, only upon a much higher ground, in reference to God's heavenly people, the Church—the body of Christ—composed of all true believers. They, too, are a separated people. We shall now proceed to examine the ground of this separation. There is a great difference between being separate on the ground of what *we* are, and of what *God* is. The former makes a man a *pharisee*; the latter makes him a *saint*. If I say to a poor fellow-sinner, "stand by thyself, I am holier than thou," I am a detestable pharisee and a hypocrite; but if God, in His infinite condescension and perfect grace, says to me, "I have brought you into relationship with Myself, in the person of My Son Jesus Christ, therefore be holy and separate from all evil; come out from among them and be separate;" I am bound to obey, and my obedience is the practical manifestation of my character as a saint—a character which I have not because of any thing in myself, but simply because God has brought me near unto Himself through the precious blood of Christ. It is well to be clear as to this. Phariseeism and divine sanctification are two very different things; and yet they are often confounded. Those who contend for the maintenance of that place of separation which belongs to the people of God, are constantly accused of setting themselves up above their fellow men, and of laying claim to a higher degree of

personal sanctity than is ordinarily possessed. This accusation arises from not attending to the distinction just referred to. When God calls upon men to be separate, it is on the ground of what He has done for them in the cross, and where He has set them, in eternal association with Himself, in the person of Christ. But, if I separate myself on the ground of what I am in myself, it is the most senseless and vapid assumption which will sooner or later be made manifest. God commands his people to be holy on the ground of what He is: "Be ye holy, for I am holy." This is evidently a very different thing from "stand by thyself, I am holier than thou." If God brings people into association with Himself, He has a right to prescribe what their moral character ought to be, and they are responsible to answer thereto. Thus we see that the most profound humility lies at the bottom of a saint's separation. There is nothing so calculated to put one in the dust as the understanding of the real nature of divine holiness. It is an utterly false humility which springs from looking at ourselves—yea it is, in reality, based upon pride which has never yet seen to the bottom of its own perfect worthlessness. Some imagine that they can reach the truest and deepest humility by looking at self, whereas it can only be reached by looking at Christ. "The more thy glories strike mine eye, the humbler I shall be." This is a just sentiment, founded upon divine principle. The soul that loses itself in the blaze of Christ's moral glory, is truly humble, and none other. No doubt, we have a right to be humble when we think of what poor creatures we are; but it only needs a moment's just reflection to see the fallacy of seeking to produce any practical result by looking at self. It is only when we find ourselves in the presence of infinite excellency, that we are really humble. Hence, therefore, a child of God should refuse to be yoked with an unbeliever, whether for a domestic, a commercial, or a religious object, simply because God tells him to be separate, and not because of his own personal holiness. The carrying out of this principle, in matters of religion, will necessarily involve much trial and sorrow, it will be termed intolerance, bigotry, narrow-mindedness, exclusiveness, and such like;

but we cannot help all this. Provided we keep ourselves separate upon a right principle and in a right spirit, we may safely leave all results with God. No doubt, the remnant, in the days of Ezra, must have appeared excessively intolerant, in refusing the cooperation of the surrounding people in building the house of God; but they acted upon divine principle in the refusal. "Now when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the children of the captivity builded the temple unto the Lord God of Israel, then they came to Zerubbabel, and to the chief of the fathers, and said unto them, Let us build with you; for we seek your God as ye do; and we do sacrifice unto him, since the days of Esar-haddon, king of Assur, which brought us up hither." This might seem a very attractive proposal—a proposal evidencing a very decided leaning toward the God of Israel; yet the remnant refused, because the people, notwithstanding their fair profession, were, at heart, uncircumcised and hostile. "But Zerubbabel, and Jeshua, and the rest of the chief of the fathers of Israel, said unto them, ye have nothing to do *with us* to build an house unto *our* God; but *we ourselves together* will build unto the Lord God of Israel." (Es. iv. 1—3.) They would not yoke themselves with the uncircumcised—they would not "plow with an ox and an ass"—they would not "sow their field with mingled seed"—they kept themselves separate, even though, by so doing, they exposed themselves to the charge of being a bigoted, narrow-minded, illiberal, uncharitable set of people.

So, also, in Nehemiah, we read, "and the seed of Israel *separated themselves* from all strangers, and stood and confessed their sins, and the iniquities of their fathers." (Chap. ix. 2.) This was not sectarianism, but positive obedience. Their separation was essential to their existence as a people. They could not have enjoyed the divine presence on any other ground. Thus it must ever be with God's people on the earth. They must be separate, or else they are not only useless, but mischievous. God cannot own or accompany them if they yoke themselves with unbelievers, upon any ground, or for any object whatsoever. The grand difficulty is to combine a spirit

The unequal Yoke.

105

of intense separation with a spirit of grace, gentleness and forbearance; or, as another has said, "to maintain *a narrow circle with a wide heart*." This is really a difficulty. As the strict and uncompromising maintenance of *truth* tends to narrow the circle around us, we shall need the expansive power of *grace* to keep the heart wide, and the affections warm. If we contend for *truth* otherwise than in *grace*, we shall only yield a one-sided and most unattractive testimony. And, on the other hand, if we try to exhibit grace at the expense of truth, it will prove, in the end, to be only the manifestation of a popular liberality at God's expense—a most worthless thing.

Then, as to the object for which real Christians usually yoke themselves with those who, even on their own confession, and in the judgment of charity itself, are not Christians at all, it will be found, in the end, that no really divine and heavenly object can be gained by an infringement of God's truth. *Per fas aut nefas* can never be a divine motto. The means are not sanctified by the end; but both means and end must be according to the principles of God's holy word, else all must eventuate in confusion and dishonour. It might have appeared to Jehoshaphat a very worthy object, to recover Ramoth Gilead out of the hand of the enemy; and, moreover, he might have appeared a very liberal, gracious, popular, large-hearted man when, in reply to Ahab's proposal, he said, "I am as thou art, and my people as thy people; and *we will be with thee* in the war." It is easy to be liberal and large-hearted at the expense of divine principle; but how did it end? Ahab was killed, and Jehoshaphat narrowly escaped with his life, having made total shipwreck of his testimony. Thus we see that Jehoshaphat did not even gain the object for which he unequally yoked himself with an unbeliever; and even had he gained it, it would have been no justification of his course.^a Nothing can ever warrant a believer's

^a The unequal yoke proved a terrible snare to the amiable heart of Jehoshaphat. He yoked himself with Ahab for a religious object; and, notwithstanding the disastrous termination of this scheme, we find him yoking himself with Ahaziah for a

yoking himself with an unbeliever; and, therefore, however fair, attractive, and plausible the Ramoth expedition might seem in the eye of man, it was, in the judgment of God, "helping the ungodly, and loving them that hate the Lord" (2 Chron. xix. 2). The truth of God strips men and things of the false colours with which the spirit of expediency would deck them, and presents them in their proper light; and it is an unspeakable mercy to have the clear judgment of God about all that is going on around us: it imparts calmness to the spirit, and stability to the course and character, and saves one from that unhappy fluctuation of thought, feeling, and principle which so entirely unfits him for the place of a steady and consistent witness for Christ. We shall surely err, if we attempt to form our judgment by the thoughts and opinions of men; for they will always judge according to the outward appearance, and not according to the intrinsic character and principle of things. Provided men can gain what they conceive to be a right object, they care not about the mode of gaining it. But the true servant of Christ knows that He must do his Master's work upon his Master's principles, and in his Master's spirit. It will not satisfy such an one to reach the most praiseworthy end, unless he can reach it by a divinely-appointed road. The means and the end must both be divine. I admit it, for example, to be a most desirable end to circulate the Scriptures—God's own pure, eternal word; but if *I could not* circulate them save by yoking myself with an unbeliever, I should refrain, inasmuch as I am not to do evil that good may come. But, blessed be God, His servant can circulate His precious book without violating the precepts contained in that book. He can, upon his own individual responsibility, or in fellowship with those who are really on the Lord's side, scatter the precious seed everywhere, without leaguings himself with those whose whole course and conduct prove them to be of the world. The same may be said in reference to every

commercial object, which likewise ended in loss and confusion; and, lastly, he yoked himself with Jehoram, for a military object. Compare 2 Chron. xviii.; xx. 35—37; 2 Kings iii.

object of a religious nature. It can and should be gained on God's principles, and only thus. It may be argued, in reply, that we are told not to judge—that we cannot read the heart—and that we are bound to hope that all who would engage in such good works as the circulation of the Bible, the distribution of tracts, and the aiding of missionary labours, must be Christians; and that, therefore, it cannot be wrong to link ourselves with them. To all this I reply, that there is hardly a passage in the New Testament so misunderstood and misapplied as Matthew vii. 1: “Judge not, that ye be not judged.” In the very same chapter we read: “Beware of false prophets by their fruits ye shall know them.” Now, how are we to “beware,” if we do not exercise judgment? Again, in 1 Cor. v. we read: “For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? Do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without, God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.” Here we are distinctly taught, that those “within” come within the immediate range of the Church's judgment; and yet, according to the common interpretation of Matt. vii. 1, we ought not to judge anybody; that interpretation, therefore, must needs be unsound. If people take, even in profession, the ground of being “within,” we are commanded to judge them. “Do not ye judge them that are within?” As to those “without,” we have nought to do with them, save, to present the pure and perfect, the rich, illimitable, and unfathomable grace which shines, with unclouded effulgence, in the death and resurrection of the Son of God. All this is plain enough. The people of God are told to exercise judgment as to all who profess to be “within”; they are told to “beware of false prophets”; they are commanded to “try the spirits”: and how can they do all this, if they are not to judge at all? What, then, does our Lord mean, when He says, “Judge not”? I believe He means just what St. Paul, by the Holy Ghost, says, when he commands us to “judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the heart: and then

shall every man have praise of God" (1 Cor. iv. 5). We have nothing to do with judging motives; but we have to judge conduct and principles; that is to say, the conduct and principles of all who profess to be "within." And, in point of fact, the very persons who say, "We must not judge," do themselves constantly exercise judgment. There is no true Christian in whom the moral instincts of the divine nature do not virtually pronounce judgment as to character, conduct, and doctrine; and these are the very points which are placed within the believer's range of judgment.

All, therefore, that I would press upon the Christian reader is, that he should exercise judgment as to those with whom he yokes himself, in matters of religion. If he is, at this moment, working in yoke or in harness with an unbeliever, he is positively violating the command of the Holy Ghost. He may have been ignorantly doing so up to this; and if so, the Lord's grace is ready to pardon and restore; but if he persists in disobedience after having been warned, he cannot possibly expect God's blessing and presence with him, no matter how valuable or important the object which they seek to attain. "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams."

IV. We have only now to consider the philanthropic phase of the unequal yoke. Many will say, "I quite admit that we ought not to mingle ourselves with positive unbelievers in the worship or service of God; but, then, we can freely unite with such for the furtherance of objects of philanthropy—such, for instance, as feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, reclaiming the vicious, in providing asylums for the blind and the lunatic, hospitals and infirmaries for the sick and infirm, places of refuge for the homeless and houseless, the fatherless and the widow; and, in short, for the furtherance of everything that tends to promote the amelioration of our fellow-creatures, physically, morally, and intellectually." This, at first sight, seems fair enough; for I may be asked, if I would not help a man, by the road-side, to get his cart out of the ditch? I reply, certainly; but if I were asked to become a member of a mixed society

The unequal Yoke.

109

for the purpose of getting carts out of ditches, I should refuse—not because of my superior sanctity, but because God's word says, "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers." This would be my answer, no matter what were the object proposed by a mixed society. The servant of Christ is commanded "to be ready to every good work"—"to do good unto all"—"to visit the fatherless and the widows in their affliction"; but then it is as the servant of Christ, and not as the member of a society or a committee in which there may be infidels and atheists and all sorts of wicked and godless men. Moreover, we must remember that all God's philanthropy is connected with the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is the channel through which God will bless—that the mighty lever by which He will elevate man, physically, morally, and intellectually. "After that the kindness and philanthropy (*φιλανθρωπια*) of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which He shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour" (Tit. iii. 4—6). This is God's philanthropy. This is His mode of ameliorating man's condition. With all who understand its worth, the Christian can readily yoke himself, but with none other.

The men of the world know nought of this, care not for it. They may seek reformation; but it is reformation without Christ. They may promote amelioration; but it is amelioration without the cross. They wish to advance; but Jesus is neither the starting-post nor the goal of their course. How, then, can the Christian yoke himself with them? They want to work without Christ, the very one to whom he owes everything. Can he be satisfied to work with them? Can he have an object in common with them? If men come to me and say, "we want your co-operation in feeding the hungry, in clothing the naked, in founding hospitals and lunatic asylums, in feeding and educating orphans, in improving the physical condition of our fellow mortals; but you must remember that a leading rule of the society, the board, or the committee formed for such objects, is, that the name of

Christ is not to be introduced, as it would only lead to controversy. Our objects being not at all religious, but undividedly philanthropic, the subject of religion must be studiously excluded from all our public meetings. We are met as *men*, for a benevolent purpose, and therefore Infidels, Atheists, Socinians, Arians, Romanists, and all sorts can happily yoke themselves to move onward the glorious machine of philanthropy." What should be my answer to such an application? The fact is, words would fail one who really loved the Lord Jesus, in attempting to reply to an appeal so monstrous. What! benefit mortals by the exclusion of Christ? God forbid! If I cannot gain the objects of pure philanthropy, without setting aside that blessed one who lived and died, and lives eternally for me, then away with your philanthropy, for it, assuredly, is not God's, but Satan's. If it were God's, the word is, "He shed it on us abundantly THROUGH Jesus Christ," the very one whom your rule leaves entirely out. Hence your rule must be the direct dictation of Satan, the enemy of Christ. Satan would always like to leave out the Son of God; and, when he can get men to do the same, he will allow them to be benevolent, charitable, and philanthropic. But, in good truth, such benevolence and philanthropy ought to be termed malevolence and misanthropy, for how can you more effectually exhibit ill-will and hatred toward men, than by leaving out THE ONLY ONE who can really bless them for time or for eternity. But what must be the moral condition of a heart, in reference to Christ, who could take his seat at a board, or on a platform, on the condition that that name must not be introduced? It must be cold indeed; yea, it proves that the plans and operations of unconverted men are of sufficient importance, in his judgment, to lead him to throw his master overboard, for the purpose of carrying them out. Let us not mistake matters. This is the true aspect in which to view the world's philanthropy. The men of this world can "sell ointment for three hundred pence, and give to the poor;" while they pronounce it *waste* to pour that ointment on the head of Christ! Will the Christian consent to this? Will he yoke himself with such? Will he seek to im-

The unequal Yoke.

111

prove the world without Christ? Will he join with men to deck and garnish a scene which is stained with His Master's blood? Peter could say, "Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise and walk." Peter would heal a cripple by the power of the name of Jesus; but what would he have said, if asked to join a committee or society to alleviate cripples, on the condition of leaving that name out altogether? It requires no great stretch of imagination to conceive his answer. His whole soul would recoil from such a thought. He only healed the cripple for the purpose of exalting the name of Jesus, and setting forth its worth, its excellency, and its glory, in the view of men; but the very reverse is the object of the world's philanthropy; inasmuch as it sets aside His blessed name entirely, and banishes Him from its boards, its committees, and its platforms. May we not, therefore, well say, "Shame on the Christian who is found in a place from which his Master is shut out." Oh! let him go forth, and, in the energy of love to Jesus, and by the power of that name, do all the good he can; but let him not yoke himself with unbelievers, to counteract the effects of sin by excluding the cross of Christ. God's grand object is to exalt His Son—"that all should honour the Son even as they honour the Father." This should be the Christian's object likewise; to this end he should "do good unto all;" but if he joins a society or a committee in order to do good, it is not "in the name of Jesus" he acts, but in the name of the society or committee, without the name of Jesus. This ought to be enough for every true and loyal heart. God has no other way of blessing men but through Christ; and no other object in blessing them but to exalt Christ. As with Pharaoh of old, when the hungry Egyptians flocked to his presence, his word was "go to Joseph;" so God's word to all is, "come to Jesus." Yes, for soul and body, time and eternity, we must go to Jesus; but the men of the world know Him not, and want Him not; what, therefore, has the Christian to do with such? How can he act in yoke with them? He can only do so on the ground of practically denying his Saviour's name. Many

do not see this; but that does not alter the case for those who do. We ought to act honestly, as in the light; and even though the feelings and affections of the new nature were not sufficiently strong in us to lead us to shrink from ranking ourselves with the enemies of Christ, the conscience ought, at least, to bow to the commanding authority of that word, **BE NOT UNEQUALLY YOKED TOGETHER WITH UNBELIEVERS.**

May the Holy Ghost clothe His own word with heavenly power, and make its edge sharp to pierce the conscience, that so the saints of God may be delivered from everything that hinders their "running the race that is set before them." Time is short. The Lord Himself will soon be here. Then many an unequal yoke will be broken in a moment; many a sheep and goat shall then be eternally severed. May we be enabled to purge ourselves from every unclean association, and every unhallowed influence, so that, when Jesus returns, we may not be ashamed, but meet Him with a joyful heart and an approving conscience.

C. H. M.

"NO CONFIDENCE IN THE FLESH."

FRAGMENT.

THE history of Saul shows how far one can go on with God and in favour of His people, by an energy which after all is fleshly. The history shows how Saul was put to the test, and how God was with him, in a certain sense: for He gave him another heart—not conversion, of course—but so that he became another man; and yet all that is brought out in result is, how far flesh can go in pursuing the objects of God, and where it all ends! It is a very solemn account; but it is what is presented in the history of Saul. It shows how far the flesh can act even under the direction of God; which Saul did, until his own will began to act, and then he could despise even Samuel himself.

No. XI.

THE CHRISTIAN POSITION AS TO LIFE
AND THE SPIRIT.

Gal. ii. 19—iii. 14.

THERE are two things presented here, which distinguish the Christian. The first is an entirely new life in the presence of the Lord Jesus (Gal. ii. 19, etc.) The second is the possession of the Holy Ghost (chap. iii.), in contrast with the law, and also the promises; for the accomplishment is quite distinct from the hope. The difference is immense; for, in order to enjoy the effect of the promise, it is needful that faith come in and that righteousness be accomplished. The perfect righteousness of Christ in God's presence must be put on. One cannot have the accomplishment of the promise save in Christ.

The Galatians had, to a certain point, succeeded in introducing some measure of works of the law in order to salvation. Not that the name of Christ was set aside, but his work was despised. Now God, in His grace, has set us before Him without questions. They have been all solved in Christ and God. We are not clear till we have recognised ourselves under the efficacy of all that Christ has done for our salvation, and we cannot enjoy it, as long as there are questions to be solved.

To enjoy the efficacy of Christ's work is the foundation of all. It is the joy of the full revelation of God. Abraham had precious promises (Gen. xv., xvii.) But it is one thing to have promises, like those made to Abraham, precious as this is without doubt, a totally different thing to have a full entire revelation of God in respect of us, such as we have in the epistles. The work which has been fully and clearly revealed has put me where Jesus is, in the presence of God, happy and without a cloud. What Christ has done, the law could not do, and did not pretend to it; for the law, having

a shadow of things to come, shewed, after all, that God could not be revealed therein. Why? Because righteousness was not accomplished: it would have been judgment, for the law demanded its fulfilment. The Holy Ghost tells us that the way into the holiest was not yet made manifest. God kept Himself in the thick darkness.

Now, they were seeking to add things in order to be saved, when the believer was without questions in the presence of God. Therefore, says the apostle, "If I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. I have done wrong, then, in overthrowing them, I am a transgressor and Christ a minister of sin!" (Gal. ii.) "But," he adds, "I, through the law, am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."

What, then, is the effect of the law, and wherefore serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, but it is not a thing which I could accomplish. The apostle has not even the idea of such a thing, for the law was given to shew man that he was a sinner. The righteousness which is by faith is quite another thing from abiding under the law. I know all the power of the law; it can only condemn me. But now I am dead to the law. How happy to know the thing by grace, for grace is of little moment to me if I am under law. The knowledge of grace makes me understand that the more God is good, the more guilty am I if I offend him. The revelation of this grace of God, if the law enters, and I must render an account, makes one more culpable in every respect. When Moses came down from the mountain, he brought a ministry of condemnation and death (compare Exodus xxxiv. and 2 Cor. iii.) God had proclaimed himself as the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and sin, and that would, by no means, clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon

the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation. This was not a ministry of pure grace, as some suppose; for God had said, Whosoever hath sinned against me, I will blot him out of my book (Exodus xxxii. 33). But under grace, he who sins against such a God is more guilty than a sinner under the ministry of condemnation and death. Nor is this a piece of reasoning; for the word says, that Moses put a vail on his face, that the children of Israel could not look to the end of that which is abolished. If God impute my sin to me, all this goodness does but aggravate my case. What is it that I want? The manifestation of righteousness. For whatever was the goodness of God displayed, it rendered man more blameable, and promise could not take that away. The people were guilty, and the ministry with which Moses was invested was a ministry of condemnation and death. But the righteousness of God by faith of Jesus Christ is unto all, and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Rom. iii. 22, 23). God knowing that which should be manifested, bore with sins. That has only displayed His righteousness which He has declared at this time. We are justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness (Rom. iii. 24, 25).

The important thing for our souls is, that God's righteousness has been fully revealed. It is not that faith denies the authority of the law: "yea, we establish the law." Faith owns that the law demands perfect righteousness; but it also says, "If I seek my salvation by the works of the law, I am condemned and lost." But now faith says, "I, through the law, am dead to the law." This is what Christ has accomplished for us personally. Christ has put Himself under the sentence of the cross, and by His death I am crucified with Him. The life, in which I was responsible and I had sinned, exists no longer. This, it is, which makes such a total difference. The life in which God saw me a sinner, the life to which sin is attached, and consequently condemnation and

death, no more exists. "Nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." This is not yet all. It is no more a question for me, if I can find the favour of God by keeping the law; for I live no longer according to this life, but in the life of Christ who loved me. My responsibility as to this life is gone; Christ has loved me, and loved me as I am. Such is the sole relation that I know; and I am sure of His love. It is the action of Christ for me which has set me thus, and not mine for Him.

It is true that I have failed; but I am dead, and my responsibility, as a saved person, flows from this, that Christ has loved and saved me, and from the relations which exist between Him and me. If my soul has not understood its responsibility before God as saved, I have not understood the gospel; nevertheless, I cannot deny it, God being revealed to me. It is not any more a question of what I ought to be, but of what Christ has done, and done for me. What I find is, that He has loved me as I was. I find in Jesus the manifestation of the God who loved me. I have the full assurance before God, that I have no longer anything to do with this first life, the life of the first Adam; but that I live now in another life, communicated by the second Adam, even Christ, of whose love, to me, I am assured.

There is a great difference between the enjoyment of lost child introduced into a family, and that of him who is adopted there. The child may find the father to be kind, but he has not yet the child's heart, nor position, as long as he feels himself a mere foundling. As soon, however, as his position is changed, because he understands that the head of the family is become his father by adoption, he enjoys those intimate relations which exist between a parent and his child.

Everything depends on the relations which exist. One cannot enjoy the affections of God without being His child; all depends on the knowledge and enjoyment of this relationship. Then the heart is happy, and such is the place of the Christian. The effect of Christ's work

is to set us thus in the relation in which Jesus stands with the Father.

The apostle presents us with a second position in Gal. iii. 2:—"Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law or by the hearing of faith." To this he replies:—"As many [persons] as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." . . . "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us, that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ: that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith."

Now we have the contrast, not only with the law, but also with the promises; for Christ is far above the promises, seeing that He is Himself their accomplishment. Those who are of the works of the law—on that ground and principle—are cursed; those who are of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham (Gal. iii. 9). Impossible to have joy in God's presence without the question of sin's being settled. Can we stand before God without that? No; righteousness is necessary. If I have the least thing upon my conscience, how can I be happy in the light? For one must be there without spot. But Christ has done more than answer to righteousness; and herein we find a glorious manifestation in Christ, for He has accomplished, in perfection, all that was demanded of man, and He is now glorified. We enjoy not merely the righteousness which was required, but this—that God has been glorified; and that is much more. Had God merely shewn Himself just, He would have cut off all men as sinners: without the work of Christ, God's majesty would have been compromised; but Christ gave Himself up to be the vessel for displaying on the cross all that God is for us. God Himself has been so glorified, that Christ could say, "Therefore doth my Father love me." The God-man has not only satisfied the righteousness of God, but, besides, the consequence of His perfect work, is that we can rejoice in His presence without questions and without trouble of conscience. We have received not life only, but the

Holy Ghost, as the seal of our justification, and in order that we may understand all the effect of this righteousness to enjoy it without a cloud in the Father's presence.

Another thing besides flows thence — the base on which the church is founded. For this is not on what man was not, but on what he is in Christ; and in this manifestation Christ has unfolded all that was in God for us. The Church of the living God is the pillar and ground of the truth (1 Tim. iii. 15). *There* is the truth, because God has been manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, and received up into glory. That had not been all promised. For the Church to receive her existence, it was needful that God should be manifested in flesh. Christ having accomplished the work of redemption, God has introduced man in His presence, and set him in glory. Having proved man to be a sinner, He was not contented to take away sin, but he would see him His own, and make him enjoy all His grace in perfect peace, giving him to understand that His righteousness was accomplished in Christ. Such is the Church. Souls convinced of sin enjoy all the fulness of the sovereign grace of God, because there is no more question of sins for them. By the gift of the Holy Ghost, there are two effects. There is first the consciousness of the perfect righteousness of God Himself without conscience of sin. Can you say that there is no more question of sins for you? Is this question entirely at rest, and your relation to God founded on that? Have you recognised that your responsibility, your relation, with God, is based upon the accomplished righteousness in Christ? If so, you are happy and blessed. Formerly you were sinners, but now you can say, God loves me. I do not speak of your thoughts; but you have made the discovery that you are God's children by faith in Christ Jesus, that your responsibility, as sinners, is closed. Are your hearts thus at large? to consider before Him that you are crucified with Christ, and that sin is gone for you? I cannot have the feelings of a bride towards one whom I dread as my judge:

I need the consciousness of being in the presence of my bridegroom, according to that lovingkindness which is better than life.

Is God your daily resource in your faults and sins, even when you have committed them? Do you believe that His love can do that? There is where the apostle regards the Christian as set; and when the contrary happens, the Jewish position is more or less taken by the heart. If I have not full confidence in God, I must seek something outside, instead of having recourse to God to find strength and to restore my soul. If God is your resource, you will not seek the law. The touchstone for the child of God is, whether his resources are in God or in himself. Perhaps, like the Jews, he seeks to offer sacrifices. If Christians, we are under grace, and it is of moment for us to be clear as to the position Christ has brought us into. There we are blessed in His presence; there, also, we are in possession of the precious things which are promised us. For, I repeat, it is not the promises which constitute our joy but Christ, in whom we have them all, Yea, and Amen, in virtue of the work which has been wrought and accepted; and we can be strangers and pilgrims.

May God strengthen us more and more in the consciousness of His love, which has saved us, and brings us into His presence to enjoy all that He is for us. Then Christ will be the object of all our thoughts. May we have it simple and settled before us, that it is no more ourselves that live, but Christ that liveth in us, that nothing is wanting to the accomplishment of the requirements of God, and that our position is based upon His love.

If by the law God tested fallen man as to ability and willingness *to do* His will, by the Gospel, he has tested him as to his ability and willingness *to suffer* His will. Under the law, man was *to give to* God; under the Gospel, man was *to receive from* God. But man, fallen, has neither heart, nor mind, nor will to have anything to do with God. He will not have Him as *the end* of his being, nor will he have Him as *its source*. When Grace prevails to save a soul, it soon becomes evident that *the source* precedes *the end*, and that "All my springs are in Thee" must precede "Lo, I come to do Thy will, Oh God!"

No. XII.

THE CHILD OF THE BRIDECHAMBER.

Matt. ix. 9—17.

THE conversion of Matthew, the publican, will not, I believe, be fully enjoyed, if we do not continue with it in our view to the end of ver. 17. For I regard Matthew as being at that moment in the thoughts of the Lord, a new bottle with the new wine in it.

The Lord met him in the place where the world had put him. He was a publican, and was sitting at the receipt of custom. But He passed by, and it was “a day of power,” and Matthew was “made willing.” He “hearkened diligently” to Christ, and his soul at once “delighted itself in fatness.” For he arose and followed the Lord, and then spread a feast for Him.

This was joy and liberty. And Jesus sanctioned it. He sat at Matthew’s table. This was done suddenly, it is true. But though *sudden* it was not *premature*—though *unbidden* it did not remain *unsanctioned*. The Eunuch, in his day, went on his way rejoicing, and that rejoicing, like this of Matthew, was early and sudden, but it was not premature.

And in Matthew there was light, and the mind of Christ, as well as liberty and the joy of Christ. He seated at the same table the publicans and sinners who had been following Jesus—the very people who had brought the Lord of Glory from heaven, and the very people whom the Lord Himself will have at His own table in the day of the marriage-supper; a company of sinners redeemed and washed in the blood of the Lamb.

Matthew thus justly and beautifully understood the mind of Christ. He *knew* Him, though he had but just then been introduced to Him. Like the dying

The Child of the Bridechamber.

121

thief. For a short moment is time enough to carry the light and liberty of Christ into the dark and distant heart of either a thief or a publican.

Matthew was in Christ's presence *in joy*. He was a child of the bridechamber. He feasted the Lord. The King was sitting at his table—because, in spirit, Jesus had already brought Matthew to His banqueting-house. This was the time of “the kindness of his youth,” or, “the love of his espousals”; and in that joy, he had risen up, left all, and followed Christ. The world might, therefore be to him, “a wilderness, a land not sown” (Jer. ii. 2); but with Jesus he feasted. The word of power, the invitation of grace, he had listened to, and to his soul it had been “a feast of fat things,” wine and milk of the King's providing. It was as a bridegroom, as a lover of his soul, Matthew had apprehended Christ, and was now entertaining Him at his table; and because of this new-found liberty and joy, Matthew is among the children of the bridechamber, a new bottle with the new wine in it.

Neither Moses, nor John the Baptist, could have made such a bottle as this. The word of Christ, heard in the light and energy of the Holy Ghost, could alone have provided it. On Him only, all the vessels of the Lord's house hang, the “flagons” and the “cups.” The Pharisees and the disciples of John do not even understand this. The one object to the feast *with sinners*—the other, that the feast is not a *fast*. The legalist and the religionist, neither of them, can brook the publican's that is the sinner's feast. The elder brother complains of the fatted calf. The music and the dancing, as the cheerful sound reaches him in his outside place, vex him—as the sight of the table and the company in the house of our Levi, irritates the Pharisees as they look on and will not sit.

The good Lord, however, vindicates both the feast and the guests. He lets be heard, there on the spot and at the moment, that He had come to gather such a scene. And He thereby vindicates the host as having done the part of a child of the bridechamber, and as having done it well.

A simple sweet story of grace! Would that one's heart realised the joy that the mind is tracing! Jesus found a publican, a sinner, just at his place in this wretched self-seeking world; he took him up at once, made him a new bottle, and filled him with new wine, like the Samaritan at Jacob's well. She was taken up just *as* she was, and *where* she was; and, as another child of the bridechamber, she was sent on her way rejoicing. The world will "fret itself," and "be driven to darkness," as the prophet speaks. The heart of the Pharisees is rent by vexation at such a sight. The publican's feast is lost upon them, the new wine is spilt; as the Lord adds, "No man putteth a piece of new cloth upon an old garment, for that which is put in to fill it up taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse: neither do men put new wine into old bottles, else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish."

But then, days of absence, and therefore days of sorrow of heart, were to come, after these feast-days of His presence; but they had not come *then*. That day in Matthew's house was "one of the days of the Son of Man." But the heart that can feast a present Jesus will mourn an absent Jesus. "The days will come when the Bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast." The children of the bridechamber will fast during the Bridegroom's absence, because He is dear to them. It is not the Pharisee's fast of religious service and merit, but the fast of a heart that has been weaned away from other objects, and for the present has lost the presence of its own.

The Wise Virgins are as children of the bridechamber, fasting while the Bridegroom has not as yet returned. The oil in their vessels tells us that they are waiting and watching for Him, with hearts separated to the desire of his return; and the Matthew who, upon the revelation of the Lord to His soul and in His presence, could spread a table, would be the Wise Virgin that would wait and watch, in separation and desire, during His absence. The oil in the vessel would well suit the soul that in other circumstances had spread the table.

The Child of the Bridechamber.

123

It is not from *experience*, but from *desire* only, one's heart traces the path of a child of the bridechamber. Of such a soul some of us will say, "I see from far the beauteous light." There are occasions and seasons when the state of the affections to Christ are sorrowfully discovered; and sure I am, we need a more *earnest* eye for Him. Our look at Him has need to be a nearer one, more fixed and personal. Our sight of Him is too commonly conducted as by the light of others. We are prone to have Him in *company*, in the reflections and by the help of the scene and circumstances in which we place ourselves. I covet a more *earnest* look at Him; a look that can reach Him very closely and personally, without aid, or countenance, or company. The single eye knows Him *only*, the earnest eye enjoys Him *deeply*.

Mary at the sepulchre had it, when she could pass by the shining ones, while looking for Him. The sinner of the city had it, when she could let the scorn of the Pharisee pass over her without moving her. The Samaritan had it, when she could forget her water-pot; and the Eunuch, when he went on heedless of the loss of Philip. Our Matthew had it. And it is this which not only *realizes* Christ, but puts Him in His due supreme place, and *chief room both of attraction and authority*.

 EXTRACT.

I have sometimes, latterly, been so longing to be away, home, that I have feared it might be somewhat a kind of unwillingness to work, but yet it was accompanied with the wish to finish whatever the Lord had given me to do. Everything marks the near approach of the end; what an amazing source of joy. It will be indeed rest. This feeling is often suppressed, by being absorbed in work, but in a moment's leisure (which sickness or other like causes give) bursts out afresh. If one cannot live *for* Christ, what has one to do but to live *with* him. Happy alternative of Grace!

N^o. XIII.CORRECTIONS OF THE TRANSLATION OF
SOME PASSAGES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.

- John 5: 24. 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 judgment*; but is passed from death unto life.
29. They that have done good, *unto* the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, to the resurrection of *judgment*.
- Acts 3: 19. Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, *so that* the times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.
- Rom. 1: 1. Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, *a called* apostle.
4. Declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, *by resurrection* from the dead.
7. To all that be in Rome beloved of God, *saints by calling* ("called saints" is ambiguous).
17. Therein is the righteousness of God revealed *in the way of faith* to faith.
- 2: 14. These having *no law*, are a law to themselves.
23. Thou *that boastest thyself in law*, through breaking the law, dishonourest thou God?
- 3: 20. Therefore *by works of law* there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for *by law* is the knowledge of sin.
21. But now *apart from law*, the righteousness of God is manifested.
22. The righteousness of God by faith of Jesus Christ, *as to all (towards or for all)* and upon all them that believe.
30. Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision *in the way of faith*, and the uncircumcision *by faith*.
31. Do we then make void *law by faith*? God forbid: yea, we establish *law*.
- 4: 12. And the father of circumcision, *not only to those who are of the circumcision, but to those also* who walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised.
- Rom. 5: 1. Therefore, *having been justified* by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Corrections of some passages in the New Testament. 125

- Rom. 5: 11. We also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the *reconciliation*.
18. Therefore, as *by one offence* (or by [the] offence of one) *towards all to condemnation*; even so *by one accomplished act of righteousness toward all* unto justification of life.
20. Moreover *law entered*, that the offence might abound.
- 6: 7. For he that is dead *is justified* (or *cleared*) from sin.
- 7: 1. I speak to them that *know law*.
6. But now we are delivered from the law, *being dead in that in which* we were held.
20. Now if I do that which *I* would not (*I* emphatic) it is no more *I* that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.
24. Who shall deliver me from *this body of death*.
- 8: 11. He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies *because of his Spirit* that dwelleth in you.
- 20, 21. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected it, *in hope that the creature* itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into *the liberty of the glory* of the children of God.
27. He maketh intercession for the saints *according to God*.
28. *But we know* that all things work together for good, etc.
33. Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?
34. *It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth?*
35. *It is Christ that died Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?* Shall tribulation, etc.
- 9: 9. *For this word is of promise*, at this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son.
32. For they stumbled at *the stumbling-stone*; as it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumbling-stone.
- 10: 4. For Christ is [the] end *of law* for righteousness, to every one that believeth.
- 11: 31. *Even so have these now not believed in your mercy, that they might be objects of mercy*.
- 14: 22. Happy is he that *judgeth not* himself in that thing which he alloweth.
- 15: 12. In Him shall the Gentiles *hope* (to connect it with the God of *hope*, see ver. 13).
- 16: 26. According to the revelation of the mystery which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest, and by *prophetic Scriptures* made known unto all nations.
- 1 Cor. 2: 13. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth; but which the Holy Ghost teacheth, *communicating spiritual things by spiritual means*.

Corrections of the Translation of some

- 1 Cor. 3: 9. *For we are co-labourers of God: ye are God's husbandry; ye are God's building.*
- 4: 4. For I know nothing of *myself* ("by myself" is antiquated).
- 7: 36. But if any man think that he behaveth himself unseemly toward his *virgin state*, if he pass the flower of his age.
37. That he will *keep his virgin state*.
38. So then *he that marrieth himself* doeth well; but *he that marrieth not himself* doeth better.
- 9: 21. To them that are without law, as without law, being not without law to God, *but subject to Christ, or under law to Christ*.
- 10: 6. Now these things were *figures of us*.
- 11: 25. This cup is the *new covenant* in my blood.
29. He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh *judgment* to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.
- 12: 1. Now concerning *spiritual manifestations* (or *powers*), brethren, I would not have you ignorant.
- 14: Leave out, throughout the chapter, the word "unknown" before "tongue."
- 15: 20 to 28. Read in parenthesis.
- 2 Cor. 2: 5. But if any have caused grief, *he hath not grieved me, but, that I may not charge you, in a measure all of you*.
- 3: 7—16. Read in parenthesis.
18. *But we all, contemplating* (or *looking at*) *the glory of the Lord with unveiled face*, are changed into the same image.
- 4: 6. *For (it is) the God who spoke the light to shine out of darkness who has shone in our hearts, for the shining forth of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.* ("Spoke the light to shine," is not quite English; but "commanded" is weak. "God said let there be light, and there was light," is referred to. "He *spake* and it was done.")
- 5: 10. For we must all *be manifested* before the judgment-seat of Christ.
17. Therefore if any man be in Christ *there is a new creation*.
20. As though God did *beseech by us, we pray in Christ's stead be reconciled to God*.
- 6: 8, 9. *As deceivers and true, as unknown and well known.*
10. *As sorrowful but always rejoicing, as poor but making many rich, as having nothing and possessing all things.*
- 10: 13. But we will not boast of things without measure, but *according to the measure of the rule which the God of measure has distributed to us to reach even unto you*.

- 2Cor. 13: 3—5. Since ye seek a proof of Christ's speaking in me (which.....toward you) Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith.
- Gal. 1: 6, 7. I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ to a *different gospel*, which is not another.
- 2: 2—4. Read ver. 3, in parenthesis. In ver. 3, it is better to read "*Neither was Titus*, who was with me, being a Greek, compelled to be circumcised."
10. Only they would that we should remember the poor, the same also which *I have been diligent in*.
17. But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, *then is Christ the minister of sin*.
19. For I, *through law*, am *dead to law*, that I might live unto God.
- 3: 10. For as many as are of *works of law* are under the curse.
11. But that no man is justified, *through law*, in the sight of God, is evident.
16. Now to Abraham *were the promises made and to his seed*.
17. The covenant that was confirmed before of God to *Christ*.
18. For if the inheritance be *of law*, it is no more of promise.
21. If there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been *by law*.
23. But before faith came we were kept *under law*.
- 4: 21. Tell me, ye that desire to be *under law*, do ye not hear the law?
26. But Jerusalem, which is above, is free, which is *our mother* (a different reading).
- 5: 18. But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not *under law*.
- Eph. 1: 7, 8. According to the riches of his grace, *which he has caused to abound toward us* in all wisdom and prudence.
- 9, 10. According to his good pleasure, which he hath purposed in Himself, *for the administration of the fulness of times* [namely] *to head up all things in Christ*.
12. That we should be to the praise of His glory who *pre-trusted in Christ*.
- 2: 14. Hath broken down the middle wall of partition (strike out "between us").
15. To make in himself of twain one new man *making peace* (strike out "so").
- 3: 15. Of whom *every family* in heaven and earth is named.
19. And to know the love of Christ that passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled [even] *unto all the fulness of God*.

128 *Corrections of the Translation of some*

- Eph. 4: 12. For the perfecting of the saints [with a view] to the work of ministry.
- 5: 1. Be ye therefore *imitators of God* as dear children.
13. *For that which makes all things manifest is light.*
30. For we are members of His body [we are] of His flesh, and of His bones.
- 6: 12. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against *the spiritual [powers] of wickedness or of evil in the heavenlies* (or *heavenly places*): and so i. 3; ii. 6; iii. 10.
- Phil. 1: 7. Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, *because you have me in your heart.*
22. But if I live in the flesh, *this is worth the while.*
- 2: 6. Who being in the form of God, *did not count it an object of plunder* (i.e. as Adam) to be equal with God.
17. Yea, and if I be *poured out as a libation* on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all.
- 3: 11. If by any means I may attain unto *the resurrection from among the dead.*
14. I press toward the mark for the prize of *the calling of God in Christ Jesus on high*; or, *calling (up) on high of God.*
20. From whence also *we look for the Lord Jesus Christ [as] Saviour.*
21. Who shall *change the body of our humiliation that it may be fashioned like the body of his glory: or, our body of humiliation like His body of glory.*
- Col. 1: 19. *For all the fulness was pleased to dwell in Him*; or, *It pleased all the fulness to dwell in Him.*
- 2: 20. If ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why as *though alive* in the world are ye subject to ordinances.
- 1 Th. 4: 6. That no man go beyond or defraud his brother *in the matter*—(a euphemism for what concerns carnal lusts).
14. Them also which *have fallen asleep through Jesus*, will God bring with him. (At any rate “fallen asleep through Jesus,” may be a question).
16. The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with *an assembling shout*. (It was the cry to the scattered rowers, or hoop to gather to their ports and place).
- 2 Th. 1: 8. In flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, *and on them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.*
- 2: 2. That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, *as that the day of Christ were present.*

Passages in the New Testament.

129

- 2 Th. 2: 6. And now ye know *that which holds back* (or *restrains*.)
 7. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work;
only there is the holder back (or *restrainer*) till he
 be taken out of the way.
 8. Whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of
 his mouth, and shall destroy *with the appearing*
of his coming (or *presence*).
- 1 Tim. 1: 17. *Now to the king of ages, the incorruptible*, invisible
 only wise God.
 2: 3. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of *our*
Saviour God.
 4: 10. We trust in the living God who is *the preserver of all*
men, especially of those that believe.
- 2 Tim. 1: 10. Who hath abolished death, and hath brought *life*
and incorruptibility to light by the gospel.
 2: 6. The husbandman *labouring first must be partaker of*
the fruits: i.e., he must first labour in order to
 partake.
- Titus 2: 13. Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious ap-
 pearing of *our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ*.
 14. And purify unto himself *a people of [his] possession*.
- Philemon. 6. That *the fellowship of thy faith* may become effectual
 etc.
- Heb. 1: 2. Hath in these last days spoken to us *in [the person*
of] Son, or as Son.
 2: 5. Unto the angels hath he not put in subjection *the*
habitable earth which is to be, or, the coming world.
 14. That through death he might *annul* him that had
 the power of death.
 16. He *took not up* [the cause of] *angels*; but *he took up*
 [that of] the seed of Abraham.
- 3: 1, 2. Consider the Apostle and High Priest of our pro-
 fession, Christ *Jesus, faithful* to him that ap-
 pointed him.
 3. For *He* was counted worthy of more glory than
 Moses.
 16. *For who when they had heard provoked? Was it not*
all who came out of Egypt by Moses? (This is in
 part a question of an accent, and hence may be
 more than usually subject to the spiritual ques-
 tion of its import).
- 4: 3. For we which have believed [*are those who*] *enter* into
 rest.
 5: 10. *Addressed of God* [as] high priest after the order of
 Melchizedec.
 14. But *solid meat* belongeth to them that are of full age.
 7: 3. Without father, without mother, *ungenealogied*.
 18. For *verily there is* a disannulling of the command-
 ment going before, for the weakness and unprofit-
 ableness thereof (for the law *perfected nothing*)
and the bringing in of a better hope, by the which
 we draw nigh to God.

130 *Corrections of the Translation of some*

- Heb. 7: 22. By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better *covenant*.
- 9: 8. The way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, *while yet the first tabernacle had its standing*.
- 15, 16, 17. For this cause, He is the mediator of the new *covenant*, that by means of death for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first *covenant*. (16, 17. "Testament" remains), but the two verses are in parenthesis. In ver. 18, "testament" may either be simply left out, or be changed into *covenant*. Ver. 20. "This is the blood of the *covenant*."
26. But now once in *the consummation of the ages*; or, *the completion of the ages*.
28. Unto them who look for Him shall He appear the second time *apart from sin* unto salvation.
- 12: 2. Looking unto Jesus *the leader [in] and finisher of faith*.
- 22, 23. And to an innumerable company of angels, *the universal assembly, and to the Church of the first-born* which are written in heaven.
- 13: 7, 8. Remember *them who have led you*, who have spoken unto you the word of God; whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.
8. *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever*.
17. Obey *your leaders*; or, *those who lead you*.
- James 3: 1. My brethren be not many *teachers*.
- 4: 5. The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth *enviously*.
- 1 Pet. 1: 2. Unto *the obedience* and sprinkling of blood of Jesus Christ.
9. Receiving the end of your faith, *the salvation of souls*.
- 2: 7. Unto you, therefore, *is the preciousness, who believe*.
- 3: 20. Wherein few, that is eight souls, were preserved through [the] water.
- 4: 1. He that hath suffered in his flesh, *is at rest from sin*.
18. And if the righteous are *difficultly* saved.
- 5: 3. *Not as ruling over heritages, but as models of the flock*.
13. *She* that is at Babylon [*your*] fellow elect, saluteth you.
- 2 Pet. 1: 3. This verse it is impossible to translate, there being no verb in it; but it gives the fuller sense, because the presence of divine power is the thing given, and which gives (according to) every thing of his divine power, which is for life and piety [which power is] given to us through the knowledge of Him that hath called us by glory and virtue. It is not simply every thing which is for life and piety, but it is every thing of His divine

Passages in the New Testament.

131

power which relates to that ; but it is not these things that are given to us, but the divine power as that which begets them ; which power we have by the heart-knowledge (*ἐπιγνώσεως*) of Him that has called us, etc. "Christ dwells in our hearts by faith ;" but "divine power *has given*," is another thing from divine power livingly in us.

- 2Pet.1: 19. We have *also the word of prophecy more sure (confirmed)*.
 20. No prophecy of Scripture *interprets itself by itself*.
 3: 12. Looking for and *hastening the coming* of the day of God.
 1John 1: 2. And we have *seen and bear witness* and show to you that eternal life.
 2: 2. And He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but *also for the whole world*.
 13. I write unto you *young children*, because ye have known the father.
 18. *Young children* it is the last time.
 24. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall *abide* in you, you also shall *abide* in the Son and in the Father.
 28. And now little children abide in him, that when he shall appear we may have confidence, *and not be put to shame by him*, at his coming.
 3: 1. Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us that we should be called *children of God*.
 2. Beloved, now are we *children of God*.
 3. And every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself even as he is pure.
 16. *Hereby know we love*, because he laid down his life for us.
 24. He that keepeth His commandments *abideth* in Him.
 4: 2. Every spirit that confesseth *Jesus Christ come in flesh* is of God.
 5: 11. This is *the witness* that God hath given to us eternal life.
 20. In his son Jesus Christ. *He is* the true God and eternal life.
 2 John 7. Many deceivers are entered into the world *who confess not Jesus Christ coming in flesh*.
 Jude 8. Likewise also *these dreamers* defile the flesh, etc.

N^o. XIV.

JOHN.

THE Gospel of John has a peculiar character, as every Christian perceives. It does not present the birth of Christ in this world, looked at as the Son of David. It does not trace His genealogy back to Adam, in order to bring out His title of Son of Man. It does not exhibit the Prophet who, by His testimony, accomplished the service of his Father, in this respect, here below. It is neither His birth, nor the commencement of His Gospel, but His existence before the beginning of everything that had a beginning. "In the beginning *was the Word.*" In short, it is the glory of the person of Jesus, the Son of God, above all dispensation—a glory developed in many ways in grace, but which is always itself. It is that which He is; but making us share in all the blessings that flow from it, when He is so manifested as to impart them.

The first chapter asserts what He was, before all things; and the different characters in which He is a blessing to man, being made flesh. He is, and He is the expression of, the whole mind that subsists in God, the *λογος*. In the beginning He was. If we go back as far as is possible to the mind of man, how far soever beyond all that has had a beginning,—He is. This is the most perfect idea we can form, historically, if I may use such an expression, of the existence of God. "In the beginning *was the Word.*" Was there nothing beside? Impossible. Of what would He have been the Word? "The Word was *with* God." That is to say, a personal existence is ascribed to Him. But lest it might be thought that He was something which eternity implies, but which the Holy Ghost comes to reveal, it is said that He "was God." In His existence eternal; in His nature divine; in His person distinct; He might have been

spoken of as an emanation in time, as though His personality was of time, although eternal in His nature,—the Spirit therefore adds, “In the beginning He was with God.” It is the revelation of the eternal *Λόγος* before all creation. This Gospel therefore really begins before Genesis. The Book of Genesis gives us the history of the world, in time; John gives us that of the Word, who existed in eternity before the world was; who—when man can speak of beginning—*was*; and, consequently, did not begin to exist. The language of the Gospel is as plain as possible; and, like the sword of paradise, turns every way, in opposition to the thoughts and reasonings of man, to defend the divinity of the Son of God.

By Him, also, were all things created. There are things which had a beginning—they all had their origin from Him. “All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made.” Precise, positive, and absolute distinction between all that has been made and Jesus. If anything has been made, it is not the Word; for all that has been made, was made by that Word.

But there is another thing besides the supreme act of creating all things (an act that characterizes the Word), there is that which was in Him. All creation was made by Him; but it does not exist in Him,—but in Him was life. By this He was in relation with an especial part of creation, a part which was the object of the thoughts and intentions of God. This life shone among men, was the light of men, revealed itself as a testimony to the divine nature, in immediate connection with them, as it did not with respect to any others at all. But, in fact, this light shone in the midst of that which was in its own nature^a contrary to it, and which, therefore,

^a It is not here my object to develop the manner in which the Word meets the errors of the human mind; but, in fact, as it reveals truth on God's part, it also replies, in a remarkable way, to all the mistaken thoughts of man. With respect to the Lord's person, the first verses of the chapter bear witness to it. Here the error which made of the principle of darkness a second god, in equal conflict with the good Creator, is refuted by the

parts of the truth, we have a precious sustainment of faith given to us, when all that belongs to the body of testimony may fail. Jesus, personally the object of faith, in whom we know God; the life itself of God, reproduced in us, as being quickened by Christ. This is forever true, and this is eternal life, if we were alone, without the Church, on earth; and it leads us over its ruins, in possession of that which is essential, and of that which will abide for ever. The government of God will decide all the rest. Only it is our privilege and duty to maintain Paul's part of the testimony of God, as long as through grace we can.

Remark also that the work of Peter and Paul is that of gathering together, whether it be the circumcision or the Gentiles. John is conservative—maintaining that which is essential in eternal life. He relates the judgment of God in connection with the world, but as a subject that is outside his own relations with God, which are given as an introduction and exordium to the Apocalypse. He follows Christ when Peter is called, because although Peter was occupied, as Christ had been, with the call of the Jews, John—without being called to that work—followed Him on the same ground. The Lord explains it as we have seen.

Vers. 24 and 25 are a kind of inscription on the book. John has not related all that Jesus did, but that which revealed Him as everlasting Life. As to His works, they could not be numbered.

Here, thanks be to God, are these four precious books laid open, as far as God has enabled me to do so, in their great principles. Meditation on their contents in detail, I must leave to each individual heart, assisted by the mighty operation of the Holy Ghost. For if studied in detail, one might almost say with the Apostle, that the world would not contain the books that should be written. May God in His grace lead souls into the enjoyment of the inexhaustible streams of grace and truth in Jesus which they contain!

No. XV.

HEAVEN: THY DWELLING-PLACE.

(AS KNOWN IN THE OLD TESTAMENT.)

FEW of us know the extent to which prejudice acts, at the present moment, upon our own minds, to hinder us in our progress in truth. There is the prejudice of the old nature against the truth, which nothing but divine power and grace can subdue; but, besides this, there is the prejudice of "our present views," which may be the furniture of education, or the results of the opinion common to the day we live in. In this last case, much might be done by us toward obtaining *liberty*. Let a man, for instance, just take for granted that he is master of a subject, and he will *judge* all he reads upon it according to his own thoughts of it; but let him grant that he has to study the subject *anew*, and he will then search the scriptures to see, not only whether the things he has heard or received upon a given subject are so or not, but he will search the blessed book in hopes to have his own views, however correct they may be, enlarged, according to the measure of the Divine standard of truth. And O how poor, and how feeble, is the measure which the best taught of us has yet received, when that measure is seen in the light and presence of the eternal fullness which is at the fountain-source!

To present one prejudice, which is common and hurtfully injurious, I might name notions current about *heaven*.

We have heard of heaven (blessed, blessed place!) from the cradle; but what do we know of it as taught by the word of the Lord? Men talk of heaven as though any one, every one, could go there, and without a passport too—as though man had originally been created for heaven, and not for earth—as though it were not writ-

ten, "the heaven, even the heavens, are the Lord's; but the earth hath He given to the children of men" (Psa. cxv. 16). Again, it is quietly assumed that heaven *was* the subject of revelation, from Gen. i. 1; and that every one knows all about it. And what, really, has been the result, but that many a Christian now-a-days knows as little of heaven, as it was possible for a godly patriarch or a godly Jew to have known about it.

Aaron—what could he have told us about the temple of Solomon? Nought; but he knew all about the tabernacle, for that was revealed to *him*, and stood before him; his privilege and his responsibility were therein. Solomon—what could he have told about the true tabernacle, which the Lord has pitched, and not man (Hebrews)? Nought; but about the temple, much every way. Could Saul, the persecutor—could the Hebrews, as such—have written the Epistle to the Hebrews? No. It and such truth was *new* truth, not given till Paul's day—truth in which our privileges and responsibilities are hidden. Do we know these things as taught by Paul, etc.?

To what extent was "heaven" written about in the Old Testament? To what extent did Old-Testament saints participate in the light which New-Testament scripture gives to us upon heaven, and that which pertains to heaven?

Such is the subject which I would place before my reader, as being at present before my own mind, to inquire upon from scripture.

I turn at once to the book^a and its testimony.

In Gen. i. we read, that "in the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth; and called the firmament (in the which the lights of the sun and moon were set) heaven; and that the fowl of the heaven (or air)

^a If the word "heaven" occurs five hundred times in the Old Testament, there are not more than ninety occurrences in which it in any way refers to the heaven which is the dwelling-place of God; the more common sense being the firmament, or the atmosphere. A reference to a Concordance will prove this. I shall, of course, have to turn, almost at once, to these ninety exceptional passages.

were part of His creation." These passages precede our being introduced into the paradise of Eden—a scene in which the first Adam, a living soul, was placed in a garden, with everything in it calculated to minister to *his* delight and joy—a scene where the Lord God was not always manifestly revealed, but an occasional visitant. It was not the place of His residence, nor the place of residence of the second Adam, the Lord from heaven, the paradise of God.

I turn now to places which point to heaven in a higher sense.

1. Gen. xiv. 19, 20: "Melchisedek, the priest of the most high God, said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth: and blessed be the most high God."

In the expression, "*possessor* of heaven and earth," we get nothing more than was known, perhaps, before, or might be supposed to have been known. If the rendering of "the most high God" is to be changed to "El of the (place) above," we do get an intimation, certainly, that God is "of the heavens." I do not say that it is so, but it may be so; and then the intimation of a place more connected with God than the heavens and earth of this world, was made sooner than it has been generally supposed was the case. But even then there is here no *opening* of the place, heaven, as the residence of God, any more than in other passages to which we shall shortly come; no call thence or thereunto; no title to us to enter it; no communication to us of its hopes, blessings, and powers.

2. Chap. xxi. 17: "The angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven What aileth thee, Hagar? fear not; for God hath heard the voice of the lad where he is."

Chap. xxii. 11, 12: "And the angel of the Lord called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I. And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him."

And ver. 15: He "called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time, and said, By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son; that in bless-

ing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea-shore," etc.

I notice these passages as being cases in which a *call came out of heaven*, in some sense or other. The first was to Hagar, about her apparently dying boy, Ishmael; the second and the third were to Abraham, about Isaac, and about the reward for his own surrender of him up to God. Neither of them open to us (so far as I see) that which is above the clouds; both bring before us the character of Him, in one way or the other, who always acts worthily of Himself, whether He be carrying out a plan for earth, or a plan for heaven itself.

3. Chap. xxiv. 2, 3, 7: "And Abraham said to his eldest servant of his house I will make thee swear by the Lord, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell. The Lord God of heaven, which took me from my father's house . . . He shall send His angel before thee."

This citation is important. Abraham binds his servant by an oath before the God of the heaven and of the earth; but he speaks of Him only as "the Lord God of heaven," when his own call was in question. Abraham had a double blessing, as father of the faithful: First, his personal call was from idolatry unto God, the living God; Secondly, he became a sort of head of the channel of testimony, God's testimony, upon earth. The first recognised father, "of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever, Amen" (Rom. ix. 5), the adoption and the glory and the covenants were his. The first clearly tangible argument in proof of resurrection, the resurrection of the body, that is on record, is found in Abraham's history (compare Gen. xv. 6—8, 13, 15, and Acts vii. 3, 5). Abraham's faith refers to God as the God of heaven; and in the New Testament, where the Spirit of Christ is reviewing Abraham's course (called to go out into a place which he should afterwards receive for an inheritance, he obeyed—went out, not knowing whither—

sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country; dwelling in tabernacles, as heir of the promise), He adds (light which is not found in the Old Testament), that the city which he looked for is one which hath foundations, whose "builder and maker is God" (Heb. xi. 10).

And again, He speaks of a class thus: "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on earth." And then adds His explanation of their conduct—not necessarily what they understood in their own minds, but that which He saw to be in the spirit and faith which governed them—"They that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for He hath prepared for them a city."

There are things of which, if we would be well taught in scripture, we must discern the difference; *e. g.* faith in an individual believer laying hold of a promise of God, and God's estimate of the value of that faith; again, faith and the object on which faith acts are distinguishable; so again, while there is a connection between the least promise God has given, and the fullness of the glory of His Christ before Him, there is also a gradual development of light, from the beginning of man's history after the fall, down to the time of life and immortality being brought to light by the gospel, which must not be forgotten (compare, also, Deut. iii. 24; iv. 36, 39). In John xvii., all that the Lord said to His Father about the disciples, was truth itself; but it was truth according to the estimate of them made by Him, who saw them in the light of His Father's love, and not according to their feelings, thoughts, and experience. There is a great principle involved in this.

4. Gen. xxviii. 12: "And he (Jacob) dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it. And, behold, the Lord stood

above it, and said, I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac," etc.

This was a dream: it presented heaven opened; the Lord God of the patriarchs in heaven, and His messengers ascending and descending by the ladder. The ladder descended to El Bethel, *in the land*. There the heavens will meet the earth during the millennial glory, the new Jerusalem being let down from heaven toward Jerusalem upon the earth (Isa. iv. 5, 6); and El Bethel falls within "the holy oblation" of that day's division of the land, and not far from the new site of the temple (Ezek. xlvi. 8—20). The God who had planned such a glory to come (John i. 51), would surely care for all the needs of the pilgrims to whom He revealed it—needs, alas! oft, like Jacob's, the fruit of evil, and of walking carelessly at a distance from God—needs, alas! too, which absorbed a larger place in his mind than the glory he had seen—needs about which he was for driving a bargain with the God of glory, instead of receiving the glory of God, the manifestation of which to him clearly proved that all his needs would be cared for.

5. Deut. x. 14: "Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens is the Lord's thy God, the earth also."

This introduces to us plainly a new thought. There are not only the earth and the heaven, but *also* "the heaven of heavens."

The expression is remarkable, and recurs, as in 1 Kings viii. 27, where Solomon says, in his prayer: "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee; how much less this house that I have builded" (and 2 Chron. vi. 18). See also the same expression, 2 Chron. xi. 6 (5), in Solomon's message to Hiram.

Nehemiah also uses the same expression (ix. 6): "Thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens."

David also (Ps. lxxviii. 33, 34) praises "Him that rideth upon the heaven of heavens, which were of old."

And again (Ps. cxlviii. 4) he says: "Praise Him, ye heaven of heavens."

I only remark here, 1st, that this is a truth distinct from the truth of the heavens; and, 2ndly, that the

place spoken of is not explained, or any details of it given to us. To see the *outside* of the palace of the King of kings, and to know the *inside*, or the glory which pertains to Him as such, are very different things.

6. Deut.xi.21: "The land which the Lord sware unto your fathers to give them, as the days of heaven upon the earth."

This doubtless will lead the mind back to Jacob's dream, and the fulfilment which is yet to come, according to John i.51. Other passages also come to the mind, such as: "But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord" (Numb.xiv.21; comp. Ps.lxxii.19. See also Isa.iv.2—5; the last eight chapters of Ezekiel; Hab.ii.14, etc.).

7. Deut.xxvi.15: "Look down from Thy holy habitation, from heaven, and bless thy people."

This is part of the appeal to be made by Israel when come in unto the land which the Lord his God should give him, with the offering of the basket of first-fruits. It is the more to be remarked upon as being found in the book of Deuteronomy, which book contains the exposition of the divine principles by the which Israel could and shall inherit the land; viz., the principles connected with the obedience of faith, when they could not inherit it upon the principle of their own obedience, energy, and doings.

8. Deut.xxx.11, 12: The obedience of faith.

"This commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that thou shouldst say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldst say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it."

Honey shut up in the hive was here, but honey shut up in the dark. One of the dark sayings, full as a mine of crystals, all ready to sparkle and reflect the light when it should be brought in, but unintelligible by the human mind till the light was brought. Read the citation

again, and set it in contrast with that version of it which Paul gave (Rom. x.). He (Paul) takes it as the precious setting of gold prepared for three most brilliant gems he had to fix. These were the three brilliants: "to bring Christ down from above;" "to bring Christ again from the dead;" and "the word of faith which we preach."^b

9. "The Lord your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath" (Josh. ii. 11; comp. 2 Chron. xx. 6). A strong strength-giving thought and truth to oppose to all and to every difficulty!

In Josh. ii. 11 it is found in the mouth of Rahab, the poor harlot of Jericho, and is part of her confession to the spies she was hiding. O what an energetic thing is faith! and how intelligent a one, too. A poor harlot in the doomed city of Jericho, spite of the fog resting on it, could see by faith whereabouts the living God was, and what He was about to do; yea, weigh up, try it, the chances of the day, and see how to give up all, and to throw herself upon her country's enemy, that she might save all.

The second reference is from the prayer of Jehoshaphat to the Lord against Ammon and Moab; and the Lord hearkened and heard, and gave a great victory, without any battle, to Judah, Jerusalem, and Jehoshaphat.

There are Divine names which are above failure; blessed to know them, and to find that the waters flow forth when we use them, wherever we may be, and however fallen from our proper place and standing: such is that title—The God of Heaven.

10. In the dedication of the temple (1 Kings viii.), we

^b "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them. But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" (Rom. x. 4—9).

Heaven: Thy Dwelling-Place.

261

find Solomon spreading forth his hands towards heaven (ver.22), and repeatedly referring to God as the God of heaven. This is much to be noticed, because it shows that faith did not limit God to His then manifestation of His testimony; but, if it could not pierce the clouds to see *what* lay inside, it knew *WHO* was there, even He whose glory the heaven and heaven of heavens could not contain; and knew how, also, to set the present blessing down here in the presence of that higher glory, and how to use that higher glory as an aid for man failing in his portion down here. Let us see this:—

Ver. 27: “Behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee; how much less this house that I have builded. Yet have respect unto the prayer of Thy servant, and to his supplication . . . that Thine eyes may be open towards this house night and day, even toward the place of which Thou hast said, My name shall be there; that Thou mayest hearken unto the prayer which Thy servant shall make toward this place . . . and to the supplication of Thy people Israel, when they shall pray toward this place: and hear Thou in heaven Thy dwelling-place; and when thou hearest, forgive.”

Thus does Solomon place the house he had built in the presence of heaven. *What* lay inside of heaven he knew not; *WHO* was there he did know, even He who was Creator and Upholder of all things, and the God of Israel, Judge and Governor of the whole earth. And then, “Hear Thou in heaven” is reiterated in various connections as to the Israelite honouring the house built: as ver. 32, for confirming an oath; ver. 34, for the rendering confession and prayer efficacious in a day of judgment; so ver. 35, 36, 39; so ver. 43, for the rendering acceptable the prayer of a stranger not an Israelite; for Israel in the day of battle, ver. 45, and for the day of captivity, ver. 49. Compare 2 Chron. vi. 13, 21, 23, 25, 26, 27, 30, 33, 35, 39.

These passages are deeply interesting, but they show only, as has been said, that heaven was recognised as the dwelling-place of Him who had set up a testimony upon earth, and could uphold it. They do not show heaven

opened, nor the glory of the Heavenly One displayed as such. Comp. 2 Chron. xxx. 27; xxxii. 20.

11. In the next passage one saw a man going up into heaven.

“And it came to pass as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. And Elisha saw it, and he cried, My father, my father! the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof. And he saw him no more” (2 Kings ii. 11).

What a different thing is Christ seen ascending (in Acts i.) till a cloud received Him out of their sight, from Christ looking down from heaven upon Stephen, shewing to him, and sustaining him by, His glory and sympathy.

These wheels, the last glimpse of which was caught as they entered heaven, carried off from the prophet his head; and he himself had to turn back to service upon earth and amid trial.

12. The next passage I will cite is 2 Chron. xxxvi. 23: “Thus saith Cyrus, king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth hath the Lord God of heaven given me; and He hath charged me to build Him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all His people? The Lord his God be with him, and let him go up” (see, also, Ezra i. 2). Darius, likewise (Ezra vi. 9, 10), and so, also, Artaxerxes (Ezra vii. 12, 21, 23, 23). And faith in Ezra recognized, and avowed before all, that God was the God of heaven, and that they were His servants, though cast in judgment for sin out of His heritage upon earth (chap. v. 11, 12). And it was blessed indeed, when all that could be broken up down here was indeed broken up, yet to find that they could look to the gate of heaven, calling upon Him they knew, who was known to be inside it; and though they saw Him not, yet could they be assured of His help. Very blessed! though how short of that which we are called to enjoy, according to the epistle of Paul to the Hebrews; for we have heaven opened upon us, and the blessings of Him who in His own home is more than Creator, Up-

holder, Judge of all, and Head of government for the earth, for to us He is revealed as Father and God of our Lord Jesus Christ.

13. Nehemiah i.4: "I prayed before the God of heaven . . . O Lord God of heaven," etc.

Such was Nehemiah's conduct when seeking help from God. And (chap. ii.4), when alarmed at the king's rebuke to him, he says, "So I prayed to the God of heaven, and I said to the king;" and so (ver. 20) he refuses the help of the strangers of the God of heaven, whose servant He was, to aid in building, etc.

Surely the God-of-Israel's faithful servants ought not, then, to have had to speak of him as the God of heaven. Nothing but sin and its judgments hindered their being able to say, "God that dwelleth between the Cherubim." But if man's sin had driven Him thence from among them to the distance, if He had retired to His place to consider and see the end, there He was in heaven, and there He would in grace hear the cry of the needy.

14. Job says (chap. xvi. 19), "My witness is in heaven, and my record is on high."

Eliphaz, also (chap. xxii. 12, 14), recognizes God as being in heaven, and walking in the circuit of heaven.

I note these passages the rather because they point out a time preceding Israel's Exodus, and therefore preceding the existence of the tabernacle. They come, too, from a quarter in which man is seen, not only without a written standard of truth, but apparently little possessed of the promises, such as even a Noah, an Abraham, etc., had.

15. Nowhere do we find a recognition of faith more distinct, that however man down here may have failed, and that God may not be displayed here on earth, yet that He may be found in heaven, than in the Psalms. But observe, it is only the outside of heaven that met faith's vision as God's hiding-place when retired from among man on account of man's sin. And the titles by which He is hailed throughout the book are limited to the revelations made of God to the earth—"Elohim," "Jehovah," "my King," etc.; but never once is there the curtain drawn aside, so as to show either that which

is in heaven, or the titles of glory, relationship, affection, and office proper to that place.

ii.4: "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall have them [the infidel faction] in derision" (compare Acts iv.25, 26, and Rev. xi.).

viii.1: "Thou hast set Thy glory^c above the heavens."

xi.4: "The Lord is in His holy temple, the Lord's throne is in the heavens."^d xiv.2: "He looked down from heaven"^e (compare xxxiii. 13).

xx.6: "He will hear from His holy heaven."

xxxvi.5: "Thy mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens."^f

l.6: "The heavens shall declare His righteousness"^g (a most deeply-interesting Psalm).

liii.2: "God looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, that did seek God."^h

lvii.3: "He shall send from heaven,ⁱ and save me from the reproach of him that would swallow me up."

"Be Thou exalted aboveⁱ the heavens; . . . let Thy glory be above all the earth" (ver. 5, 11).

lxxiii.25: "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee."

Such is the remnant's feeling when weaned, and taught to hang on God, the God of Israel.

lxxvi.8, 9: "Thou didst cause judgment to be heard from heaven; the earth feared and was still, when God arose to judgment, to save all the meek of the earth."

So shall it be sung in Judah and in Israel, when God's tabernacle is again in Salem, and His dwelling-place once more in Zion.

lxxx.14: "Return, we beseech Thee, O God of hosts;

^c "Jehovah's name in all the earth, His glory above the heavens," will be true in millennial blessedness.

^d This Psalm is the outcast remnant's answer to the wicked, who had tauntingly said, "Flee, sparrow, to your mountain."

^e This is the stay of the believing remnant, when the fool says in his heart, "No God," etc.

^f The same as note ^e.

^g Israel's future arraignment is found in this Psalm.

^h This, again, is as note ^e.

ⁱ What confidence faith in God Himself gives amid trials of the worst kind.

look down from heaven, and behold, and visit this vine."

Such a prayer will yet arise from the land of promise, when its inhabitants shall seek the Lord under the pressure of sorrow, given in Ps.lxxix.; and it will be followed by praise, as in Ps.lxxxv.

lxxxv.10, 11: "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other. Truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven."

lxxxix.2, 5: "I will sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever; with my mouth will I make known Thy faithfulness to all generations. For I have said, Mercy shall be built up for ever: Thy faithfulness shalt Thou establish in the very heavens" (ver.2). "The heavens shall praise Thy wonders, O Lord" (ver.5).

This Psalm, which closes one of the chapters into which, in Hebrew, the book of Psalms is divided, gives a wondrous explanation of Israel's hope, its springs of blessing.

cii.19: "From heaven did the Lord behold the earth, to hear the groaning of the prisoner," etc.

The verses 25—27, as applied, in Hebrews i.10, 12, to Christ, are the key to this most blessed portion of divine writ.

ciii.19: "The Lord hath prepared His throne in the heavens; His kingdom ruleth over all."

Poor David found it for himself, as we see in his hour of awful failure, in which he learnt the substance of this Psalm—how that mercy could triumph over David's self (2 Sam.xxiii.1—7), as well as it had previously enabled him to triumph over all his circumstances (2 Sam.xxii.).

cxv.3: "Our God is in the heavens."

This is Israel's answer to the heathen challenge, "Where is now your God?" Mark, also, especially, ver.6 of this Psalm: "The heaven, the heavens for the Lord: but the earth hath He given to the children of men," as it might be well rendered.

cxix.89: "For ever, O Lord, Thy word is settled in the heavens."

A principle of immense moment at all times, because

it involves much that is connected with Him who is the Word; and to the Jew, amid infidelity and scorning, it will be found to be all his strength.

cxxiii.1: "O Thou that dwellest in the heavens!"

When the soul is exceedingly filled with contempt, scorning, and pride, how blessed so to look up!

cxxxvi.6: "O give thanks unto the God of heaven; for His mercy endureth for ever!"

This is the last verse of that most remarkable Psalm, every verse of which ends with "His mercy endureth for ever!" It is a song of Israel restored, telling all its mercies, and that in the day, too, in which it will be its joy and glory to know that earthly glory is subordinate to heavenly; and that Christ, the Messiah, has, as Son of Man, a church, His bride, in heaven, even when, as King of Israel, the land shall be called Beulah, *married* to Jehovah.

cxxxix.8: "If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there."

This Psalm contains a mystery; but Jehovah everywhere, and knowing all things, is part of its blessed burden.

Let my reader quietly read over each of the Psalms quoted; the light thrown by the contexts on the citations will repay the trouble well.

16. Prov.viii.27: "When He prepared the heavens, I [Wisdom] was there."

The personal individuality of the Wisdom spoken of here utterly forbids intelligence to explain it by wisdom as an attribute. It is evidently, from John i.1—5, the Son, who was in the beginning with God—the Maker of the heavens and earth Himself.

Prov.xxx.4: "Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended? Who hath gathered the wind in His fists? Who hath bound the waters in a garment? Who hath established all the ends of the earth? *What is His name, and what is HIS SON'S name*, if thou canst tell?"

This ascending up into heaven, and this descending, must lead our minds, if taught in Rom.x. and Eph.iv. 8—10, to something more than the heavens and earth which now are, and shall be destroyed by fire; and so, I

think, must that query, to a Jewish mind so puzzling, "What is His name, *and what is His son's name*, if thou canst tell?"

17. Eccl.v.2: "Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few."

This book gives very much instruction as to the insufficiency of earth to afford satisfaction to the human heart. It points on (I cannot doubt it) to the time yet to come, when, if Israel will have all blessing on the earth that nature can enjoy, the earth will yet be directly under the government of Heaven itself. The Heavenly Man, and His heavenly human associates, are to have the habitable world to come in subjection, and to rule it under God.

Life and immortality were brought to light by the gospel—OUR gospel. Till it came, while creation and providence spake plainly of the Eternal Power and Godhead, and the government of God upon earth shewed His holiness and righteousness, and in types, sundry and various—from Abel's accepted lamb, down to all the types and shadows given in the tabernacle and temple—grace was presented; still, life and immortality were not presented in a way that men could understand them. Neither could man understand the grace and mercy which were needed and supposed in God making to Himself sons and daughters for the Father's house in heaven, communicating to them at the same time the divine nature, and making them to be heirs of God, and co-heirs with Christ—as a body, the dwelling-place of the Holy Ghost; and every member in particular, a member of the body of the Lord Jesus, a member of that body of which He now in glory is the avowed Head. Yet there, in Old Testament times, the heaven, the dwelling-place of God, was; and it was an eternal truth that He was Judge of man's actions here below, though man might not like it, or understand God's hidden plans, or the reality of his own fall and destiny.

18. We turn now briefly to the testimony of the prophets.

Isa.xiv.12—14: "How art thou fallen from heaven,

O Lucifer, son of the morning! . . . Thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the height of the clouds; I will be like the Most High."

As the prophet and the man of God oft spake words the import of which was beyond the reach of their own ken (1 Pet. i. 10—12), led thereunto and therein by the Spirit of God, who knew things to come; so, on the other hand, we oft find the children of wrath, the servants of Satan, saying things altogether beyond the measure of human intelligence. This may explain this portion in measure, and the correspondence between it and the portions found in Dan. xi. 45, and 2 Thess. ii. Satan knows his own mind and objects well enough to express them through a rebel prince's actions, and God knows enough of the heart and of Satan to read aloud those thoughts according to the real drift and tendency of them.

Isa. lxiii. 15: "Look down from heaven, and behold from the habitation of Thy holiness and of Thy glory."

Such is the pleading of a remnant in the latter day, amid inconsistencies which oblige it to add, "Doubtless Thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not: Thou, O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer: Thy name is from everlasting."

In the same context we find the reply: blessings immeasurable fill chap. lxv.; and then chap. lxvi. 1: "The heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest?" After which follows the arraignment of wickedness on the earth.

19. In JEREMIAH, one expression is very remarkable among the idolatrous of his day, who "would make cakes and burn incense *unto the queen of heaven*" (see vii. 18; xlv. 17, 18, 19).

In chap. iii. 41, of his Lamentations, he says: "Let us lift up our heart . . . unto God in the heavens;" and (ver. 50) till the Lord . . . behold from heaven." Poor fellow, he had that refuge like us, if all around was

dark: yet he could not see the details as we do of what is inside of heaven.

20. In EZEKIEL, we find once, and it is the only place, I think,^k which occurs in the Old Testament, the expression—"The heavens were opened" (chap. i. 1). It is connected with the departure of the glory from the temple.

21. DANIEL, when with his companions (chap. ii. 18), when alone (ver. 19); and when before Nebuchadnezzar (vers. 28, 37, 44), recognizes God as the "God of heaven."

Blessed comfort to him, who was a living witness, in his own experience, that Israel was become the tail, and had ceased to be the head by reason of unfaithfulness! Yet how blessedly does this Nazarite-soul walk with God as the unseen yet, by him, honored God of heaven; and he reaped honor from God as he yielded honor to Him.

He speaks also of a "Holy One coming down from heaven" (chap. iv. 13, 23), as having been seen by Nebuchadnezzar. "Of the heavens reigning," being a truth that Nebuchadnezzar must learn (chap. iv. 26).

It may be remarked, that it was a voice *from heaven* that pronounced Nebuchadnezzar's sentence (ver. 31), and not till he (Nebuchadnezzar) lifted up his eyes unto *heaven* did his understanding return to him (ver. 35), and he sought to honor the God of heaven (ver. 37).

Daniel charges Belshazzar with having lifted himself up against the Lord of *heaven* (chap. v. 23), and speaks of the vessels brought from Jerusalem as the vessels of the house of the Lord of Heaven.

Still heaven is not seen opened, nor the blessings and glories of it revealed.

Yet afterwards (in chap. vii.) we do get, in the visions of Daniel, something more definitely connected with a scene in heaven, we get "the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him" (ver. 13).

Let the passage be read carefully:—

^k But see in a *subordinate* sense the expression, Gen. vii. 11; Deut. xxviii. 12; Psa. lxxviii. 23; Mal. iii. 10.

"I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of Days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of His head like the pure wool: His throne was like the fiery flame, and His wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before Him: thousand thousands ministered unto Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened. I beheld then because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake: I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame. As concerning the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away: yet their lives were prolonged for a season and time. I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. And there was given Him dominion and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve Him: His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."

Observe the evil is put down by the Ancient of Days, and then the Son of Man receives from Him, is invested by Him, the Ancient of Days, with a kingdom. He, the Son of Man, is seen upon the cloud; He is not seen before the Ancient of Days; all that is said is, "they brought Him near before Him."

In Matthew xxiv. iii., we read: "And then [after the tribulation] shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven: and the tribes of the earth shall mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory," etc. Compare also chap. xxv. 31, and part of the Lord's testimony to the high priest (xxvi. 64): "Hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven."

JONAH i. 9: "And he [Jonah] said unto them [the shipmaster and mariners], I am an Hebrew: and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, which has made the sea and the dry land."

How humbling the sequel: "Then were the men exceedingly afraid, and said unto him, Why hast thou done this?" They feared the Lord apparently more than His unfaithful servant and messenger.

It would have been easy to have classified the passages just given, according to a system more or less correct. But

as I write upon the principle of "inquiry," and not of "teaching," I prefer to leave the testimony, just as it is; and to allow it to produce its own, or God's own, effect upon the conscience of each reader.

In conclusion, I would only add a few words by way of contrast between what was in olden time revealed, and what is revealed now unto us.

There is but one God, and He is the God of heaven; that is clear: but in Old Testament times He stood in certain positions in which He *revealed* a limited measure of His glory—that which pertained to the position in which for the time being He was working. It might be a creating, or in providence, or as setting Himself to govern a people who were upon earth. While He always acted worthily of Himself, it was, alas! in proportion as man in his subordinate position failed, that, the manifested glory of God being hidden, man was forced to look to the heavens to which God had retired.

There is not found, then, in the Old Testament, the God of heaven in all the *fulness* of His moral glory, yet, as a Man, come to see whether earth would welcome Him; there is not there found this same blessed Heavenly Man gone back into heaven—and when made Lord of all, calling from the heavens, by the preached word, and sending down the Spirit, and setting the door of heaven open upon His people that they might see by faith, and know that all heaven was theirs, and all the details of its blessedness, whether as to worship or government, position or inheritance. The sympathies of the heart of the Eternal God of heaven pouring out, through and from the heart of the Son of Man, the Lord of Glory in heaven, down to a suffering people in this world, is not presented in the Old Testament. The truth, amazing truth! that God, the God of heaven, with all that He is, and all that He has is ours, who believe in the Lord Jesus,—perfect Divine affection in a perfectly human heart,—all this, and more is found now in the heavenly calling, and in the mystery of which we are partakers. For God is now revealing Himself according to what He is and has as the God of heaven, the Father of the only

Begotten Son, and heaven is opened upon us, as also the Father's heart is opened to us.

At some future time I may attempt to enter upon these things as taught in the heavenly calling and the mystery; at present I prefer commending to my readers the perusal of a paper entitled "*Heaven*," Vol. V., art. v. p. 58, of the *Present Testimony*, and commending them and it to God and the word of His grace. May they prove all things, and hold fast that which is truth!

FRAGMENT.

ASSOCIATION with Christ—how blessed a subject! And who but God Himself has the ability to connect anything, or anybody, with the Christ who is His Son. Hear, however, what He says: "He that spared not His own Son, but gave Him up for us all, how shall He not *with Him* freely give us all things?" (Rom. viii. 32).

I. Have you Christ? Then all things are yours (see also 1 Cor. iii. 21—23). But if you cannot say, "*Christ is mine, as I am His*," then can you not correctly say that anything is yours.

II. But "*How came I to be His?*" says the Christian. "He that stablishes us with you in the Anointed One, and hath anointed us is God" (2 Cor. i. 18—22).

III. See now some of the results of this:—

1. By baptism we have confessed that we are dead *together with* Christ from all guilt, through His death (Rom. vi. 8).

Therefore, also,—

2. We have been quickened together with Him (Col. iii. 13); that is, we have been made partakers of the life in which He rose from the grave [not had our old man set to rights and made orderly and soft, but a new nature communicated to us].

3. This death with Christ sets us entirely free from legality (Col. ii. 20), and is—

4. Connected with a Life which is hidden with Christ in God (Col. iii. 3). This leads—

5. To a life according to the Spirit (2 Cor. xiii. 4), and—

6. To a death, practically, as to the flesh with its affections and lusts (Col. iii. 9; Gal. v. 24). Its natural instinct, as well as a fruit of its possessing us is that we know that—

7. To leave the body is to depart and be *with Christ* (Phil. i. 23), for, to us, to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord: and

8. God gives us thus the hope, as a certainty of association with Christ in the glory (Col. iii. 4; comp. 1 Thes. xiv. 17, and v. 10, and 2 Cor. iv. 14).

No. XVI.

TWILIGHT ERE DAY DAWNED.

To know that there is such a Being as God, and to know God Himself, are two things very distinguishable the one from the other. I might say more than this; for the revelation of the existence of God, and the revelation of the character of God, are, apart from a creature's knowledge of the one or of the other, separable.

In the abstract thought of Him as the First, as the alone I AM, God existed, in the full consciousness of His own being and of His own blessedness, when there were none to recognise His being or His blessedness save Himself alone. Revelation, in any sense in which the term may be used, seems to suppose, not only Divine existence, the evidence of itself, and an outshining of that which characterises the Being so existing, but that there is an evidence or testimony communicable to and intelligible by other subordinate beings; that is, the existence of beings subordinate to God is supposed, directly I speak of revelation. His own being, attributes, and character existed in God before any revelation of them took place.

I need not speak now of other worlds--of angels fallen or unfallen: I would speak of this earth, and of man upon it.

The evidence to man, the testimony upon which man is held responsible to own the existence of a First Great Cause of himself and all around him, is various. He who has power to hold man to his responsibilities, whether man likes it or not, argues thus with man in the book which He has written: First, that creation itself, the works of creation, had at first, and—however they may have been marred—still have, a voice for God.

They proclaim, and proclaim in a way that man can understand and has understood, though practically denying it all the while, the eternal power and Godhead. "That which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse" (Rom. i. 18—20^a). Man is a part of creation; he was the highest part of this earth's creation; and his existence, one's own very self, is a proof of the being of a God, as much as were man's first circumstances. And the character of his being and of his circumstances spake of goodness and beneficence, as well as of power, being in the Creator. Providence, also, and the display which it makes of One who causes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust, and gives fruitful seasons, is a *second* proof which scripture gives to the being and character, in patience, of God (Acts xiv. 17; Matt. v. 45).

And God has power and the intention of forcing man to recognise and to know all this, if not before in grace, then at last in judgment (Acts xvii. 23—31).

That Eden was the proof of eternal power and goodness as to innocent man, is plain. That a creature made to be dependent by God must be so (if God be indeed able to accomplish His own will), is clear also. And if man has renounced that position of dependence upon God, he has not changed the essential law of his being, viz. dependence—nor has he taken from his Maker the claim over him, or the intention to make that claim known; a bad conscience man has won by his revolt, and sorrow, too, in many a way.

Now, the display which God made of Himself in creation, was a display expressing itself in a creation which was all very good—all fit to be blessed by God as such. It had a voice of blessing for man made in the likeness

.

^a The context, from verse 16 to the end of the chapter, should be studied.

and image of God, while he was innocent and obedient; but it had, it has, no answer to the conscience of man as a rebel—to conscience which thinks God is against man, because man has set himself against God.

Again, the patience of God in providence, and His goodness therein, have no answer to guilt in the conscience; for there is a judgment to follow, when patience has had its perfect work. And how shall I be *then*, when I have to give account of that which I have done? Neither creation nor providence can satisfy a sinner's conscience, can give it peace before God. And more than that—while there is but one true God (many as are the names and glories by which He displays Himself), no name, no glory of His which does not plainly show that He has stood up for me, undertaken my cause for me as a ruined sinner, ever can give my conscience peace.

Let us look at this in detail. His holiness, in driving out Cain from His presence upon earth, for the murder of Abel, and separating thus the children of Adam into two families—one in the presence of God, the other outside of that presence—could that give Adam or Eve peace? No. Could, then, the judgment that swept the world with a deluge, saving but one small family, give to Noah peace for eternity? No: wicked Ham was saved as well as Noah. The salvation was of a family in time, not of individuals for eternity. Could the sword of government, put into Noah's hand, give peace? No: the drunkenness in his own tent, and the rebellion of Babel's tower, proved how incompetent Noah was for the trust—how rebellious man was against the trust of government. And Abram's call out from among idolatries, to be a witness for God, while it shewed that Abram had found grace before God, met not the need of his own conscience as to sin as an individual. Nor did Israel's call out of Egypt, or the Gentiles' investiture with power, as seen in the book of the prophet Daniel, or any other thing that God did, either reveal *how* He could be just while He would Himself justify the sinner, or that which could possibly enable a sinner, as a sinner, to get a conscience purged from guilt.

That God was saving sinners from the moment that man's history outside of Eden commenced; that He never saved but through His own estimate of the redemption by blood, the which He meant to manifest; that the blessing was communicated from God by the Spirit, who, from the beginning, wrought, if He wrought for eternity in any soul, by giving it faith in the word which God spoke—all this is clear, and not called in question. But (and this is an important thing to remark) God had, and was *acting* upon, plans for the earth, and His open testimony and action was for *a present* testimony for Himself, showing out what man was, and teaching man to know himself; the renewal of souls was a secret hidden thing, not spoken about though real; and faith had to do with the word of God and the action of God, as set forth at each succeeding period.

The more a man in Old-Testament times reasoned and thought upon the eternity connected with God—that He was from everlasting to everlasting, the more must he have felt that there was some deep enigma to be solved. "Creation is not for eternity," might Noah have said, "for the heavens and earth which were have been destroyed by a deluge; yet God is from everlasting to everlasting: providence will endure with its rainbow while the earth lasts—but how long will that be?" "The Law," Moses might have said, "is perfect for a man upon earth,—if he can be what God describes,—but God is the God of eternity, and what lies beyond the grave?" The more all that man was, and that which characterised man's circumstances, was seen in the light of the Being of an eternal God, the more enigmatical must everything have appeared until life and immortality were brought to light by the Gospel of a crucified and risen Saviour.

God was not, in Old-Testament times, showing Himself forth as a Saviour God, as doing those works and accomplishing that righteousness, which at once proclaimed Him as a Saviour of sinners for heaven and for eternity; and at the same time, gave a full and perfect manifestation of His character as the God of mercy and of compassion. While His works and revelation of

Himself might, through faith and by the Spirit, be blessed unto eternal salvation, the drift and tendency of the revelation was rather to show out what man was—to try him and to prove him, and to make him know himself—than to show out what God was and could be and do in answer to the ruin of a creature.

“The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent’s head,” was God’s first testimony. It was all that Adam brought with him out of Eden. His faith had no other object to rest upon. Did he, could he, understand all that God meant when He used this enigmatical sentence? Could he even understand all that *we* have understood and known as true about it? Certainly not. Take but the promise (which is already made good to us) of Christ: “In that day [of His ascension] ye shall know that I am in the Father, and ye in me and I in you.” Did Adam know this? No: Christ was not even come—had not died, much less was He risen from the dead and ascended up into heaven; that *part* of the enigma was not made good; it was not even revealed that such things were to be. Adam could not know it; and in such a vast plan as that little sentence—“the woman’s seed shall bruise the serpent’s head” contains—how many parts were there! God presented them, as seemed Him good, piece by piece: and, let it be observed, faith could not ever go beyond that part of His plan which God had revealed, though, while faith in man was thus limited to the parts God had revealed, and the part God was revealing, that part derived its value from its being part of the whole plan of God, the part He was revealing, the part which more especially challenged man’s faith. Faith’s language is uniform: “Let God be true and every man a liar”; but then, be it remembered, faith had to do with a *living* God, whose testimony, while it all tended to one common salvation and end, varied as to the *part* of that end to which it was in successive time given (see Heb. i.). Let any one read through Heb. xi., and they will see this. Each individual, almost, who is well reported of for faith—as Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, etc., etc.—had a different word to trust in.

The levity, carelessness and assumptions of which we

are guilty in the things of God, are often frightful. One common instance of it has often struck me, in the way that many minds would reduce all to the same level of light and knowledge. Abraham, David, Peter, during the days of the blessed Lord's humiliation, and Paul, after the ascension of Christ, are all supposed to have been on one level as to truth and light. Now it is not much to assume that Peter, who had the light of many prophets, in addition to the light which existed in David's day, was not lower than any Jew in knowledge, and light, and power, for he was instructed, endowed for, and launched in service by the Lord Himself. But how utterly was Peter unable to enter into the most simple truths which we enjoy—the needs be of his Lord's death he could not see (Matt. xvi. 21—24); and if His death was not seen, then surely not His resurrection either. To forego Jewish hopes of the kingdom to Israel also, even after his Lord's resurrection, he was unable (Acts i. 6), though the teaching of his blessed Master had been plain enough (John xiv.—xvi.) about the Church which was to take Israel's place as a witness upon earth. Another thing of interest, in this connection, is the way that in John xvii. the blessed Lord, in speaking to His Father about the disciples; speaks, not according to what their measure of intelligence was, but according to that which He and His Father saw to be involved in their faith, little as it might be, and feeble as it most certainly was. (Comp. John xiii., xiv., xv., with John xvii.).

I have passed by one point to which I would return, namely, the distinction between revelation in the more general sense in which I have used it above, and the more limited and popular sense connected with the Scriptures (or written standard) of truth. Properly speaking, whatever reveals God is revelation—whatever makes known, to intelligences around and below Him, what and who He is, I should call revelation. Psalm xix. thus refers to various witnesses to Him and His glory. Creation, providence, His own conduct and words, received by living men, and handed down from Father to son among men, all revealed God, was all revelation of God and from God, before any part of Scripture was

written? Popularly speaking, the term revelation is more restricted in its meaning, and confined to that Written Word which has been given to form and sustain, and be the responsibility of those living witnesses, and that chain of them that God has had for Himself upon the earth, almost from the beginning. The word spoken by God, and the word written by God, were harmoniously one; yet the Word written had peculiarities connected with the gift of it of immense moment. It is important to distinguish and to see how creation and providence are used, throughout Scripture, to *convict* man wherever and whatever he may be, while it is only the word spoken or written which contains the doctrine of Government and mercy, of redemption and salvation, whether for the earth in time, or for the heavens in eternity. Not that the value of the Book of Revelation is restricted to the light of these things, though that be distinctive to it and to the living witnesses whom God has raised up as depositories of its truth: the value of the book goes much further, for it explains and unfolds, in man's own language, in an intelligible way, and in a way that never varies:—the claims of God as Creator and Upholder of man, and of the earth, in patience and government;—gives the account of man's original state and rebellion against God, so as to explain all that is around and within us, and to enable us to see what God thinks about it and us, and the Power which, through the fall, got the mastery of man;—and does all this in a way divinely perfect. Creation and Providence suffice to *condemn* man in the arena of God's presence, *may* suffice to bring man in as ruined in his own conscience. But the Bible gives the Divine analysis of all, of what has been, is, and is to be; of the world, of Providence, of man, of Satan, of angels—and shows how these things, having been created for God, cannot escape from Him: but it does infinitely more—it shows how through the Second Adam, the Lord from heaven, all these things sink into and arrange themselves in one vast plan for the glorifying of Himself by *redemption* through His Son, and affording thereby a perfect exhibition of who and what He is—an exhibition of it to and in the joy of poor

sinner saved by grace. May the Lord enable us to know the unspeakable value of the Written Word—and may He show us, not only that there is such a thing as truth; but may the Holy Ghost, Spirit of the living God, bring to bear upon our hearts individually, the truth of the person and glory of Him, who being Son of God is now also Son of Man, and is in heaven at the right hand of the Majesty of the Highest—in the glory too of the Father, glory which He had with Him before the world was.

The Son of Man glorified in heaven—as Son of God and Son of the Father—and God the Holy Ghost come down here—the Church being the participant of heavenly and Divine blessing, is no twilight portion, but is as the beauty and brightness of the brightening dawn of a morning without clouds—as the clear shining after rain—if I may use the expressions figuratively, and in connection with the revelation of truth.

POETRY.

1.

“Let there be light!” Jehovah said,
The beam awoke, the light obey’d;
Bursting on chaos dark and wild,
Till the glad earth and ocean smiled.

2.

Light broke upon my rayless tomb,
The day-star rose upon my gloom;
And, with its gentle new-born ray,
Brighten’d my darkness into day.

3.

Glory to THEE by all be given;
Of light, the light in earth and heaven;
Of joys, the joy; of suns, the sun;
Jesus, the Father’s Chosen One.

N^o. XVII.

DIVINE NAMES AND TITLES.

1. ELOHIM—GOD.

REMARKS UPON SOME OF THE OCCURRENCES THEREOF.

(Continued from Vol. II. p. 421.)

THIS name occurs unconnected with any other name, in the portion of scripture, Gen. i. 1, to ii. 3, which contains the recital of the creation. The diversity of the Divine action and glory, as there recorded, is very great; but all of it is expressive of that which is simply *Elohim*-glory.

In Eden, He calls Himself “Jehovah-Elohim,” and never anything else; that is, as to the book of Genesis, from chap. ii. 4 to iii. 24, inclusive. But no sooner are we out of Eden, than the name of Elohim (God) is dropped; and we read, as to the Divine action which follows, neither of Elohim (God), nor of Jehovah-Elohim (Lord-God), but simply of Jehovah^a (or Lord). See chap. iv. 4: “The *Lord* had respect unto Abel and to his offering”; and ver. 6: “And the *Lord* said unto Cain”; so, also, ver. 9, 15, etc.: in connection with which we may remark, that (ver. 26) it was said in Seth’s family, “Then began men to call upon (or call themselves by) the name of the *Lord*.”

That the Spirit of God should have used “*Elohim*” as the designation, while describing creation—“*Jehovah-Elohim*” while describing the Eden scene—and “*Jeho-*

^a As we shall see hereafter, there were stores in the truth of *this* name which, if so used alone, met all the claims of Divine glory, and could meet all the needs of fallen man. This is quite a distinct thing from the scene being a presentation of Jehovah-glory, man-ward. That, clearly, it was not.

vah" for the designation after man's expulsion from paradise, is *remarkable*, to say the least; and, certainly, it was intentional.

I have said, that in Eden He calls Himself *Jehovah-Elohim*, and never anything else. In contrast with this, I notice, that in the temptation of man in Eden, the tempter drops the former title altogether—never uses it; so that he speaks only of *God*: "And he (the serpent) said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" (Gen. iii. 5); and, "Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be open; and ye shall be as Gods, knowing good and evil" (ver. 4, 5). This, and the counterpart of it in Eve, whose answer to the tempter, in like manner, only records the name of "God," is to be observed: "The woman said unto the serpent . . . God hath said," etc. (ver. 3).

To the rest of creation, as in Gen. i., Elohim had not set Himself in Jehovah-Elohim relationship. On Adam and Eve alone, in Eden, that relationship had shined forth; and it was under the power of the additional blessing found under the compound title, that man was blessed and set upon responsibility. Part of Satan's guile was thus to throw the mind back, out of its present, full, *distinctive* portion, to another portion, which, though it flowed from the same Person, as Source, and was a blessing to Adam and Eve, was not the distinctive one, upon the ground of which He that had blessed them stood toward them, or held them toward Himself in blessing and in responsibility. It was on this ground, therefore, that the intelligence and affection of Adam and Eve were placed, fed, and sustained. To let this slip, and sink back to the lower ground, was injurious to themselves in the extreme. Here was woman's weakness found; and the stepping back, even if all that the adversary suggested that their Blessor had said had been correctly given, might have suggested a lie; and the admission of the suggestion might have been the acceptance of a lie. It might be true in itself, without being the whole of truth as to themselves.

Elohim and Jehovah-Elohim are one and the same

Being; but the display of the manifestations of Elohim-glory is different from the display of the manifestation of Jehovah-Elohim-glory. The privileges, capacities, and responsibilities of being under the two differ, though they may both be combined, as they were in Eden, in one and the same party—the human family; but then, and necessarily so, it is the distinctive part of the portion which becomes separative. I cannot doubt but that this, as a principle, is overlooked by the large mass of believers; and that their overlooking of it is to them a mischievous weakness, resulting from a malicious wile of Satan. For it is always true, that if we merge what is distinctive to ourselves in what is common to others, we not only lose our own places, but displace all that is above us, and misplace all that is around and below. Dispensational privilege constitutes dispensational responsibility always; and the first assailant of distinctive privilege, blessing, and responsibility—the first successful attempter of entanglement to the human mind, as to its present subjection and responsibility, by means of merging that which was distinctively peculiar in that which was general and in common—is here presented to us in the serpent.

Eternal power and Godhead manifested in the origination of a system; that is what I see in Gen. i. 1, ii. 3. The human race set at the head and as the centre of that system, in intelligent dependence and subjection to Jehovah-Elohim; that is what I see in Eden. Had Eve known in herself one proof of power to originate? No; not one. How came she to assume that it was in her then? I should say, “By forgetting her distinctive and peculiar place.” She was made to be a help-meet for him into whose hand, *to dress it and to keep it*, the garden had been given—the honoured creature of Jehovah-Elohim. Intelligence in that which is the Divine testimony to us, is power and blessing; the forgetfulness of it, or the corruption or the dilution of it by us has, on the other hand, its corresponding results of ruin and weakness.

As to that which is Divine: it had been well-pleasing that, in the midst of that which was to be an expression

of Elohim-glory, there should yet bud and germinate something more bright, a fair expression of the Jehovah-Elohim glory. None could stay the blessing, or prevent it. Beguiled, Eve forgot her peculiar connection with and place in the latter, and blindly assumed to herself that she had merely the former.

Let me remark here, ere passing on, that as man's extremity is God's opportunity, so just in this betrayal to Satan, by man, of the charge entrusted to him (for it was man's sin which let Satan into the place of power over man, and, in a certain sense, over man's inheritance, namely, the earth), that the occasion arose for God to shew forth the unsearchable depths of His own infinite power, wisdom, and goodness. He could *originate* that which would meet the needs of His own glory, even in such a case as this; and He could introduce that which would, without any compromise to His own character, eject the power of the adversary, and place man (and man able to stand, too) in fuller and more developed relationship with a heaven and an earth of this globe. And (worthy expression of that Elohim-glory) the seed of the woman, who was beguiled, should bruise the head of the serpent who beguiled her. Redemption by Christ will bring in a full, a perfect display of Elohim-glory; and present, too, a full, a perfect display of Jehovah-Elohim, in blessed relationship with man on the earth—yet in a new phase from what was at first, because God manifest in the flesh will be the pillar of the tabernacle, the dispensing Sun of blessing in that day. And this will necessarily affect and modify everything. The very display of the Trinity will be modified; for the display will be of Jehovah-Elohim-Shaddai and of the Lamb (see Rev. xxi., xxii.). And that name, Shaddai, as expressive of power (Almighty), will circle and close in the fruits of redemption-toil in everlasting blessing.

The first place in which we find the word used in a *subordinate* application, is in Gen. iii. 5, when, in Eden, Satan suggested, "Ye shall be as Gods, knowing good and evil." It was true; for the Lord God said, when they had done as the serpent suggested (ver. 22), "The

man is become as one of us, to know good and evil." But it was truth apart from God as its giver or suggester; and a truth taken out of God's system and order, and misplaced, is not for blessing. The possession of the knowledge of good and evil might be in itself incompatible with man's blessedness, as standing in creation-blessedness; the mode in which it was obtained, certainly, ensured its being a curse, for it was gained by an act of practical independence of God—by positive disobedience. God could know good and evil, and hate the evil and love the good. Satan might know good and evil, to hate the good and to love the evil. Man has known it; and what to him has been the benefit of this knowledge in itself? It came with disobedience; and there in Eden, near to God, it taught first of nakedness, and then of God—a God of judgment.

Out of God's presence, the balance-beam of conscience may go up and down, up and down, quivering in judgment upon right and wrong; but the heart, far from God, loves its own way still, and will take it. But conscience, fruit of the fall, never had power to make a man love the good and refuse the evil. It is to be observed, that the effects of the acquisition of this knowledge were more than one. It did lead into a perception of man's nakedness, and of that nakedness exposing him to God's holiness. God's holiness and man, as he then was, could not meet, save to man's discomfort; but this discovery was attended also with a power of ingenious blending of circumstances around man, so as to meet, as best *he* might, the difficulties of his own sin-produced needs. The fig-leaf apron, the hiding in the bushes, if foolishness as remedies to the Divine mind, and if sure to pass before His presence more quickly than the dew before the sun, yet told of man *at work for himself*, blending his own circumstances to meet his own thoughts of his needs. The amelioration of the world, its steam-ships, its railroads, its electric telegraphs, etc., etc.—all that the pride of highly-cultivated civilisation now boasts in—is fruit from this root. Just so is all the religion of fallen human nature. Fallen man *at work for himself*, to alleviate his own misery, or fallen man at work to

satisfy his own conscience as to God, present pictures of what was not seen before the fall, nor will be seen in the new heaven and new earth.

Observe: though Satan and Eve might drop the name of Jehovah in Eden, God still calls Himself, while there, Jehovah-Elohim.

The name used generally in chap. iv. and onwards, seems to be not that of Elohim, but of Jehovah (ver. 1, 3, 4, 6, 9, 13, 15, 15, 16); and the compound, Jehovah-Elohim, does not re-occur till Noah's blessing of Shem; that is, not until chap. ix. 26, where, clearly, *relationship-blessing* was again in question.

The first place outside of Eden, also, where *Elohim* occurs, seems to me characteristic. It is in chap. iv. 25, where creative power and goodness are displayed. Cain having slain Abel, and himself having gone out, under a curse, from the presence of the Lord, "*Elohim*" gave another heir to the family: "And Adam knew his wife again: and she bare a son, and called his name Seth: for God (*Elohim*)," said she, "hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel, whom Cain slew" (ver. 25). The name of *Elohim* here is remarkable, and seems to be also contrasted with what is read in the next verse (26): "And to Seth, to him also, there was born a son; and he called his name Enos: then began men to call upon the name of the LORD (*Jehovah*)."

As we approach the history of the deluge, we find the name of "*Elohim*" put forward, thus: "Enoch walked with *Elohim*" (ver. 22); and (ver. 24), he "walked with *Elohim*, and he was not, for *Elohim* took him."

So, again (chap. vi. 2), "The sons of *Elohim* saw the daughters of men, that they were fair: and they took them wives of all which they chose" (comp. ver. 4 and 5). And again (ver. 9), "Noah walked with *Elohim*;" (ver. 11), "The earth also was corrupt before *Elohim*;" and (ver. 12, 13), "*Elohim* looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth. And *Elohim* said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me."

The state of man was such, it would seem to me, Godward and circumstantially, that it would have been

incongruous to have introduced the name of “Jehovah-Elohim” here—i. e., a name of divine relationship; on the other hand, if turned out of Eden, which was the scene prepared for the display of *Jehovah-Elohim*-glory to man as a creature—the human race could not undo their connection with *Elohim*-glory—they were in *person* part of that, their existence witnessed to it; and the question of destroying the heavens and the earth, which were so likewise, seemed also to call for the presence of *Elohim*. The *Elohim* who made alone had right or power to destroy.

In the commencement of the sixth chapter, the verses 3, 6, and 8, are to be observed as each containing the name of “The Lord,” or Jehovah. It is a name which we shall see, when we come to it, has a peculiar force under such circumstances.

Ver.3: “The LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be a hundred and twenty years.”

Ver.6: “And it repented the LORD that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him at His heart.”

Ver.8: “But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.”

In each of the cases it is used as the security for mercy, in a scene in which creation-beauty was marred, and man excluded from Eden-blessing.

The connection of the name of *Elohim* sometimes with *providential care* is seen in chap.vi.13 and 22, in God’s arrangements for the preservation of Noah, his family, and a remnant of the creatures (see, also, chap.vii.9). The same remark may be made as to chap.viii.1: “And God remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the cattle that was with him in the ark: and God made a wind to pass over the earth; and the waters asswaged” (see, also, ver.16). So, also, in chap.ix., the blessing of Noah is by *Elohim* (ver.1; compare, also, ver.6); the covenant in providence is by *Elohim* (ver.8, 12, 16, 17). This is the more remarkable because of the juxta-position in these contexts of the name of Jehovah, and also the

fact that after chap.ix. the word *Elohim*^b does not occur again until chap.xvii.

The use of the word occurs also in chap.xix.29: "When God destroyed the cities of the plain, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow," etc., etc.; so (in chap.xx., in the intercourse of God with Abimelech in the matter of Abraham's wife) we find the word largely used; also in chap.xxi., the subject being Sarah's conception and Ishmael's rejection; and in chap.xxii., which gives the trial of Abraham's faith.

These four chapters, viz., the nineteenth, twentieth, twenty-first, and twenty-second, deserve a special study.

The connection of this name with any particular person, people, place, etc., gives to that which is thus spoken of a peculiar and sometimes a distinctive honour. Thus He calls Himself constantly "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob;" but we read not of Him as the God of Lot, the God of Esau, of Ammon, or of Moab. So, again, we read of "the God of your fathers" (the address is to Israel). "The God of Israel" is faith's language. Again we hear of "the God of David;" "of Elijah;" "the God of heaven and of earth" (Gen.xxiv.3), etc.; and (2 Kings xix.16) of "the living God."

In many places the word is used as an adjective, and the force is then vague; the more so, perhaps, because it is then rarely used by faith. Thus (Gen. xxiii. 6), "Hear us, my lord," said the children of Heth; "thou art a prince of God among us: in the choice of our sepulchres bury thy dead." Again; Rachel said (chap.xxx.8), "With wrestlings of God have I wrestled with my sister, and I have prevailed." See, also, Exod. ix. 28: "Intreat the Lord for us," said Pharaoh, "that there be no more thunderings of God."

There are a few passages to be at least noted by the Christian reader: "Thou [Moses] shalt be to him [Aaron] instead of God" (Exod. ii.16). "I have made thee a god to Pharaoh" (chap.vii.1).

^b In chap. xiv.18, 19, 20, 22, xvi.13, the word is *ֵלֹהִים*.

In Exodus it is the word translated *judges*;^c see chap. xxii. 8(7), 9(8), 20(19), 28(27); so, also, in 1 Sam. ii. 25: “*The judge*^c shall judge him.”

In Psalm viii. 5 it is translated *angels*: “made him a little lower than the angels.”

These citations may throw light upon Ps. lxxxii. 6: “I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the Most High: but ye shall die like men.” This passage is of peculiar interest from its citation in John x. 34, 35.

The following terms I also notice:—

The mount of God (Exod. iii. 1 and iv. 27, etc.).

The rod of God (Exod. iv. 20).

The God of gods (Deut. x. 17).

The hill of God (1 Sam. x. 5).

The God of my rock (2 Sam. xxii. 3, etc.).

The temple—the footstool of our God (1 Chr. xxviii. 2).

The name does not occur in the books of Esther, the Song, Lamentations, Obadiah, Nahum.

The comparison is interesting of Ps. lxxviii. 56, “They [Israel] tempted and provoked the most high God;” and 1 Cor. x. 9, “Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents.”

For the most part, the scene and circumstances in which a name is *first* introduced give best of all the general ideas intended to be presented in that name. This I believe to be the case as to the name “God,” as given in the first chapter of Genesis. Its connection with another name, as in the second chapter, may help the mind to apprehend the peculiarities distinctive either to the one taken alone, or to the two as combined. The student of Scripture will also find help by marking passages in which one name is contrasted with another name; or in which a portion of Scripture, which has one name in it in one place, is found in another place with another name substituted for it.

But to learn the force of any name, and really to profit from this study, the Christian must read for himself the

^c These passages would lead one to think that 1 Sam. xxviii. 13 might be better rendered, “I saw a judge [i. e., Samuel; compare chap. vii. 15 and contexts] ascending out of the earth.”

whole Bible, and mark the scenes and occurrences in which each name occurs and is contrasted with others.

I pass on now to the names of "El" and "Eloah."

2. EL.

The first occurrence of this name is in Gen. xiv. 18—22. When Abram heard that Lot was taken captive, he led forth his servants against the victorious hosts of the four kings, and pursued unto Hobah, and brought back all the goods, and Lot and his goods, etc. "And the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the valley of Shaveh. And (ver. 18) Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high^d *EL*. And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high El, possessor of heaven and earth: and blessed be the most high El, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he (Abram) gave him (Melchizedek) tithes of all. And the king of Sodom said unto Abram," etc. The scene was a remarkable one in the annals of faith, as much so as in the life of the father of the faithful.

The four victorious kings were—

1st, *Amraphel*, king of Shinar. The land of Shinar extends from the Persian Gulf, occupying, thence upward, the whole land between the Tigris and the Euphrates. Faith's estimate of it is easily seen in these texts:—Gen. x. 10. The grandson of Ham (whose posterity were cursed by Noah), Nimrod, had "Babel, and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar," as the beginning of his kingdom. It was in the plain of Shinar (chap. xi. 2) that the tower of Babel, which

^d The word which is rendered here "most high," means *superior, upper*, and is so rendered in Isa. vii. 3, "the conduit of the *upper* pool" (see, also, xxxvi. 2); and Jer. xxxvi. 10, "the *higher* court"; Eze. ix. 2, "*higher* gate"; xli. 7, "*highest* chamber"; xlii. 5, "*upper* chambers," etc. etc. Many commentators would render it, in Dan. vii. 18—27, "saints of the *high* places"; so, also, there are those who would prefer in this passage (Gen. xiv. 18—22), "God of *most high* places"—"God of the *heavenlies*."

was man's defiance of God's power, was reared. Again, in Isa. xi. 11, in the deliverance given to His people by the Branch out of the roots of the stem of Jesse, it is said, "The Lord shall set His hand again the second time to recover the remnant of His people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and . . . from Elam, and from *Shinar*." Again, in Dan. i. 2, we read, that "the Lord gave Jehoiakim, king of Judah, into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, with part of the vessels of the house of God, which he carried into the land of *Shinar* to the house of his god." And in Zech. v. 11, it is in the land of *Shinar* that wickedness has her house built, and is established and set upon her base. Mesopotamia, out of which Abram was called, was comparatively very small, yet formed part of the same territory, geographically, and was to the left furthest from the Persian Gulf.

2ndly, *Arioch*, king of Ellasar. Ellasar was in Arabia, extending along the Red Sea, or Arabian Gulf, at its mouth.

3rdly, *Chedorlaomer*, king of Elam, in Persia. Elam was of Shem's branch (Gen. x. 22). But the captives of the beloved people, as we have just seen (1 Chron. i. 17), are delivered from "*Elam*," as much as from *Shinar* (Isa. xi. 11); for "Go up, O Elam; besiege, O Media," had been the call (chap. xxi. 2); and (xxii. 6) "Elam (in response) bare the quiver with chariots of men and horsemen." In the general desolation predicted, the kings of Elam have to drink of the wine-cup of the fury of the Lord God of Israel (Jer. xxv. 25). Its judgment was a most solemn one^e (chap. xlix. 34—39). The

^e "The word of the Lord against Elam: Behold, I will break the bow of Elam, the chief of their might. And upon Elam will I bring the four winds from the four quarters of heaven, and will scatter them toward all those winds; and there shall be no nation whither the outcasts of Elam shall not come. For I will cause Elam to be dismayed before their enemies, and before them that seek their life: and I will bring evil upon them, even my fierce anger, saith the Lord; and I will send the sword after them, till I have consumed them: and I will set my throne in Elam, and will destroy from thence the king and the princes, saith the Lord. But it shall come to pass in the latter days, that I will bring again the captivity of Elam, saith the Lord." Compare, also, Ezek. xxxii. 22—25.

Shushan (of Dan. viii. 2) was in the province of Elam. And Ezra tells us (chap. iv. 6), that the Babylonians, the Susanchites . . . the Elamites, counterworked God's people in the restoration from captivity.

4thly, *Tidal*, king of nations; that is, Galilee of the nations. The king of the nations of Gilgal (or Galilee) is the thirtieth king smitten by Joshua and the children of Israel, on their taking possession of the land (Josh. xii. 23); and it is remarkable for another prophecy concerning it: "Nevertheless the dimness shall not be such as was in her vexation, when at the first he lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, and afterward did more grievously afflict her by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations. The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined" (Isa. ix. 1, 2). Compare Matt. iv. 12—16, as showing how it regulated the blessed Lord's movements at one time.

The first of these four kings was lord of the land out of which the father of the faithful had been called by the God of the whole earth, when Lot accompanied him. Neither his land nor that of the next two lay in the Land of Promise. Tidal's land was therein, and was, perhaps, more likely to be in collision with the cities of the plain. But the immediate cause of this war, and the inroad of foreign armies, was rebellion against Chedorlaomer (ver. 4). These four kings' kingdoms were large, and all lay within the conquests of Nimrod. Distant as they were the one from the other, they show the power of the confederacy of that day.

The five kings against whom they came were kings of *cities*, which all lay within the territory possessed by David and Solomon, though the first (Sodom) was in the land of the Amalekites, and the last (Zoar) in that of the Edomites. All five cities are but too notorious in Scripture. 1st, Bera, king of Sodom; 2ndly, Birsha, king of Gomorrah; 3rdly, Shinab, king of Admah; 4thly, Shemeber, king of Zeboiim; and, 5thly, the king of Bela or Zoar.

"Lot had seen all the plain of Jordan, that it was

well watered everywhere, before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest to Zoar . . . and he dwelt in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom. But the men of Sodom were wicked, and sinners before the Lord exceedingly." So we read in Gen. xiii. 10—13; and again in chap. xviii. 20: "And the Lord said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous; I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I will know."

The God of mercy had prepared an intercessor for His own sake (that His mercy might appear), and for the sake, too, of Abraham, and of Lot, and of the poor sinners; and Abraham was he. But what a state the city was in, when (ver. 26) we read, "And the Lord said, If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes"; and then (ver. 28), "If I find there forty-and-five, I will not destroy"; and (ver. 29), "I will not do it for forty's sake"; and (ver. 30), "I will not do it if I find thirty there"; and (ver. 31), "I will not do it for twenty's sake"; and then (ver. 32), "I will not destroy it for ten's sake." But there were not *ten* righteous persons in this city, chief in wickedness, towards which Lot pitched his tent. Lot entered into Zoar. "Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven; and He overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground" (chap. xix. 22—25). And Abraham "looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain, and beheld, and, lo, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace" (ver. 28).

This accounts for the prestige of these two places, and for such words as those used where the Lord is describing His plagues, Deut. xxix. 23: "The whole land thereof is brimstone, and salt, and burning; it is not sown, nor beareth, nor any grass groweth therein, like the overthrow of Sodom, and Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboim,

which the Lord overthrew in His anger, and in His wrath." And when utter destruction is intended, no phrase serves the turn better than, "As God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and the neighbour cities thereof." See this, as to Babylon, in Isa. xiii. 19, Jer. l. 40; as to Edom, Jer. xlix. 18; as to Moab and Ammon, Zeph. ii. 9.

Two other most striking passages on this subject are (Isa. i. 9), "Except the Lord of Hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah"; and (Rev. xi. 8), the great city spiritually called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified.

As to the last three of the cities: "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim?" (Hos. xi. 8). Zoar was spared at Lot's intercession, when doomed: "See, I have accepted thee concerning this thing also, that I will not overthrow this city, for the which thou hast spoken" (Gen. xix. 21). And we find, as to Moab, it is written, in after-days, "His fugitives shall flee to Zoar" (Isa. xv. 5); and, "They uttered their voice, from Zoar unto Horonaim" (Jer. xlviii. 34). Mercy is a very self-consistent thing.

To sum up that which we have seen.

Abram, the father of the faithful, called by God out from his country and kindred, was dwelling as a pilgrim and a stranger in the land promised to him. He looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God; and God was not ashamed to be called his God. Lot had come out with him, but kept not up the wayfaring man's character, and settled down in the city of Sodom. The power of darkness brings in three kings from the lands external to that of promise, and one king in the land, to punish the five kings in the land who had rebelled against the king of Elam. So far as the kings were concerned, Lot was nobody in the question of the war. His residence, however, as being in Sodom, became so, and so did his goods, and the women and the people. In God's moral government, and in Satan's wiles, Lot in Sodom might be a very

leading item in all this history. Abraham no sooner hears of this, than he goes forth with his own servants, and with Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre, pursues, and after a forced march overtakes the foe, and recovers the spoil, with Lot and all that was his. What a position was this friend of God in, when the king of Sodom went out to meet him, after his return from the slaughter of the king of Elam, and of the kings that were with him! A Lot, a Jonah, is oft a cause of trouble to a city, a ship: an Abram is oft a deliverer even of the wicked and their goods!

If Abram's deed was but natural to such an one, still it was a deed of a mighty man—one of valour and of disinterestedness. The king of Sodom came out to own it; he "went out to meet Abram"—this is given us in the 17th verse; but ere he can speak (as in the 21st verse), there is found to be another person present, who takes the lead and precedence of him: "And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine; and he was the priest of the most high El. And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high El, possessor of heaven and earth; and blessed be the most high El, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all" (ver. 18—20).

The man who here wandered as a pilgrim, and whose heart, formed to God, could content itself with no house, no city, no land, until he came to the house, city, and land prepared by God for Himself and for them that are His, wandered not from inward fickleness or weakness. That heart was bold enough to go forth and slay the four victorious oppressors of the strangers among whom he dwelt. The God of might was with him, and sends in His testimonial of approval in His own high priest—type, as we know, of another King of Righteousness, and Prince of Peace. Melchizedek meets him, on his return, with bread and wine; blesses him according to the name of Him, the *Mighty* One of the most high places, Possessor of heaven and earth, whose servants they both were; praises the *Mighty* One for the honour put on Abram; and lets Abram shew his might in tithing all unto himself as priest of God. Nothing could

have been done to mark more distinctly God's thought of His own connection with the deed of *might* of His servant.

Now, the introducing, for the first time, this name to us here, is most sweetly significant. Abram had just been showing *might* in his own circumstances—might of no ordinary character. He who is the *Mighty One*,^f sends in one that can identify Himself with what His servant had just done, and His servant with Him in it. The king of Sodom is then allowed to speak, which gives to Abram an occasion of showing that his mastery was over himself, as much as over his circumstances. The spoil he had taken he would not keep, lest his God's faithfulness should be hidden among the children of men. This, as we know from the next chapter, had its immediate reward. For if Abram would be a Nazarene unto God, and so act that man should not say, even unjustly say, "I have made Abram rich," God would Himself be the shield and exceeding great reward of such a one. And what a string of blessings does He pour out! Alas! poor Jacob had no such zeal for God, and fared accordingly. It is a great thing for us if we can think of God's name, and of what, in our circumstances, our being of the number of His called ones, makes meet for us.

Observe, as to the originating of this name, Melchisedek is the introducer of it. Man far from God may

^f The following citations show the signification of the word when used as a common noun, and not as a name of a person:—

Gen. 31 : 29. "It is in *the power* of my hand to do you hurt," said Laban to Jacob.

Deut. 28 : 32. "There shall be no *might* in thine hand," said to Israel in warning of the effects of sinning against God.

Neh. 5 : 5. "Neither is it in *the power* of our hand." Compare Pro. 3 : 27 ; Mic. 2 : 1.

Psa. 82 : 1. "God standeth in the congregation of the *mighty*."

89 : 7. "Who among the sons of the *mighty* can be likened unto the Lord?"

Ezek. 31 : 11. "The hand of the *mighty one* of the heathen."

32 : 21. "The *strong* among the mighty shall speak."

invent^s names, fashion^h titles for Him, misapply and misappropriate, to his own hurt and God's dishonour, names and titles of divine origin; but when the introducer of a name or a title is such an one as Melchisedek, that alone gives authority to the name.

The spring of the patriarch's strength was in another; his power to use that strength was in his own separation individually and as to circumstances, to that other.

The name is one of the most peculiar interest to us as Christians, because of that cry from the cross, "Eli! Eli! lama sabacthani!"

"There power itself and weakness meet ;"

when He, who was the Power, as well as the Wisdom of God, was crucified through weakness.

A Nazarite in service was He, self-emptied, perfectly dependant, who alone could say, in the truthful sense of the words, "Lo! I come to do Thy will, O God!" and, "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" He would not speak or seek for *Himself*, for how then could the work have been accomplished? The patriarch got his heart cleansed by the exercises of faith; Christ, by the circumstance of exercises, got the occasion of shewing how pure and perfect he was, while doing the work given to Him to do. I conceive that the use of this name in the first and in the tenth verses ("Thou art my El from my mother's belly") is full of force; and the feeling of weakness, forsaking, and desertion, in contrast with might and power, which are present, is sorrow indeed. Such was His when He tasted death for us.

The needs-be of it was in His own self and name. If His will and heart led to His name being Immanu-*el* (the *Mighty* One with us), how should He be that, and hide His face from human woe? Or how, if He hid Himself from the human woe (the very core of which was guilt on account of sin), how, I say, could He ever, holily and justly, be God-with-us, to bring man into circumstances

^s As did Pope, in applying "Jehovah, *Jove*, or Lord," to the Father, etc.

^h As do those who speak of God as the God and King of this *world*, and consider themselves as citizens of it.

fitting to Himself? (Mat. i. 21—25; Heb. ii. 9—18). The name of Immanu-el is, in its application, earthly; yet in the connections of the truth found in it (as may be seen in the passages referred to of Matthew's gospel and the epistle to the Hebrews), it is of much wider application. A crucified Jesus was a Jew-rejected Messiah, who might be found by *whosoever* should call upon His name. Immanuel, though the very One in whom and in whose work we trust, is, Himself, once rejected by the Jew, yet to bless the Jew in the land. And what though the waters of the river, strong and many, even the king of Assyria, and all his glory, shall come up over all his channels, and go over all his banks, and shall pass through Judah, shall overflow and go over, shall reach to the neck? Is the blessing hindered? Can a deluge breaking up from below prevent it? No: as Isaiah (viii. 7—9) goes on to say, El-with-us is our banner in that day; "the stretching out of His wings shall fill the breadth of Thy land, O Immanuel!" and therefore, "Associate yourselves, O ye people, and ye shall be broken in pieces; and give ear, all ye of far countries: gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces; gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces. Take counsel together, and it shall come to nought; speak the word, and it shall not stand: for EL-*with-us*." That is, this very name Immanuel is the solution, in that day, of all the sorrows of the Jewish people (see, also, Isaiah ix. 5—7).

Thus we find this name of El at the cross, where God let man measure out his wickedness against Him who was crucified in weakness; so opening a door to the *whosoever*, etc.: and we find the same name of *El* when God takes up His controversy with the infidel faction of the last day, and by this name the Jew gets blessing upon earth.

There is another combination of this name of El, besides that of Immanuel, which is also one of peculiar interest. For if Immanuel be a personal name of the blessed Lord, El-Shaddah'y is a name in the which much of Divine *grace* is presented to us in the word.

The first occurrence is in Gen. xvii. 1: "The Lord

appeared unto Abram, and said unto him, I am [El-Shaddah'y] the Almighty God: walk before me, and be thou perfect, and I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly," etc. Then, again, when Isaac is sending Jacob to Padan-Aram: "And El-Shaddah'y [God Almighty] bless thee, and make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, that thou mayest be a multitude of people; and give thee the blessing of Abraham, to thee, and to thy seed with thee; that thou mayest inherit the land wherein thou art a stranger, which God gave unto Abraham" (chap. xxviii. 3, 4). And accordingly, when God appears to Jacob again, after he had come out of Padan-Aram, and blessed him, He said (chap. xxxv. 10), "Thy name is Jacob: thy name shall not be called any more Jacob, but Israel shall be thy name: and He called his name Israel. And God said unto him, I am El-Shaddah'y [God Almighty]: be fruitful and multiply: a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins; and the land which I gave Abraham and Isaac, to thee I will give it, and to thy seed after thee will I give the land."

It is the name which Israel uses when he has to send Benjamin into Egypt (chap. xliii. 14): "And God Almighty give you mercy before the man," etc.; and uses, when, dying, he speaks to Joseph: "God Almighty appeared unto me at Luz, in the land of Canaan, and blessed, and said unto me, Behold, I will make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, and I will make of thee a multitude of people; and I will give this land to thy seed after thee for an everlasting possession" (chap. xlviii. 3, 4); "and now Ephraim and Manasseh are mine," etc. Compare, also, his most beautiful blessing of Joseph, in chap. xlix. 25.

If God be for us, what is he, or what the circumstances, which may be set in opposition to us. El-Shaddah'y was for Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and was known, too, to each of them to be for him, for his posterity and circumstances, and all was felt to be right. Ruth, on the other hand (chap. i. 20, 21), felt bitterly, through unbelief, the sorrow of having "the Almighty"

against her. Job's friends knew how to use the name of the Almighty against him, and his own unbroken spirit lent itself to the same folly.

That there is something distinctive and characteristic in the name El-Shaddah'y is clear from Exod. vi. 3: "I am Jehovah: and I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob by the name of El-Shaddah'y; but by my name of Jehovah was I not known to them." A most important passage, as showing the force of the names used in Scripture. And in accordance with this—indeed, as confirmatory of it—I remark, that in the Song of Moses (Exod. xv.), the name of LORD, or Jehovah, occurs twelve times; El, twice, viz., "He is my El" (ver. 2), and (ver. 11) "among the gods;" and the name of Elohim but once, "my father's God" (ver. 2).

Some of the passages in which this name of El occurs are of too much interest in themselves for me not to cite them; *e.g.*—

Exod. xxxiv. 5: "The LORD descended in the cloud, and stood with him [Moses] there, and proclaimed the name of the *Lord*. And the *Lord* passed by before him, and proclaimed, Jehovah, Jehovah-El, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear (the guilty); visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and upon the children's children, unto the third and fourth generation."

So, again (Numb. xxiii. 8), in Balaam's testimony: "How shall I curse whom El has not cursed?" Again (ver. 19), "*El* (is) not a man, that He should lie;" and (ver. 22), "*El* brought them out of Egypt;" and (ver. 23), "What hath *El* wrought!" See, also, chap. xxiv. 4, 8, 16, 23.

In the songs which record the triumphs of grace over all that was outside and inside of David—the way in which grace, mercy, and compassion express themselves in the circumstances and persons of the beloved of God—this word occurs, 2 Sam. xxii. and xxiii.

Chap. xxii. "As for El, his way is perfect" (ver. 31).

“Who is El, save the Lord?” (ver. 32). “El is my strength and power” (ver. 33). “It is El that avengeth me.”

And chap. xxiii. “Although my house be not so with El, yet He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure; for this is all my salvation and all my desire, although He make it not to grow.”

In Daniel we find the word in two remarkable places, namely, in chap. ix. “the great and dreadful El” (ver. 4), and (in chap. xi.) “The king . . . shall magnify himself above every El, and shall speak marvellous things against the El of Els, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished” (ver. 36).

Observe also these passages where the word is connected with the thought of sonship.

In Psa. lxxxix. 26, speaking of Solomon, the son promised to David, “He shall cry unto me, Thou art my Father, my El, and the Rock of my salvation.” Also, “I will make Him my First-Born, higher than the kings of the earth. My mercy will I keep for Him for evermore, and my covenant shall stand fast with Him.”

Hos. i. 10: “It shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there shall it be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living El.”^s A passage of peculiar interest to us, from its moral connection through the heavenlies with ourselves.

3. ELOAH

Is the singular number of the word Elohim.

The singular number is comparatively of rare occurrence. The plural form is that which is used in Genesis, and so generally throughout the Bible, as the name of Him who is Creator of heaven and earth, and Arranger and Disposer of all things—that the occurrences of the form in the singular number demand a special consideration. For instance, the singular form is found fifty-seven

^s The word *God*, twice found in ver. 9, is in italics. It would have been better rendered “He.”

times, of which forty are in the Book of Job; the plural form about 2,700. In neither of these do I include the Chaldee, where singular and plural occurrences are altogether under ninety-six.

It strikes me, that in many of the occurrences of the singular form, there is a contrast presented more between the thought of One God and many gods, than between the *who*, of the true God (who is the One only God) and *what* the so-called many gods are. This is not a distinction without a difference; for in the one case the abstract notion of Deity (which certainly excludes plurality) is contrasted with the absurdity of having many "one firsts and one lasts," and in the other case the Eternal power and Godhead, the traces of whose power and beneficence are seen in creation and providence, are set in contrast with demons and demoniacal characteristics.

Having made this suggestion, I will now cite the passages which suggested the thought to my own mind.

Deut. xxxii. 15 ("This is the first occurrence of the word): "Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked: thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick, thou art covered with fatness; then he forsook God [*Eloah*] which made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation. They provoked Him to jealousy with strange gods, with abominations provoked they Him to anger. They sacrificed unto devils not to Eloah: to gods [*Elohim*] whom they knew not, to new [gods] that came newly up, whom your fathers feared not."

Is there not here a contrast between *the one God* and the so-called gods many? The song is of the Lord's own inditing (2 Ch. xxxii. 13—15). The language is the scurrilous blasphemy of Sennacherib: "Know ye not what I and my Fathers have done unto all the people of other lands? Were the gods [*Elohim*] of the nations . . . able to deliver . . . out of mine hand? Who among all the gods [*Elohim*] of those nations that my fathers utterly destroyed, that could deliver out of my hand, that your God [*Elohim*] should be able to deliver you out of mine hand. Now therefore let not Hezekiah deceive you nor persuade you . . . for no

god [Eloah] of any nation . . . how much less shall your god [Elohim] deliver you out of mine hand?"

Not one god of the many gods that Sennacherib could think of was a match for himself; so he thought, who saw not that himself was but a slave of Satan, and a scourge in the hand of the only true God.

Neh. ix. 16—19: "Our fathers dealt proudly, and hardened their necks . . . but thou art a *God* [Eloah] ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and forsookest them not. Yea, when they had made them a molten calf, and said, This is thy God [Elohim] that brought thee out of Egypt, and had wrought great provocation; yet Thou, in Thy manifold mercies, forsookest them not in the wilderness."

Psa. xviii. 30, 31: "As for God [Elohim] His way is perfect: the word of the Lord is tried; He is a buckler to all those that trust in Him. For who is God [Eloah] save the Lord [Jehovah]? Or who is a rock save our God [Elohim]?"

Psa. l. 21, 22: "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself; but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes. Now consider this, all ye that forget God [Eloah], lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver."

Isa. xlv. 8—10: "Ye [Israel] are even my witnesses. Is there a God [Eloah] beside me? Yea there is no Rock; I know not any. They that make a graven image are all of them vanity; and their delectable things shall not profit: and they are their own witnesses; they see not, nor know; that they may be ashamed. Who hath formed a god [El], or molten a graven image that is profitable for nothing." And see the vivid description of the making of the idol, and of the use of the residue of the materials out of which it is taken, in vers. 12—20.

Dan. xi. 37—39: "Neither shall he regard the God [Elohim] of his fathers, nor the desire of women, nor regard any God [Eloah]: for he shall magnify himself above all. But in his estate shall he honour the God [Eloah—a god] of forces [Mahuzzim]; and a god [Eloah] whom his fathers knew not . . . Thus shall he

do in the most strongholds with a strange god [Eloah], whom he shall acknowledge and increase with glory.

Hab. i. 11, 12: "He shall pass over, and offend, imputing this his power unto his god [Eloah]. Art thou not from everlasting, O Lord my God. Mine Holy One? we shall not die, O Jehovah, Thou hast ordained them for judgment; and, O Mighty God [Rock], Thou hast established them for correction."

Hab. iii. 2, 3: "In wrath remember mercy. God [Eloah] came from Teman, and the Holy One from Mount Paran."

It is worthy of note that Eloah occurs in Job alone forty times; Elohim less than twenty.

Elah is the Chaldee form of the word Eloah. Of the occurrences which do not number ninety-six, there are not more than ten in the plural, the rest are in the singular form. It is worthy of notice, that here in Chaldee, the singular form is the common one for the Supreme Being, "the God of heaven," as He is here constantly called, and the plural form is used as connected with unbelief. e.g., Jer. x. 11. The Spirit is speaking of idol-makers: "Thus shall ye say unto them, The *gods* that have not made the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth, and from under the heavens."

"The *gods*, whose dwelling is not with flesh" (Dan. ii. 11), would not, could not aid the magicians. "Your God is a God of *gods*" (ii. 47), was the king's tribute of homage to Daniel. Dan. iii. 12: The Jews, "O king . . . serve not thy *gods*, nor worship the golden image"; and (iii. 18) "We will not serve thy *gods*," is the confession of the three servants of God. "The fourth is like unto the Son of God" (iii. 25) [a son of the gods]. 'Twas the thought of the king when he saw Him who is God and Son of God in the furnace: "and praised the *gods* of gold" (v. 4), "In whom [is] the spirit of the holy *gods*—the wisdom of the holy *gods*" (v. 11), "The spirit of the *gods* is in thee" (v. 14), "Thou hast praised the *gods* of silver" (v. 23).

Yet in the days of Daniel, Ezra, and Jeremiah, Elohim was a common title of God. Whether the non-use of the plural form, when speaking of Him, was con-

nected with the idiom of the Chaldee language, or rather with the peculiarity of the circumstances and state of things and subjects, which the use of it by the servants of the living God supposed, I cannot say positively.

The three words, Elohim, El, Eloah, seem in common to present the idea of *power* as their meaning. They appear to me also evidently derived from the same root. Yet the abstract idea of power and might found in each, *may be* presented by them severally with a peculiarity distinctive to each particular form.

In re-perusing what I have written—and also the occurrences in full in the “Englishman’s Hebrew and Chaldee Concordance”—I think three shades of meaning are presented, namely, that He whom we adore alone has creatorial power, victorious power, and stands thus in His very being, in contrast with all that are called gods.

These remarks contain, I am aware, little positive instruction—they are those of an inquirer rather than of a teacher; if others have not observed the fact, that this name of El exists, as well as those of Elohim and Eloah, the paper may serve a turn for good in calling the attention of some to these facts: it may serve also the good turn of calling the attention of those who have more light than has the writer of these remarks, to the general need for information upon this subject.

FRAGMENT.

As Christians, we are thrown together bearing the name of Christ, as being part of His bride; and it is sin to take any other name than His. The wife surrenders her own name in taking that of her husband. But, alas! how careless Christians are, if we look around us; how readily do they take up other names than the alone name of Jesus Christ; and thus, so to say, disown their allegiance to Him alone. E. F.

N^o. XVIII.NO MAN BECOMES A CHILD OF GOD BY AN
ACT OF HIS OWN WILL.*(A Letter to a Friend).^a*

MY DEAR BROTHER,

I have often thought of our last conversation, as we walked on the sands at S —, and as often felt the regret which I then expressed to you, that the subject of the eternal security of God's children should be so generally approached through the medium of texts and considerations, which are supposed to be attended with difficulty as to it, instead of the substantive testimony to it, with which the Word of God abounds, being fairly considered, and difficulties and objections viewed in the light which is thus afforded us. But in turning to the subject, with the thought of fulfilling your request, that I would present you in a condensed form, with what I regard as the positive testimony of Holy Writ respecting it, I have been divided in my mind between these two modes of presenting it, namely, that of taking the passages in the order in which one comes at them in reading the New Testament, or that of classifying the passages, arranging them under several heads. I had pretty nearly determined to confine myself to neither; but commencing in the former mode, to take any opportunity which might arise of acting on the latter also; an inquiry into one passage often naturally suggesting a reference to others of like import, even though they should not follow in exact order of occurrence; when it seemed to me, that, ere commencing

^a This was *bonâ fide* a private letter, but is published now, with the consent of the writer and receiver, in the hope of extending the sphere of its usefulness.—ED.

No Man becomes a Child of God by his own Act. 307

either, it was almost indispensable to devote a little attention to the previous inquiry, of *how a man becomes a child of God*. If it be, as so many suppose, by an act of our own will, choosing to turn to God and believe in Christ, that we become Christians, then it is a doctrine feasible enough, that by another act, or by other acts, of our own will, we should finally cease to be such. But if the sentiment placed at the head of this page be the truth of God, and can be proved to be such, then it will be manifest, that in order to the utter and final defection of a Christian, it requireth not only a change in his will (which is indeed fickle and unsteady as the wind), but a change in the will of Him by whose will and power it is that he has become a Christian—a child of God. The Lord grant us true simplicity and subjection to His word, in looking into these matters!

Two passages would of themselves be sufficient to settle our souls as to the subject before us, if we really read them with unquestioning simplicity of faith—“Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (John i. 13); and, “Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of His creatures” (James i. 18). In the former of these, the new birth is expressly declared to be, “not of blood,” or natural descent; “not of the will of the flesh,” or the natural will or choice of the person who is born again; “nor of the will of man,” any agency which other men may choose, or will, to pretend to exercise upon him. In both passages, it is expressly declared to be “of the will of God.” Here I might leave this subject; but, knowing how the thought haunts the minds of those who have had the kind of training both you and I had—“Well, but are not life and death set before us in Scripture? And are we not called on to choose life that we may live?”—I would not thus summarily dismiss the inquiry. There are passages such as these in the Old Testament; and there are some of a somewhat similar character in the New; and every word of God is sacred, and true acquaintance with its meaning important. But it does now appear to me, that

they who use such passages as those just referred to, to shew that the new birth is dependant upon an act of the human will, in the reception of Christ, or of the Gospel that sets Him forth, have entirely mistaken the scope and meaning of those passages, and betray their ignorance of the scope and design of a great part of the Word of God.

To you I need hardly say, that all doubtless who have been saved in all ages, have been saved by grace through faith; but there is a wide difference between the testimony and dealings of God before the crucifixion of Christ, and since that event. Until that event took place, God's dealings with mankind were one continued trial, so to speak, of whether there be in man anything whereby he can, under any circumstances, retrieve or save himself. Not that such trial was needed for God; He knew from the beginning, yea, from before the foundation of the world, what man's course would be, and how it would demonstrate the utter hopelessness of his condition, if left to his own will, with every possible inducement to act aright. But this was to be demonstrated to man himself; and hence the trial. I would not at present dwell upon man's trial in Eden. He was then tried as to whether he could maintain his innocence, by withstanding temptation from without. There was then no tendency to evil within. But when man had fallen—when the great deceiver had succeeded in poisoning all the springs of moral action in man's nature—God neither summarily cut off the offender, nor at once sent the Saviour. Wrapping up a promise of the Saviour in the curse pronounced upon the enemy, he left man, now driven out of Eden, to multiply and fill the earth, and make manifest, without the restraint of an express law such as Adam had been under, what the bent of his will was, the promise all the while affording a resting-place for faith, wherever there was a heart, such as Abel's, Enoch's or Noah's, opened to receive it.

What was the result of this trial? “And God saw that the wickedness of man was great upon the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (Gen. vi. 5). “The earth

also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth" (vers. 11, 12). The evil rose to such a height, that God could no longer tolerate its existence; so the flood was sent to destroy man from off the face of the earth.

Noah had found grace in the eyes of the Lord, and was, with his family, preserved to re-people the earth. Man was thus put on trial once more. After the flood, a new element was introduced, to restrain the violence which had before filled the earth. The ordinance, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed," made man a check and a restraint upon the violence of his fellow-man. But how does man acquit himself under this new principle of human government, thus in its essence introduced? Alas! Noah, the one in whom the authority was naturally invested, debases himself with wine; and, when thus degraded, his own offspring take advantage of his state to degrade him further still! Babel, too, and the cities of the plain; Egypt, with its idolatries and oppressions; and the cities of the Amorites (see Deut. xviii. 9—12), all form specimens of what man proved himself to be in the interim between the flood and the giving of the law. Rom. i. 21—32, presents us with a gloomy picture of what man at this period proved the desires of his heart and the bent of his will to be; as well as of the consequences to which God gave up the Gentile world. But when He did thus give up the Gentiles, He made choice of Israel, that in His dealings with that nation, brought outwardly nigh to Himself, and favoured with every possible advantage, further trial might be made, within a narrower sphere, of what the heart and will of man would produce. It was to this people that the law was given. And Moses, in recapitulating the dealings of God with this people in the wilderness, states that the object was "to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldst keep His commandments or no" (Deut. viii. 2).

It was to Israel that the words so often quoted to prove

that life or death is at our own choice, were spoken: "See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil; in that I command thee this day to love the Lord thy God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments, and His statutes, and His judgments, that thou mayest live and multiply," etc. (Deut. xxx. 15, 16). Again, "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live" (v. 19).

Was it, then, that any were saved by thus choosing life that they might live? This would be to affirm that life could come by keeping the law; and Paul says plainly, "If there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law" (Gal. iii. 21). But then he also says, "If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain" (Gal. ii. 21). This would be a terrible conclusion to come to, indeed. And if you should enquire, as some did in the Apostle's days, "Wherefore then the law?" let the Apostle answer: "It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made" (Gal. iii. 19). And if you should still say, Why added because of transgressions? take for answer the same Apostle's words in another place, "For by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Rom. iii. 20). And again, "Moreover, the law entered that the offence might abound" (Rom. v. 20). And again, "I had not known sin, but by the law" (Rom. vii. 7). And again, "But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful" (ver. 13). Yet once more, "The law worketh wrath" (Rom. iv. 15). Now, it seems to me a serious thing, in the face of all these inspired declarations of what ends the law was designed to answer, to affirm that any were saved by "choosing life" according to the tenor of the words of Moses, which have been quoted. Life was then offered them on condition of obedience to the law; and the Holy Ghost solemnly assures us, that "By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified" (Rom. iii. 20; Gal. ii. 16, 21; iii. 11); that is, in

other words, *they could not have life on the terms proposed by Moses.*

Of this, Moses himself was quite aware. In the very next chapter to that from which his words are quoted, we find that the Lord appeared and said unto him, "Behold, thou shalt sleep with thy fathers; and this people will rise up and go a whoring after the gods of the strangers of the land, whither they go to be among them, and will forsake me, and break my covenant which I have made with them" (Deut. xxxi. 16). They had already broken one covenant of works, in token of which Moses brake the two tables of the law, which were in his hands, when he came down from the mount (see Ex. xxxii. 19). With an unchanged nature, and placed under a similar covenant of works, what could be expected now? What but the results which the Lord assures Moses, and Moses assures the people, would actually ensue? "Now therefore write ye this song for you, and teach it the children of Israel; put it in their mouths, that this song may be a witness for me against the children of Israel. For when I shall have brought them into the land which I swear unto their fathers, that floweth with milk and honey; and they shall have eaten and filled themselves, and waxen fat; then will they turn unto other gods, and serve them, and provoke me, and break my covenant. And it shall come to pass, when many evils and troubles are befallen them, that this song shall testify against them as a witness; for it shall not be forgotten out of the mouths of their seed; *for I know their imagination which they go about, even now, before I have brought them into the land which I swear*" (Deut. xxxi. 19—21). Can anything be more solemn or decisive than these last words? God declared to Moses, that instead of choosing life that they might live, the people would turn to other gods, provoke Him, and break His covenant; and He speaks of these future acts of evil, as only the display of what he knew to be *at the then present time* working in their hearts. "I know their imagination," &c. Hence, Moses says to them, "Take this book of the law, and put it in the side of the Ark of the covenant of the Lord your God." Why? That

they might choose life, and live by keeping it? Nay, but "That it may be there for a witness against thee." "For I know thy rebellion," he proceeds, "and thy stiff neck; behold, whilst I am yet alive with you this day, ye have been rebellious against the Lord; and how much more after my death" (ver. 26, 27)? "For I know," says he again to them, "that after my death ye will utterly corrupt yourselves, and turn aside from the way which I have commanded you; and evil will befall you in the latter days; because ye will do evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke him to anger through the work of your hands" (ver. 29). Surely we need no further answer to those who use Moses' words to prove that salvation depends on human will. If it did, who could be saved?

Joshua's words are sometimes quoted for this purpose, as well as those of Moses; and with as little reason or force. After reminding Israel of the condition in which their fathers were, serving other gods, when the Lord took Abraham from the other side of the flood; after rehearsing to them the wonders which God had wrought, and many of which their eyes had beheld; he exhorts them to fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in truth, and put away other gods; and then he adds, "And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom you will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served, that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Josh. xxiv. 15). The fact is, he does not call upon them to choose between the Lord and idols. He says, "*If it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord*, choose ye," whether ye will serve this class of idols, or that. He, through grace, as we know, was resolved on serving the Lord. But when the people, with good intentions, perhaps, but in a spirit of self-sufficiency, declare that they too will serve the Lord, how does Joshua receive their protestations? "And Joshua said unto the people, ye cannot serve the Lord, for he is a holy God; he is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins. If ye forsake the Lord, and serve strange gods, then he will turn and do you hurt, and consume

you, after that he hath done you good" (ver. 19). And when the people still vow and protest "Nay; but we will serve the Lord," Joshua says to them, "Ye are witnesses against yourselves, that ye have chosen you the Lord, to serve him. And they said, We are witnesses" (ver. 21, 22). Ah, yes; to have our words witness against us, is the only result that can flow from our declaring that we choose the Lord and His service. And as though to shew in what a poor condition they were for taking such vows upon them, Joshua immediately exhorts them: "Now, therefore, put away the strange gods which are among you, and incline your heart unto the Lord God of Israel" (ver. 23). There were, then, strange gods among them! Their hearts, too, needed inclining to serve the Lord! Plain proof that they were, as we know the human heart ever is, averse to His service.

Of this we have still further evidence in that part of their history which immediately succeeds. The Book of Judges is but the history of their sins, and of the calamities which these brought upon them, with the Lord's merciful interpositions for their deliverance. Into this I do not now enter. Nor shall I pursue the thread of their history throughout. It would lead me too far. One point, however, must not be omitted; I refer to the ministry of the prophets. It differed materially from the law simply considered. The law left no room for repentance. It demanded obedience, but failing to obtain that, it had nothing to pronounce or bestow but condemnation and the curse. It was obedience, uniform, unvarying obedience, which the law required; not repentance and a return to obedience. But the prophets were sent to propose, as it were, new terms. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon" (Isa. lv. 7). "Thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to Me, saith the Lord" (Jer. iii. 1). "Go, and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord, and I will not cause Mine anger

to fall upon you; for I am merciful, saith the Lord, and I will not keep anger for ever, O house of Israel. Is not my way equal? Are not your ways unequal? When a righteous man turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and dieth in them—for his iniquity that he hath done he shall die. Again, when the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive. Because he considereth and turneth away from all his transgressions that he hath committed, he shall surely live—he shall not die” (Ezek. xviii. 25—28). Such was the ministry of the prophets. But was this, to prove, any more than Moses’ or Joshua’s language respecting the law, that it was possible for man, of his own will, so to turn from his wickedness and do that which is lawful and right, as to live thereby? Surely not. It was a further test—a milder one—to prove whether it was in the heart or will of man to turn to God, and serve and obey him. It was as though God said, I will not rigorously enforce the claims of my law. It claims uninterrupted and universal obedience. *That* you have utterly failed to render, and the law knows nothing of repentance. But now I give you an opportunity to begin again. “If the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die. All his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him: in his righteousness that he hath done, he shall live.” It was a fair offer to blot out all the past, and begin over again; and this offer was made, be it remembered, *to those who were complaining that their destinies were not in their own hands*. Could a fairer offer have been made? But need I ask you, my brother, whether it were possible for any fallen man to be saved thus? What! by keeping all God’s statutes, and doing for the time to come, that which is lawful and right! Surely this would have been for the doer of these things to live by them, which Paul declares to be the righteousness which is of the law. It was simply affording to those who thought they would have done better than their fathers, an opportunity of shewing what they could do!

And what was the issue of this trial of man by the new proposals of repentance and amendment of life! "And the Lord God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because he had compassion on His people and on His dwelling-place: but they mocked the messengers of God, and despised His words, and misused His prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against His people, till there was no remedy" (2 Chron. xxxvi. 15, 16). These patient dealings of God with Israel were resumed after the captivity; and John the Baptist was the last of the long line of those who were thus sent to Israel. "For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John" (Matt. xi. 13). Did I say, the last in the line? Yes, he was the last in the line of *servants* who were thus employed; but there was One greater than all these servants of God, who came after them all, on the same errand. Will you turn, my brother, to Matt. xxi. 33—xxii. 14, where you will find the summing up of all we have now been considering together, and that from the lips of our blessed Lord Himself. You know the two parables which constitute this passage. A certain householder plants a vineyard, and lets it out to husbandmen. When the time of the fruit draws near, he sends his servants to the husbandmen, that they may receive it. The husbandmen take the servants, beat one, kill another, and stone another. Again he sends other servants more than the first, and they do to them likewise. Last of all, he sends his son, saying, "They will reverence my son." So that one object for which the Son of God was sent, was to seek fruit of those to whom the vineyard had been entrusted. How was He received? "But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance. And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him." The meaning of this cannot be mistaken. The Jewish nation were the husbandmen. All the privileges God had bestowed upon them were the vineyard. The obedience He required was the fruit, which they ought to have rendered. The law demanded it, but in vain. Prophet

after prophet came seeking it; but maltreatment or death was all that they received. Last of all came Jesus, the Heir. Him, also, they put to death. What can be done more? What further test of man's heart and will can be applied? There is a further test; and the application of this, with the result, is illustrated in the next parable, at the beginning of chap. xxii.

Jesus came, not only as the last of those whom God sent, seeking fruit from man—He came as the messenger and minister of God's grace to man. "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, and sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding; AND THEY WOULD NOT COME." Here it is not the lord of the vineyard seeking fruit—God requiring of man the service, the obedience due to Him. No; it is a king inviting to a wedding-feast—God, in His grace, providing everything for man, and inviting him to partake. But he is no more inclined to receive God's bounty, than to satisfy God's claims. THEY WOULD NOT COME. But this is not all; the first refusal is not received as final. "Again he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage." Christ, as seeking fruit, is rejected and slain. He is equally rejected as inviting Israel, by means of His disciples, to partake of the feast which God had provided. But when they have thus rejected Him, grace still lingers over them, and His very death is made the occasion of renewed invitations. "All things are ready" (this could hardly have been said before): "come unto the marriage." "But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise: and the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully and slew them." Such is the reception with which all God's overtures, as well as His claims, are met on the part of man. He claims obedience, seeks fruit—man will not render it. He publishes grace, providing a wedding-feast, and inviting guests—"they would not come." He repeats His invitations, descanting on the plenteousness of the

provision, and declaring that all things are ready. It is all to no purpose. Some light-heartedly despise His bounty, preferring their merchandise or their farm; others, more cruel in their rejection of grace, spitefully entreat and slay the servants who are sent to invite them. Such is man, and such man's will, with every possible advantage, short of that Almighty grace which subdues his opposition, and makes him willing to receive Christ, and the salvation He has brought. Such grace it is, and such grace alone, by which any become the children of God.

The marriage was made by the king for his son. The feast was provided to grace this marriage. Is the king's son to be despoiled of his marriage-feast, because of the perversity and obstinacy of those first invited as guests? These, or many of them, perish for their contempt of God's grace; but other messengers still are sent out—not now to those who might have expected to be invited, but into the highways, to bid as many as they find. “So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all, as many as they found, both bad and good; and the wedding was furnished with guests.” In Luke xiv., where we have a similar parable, the servants are told, “Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and BRING IN hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind.” They were to *bring them in*. It is not an appeal to their will, as to whether they will come; they are to be brought in. When this is done, the servant says, “Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and COMPEL them to come in, that my house may be filled.” If we are really guests at Christ's table, it is not that we have of ourselves chosen to come when invited, nor even when urged; but because we have been *brought in*, or *compelled to come*. That is, the opposition of our natural will has been overcome by that Almighty grace, which, in thus overcoming our opposition, has made us willing, and brought us in. This is beautifully expressed in the well-known lines:—

"Nay, but I yield, I yield,
I can hold out no more ;
I sink, by dying love compell'd,
And own Thee conqueror !"

No man becomes a child of God by an act of his own will!

"No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost."

"God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ."

"And you being dead in your sins, and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath He quickened together with Him."

"For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

"But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus."

"Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you."

"Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of His creatures."

"Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

Commending these scriptures to your most prayerful consideration,

I remain,

Dear brother,

Affectionately yours in Christ,

FRAGMENT.

THERE is such a thing as "*a moral cannot*," as well as "*a physical cannot*." In the former, our *wills*, tastes, affections, thoughts, and he who rules us by these, are often stronger than our judgments. Awful state! if our being subject to God is in question. "I have married a wife, and cannot come" told a tale about the want of *heart* and *will*, not of external ability. H. P.

N^o. XIX.

REVELATIONS XXI., XXII.

WE have here the description of "the heavenly city." It is called "the Bride, the Lamb's wife," that we may know how to identify it. "The Bride," however, as such, would awaken altogether a different train of thoughts. But it is important to identify the city and the Bride, and to give its true character to the heavenly city in contrast with Babylon. The state described here, is not the perfect and eternal state, as "the leaves of the tree for the healing of the nations" shews; though of course the heavenly saints themselves are perfect. It is God's great centre—the heavenly one—of all He has brought together in power and government, the heavenly capital, so to speak, of His millennial empire; and therefore we find it in connection with Christ, and presented as a city. It is to be, after Christ, the manifestation and centre of glory. And we have to thank God, that He not only gives us what satisfies personal affection by presenting to us the person of Jesus in the glory, but unfolds also to us, by means of figures—the Spirit enabling us to understand them—*what the glory is* prepared from everlasting, so that the heart thus becomes acquainted with it.

We have seen already in this book that, previous to the display of this heavenly city, the imperious One who said, "I sit as a queen; and I shall see no sorrow," has been destroyed, and now we get "a city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." Of the other, we may say it was "earthly, sensual, devilish." It had all that Satan could produce to attract man, as man. Every thing that ministered to the ease, comfort, and glory of man, was to be found there; the merchandize of gold, and of silver, and of precious stones, and all that was

costly and desirable. Thus, taking it as a whole, it was man's city and Satan's city. For whatever is now of man, as man on the earth, is looked at by God as in connexion with Satan. Therefore, when Peter said, "This be far from Thee, Lord," the Lord replied, "Get thee behind Me, Satan; thou art an offence unto Me; for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men." Here the Lord stamps that which is "of men, as being according to Satan," and therefore an offence to Him. So to the Jews He said; "Ye are from beneath, I am from above; ye are of this world, I am not of this world"; thus stamping everything that is of the spirit of this world as "from beneath." Babylon had this in perfection, for she was the mother of harlots—the spring and source of corruption; but to every true tie to the things of God, or to God Himself, she was an utter stranger. But we have seen that this great Babylon was judged of God—that after that, and the marriage of the Lamb, the Lord came out in person and made war with the adverse power, accompanied by the saints; the first resurrection having taken place, and that then, the victory achieved, the kingdom was in the hands of Christ, and the saints, who live and reign with Him a thousand years; that during this period, Satan is bound, after which he is loosed again for a little season; and that when he is cast into the lake of fire, and the judgment of the white throne passed, and the new heavens and the new earth come in, then "God is all in all."

In the first eight verses of this twenty-first chapter, we have the time when God shall be all in all, closing the prophetic history of the book. Beyond that period it evidently cannot go; in what follows, the prophet turns back to the description of the New Jerusalem; to what the Bride, the Lamb's wife is, while Christ is reigning. The scene here displayed is the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven, from God. The prophetic history entirely closes; the mediatorial kingdom passes away when all is perfectly brought into order—when God is all in all. But though the mediatorial kingdom is given up, of course Christ does not cease

to be man. It is part of His perfection which remains for ever. Instead of carrying on the mediatorial kingdom, when He has put down all rule and all authority, He delivers up the kingdom to God, even the Father. The result does not pass away. The proper personal glory never passes away. The mediatorial glory will close; that which is personal never can.

It is well to notice, that when the angel comes to shew Babylon in xvii. 1, he describes her wide-spread influence, "sitting by the many waters;" but when here he comes to shew the New Jerusalem, there is nothing to be said of her; it is enough to say, that she is "the Bride, the Lamb's wife." The harlot could ride the beast, and spread corruption far and wide; she had immense power, but *affection she had none*. While the harlot is saying, "I sit as a queen, and shall see no sorrow," the Bride feels that she is not her own, but that she belongs to another. While the love of influence, the "sitting beside many waters" is the spirit of Babylon, the character of dependence marks the Bride. Ah! beloved friends, if we are seeking power or worldly influence, the spirit of Babylon is in us. The only influence we should court, as to service or as to anything else, should be the result of attachment to Christ alone, and dependence upon Him. Affection for Him is the one thing. There will be plenty of trial and difficulty, where this exists: but *there will be no thwarted affections* when He is the object. We shall never find in Him what does not satisfy. This is happiness. There may be plenty in us needing to be subdued, and this will give us trouble, and 'tis labour, alas, often, to keep the heart up to a sense of His love; but that single word, "the Bride, the Lamb's wife" is quite enough for us; for was there ever an affection wanting in Christ toward us? Never. Never shall we find defect in the object of our affections, though we shall find defect in the affection in ourselves, lack of ability to enjoy the fulness of our portion. A true sense of the abiding love of Jesus to us is that which gives perfect peace to the love that is looking to Jesus. One source of our failure in realising the love of Jesus is, that our hearts, though enlarged by the Holy Ghost, are too

little to answer to it. Herein lies the marked difference as has been remarked between the Book of Ecclesiastes and the Song of Solomon. In Ecclesiastes it is said, "What can the man do that cometh after the king, who hath gathered to himself peculiar treasure of all the sons of men?" But the larger his heart was in its intelligence and in its desires, the less there was to fill it, so that everything issued in "vanity and vexation of spirit." But what was wanting in the Song of Solomon—primarily applicable no doubt to the Jewish remnant—was a heart large enough to take in the all-satisfying object of its love. And oh, what a thought it is, that Jesus and all the glory He has received is ours! as He says, "the glory which Thou gavest me, I have given them."

The heavenly city comes down from God out of heaven. It is of, and from God, where all is good. God is the infinite and eternal source of good, and in the person of Christ we get the form and fulness of it. If it is righteousness it is from God; if holiness it is from God; if love, it is God's nature. We being made partakers of grace all that is thus displayed in us comes directly from God. So that in a secondary sense, the Church even down here, is the manifestation of the glory of God; though here there will spring up that which is of man and is corrupt. But there, all that is of us disappears, and all that is displayed in us comes from God. And I would, here add, that there is not a single grace that, in the power of the Spirit of God, ought not to be manifested by us now, poor failing ones as we are. There was not one which Jesus did not manifest, for He was the Son of Man in heaven when walking here on earth; and we as the epistle of Christ ought to be known and read of all men.

The glory of this city is presented to us in detail; and although it is divine, "the Glory of God," it is also human, as the number twelve shews. We see this in the Lord. If He took up a babe in His arms it was a gracious act of humanity; but the love that prompted it was divine. A Rabbi might despise a child, but Jesus did not, though "God over all, blessed for ever." The city had "the glory of God." The Church is that in which

God will display Himself in glory. But this glory is not the essential glory of God, but the communicated glory; as it is written "the glory which thou gavest me, I have given them." While this is wonderful, yet it is what ought to be. For ought there to be any other glory beside the glory of God? Certainly not. And, surely, that which is nearest to God, next to Christ, ought to have His glory. For there is no glory that is not God's glory. And how can we understand the shewing out of the riches of God's glory if He does not display them? The creation does in one sense shew the glory of His power, "the heavens declare the glory of God." But when it comes to be the fruit of redemption, the fruit of the travail of Christ's soul, it is for the display of the glory of God in a yet higher way. It was done at His own cost, and could it be less than His glory at such a cost? There is not an attribute or part of the character of God that has not been perfectly glorified in the work of redemption. It is wonderful if we think of ourselves that it should be so, but if the Church is to be for the glory of God, it must be displayed in what is worthy of God. If Christ is to be "glorified in His saints, and admired in all them that believe," the glory must be God's; it cannot be unworthy of Himself. And the way I measure it is—it is the fruit of the travail of Christ's soul. God commended His love toward me, in that while I was a sinner, and such a sinner as I was, Christ died for me. The very things about which Christ glorified God are the very things which I find to be in myself, and thus I find that God has been fully glorified about every one of my sins. So in apprehending myself to be a sinner, I just see the very thing that shews me all the glory to be of and from God. There is nothing in us, all is of grace. If anything of ours is mixed up with our hopes of glory it is utter folly. It would be madness to talk of what is of us and the glory of God at the same time. The vessel is nothing, save as it is owned and filled of God; and thus it comes simply and happily to the soul. The moment I see the whole of it to be the display of God's glory, my soul can rest in peace. He has taken me up a poor sinner that it might be fully

known that nothing but His grace had done it: and I know His love passeth knowledge. And what is more still, I know I shall never get out of it, for the love of God is infinite; and if I am in that which is infinite, I can not, indeed, measure it, but I know I can never get out of it.

“Her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal.” When speaking of the displayed glory of God, as man can see it, it is said to be like “a jasper and a sardine stone,” iv. 3. So the light of this city is “like a jasper stone clear as crystal.” It is a divine glory which clothes it. Scripture give us an understanding of what these figures mean, if, taught of God’s Spirit, we are at the pains to compare its statements. These precious stones give us not the simple brightness of colourless light, God is this; for if I look at God, at what He is essentially, He is light. “God is light.” But if He shews Himself through the tears and sorrows of this life, then I get the rainbow. The light is broken into divers rays, as shining through a prism. So in these precious stones we get, not the essential glory of God as light, but the light broken up as it were, in various mediate beauties; we get the unfoldings of the various ways and dealings of God with His creatures. We see these stones in creation, then in grace, and then in glory.

In creation, Ezekiel xxviii.; in grace on the breast-plate of the High-priest; in glory here as the foundation of the city. Whatever God has displayed of His moral glory in righteousness as well as in judgment is concentrated in the Church. Into this I will enter more fully when taking up the meaning of the stones, connected as they are with grace and with judgment.

“And the city had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates,” shewing perfect security. When men seek to protect a place, it is by building high walls of immense thickness. So this city, which is the royal seat has a wall great and high displaying the majesty of God as builder. It is perfectly secure, in a dignity which isolated it, so to speak, so that it could not possibly be entered but by those who belong to it.

"At the gates were twelve angels." The angels wait at the gates as door-keepers; elevated above us in creation here, they are but keepers of the gates; they are porters to this city of God, shewing that all providential power but ministers to this glory.

On the gates were written "the names of the twelve tribes of Israel," shewing government in perfection as God's. All His patient dealings in government and goodness with man are here displayed.

"And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb." The perfect immutable foundations of truth are all here. The character in which the truth is displayed is the unchangeable truth of the gospel; "the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth." What we get as the church as such is a special glory; but that which is the foundation on which she rests is truth from eternity, everlasting truth, a full and perfect revelation. As to light, we are "in the light as God is in the light;" and then as to love, "God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God and God in him." But when we come to the foundation of the Church, it is the truth, the everlasting truth of God—redemption according to His work and power.

What we have in Christ, moreover, as to His person, cannot be less than the fulness of God, eternal truth being at the bottom. It is God revealed in Christ, "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, suffered you to put away your wives, says the Lord; but from the beginning it was not so. We cannot say so, for Christ is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever;" and again, "that which was from the beginning declare we unto you." So Paul, though stating the deep counsels of God, takes up the most elementary truths, which no counsels ever change, because our relationship is with God, who never can; for if we are brought into the relationship of children, it is with a God of eternal holiness and eternal love. And it is joy to our souls to know that we are not only brought into connexion with certain dealings of God, as

the Jews were, but with God Himself, as known in Jesus.

The city is a divine thing, but in human manifestation and perfection. The names here shew human administration, and the number twelve repeated that it is exceedingly perfect. The number seven in Scripture always denotes the perfection of spiritual agency whether for good or evil; but when the dealings of God are in or through man, the number twelve is used, to signify perfection in government in human administration.

“And the city lieth four-square, and the length is as large as the breadth.” It is a square, not a circle. It has not the perfection of a circle—a figure used for eternity—but the perfection of that which is formed. It is the most perfect of created things.

“And the building of the wall of it was of jasper; and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass.” The measure and character of this city is not after the thoughts of man. Man said, “Let us build a city and a tower, and make us a name. And they had brick for stone, and slime for mortar.” But God is the builder of this city, and it carries the divine glory. There is no slime or bitumen here: “the building of the wall of it was of jasper.” “And the city was of pure gold, like unto clear glass,” transparent in purity. Gold is an emblem of divine righteousness; and the “clear glass” reminds us of the brazen sea in Solomon’s temple, set for the priests to wash their hands and feet in when they went in to serve. But there is no need for that here. There is nothing to defile here. Here it is solid purity, standing out in all its clearness. In the fifteenth chapter we get the sea of glass “mingled with fire,” because connected with tribulation.

In the fourth of Ephesians Paul speaks, without symbol, of “the new man, created after God in righteousness and true holiness.” So, likewise, this city is the display of this work of God in man; just what it was fitting it should be. It is not man’s righteousness, nor man’s innocence; neither will do: but it is divine righteousness and divine holiness. Holiness is separation

from evil; innocence, ignorance of evil. We do not say that God is innocent, but that God is holy; because He hates all the evil He knows, and delights in the good. And God's new creation, perfected after His image, delights in what is good, and hates all that is evil. God has produced this by His own power. The city is pure as gold, transparent as glass. Well may we exclaim, O the depth and the wealth of the divine righteousness and holiness!

But let us now turn to the stones. In Eze. xxviii. in the lamentation over the king of Tyrus, we find them denoting the perfection of created beauty. "Thou sealest the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty." The sum of beauty was the creature display of this perfection; the light bringing out these bright colours in the creature. Every precious stone was his covering. He was the brightest in creation; but when he looked at it as his own, and not as created perfection put upon him, then his heart was lifted up because of his beauty, and his wisdom corrupted by reason of his brightness, and he fell. In Exod. xxviii. we see these stones brought out as the sum of beauty in the way of grace. They were in the breastplate of the High Priest, and joined to the ephod, so that when he went into the holy place he bore the names of the children of Israel. It was for a memorial before the Lord continually. So Christ bears our names in his heart, ever living to make intercession. Then in the 30th verse the Urim and the Thummim are placed in this breastplate of judgment—light and perfection. Aaron bore the names of the children of Israel on his heart as an accepted people before the Lord. "And Aaron shall bear the judgment of the children of Israel upon his heart before the Lord continually;" that is, he maintains them in communion in spite of failure. He first bore the names on his heart in the stones on the breastplate, so that when God looked out to bless He saw their names continually. And then there was the intercession to maintain the communion of a failing people with the unfailing light. Thus Israel is seen in perfectness in the presence of God in grace. So now when God looks out in divine favour, it is on Christ Himself. The

children's names are all engraven on His heart, their judgment borne in the details of their ways, as regards the government of God, and displayed in their beauty, to get the answers of light and perfection; for such was the Urim and Thummim. Here again we see these precious stones in glory, all centred in this glorious city, the brightness not maintained by effort or exercise of power, but settled, not a part of the glory merely, but "the foundations of the wall of the city garnished with all manner of precious stones," every grace shining out in unchanging beauty. The wall of jasper showing how divine, the gold how righteous, its transparence how holy and pure, and these stones the varied perfection of all communicated grace and beauty, and all is centred in "the Bride, the Lamb's wife."

"And the twelve gates were twelve pearls, every several gate was of one pearl." It was in Christ's heart to seek a goodly pearl. It was upon that His heart was set; and "when He had found one pearl of great price, He sold all that He had and bought it." He was not merely seeking a treasure, but He was seeking a goodly pearl; and He knew what was tasteful and comely. All the grace of the church was what the heart of Christ was set upon, as that which was perfectly fair and beautiful. Now every gate was this, "every several gate was of one pearl." On the very outside the comeliness and beauty of this city was to be seen. The character of Christ stood at the very entrance. Not only was there righteousness and true holiness within, but on the outside there was all that was lovely and comely; so that the very angels who entered not in, could stand at the gate, and even there see the loveliness which God had put upon it. So even here below the character of Christ ought to be manifested to every beholder. Even the stranger should be able to discern it, the saints being "the epistle of Christ, known and read of all men."

"And the street of the city was of pure gold, as it were transparent glass." This confirms us as to the import of the Lord's words to His disciples in John xiii. When speaking of His finished work for them, He says, "He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet,

but is clean every whit;" that is, he has been cleansed once for all. But his feet become defiled in walking through the world, and therefore need washing again and again for service. This is not an excuse for failure, although the Lord takes occasion from it to display His rich provision for meeting our daily need. We have the same figure in the case of the priests who served in the tabernacle. Their bodies were washed once for all at their consecration, and this was never repeated; but every time they went into the tabernacle they washed their hands and their feet. "He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet." Mark His love. Not content with serving down here even unto death "to wash us from our sins in His own blood," He girds Himself to serve even in heaven, that we may continue in communion. "Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it by the washing of water through the word." Thus we have the written word in its application to the daily details of life. So to Peter the Lord said, "If I wash thee not thou hast no part with me." If we are to have part with Him, we are to be as clean as He can make us. And as we are to have part with Him, His grace now as then leads Him to gird Himself, and remove the defilement.

But in this golden city the very streets are righteousness and true holiness. There I shall walk without being defiled; I shall walk upon holiness there. Walking in purity is with labour here. Even if we do keep ourselves from defilement here, we are wearied with the effort, and if we do not we are weary of ourselves. But oh! what a thought! I shall walk on streets of pure gold there! What rest it gives to the heart and conscience, to think of walking and not needing to toil to keep myself from defilement, not needing to watch lest my garments become spotted with the world! Whilst here, because of the world, the flesh, and the devil, we have always to watch and pray. What! always? Yes, always. Whilst in this defiled place, we must have our loins well girded and our affections tightly tucked up, for if we let them flow, they will certainly get into the mire. But when He comes, He will ungird us, and make

us sit down at ease, and He will gird Himself and come forth and serve us. What a relief to the heart to think that I may let out all my affections and meet nothing but God! that the more I let them flow, the more I shall be enlarged to take in my fill of blessedness! This ought to be our aim now.

“And I saw no temple therein, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.” Here the difference of worship is marked. How strange to a Jew, there is no temple needed here! God had said He would dwell in the thick darkness, and when the glory filled the house the priests could not minister. And, moreover, that which shut the glory in, shut man out. For in Jerusalem God had shut Himself up to be revered; therefore He must shut man out. The natural consequence of even a partial display of the glory is to add that which should keep aloof from familiarity. In the temple He surrounded Himself with majesty which made men feel how great He was, but this hid Himself. But there is no temple here, for “the Lord God Almighty, and the Lamb are the temple of it.” Here, it is not that which hides God, whilst surrounding Him with majesty, nor that which shuts us out, but God surrounds us with Himself, while He perfectly reveals Himself. His own glory, and that revealed is His temple, and there “man speaks of His honour.” Blessed thought it is, God and the Lamb are the temple, and there we worship.

The Lord give us, only to enter more fully into His wondrous Grace, and then it will be easy for us to understand how this wondrous glory can all be ours. When we know ourselves to be nothing, and yet are able to say He has loved me, we shall not wonder that God should do all this for us, seeing He has loved us so. The Holy Ghost always reasons downwards from what *God is*, to what He cannot but do, because He is God. Man, on the contrary, reasons from what *man is*, to what God may *possibly* do for him, according to what he is himself; and so argues all wrong. The Holy Ghost reasons thus, “He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up freely to the death for us all, how shall He not with

Him also freely give us all things." I learn from this to expect great things, and I cannot expect too highly if God is to be glorified in it. For if Christ is to be glorified in His Saints, and admired in all them that believe, what will not God do to display the glory of His Son?

Shall I be thinking about the worshipper, although thus glorified and adorned, when I see Him who is worshipped? No, I shall be occupied with Him who has brought me there. The present practical result ought to be that our hearts should be adoring the riches and the wonders of His grace, as David (1 Chron. xvii.) when he sat before the Lord. "Who am I, O Lord God, and what is mine house that thou hast brought me hitherto!" Oh! to get our souls more filled with what He is, as David rested even in his knowledge of it, and argued from it (vers. 26 and 27). We have often spoken of the prodigal son who disappears, as it were, when he reached His Father's house. It is the Father then who fills the whole scene. And the Father's bosom will be the place of our worship in that scene of glory. Well, let Him have our hearts for His temple now, while yet our bodies are down here, until he takes us to be with Him for ever. Amen.

CHAP. XXI.

In the former part of this chapter we saw the glory of the heavenly Jerusalem, and her own intrinsic blessing; now we have before us her relative position, and the blessing of which she is the vessel also for others.

In vers. 22—24 we have two thoughts presented to us, worship and testimony. In the Golden City we get both, and the worship is direct and immediate, for there was "no temple therein." Before Christianity came in, there was no testimony to the world; but when grace had come in, and God had shewn out what He was to sinners, then there was a testimony to carry the knowledge of it to the world. It was not so in the Jewish system. God had then a temple, but there was no testimony in the temple to call the Gentiles in. There was

a temple for worship, a testimony among the people in whose midst he dwelt; but there was no testimony sent out to the Gentiles. God never manifested Himself, He was hid among the people He had formed around Him; even the High Priest went in with a cloud of incense "lest he die." But now that the Gospel has come in, it is the reverse of this. God, being known in love to those within, sends forth a testimony of His love to sinners without; whilst those within can worship in perfect peace. The moment Christ came, God was revealed to men; and the moment the veil was rent by the death of Christ, there was immediate and perfect access into the presence of God, and perfect love flowing out to the world. And, therefore, we find these two things here; no veil, and perfect access into the presence of God, and necessarily the testimony of the love that brought us there. There is no temple there, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And if those within would speak of the temple, it is of God Himself that they must speak.

"And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine on it; for the glory of God did lighten it and the Lamb is the light thereof." There was no need of light from another medium, no need of sun or moon; for the glory of God did lighten it. There was the full display of His glory. It was not a mere testimony about God, but God Himself was there, filling it with light. "The glory of God did lighten it," but it is added, "the Lamb is the light thereof." The Lamb is the one in whom the glory is manifested, and by whom it is displayed. The glory is too brilliant, too absolute to lay hold of an affection, wonderful as it is, an object is still wanting for the heart, therefore I get an object which fixes me in the midst of it; just as I cannot fix my eye on the light which pervades a room, though I can on the candle from which it flows. If a blaze of glory fills a place, I shall be lost, as it were, in the midst of it; but here I get a known person who carries all the glory. Here, I find the Lamb, whom I had known down here in suffering love; and in the midst of all the brightness my heart is fixed and at rest.

The glory is divine that is needed for perfection, and that God may be every thing; but God, in his nature, cannot be made an instrument of service—the Lamb is the light thereof. “And the nations of them that are saved shall walk in the light of it.” Saved from terrible judgments, they no longer “sacrifice to their net, nor burn incense to their drag,” nor yet “walk in the sparks that they kindled.” They will see the light in us, and walk by it. We ought to shine in spirit practically now, the nations ought to see the light of God and of the Lamb in us now; but in that day it will be perfectly accomplished. If there be any light now from God in this dark world, it is in the Church, though the candlestick burns but dimly; but in that day, when there will be nothing in us to dim the light, what a bright light it will be for the world! We shall be the light; the perfect manifestation of the light in which we shall walk; for we shall see God and the Lamb, and be the perfect manifestation of it to others. Even now, to the extent that I am enjoying God in my own soul, I shall have power to manifest Him to another; for my only desire will be that God and the Lamb may be glorified in me. But though, now I find so many hindrances to this, in that day, without anything between me and God, I shall worship God without a temple and without a cloud. We shall see the glory in Him, and the world shall see it in us. Thus we have the double joy of first knowing Him for ourselves, and then of communicating this to others. If I could be more faithful to give out Christ’s light, what a joy it would be! Seeing Him first for myself, and then giving out the light that others might see Him in me as the epistle of Christ, for such we are declared to be. We should not be satisfied with our own individual joy in Him, but, as we learn to estimate Him, desire that He might be glorified in us, and by others through us. In that day of glory, everything in which God has dealt with man, or in which he has displayed His ways and thoughts, will be brought out to manifest the stability of God. All that has been put into man’s hand to exercise him, and in man’s hand has failed, will then be brought out in perfection; thus proving

the failure to have been in man and not in the thing committed to him. Take man himself. How has he failed! In the second Adam God will be, and for ever, fully glorified. Creation itself is witness to the same truth. The law was given to man, and he failed to keep it; but in that day it will be written on their hearts. Then take power, which God had given to man, to use for his glory, and how did he use it. To rise up in pride against God-enforced duty, and at last crucify His Son. We find all combining against Christ, both the Chief Priests, and Herod and Pontius Pilate. "The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together, against the Lord and against His Christ." But in that day, "the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honor into it." Then again, after His rejection, the only thing God had for a testimony, was the Church, failing though it be; as the only thing He can now own as witness, is that which owns His rejected Son. But in that day we *shall* be all that we ought to be now. In that day, "the nations of them that are saved shall walk in the light of the city," and the "Lamb is the light thereof." He will then attract every eye, and fill the heart of every worshipper within, and be admired in them by those without.

"And the gates shall not at all be shut by day." There is no fear there, no war or dread; all is perfect security. And night there is none! All that is ended, and there is no more darkness.

"And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it."^a There is not only the absence of evil, but the universal acknowledgment that "the heavens do rule." Both kings and people bring their glory and honour into it. Unto whom? To the poor despised Carpenter's Son, and to those who walked with Him. When He was in the world they could not see His glory; but they shall see it, and bow down to it, when He comes in glory. Those who saw it when it was hidden from the world, and were hidden too with Him, shall be with Him and share His glory when He shall be manifested.

^a Read "unto," or "to it."

Love brought Him down in humiliation, but He could not clothe Himself in vanity; and so if God's glory is to be manifested, His person is to be the display of it. It is not the effort of man that makes much of a thing, but it is Christ alone that attracts; and those who will there be vessels of His glory, will be those who simply follow Christ in lowliness; making everything of Christ, and nothing of themselves.

"And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth." There is great relief in this. For if we speak now of our poor hearts, surely defilement gets in. And if we look at the Church while under responsibility—although God graciously keeps His saints—defilement creeps in, although it ought not. But there, blessed be God, nothing that defileth can enter! There holiness can rest. It has no rest here. Down here, in this sin-stricken world, these two things, holiness and rest, must, as regards what is without, be apart; because sin is down here, and Christ is not down here. Watching is not rest. It is faithfulness, and brings its joy, but it is toil and not rest, although, through grace, it is a blessing! But there holiness will rest, and that will be the highest happiness. Of course, God Himself will be the highest; but of that which flows from God, holiness will be the highest. It is that which characterizes our state; for God Himself is love.

"Neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie." Here we have something more than the new nature. That we have now; but there nothing can come in to disturb it, nothing can come in to soil the golden streets of that city, nothing can enter to distract the soul as to God and His truth. There will be no abomination nor anything that maketh a lie; in the idolatry of an ordinance coming in between the soul and God, turning it aside from the simple truth, that God is love. For whatever is not entirely and wholly of God, is an abomination and maketh a lie. Then there will be no ornament worn which tells of the idolatry of the heart, taking something apart from God. O, if any one is really interested in the welfare of the Church of God, his heart must be ready to break when he sees the many thousand

things that come in to distract the affections of the saints; the many thousand forms of idolatry, "the abomination and that which maketh a lie," coming in to separate between us and the One God and Father, and the One Risen Head. It may be worldliness, ordinances, circumcision; in short, whatever makes a lie. Paul's heart was in an agony when he saw these things coming in. Look at his epistle to the Galatians, when they were turning away from Christ to circumcision; or at that to the Colossians, who were slipping away from the Risen Head and turning to ordinances, which is idolatry and worldliness; thus departing from Christ as the only object before the soul, which is an abomination against the truth, and therefore "a lie." But, blessed be God, into this glorious city there shall in no wise enter anything that defileth. No abomination shall enter there, no idolatry, not one principle to turn aside from God, or to make a lie, disturbing and distracting the affections from their one object, Christ. Not only what is good is there, but what secures it from the introduction of evil and all that brings in corruption.

All this, however, is negative; but we get what is positive as well. And what is positive? Who shall enter into this heavenly Jerusalem? "They who are written in the Lamb's book of life." It is not said "they who are clean," it is not by the cold fact that they are clean that they are characterised; but the affections are linked up with the Lamb's heart, while we know that clean they are. They who are written in His book are according to His heart. And they are all there. All that the Lamb had in His heart from eternity; all for whom He had girded His loins and made Himself a servant for ever, saying, "I will not go out free"; all are there; for they were associated with Him, and they shall be associated with Him, and with His heart and thoughts for ever.

There are, also, the relationships of the place; and if our minds are ever so vague as to the understanding of the things, though they may be as obscure as the symbols used, yet we shall get positive thoughts by the Spirit of God from them, when we take what Christ is, and has taught us as the key to it all. The moment you get

your heart and spirits into the tone of Christ's mind, and have your thoughts occupied with what He is, and with what has occupied His thoughts and His heart—with His house and His glory—then everything takes its proper place, and your heart and understanding become enlarged, to comprehend this blessed book. If I am living in a house, everything in it is natural to me, and there are every day details which fill up the mind; and if I have got the house, I know what I shall find there and what I shall not; and that is really spiritual understanding. If I know, in any little measure, what exercise of heart is, I know that Christ is the answer to every desire that He Himself has awakened in my soul; and it is only those who are spiritual who can understand.

In chap. xxii. we get what is relative, because the aspect of the city towards what is down here on the earth—in connexion with Christ, of course—but its blessings are towards the earth. The tree of life grows in heaven, and belongs to heaven, yet its virtues flow out towards the earth. And though the Church is in glory, as long as there is a need to be met, love is to be exercised; and the Lord uses the Church for this. It is in this sense that is said, "His servants shall serve Him," which implies that there are those who need serving. The nations get healing, but there will be no need of healing in heaven. This service brings in new joy, for the members of the Church will not there have lost this honour of being the instrument to others; we shall have the privilege of being the channels through which the blessings will flow to the earth. And so now we ought to be the channels of love and grace to the world, as also more especially to the saints, while needing it here below.

"And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb." And there was also "the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits," etc. The tree of life was there, but there is no mention of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. The tree of life was the blessing; the tree of knowledge of good and evil the test of responsibility, of which Adam ate and was lost.

These two principles, Life and Responsibility, have run on from that moment up to this very hour, and will continue to run on until God has made all things anew. Some, having eaten of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, while in the nature consequent on this, cannot eat of the fruit of the tree of life. But God, in the aboundings of His grace, has given us more than ever we lost; for the spring of grace has flowed out to us in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, who undertook all our responsibilities, took upon Himself all the wrath due to our sins, died under it, and rose again in the power of an endless life; in which new life, being first in Him and afterwards communicated to me, I can eat of the fruits of that tree of life, once barred from me by reason of sin. Now that sin is for ever put away, and in that new nature which is incapable of sinning, I can freely eat the fruits of the tree of life; as Jesus says, in addressing the Church of Ephesus, "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God," thus bringing us into the enjoyment of the full result of all—of the full ripe fruits that everlasting life in Jesus can produce; the outward manifestation of it shall heal the nations, as, indeed, it has healed us. But I would again remark, that all this blessing is the fruit of free and sovereign grace. For if there had been no responsibility on man's part, there would have been no need of a Saviour. It is because we were totally lost that grace has its place. It was because I had totally failed, having followed my own will instead of doing God's will, that God has come in in grace and brought me nearer to Himself in redemption, than I had been set at the first in creation and innocence; for now I am created anew in Christ Jesus.

"The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations." The nations cannot eat of the ripe fruit of tree, because they need healing; but the Church, thus possessing the grace of life herself, will go forth in healing grace to those who need it. If you turn to Isaiah lx., you will see the contrast between the earthly and the heavenly Jerusalem shewn in a remarkable manner, although in some respects the heavenly

one is drawn from the earthly. In Isaiah, we find nothing about healing in the earthly Jerusalem, but the reverse. We read there—"The nation and kingdom that will not serve Thee shall perish, yea these nations shall be utterly wasted." But in the heavenly Jerusalem—"the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations." Thus we see that Israel will be a test of legal responsibility, as it ever was; but it will be the vessel of power and dominion. Israel of old had no ministry, because it had no love to carry forth to other people; but it had a priesthood within, because the veil not being rent by Christ's death, they could not get direct to God, and therefore needed a priest. But now with us we have no priest on earth, because by the death of Christ we are brought into the immediate presence of God, and therefore a ministry is committed to us; that is, we are called upon to testify of the grace that brought us there. And, therefore, when in the glory we shall be going forth to the healing of the nations, for whilst ourselves feeding on the ripe fruit of the Tree of Life up there, the outgoings of love will reach down here.

"And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God, and the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him." God was saying to Israel under the Law, "If you defile yourselves you will bring the curse." But in the heavenly city, which will be a source of blessing, there will be "no more curse." It is not here, however, children with the Father, but the throne of God in majesty; not as Sinai, which brought a curse, but the throne of God and the Lamb—ministry and grace. That is, the throne of God and the Lamb is the spring and source of the blessing, whilst the channel through which this grace will flow will be the Church, and so it is said, "His servants shall serve Him," ministering to those who need it. It is not intrinsic joy, but service that is the characteristic here. And as there will be no flaw in the blessing within, so there will be no failure in the service without. If the light is perfect, so will the service be. I shall not have to canvass my conduct then as I now have to do, saying, "O if I had been faithful enough I should have said this or done that; or if there

had been love enough in my heart I should have gone here or gone there;" but there it will be a perfect service flowing from a perfect source! What rest such service will be! For "they shall see His face, and His name shall be in their foreheads." Not only will they serve rightly, but men will see that they do so, the perfect witness to the name they bear, the full confession of it. "His name shall be in their foreheads." And here I would remark, that it is not that we should be doing so much service that should be before us, but that Christ should be glorified in what we do, and we not seen in it; God's mark being in our foreheads, that all may see whose we are and whom we serve.

"And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light," etc. The Lord God giveth them light, therefore they need no candle, no borrowed light, for they get immediate light from God Himself. He Himself giveth them light, so now, if at any time you have walked by the light of another's candle less spiritual than yourselves, you must have been led wrong, that other not having reached the same measure as yourselves; but when God Himself giveth us light, there is no uncertainty then as to what we have to do. If in any given case I have to say I do not know what to do, then immediately I say my eye is not single; for if it were, my whole body would be full of light, and my obedience would be as perfect as the light. What, then, am I to do? I am to bring my difficulty to God, even my Father, who will guide me, for He is perfect grace.

"And the Lord God of the holy prophets sent His angel to shew unto His servants the things that must shortly be done." Here the scene closes.

Then in verses 7, 12, and 20, the Lord, three times over, speaks of His coming quickly. In the seventh verse it is connected with the prophecy, and addressed to those who are connected with the warnings given. In the twelfth verse it is universal. And in the twentieth verse it is connected with another subject; it is in answer to the desire of the Bride for His coming, that He says "surely I come quickly."

The position of all the parties is given. In the seventh verse it is those "who keep the sayings of the prophecy," after "the things that are." The Church, as a witness for God on the earth, having failed, the many antichrists having come in, God in His great mercy gives directions down to the very points where all is destroyed, and then all is closed. The mystery of iniquity doth already work, and will to the end, so that the last time is come. He is ready to judge, though longsuffering in mercy. That has been the position of the Church ever since. Corrupt men have crept in unawares; they were in already in the apostles' days, whereby we know it is the last time. Paul, Peter, John and Jude, all testify to the germ of iniquity as already existing; so that in the prophetic part, He says, "he that is unjust, let him be unjust still," etc. Yet mercy delays the execution of the judgment; and it is blessing to those who keep the sayings of this book. And the sayings of this book is a prophecy given to the servants, when Laodicea is judged and spued out of Christ's mouth.

In the twelfth verse it is universal: "to give to every man," etc. Here he has done with the prophetic part of the book, and goes far beyond it, "to give to every man." Not to those under the beast, but to the general condition of man on the earth. It may be questionable how far it refers to Gog and Magog, because it is not told us; but His coming here has a reference to all, "according to their works."

In the sixteenth verse we get a kind of exordium to the whole book; those to whom the prophecy was given and the Church: we get Christ here in His double character, in respect of the divine government, as the Root of David, the source from which David sprung; and as the Offspring of David, David's heir to sit on David's throne. And then, besides that, He is "the Bright and Morning Star;" which is the character in which He presents Himself to the Church, before He arises as the Sun, to usher in the day of judgment to the world. He is connected with the Church before the day appears, so that we have our portion with Him before the day appears. And so, in the knowledge of this relationship, as

soon as He says "I am the Bright and Morning Star", "the Spirit and the Bride say come." He does not say to the Church "behold I come quickly." But, the Holy Ghost in the Church having given her the consciousness of this relationship to Him, the moment He presents Himself as the "Bright and Morning Star," she immediately replies "come!" There being nothing to be settled between Him and the Church, her whole thought is taken up with the revelation of Jesus Himself in this character. She has one simple thought, "He is coming," and she says "come!" She knows very well that He is coming quickly to judge the world, but she is the Bride and not the world.

Then we get a lovely picture of the Church while waiting for Him. "The Spirit and the Bride say Come; and let him that heareth say Come." She calls on all who have heard the voice of the Good Shepherd to say "Come." She is not content that there should be any Christians who should not know this relationship in their own souls. "Let him that heareth say Come!" Is that all? No; "Let him that is athirst come." Her own affections are fixed on the Bridegroom, she is longing for His return; but meanwhile she would draw all to the fountain. She is thirsting for the Bridegroom; but she turns to the world and says "I have something for you to hear." For while down here, she has the Holy Ghost in her, and therefore can say to others, "I have something for you to hear; I have water of life for you who are thirsting." Her desire is for the Glorious One, and that all should be gathered in through grace to that water of life. The river being free and the Church knowing the power of grace, she says, "Who-soever will, let him take of the water of life freely." The Church does not say "Come to me." Christ said "Come unto me." But the water of life flows there, and she can invite souls to come and drink, invite them to drink where she has drunk in Christ. And if any one is saying "Come to me," it is evident they have never had the water of life themselves; for if they had they would have such a sense of their emptiness that they would never say to any one, "Come to me." Then

mark the three "Comes." He says, "Surely I come quickly." The Church does not say Come quickly, but "Come!" He is the One she wants, and He answers her desires, and says, "I come, surely I come quickly!" It is the Lord's own heart's answer to the desires He has kindled. And the book closes with "Amen, Even so come Lord Jesus."

How blessedly, when He has closed the testimony, does He thus bring the heart of the Church back from everything to Himself. So when you have done with your duties get back to Christ, or else your duties will get between you and Christ. It is no matter what occupies us. The judgments of God will surely come; but you cannot have your affections formed and fashioned by judgments. Conscience may be solemnised by them, but the heart can never be won. Therefore, whatever the duties, the service, or the trials, let the heart get back to Christ Himself, the one object for our affections. In the glory, though we have a part, it is put on, as it were, we are clothed in it, the one object Christ Himself. Let it be so here. The Lord give us, whatever we are occupied with, to get back, by the power of the Holy Ghost, in all our service to this sanctuary, even to Christ Himself, the once lowly but now exalted One, and to fix our hearts on Him! Amen.

A FRAGMENT.

"If jealous over my own heart, and counting it, in the Spirit, to be better to depart and be with Christ, I can still feel willing to abide while the Lord will vouchsafe any little service, in connection with the testimony He is rendering, or the Saints beloved of Him; and with unfeigned feeling I do count that there is many a servant around me, to whom *a green old age*, full of service, would be an honour. Humbling, doubtless, to be left to wander when *natural* energy and vigour is all gone; but blessed, if it be for the honour and service of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the comfort of His saints."

N^o. XX.

"A WORD OF EXHORTATION."

THE rapidity with which infidel principles advance, and the feebleness of resistance that they meet, are no more prophetic truths simply, but present realities. The struggle between a superficial Christianity and the deep seated unbelief of the age has commenced. The period is a solemn one for the Christian, and one which will bring into prominence the value of the truths received by those whom God has graciously reserved from the mere powerless religion which so characterises the state of Christianity around us.

Any one observant of the condition of this country must see that the current of infidelity, once restrained within narrow limits comparatively, has now overflowed its embankments, and, by means of the numberless publications issuing from the press, and the activity of its living agents, has laid under its influence vast portions of our fellow men, who are now in masses beginning to throw off every thing like religious constraint, trampling under foot everything that is sacred, at the same time hating that religion which was too weak to hold it back in its reckless course.

The state of religious parties will be manifested in the struggle. Those bodies which, like Unitarians, have disseminated the principles which open out into rank atheism are already openly declared friends to irreligion and profanity, gliding on with the stream, and helpers in its course.

It will be found, too, that many called orthodox, but who have so far been drawn into the current as to have advocated views in accordance with the latitudinarian spirit of the age, will be found powerless for resistance of the evil.

The subtlety of Satan has been such, that while every year has added to the strength of the ranks of infidels,

superstition has been growing along with it. There has been more zeal for temples, for priests, for sacraments; and shall we not see that the two, apparently so distinct, so opposite, may meet at one common point, blend, and thus form unitedly for a time a stronger opposition to the truth of the living God?

On the other hand, we find that there are those who, watching with painful interest the progress of error and ungodliness, are beginning to see how frail have been their attempts to bring about a state of universal blessing on the earth.

They have been denying the plain testimony of God's word as to the progress of evil; they have been adding institution to institution, in order to bring about their desired end: all is disappointment and confusion. The fact is, the presence of Satan has been ignored, the power of the god of this world has been left out of their reckonings, and as a consequence—means unappointed of God have been brought to bear upon man's condition; the name of Jesus has been despised; the finger of God has been slighted. It now becomes a solemn period for the Christian to look well to his goings.

My object in this paper is to give a word of exhortation to such. In so doing, I feel conscious of my own weakness, but at the same time I feel the responsibility for faithfulness to God.

When Jacob was returning back from his long sojourn in those regions from which God had called out Abram—a country which had been positively forbidden to Isaac, but to which he had fled to escape the consequences of his deceitfulness towards Esau—he found that the nearer he drew towards Bethel, where God had called him to dwell, the more necessary was it that he should put away the strange gods that were with him. Then said Jacob unto his household, and to all that were with him, "Put away the strange gods that are among you and be clean, and change your garments. And they gave unto Jacob all the strange gods that were in their hand, and all their earrings which were in their ears, and Jacob laid them under the oak which was by Shechem" (Gen. xxxv. 1—4).

When Gideon was summoned to appear, as a mighty man of valour, to save Israel from the hand of the Midianites, he must throw down the altar of Baal that his father had, and cut down the grove that was by it; he must build an altar to the Lord, and offer a burnt-sacrifice with the wood of the grove that he had cut down (Judges vi. 25, 26). When Peter was to stand foremost, and to lay to the charge of Israel that they had denied the Holy One and the Just, it was needful that he should go out and weep bitterly for the share he had had in the denial of the Lord of Glory; and so now—now—when the enemy has come in like a flood—how many strange gods must be buried—how many altars to Baal destroyed—how many acts of denial be wept over, before we can take our true place as servants of the Most High God? Happy are they, who like Abram, when he heard that his brother was taken captive by his enemies, armed his trained servants, born in his own house, three hundred and eighteen, and pursued them unto Dan, and brought back all the goods, and also brought back again his brother Lot and his goods, and the women also, and the people (Gen. xiv. 14—16). Happy are they, who like Moses, have been shut up in communion with God, while the golden calf has been molten, and the people invited to the worship. He could descend from the mountain with clean hands into the midst of a defiled people. Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who is on the Lord's side, let him come unto me (Exodus xxxii. 26).

I believe that the grace of our God has been exceeding abundant in our day. He who foresees the evil has mercifully provided for it. The Spirit of the Lord has lifted up a standard against the enemy who has come in as a flood. Let us recount some of the mercies of our God, and see how adapted to the need of our times. God has alike called us away from the superstitions that would supplant Christ, and His gospel; and from the infidelity that would despise, and trample on both. He has so revealed His grace and love, as to fix us firmly upon His own foundation; other foundations can no man lay than that which is laid—

Christ Jesus. Have we not been taught in such power the value of that precious name, that we can say, "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord. The glory of His person—the value of His incarnation—of His life—of His death—of His resurrection—of His ascension and His session at the right hand of God—of His intercession there—have we not been taught to look for that blessed hope and glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ? We have learnt the value of meeting in His name—we have realised His presence according to His promise—we have learnt to prize not only the love of God the Father, and the grace of our Lord Jesus, but also the operations of God the Holy Ghost, and to honour Him according to God's word. Has not God in His mercy furnished us with those weapons which are not carnal, but mighty through God, to the pulling down of strongholds; made us bearers of the seed of the kingdom, the Word of God, and fulfilled his Word, the word of Jesus to His disciples—"Lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." And for why have all and every of these precious truths (and more too) been revived, preached with more clearness, and believed with more sincerity? Has it been only for our own special individual use? Has it not been rather for the need of our fellow-men and for the days of darkness in which our lot has been cast? Unto whom much has been given, of him much will be required. Have not some of us been ready in the unbelief of our hearts almost to deny the speciality of God's grace in these things, to speak of our ground of meeting as a failure, etc., and been like unto Orpah of old, who kissed her mother-in-law, and went back to her people and her gods. The grace of God to us has been this, that He has swept away the clouds and mists from His own eternal truths, and made them shine more brightly upon our hearts, and this is power.

Let us beware, brethren, lest any of us be like the men of Gideon, who turned back to their homes before the fight began, lest we lose the glory of the three hundred before whom the Midianites melted away.

A Word of Exhortation.

The Lord be gracious to us, and renew in our hearts the freshness of His own truths, and give us more grace to walk uprightly before Him, and to seek to follow out the full blessing He would have us know.

The more dangerous the coast is, there is the more need of a light-house; and the darker the night, the more need is there that the light be full and clear; nay, the darkness of the night will but cause the lights to be more distinctly seen. We have not learnt one single truth too many. Would God, our hearts, not our intellects only, were more under their power!

Y.

“Dost thou still retain thine integrity? Curse God and die.”—*Job* ii. 9.

“Submit yourselves to God. Resist the devil.”—*James* iv. 7.

Doth the tempter, as of old,
Urge thee on to curse thy God?
Fear not : only be thou bold ;
Thou shalt *bless* Him for the rod.

Not in anger, but in love,
Hath He thus afflicted thee ;
Let thy thoughts, then, rise above ;
Praise Him, bless Him heartily.

He is wise, and thou art not ;
He is good and thou art vile ;
Though sharp trials be thy lot,
Patient wait “a little while.”

Can that God who gave His Son,
Now deny thee “any good” ?
He’ll not leave one thing undone,
Who redeem’d thee with such blood.

Boldly, then, resist the foe ;
Lay thee low before thy God ;
Soon thou shalt in glory know
Love and wisdom’s in the rod. B.

“If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.”—*Heb.* xii. 7, 8.

No. XXI.

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

THE Acts of the Apostles are divided essentially into three parts — chap. i., ii. — xii., and xiii. to the end. The 11th and 12th may be termed transitional chapters, founded on the event related in the tenth. Chap. i. gives us that which is connected with the Lord's resurrection; ii.—xii., that work of the Holy Ghost, of which Jerusalem and the Jews are the centre; xiii., and the succeeding chapters, the work of Paul; the fifteenth connecting the two, in order to preserve unity in the whole course. We have, indeed, the admission of Gentiles in the second part; but it is in connection with the work going on among the Jews. The latter had rejected the witness of the Holy Ghost, as they had rejected the Son of God; and God prepared a work outside them, in which the Apostle of the Gentiles laid foundations that annulled the distinction between Jew and Gentile, and which unite them — as in themselves equally dead in trespasses and sins — to Christ, the Head of His body, the Church, in heaven.

Let us now examine the chapters in their course. Chap. i. supplies us with the narrative of that which relates to Jesus risen; and the actions of the apostles before the descent of the Holy Ghost. The Lord's communications present several very interesting points. Jesus, the risen man, acts and speaks by the Holy Ghost, after His resurrection as before it. Precious token of our own position, when the energy of the Holy Ghost, being no longer engaged in restraining and mortifying the flesh, will be entirely consecrated to eternal joy and worship, and to the service committed to us by God. The risen Lord then gives His disciples commandments in connection with the new position He assumes. Their life and their service are to be formed and guided, in view

glory, as well as by His own divine power, and the energy of the Holy Ghost, He was raised from the dead.

This does not prevent God's resuming His ways in government with the Jews on earth, when the Church is complete and manifested on high; and which He will do according to His promises and the declarations of prophecy. The apostle explains this also in the Epistle to the Romans; but it belongs to the study of that Epistle. The ways of God in judgment with regard to the Gentiles also at the same period, will be shewn us in the apocalypse (as well as in other passages of the Epistles, in connection with the coming of Christ), and even of His government of the world in general from the beginning to the end; together with the warnings necessary for the Church when the days of deception begin to dawn, and to be developed, morally, in the ruin of the Church, viewed as God's witness in the world.

Our apostle, when brought to Rome, declares, upon the manifestation of unbelief among the Jews, which we have pointed out, that the salvation of God is sent to the Gentiles; and he dwells two whole years in the house he had hired, receiving those who came to him,—for he had not liberty to go to them,—preaching the kingdom of God, and those things which concerned the Lord Jesus, with all boldness, no man forbidding him. And here the history is ended of this precious servant of God, beloved and honoured by His Master, a prisoner in that Rome which—as head of the fourth empire—was to be the seat of opposition among the Gentiles, as Jerusalem of opposition among the Jews, to the kingdom and to the glory of Christ. The time for the full manifestation of that opposition was not yet come; but the minister of the Church and of the Gospel of glory, is a prisoner there. It is thus that Rome begins its history in connection with the Gospel that the apostle preached. Nevertheless, God was with him.

No. XXII.

THE FOLD AND THE FLOCK.

JOHN X. 1—30.

THE force and beauty of this chapter are often missed, through failing to notice the circumstances in our Lord's ministry, which impart to it its special character.

Much has been often advanced in illustration of the office of our Lord as "the Good Shepherd," and it may be with a measure of truth; but the parable before us which presents him in this character, applies itself to the condition of Israel, before God, as brought to light by the ministry of the blessed Son of God, in grace, amongst that people.

It is of Israel especially that the Lord says, "Ye, my flock, the flock of my pasture are men; and I am your God." Hence any application of the terms, "entering in by the door into the sheepfold," or "climbing up some other way," to a sinner's coming to Christ, or, which is more common, to any supposed entrance into the church is, to say the least, a misapprehension and a misapplication of a most important and instructive passage.

If, then, Israel be God's *flock*, Jerusalem, or, at any rate, that system of ordinances which separated Israel from the surrounding nations, and of which Jerusalem was the centre, was the *fold*. The fold into which Christ is here proving His right and title to enter; and in connexion with which He presents, by way of parable, the effects of His personal ministry as the true, but disallowed, Shepherd of Israel.

"This parable spake Jesus unto them; but they understood not what things they were which He spake unto them." The glass which so accurately reflected their condition and circumstances was held up to them, but they were too much blinded by their prejudices to dis-

cern in it God's moral judgment of their state, and of their own responsibility.

In seeking then to understand this parable, which it is said the Jews understood not, it should be remembered that there was a twofold effect resulting from our Lord's ministry; namely, the attaching to Himself, in grace, those who, as taught of God, received His claims; and also the testing of the moral condition of those who rejected His mission; which, indeed, were the great mass of the nation. For if God's manifestation of Himself in grace does not convert the heart, it nevertheless puts the consciences of men in the light; and thus leaves them under the responsibility of rejecting the light, and hating the light, because their deeds are evil.

This was pre-eminently true of our Lord's ministry; but in every dispensation it holds good, and, "wisdom is justified of all her children."

Of John the Baptist's ministry it is said, "all *the people* that heard him, and *the publicans*, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him."

The light of God, in whatever vessel it shines, is recognised and rejoiced in where the heart and conscience are in exercise before Him; and it puts under responsibility those by whom it is rejected.

A little consideration of this will throw light upon the present chapter.

John the Baptist was intermediate between "the law and the prophets," and the coming of our Lord; and his mission was to disclose the moral condition of the people, and by the baptism of repentance to prepare them for the speedy advent of their expected Messiah. But, more than this; he was also set to *preach a remnant* in Israel, or a separation from the mass of the people, of those who received his testimony. Hence a distinct baptism was attached to his ministry, as the formal seal of that separation which was to be administered to all who obeyed his word. This was a circumstance which marked him off from all preceding prophets, who, whatever might be the force of their ministry, had no com-

mission to effect an outward and formal separation of those who received their testimony. A moral separation there must, of course, always have been between those that feared the Lord, and those that rejected His word. But the ministry of John marks an epoch in the dealings of the Lord with the nation. Hence the language of Matt. iii. 7—12, “When he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance: and think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance [a baptism which separated by the confession of sins to the hope of coming mercy and salvation]: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost [a baptism which separates to God by the power and presence of God; making those who receive it the vessels of his power and presence], and with fire [a baptism of judgment which Christ when He returns will assuredly bring upon those who have rejected His claims as witnessed by the Holy Ghost]: Whose fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor, and gather His wheat into the garner; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”

Now, it is exactly at this point that in the Gospel of Matthew, our Lord's ministry is said to commence. He associates Himself with this remnant in Israel, separated by John's baptism; and He Himself is baptized with John's baptism. Not, indeed, as if He needed repentance, as the reason He gives for submitting to it sufficiently shews. “He said, Suffer it to be so now; for thus it becometh us to *fulfil all righteousness*.” It was as *fulfilling all righteousness* that Jesus was baptized. But in thus owning this ordinance of God in the hand of John, our Lord at the same time associates Himself with this move-

ment of God's Spirit on the hearts of a remnant in Israel, and fulfilled the gracious words of the sixteenth Psalm; "Thou art my Lord; my goodness extendeth not to thee; but to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent in whom is all my delight."

Stooping thus low in love and grace, and in self-emptying obedience, he is in a position to declare God's name to his brethren. For the Apostle applies the first words of this Psalm to Christ, in connexion with the declaration (Heb. ii. 11), that "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. Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."

But being what He was, as Son of God, as well as the humbled Son of man, He is found receiving this remnant, who were the sheep, whom He "calls by name and leads them out;" or "the poor of the flock,"—"of the flock of slaughter"—of the eleventh of Zechariah; where Christ is prophetically presented as the Shepherd of God's appointment to Israel; on which this chapter in part, and His personal ministry as detailed in Matthew, especially, forms a striking comment.

The first thing, then, which the Lord marks is, that *He* had entered *by the door* into the sheepfold, thus proving his authority from the owner of the flock, to take charge of the sheep, in opposition to any surreptitious entrance, which of itself convicts of a sinister design. As He says, "He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But He that entereth in by the door the same is *the Shepherd of the sheep.*"

Christ is here, then, Jehovah's divinely sanctioned

Shepherd of Israel, who were the “people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand;”—for He had submitted to every requisition of the owner of the flock:—but at this time, alas! proved to be “*the lost sheep* of the house of Israel.” For the mass of the nation, and especially the rulers of the people, blinded by a false estimate of their condition before God, and entrenched in religious ordinances, knew not the person of Him who came in grace to meet their need; nor heeded the divinely-sanctioned claims of Him who, “when He saw the multitudes, was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad as sheep having no shepherd.” “Their own shepherds pity them not!”

Hence, having stated, as another mark of His proved title to be the Shepherd of the sheep that, “to Him the porter openeth,” and the “sheep hear His voice,” He adds, “He calleth His own sheep by name, and *leadeth them out*. And when He *putteth forth* his own sheep, He goeth before them, and the sheep follow Him; for they know His voice.” And here we may be reminded of the beautiful keeping of the figure; and be referred to the customs of oriental countries as verifying this description of the Shepherd’s preceding His flock, when leading them from the fold to their pasture, or when conducting them from pasture to pasture. But it is not the correspondence of a description with physical facts or with a known usage that is here in question. It is the application of this peculiar action of the shepherd, by way of parable, to shew, as in a glass, what was then taking place under the action of our Lord’s ministry, as necessarily modified by the moral condition of Israel, which was being tested and proved by His presence amongst them.

In a word, it expresses the moral effect of our Lord’s ministry, when received in grace, as in the example of the poor blind man in the preceding chapter, and also the effect of the disallowance of His claims on the part of the leaders and the mass of the nation.

In the one case, it was the Lord “calling his own sheep by name, and leading them out”—for the result of their attachment, in grace, *to him* was their being

virtually, if not actually, excommunicated like "the blind man" referred to, and thus outside (led outside by the Good Shepherd) of all Israel's ordinances, and clean apart from every ground of connexion with God, but that which was found in the person of Christ. While, on the other hand, it was virtually the Lord's saying, as in the prophet, "I will no more pity the inhabitants of the land—but, lo, I will deliver the men every one into his neighbour's hand, and into the hand of his king: and they shall smite the land, and out of their hand I will not deliver them." And again, "Then said I, I will not feed you: that that dieth, let it die; and that that is to be cut off, let it be cut off; and let the rest eat every one the flesh of another."

Thus, through the rejection of the claims of our Lord to be the Shepherd of Jehovah's flock, the fold is deserted by Him who alone could lead into green pastures, or give security to the sheep. But leading outside the fold His own sheep, He in effect says to them, "I will feed the flock of slaughter, even you, O poor of the flock." And how blessed to be under the care of such a Shepherd! though it be outside all man's religion, and apart from the whole array of Israel's divinely appointed ordinances. For it was in the maintenance of these, in opposition to a living faith, as the grounds of connexion with God, that the claims of this blessed Shepherd were disallowed.

One might turn with deepest interest to the descriptions of the thirty-fourth of Ezekiel, in illustration of Israel's happiness, when, in a future day, the Lord will set aside, in power, the claims of every false shepherd that has neglected or preyed upon the flock, and will Himself take charge of His beautiful flock. As He says, "For thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out. As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day. And I will bring them out from the people, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land,

and feed them upon the mountains of Israel by the rivers, and in all the inhabited places of the country. I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be: there shall they lie in a good fold, and in a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel. I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord God. I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick: but I will destroy the fat and the strong; I will feed them with judgment." Or it might be thought an omission not to refer to the twenty-third Psalm, as an illustration of the present experience of a believer under the exercise of Christ's shepherd-care. And surely nothing can exceed the beauty and comfort of that Psalm, nor the richness of the portion of the soul which can say, "Jehovah is my Shepherd, I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; He leadeth me beside the still waters." The certainty that want will never be the condition of the soul that reposes in such a Shepherd as Jehovah, and is owned of Him, may, in its largest, widest, application, be affirmed; and that quietness and refreshment are the natural blessings to the soul that flow from being under his hand. But this is not all that our souls require; alas! as it is not all in the natural application of the figure. The silly sheep may stray from the rich and quiet pastures, and need the Shepherd's care to follow it in its wanderings, and restore it again to where the flock abides, under His gentle eye. Hence the touching expressions, "He restoreth my soul; He leadeth me in paths of righteousness for His name's sake." This is a different exercise of the Shepherd's care from that of making to lie down in green pastures and leading beside still waters. It is recovery, in gracious love, when these have been departed from; and it affords the most affecting acquaintance with the grace of the heart of the Lord. When thus restored, the soul may add, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me: thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."

Nothing so strengthens the confidence of the soul in the Lord as the experience of the exercise of his gentle restoring grace. It so introduces the heart to the interior resources of God's goodness, and so establishes it in his unfailing mercy, that confidence in all imaginable trials, and an assurance of receiving nothing but good at his hand, are the natural result. The darkest paths of difficulty and of danger—"The valley of death's shade" may be tracked in perfect security now, because the soul has been shewn the only proper spring of confidence. "THOU art with me: Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me." And more than this—the sense of surrounding enemies can now be used not as an occasion of dread, but as only giving character to the efficiency of that goodness which prepares a table before us, in the presence of enemies. "Thou anointest my head with oil, my cup runneth over." This is not the result of an increase of outward good, nor the mere effusion of thankfulness at the contemplation of the increase of corn and wine—this may not exist—but it is the renewing of holy joy from the experience of what GOD is; and the overrunning-cup is the sense of the heart's portion in the presence of a God of infinite goodness. The conclusion, therefore, from such an association with God, and such experience of what God is in goodness and love, is, "Goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." All this, and much more than this, readily presents itself to the mind, while contemplating this lovely Psalm; but the chapter before us is not so much intended to teach generally the shepherd-care of Christ, as to disclose the present principles of his action resulting from Israel's rejection of His claims. For it is in Israel, and amongst an earthly people, that His proper shepherd-character will be displayed. As a proof (see Isaiah xl. 10, 11), "Behold, the Lord God will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him. He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young." And (Psalm lxxviii.

70—72) “He chose David also his servant, and took him from the sheepfolds: from following the ewes great with young he brought him to feed Jacob his people, and Israel his inheritance. So he fed them according to the integrity of his heart; and guided them by the skillfulness of his hands.” Hence, when he has given the remnant, whom His personal ministry was now separating to Himself, the necessary authority and guidance to leave the fold, which was His having called them by name (the mark of individual dealing in grace), and having Himself gone out before them, He takes an entirely new place and position.

He now says, “I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture” (John x. 9). This is no mere reiteration of the previous parable, which it is said the Jews did not understand; but it is the unfolding of the true position in which He now stood to all who were taught of God to acknowledge His claims. He does not present Himself as the door into a fold; but as the door of salvation. “By me if any man enter in he shall be *saved*!” “And he shall go in and out and find pasture.” It is the acknowledgment of His personal claims, in faith; and the result is, not security in a fold, but salvation and liberty, and sustenance. Neither does He now address Himself as before, to His own sheep within the fold, in order to lead them out; but it is, “*If any man* enter in he shall be saved,” etc., which took up the outcasts of Israel and opened the door of grace to *all*.

It is indeed a tacit indication, that another principle of God’s dealing must be known, and another position taken by those who were owned of Him.

It is not now enclosing in a fold of ordinances in separation from those without; but it is salvation through the Shepherd who gives the life for the sheep, and security and pasturage in following Him. It is the presence of the Shepherd, and not the walls of a fold, that we must seek.

It is not, as is generally known, when speaking of the gathering of the Gentiles, as the other sheep who were not of the Jewish fold, the gathering them to a fold:—

for the word is changed, and it is, "There shall be *one flock* and one shepherd."

"The *Good Shepherd*," and the "*True Vine*," present the Lord in contrast with all that existed in Israel's vine of ordinances, and every pretender to the care of the flock as having a right to them before He came. United to Him as the True Vine, they become fruitful branches; and as the Good Shepherd, He not only gives His life for the sheep, but He gives eternal life and eternal security to those whom He thus owns as His flock.

The difference between the door into the fold, by which Christ entered, and Himself as the door of the sheep should be noticed, in order to have the line of instruction clear before the mind. In the one case, it was the appointed way of Christ's entrance amongst the Jews as the Shepherd of Israel, and living Messiah, in His earthly ministrations to that ancient flock of God; and in the other, it was the place which He took in grace as the rejected One of the nation—the door of salvation to all who entered by Him. Not the door into any fold of exclusive ordinances, as in Israel, which He was now leaving Himself, and thus leading out His own sheep; but the door of entrance to salvation, to liberty and sustenance; and where security would be found alone in being near and following the Good Shepherd.

Nothing can be more touching or instructive than the contrast presented between the conduct and feelings of the "hireling," and Himself as "the Good Shepherd." With Christ there is no fleeing like the hireling when danger appears, but in love and self-devotion to His sheep meeting all the danger, saying to the enemy, "If ye seek me, let these go their way."

"The Good Shepherd gives his life for the sheep"—Israel as His sheep—those lost sheep of the house of Israel—and for the "other sheep" also which are not of Israel's fold—which are gathered and brought by His death from amongst the Gentiles, that thus there should be "one flock, one shepherd" (*μία ποιμνὴ εἰς ποιμνὴν*). But this is spoken of as consequent upon His death—for, indeed, whether of Jew or Gentile there could be no association with God or enjoyment of salvation apart from his death.

The Fold and the Flock.

439

The reciprocation of the knowledge subsisting between the Good Shepherd and His sheep is also marked. He knows His sheep and they know Him; even as the Father knew Him, and He knew the Father. It is not a mere abstract statement of a reciprocation of knowledge, but an illustration of the character of that knowledge. He, the blessed Son, who had given His life and was in heaven, ere this gathering of His other sheep took place, or even the remnant of Israel was gathered by virtue of His death, knew His own, even as the Father knew Him, when He was upon earth. Nothing can be more precious to the soul than such a principle as this! And how simply, yet how wonderfully, is the link of connexion between Christ and His sheep presented, and their eternal security declared! "My sheep hear my voice — and I know them — and they follow me — and I give unto them eternal life!" But this is not all. He adds, "They shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father who gave them me is greater than all; none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one." What a link of connexion is this! The poor sheep, precious to Christ as the Father's gift to Him! What a ground also of security! The sheep not only have eternal life from Christ, but they are in His hand! Nay more, the thought of their security must be knit up with the eternal power of God — for the sheep are in the Father's hand! And then the contrasted points brought together of the lowly Shepherd stooping to enter by the door into the fold — and the statement, "I and my Father are one!" Nothing can be more touching, nothing more precious or wonderful! The grace is infinite, the love knows no bounds, and the power by which all is secured is the Almighty power of the Eternal God! The depth of instruction in the chapter is but just touched upon in this brief paper, but it may guide the meditations of some to the chapter itself, there to find the infinitude of divine love thus brought home to us as the portion of the sheep of Christ.

D—

N^o. XXIII.

A C T S VII.

THIS chapter has a special importance in a double way. First, it shews, that not only had the Jewish people rejected the Christ, but that besides, they resisted the testimony of the Holy Ghost. They would not have this grace; thus shewing what man's heart is, left to itself. They had sinned against God, despised His law, and rejected the grace of Jesus; and now they resist the testimony of the Holy Ghost. The stoning of Stephen is the last grand act of their sins. But, secondly, this puts the first person of the church of God into heaven. The heavenly company is now beginning. The first soul has gone into heaven, consequent on the full redemption of Christ. And here all is bright. It is not now as in the Psalms, "In death there is no remembrance of Thee," etc. Thus we have the contrast between those who were resisting the Holy Ghost, and one full of the Holy Ghost.

The burden of Stephen's testimony was, that whatever God had sent in grace they had rejected, and that the temple, in which they trusted, God had prophesied against. For example, Joseph they had rejected; and when Moses came they rejected him in the same way. And so with Christ. It was always the same. Whenever God had sent a person in a remarkable way, they had rejected him. Thus, on the one hand, we get them resisting the testimony of God; and, on the other, trusting in that which God had rejected.

Now this shews us what we are, *as to our natures*. For Scripture always takes a remarkable case, and by means of it presents to us what is in everybody's heart. There is just the same principle governing man now that there was then. There is just the same resistance

of the testimony of the Holy Ghost when He sends it *now* that there was then, and just the same trusting in ordinances. The Holy Ghost gives us, by the mouth of Stephen, a picture of human nature in its most advantageous circumstances. And what the Jews were doing then, is just what we are doing now, as to our natures. Men are as rigid about ordinances now as ever the Jews were, and as determined in rejecting the testimony of the Holy Ghost. But God must have life and holiness, and these, ordinances cannot give.

The testimony of Stephen cut the Jews to the heart, and "they gnashed on him with their teeth. But he, being full of the Holy Ghost," etc. Here Stephen was full of the Holy Ghost, not merely as a prophet, but for himself. Here he takes share in the sufferings and rejection of his Master. The power of the Holy Ghost puts him in the place of testimony, and this draws down the hatred.

We now get the wonderful state and testimony of this man full of the Holy Ghost. Everything is changed by it. "But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, and said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God." This opening of heaven is a wonderful fact: and it has not been closed. Unless, as in Ezekiel, heaven was never opened until Christ came. God could take Elijah up to heaven, but until Christ came there was no object on whom heaven could open. We read of heaven being opened four times. On the first two occasions — as to Sonship (Matt. iii.) and angels seen in service (John i.) — it was confined to Him; but on the occasion before us, as well as on the last (in Rev. xix.), through grace it is to us too. Christ having been rejected, heaven cannot open on any object here; but it opens and we see the object there. Heaven does not open *on* us, but *to* us. When heaven was opened to Jesus He had no object. He was the object. Heaven opens to us, for the object is given to our hearts there. "He, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus

standing on the right hand of God." Now, the principle of this is true for us all. When full of the Holy Ghost (not merely having the Holy Ghost), He so takes possession of all our faculties that nothing else intrudes.

The first effect of this being full of the Holy Ghost is, that Stephen sees only one thing — Christ in heaven. Another thing follows, namely, the capability to persevere. We all know how liable our thoughts are to wander. But why is this? We are not full of the Holy Ghost. When He takes possession of the soul it is not so. How often is a person occupied all day long with his business or his family, or his pleasure, and when he goes to pray for ten minutes, instead of all the fixedness of soul in the presence of God, in come swarming all the thoughts that the heart is on. Now this is a test of the condition of the heart. The house is a little empty, and the door left open to Satan. When the Holy Ghost is there it is not so. Then the heart is steadfast in the things of God. And when there is not this fixedness, we ought to recognise it as failure.

When heaven is opened, Stephen sees a Man in the glory of God. Never had such a thing been seen since the beginning. It was prophesied about, but now there was the thing itself. How came He there — this Man? He came there by perfectly accomplishing redemption. He could never have been there otherwise. The Holy Ghost is the seal of our union with Him. That is what the eye of Stephen was fixed on. Glory is natural to heaven, but Stephen now saw the Son of Man in the glory of God. That is what we see. The One with whom we are united is there for us. Thus we know the perfectness of redemption. Because if He as a man is standing where redemption has brought Him, He gives the Holy Ghost as the seal of our full participation in this place with Him. We have to be filled with the Holy Ghost, in order to know and enjoy it.

"We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." The effect on Stephen of seeing Christ in glory as the fruit of accomplished redemption is, that he is changed

into the same image. What did Jesus say on the cross? "Father, into Thy hands I commit my Spirit." What did Stephen say? "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." He does not say, "*I* commit," but he can say, "Receive my spirit." Thus we see the same spirit animating Stephen. He has the same unhesitating confidence in the Person he was looking to. What is death here? "Absent from the body and present with the Lord." Thus we see the Spirit of Christ in Stephen as he looks upwards. And when he looks down on those who were stoning him, what does he say? What did Jesus say? — "Father, forgive them." And, in the same spirit, Stephen says, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." It is lovely to see that the moral effect — grace — is just the result of looking up steadfastly at Jesus.

We have never been in heaven. But the home of a child is where its father and mother are. And the One we know better than any mortal being is there. The poor thief had his heart on Jesus. "Well," said Jesus, "you will be with me." Jesus had a hold on his heart. So with Stephen — "~~Lord~~ Jesus receive my spirit." And so in two other passages, which speak of our portion in dying. "We are willing rather to be absent from the body, and present" — in heaven, is it? No; but "present with the Lord." "I desire to depart and to be" — in heaven, does Paul say, "which is far better"? No; but — "to be with Christ, which is far better." It is to be "where the Forerunner is for us entered."

How we should bless God that He has given us a known object in heaven. The Holy Ghost has come down to tell us of all His glory, and so to fix our hearts upon Him. He is, moreover, the seal and assurance that we belong to heaven and not to earth. The Lord give us so to walk, that the Holy Ghost can occupy us with heaven. If we fail, He must occupy us with ourselves; and that is not Christ.

ENOCH AND NOAH ; OR, ISRAEL AND THE CHURCH.

“ By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death.”

“ By faith Noah prepared an ark to the saving of his house.”

HEB. XI, 5, 7.

ERE the flood's engulfing billows
Desolation spread around,
Enoch to his rest was taken,
Enoch happy rest had found.
Noah, brought through all its dangers,
Found the ark his resting-place ;
Each secure, and each made happy,
By the Lord's abounding grace.
Enoch, of the church a figure,
Taken ere the wrath was pour'd ;
Knowing ere his blest translation,
He was pleasing to the Lord :
Noah, representing Israel's
Remnant of the latter day.
Brought through all the tribulation,
Happy 'neath Messiah's sway.
Israel rests on earthly promise ;
Israel's heart is on "*the Land*,"
There, for God Himself hath said it,
Israel shall in triumph stand !
But the Church, with eyes uplifted,
Views her all in heaven above,
Waits her blessed Bridegroom's coming,
As the object of *her* love.
What a portion, loved of Jesus,
What a portion blest have we ?
Christ Himself — and all His glory ; —
Christ, who died to set us free ;
He, who now in heaven's preparing
For His Church her proper home ;
Soon with shouts of triumph swelling,
For that Church Himself will come.
Earthly goods are not *our* portion ;
Heavenly things to us belong ;
Resurrection and translation,
Are the burden of our song.
O that all our hearts' affections
Gathered round our Lord alone ;
And that nought on earth engaged us,
But to make our Jesus known !

A. M.

END OF VOL. VIII.

G. LITTLEWOOD, PRINTER, 93, LONDON WALL.