

THE REMEMBRANCER

A MONTHLY MAGAZINE

FOR

THE LORD'S PEOPLE.

“Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them. . . . Yea, I think it meet . . . to stir you up by putting you in remembrance.”

—2 PET. i. 12, 13.

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The Remembrancer.

THE APOCALYPSE.

(Rev. v. 5, 6.)

How dark the night around us! Sin and death
Are reigning conquerors o'er this rebel
world ;
The serpent's trail defiles; and error's breath
Corrupts the very truth that grace unfurled
To rescue man from sin's vile slavery,
And make him, as God's freed-man, truly
free.

Alas ! the name of Christ Himself is used,
By those who call Him Lord, to sanction
ill ;
The time of God's long suffering is abused !
Because He smites not, man grows viler
still ;
"The mystery of iniquity " abounds,
While the false watchman " peace and safety " sounds.

But here we see, in Heaven's unclouded light,
An Object hidden from man's earth-closed
eyes ;
The Lamb, once slain, now raised beyond all
height,
His name the theme of all heaven's symphonies :
We hear His praise from harps divinely
sweet,
And see the elders worship at His feet.

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Oh, how delightful are the heavenly
scenes,

Which John, in Patmos, favoured was to
view !

The soul, that on the Saviour's bosom leans,
Knows in itself that all His words are true;
Breaks out in songs to see the Lamb once
slain,

Now crowned in heaven, and soon o'er earth
to reign.

His coming glories with Himself are ours !

His Bride shall share the honours of His
name.

Oh, how this hope the faithful heart em-
powers

His cross to bear, and smile at toil and
shame !

"Lo, I come quickly!" is His last sweet word:
Amen, e'en so ; come, quickly come, O Lord.



MEDITATIONS ON THE REVELATION.

In beginning our "Meditations" on this wondrous book it will be well to recall what was said in our Introductory Meditation on Prophetic Portions of The New Testament, viz., that "we ought to enter on it with our consciences and sympathies rather than with our intellects," and to see to it that our souls are somewhat in order, treated as we are as *friends* on these occasions (see page 5 of Vol. xiii). We need

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also, I believe, to know something of what another has called "the Patmos platform" if we would understand rightly the teachings of this solemn portion of the word of God.

It was the same God who gave to the Lord Jesus the Revelation for us in grace, who also marked for Him the time in which He should give it forth. And He also it was who, at that very time, brought John, though the means of a bitter persecution, into the very spot in which the Lord was to reveal it to him.

I dare say John's thoughts about the troubles that befell him, and which were the immediate occasion of his being pushed into Patmos, were very different *before* and *after* that he had been there and had there received the Revelation.

Afflictions, weakness, man's wickedness acting according to hatred of the truth, and the breaking up of all John's work, and, perhaps, thoughts about work for the Lord *on the one side; and on the other side*, God and the power of His might which (causing all things to work together for good) was guiding John—in his weakness, by a current of afflictive circumstances over which he had no power—to a point where the Lord Jesus wanted to meet him and give him the substance of the Apocalypse.

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These are the two very opposite views of one and the same thing, as looked at from John's stand-point on the earth, or from God's stand-point in heaven.

The opening of this remarkable book gives us its title and character, "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto Him." For it will be found, I judge, to be a *revelation* of the Lord Jesus Christ, in such characters of glory and power as He derives from *God*, or a revelation of Him in the exercise of judicial authority. Now *two* exercises of judicial authority awaited Him after He had ascended to God, and accordingly this book has *two* parts.

i.-iii. These chapters give us the *first part*. The Lord is here exercising judgment in *the Church*, or among the lights of the sanctuary. This is called, "*The things which are.*"

iv.-xxii. These chapters give us the *second part*. The Lord is here exercising judgment in *the earth*—preparing it for His kingdom. This is called, "*The things which shall be hereafter.*"

This is the general order of the book, but these two parts contain properly both a preface and a conclusion.

In the preface (i. 1-8) we first learn that this wondrous book deals with "The word of God, and the testimony of Jesus Christ,"

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that is, God's counsels made known by Jesus Christ. Then we are told the manner in which Jesus Christ ministers this testimony to the churches, and blessing is then pronounced on him who acts righteously by this book, by either reading or hearing it, and then by keeping the things which are written in it.

After this the seven churches in Asia are called to listen, and after a benediction on them, the Lord Jesus is announced as the One who is about to come "with clouds" or in the solemnities of judgement (Dan. vii. 13; Matt. xxiv. 30, xxvi. 64). A coming quite according to the judicial character of the book, and which is to make the kindreds of the earth wail because of Him, and those which pierced Him to see Him to their confusion.

But in the midst of such an announcement of the Lord as even this, the saints have two sweet and happy utterances put into their lips. On His being here revealed as "the faithful witness," "the first begotten from the dead," and "the Prince of the kings of the earth," they praise Him as the One who loved them. And again, when His coming in the clouds as for judgment is announced, they invite His glory with full confidence still, and say, "*Even so, amen.*" For they have thoroughly learned that they may

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have boldness even in a day of judgment (1 John iv. 17). Then when these utterances of the saints pass by, the Lord reveals Himself as "the First and the Last," a title which He frequently takes in this book, the very title, too, that He so constantly assumes when judging the idols of Babylon in Isaiah (see Isa. xlviii.), all this still assuring us that He is now about to speak *in judgment* again. In the mouth indeed of every witness here, we learn that *this book* is a revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ, which *God*, not the *Father*, gives Him, or in *judgment*, not in *grace*. But this is only here at the close of the volume of the New Testament, for I may observe that the Lord has ever sought, so to speak, to publish His name in grace before He does so in judgment. In some way or other He will and must make Himself known, for that is His glory; but He seeks the rather to be known in goodness than in judgment, if men will hear. We have this variously illustrated. To Egypt, for instance, the Lord made Himself known in Joseph, the witness of His goodness; for by Joseph he filled Egypt's storehouses with all kinds of wealth. But Egypt forgot Joseph. A king arose there, who persecuted Joseph's people and said of his God, "Who is the Lord that I should obey Him?" Then the Lord had to publish

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His name in that land in judgment, saying to the king: "In this thou shalt know that I am the Lord, behold, I will smite with the rod." He was now to be made known not in Joseph, but in plagues. So in Israel afterwards. The Lord Jesus was offered to them as "the chief corner stone, the sure foundation," the One in whom they should find salvation and strength; but being rejected as such, He was to be revealed to them as "the head stone of the corner" in the power and judgment of an exalted stone which was to fall and to grind to powder. And so in the *world* now; this present dispensation is publishing God in grace: He is beseeching men to be reconciled. But they who will not thus know Him, neglecting "the great salvation," must know Him by-and-by in judgments (2 Thes. i. 8). If the *blood* of the Lamb be despised, the *wrath* of the Lamb must await (Rev. vi. 16, 17). The same One who is "full of grace and truth" now, will by-and-by send the sword out of His mouth to execute judgment (Rev. xix. 15). And this is the difference between the Gospel by John and the Revelation. The Gospel publishes the name of the Lord in grace, the Revelation in judgment. The one flows from the Father, the other from God. Now, according to all this, when we pass the preface and get into the body of

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the book, it is the Lord, the Son of Man in the place of judgment, that we at once see (see i. 9-20). These verses introduce the first scene which the book discloses, and here John sees the Lord as High Priest prepared to judge the sanctuary. He does not show Himself to John as the Priest at the golden altar, with the censer and the burning incense, but at the candlestick with the golden snuffers, as though He were inquiring, and that too for the last time, whether or not the lamps of the sanctuary would burn worthy of the place, or whether He should not be compelled soon to remove them. It is the Son of Man, with garments down to the foot, and golden girdle about His loins, with head and hair white as wool, eyes of flame, feet of brass, and voice of many waters, in His hand holding the seven stars, and in His mouth the *two-edged sword*, and walking in the brightness and power of the midday sun, among the seven candlesticks. All this was an expression of judgment "of the house of God" (1 Pet. iv. 17 c f., also Ezek. ix. 5, 6); a revelation of the Priest, not at the altar with incense, nor even at the candlestick with oil to feed it, but at the candlestick with the snuffers to judge and trim it, as being out of order. John shall hear himself personally and individually addressed, with the wonted words

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of God's sweet love to us, "Fear not;" but still this is a vision that may well make the stoutest of the children of men to fall as dead. And it is quite according to such an introduction as this that we find our Lord in the following scene (Rev. ii., iii.) Here it is the Lord in "the house of God" challenging the churches to answer for themselves. He had before set them in blessing, and now He looks for fruit. It is as though He had heard a report of their unfaithfulness, and was now saying unto them, "How is it that I hear this of thee? Give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward." He had already communicated with them through the apostles, but now He does so through the angels. Paul had addressed them in the *pastoral grace* of Christ; John now addresses them as from the *judicial authority* of Christ. The apostles had fed them and disciplined them as in the place of dependence, but now these epistles challenge them as in the place of responsibility; and the moment they are thus addressed they are found wanting as candlesticks bound to shine to the praise of Him who had set them in His sanctuary; they are now visited, and the common result of all such visitations of God's stewards may tell us the end of the candlesticks also.

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For the crisis or judgment has always found man unready: whether planted in innocency, in a sphere of providence, or under a ministration of grace, man has been found unequal even to hold a blessing. "Adam, where art thou?" got this answer, "I heard thy voice in the garden and I was afraid because I was naked, and I hid myself." The vineyard of Israel afterwards should have yielded its fruit to Him who had planted and dressed it, but when He came it was only the wild grape that He found. And so it is now with the candlesticks in the house of God. They had been duly prepared by God's care. They were nothing less than golden candlesticks, churches fed by the Spirit, blessed with blessings from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, made fully furnished and well-ordered lights in the sanctuary. But now that the visitation is made in due season too, the Son of Man finds something unsuited to the holy place. These seven churches (the sevenfold or perfect expression of the church) are here challenged by the Son of Man with these words, "I know thy works," but the sevenfold light is but dim and uncertain. This steward of God's glory is but unfaithful also. And so by-and-bye the same inquisition will be made of "the earthly gods," the Gentile powers to whom

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the Lord has committed the sword, and they will then in like manner as Adam, Israel, or the candlesticks, be found wanting, and they will have to fall as men and die like one of the princes (Ps. lxxxii.) All the stewards are thus found wanting, when weighed in the balance, and the Lord is justified in His saying and clear when He judges.* These seven churches are here as the place of this judgment. There were, it is true, other congregations of the Lord at the time, but these seven are enough to exhibit the judgment, for seven is completeness. So some of them may be found by this judgment or visitation in a better condition than others; but still the Son of Man sees the whole thing far different from what it ought to be. The whole tone of this visitation bears with it a notice of what the end was speedily to be, as in our day we see it, for Philadelphia and Smyrna are now as fully removed candlesticks as Sardis or Pergamos.

(To be continued, D. V.)

THE TRUE GRACE OF GOD.

(1 Peter v. 12)

There is not a single doctrine of Scripture that is met by so much repugnance in the

* The Son of Man is the Lord's title here (chap. i. 13), and that belongs to Him in judgment (John v. 27).

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human mind as the truth of divine grace. This opposition is not confined to unconverted persons only; for the very same disposition, if discerned, will be found to operate in the minds of those who are renewed by the grace which, in measure, is opposed and denied. It is not that the necessity of grace is altogether disallowed; a certain degree of it is admitted, as essential to acceptance with God. This even the Pharisee himself could allow, who thanked God for the difference between himself and others. But its absoluteness and completeness, *i. e.*, its real and divine character, finds an unwilling reception in the heart.

It will be found, I imagine, on strict enquiry, that the substitution of our own feelings and natural apprehensions, in the place of an absolute and simple faith in God's testimony, has much to do with wrong and inadequate views of God's grace. The natural bias of the mind (acquired, it may be, and strengthened by, systematic exhibitions of truth) goes very far in restricting the breadth and freedom of thought in the divine word; and makes it a very hard thing for a man to "become a fool that he may be wise" (1 Cor. iii. 18).

Two things are exceedingly needful to be understood and kept in prominence, in order to the right apprehension of grace,

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viz., what the nature of man is, and has been proved to be, under the various trials to which it has been subjected in the dispensations of God; and the real nature and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, as God's full and blessed and only remedy for all this proved and manifested evil in man.

It is comparatively an easy thing to dwell on the sense of personal evil, and to confess in humiliation the workings of a corrupt nature; but it is exceedingly difficult to connect the conscious evil of the flesh with all that has been discovered by God to exist in that flesh, from the day of its first murderous outbreak in Cain, until its enmity found its worst vent in the rejection and murder of God's only Son. If it were kept in mind that it is the very same nature which murdered Cain, and filled the earth with violence before the flood; which turned to the baseness of idolatry in the newly-peopled world, and exhibited itself in the filthiness of Sodom; which wrought in rebellion against the law of God when He thus dealt with the Jew; which, finally, in Jew and Gentile joined in crucifying God's Son when He was sent into the world—it would go far towards clearing the ground for the admission of grace in all its fulness and perfectness, as presented in the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

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If my apprehensions of sin are limited by the discoveries I may have made of my own evil, and are not corrected by the results of God's dealings with man, brought to an issue in the guilt of the cross, I shall stop far short of the proved abomination and wickedness of the flesh; and shall in the same measure practically fall short of a just estimate of the riches of God's grace—that "true grace of God wherein we stand."

It is this which constitutes the special evil of wrong and inadequate thoughts of grace: it disparages God's infinite goodness, and the value of Christ's work.

It is a right thing for a Christian to be desiring holiness, and to feel and confess his want of conformity to Christ; but what is it that gives the power of holiness, and what produces practical transformity to Christ?

The grace of God is not merely negative in its operations. There is a transforming power in the very gaze of the soul on Him, through Whose grace we are saved, and Who is the Object of God's delight.

The true character of this grace can never be maintained in the soul, apart from walking in the abiding sense of the presence of the Lord. Out of that presence I lack the light that manifests it, and the darkness of

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the world produces a dulness of the faculties that apprehend it.

It is the province of faith to be continually lifting up our souls out of this world, and all that is passing around us and within us, and to show us things—the only realities—in the light of God.

And it is just as we get above the region of sense, and are acted upon by the realities of faith, that we are established in grace, and that our comfort and joy as the children of God are advanced, and our walk and ways here are according to God.

What we *are* as the children of God can only be known to faith; and the infinite depths of grace, and the bright prospects of glory, are laid open solely to the eye of faith.

It is a true and blessed fruit of the Father's grace "that we should be called children of God;" but then it is added, "*therefore* the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not." It is not in the scope of the world's knowledge to know the children of God.

But this knowledge is essential to all who would walk as the children of God. Without it, yea, without the constant exercise of soul on this blessed truth, there cannot be the taking or the maintaining of our right place in the world, as exhibiting the grace

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that is to be God's witness to the world, "blameless and harmless, the sons of God in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world." "Beloved, now *are* we children of God."

What we *are* is necessary to be known and cherished in the soul as the power and ground of exhibiting what we *should be*. It was so with the Lord. Had He not been *what He was*, His whole course through the world would have been altered by it. Could He have forgotten or denied His unique claim to be the Son of God, then (I speak not of His work only) His whole character and ways would have sunk to another level in the world.

But this is a truth known and admitted by us all. Still faith needs to be strengthened against the continual contradiction of the world and sense, and our hearts to be recalled to the grace in which we stand.



THE PRIESTLY GARMENTS.

(*Exodus xxviii.*)

This chapter speaks to us of the garments with which Aaron was to be clothed to present himself before the Lord. He was the representative of the people, of those twelve

tribes of Israel whose names he bore—a type of what Christ is doing for us in heaven. The Lord is not Priest after the *order* of Aaron, but he exercises priesthood now according to the *type* presented by Aaron. Now Christ is hid in God as the High Priest when he entered the holiest on the day of atonement.

A priest supposes temptations, distress, or as in the epistle to the Hebrews, infirmities. He is the mediator to intercede on behalf of the people, and to represent them before God. I am weak, but all my weaknesses become, not a ground for judgment but, an occasion for God to display all His tenderness and all His compassion toward me, by means of our Priest. *Down here* Jesus washes our feet, but *before God* He represents us in His perfection. He displays to us down here the riches of God's grace towards us, and He presents us to God in His own perfection. Exodus xxviii., shows us how the Priest presents us before God. The ephod was the garment characteristic of the High Priest; the two parts of it were joined by two shoulder pieces, which bore on two onyx stones the names of the twelve tribes. The girdle is typical of service, "Let your loins be girded." The breast-plate was fastened to the ephod, and also bore on twelve stones the names of the twelve tribes.

The garments were of fine-twined linen : they were, as it were, ornamented with all possible graces, the ground work representing purity itself.

Aaron was to bear the children of Israel before God. He carried them on his *shoulders* ; all the burden of His people and the government are on the shoulders of Christ. If the stones had not been on Aaron's shoulders, the ephod would have fallen ; it was fastened by the names of the children of Israel. If Christ is Priest we are on His shoulders, borne as a memorial before God. He bears the burden and the government : He does all. Efficacy depends entirely upon Him, even in what we do for the Church. Aaron also bore the names of his people on his *heart*, in the breast-plate of judgment. There is not a ray of God's glory and love shining upon Christ which does not also shine on us, who are borne upon His heart. The heart of Christ presents us to God. It is not only to obtain special favours, but it is *we ourselves* that He presents according to the love there is between Him and God. The Urim and the Thummim are lights and perfections. Aaron bore on his heart before God the judgment of the children of Israel according to the perfections of God's presence. Our sins cannot pass by Christ, and interpose themselves between God and Him. He maintains us in righteousness continually before God according to the lights and perfections of that presence. God never hides His face. He may chastise us. By

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our failures we may lose communion with Him; but if God hid His face from us He would hide it from Christ. It is hidden now from Israel, who is under the law. It is our shortcomings which raise a cloud between us and God, it is a consequence of our failure; but God's sovereign grace is by no means changed by it.

The "HOLINESS TO THE LORD!" which was graven upon the gold plate, and put on a blue lace on the mitre) *is always before God.* Our prayers ascend in holiness to the Lord, *because Christ is there.* The iniquity in our holy things being borne by Him, our offerings (for there is iniquity, as all our service is imperfect) are presented before God according to divine holiness in Christ.

This chapter in enabling us to understand better the extent of the love and favour, of which we are the objects, fills us with thanksgiving; and causes us to find in Christ ever new resources: for our knowledge of Him can always grow, and so our joy increases.



"TRANSFORMED."

(*Romans xii. 2*)

The word here translated "transformed" is only found four times in the New Testament. It is used both in Matthew and Mark to describe the change in the appearance of our blessed Lord on the mountain when "His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light." In these places it is rendered "transfigured." It is met with finally in 2 Cor. iii. 18, where

it is given as "changed." Who can doubt that there is an intended connection between these Scriptures? When the Lord was "transfigured" on the mount, God showed out, in anticipation, the glorified state on which His beloved Son would enter after His death and resurrection. (See John xvii. 5.) But we believers shall, by His grace, be glorified together with Him: see John xvii. 22; Rom. viii. 17, etc., from which Scriptures we learn how this will be accomplished. Romans xii. 2 teaches that it is, first of all, a moral work within—a spiritual change effected by the renewing of our mind. From 2 Cor. iii. 18 we gather that while Christ in glory is the model to which we are to be conformed (compare John xvii. 19; Rom. viii. 29), it is by beholding His glory that we are gradually "transfigured"—from glory to glory—into the same image. God thus uses by the Holy Spirit the glory of the Lord to change us morally into the likeness of His beloved Son. But, as 1 John iii. 2 tells us, we shall not be like Him until we see Him as He is. We wait, therefore, until His coming for the full accomplishment of the counsels of God, when our bodies as well as our souls will be conformed to the image of His Son (Phil. iii. 21). In the meantime our moral growth in His likeness will be in proportion to our present occupation with Him in the place where He is.

"And is it so? I shall be like Thy Son;
Is this the grace which He for me hath won?
Father of glory, thought beyond all thought,
In glory, to His own blest likeness brought."

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THE APPROBATION OF THE LORD.

("Do I seek to please men? If I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ."

Gal. i. 10.

"Study to show thyself approved unto God."

2 Tim. ii. 15.)

It should be joy to anyone who loves the Lord Jesus to think of having His individual peculiar approbation and love; to find that He has approved of our conduct in such and such circumstances, though none know this but ourselves who receive the approval. But, beloved, are we really content to have an approval which Christ only knows? Let us try ourselves a little. Are we not too desirous of man's commendation of our conduct? or, at least, that he should know and give us credit for the motives which actuate it? Are we content, so long as good is done, that nobody should know anything about us—even in the church to be thought nothing of? that Christ alone should give us the "white stone" of His approval, and the "new name which no man knoweth save only he that receiveth it"? Are we content, I say, to seek nothing else? Oh, think what the terrible evil and treachery of that heart must be that is not satisfied with Christ's special favour, but seeks honour (as we do) of one another instead! I ask you, beloved,

which would be most precious to you, which would you prefer, the Lord's public owning of you as a good and faithful servant, or the private individual love of Christ resting upon you, the secret knowledge of His love and approval? He whose heart is specially attached to Christ will respond, "The latter." Both will be ours, if faithful; but we shall value this most; and there is nothing that will carry us so straight on our course as the anticipation of it. "Wherefore we make it our aim . . . to be well-pleasing unto Him." (2 Cor. v. 9.—*Rev. Vers.*)



THE WORK OF THE HOUSE OF GOD AND THE WORKMEN THEREIN.

(*Ezra iii.*)

The books of Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai, and Zechariah hang together. In Ezra, we get the temple built and worship restored; in Nehemiah, the restoration of the city; Haggai opens out the secret of the real hindrances to the work; in Zechariah, we have truth presented by which God strengthened the hearts of the remnant.

Truth meets persons in our days in external things: it is common to see Christians opening the Scriptures and being struck with the fact of how unlike the things there

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presented are to what they see around them. Man would set to work to put things in order. God's remedy is to meet practical departure in oneself, to begin with self. We have "the word of the Lord,"* are we bringing our consciences to it—not asking for increase of light, increase of power, but more honest, holy obedience to what we know, just doing that, in all our weakness, which God teaches us to be right? I read Philippians ii. 13, "It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure;" if I am waiting for more power, before I work out that which it is His will I should do, I am denying that He is working in me to accomplish it by His power—to will and to do.

We are to walk, step by step, as God gives the light. Some will say, "Yes, when the door is opened, as it was for the Jews, when power is put forth, as it was for the Jews, then we will go forth;" not seeing that, when the Jews walked disobediently, God raised up enemies from without, standing by to sanction their captivity. The Jew could say, "We must be in bondage until the years of the captivity be ended." Not so the Christian. God has set him free from all captivity, in

*There was a moral appeal to conscience in the Jew—"you know what Moses says, and you have departed from it"—"how came you Jews out of the land?"

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Christ. If he get into bondage, through the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, or the pride of life—the moment God gives him light to see where he is, that moment the word to him is, “Cease to do evil, learn to do well.” The question at the Reformation (and so now), was, “Is the word of God to be obeyed or not?—the Lord hath spoken and shall not we obey?” It is for God to see in us obedience to His word, so far as we know it, and more knowledge will be given—“to him that hath shall more be given.”

But, here, it is necessary for us to see that conduct may go beyond faith. If it does, it will break down. Right conduct on a wrong motive must fail. In Ezra iii., we have the Jews working for God, and that from the written word; for what Moses commanded, they observed (ver. 2), and what David did, they set themselves to do (ver. 10). But they failed. The adversaries of Judah came and stopped the work (chap. iv.). Looking at the outward form, we should have said, “Now here is obedience.” But God’s eye saw through it all. Self-complacency was there; the corrupt heart was there. Haggai furnishes the key. The heart was unpurged. These adversaries, what were they? The remnant had escaped, had got into the land, had begun to build—and why did they not go on? God was using the adver-

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saries of Judah, as the occasion, to show the cause of their failure. Circumstances bring out the cause of failure ; but occasion and cause are constantly confounded. The cause of failure was not in the adversaries of Judah, but in the hearts of the people which were set upon their own things and not upon the things of God, upon their own ceiled houses, and not upon the house of the Lord. And so, we find, through the whole of the word of God, the occasion one thing, the cause another. That which is not done to the Lord, is not done in faith.

Have we a purpose ?—Jesus had a purpose to which He ever turned. O how little purpose of soul have we for God ! The Jews had plenty of thoughts ; but, when difficulties sprang up, they had no purpose. God, therefore, had to teach them purpose, to teach them whether it was His energy, or their own, they were walking in, to teach them to trust in Himself. Action, in the time of difficulty, is what God expects from us, as knowing and acting in the strength we have in Him ; to go forward in the purpose of God, as the channels for His energy to flow in ; to show that there is strength and energy in Him, far beyond all the hindering circumstances, which may come to try our purpose.

Divine energy will never lose its purpose

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for God. Human energy will say, "the time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built" (Hag. i. 2), and will be amusing itself with its vineyards and fields and houses, squandering the time, instead of carrying on with untiring energy, the settled purpose of the soul, amidst all the difficulties and dangers which may threaten or oppose.

In Haggai, I find God acting; and there, I get a lesson for myself, for I have to do with God. I see the hypocrisy of man, doing a right thing, but not doing it to God, doing it from a wrong motive. Whatever is not done, in faith, to God, will fail. As soon as there is confession, when the people "did fear before the Lord," there is the gracious answer, "I am with you, saith the Lord."

Thus, we have three great points brought out:—

1st—Are we walking in what we know, up to the light we have?

2ndly—The course of conduct the light brings into, will not do for the flesh to walk in, but the energy of faith alone.

3rdly—Whatever connection the circumstances of providence may have with the things of God, they are not of power in the work of God. The providence of God may open the prison-door, lead the people out, raise up Cyrus, Zerubbabel, etc.; but, when

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they want power for action, we find the Spirit of prophecy opening their eyes to see their departure from God, telling them what was in their own hearts, and then telling of the grace in God's heart towards them, and the glory that awaited them (See Ezra v. 1,2).

By the mercy of God, the government of a country may be favourable, quietness may be enjoyed and there may be the privilege of meeting together without fear of interruption or violence—a great boon (under God) of the government. This is a great responsibility. But there is nothing of real power in service, but a “thus saith the Lord.” There is no power in the floating topics of religion, it must be the truth of God in our own souls—knowing the truth of God, as God's truth, and then our action, action for God. Are we searching the word of God to find God there? What is the value of seeing all the scenes pointed out in Scripture—things past, or things to come—and not seeing God in them? There are two marks of spiritual experience in Scripture. First, having studied such a portion, have you seen God as presented in those circumstances? have you met God there? If so, you have been bowed down and humbled; and, if humbled, you have got rest. Secondly, a spiritual reception of Scripture will ever produce corresponding action, a going

forth, a "Here am I." If one say, I cannot understand—when the Spirit is teaching, He takes us to what we can understand. Power for service is learned in the presence of God, and there alone; for, in the presence of God, we get humbled and rest in His grace.

Is my study of Scripture a drawing out of God's word of what I am, and of what God is?



HIMSELF !

"I used to think that I had lively faith, communion, and hope; but as I get older I find myself more like a babe, faithfully watched over by a mother's eye, and seem to get more satisfied to see what His thoughts of to-day are about me, and what His plans. Less account made of my feelings, more of His; less notice of my faith, more of the fact that He died in my stead. More consciousness of the worth of His presence in heaven as a fact, than of the feelings which the knowledge of it produces in me—more counting on the certainty of His coming back in order to put the finishing stroke to what He has wrought, than of the flutter of expectancy. Not that the work wrought in us by the Holy Ghost has sunk in value in my thoughts, but that I look

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more at the outgoings of that work in me. 'To me to live is Christ;' 'The life I live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me.' Individual attachment of the soul to the person of the Lord seems of growing importance. He bare the wrath in our stead; He has confessed in heaven above His love to us; He means to come and fetch us home. How can I say such things, and not want to see Himself—His own very self? True, when He comes the scene will be surpassingly grand and blessed—Himself, the resurrection and the life, coming out from God to turn the low estate of those who have trusted in Him to an occasion in which to show forth the glories of His own divine person as the resurrection and the life. He will come, and call up out of the grave all that believed in Him; and then, standing on the cloud, will cause the life wherewith He will have quickened those that are alive and remain to His coming, to burst forth; and then body and spirit shall be as instinct with His life as the souls of His people already are; and He will catch them away to be with Himself for ever in the Father's house. Most blessed as this the doctrine of 1 Thess. iv., is, my soul seems to find its deeper, more individual portion in chap. i. I appreciate Him, and do so in the very presence of God.

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He loves me, and I love Him; and I wait for Him to come from heaven. The individuality is so blessedly seen on the one hand, and the contrast on the other between this divinely-wrought love to Himself and the poor world all around. It is, too, one's portion for to-day just where we are now."

(Extract from letter.)



MEDITATIONS ON THE REVELATION.

(Continued from page 11)

These challenges of the Churches by the Son of Man lead us to see, that all was then nearly over, that there was but a step between such rebukes and their removal. And, surely, we do not need in our day to be told of the disturbance which has taken place in the house of God. We learn that Adam lost Eden, and the present groans of creation tell us so. We learn that Israel lost Canaan, and their present wanderings over the earth tell us so. And how see we the sanctuary? Are we not witnesses to ourselves that we have been no more able to hold the blessing which was ours, than Adam could hold Eden, or Israel Canaan. The candlestick that was set for the rebuking of all that was without as darkness, and for being itself the embodied and well-order-

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ed light of the world, is not now at Ephesus or even Sardis. But where is anything like it? Can any one thing, in any one place, assert the honour of being the Lord's candle there, and show that the Lord is feeding, and judging, and trimming it as such? In the day of John the Lord still owned the candlesticks, owned them by thus visiting and judging them. But is there such recognition now? We may try our ways most surely by all that is here said to the Churches, but this does not amount to the Son of Man owning us by judgment. And our first duty therefore both in grace and wisdom is, to be humbled because of this; for though we may have much in fragments that belongs to the candlesticks, yet all that does not give us the standing and privilege of the candlestick, entitling us to set aside as darkness, and as not of the sanctuary, all that is not of ourselves.

When our fidelity to the Lord became the question, we were found wanting, as any other steward. This book will, at the end, show us that the question of the Lord's fidelity to us will be answered in the other way: for as the Lamb's Wife the Church will then be found to survive all the judgments, though *here* she could not as the candlestick stand the righteous challenge of the Lord. And this is man—and this is God

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always: shame and ruin mark our end—honour and peace, and everlasting truth and love the end of the Lord. And in this shame and ruin, I believe these three chapters close; the perfect order of the seven lights of the house of God is gone, and gone too not to be restored, and according to this the prophet is at once called to see other things, and other places; to witness another scene, but still a scene of judgment as we shall find, not that of the priestly Son of Man in His Temple, but that of God and the Lamb in the earth.

But this judgment is delayed till all the foreknown family have come in—for God's long suffering is salvation (2 Pet. iii. 15). The fulness of the gentiles must come in, and all be brought to the knowledge of the Son of God (Rom. xi. 25; Ephes. iv. 13); therefore before we are led in our prophet to behold this second scene of judgment, or the judgment of the earth, we are given, I believe, *a sight of the Church in heaven*, under the symbols of the living creatures, and crowned elders round the throne; so that the rapture of the saints into the air had taken place at some untold moment between the times of our third and fourth chapters.

But here I would pause a little. We have not, I am aware, this ascension of the saints

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actually presented here ; we learn it in the appointed Scripture (1 Thes. iv.), and that rapture will lead both to the Lord Himself and then to the Father. But it is not these results that we get here. It is not the saints, either in the Lord's presence, or in the mansions of the Father's house, that we see here, but the Church before the throne of God Almighty, of Him who was, and is, and is to come, for whose pleasure all things were created. This is the scene we get here :—not the children before the Father, but the Church in dignity before the throne.

But how perfect is the wisdom of God in appointing all the seasons for revealing His mind and purposes ! A view of the Father's house would not have been in character here, for this is the book, not of consolations for the children of the Father, but of judgments by which God and the Lamb are asserting their holy rights, vindicating their own praise, and delivering the long usurped and corrupted inheritance out of the hands of its destroyers. The Gospel by John conducts us to the Father's house, our path there ends, as the path of *children*, in that house of love ; but this Apocalypse by John gives us the action that gets the golden city ready for us, and our path here ends, as the path of *heirs*, in that place of glory : for both are ours, the joys of children, and the

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dignity of heirs—the house of the Father, and the throne of the Son. Here, then, when taken into vision of heavenly things, it is the throne of God, with its due attendants, and not the Father's house with the children that we see. It is the throne of God Almighty, Creator and Ruler of all things, around which is, therefore, the holy pledge of the earth's covenanted security—the rainbow. And it is the place too from which the subsequent action of the book, or the judgment of the earth, flows; and, therefore, lightnings and thunders, and voices (the symbols of these judgments) here issue from it. And it is the throne, also, which is to rule the world to come or the kingdom at the end. And therefore the seven spirits (the symbol of that energy by which that kingdom is to be maintained—Is. xi. 1-3) are here seen before it; and in connection with this government of the kingdom, or “world to come” (Heb. ii. 5), we see the Church in the symbol of the living creatures and elders also around it. But as to this wondrous subject of the living creatures or the Cherubims, I would observe a little more particularly. Whenever we see them throughout Scripture, they are always attendants upon the throne of God: always reflecting by their action, or atti-

tude, the mind and ways of Him who sits there.*

1.—Thus they are seen at the gate of Eden, with a flaming sword, because there the Lord was expressing His own unrepenting righteousness in the law, driving as He then was the sinner out of His place.

2.—Thus also they are seen over the mercy-seat in the holiest, with fixed delighted gaze enquiring into the secrets of that throne of grace, because there the Lord was expressing His work in Jesus, the fixedness of His purpose, and joy in the gospel of His dear Son (Exod. xxv. 20 ; 1 Peter i. 12).

3.—Thus also they are seen with unfolded wings under the God of Israel (Ezek. i. 11), because then the Lord of Israel was about to leave His sanctuary, the apostasy of His people having disturbed His rest in Jerusalem. And they are here also seen reaching out their hands to take fire to cast it over the city, for then the Lord had commanded the judgment of its sins.

4.—Thus also as here, they are seen round the throne, still attending on it to celebrate the praise of Him who sits there, and do His will, and learn His mind, still therefore reflecting His mind and ways. But in this

* They were, therefore, I judge, made out of one piece of gold with the throne itself (see Exod. xxv. 19).

last place of the Cherubim, we observe a distinction of great importance. Hitherto, or in the first three instances, they were angelic, because the law had been ordained by *angels* (Gal. iii. 19). With delight the angels enquired into the mysteries of Christ (1 Pet. i. 12), and *the angels* waited on the Lord of Israel (Is. vi. 2). But now the Cherubim, or attendants on the throne, have become *human*, because "the world to come" is to be made subject to *man* and not to angels (Heb. ii. 5), and this throne in Rev. iv., is the throne that is by-and-bye to preside over "the world to come."

But this is glorious and wonderful. Poor sinners redeemed by blood are destined, through grace, to take the Cherubic dignity and joy in which angels, unfallen angels, once stood, the angels themselves falling back, as it were, and opening their ranks to let redeemed sinners in, and then to take their own place around them, as well as around the throne itself (vii.). Angels are thus passed by and the seed of Abraham taken up, and it is blessed to know that angels themselves take delight in this. They desire to look into this mystery. God manifest in the flesh is seen of them (1 Tim. iii. 16). Their own joy is enhanced by all this, for by it they have learnt more of the shining and gracious ways of Him who crea-

ted them, as He has redeemed us, and on whom they as we depend. Beggars from the dunghill are set as among princes round the throne—the living creatures, and the crowned elders accordingly, never in the whole action of this wondrous book move out of *heaven*, but there abide, either in the intelligence of the mind of God, or in authority under the throne, or in the holy office of leading the joy of creation (see v., vi., vii., xi., xv., xix.). They abide in their sphere on high while the action proceeds on earth.* Such I judge to be the throne with its attributes and attendants. It is the throne of the Creator and Upholder of all things, from which is to go forth the judgments which are to clear the earth of its corrupters and destroyers, and then to have connection with the redeemed earth in “the world to come.”

But the throne being thus seen, and God's glory and pleasure as Creator and Governor

* There was something like this order of living creatures and crowned elders in Israel. I mean in the way in which the Ark was attended. The Priests and the Levites surrounded the Ark in a nearer and smaller circle, and then the twelve tribes (on each side three) encompassed it in a larger and more distinct circle or square, thus the one had more intimacy with it than the other, as here the order of living creatures, elders, and angelic hosts around the throne (See Num. i.—iv.).

of all things being thus celebrated, the question arises, Who can He *seat* on the throne with Himself? Who shall ascend into the *hill* † of the Lord, or who shall stand in His holy place?" The earth and its fulness is the Lord's by the title of creation here celebrated, and owned in that 24th Psalm; but it was His pleasure of old to set His image over these works of His hand. Adam was given dominion, but Adam lost his place, and forfeited his kingdom. Who then shall reassume the dignity, again ascend the hill of the Lord? Who is he whom the Lord God can reinstate in Adam's forfeited lordship? That now becomes the question, and accordingly it is raised in the 5th chapter, immediately after the exhibition of the supreme throne in the 4th chapter, and the answer to it from every quarter is this:—"The Lamb that was slain, the Lion of the tribe of Judah." He who sat on the throne joins to give that answer by letting the Book pass from His hand into that of the Lamb. The living creatures and elders join in giving it by singing their song of gladness in the prospect of the earth being soon the scene of their glory; the hosts of angels join in giving it by now ascribing all

† See Ps. xxiv.—A hill is a symbol of government Ps. ii. 6; Is. ii. 2.

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strength, and glory, and faculty for dominion to the Lamb. Every creature in heaven, on earth, under the earth, and such as are in the sea, in their order and measure join in giving it by uniting the name of the Lamb with that of their Creator and Lord, and they all at once feel as though their groans were already turned into praises, for as soon as Adam fell, creation was sensitive of the cause and became a prisoner of hope (Rom. viii. 20-22); but now that the Lamb takes the Book, she becomes at once equally sensitive of deliverance, and glories in the liberty of the children of God. Thus is the question settled in heaven. The title of the Lamb to take dominion in the earth is owned and verified in the very place where alone all power and dominion or office could righteously be had, in the presence of the throne in heaven, for "power belongeth to God." Messiah owns that in the 62nd Psalm, and here He again owns it by taking the Book out of His hand, for that is an action which confesses on the part of the Lamb, that powers are ordained of God, that the Lord in heaven is the foundation of office. Thus it is in heaven, and from the Ancient of Days, that the Son of Man takes dominion, and the Nobleman receives His kingdom (Dan. vii.; Luke xix.). Jesus would not take power from the god of this

world (Matt. iv. 9, 10), nor would He take it from the heated desire of the people (John vi. 15). He waits to take it (for then alone it could be righteously received) from the hand of the God of heaven and earth, from whom Adam had of old received it. And as the Lamb here owns God on the throne to be the source of power, so God on the throne owns the Lamb to be His ordinance of power. This action of taking the Book has this concord of sweet sounds in it, for the Lamb goes up to receive it, and the Lord allows it to pass from His hand. God's glory as supreme and only Potentate is thus vindicated, and He commits power in the earth again to the hand of man, as fully sanctioning it then, and all the exercise of it, as of old He did in Adam, delighting again in this other image and likeness of Himself. And this governs all the subsequent action of this wondrous book, for the title to the kingdom being thus approved in the due place and form, it only remains to clothe that title with possession. The inheritance is the Lamb's by purchase of blood; that blood sealed Him as the fully obedient One, and therefore God could thus highly exalt Him (Philip. ii.), and that blood had also reconciled all things in heaven and earth (Col. i.). And the inheritance being therefore thus purchased, He has now only to redeem it. His blood as the Lamb slain had given Him the title to it; His strength as the Lion of the tribe of Judah must now give Him possession of it.

(To be continued, D. V.).

THE "PATIENCE OF HOPE."

O JESUS, precious Saviour,
Oh! when wilt Thou return?
Our hearts, with woe familiar,
To Thee, our Master, turn.
Our woe is Thine, Lord Jesus!
Our joy is in Thy love:
But woe and joy all lead us
To Thee, in heaven above!
We ponder the long story
Of this world's mournful ways;
We think on holy glory
With Thee, through endless days.
We see God's gracious order
All spoiled by man below;
See all around disorder,
Meek hearts beset with woe.
Where'er we ope' the pages,
In which—Thy wondrous word—
Man's path through varied ages
Is given us, to record,
Of failure, ruin, sorrow,
The story still we find:
God's love but brings the morrow
Of evil in mankind.
To Thee we look, Lord Jesus,
To Thee, whose love we know;
We wait the power that frees us
From bondage, sin, and woe.
We look for Thine appearing,
Thy Presence here to bless;
We greet the day that's nearing,
When all this woe shall cease.

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But oh, for us, blest Saviour !
How brighter far the lot,
With Thee to be for ever,
Where evil enters not !

To see Thee, Who'st so loved us,
Then face to face above,
Whose grace at first had moved us
To taste, and know, Thy love !

With Thee, O Lord, for ever !
Our souls shall be content ;
Nor act, nor thought, shall ever
Full joy with Thee prevent.

Thy Father's perfect favour
Our dwelling-place shall be,
And all His glory, ever
Shine forth on us and Thee.

Oh come then soon, Lord Jesus!
In patience still we wait
(Await the power that frees us)
Our longed-for heavenly seat !



“THE OLD AND THE NEW.”

God never gives up the creature, or the original order of the thing which He has created or established : “For thy pleasure they are and were created,” is His rule. Whatever the ruin may be which sin and Satan have introduced, yet all will be infinitely surpassed, when set up again for His glory and our blessing, in the second Man, the last Adam.

This is true as regards the first heavens and the earth, and the man and the woman, who were made in the image of God, and who walked with their Creator in the midst of the garden of Eden. It further applies to the relations of life in which Adam and Eve were set as one flesh ; so that marriage itself is claimed by Jesus (Matt. xix.) for “an *order* of God,” as He made them in “the beginning,” and will find its perfect fulfillment at last in Christ and the church (see Ephes. v. 31). It is true “the patterns” of the heavenly things have been sadly dimmed, and even marred by the fall; and “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil” has taken deep root, and spread its branches and fruits far and wide amongst the generations of men. But even this interruption by sin has been turned round for the display of the forbearance and goodness of God towards His guilty creatures, in the plans of His government of the world. Ways and means of recovery have ever and anon been employed by God, if man *were* reclaimable; but all reformatory measures failed, whether by the law, or the kings, or the prophets, and evil has established itself in the earth: “There was none good but One,” and He was God! He alone could measure or meet this mighty ruin, and this was met, in the fulness of time, by sending forth “His

Son, made of woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law ;” and beyond this, “ God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them ” (2 Cor. v.). He who alone could provide a remedy, did so in His infinite love, and “ made Him who knew no sin, to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” But beside the efficacy of His sacrifice, and our redemption by His blood out of the state and condition we were in, as men in the flesh, and in our sins—“ in Him was life, and the life was the light of men,” and of the world. God manifest in flesh (Jesus the Lord) had come into the midst of the human family, not to judge and condemn, but as a Man amongst men, going about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil ; for God was with Him. Perfect too as the Son of man in His daily life, He was viewed with delight from the opened heavens, and declared to be “ the beloved Son in whom the Father was well pleased.”

One had come forth from God, into the midst of a disobedient and gainsaying people, whose meat and drink it was to do the will of Him that sent Him, and to finish His work. Led too into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil (that in all things He might stand between men, and what man

was powerless to meet), He resisted the tempter by the word of the living God, and finally, in the triumph of that hour, bade Satan go behind Him. Nor did Jesus stand alone in His life of service towards the oppressed and guilty, but sent forth His disciples into the cities and towns, whither He Himself would come; so that they returned, saying, "The devils are subject to us through thy name."

But the Son of God upon the earth, speaking as never man spake, and with such a ministry maintained by His own personal glory, through mighty wonders and miracles which He and His disciples wrought, failed to win the confidence and faith of men in the glad tidings of the prophetic kingdom, which the Messiah presented in His own Person. They would not accept Him—divine power and grace were all ineffectual—and they crucified their King. Life and light in "the Word made flesh" were thus refused, and the love rejected which brought them down into the midst of moral darkness and death in which men lay. Majesty and glory, in the Son of David, were despised; and the throne, the sceptre, and the kingdom, alike refused, when presented, as He rode into Jerusalem, the royal city.

In effect, the world broke the link which

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the heavens supplied, as the only recovering means of present blessing, by refusing the hand and heart that formed it. Goodness, supreme goodness, was driven back to its source in God by the crucifixion of Christ. Righteousness, cast out of the world by the expulsion of Him in whom it dwelt, went up for a home with the Father on high. Sad as this was, it was all that Satan and man could do, and did, by means of the cross; but in thus getting rid of Christ, how little did they see that this last act of combined wickedness was the limit of their power, which expired in the outburst of its own enmity and rage. The glory of Christ's resurrection was its contradiction and reversal by the right hand of God, and *now* His intentions and counsels have changed their centre, and are to begin and be carried out in sovereign grace and Almighty power "from the heavens" above, where the rejected One of the earth has been accepted and crowned with glory. Redemption by blood, the blood of Christ, has been accomplished for the overwhelming ruin under which the whole race lay by the guilt of the cross; and the Lord in resurrection life, and ascension power on high, is declared to be the Head and Beginning of the new Creation of God. Consequent upon this change of divine operation for the glory

of Christ, and as regards ourselves, "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new. And all things are of God." No higher place can be reached than that into which God has exalted Christ, as the Head of all principality and power; and we await His coming forth in manifested glory. Moreover, the witness of all this to the Church is the Holy Ghost, which the Father has sent in the Son's name, till the shout calls away the bride to meet her Lord in the air. It is well to be assured thus, by the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, that the very next thing is "manifestation in love," and then "display in glory;" for all that preceeds, and is necessary to this, has been accomplished. It is this expectation of the heart which makes "the blessed hope" of the Lord's coming so precious and *present* to it. Nothing but this can make it the ruling passion of the soul, for transformation *here*, by separation from evil; or for the comfort and joy of knowing that we shall be like nothing else when He does come.



FRAGMENT.—"I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." There is no reference to eternal life here, but to the general faithful care of God—His care of us day by day, so, that the saint need have no care. This is God's way of "insuring."

THE MANNER OF THE LOVE.

(1 John, iii. 1-3.)

I suppose we all know that in the gospel by John we have the manifestation of the divine life here on earth in the person of the the blessed Lord, while in the epistle, by the same writer, it is the manifestation of the same life in us. It is easy enough for us to see and understand that the life is manifested in Him ; but when we come to the same life in ourselves, we turn in upon ourselves to see what is the effect produced in us ; and such is the human heart that we judge of the thing by the effect produced in us. Now God puts before us the thing itself in all its reality. It is most wonderful to think of the divine life in us when we look at ourselves. People are almost afraid nowadays to speak of it ; yet, if we are born of God, what life have we ? We are converted, saved from wrath, it is true, but we are in possession of something that has been imparted to us by God Himself in His own sovereign grace and power. He has given us that life—"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us."

Most wonderful and blessed when by the grace of God we can think of what God has done and is doing, and learn from God Him-

self how He handles the soul. We make such mistakes, and are so short-sighted and clumsy too, as we always are in our ways; but the way God handles us is a way that produces in the soul what answers to Himself and to the glory of Christ. He always gives us the thing, makes it good to us, before He speaks of the responsibility connected with it. It is a great thing when we learn this; it is the beginning of really learning God, to learn the principle on which He is acting toward us. We, having nothing, possessing nothing; He, in His own sovereignty, grace, and love, begins with what He is, and ends with what He is. Everything of the old man begins to cry out when grace comes to the soul, and the soul apprehends that grace. When Aaron's rod blossomed and bore fruit—priestly intercession in grace—God had said He would thus make the people's murmurings to cease, they begin to cry out "we die, we perish, we all perish, there is an end of us now." We at once discover that the old man, the flesh begins to find out, that everything in us has to go because of grace. God is for us, "working in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure."

"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us." That is the sovereign act of God in His sovereignty. It

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comes in wonderfully in connection with that. It is not the amount of our sins forgiven, not what the style of His love is, what sort of love He has bestowed upon us. Is it to blot out all that is against us? No! The character of His love is, that He brings us into relationship with Himself. Nothing will satisfy, nothing does satisfy, the heart of God, as to me individually, but bringing me into relationship with Himself. Apply that to yourself, and you will see how it searches you out. If by the grace of God I have got hold of it, I say, "Marvellous love!" I cannot find any reason in myself for it, but I find the cause in God Himself. One verse we so often pass over so quickly and carelessly is this, in John iv., "The Father seeketh such to worship Him." All the activities of the divine nature are here in this word seeking to satisfy itself. Has it ever occurred to you that this is what is going on now? Divine love has satisfied itself in bringing us to Himself, making us His children, honouring the work of the blessed Lord Jesus Christ, and so placing us in that blessed relationship with Himself that He may have His love satisfied in such things as you and me. It is of great importance in this day, when people try to satisfy their minds with all sorts of things, to see how God deals with heart and conscience.

“That we should be called the children of God.” What is the consequence? Why, the world does not know us, does not know us any more than it knows the Father—“O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee.” I do not ask how much you know of the world—it would not be very edifying for any of us to give his experience about that—but how much does the world know about you and me? How much are you and I living in the power and reality of that of which the world knows nothing? We have something beyond the understanding of the world; that is the first statement made as to it. “It does not yet appear what we shall be,” because Jesus has not yet been manifested in glory. If you read that over and over again you can find no argument in it; it is a statement of the greatest blessedness and the most complete sovereignty—“We shall be like Him; we shall see Him as He is.” We shall not see Him as “the Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief,” but as the Man of glory, and yet the One who for our sakes was the Man of sorrows and grief. We shall be like Him then—inwardly and outwardly like Him. Do you think we have the bare idea of that in our hearts, in our souls now? We are going to see Jesus there in the glory, and when we see Him we shall find ourselves

inwardly and outwardly like Himself. Now all we can discover, I think, is unlikeness to Him, and the Spirit of God would have us judge and get rid of it; but we shall see Him as He is, there in the centre of all that heavenly glory, and when we see Him we shall be like Him. What is so important in both these verses is the soul's possession of the truth, and the practical expression of it in this world. Why are the people of God worldly, so familiar with the world, and the world with them—why? Because we have not really got this hope in Christ as a practical living reality in our souls; that we are going to be with Jesus in the glory, to be like Him and with Him. Have we the truth without the power of it? Has the power of it passed away? If so, the reason of this is in ourselves.



“GOD IS LIGHT.” “GOD IS LOVE.”

There are two great principles in God's nature, answering to His two essential names, above given of “Light” and “Love,” viz., Holiness and Love. One is the necessity of that nature, imperative in all that approach Him; the other is its energy. God is holy: God is—not loving, but—love. We make him a judge by sin, for He is holy

and has authority; but He is love, and none has made Him such. If there be love anywhere else, it is of God: for God is love. This is the blessed, active energy of His being. In the exercise of this, He gathers to Himself, for the eternal blessedness of those who are gathered. Its display is in Christ, and Christ Himself is its great power and centre. His counsels as to this are "the glory of His grace": His applying them to sinners, and the means He employs for it, are "the riches of His grace."



MEDITATIONS ON THE REVELATION.

(Continued from page 40.)

In Israel there was the ordinance of redeeming the inheritance, as well as the heir or person (Lev. xxv.). If either an Israelite or his possession had been sold, it was both his kinsman's duty and right to ransom him and it: now Jesus has approved Himself our kinsman in both ways. The Son of God became the Son of man and thus showed His kinsman nature. He died to purchase us and our inheritance by blood, and thus showed His kinsman love; and in this book of the Revelation we get Him, I judge, perfecting His acts as such kinsman and redeeming our inheritance out of the

hand of its corrupters. The kinsman in Israel had title to redeem the inheritance, but then he had to do it on condition of discharging the debt that was on it. Jesus has paid His blood, a full and more than adequate value, as is here owned, for the Book, or title to the redeemed possession, passes into His hand, and hence the action flows. But the usurper of the inheritance is still to be removed, the enemy to be made the kinsman's footstool; and whether the action be properly that of God, or that of the Lamb Himself, the character of the action, I judge, is equally clear and certain. The action is the redemption of the inheritance flowing from the Lamb's acknowledged title. The Book taken by the Lamb is the title deed; and that it is so, and not a book of instructions to Him as the Prophet of the church, or anything but this title deed that concerns the church's inheritance of the earth, appears to me from several considerations.

1st. Because it lay in the hand of God Almighty, the Creator of all things, before He receives it.

2nd. Because it is taken by the Lord as the Lamb slain, and as the Lion of Judah, characters of purchase and strength.

3rd. Because on the taking of it, the church sings in prospect of her dominion

over the earth. The angels, who had been previously ministers of power in the earth, then transfer all that to the Lamb, and creation ends her groans in praises.

These witnesses establish in my mind the character of the Book which the Lamb takes, and the book of the Revelation is in concord with this. It is the history of the redemption of the inheritance; I mean, of course, the second part of it, after the third chapter. It is the Joshua of the New Testament. It occupies the same place in the history of the acts of the Lord in the New Testament, as the book of Joshua does of the acts of the Lord in the Old. It records the manner of redeeming the inheritance, as that did; and without His acts as recorded in Joshua the Lord's ways in old time would have been imperfect.

He had redeemed the heir out of Egypt by the hand of Moses, educated and trained him in the wilderness, and thus prepared him for rest in Canaan; but He had still to redeem Canaan out of the hand of the Amorite, and this act of His is recorded in Joshua. Then, but not till then, the Lord went through the whole course of His mercy and strength; and so, without the book of the Revelation, the record of the Lord's acts would in like manner have been incomplete. The gospels and the epistles tell us, like the

book of Moses, of the redemption of the heir, and his education in the wilderness of this present evil world, but now it is this closing book of the Revelation that tells us of the redemption of the inheritance, and thus properly closes and completes the perfect acts of the Lord in behalf of the Church of God*. But the day of vengeance is united with the year of the redeemed (Is. lxiii. 4; xxxiv. 8; lxi. 2), and accordingly the redemption of the inheritance is conducted by judgments, or vengeance on the enemies of the heir of it, its usurpers and corrupters, as therefore from henceforth in this book (until the inheritance is redeemed—until the kingdom is brought in) it is judgment that

*If no kinsman were found able or willing to redeem the inheritance, it returned to the heir in the Jubilee. The Lord of Israel thus kept in His own hand the means of restoring all things. He acted as Lord of the soil, and said the land was His (Lev. xxv. 23). He created as it were a tenantry for forty-nine years, in the fiftieth year resuming the land, and then settling it anew on His family according to His own mind. And so with this earth, of which the land of Israel was the sample; man may take it into his own hand for a time, and by his covetousness on the one hand, or idle habits on the other, disturb God's order in it. But a day is coming, the promised and expected Jubilee, the time of the restitution of all things, and then the earth shall be brought back to God again, and He will resettle it on His family according to His own holy and righteous principles. I might here observe that sacrifices may be allowed among the Jews in the kingdom, to keep in memory the blood of the Lamb which was the price and purchase of the kingdom.

is proceeding (vi.—xix.). It may be seals that are opened, trumpets blown, or vials emptied, but all is preparing the inheritance for the Lamb and the church, all is action for the redeeming of it, and bringing it into the hand of Him into whose hand the title deed of it, as we have seen, has already passed. And according to this, on His beginning this action, He receives both a *bow* and a *crown*, the one signifying that He was going forth to judge and make war, the other that that warfare was to end in the kingdom. As is said to Him in another Scripture, “Gird thy *sword* upon thy thigh, O most mighty,” and then “Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever” (Ps. xlv.). Thus it is henceforth a book of judgments, as it has been hitherto, only judgments in another sphere and for another end—not of the candlestick but of the earth and its corrupters. Judgment had begun at the house of God, and now ends with those who would not obey the gospel. One enemy may appear after another, the beast, and the false prophet, the dragon, the great whore, or the kings of the earth, but it is only that each, in his season, may meet the judgment of the Lord. So there may be sorrow after sorrow, the woman may have to fly into the wilderness, the remnant of her seed to feel the rage of the dragon,

those who refuse to take the mark of the beast to know and exercise the patience of the saints, and the two witnesses to lie slain in the streets of the great city ; but all this sorrow is only leading on to the *rest* of the kingdom, or to the descent of the Golden City. The inheritance is thus redeemed by judgments out of the hands of its corrupters, and then the righteous nation that has kept the truth enters. But in all this action, I judge, the church has no place, the saints having been taken to meet the Lord in the air before it begins. This scene is one of judgment, and they have been removed, like Enoch, to another altogether. And I would now suggest a few reasons, on which I ground this conclusion, as I did before for my conclusions on the character of the sealed book.

1st. The saints are seen around the throne in heaven ; or, as I have already noticed, in the 4th chapter, and throughout the book, onward from that, they are never seen but there ; and this leads me to judge that the church has been removed from the earth at some untold moment between the time of the 3rd and 4th chapters, as I have already said.

2nd. At the opening of this action, chap. vi., the same signs are given as had before been given by the Lord Himself to His Jew-

ish remnant (Matt. xxiv.) respecting the end of the world (or 'age'); and as in all that prophecy the church is not contemplated, so do I judge that she is not contemplated here, but that it is the faithful Jewish election who are engaged in this action, as they only are considered in that prophecy.

3rd. The judgments begin with the 6th chapter, but as Joshua of old did not begin his wars till the redemption and discipline of the people were ended, and they were taken out of the wilderness, so, do I judge, will not the action of the 6th chapter begin till the rapture of the saints, which closes the discipline of the church and takes her out of the wilderness, is over.

4th. It is a scene of judgment, as I have already noticed, and the calling of the church is that of Enoch, to be taken out of it, and not like Noah, preserved *in it* (see 1 Thess. iv. and 2 Thess. ii.).

From such considerations I do conclude that the church is not mixed up in the scene which now lies before us. They have been taken into their more immediate inheritance which is in heaven (1 Pet. i. 4), which is to them the passage of the Jordan, before these judgments on the corrupters of the earth, the mystic Amorites of Canaan, begin. These scenes are the wars of our Joshua—a remnant like Rahab is delivered

out of the defiled place after they begin; but the saints have passed into their inheritance, though the whole of it is not yet subdued, and through these chapters, vi.—xix., they wait in the house of the Father for it. But I do not particularly notice these chapters; indeed I do not believe that we are competent to speak of them with authority. We may draw much warning and exhortation from them, which we should lay deeply to heart as being that which the Lord would continually say to us, in order that we may stand in any evil day that may arise, as arise it may, to try and sift us at any hour. But of the scenes themselves I would not speak with authority. The Lord in them is clad with zeal as a cloak, the day of vengeance being in His heart, and the year of His redeemed having come, and onward thus He travels in the greatness of His strength, till He couches in His kingdom as the Lion of Judah. The true day of Jericho, and of Ai, of the valley of Ajalon, and of the waters of Merom are here fought till the earth gets rest from war, and the people of the Lord dwell again in sure and quiet habitation*.

(To be continued, D. V.)

*This book exhibits the same union as Isaiah lxiii. 4, for it gives, as I judge, the day of vengeance, and also the year of the redeemed, or the ransom of the true Israel.

TILL THAT DAY.

O day so often long'd for
Amidst the strife and toil ;
O morning of clear shining
Over a reeking soil !
So Deborah and Barak
Sang when the fight was won ;
(And so in higher accents we)
"May those that love Thee, Saviour, be
Like to the rising sun."

Some have the morning waited
In cell and prison den ;
And some in labour patient,
Ignored, unknown by men ;
And many a wand'ring minstrel,
Across the desert way,
Awaits to sing the fullest praise,
Awaits his song of songs to raise
Before Thee on that day.

As the first rays illumine
The pure white Alpine snows,
And blushing to vermilion,
Each crag like coral glows—
The throne, the crown, the kingdom,
Will bright and glorious be ;
But still we seek a higher part
To fill the cup and crown the heart—
O blesséd Lord, 'tis Thee !

'Tis *Thou* !—who know'st the secret
Of every burden'd soul ;
Thou who canst tell each yearning,
And every wish control.
Who of devoted Mary,
Such gracious words couldst say ;

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O guerdon great, O blessed choice !
We too, would listen to Thy voice,
Our solace till that day.

There where all saints adoring
Thee, the exalted Head,
Obey Thy voice harmonious,
That voice that wakes the dead.
Above the light and splendour
Of all that bright array,
Without restraint, in fullest tone,
Shall rise Thy praise, for Thou alone
Couldst keep us till that day.



MEDITATIONS ON THE REVELATION.

(Concluded from page 60.)

As we had a preface to the book in its place, so now we have a conclusion (xxii. 6-21).

Here we first listen to the angel who had attended John, attesting the full truth of all that had passed, and then we listen to the Lord pledging His speedy coming, and a blessing (as in the preface) on those who should righteously use this book. We then find that the hearing and seeing of these excellent things so wrought for a moment on the mind of John, that he falls down and worships the angel, as indeed he had done before (xix. 10). But on both these occasions he had been receiving some over-

whelming visions. In chap. xix., he had just seen the marriage of the Lamb in heaven; and now the golden city in her glory and beauty; and his engaged and overpowered affections, awakened by such visions, must account to us for these worshippings of the angel. But the angel rebukes him, as Pèter did Cornelius in such a case, and then instructs him in one particular touching this book, which is strikingly different from the instructions given to the Jewish prophet on a like occasion (Dan. viii. 26; xii, 4, 9). Daniel had seen and heard wonders, but was told to seal them till the time of the end, because the vision was yet to be for many days; but here our prophet is told to publish these things which he had seen and heard, because the time did not now wait but was at hand. This marks the mind of the Spirit so differently in the Jewish prophet, and the prophet who was standing in our dispensation addressing the saints in John. For though events might have to pass in the thoughts of Israel before the kingdom could come, the church may look for her Lord at all times; and accordingly the Lord at once breaks in here with an announcement of His speedy coming, and that too with the rewards of righteousness, and revealing Himself again, as He had done in the beginning in His supreme

place as the Alpha and Omega. After this the attending angel returns to his own proper theme, promising a blessing in righteousness on those who obey, and setting aside all the workers of evil, for this is the theme of the book—a book which does not say, “Blessed is the man whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered,” but pronounces blessing on the righteous, and doom on all evil doers. For it is not a book of ministering grace, but of exceeding righteousness; it is not sympathies or consolations that we find in it, but judgments. It is the place of Ezekiel which the Lord fills here, as it was that of Jeremiah which He had before occupied in the Gospel. In the Gospel, or in His ministry through the cities and villages of the land, He was the sorrowing sympathising Prophet, so that some said “It is Jeremias;” but here He stands the Son of man, like Ezekiel in the place of judgment, in spirit saying, “He that heareth let him hear, and he that forbeareth let him forbear,” “he that is filthy let him be filthy still, and he that is holy let him be holy still.” There was no tear in the eye of Ezekiel, though rivers of water ran down the cheeks of Jeremiah.

All is so perfect in its time. The Lord knew the sympathies of the one as He walked in the land, and saw the moral ruins

of Zion ; and He can now know the righteousnesses of the other, as He stands above all that defiled ruin, and apart from it all in judgment.

But still, after all this, Jesus Himself again comes forward ; and having set His seal to these revelations and words of the angel, He shows Himself to His saints. He glances at them in all the majesty of the root and offspring of David, and in the beauty of the Morning Star, and the moment He thus looks out upon them all the desire of the church is awakened, and, led by the Spirit (whose office is always to point to Jesus), she is moved to invite Him to come ; but once thus, with her desire set in motion, she sweetly goes out in *grace* toward others, as in desire towards Him, and after inviting Him, the Bright and Morning Star to come, she invites others who would “hear” to join her in this, and then those who were “athirst,” having some affection towards her Lord just stirred, to come up to the full measure of her desire, and lastly, through the largeness of her heart, whosoever would, in whatsoever mind or state they may be, to come and drink of the living waters with her. Thus was her soul divinely moved upwards and around her. But this was an interruption of the more orderly progress of the book (like i. 5, 6) on Jesus being

revealed. But we should be prepared for such interruptions; we should not expect that the Lord could be revealed without the church being moved, as in these places. Praise must fill her, if His grace be revealed, as there (i. 6); desire must move her, if His person or glory be revealed as here; and we should all, beloved, be cultivating that longing of heart after Him that will lead us to take a ready part in such raptures of the Spirit in the Bride as these.

But this was interruption, and therefore, when it passes, the Lord resumes the more proper theme of the book, and threatens plagues to him who unrighteously adds to it, and loss of life and glory to him who unrighteously takes from it. This, however, must not be allowed to close all: "Surely I come quickly" is heard again, words which had now broken forth from the Lord three times during this conclusion, for His heart was fuller of that than of any other thought, and He would fill ours with it also. All was either to yield to that, or issue in it. Judgment must be executed, but judgment is His strange work. Affliction of the righteous must be gone through, but He never willingly afflicts. All is imperfect till Jesus appear; His own heart is upon this, and this is the last thought that He would leave upon ours. And the saint does

respond, "Come, Lord Jesus," that the Lord may thus know that this is His people's desire and point of hope as it is His.

Here Jesus the Lord and His ministering angel close their testimony. The apostle then in his turn takes his leave of the saints, saying, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all." In the love of the Spirit he commends them to that which is their only provision in the way till their journey is ended. Till He comes, come when He may, bringing His glory with Him, they must stand in His grace; for the Lord gives both, and grace leads to glory.

The wilderness is now proving that He has riches and stores of the one for us, and Canaan will by-and-bye prove that He has riches and stores of the other for all who love Him in this thankless and evil world.

"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God, how unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out."



A WORD IN SEASON.

This is the time of the world's *manhood*. All its elements are putting on strength, and taking their full form. The civil and the ecclesiastical thing is asserting its man-

hood or full age. Vigour marks the progress of the professing church, and of the commercial spirit: governments linking themselves with the one for their support, and the people imbibing and breathing the other for their advancement.

The world is thus stirring itself and playing the man. But Christ is still a *rejected* Christ, and faith has to own a *weak* cause in the presence of an advancing world, and of strengthening apostasies.

Thus it is, I judge, at this moment, and thus will it be. But judgment is to fall on the strong thing in the hour of its pride and vigour; and a glory (still hidden, but trusted and waited for) is to receive, to enshrine, and beautify, and gladden, that which now walks on as the despised and feeble companion of a rejected Lord.

All this may be serious to the thoughts of our natural hearts; but it is plain in the judgment of faith. It is the will of the Lord to let these apostasies grow up to manhood strength. *The Apocalypse presents them to the eye in that form and condition, just when judgment overtakes them.* The woman, or the ecclesiastical apostasy, is *riding*, just at the moment of her overthrow; and the beast is holding and managing the *whole world*, just as he is met in the day of the Lord. The Apocalypse in no wise shows

us a weakened or depreciated condition of these great agents of the course of this world; but exhibits them in surpassing strength, and bloom, and honour, just at the end.

We are not in the days of the Apocalypse, it is true, but we witness the energies (which play their part there in all this vigour and pride of manhood) getting themselves ready, and preparing to take their appointed place.

The heart of the children of men is not aware of the true character of all this. *Progress* is desirable, as they judge. Man in his social place is advanced; and all his welfare in the human system around, with its securities, and peace and refinement, and morals, and religion, is served. But what is there of God in all this? Were I to adopt the world's boast, and go on with its expectations, I should be strengthening my securities; but I should, with that, be losing my companionship with the heart and mind of Christ, which is our only true dignity this side the manifested glory of the kingdom. God gives all spiritual blessings now, peace, and joy, and liberty, with promise upon promise. But He is not re-gaining the earth to its circumstances for our enjoyment. Judgment must do that. *Judgment is to make way for glory in the world, and peace on earth.*

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This tries our hearts. We cannot but feel that it does. All things are not now disposed by Christ, though He is in the place and title of all power and authority. He does not affect, so to speak, to have all that the heart or nature values at His present disposal. His present kingdom does not actually reach so far, though in title His authority is over all things. He does not speak of making us happy in *circumstances*; and it is for us to count the cost of this. It is for us to acquaint ourselves with what He is dispensing, and then to ask ourselves, Can we value it? And it is *faith only* that values it. Nature cannot; the heart cannot. What Jesus now dispenses is exactly what faith, but what faith alone, can understand and appreciate.

May we lay this to heart; and, in the midst of all the alarms and forebodings of this serious solemn moment in the history of the world, say to our souls, The Lord is gathering out His elect, and leaving the great material around us for judgment—this is the way of His wisdom, and it promises us no security in present things, but will work out, for faith and hope, all their brightest thoughts and expectations.

Might we, in the real power of our souls, say with another—

“His wisdom ever waketh;
His sight is never dim;
He knows the path He taketh,
And I will walk with Him.”

THE WAYS OF GRACE.

(Ephesians v.)

It is a serious thing, while full of comfort and warning to our souls as well, that there is nothing that so condemns sin as grace. The law condemns it, no doubt, but the law, in itself, never judges the nature. It condemns acts. If applied by the Spirit of God, it leads one to gather what the tree must be from the fruit. It infers what the nature is, but it does not directly, and immediately, and entirely deal with it. Grace does: "what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son" (that is grace) "in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin (as a sacrifice for it), condemned sin in the flesh." God condemned the nature, root and branch; executed His sentence upon all that man is in his best estate. No disguises could stand now; no excuses: all was brought into the full light of God Himself, and all condemned. It is the same thing from first to last. Grace is that which strips off all the thin veils which the flesh would cover itself with, in order that we should not learn what we are. Grace, while it puts away what we are, yet gives us the privilege of learning it—puts us on God's side, to execute His judgment upon it: enables us to deal with it, with an

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unsparing hand, just because we have a new nature given from God. We can afford to mortify our members which are upon the earth, because we have a new and divine life that death and Satan cannot touch. And therefore it is, you will find, that in those parts of Scripture, where grace is most fully brought out, there we have the closest exhortations to holiness. Consequently, whenever souls are afraid of grace, they avoid the only thing which can produce real holiness, they avoid the only thing which can detect and destroy the vain show in which they are walking themselves.

But there is another and a very serious thing for those who have received the grace of God, and who profess to stand in it. It is this: "God is not mocked." He will not allow that the name of His Son should ever be allied with evil. He will never allow that His grace should be pleaded as an excuse for sin. Grace has stretched out his hand, and has plucked us from hell, to carry us straight from the jaws of death into heaven itself: no less than this is done in principle, when we receive the Lord Jesus. We are taken out of the net spoiler and set in the hand of the Father and of the Son, whence none shall pluck us. But if this be so, what is the practical purpose of God in it? What does He intend that we should do

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under the shelter of this almighty grace, which has wrought such marvels for us? Assuredly that we should never allow the natural evil of our hearts; that we should watch for God and be jealous for Him against ourselves. We are taken out of ourselves, transplanted into Christ. We become, therefore, (if we have faith in Him, if it be a real work of the Holy Ghost), identified in feeling with the Lord: we are put in the interests of God, if I may so say, against our own corrupt nature; against evil everywhere, but above all wherever the name of Christ is named. We have nothing directly to do with the corrupt world outside, but we have everything to do with our own corrupt nature; much to do with watching against it, judging it, dealing with it for God, wherever it dares to show itself. In love to one another and jealousy for the Lord, we may have to deal with it even in another: but then it must always be in holy love. For even where we have to watch over one another for the Lord, it is never in the spirit of law—never merely to condemn the evil, and then leave a person under the effects of his folly and sin.

But let us listen to a few words spoken to the Ephesian saints: and first, in a verse or two of chap. iv. “Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil

speaking, be put away from you, with all malice : and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another." Evidently there you have what is to guide and form the spirit of my walk with my brethren. Is that all? No. It not only takes up our spirit towards one another, but we are reminded what God's way is towards us : "forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven you." Then it goes on to another thing. The Lord Jesus did not merely die to put away my sin, but to give me the immense privilege of being put before God in all His acceptance and loveliness. I could not be in heaven if it were not so—if it were only that sin were put away. God cannot have anything in heaven merely negative. Mere absence of evil is not enough there. If we are to be in heaven at all, God must have us there, lovely in all the loveliness of Christ; and that, as far as the new man is concerned, He communicates to us here. Accordingly it is said to us, "Be ye therefore followers (imitators) of God, as dear children, and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us," &c. That is going further. A person might forgive another, but there might still be reserve remaining—a shutting oneself up in one's own little circle. Here, on the contrary, we find there is to be the energy that

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goes out; the love which delights in another's good. It is the activity of love going out towards the saints. "Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us," &c.

But then another thing comes to light. There is danger even among the saints of God. The devil can come in and turn brotherly love to a snare; and this not only in the way of positive evil being allowed to break out, but in the unjudged tendency to it. "But fornication and all uncleanness, or covetousness let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints: neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient, but rather giving of thanks." The Lord in no way forbids the happy cheerfulness, which He loves in His saints. He does not call us to be monks, which is man's way of keeping the flesh under restraint, and only another form of self. We may have self under a legal form, and self under a lax form; but under any form it is not Christ, and the only thing which God values now is Christ.

"For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater; hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God." This raises a serious question for all of us. These are things for use. They are exhortations, not merely to apply to other people, to mea-

sure them by, but to take home to ourselves. They are for saints, not for the world. No doubt we find the evil warned against, in the world, and our hearts ought to feel for those who shall have no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. But, remember that the primary object of the Holy Ghost was to warn and guard the saints themselves; who, desiring to watch against the evil distance of the flesh, will, directly they come together, find the danger of another thing, and that is evil nearness. Who then can take care of us, if such be the dangers that surround us? Only God—but God still acting in the way of grace. There is no reason why a soul should not have perfect confidence in God against self. But wherever there is the desire to have our own will and our own evil thoughts gratified—wherever there is the wish to have our way according to the flesh, depend upon it, the judgment of God will be there, unless the grace of God interfere to deliver the soul. This is a solemn thing, and one that we need to lay to heart. For the Lord is jealous on our behalf, and He is jealous for His own glory. Therefore may we be watchful. May we remember what He has written: that if “the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are

His," be on the one side; "let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity," is on the other. "Depart from iniquity!" Is it possible that such a word could be said to the saints of God? Yes. It is the word of the Holy Ghost Himself, wherever the name of Christ is named. Let our souls then hold fast grace: but let us remember that the object of the all grace which has been manifested to us is, that we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear. It is always so. And there is another thought along with it which seems to me of value—that sin, when looked at in the presence of God, always acquires its true name and character: I am not allowed to gloss over it, and call it by a name that men might give it. For instance, there are a thousand things that men would call polite. What does God call them? A lie. Again, there are many things that men would say are allowable in the way of business. What does God call them? Dishonesty and covetousness. Such is God's sentence. And would we escape from it? No. We should be left to manifest what we are: that we had named the name of Christ falsely, in our own strength merely—like the Egyptians assaying to pass through the Red Sea after Israel. The result was, that they were all drowned. May we be jealous

not to allow ourselves in the smallest thing that is contrary to God! What a list of things the Spirit of God here warns me against! I can look within, and know how the heart there answers to the word of God without that has already put me on my guard. If I despise the warning, what then? I shall prove what I am, to the disgrace of the name of the Lord Jesus, and my own shame and sorrow. What an effect of a moment's gratification! If then a little word is as the letting out of water, what is a little act of sin, where it is allowed? The Lord keep us from little sins—keep us watchful, jealous, careful; but at the same time never letting slip grace—rather reminding and strengthening one another in that perfect grace in which we stand.

Let us remember that He who has called us to watch against these things, has also called us to thank Him, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ always and for all things. Even if we have got to humble ourselves before God for what we are, we are never to forget what Christ is for us and to us.

May we be kept faithful and circumspect in our ways for the Lord Jesus' sake.

“As He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.”

THE LOVE OF CHRIST.

It is not only that Christ did great things for us, but He gave Himself: beyond this love could not go. The same love which made Him give Himself for us, is now occupied in separating us from everything that could separate us from Him. Nothing can express more the profound depths of the love of Christ for us than this, that His present occupation in heaven is devoted to removing everything that would cause distance between us and Him. John xiii. 5-12, is expressive of His present service for us: I am going to glory, He says, but I am going there to serve you. My mind's attention will be fixed on you, my heart's affection will be set on you, and I shall take care that nothing shall break the intimacy that subsists between us. I shall make it my business there to detach you from everything that would separate you from myself. He sets us apart from all that would hinder communion and prevent any break between us and Himself. He takes care that nothing interferes with the intimacy, that there may not be the slightest reserve.

Such is His love for us.

“As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love.”

GOD HIMSELF.

In Ephesians, though the Holy Ghost is about to enter upon the subject of the church, He does not touch upon it until, individually, the saints are apprized of the astonishing depth of their privileges. He never enters upon our future privileges until our present standing is settled. What is "the inheritance?" It is that which we shall be set over. But blessed as this is, it is far better to be set right as to that which is above us. The Lord will take care that we shall know where we are to be set; but God Himself is better than all the glory. To know God—to be consciously near God—to be set at rest in the presence of God—to be happy with God—to know how much He loves and cares for us, is infinitely better than knowing all about Jews and Gentiles, or earth or heaven. We shall have a blessed place with Christ—we shall reign with Him; but the kingdom itself, with all its blessedness and glory, is an inferior thing to the heart being really at ease and happy and at home with God.



God, thine everlasting portion,
 Feeds thee with the mighty's meat;
 Price of Egypt's hard extortion,
 Egypt's food no more to eat.

JOY UNSPEAKABLE AND FULL OF GLORY.

One all-transcending sight to me,
Though glory circling glory be,
A joy beyond all joys to see
My Saviour.

In speechless rapture shall I trace
The holy beauty of that face,
Nor turn to glories from its grace,
My Saviour.

Once marr'd by sorrow,—radiant now,
For joy, which in its fulness Thou
Alone canst know, illumines Thy brow.

Eternal Son! heaven's joys were thine,
In Godhead glories Thou didst shine,
But distance, guilt, and woe, were mine.

Could love then rest? It led Thee where
I lay in darkness and despair,
That I Thy paradise might share,
My Saviour!

A new thing 'neath the sun was seen,
For God a Man on earth has been,
Now Man in glory fills the scene!

New joy e'en heaven itself hath found,
New glories circle Thee around,
New voices the new song resound.

Light crowneth love! Oh, glorious day!
The former things have pass'd away—
Pain, sorrow, parting, death, decay.

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All finish'd is God's high behest,
On earth, in heaven, His people blest,
And He in His own love doth rest.

His glory shines in full display,
Nor sun nor moon need add one ray,
God's presence is eternal day.

For this I wait ! nor would forego
The blessed privilege to know,
And follow in Thy path below,
My Saviour.

A little while my Lord to own
Where once Thou wast despised, unknown,
Betray'd, rejected by Thine own.

Be all my glory now Thy cross,
Thy interests mine, all else but dross,
For Thee I welcome shame and loss,
My Saviour.

To please Thee, Lord, be all my care,
To meet Thee I with joy prepare,
Be Thou my heaven, or here, or there,
My Saviour!



THE BEAUTY OF GOING DOWN TO
THE VERY BOTTOM.

(Phil. iii)

I have read a part of Phil. iii., desiring to look at it, as bringing before us what were the principles of the life of Paul and of the Christians of his day. We see here, if we

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turn to the early part of the epistle, what the circumstances were in which he lived upon these principles, the extent to which he carried them out, and the contrast between his doing it imperfectly and the One who did it perfectly—the Lord Jesus Christ, a summary of which we get in chap. ii.

It is remarkable the very bold claim he makes in the first three verses of this chapter, as to himself and those he calls his brethren being the only true worshippers of God, and that in contrast to certain other persons. Those he calls his brethren were those who were looking out for the Lord Jesus Christ (ver. 20); and those who walked not like him, were those whose religion began and ended with themselves.

“Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord.” God was before them, and they so saw the Lord Jesus as to be able to rejoice in Him, and Paul so saw Him as to make him appeal to these Philippians to rejoice in Him, and that by the power of the Spirit sent into their hearts. There was a class of people, who, instead of having everything connected with another world and finding all their joys in God, were just occupying themselves with things down here. He says of them, “Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision.”

That is a distinct contrast between religion of the Spirit and in truth, and the Ritualism of to-day. Then he takes up himself, as one who had a right to speak on the subject, and he says as to religion, Can anyone come forth and measure himself by me? That is what my pretensions might be as to confidence in the flesh. "Though I might also have confidence in the flesh," &c. All these things were connected with the man down here. Ver. 5. Things that give something to *myself*, all gain to *me*; I was the person on whom they were all strung. He says, "I have something that you have not, and it is gain to me." I saw a Person on whom all glory was strung, on whom it was all heaped up—well, what follows that? Who took all the beauty out of what he was esteeming and glorying in? A certain Person in Heaven—truly despised and rejected by men down here, whom men by wicked hands had crucified and slain. God has placed Him in heaven, and He called Saul of Tarsus, and now he says, "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ." "I could not stand connected with Christ, and have all those things that were gain to myself; I became a prey to Christ. He took possession of me when I was striving with all my might to blot out the name of the Nazarene. He appeared to me, and I

was glad to suffer the loss of all things for the beauty of Christ."

Oh, what is it when the Lord Jesus reveals Himself to Saul; that One who had, perhaps, only been known to him as a character in history. He knew there was such a Man as Jesus of Nazareth. When that Man in heaven lets the light of His own glory in on a soul, what is it? Well, Paul had no difficulty in saying what it was to him. He said, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the *loss* of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ and be found in Him." The doctrine of Peter on the day of Pentecost was, that should they draw near to the throne of God, on which Jesus was sitting, they would receive forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Ghost; but they must come in the name of Jesus. As though God had said, "*You* found no beauty in Him, but see what *My* thoughts are: I have raised him from the dead, and now anybody who draws near in His name shall receive forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Ghost; God vindicates His own conduct. If God was obliged to hide His face from the Son of His love on the cross, He does something that stands out in bright con-

trast—"Sit Thou on My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool." When Paul saw Him, everything he had as a man was gone. He saw Christ in heaven, and he got thoroughly cleared out of all things—natural religion, &c.—and thoroughly filled with the thought of the beauty of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

Now, what was it that struck the apostle? Was it merely that the Son of God had been given to be the sin-offering—to put sin away—or was it, in addition to that, that God had presented His righteousness to him? Far, far more than that: his soul was taken possession of by the Spirit of God giving him a sight of the beauty of the Lord Jesus Christ, as the One who had emptied Himself and brought out this moral glory. The principle of man is to get as high as he can; that is the principle that Adam and Eve acted on. God's principle is exactly the contrary. That of the Lord Jesus Christ was to go down to the bottom and accomplish certain things in the bottom: but that was not all, He shewed out the mind of God. It struck the apostle as something worth imitating—as something worth following out. "That I may know *Him*"—not merely the forgiveness of sins—not merely the righteousness he got—but he was caught with the beauty of the Lord

Jesus Christ, and he takes that as his principle—as something to act on, to mould and fashion his life.

As the Lord presented Himself, there was everything to attract the poor sinner. There was the Lord living, sitting upon the throne of God. I see Him coming down to bear our sins. He bore the curse for *me*, and do you say, “I do not see any beauty in that One come down from heaven to become a Man, and bear the wrath of God for me?” Don’t see any beauty in it! *I* could not say that, if I only saw my own benefit by it—forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Ghost: but there is far more than that—there is the beauty of the conduct of the Lord in taking this place. That is called the *moral glory*—the beauty of the ways of God. I often say, Supposing the Queen were passing down one of our streets, and everyone was bowing to her, as surely all ought to do: some little child, in its anxiety to see her, falls down—she stoops and picks it up! A thrill passes through the crowd—every heart is touched, not so much because of the greatness of the person, but the *way* she does it. She thinks of her own children—she has a mother’s heart. It is not so much the person man admires, as the way in which she acts. The apostle Paul says, “If Christ has gone down to the bottom, I

cannot go there, but I will go down as low as I possibly can. He has taken the bottom place, I will try and stand next to Him in humility."

I want to look at that, for I am in a world in which everyone is selfish. If you get to God as Scripture presents Him, you see "In the beginning was the Word." There was Father, Son and Holy Ghost before creation. There was creation in heaven—angels were created. When you think of God as Creator, bringing everything into existence—taking the dust of the earth and building a man—do you not see the very principle of condescension, of coming down? Did He want the world for Himself? All creation is a display of the condescension of God. Why does not the earth reel to and fro? Because Someone holds up the pillars thereof. God comes down in Providence. All the little things are connected with condescension. The Lord Jesus knew all about it: He said, "Not a sparrow shall fall to the ground without your Father." Look at the world always rebelling against God, and yet He still keeps things in check: the whole process of His government is condescension. If I look at the Lord, there was Messiah to come, and that one is seen in Dan. vii., in the presence of the Ancient of days. But I see Him in the Gospel, born in a manger, not in the

palace of Herod. Was it not the same principle? I find it comes into Scripture in one place in a remarkable way. Rom. v. 7, "For scarcely for a *righteous* man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die." If you were to point out a man to me, and say, "That is a very *righteous* man, he would not be in debt to anybody." I should say, "I expect *he is* a self-righteous man." It would not move my affections at all. But if you shew me another man, and say, "That is a very tender-hearted man: if he hears of distress anywhere, he delights to go and relieve it," my heart would warm towards *him* directly. When I look into the whole heart of man, who is the one my whole heart goes out to? Not the people who are climbing up, but those who are willing to go to the bottom.

I would say more if I could of the earthly relationships of the heavenly family—parents counting themselves nothing for children. The father of a family and the mother, how constantly they are going to the bottom. If you find a father with half-a-dozen sons, five of them are likely to get on in the world, but one of them has a heart, and when he sees anything going wrong between his brethren, will not rest until it is put right. That is the one who gets the father's heart.

Let me just call attention to the apostle Paul. He says he is the offscouring of all things—a model man in that respect. He gives an account of his sufferings (2 Cor. xi.) as surpassing all of his day—the man set forth to shew how far the principles shewn out in the life of Christ could be carried out in a man of like passions as ourselves; and were there ever men like those apostles, through whom came all these blessings? Paul had seen the beauty of it in Christ—seen it, no doubt, in two forms. First, the only way in which blessing could come to the sinner, was by Christ's coming down lower than the sinner, why He bore the curse! *I* have never borne the curse—if I don't believe in Christ, I shall. He bore it, and went so low that Satan could say nothing. Paul saw that, but he saw more than that—he saw the beauty of the *ways* of the Lord Jesus Christ. Do let me ask you whether *you* see the beauty of those ways? Is it saying, “Oh, I see He went down, and I suppose *I must* go down—I suppose *I must* take up the cross?” There is that verse, “If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross:” does it mean as little of the *cross* as possible—let the heaviest end be upon Him? Is it merely *He* went down, *I must*? That was not Paul: he had another feeling than “must”—more than

“needs be.” God took up Paul, and he was resolutely set; he would go down to the very bottom. “I mean to follow His ways, I will be like Him in my walk, He came down to the very bottom, and I mean to follow that beauty.” In this world while he was here, he was never seeking his own, always the things of Christ, and what comes out? In this world he followed Him, and by-and-bye he will have Christ as his gain: when the Lord Jesus comes for His own, there will be no self-denial any longer.

Do you see any beauty in that conduct of Christ’s? Could I say to Christ, “Lord, there was a needs be for the curse to be borne by some one, and it was good of Thee to bear it, but what a pity it was the occasion of bringing Thee so low; there is no beauty in Thy coming so low.” No I could not say it.

“Came from off the throne eternal
Down to Calvary’s depth of woe.”

For *height* nobody like Him, for *depth* nobody like Him! And has He given me of His Spirit, and do I see no beauty in that? and have I got, like the apostle Paul, a desire for fellowship in His sufferings? Not as some people make out, that it does not mean literally what it says: “Filling up that which was behind in the sufferings of Christ.” Paul never had anything to do

with making atonement for sin; Christ had done all that, but did not Paul think of having fellowship in Christ's sufferings in his care for the church—carrying his life in his hand—he counted everything that belonged to himself as loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord. Well, he will one day be in the presence of his Lord, a very sweet thought to his and to the believer's heart now. If he had been apprehended for something, Christ had apprehended him; "I follow after, that I may apprehend that for which I *am* apprehended."

Do you know what it is to look at the Lord Jesus now in heaven, and say, "Lord, Thou knowest all the glory which God the Father gave Thee to bring to me: Thou hast done a work on the cross, and I am clean every whit: and Thou hast given me the Spirit, guarding and guiding all my life down here; and Thou knowest exactly what it will be when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal, immortality, and when this vile body shall be made like Thy glorious body, and Thou shalt have subdued all things to Thyself?" Do you ever think of what is the thought of the Lord Jesus in the glory? It would be like the potter working on a vessel, but what is in the mind of the potter? Here

has the Lord been dealing with me all these years, but what has been in the mind of the Potter all that time? It has been no haphazard work. He knew where He would conduct me. The Son could say, "I have power to lay down My life, and I have power to take it again." The Father had perfect delight in Him, and has He not let me already into the Father's heart? And does not the Son know that I am pre-destinated to be conformed to Himself? We cannot see Him with our eyes, or hear Him with our ears: even when He prays we cannot hear Him; but that Lord, as He looks down upon us, has His thoughts about His glory in us: He will have us in the Father's house, and what is His glory all the way through? This blessed way of humiliation. There is all the difference possible between this and a "voluntary humility" (Col. ii. 18), that is, making yourself the centre of everything. The Lord says, "Lo I come, to do Thy will, O God." The Colossians said, "Touch not; taste not; handle not;" "do not touch this and that," and that is what is called a voluntary humility. That is not Christ taking up the Father's pleasure, who is saying, "Now sin is come in, it will cost Thee a great deal to clear their way to Me, and Mine to them—there will be a deal of trouble in bringing

them home ; but then there is all the blessing and glory after—the fund of it in the joy of having them here.”

The church is the vessel to hold the glory of the Lamb. Is it not condescension of the Lord God to dwell in such poor creatures as we are? To be sure it is, and the principle I want to press is the giving up of all human thoughts about what is great and praiseworthy, and taking up God's thoughts. Wherever we find Him, He is always stepping down to such poor things as you and me, bringing us up to Himself.

Let us turn to chapter i.—it brings out two things. First, the circumstances in which Paul was living out the life of Christ. He was a prisoner in Rome, probably chained to a soldier—many trying to increase his troubles. They were the circumstances of a martyr really. What does he say about them? “Do not be troubled about things—about these people trying to add affliction to my bonds: it will all turn to my salvation, and Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death.” If *I* had heard that from anyone, I should have said, “That is too sharp—what! Christ made bigger by you! The Lord of all glory be magnified in you!” How can you speak of the Lord being magnified whether you live or die? Christ made to appear a great

deal more plainly by the circumstances Paul passed through here. He is up above the clouds with that Christ, and has got such a love for the One who is always occupied with him—looking at Him, that he does not care about anything—whether he lives or dies, Christ will be magnified. Then he puts it into a very concise form, “To me to live is Christ, to die is gain.” My life as a Christian is Christ; certainly it includes more than Christ being the object.

The life to live is Christ. The first impression on my heart when converted was, “*Enoch walked with God*”—that was my start. “Now, then,” I said, “I will walk with God.” Beautiful as far as it went, but I very soon found, as Luther said to Melancthon, “You will find old Melancthon stronger than young Philip!” I came to my wits’ end, for I wanted a *fund* whence to draw, so as to live it out. You are unable to live out of resources in yourself—you must not act as though your life is separate: *Christ* must be the fountain. They say there are springs in Thermopylæ exactly the same as those written about two thousand years ago—they have been gushing up two thousand years, and are the same as ever. That is nothing to the life of Christ, and the waters there.

If a believer gets to this—“To me to live is Christ,” he must think of Christ not merely as the *end* of all he does, but as the fountain. God must put us back to learn this. In all the actings of life, I want the

present help of Christ. Who is the noble man down here? A man always living to himself, perhaps giving money to charitable purposes—or the man living to Christ? Not merely that Christ is the fountain, but the principle on which our life is led. Whether eating, drinking, waking, or sleeping, doing all as to the Lord. How can it be otherwise? How can I live independent of the life in my body? It is all connected with the life of Christ in me. We have eternal life; how can this life be independent of Christ?

“To me to live is Christ.” Do I see Him by faith there in heaven? He is there in God’s presence, saying, “I died for you, that in grace you might come up here. I gave you forgiveness of sins; now I want your services—the services of every believer.” It is the secret of everything as to liberty and power. Paul saw it and clave to the living Christ. The Ephesians saw and rejoiced in it; but in after years they forgot the living Christ, and were exceedingly busy with their own duties as to being a candlestick, not only as to the living Christ, but in all the busy diligence of being a candlestick down here: they had forgotten their first love—they lost immensely by it. While down here, the eye of faith *must* be fixed on a certain Person all beautiful and glorious, all excellent in glory, whose heart is jealous that you should live to Him in every minute particular.

In chapter iii. he shews you his boast. You say, “How confident!” Here I am Christ’s gain, and I have Him before me as my gain. Persons may say, “That is too

strong." "No;" he says, "I will show you One (ch. ii.) not like myself, but who walked this path with a whole heart perfectly—the One I am following." He passed right down to the Cross. But who has placed Him in heaven, rewarding Him for all He has done? "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him," &c. He puts Him into a place as Man there. How came Jesus there? He came from the throne eternal, to shew God's character on earth, and He did it perfectly. If I am following Paul, I find myself perfectly free. I often find myself called upon to see how Paul carries out his doctrine—he failed, I always see, on the side that people do not fail upon now. He was devoted beyond discretion sometimes—a devotedness that was not always quite discreet. He spoke to the people from the stairs! Now-a-days, people look well before they put their foot down on the mud, or on a flint, even in the path they ought to follow. The blessed Lord was perfect. He was the Man with one idea, one thought—"Lo I come, to do Thy will." His meat, to do His Father's will, and He did it perfectly. I see in Him two things—the spirit of obedience and dependence.

What a marvellous person a Christian is, if he be really dependent on Christ! Paul's heart was stolen away by Christ. Are your hearts dependent on that living Person? A Christian is a wonderful person if dependent on Christ—he knows he has nothing down here to do but to be dependent on Him. He tells me His own mind, I tell Him mine. I and the Lord understand each

other well. He knows how to minister that for which I am dependent on Him. Are you dependent in spirit, and then is there this obedience of spirit that takes notice of what God Himself is, stooping down as He does? In highest light, which no man has seen or can see, yet goes down into the depths and tells us all that He has done for us! The glory came out from down-stooping, in which He presented His moral glory.



“HE MUST INCREASE, BUT I MUST
DECREASE.”

(John iii. 30.)

It is while living and walking about down here that we ought to be able nevertheless to say “I die daily;” and what is a dead man but a useless man to this world, and one obnoxious to all its schemes? And such are we in God’s account: “Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.” And such we are to be practically. Is it comely for one who belongs to the Lord Jesus to be reaching after earthly honours, riches, reputation, or aught else here below, and if doing so, has *he* learnt the meaning of “He must increase, but I must decrease?” Is not the name of Christian (that worthy name upon you, by which ye are called) often scoffed and mocked at on these very points, because of the inconsistencies of those who bear it? Of the whole course of the Lord Jesus it is written, “He made Himself of no reputation.”

Alas, that it should not be so with all of us. Alas, that with even some of us here to-night God's finger is upon us, and our consciences are telling us as to this, "Thou art the man!" Yet it is only by thus taking our true places before God as to these things with a real desire for Him to deal with us, that we are profited by speaking of them together. We are in our folly sacrificing the present enjoyment of the eternal, for the passing pleasure of the temporal, for no man can enjoy both. A remarkable illustration of this is given us if we turn to Hebrews xiii. There Esau comes before us, "who for a morsel of meat sold his birthright." With the birthright went the blessing of the firstborn. But this blessing had especial reference to the future, to the Messiah who was to come, the promised Seed, of which God had spoken to Abraham, in whom "all families of the earth" were to be blessed (Gen. xxviii. 3-15). The mess of potage, the gratification of the moment, the pleasing of nature, was preferred by Esau to the whole range of God's promises: and what does Scripture say of such? It calls Esau a "profane person"—one who preferred the enjoyment of the present to the glorious realities awaiting him in the future. It is the contrast between faith and sight.

My brethren, we too are blest. The blessing of the "Firstborn from the dead" is upon us. "Lifting up His hands He blessed them, and as He blessed them He was parted from them and carried up into heaven" (Luke xxvii.). But it is not earthly but

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heavenly, not true for sight but real to faith. Are we enjoying it—making much of it? He is gone up. Thence He is coming again in “like manner.” “Heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ,” we are waiting for Him here, until the time comes when according to God’s eternal purpose He will “gather together in one all things in Christ” (Ephes. i.). Seeing that we have learnt (poor dull scholars) that in all things He shall “have the pre-eminence”—that it is God’s *must* concerning Him (1 Cor. xv. 25). Are we saying and practically seeking to carry it out, “He must increase, but I must decrease”? Or are we like Esau despising the blessing, gathering to ourselves the poor passing and empty things of earth, none of which we can take with us, upon which (the flesh in us and all that ministers to it) our God hath stamped “vanity of vanities, all is vanity.” Ah, which is it with you? One thing is certain, we are each day saying or practising in our ways day by day either this, “*He* must increase,” or this, “*I* must increase,” and you cannot change the one word without changing the other. If you say “*I* must *increase*” you must add, “He must *decrease*,” and in our souls we bear witness that this is so. “What a man soweth, that shall he also reap,” is seen daily in the condition and ways of God’s people as to this very truth. Is it then your purpose to show in your life that the words of John the Baptist are your motto? May it be so, and may the Lord give His word power over our souls for His name’s sake.

“HE THAT DESCENDED.”

EPHES. IV. 10.

“My thoughts are not your thoughts. neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.” (Is. lv. 8. 9).

Such is one great oracle of God. “The word of God is living.” It is the word of Him who “knows what is in man.” “With God there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning;” but among the great variety of the human family, savage or civilized, bond or free, religious or philosophical (the Jew and the Greek of the apostle), man is found in contrariety to God both in his thoughts and in his ways.

Let us take the thoughts and ways of man in reference to the very end of his being. His end and object is himself. He thinks and acts from himself and for himself. But is this God’s object in creating man; or, indeed, any creature? Is it not that God may be glorified—that the Creator who is blessed forever, may be seen—not that the creature should rob Him of His glory? This end, indeed, has not, in the case of man, been secured by creation, but it is secured by redemption. He who is redeemed to God

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acknowledges the glory of God as Creator, just as he who is justified freely by grace acknowledges the integrity, sanctity and righteousness of the law. "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power, for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created" (Rev. iv.).

The contrariety between God and man was conspicuously shown when the Lord Jesus, God manifest in the flesh, walked and conversed with men on this earth. "He was a sign spoken against, that the thoughts of many hearts might be revealed" (Luke ii. 34, 35); and as He furnished the occasion for bringing out the thoughts of the hearts of men, so He took the opportunity of setting over against them the thoughts of God. There was an inveterate thought in the hearts even of His own disciples, with respect to greatness. At one time they asked Him plainly, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" (Matt. xviii. 1). At another time, "They disputed among themselves who should be the greatest." (Mark ix. 34). On a third occasion, two of them sought of Jesus the honoured place of sitting on His right hand and on His left, in glory. (Mark x. 35-45). These several instances furnish the occasion of bringing out the thoughts of God with respect to greatness.

The "little child" is set in the midst of the disciples, as the embodiment of the thoughts of God with respect to greatness. The doctrine is taught that "the chiefest among them shall be servant of all." The doctrine is confirmed by the example: "For even the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many."

The leading thought of the day is the elevation of man. Whatever may be the fact, the thought is not that of a few leading minds controlling all others, but such an elevation of the common mind as shall control all things. Is this the thought of God? Is this the way of God for the real exaltation of man? Is this the way of God for man to attain happiness? On the contrary, it is the subversion of the way of God; it is antagonism to the thought of God in the Gospel of His grace; it is the prelude to the last grand anti-christian confederacy, resulting in visible discomfiture, "by the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God." (Rev. xix.).

As Jesus Himself, in His ministry, was repeatedly contradicting the thought of greatness which His disciples entertained, so the doctrine of the humiliation of the Son of God is presented to us both as the law and example of real greatness. Self-exaltation

is the thought of man as to greatness, and the way in which he seeks happiness. "He that descended," is the thought of God. It is through Him "that descended" that the alone way is found to real greatness, even to the highest exaltation to which it is possible for God to elevate a moral and intelligent creature.

"He that descended." "I am the Lord: that is my name, and my glory will I not give to another." This is not less true with respect to the glory due to Him, as "He that descended," than it is with respect to the glory due to him as the alone Object of worship. This glory is singular—it belongs to One alone. The archangel cannot trench on this prerogative glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, for he is as essentially separated from Him that created him as man himself. The archangel could not stoop to take on him "the form of a servant," because the condition of a servant was the condition of his being. Such a stooping was only in the power of One "in the form of God." This was His glory—"He that descended." On this point Jesus largely insists in His teaching; a rich sample of which we find in John vi.

The Lord graciously seeks, from the miracle of the loaves, to find a way to their hearts for the reception of that bread which

endureth unto eternal life, of which the manna which sustained their fathers in the wilderness, was a beautiful, yet but faint, shadow: "Verily, verily I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven, but my Father giveth you *the true bread from heaven*. For the bread of God is *He which cometh down from heaven*, and giveth life unto the world." Again, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me, and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out, *for I came down from heaven*, not to do my own will, but the will of Him that sent me." The Jews then murmured at Him, because He said: "I am the bread which *came down* from heaven." They stumbled at the doctrine of the first stage in His humiliation: "He that descended." They thought they knew as much of His birth and bringing up as they did of Moses. They could not see the beauty of His humiliation: "There was no beauty in Him that they should desire Him." The doctrine is dismissed by the thought: "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? how is it then that he saith, I came down from heaven?" But Jesus leads them on in His doctrine to another stage in His humiliation; its crowning glory; reiterating the doctrine that "He descended," but connecting it with eating

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His flesh and drinking His blood, which led not only the Jews to strive, but to the turning back of some of His own followers. "I am the living bread *which came down from heaven* ; if any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever, and the bread that I will give is *my flesh*, which I will give for the life of the world." But in teaching this other step in His descent, He connects it with His ascent. "When Jesus knew in himself, that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Doth this offend you? What and if ye shall see the Son of Man ascend up where he was before?" "He that descended is the same also that ascended far above all heavens, that he might fill all things" (Eph. iv. 10).

It was at the moment Judas went out, and the cross was vividly before Him, that Jesus said : "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him." He was about to enter on a glory counselled and settled in eternity, but manifested in a moment of time ; a glory only discernible by the persons of the Godhead till it was actually accomplished, and then only seen by those taught of the Holy Ghost, the Glorifier of Jesus. This glory Jesus cannot give to another, neither dare any other take it to himself. It is only regarded as a disgrace rather than a glory, till the Spirit

reveals its truth to the soul. But it is a glory which of necessity implies His own proper underived personal glory. Who but the Son of the living God, One essentially divine, could say, "and the bread which I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world?" Apart from the divinity of His person, it was only reasonable for the Jews to say: "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" Again, who but One truly divine could say: "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it again. No one taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father." It was the glory of Jesus (having life in Himself, and able to impart it to others) to descend under the power of death, that He might rescue others from its power, and show that it was impossible for Him to be holden of death. Nor is this all, He laid down His life in obedience to the will of His Father, and there was in the death of Jesus that singular and distinctive glory, that independence and obedience met together in it. "I lay it down of myself." "This commandment have I received of my Father." "Angels, that excel in strength, do the commandments of the Lord, hearkening unto

the voice of his word." This indeed is their glory. But angels are not independent beings : they are upheld as creatures, and obedience is necessary to their condition. But obedience is that into which the Son humbled Himself. It was His glory to do so, and God was glorified in Him. It is the glory of His humiliation which reached its utmost limit in the cross, which brings forth in such prominence the name of JESUS, the *only* name under heaven given among men whereby there is salvation," and at the same time the "name which is above every name" in heaven, the honour of which all must eventually acknowledge, if not in salvation, assuredly in judgment. It is as the only Saviour, that Jesus says : "For mine own sake, even for mine own sake will I do it : for how should my name be polluted ? and I will not give my glory unto another." (Is. xlviii. 11). The Holy Ghost glorifies Jesus in testifying to His sufferings and the glories which followed them. The true doctrine of the cross is inseparably connected with the essential glory of the Person of the Son ; but it is very possible to maintain a true confession of His Person, apart from the true doctrine of the cross. It is to this doctrine the Spirit testifies, and invests the familiar fact of the crucifixion of Christ with such a meaning and interest, that it

may justly be said of it, "what eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into man's heart to conceive, God has revealed to us by His Spirit." The acknowledgment of the fact of the cross apart from the doctrine of the cross, is as truly a subversion of the gospel, as the denial of the true divinity of the Lord Jesus. He will not receive the acknowledgment of the glory of His Person, save to exercise judgment, where the glory of His humiliation is not acknowledged. The preaching of the cross not only sets forth the only way by which a sinner may find remission of sins, peace with God and access to God, but is so essentially connected with the glory of Jesus, that contempt of it is treated as trampling under foot the Son of God. The doctrine of the cross is the special test of our standing before God—to the religious, after the Jewish caste, it is a "stumbling block ;" to the philosophical, after the Grecian school, it is "foolishness ;" "but to the called, it is the power of God, and the wisdom of God" (1 Cor. i.).

"The heavens declare the glory of God ;" they set forth to our senses the power of God and the wisdom of God ; and were it not for sin, which has alienated the mind from God, they would carry universally the demonstration of God's eternal power and

Godhead. But man, as a sinner, needs another kind of demonstration, even "the demonstration of the Spirit," who shows to an awakened conscience, "the power of God and the wisdom of God" in the humiliation of Jesus. Until there be such demonstration of the Spirit, however clearly it may be supposed that God is read in His works, He is not known as the Creator, "*blessed for ever.*"

The difference between the apostle's determination to know nothing but Jesus Christ, and *Him crucified*, and the popular creed that Christ *was* crucified, is an essential difference. In the last, credit is given to a well-attested historical fact, but the apostle's expression comprises the wide range of the thoughts and ways of God. And when these thoughts and ways are brought out in their great results, it is the triumph of "Him that descended;" it is the victory of the Lamb slain. "Thou art worthy, for Thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood."

When once the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, as "He that descended," is perceived, it follows, as a necessary consequence, that there must be a new thought, a new way, and a new order of greatness, corresponding with the glory of the humiliation of Jesus. The human order of greatness is an

ascending order. It is the development of the power of mind over matter, so that men themselves are startled at the greatness of their achievements. Every step in advance only makes way for further progress. Men think, speak, and act, as though impossibility was to be blotted out of their vocabulary; but their thoughts and ways are in direct antagonism to the thoughts and ways of God. They are "labouring in the very fire, and wearying themselves for very vanity: for the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (Hab. ii. 13, 14). It is not the glory of man, but the glory of God, which is to prevail. In vain are men contending against the purpose and counsel of God; for "the Lord of hosts hath purposed to stain the pride of all glory, and to bring into contempt all the honourable of the earth." (Is. xxiii. 9). It is a fearful thing to be found striving against God. We may have marvelled at the stout-heartedness of Pharoah in refusing to humble himself before God. But when men refuse to submit to the righteousness of God, by going about to establish their own righteousness, it is only another form of stout-heartedness and of insubjection to God. And if God has declared, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is *from above and cometh down from*

the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (Jas. i. 17), and men are seeking good and perfection by exalting themselves, the issue of such a conflict between God and man, must be as terrible as it is certain. It is to such an issue that all things are now rapidly tending.

There is a wisdom, "earthly" in its origin, and a wisdom "that descendeth from above" (Jas. iii.). The earthly wisdom "has sought out many inventions" (Eccles. vii. 29), but nothing "perfect" results from it. It does not satisfy the craving of man, as a creature; it cannot pacify the conscience of man, as a sinner. It is "the good and perfect gift, that cometh down from above," which alone effects these ends. It is Jesus Himself, the unspeakable gift of God, comprehending in Himself, and in that which He has wrought, that which satisfies the soul, gives peace to the conscience, and access with confidence into the presence of God. It is He who testified, "I am from above, ye are from beneath" (John viii. 23), who alone could say, "He that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst" (John vi. 35). This is the divine order—the perfect One *coming from above*—this is the alone order of exaltation. According to

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this order, "he that exalteth himself shall be abased" (Lu. xiv. 11). He that exalteth himself is traversing the divine order; he is spurning the good and perfect gift; he stands before God as a sinner, under the increased condemnation of "sitting in the seat of the scornful" (Ps. i. 1). He is still attempting to attain blessedness by the *ascending* line, when the coming down of the Son from heaven, and His further humiliation in the death of the cross, declares that it can only be attained in the *descending* line. *The peril of the age is that men are turning upside down the gospel of Christ, in order to exalt themselves.*

One feature of corruption noticed by the apostle Jude is that in those things which men know naturally as brute beasts, they corrupt themselves." Such a natural knowledge, even of the leading truths of the gospel, is found among professing Christians. There is a natural knowledge of the mercy of God, a natural knowledge of Christ dying for sinners, which men only use to corrupt themselves, by assuming on the very ground of it, a more proud and independent standing before God than those that are without such knowledge. Such is the fearful aspect before our eyes—man exalting himself by means of the very light which should humble him and lead him to

magnify the Lord. Surely "the light is become darkness, and how great is that darkness!"

"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb. x. 31). Infidelity and superstition are spreading, and God's hand lifted up in judgment, and yet men "will not see" (Is. xxvi. 2). This is, indeed, alarming. But this is not all; the most alarming feature is that of man advancing himself into independence of God, by means of the very light which sets forth "the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." This, it is to be feared, is the true character of vaunted Christian civilisation.

There is nothing so dark in the picture of "the perilous days," portrayed by the apostle Paul, as to alarm our fears. He does not present us with desolating wars, appalling famine, or ravishing pestilence, but with selfishness, gain and pleasure, under the form of godliness. If this peril is not perceived, if even real Christians have thought that, by mingling with the world, they could elevate and improve it, and by the attempt have lost their own savour ("wherewithal shall it be salted?")—Christians themselves are not the only sufferers. "A woe is come on *the world*," because of the offences of Christians (Matt. xviii. 7). Christians have failed to glory only in the

cross of Christ (Gal. vi. 14); and thus, instead of "holding forth the word of life in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation" (Phil. ii. 15), they have helped on the delusion of the world. The Christian of this favoured land, although a citizen of the heavenly Jerusalem, may well weep over the actual condition of his country. He sees before him the antagonism of selfishness, capital arrayed against labour, and labour against capital, and the efforts of the wisest powerless to adjust these conflicting claims. He sees gain and godliness (*cf.* 1 Tim. vi. 5) almost become convertible terms; and national legislation, and even religion itself, made to bow to the low principle of human convenience. But it belongs not to the Christian to speculate on the decline of nations, except so far as to show the church the magnitude of its sin. "Judgment must begin at the house of God" (1 Pet. iv. 17). Such is the divine order. Let Christians then judge from their own selves what is right (1 Cor. xi. 13). And, if they have helped on human selfishness by failing to exhibit the glory of the humiliation of Jesus, let them at once stand forth in the confession of His name before men, not only for their own souls' blessing, but for the good of others. We cannot correct selfishness by counter-selfishness, but by testifying to

the unselfish love of Jesus, taking up the cross and following Him (Matt. xvi. 24).

"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phil. ii. 5).



A LETTER ON "THE PRAISE OF MEN."

My Dear Friend and Brother in Jesus Christ.

It gives me much pleasure to see your translation of——. I reserve the pleasure of reading it, or rather of having it read to me, for moments in which the Lord says to us, as He did to the apostles, "Come ye yourselves apart, and rest awhile." But I cannot refrain from telling you, my dear friend, that the pleasure that the appearance of your work gave me has been somewhat abated by the far too favourable opinion which you have expressed in your preface respecting me. Before I read a word of your translation, I made a present of a copy to a very dear and sincere friend of mine, who brought me word that you had spoken in praise of my piety in your preface. The passage produced the same effect on my friend that it did on me, when I afterwards saw it. I hope, therefore, that you will not take it in ill-part what I am about to say to

you on the subject, and which is the fruit of a tolerably long experience.

Pride is the greatest of all evils that beset us, and, of all enemies, it is that which dies the slowest and hardest; even the children of the world are able to discern this. Madame De Stael said, on her death-bed, "Do you know what is the last to die in man? It is self-love." God hates pride above all things, because it gives to man the place that belongs to Him who is above, exalted over all. Pride intercepts communion with God, and draws down His chastisement, for God resists the proud. He will destroy the name of the proud, and we are told that there is a day appointed when the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of man laid low. I am sure, then, you will feel, my dear friend, that one cannot do another a greater injury than by praising him, and feeding his pride. "He that flattereth his neighbour, spreadeth a snare for his feet," and "a flattering mouth worketh ruin." Be assured, moreover, that we are far too short-sighted to be able to judge of the degree of our brother's piety; we are not able to judge it aright without the balance of the sanctury, and that is in the hand of Him who searches the heart. Judge nothing, therefore, before the time, until the Lord come, and makes manifest

the counsels of the heart, and renders to every man his praise. Till then, let us not judge of our brethren, whether for good or for evil, but with becoming moderation, and remember that the surest and best judgment is what we form of ourselves when we esteem others better than ourselves.

If I were to ask you how you know that I am one of the most advanced in the Christian career, and an eminent servant of God, you would, no doubt, be at a great loss to reply. You would, perhaps, cite my published works, but do you not know, my dear friend and brother, you, who can preach an edifying sermon as well as I can, that the eyes see further than the feet go, and that, unhappily, we are not always, nor in all things, what our sermons are; that we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. I will not tell you the opinion I have of myself, for, in doing so, I shall probably, all the while, be seeking my own glory; and while seeking my own glory, appear humble, which I am not. I had rather tell you what our Master thinks of me--He that searches the heart, and speaks the truth, who is the Amen, the faithful Witness, and has often spoken in my inmost soul, and I thank Him for it; but, believe me, He has never told me I am an

“eminent Christian, and advanced in the ways of godliness.” On the contrary, He tells me very plainly that if I knew my own place, I should find it that of the chief of sinners, and least of all saints. His judgment, surely, my dear friend, I should take rather than yours.

The most eminent Christian is one of those of whom no one has ever heard speak, some poor labourer, or servant, whose whole is Christ, and who does all for His eye, and His alone. The first shall be last. Let us be persuaded, my dear friend, to praise the Lord alone. He only is worthy of being praised, revered, and adored. His goodness is never sufficiently celebrated. The song of the blessed (Rev. v.) praises none but Him who redeemed them with His blood. It contains not one word of praise for any of their own number—not a word that classes them into eminent, or not eminent—all distinctions are lost in the common title, *the redeemed*, which is the happiness and glory of their whole body. Let us strive to bring our hearts into unison with that song in which we all hope that our feeble voices will one day mingle. This will be our happiness, even here below, and contribute to God’s glory, which is wronged by the praise that Christians too often bestow on each other. We cannot have two mouths—one

for God's praise, and one for man's. May, we, then, do now what the seraphim do above, who with two wings cover their faces, as a token of their confusion before the holy presence of the Lord; with two cover their feet, as if to hide their steps from themselves; and with the remaining two fly to execute their Lord's will, while they cry, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts, all the earth is full of thy glory."

Excuse these few lines of Christian exhortation, which I am sure will, sooner or later, become useful to you, by becoming part of your own experience. Remember me in your prayers, as I pray that the blessing of the Lord may rest upon you and your labours. If ever you print another edition—as I hope you will—strike out, if you please, the two passages to which I have drawn your attention; and call me simply "a brother and minister in the Lord." This is honour enough, and needs no addition.

Your friend and brother.



FRAGMENT.—Power, the power of Christ practically, depends not upon revelations, knowledge of the glory, etc., but upon our feeling our own nothingness (2 Cor. xii.). Affection in unjudged flesh will not do—and we must look to that. Sentiment is worth nothing: you may have plenty of it with sincerity, but it will not carry a man through. That can only be in the power of the Holy Ghost.

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THE TRUE PATH OF A CHRISTIAN

(*Ephesians iv., v.*)

Allow me to present to you a brief outline of what has struck me as to the true path of a Christian, or rather the principle and measure of his walk, as taught in Ephesians iv., v. I purpose merely to draw attention to the great principles.

We get the principle and the measure of this walk; its double principle in chap. iv. If we have learned the truth as it is in Jesus, it is that we "have put off" (not 'to put off') "as concerning the former conversation the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and that we have put on the new man." And here we at once get the true character of this new man. It is "created after God in righteousness and true holiness:" not yet love, though this will never be separated, but its intrinsic moral nature in respect of good and evil.

God has been perfectly revealed through the work of Christ, and revealed in respect of evil and sin. He has been revealed in His dealing with others, with evil and good where it is, with what glorifies Him, that is Christ. He is righteous. He has been revealed in His own nature too, as regards good and evil: abhorrent of evil and having his delight in what is pure and good; He is

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holy. Adam was innocent ; he did not know good and evil till after he had eaten the forbidden fruit. Now we know good and evil; and, if we are to be "after God" it must be more, far more, in nature than Adam's estate: it must be in righteousness and holiness of truth. The power of the divine word revealing God (as Christ as now sitting at the right hand of the majesty in the heavens has brought Him to light), and quickening us, gives the true character of holiness in which we are created after God. (*Cf.* John xvii. 17, 19). God is known now not merely as a Creator who saw all as very good which had come out of His hands, but as One whose whole nature is revealed in the dealings and work of redemption, when evil and good are fully manifested, when evil is there and rife. But redemption, the *new* creation in which we are quickened out of our state of death in sin and raised with Christ out of His grave, has taken us completely out of that condition, and has made us as so quickened the living expression of the divine nature thus fully revealed. We are created again *after God*, in righteousness and true holiness (*Cf.* Col. iii. 9-11). What God is in respect of good and evil, we are in nature as having put on the new man created again in Christ Jesus ; and this as we see in Colossians connected with a true,

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full knowledge of God as so revealed. We are partakers by a new creation of the divine nature as fully revealed in Christ.

This is the first great principle of our walk as Christians. It is our life, what we are.

The second is the presence of the Holy Ghost as dwelling in us.

God Himself dwells in us by His Spirit, and sheds His love abroad in our hearts. We have been thus sealed for the day of final, full redemption. We are not to grieve so holy and blessed a Guest. Nothing inconsistent with His presence, where all is peaceful and holy love, is to be allowed in our hearts. It is not now merely a new nature, holy and righteous in itself, and capable of enjoying God blessedly revealed in Christ, but God dwells in us, shedding His love abroad in our hearts, sealing us for the time when we shall fully enjoy Him. He guides, orders, reveals the things of Christ to our minds, communicates what is blessed to us, filling us with what is divine. But especially, here, is present in us, so that nothing inconsistent with God's own presence in love is to be allowed in us. Nay more, we are to walk according to the love of the divine nature.

Such are the two great principles of the Christian's walk. He has put off the old

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man, with all its lusts and will, and put on the new man; which, with the knowledge of God's estimate of righteousness and holiness, is created after God according to this righteousness and holiness; and the Holy Ghost is present with him and in him, and he is not to grieve Him. No word or temper unsuited to that holy Guest who sheds abroad God's love in our hearts, and seals us for the day when all will be holy and blessed, is to find a place in our mouth or in our heart. In a word, the divine nature with its moral effect; and the presence of God in love; and the power of holy hope, form the Christian.

We now get the measure of this. In the latter we already get the walking of love. Chapter v., gives us the measure, if measure indeed we can call it.

God takes two essential names: Love and Light—none else. These are taken as characterizing the walk of the Christian. The measure of it Christ Himself, being the practical model: Christ in whom we see the life of God, God Himself, in a man. And this it is leads us to the full extent and character of what is looked for from the Christian. We have seen that we have been made partakers of the divine nature, created after God, and that the Holy Ghost is given to us—we are sealed by it. The

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measure of the Christian is not what man ought to be, but what God is, and has been to him ; of course this does not refer to His Omniscience and Omnipotence and the like, but morally in holiness and love. The latter we are never said to be. It is the prerogative of God to be it, and love without a motive. We, that it may be also holiness and withal as creatures, must have an object, and a motive. We cannot be it and love sovereignly ; for we are not sovereign but subject. Yet we shall see how blessedly the divine character of this love in us is maintained, though God Himself becomes its full and final object.

Light we are said to be, for purity of nature we can have, and have, as regards the new man. We are called then to be *imitators of God* as dear children. Being born of Him we are to imitate and follow Him in our actions and spirit as partaking of the divine nature, and in relationship with Him as children. We are to be followers of God and walk in love. We find a double character of this, by which, as I just now intimated, its divine perfectness is maintained. We are to be tender-hearted and forgive, show grace to one another as God has forgiven and shown grace to us (*Cf. Matt. v, 48, and the preceding verses ; see also Col. iii. 13*).

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But there is another element in divine love in man, which has a very deep stamp of perfectness on it. I have said Christ is given as the model of the display of God's character in man, as naturally it must have been. It is said here, "And walk in love as Christ has loved us and given himself for us, a sacrifice and an offering to God for a sweet-smelling savour." Perfect love was here shown in giving up Himself. So we are called to present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, our intelligent service. Two principles characterize this perfectness. First, offering up oneself. It is not loving one's neighbour as oneself—a true and perfect principle when evil is not, a state which the law as such would produce if efficacious to do so—but where evil, moral or external, or sorrow requires it wholly giving up, offering up oneself. This Christ did. He offered up Himself perfect in love. Our path is to follow Him in this. As in 1 John iii., "Hereby know we love, because he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." The second seal of perfectness is that it was an offering *to God*. The object and the motive were perfect. If He had only given Himself for us, there might have been touching generosity, nobleness of character. But the object which formed the

motive was inadequate to give perfection to the act, take men as good, or simply evil; for it was love in a man and had a motive, though divine love; and it is in that He is a model to us. But He offers Himself to God, though for us. Here our worthlessness only adds to the proof of the perfectness. But the offering being to God the motive was adequate—the act of love perfect. Hence, too, we are called to add to brotherly kindness charity or love, which we are told is the bond of perfectness. Absolute sovereign love is where there is no motive in the object. This we have seen in the last verse of chap. iv., and in Colossians. And this we are called to imitate as concerns our matters; *i. e.*, when any wrong is done to us. But when it is love with an object or motive in a man, when the motive gives its true character, then to be morally perfect, self must be given up to God. In us it may have been an evil self. But whatever it may be, it is given up; and, in our case, the body presented a living sacrifice.

We are not, then, said to be love, for sovereign love we cannot be; but we are called to be followers of God in it, as forgiving in grace, which rises above all injury, and to walk in a love which gives self wholly up to God, as Christ did. Blessed privilege!

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The other essential name of God is Light—essential purity of nature. And this in the Lord we are said to *be*. For in as far as Christ is our life, as having put on the new and put off the old man, we are so. Christ is our life. This is not prerogative with an object in grace: it is a nature which we have. We were darkness, but now are we light in the Lord. It cannot be separated from the love, because that gives us purity of motive, setting aside self (*Cf.* 1 Thess. iii. 12, 13). Yet it is a different thing. It is the purity of nature, thought, and object which were manifested in Christ. I do not add conduct, because that is a matter of exhortation. “Walk as children of light.” God is light, purity itself, and making all things manifest. While Christ was in the world, He was the light of the world. “In him was life, and the life was the light of men.” And in Him we have life and thus become light in the Lord, in a crooked and perverse generation, among whom we shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life, as Christ (1 John i.) was the manifestation of the word of life. God hath shined in our hearts to give out the light of the knowledge of the glory of the Lord in the face of Jesus Christ. Then indeed it was for the full purpose of apostolic testimony. Still as having Christ as our life, the fruits of light are

manifested : divine intelligence of good as in Christ Himself contrasted with the darkness of the world (a darkness which belonged to our nature), and the separation of good from the evil by the word, but by the living knowledge of Christ as He is, which was practically expressed in all His life. As it is written, "Sanctify them through thy truth ; thy word is truth. . . . For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they may be sanctified through the truth." So even in our intercourse with God, "Such a high priest *became us*, who is holy, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens." It is the revelation of Christ as He is now that acts by the Holy Ghost on our souls, "We beholding with unveiled face the glory of the Lord are changed into the same image from glory to glory" (2 Cor. iii. 18). The effect produced, in walk, is what His walk was on earth ; and for the same reason He could then say the Son of Man who is in heaven. That, no doubt, was the glory of His person, but so far as we are introduced by faith, livingly, through the power of the Holy Ghost into what is heavenly, we, as to object and motive are purified according to that in our walk here ; while His lowly path here engages our affections in imitating and following Him. That of which the power is seen in what He is was manifested to the

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understanding heart in His life down here. He was declared to be the Son of God with power, *according to the Spirit of holiness* by resurrection from the dead. In us it is a nature, a new man, but (as the creature must) having an object, Christ: "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life which I live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God" (Gal. ii. 18). So in Ephesians v.: "Ye are light in the Lord." Then not only are reprobable things manifested by the light, but Christ is Himself the perfect standard and light of the soul: "Awake, thou that sleepest," sunk into ease and apathy as a Christian, like the dead, though not dead, "and Christ shall give thee light." God is light, we are light in the Lord; and the perfect divine expression of this light in man, in which we are to walk, is Christ. The eye is upon Christ: "Christ shall give thee light."

Such, then, is the true measure of Christian walk—what God is in His nature as love and light, brought down to its true, perfect, and blessed expression on the earth, in man, in Christ. Thus we are to be followers of God as dear children, the fruit of the light, the purity of the divine nature to be seen in us.

THE OLD WINE AND THE NEW.

“No man also having drunk old wine, straightway desireth new; for he saith, The old is better.” (Luke, v. 39.)

Here is disclosed another secret in human nature—the power of man’s habits and associations; one which, humanly, so hinders the power of God in his soul. We have been feeding upon the *old* wine (that which the flesh has been providing for us from our birth), and our appetite for the *new* wine (that which the Son of God has brought with Him since nature and the flesh) is spoiled. We are all conscious of this. How can ye do good, says the prophet, who are *accustomed* to do evil? Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? (Jer. xiii. 23). And here the Great Prophet, in like wisdom, warns us that “no man having drunk old wine, straightway desireth new.”

And it is a solemn warning. “All things are possible with God,” it is true; and, “He giveth more grace.” But still we do well to take heed against relishing the old wine. Every thought that we follow, every desire that we indulge, savours of either the old or the new. It is a draught, small it may be, but still it is a draught of one or the other.

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And this leaves a solemn word behind it, on the heart and conscience of each of us. What are you thinking of, what are you tasting now? we may say to our souls through the day. Is it provision for the flesh you are making, or is it a walk in the sanctuary? Comes it from heaven or from hell? And oftentimes the saint has to learn, to his sorrow and shame at the end, the provision he had been making by the way. The patriarch was not drunk at the beginning, but he became a husbandman, planted a vineyard, and then drank of the wine. "Is thy servant a dog that he should do this thing," the soul may indignantly reply; but if the *hidden tempers* of the dog be allowed, his *active fury* will break out in time. "Walk in the spirit," that is the divine security, "and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh" (Gal. v. 16). And surely a little of that walking should enable us to change the speech, and to say, The *new* is better. That is what our blessed Lord would have. The holy, watchful habit of denying the flesh, its tempers and its lusts, will keep the appetite fresh and ready for this new and better wine: and into all this may the gentle and yet strong hand of the Spirit lead our souls daily. (*An Extract*).

LESSONS FROM THE LIFE OF JACOB.

(Genesis xxxv.—xxxiii.)

We do not find in the New Testament, promises to be fulfilled such as were made to Abraham and Israel in connection with earthly blessing, because there is a fulness of blessing in connection with a heavenly people that there could not be in regard to an earthly people. True, God deals with me down here, but I cannot compare God's dealings with me in the wilderness, with the love that chose me before the foundation of the world, and accepted me in virtue of the work of Christ on the cross. That whole work of Christ is before God in connection with me, and that gives me what there is in Christ—sufficient for saints in all generations.

I should like to look a little at the character and history of Jacob. When we come to the dealings of God with a people down here, it is exceedingly interesting to trace those dealings. Esau was a finer character than Jacob. There was not the craft and selfishness about Esau that there was about Jacob, and there was about him a natural nobility of character that Jacob had not. Jacob was taken up as a person to show God forming a character for Himself. It

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was the choice of God. He had said, "the elder shall serve the younger." God has said that, and in dealing with me as a saint, He will do it, till everything of the old nature is put down. If you have any one thing of which you can say, "that is *of God*," and you wish to connect self with it, you will find weakness. If you can not say of everything "is not that Thy choice," and if in everything you have not got a connection with the God in heaven, you will find weakness. Why did God choose that there should be twins? Why was he always choosing the younger instead of the elder? The world says "why?" and is angry; the believer says it and is pleased. The children are born: the first one born is called Esau; and the other, coming holding his brother's heel, is called Jacob or supplanter. God lets his character appear at the very beginning—there was no mental process, but there was character in it. Even in new-born babes we can observe certain things that are traits of the future character. One thing is remarkable, that is, the want of the showing out of the natural character of youth in Jacob: he turns to his mother—a home-boy. He was not at that time the deep, crafty one, whom God would take to form to Himself a character out of. Esau goes out hunting and returns faint and weary, "and Jacob

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sod pottage." We see here how nature can play with the things of God: unrenewed Esau asks for the pottage, and it occurred to Jacob to get something out of his brother. Did Jacob see anything of God in the birth-right? No! It could not have been so with such a plan; the character of the flesh came out: he had ends of his own—he got the one thing he cared about. The flesh could understand getting the place, the rights of the son and heir. God meant him to have it, but He did not call him to bring in his own crafty ways to get it. Next we find natural conscience at work. His mother proposes a plan for him to deceive Isaac and get the blessing, but Jacob fears he shall get a curse instead. Then his mother with cunning devices makes her plot to deceive the old man and it succeeds, but you will find Isaac does not give the great blessing then, but that it was given when Jacob was leaving his father's house. Esau vows vengeance, but waits his time when the old man should be dead. Jacob has to escape and *he meets with God*, which shows entirely that he had not done so before: terror seizes hold of him. Then, as a man in the flesh, he drives a bargain with God; and, as his history goes on, we see him with all sorts of resources to help out God. He departs from Laban, but he does not go as a man of God, called by

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the Lord to go: if he had, he would have sent to Laban and have said, God would have him depart. Would not God have taken care of him? He flies as if for his very life, and then finds that God had spoken to Laban, whilst he taxes all nature's resources to make a good escape. God goes to Laban by night saying, "Take heed" what you do Laban "that you speak not to Jacob either good or bad." Laban is more simple and open than Jacob, he lets it all out. Jacob then goes farther on, and God is before him. Can he now walk in the strength of the Lord, or is flesh still a thing cherished and counted on by him? Yes, almost as much? He is still the supplanter, he has still a plan of his own. He would not sit down quietly and say "God has got a plan for me, and that will stand." No, he has got his own plan. What was Jacob doing? Just what all try to do—trying to satisfy the yearnings of inward feelings that are not satisfied by God. He takes off the portion God has given, weighs it all up in the scale of his own conscience and makes his plan: all is beautifully arranged to meet "my lord Esau"—to meet him as a prince. The present and the servants are to go first, then the wives and the sons—the beloved one and her son behind; and they are to bow down and propitiate Esau. He sends

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them over the brook and they go, but he stays and is left to his own troubled mind. He had got a plan of his own, and God and his plan cannot go together, like so many who make a plan for God, and He wont recognize their way. Well, Jacob is left alone, and One wrestled with him till the morning: he was going to get his own soul settled before God. Just as when the sister of Moses sat by the bulrushes, as it were saying, "let God do what He pleases." Jacob till then had had a plan of his own. Ah! you will never have a plan of your own if trusting to God. Suppose you have come to your last bit of bread; if you know that God has His plan for you, you will never be ransacking your own resources to know where to get a supply. I know enough to know, that a plan cannot live when God comes in. If you had one, you would put it behind your back saying, "get thee behind me," because you had brought in *yourself*, not God's plan. Well Jacob is all alone with this One, who wrestled with him till break of day. And what did he get? Not a promise in regard to Esau; but, when brought to know what it is to wrestle with God, he got God's blessing to himself, and got it when he found that everything in nature, all spread out, couldn't give him rest. Read vs. 24-28. "As a prince hast thou power with God and with

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men": that is the blessing Jacob got. He could say, "I have learnt that I have power with God, though I go as a lame one the rest of my days."

Esau didn't want any of his stuff at all: he says, "Keep that thou hast unto thyself." He acted uprightly, acted on by God; and, according to the promise given by their father, he "breaks the yoke off his neck." Jacob had learned a lesson which every saint of God ought to learn at the beginning of his course, that, "Not by might nor by power." In their whole course, God does not call them to plan for self, but to take the plan He puts before them.

Remark the difference in Jacob's name—no longer being called a supplanter, but a prince having power with God. And what price did he lay at God's feet for that name? Nothing: he only said "I must be blessed." How different if we look at his worth or right before God as a poor thing whose plans cannot keep his own mind quiet, and his saying, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me"—I want for my own sake a blessing, and I won't let thee go—and the blessing is given *like God* gives. "What is thy name? Is it Tripper, Shuffler, Supplanter? Ah, no! Not *thine own* plans, but a "Prince to have power with God." It was getting himself connected with God, being

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powerful with God. On what ground? What could he say from first to last?—all Thy goodness, Thy thought choosing the younger and most contemptible of two children. God passes him through all manner of experiences. He stops to prepare a new plan, and God comes and gives him a new name. Esau takes very little notice of his magnificent plan, he could keep his goods for himself: God had touched Esau's heart.

It is important to see how the flesh has acted in one's own experiences. We have only to look up and see it now; but it ought not to be allowed to act in us. We are not *in the same place*, *all the old thing has been* judged, and God says, I call upon you to reckon yourselves dead, buried and risen with Christ. If saints don't begin there they will have all sorts of plans and will find they cannot get on, but are in a place of terrors. If God had poured out all your sin deserves on your head to-day, it wouldn't show out a judgment compared to that on the cross when His Son died. Do any of you know what it is to be in the place Jacob was brought to there? Paul knew what it was to be left in prison alone with God. Do you know what it is to be in such a place, *alone with God*, as Jacob? Let my plan answer or not I am alone with God, wrestling, saying "I will not let thee go except thou bless me." You will never know

what the joy of a Christian's life is, till you get there; till you have got to the place where God puts the name of son on you, connecting you with His plans, so that you can say, "I certainly form part of His plan, my flesh cannot shine in connection with that plan, the flesh can only be a crippled thing in connection with God." I don't think we know what that place of solitude with God is. Oh! what an unruffled calm there—able to say—"God and I were alone and He spoke to me of great things. I cannot be disappointed. Why? He spoke to me of the glory of being His son, why should I, such a poor thing, be spoken to of being a son of the Lord God Almighty, and of having a place in the Father's house, and I know my springs are in Him; I cannot be disappointed, for He is a God that cannot lie." Let me put to your spirits, in the Spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ, are *you* there? Do *you* understand the place of the sister of Moses committing the babe to the waters, and then sitting down to see what God would do? Are you able to sit alone, saying, "There Lord is the object of my affection, let me see what are Thy thoughts about it." It ought not to be a strange thing to be alone with God. When Jacob got to Jabbok, he was cut off from all circumstances.

I would ask you, whether your souls individually know what it is to have to do with God alone? Have you known what it is to sit down with all the plans of the flesh judged, saying, "What will God do for His own name's sake"?

THE CLEANSING OF THE LEPER.

(*Leviticus xiv. 1-20.*)

In this passage we find the ceremony, according to the law, for the cleansing of the leper—a figure of the cleansing which Christ has accomplished for us, for leprosy is a type of sin. There is a distinction to be made between the purification of the leper and that of the priest.

There were but three sprinklings with blood in the Old Testament—the sprinkling of the leper, and that of the people, and that of the priest; they each took place once and were not repeated. There was nothing to be done for the healing of the leper; it was the work of God. In order to prove that the disease was leprosy, the leper was kept by himself, set apart and watched and observed seven days. When he was entirely white, or when the spot had become white, he was purified. (*Cf. Psa. xxxii. 3-5*). When sin is hidden, and the leprosy internal, the evil is greater. The manifestation and confession of sin lead to peace, and the heart is set at ease; this is the upright and honest heart. The symptoms of leprosy are described in Lev. xiii. The healing came from God; the priest could only ascertain the disease, and perform the acts for purification. Leprosy excluded its victim from

the camp: sin hinders communion, with God and His people.

After his cleansing, the leper was reinstated in communion with the children of Israel; but the first effect of the knowledge of sin is to take from us the desire for communion with God, the intelligence of that communion, and the seeking after it. Cleansing gives us, indeed, the right of communion with the children of God, although our souls often fail to understand from the first that they have this right. Healing often precedes the knowledge of this healing; the converted soul puts itself under law, instead of accepting joyfully the whole gospel.

As to the means used for the cleansing of lepers, they are: First, the birds: one dead (type of the death of Christ) killed over a vessel of running water; the other, the living bird, is a type of Christ's resurrection (Lev. xiv. 4-7). Our sins brought Jesus to the tomb, but He rose out of it, and left them behind Him there: He had accomplished all. Second, the leper was to be washed with water (*vs.* 8, 9). Jesus cleanses us by the word which He has spoken to us (Jno. xv. 3; *cf.* Psa. cxix. 9; Ephes. v. 26); His word does for our souls what the washing of water does for the body. This cleansing was done once for all. Sancti-

fication is once for all, but the Christian must grow in it. All believers are justified in Christ. This is an accomplished reality; the Holy Ghost puts us in this position. There is the sanctification by God the Father (John xvii. 17); that of Jesus by His blood; and that of the Holy Ghost, who gives efficacy to the Father's will and the work of the Son. The Holy Ghost accomplishes it in individuals: He communicates life to us by the word, and sanctifies us wholly. Third, after cleansing follows the knowledge of what has been done; the leper must understand it, and receive its efficacy in his heart (vs. 10-20). The leper is presented to God, with a sacrifice for his offence. He was anointed with blood as a sign of sanctification.

The Christian is never to allow anything to enter his *ear* which would be inconsistent with the blood of the Lamb. The *right hand* is the symbol of action: the Christian should not do anything which would be dishonouring to the blood of Christ—all that he does every day should be done in the name of the Lord Jesus (Col. iii. 17); and he must not act in any way which would not accord with the measure of God's thoughts in the death of Jesus. All in our actions which is not holy as the blood of Christ is sin. Blood on the *great toe* is a figure of

holiness in our walk. We are not negative beings ; Christ's life should always act in us. Our thoughts, actions, walk—all are under the blood of Christ ; and that blood is the measure of what our holiness should be. One must either be under the shelter of the blood of Christ, or outside it. The child of God has on him that blood which can neither be effaced, nor lose its value. There is never need of another sprinkling. Every day our souls are renewed inwardly by the Holy Ghost, and we confess our sins before our Father. Fourthly, blood was not the only thing necessary ; oil was also required. The oil, a type of the Holy Ghost, is given because the blood is there. It was not after the water, but after the blood, that the oil was applied. The Holy Ghost comes to dwell in us because the blood of Christ is on us. If we are as pure in the sight of God as that blood, why should not the Spirit be in us ? The blood of Christ has exhausted the wrath of God against sin. There is nothing but love for those who are sprinkled with that blood. The Holy Ghost is a Spirit of knowledge, joy, peace, and love : these are His first-fruits. He is also a Spirit of strength and power, able to overcome the obstacles which arise in our path.

The effect of all was to re-establish the leper in communion with God.

GRACE AND POWER.

(2 Cor. xii.)

In the gospel of John we have something more than what is usually presented as the gospel. We have the setting aside of the old man: it is gone. At the end of chap. ii., there were some who had seen the miracles Jesus did, and were struck by them, but did not see the power of God in them. There was just one man who saw something more than the outward performance of the miracles. He saw the hand of God. 'Rabbi, I know this,' he says in effect, 'it is not merely supernatural, but it is *God*, Rabbi, it is the power of God.' But at the end of his interview with the blessed Lord the poor man says, "How can these things be?" It is infinitely more difficult to understand the words thou sayest than to see the power of God in the miracles thou doest. The blessed Lord had been rejected in chap. i: "He came to His own and his own received Him not." The world was made by Him and the world knew Him not. So when we come to that wonderful scene, Nicodemus and the Lord, the Lord stands on the ground of the resources there are in God, and the resources in Himself to meet man in the condition in which Nicodemus was without knowing it.

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It is no question now of the power of God outside you. What you want is the power of God in you. 'I do not understand what thou sayest. How can these things be? A man must be born again!' No one is saved who is not born of God. But what is it to be born of God? It is to receive from God Himself a wholly and entirely different nature, a "new" nature, capable of apprehending, understanding, entering into, in the blessed understanding of them, the thoughts that are in the heart of God Himself. We speak of growing and getting on, but this is the very foundation. If by the grace of God we have apprehended that foundation, we have made a beginning. This is how He begins here. Thus the Spirit here tells us how the truth came home to the soul. Now the first sign God gives us of the work of God in the apostle is, "Behold, he prayeth." It always comes fresh to one's heart. The persecutor on his way to Damascus was turned right round with the light from heaven, straight round from what he had set his heart on, all the energies of his nature. God takes His other servant, Ananias, aside, and says, "Go to the street which is called Straight," and he goes. The name of the street He gives him, and the name of the man, and one sign. He has begun to depend upon God; he prays—the persecutor

prays. What a history that tells ! Not only he is turned clean round from what he was before, but he has begun to depend upon God. Then nature comes out, and Ananias begins to say, 'Oh, but he is such a bad man ! I have heard of all kinds of mischief he has done.' The Lord tells Ananias, "Go thy way ; for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel : for I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake." God retires, as it were, into His sovereignty, and it is God's sovereign power that has also acted towards us.

I think it is well to remind ourselves that all the goodness, all the love, all the majesty of God passing before us, would not have affected us in the least degree if it had not been for the work of grace in our souls. He will work out of us everything of ourselves that He may fill us with nothing but Himself for the glory of Christ. Only think what it is for our souls, that Christ is to be glorified in us, in our life and our walk down here, and that we are to be taken up to be with Himself for ever. He is no stranger, and how do we know Him ? We know Him as One who has loved us with a love that is like no other. There is no other love like it. He could look upon us ; He could see us in our distance and misery, nothing in us to

attract, and that love in its sovereignty could expend itself upon us, could delight and satisfy itself in giving itself for us. It is wonderful for our souls to enter into it—the love of God, the love of the Father, and of the Son. I do not ask if your heart is satisfied. Do you know that the *Father's* heart is satisfied about you? Come and look at the epistle of John: “If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” If you love the world, it is the proof you have not tasted for your own soul's satisfaction what the love of the Father is. We have not learnt that His love is satisfied in us. It is that that blots out the world, that takes the world away from us. The Holy Spirit, in the epistle to the Galatians, speaks of the Lord Jesus Christ as He, “Who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father.” No people so rich as you if you have tasted of that love. You are masters of the world if you have tasted the Father's love. Only think of what the love of the Father is to us. We speak of going to be with Christ and like Him. What is the reason of it? Why, the Father's love to us, and the Father's love to the Son. He has first willed to have children before Himself that the fatherly affections of the heart of God Himself might

be satisfied with such things as you and me. We cannot go on with the world if we have that in our hearts.

I referred to the gospel of John and the epistle of John because we find the Spirit of God bringing out the same blessed truth—that the only way God can have to do with us, other than in judgment, is on the ground of grace. It is a changeless ground, because there is nothing of man in it; it is a changeless ground because it is all of God—it is the means to an end, and that end is the glory of Christ. That is the blessed end of everything.

Now, beloved brethren, if we can only, by the grace of God, understand this one thing—that God has not one single thought in His heart of which Christ Himself is not the object—it will make everything clear, it will make straight paths for our feet, clear up every difficulty, if we have simply, by the grace of God, His object before us. The apostle is an example of this in 2 Cor. xii.: for, (after having spoken, in chap. xi., of the wonderful history of service and of sufferings that he had gone through for God and Christ) he says, “I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord.” ‘Let us turn from the marred and blotted page of my history, and let us come to the new, and the bright, and the blessed page—the new his-

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tory that stands before God. I do not speak now of Paul, I speak of the man in Christ that stands before God. No longer the history of Paul, the poor marred and blotted page of my history, though I have more to boast in and glory in than any of you. I now come to the other—to that page that subsists before God, the brightness of that page. I stand now before God in Christ; I know myself there; I know myself in Him. It is no humbling thing to me to know myself there. It is the glory of my inmost soul, the joy of my inmost heart. I stand in all the perfection, in all the blessedness of Christ.' Beloved friend, does that humble you? God help you if it does. I will tell you why. It shows you have in you what you are clinging to with a tenacity which proves you have not Him, and Him alone, before you. You are clinging to something you *will* not let go; some fancied and fanciful excellency which you think is not so bad after all.

Do you not know something of it, if you have been in the presence of God at all? 'I know myself,' he says, 'in that character; I know myself there standing before God in Christ.' "In Christ." I cannot explain to you what it is to be in Christ in a way that would satisfy your mind, because it is incomprehensible; but I could put it a little

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before you, as it is in this chapter. It will satisfy your heart, and it will search your conscience. Thank God, it is not something critical, it is not what your mind is capable of apprehending. Thought cannot measure it, but it can reach your conscience, and it can impress your heart; it is the blessed revelation that shall reach the conscience and impress the heart—the uncontrollable heart of man—and magnify the grace that has made us His. And so He loves to pour into our hearts, and it is just like God, just His way to pour into our poor little hearts something of His great love, until our poor little hearts overflow to Him in worship. And what is worship but just the outpouring of a heart so filled to overflowing with the worthiness of the object before it, that the heart cannot contain itself! It is a kind of thing that flows out spontaneously from occupation with a blessed object.

‘I know this man,’ he says, ‘caught up to the third heavens.’ There is no boasting there for any of us. It is when he comes out of that place there is danger. ‘Now I heard and could tell you things it is not possible for man to utter. But lest I should be filled with pride thereby, He helped me.’ So we have the blessed principle of grace brought out here. The blessed Lord knew that. He knew that man for whom He died,

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that man that persecuted those who were members of Christ here on earth. He knew that man had need of His grace, that he needed to be helped to take the road. Like Nicodemus, we might say, "How can these things be?" And Paul is put in the way to take that road. 'Poor thing that you are! You cannot take the road; you have it not in you to have self set aside. You cannot keep the flesh in order yourself; but I will make that contemptible from which my grace has delivered you.'

Beloved brethren, we may speak about God being with us here in this world. I would only just suggest to you that this is not the question. God has tried, and He has tried in infinite goodness, to walk with man on man's ground, and it ended in the shame, and spitting, and the cross. Now He has saved us, and He has called us with a holy calling; and enables us to walk with Him on His ground. It changes the whole thing. It is not God walking with man in this world, but it is His calling us, and enabling us to walk with Himself. It is one thing to say God is with us here or there, blessing us in any service we may undertake, and undertaking for us; but that does not reach the soul, and give rest to the heart. The question is only, Am I with Him in what I am doing, in what He is doing? What grace

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it is! The sense of grace that comes fresh to the soul. I can only walk with Him by His grace. The apostle gives us the history of it. I think we can see there how thoroughly, by the grace of God, he had entered into that ground. Here is an out-and-out confession. 'That thorn,' he says, 'was given to me in the flesh. I resisted it.' There is a real man before God—the man Paul. Here he is himself. He says, 'I prayed three times that it might go.' God had given him a thorn in the flesh, a help from God to keep the flesh in order. I must have His grace to hold me, to sustain me. "Hold up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not" (Psa. xvii. 5). I must have a divine power over myself, to hold me, and to keep the flesh in order, for it never, never changes.

For a moment go back to John iii., for there are two things that never change. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." It never changes; it is the same to the very end. God never changes: "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit." Those are the two that never change—the flesh, and the mighty God Himself. "I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed" (Mal. iii. 6). "I besought the Lord thrice"—twice without an answer, and the third time He said, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made

perfect in weakness." Many will tell you it means that the grace of God would enable him to bear the thorn in the flesh. 'You, poor soul, could not do without that thorn in the flesh, and you thought you could; but I know better. I know your flesh, your feebleness, and I am for you. My grace will not remove it, for my grace gave it.' So he learned what he had never learned before—to accept everthing that comes. Do you think we have that consciousness now in all things that we go through in this world? Do we think what it is, not to be in the hand of One we cannot escape from, but to be in the hand of One who has chosen us in His sovereign love? He is handling us according to His knowledge of what is in us, and we are in the hand of Him who is handling us, in order that He may express from us His grace.

Now he says—by the grace of God I know this—"My grace is sufficient for thee." "For this thing I besought the Lord thrice . . . Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." Whenever I hear it said, "We are such poor, feeble things—so poor, so feeble," I say, "Well, if we look at ourselves, that is true. But what about the power of Christ resting upon us?" I find this very same man (Acts xvi.) in cir-

cumstances of distress and trial—beaten, oppressed, and his feet fast in the stocks, and he sings praises to God. Why? Because his eye and his heart are above. “Ah! He counts me worthy to suffer for Himself,” and his heart goes out in praises to Him. And the prison walls were round him, and all the suffering he had gone through before him; but he remembered Him who came into this world for him, and who counted him worthy to suffer for His sake; and there is the Object, and the power of the Object, that makes the heart glad, even in the most trying circumstances, and there is no prayer about it all. He does not pray, as you and I often do, to get delivered. He has the sense of having to do with Christ, and the heart goes back to Him in praises and thanksgiving.

Go back for a moment to the end of the gospel of John. There is Mary at the sepulchre; she weeps and weeps, even to break her heart. There she stands, and looks into the empty tomb. Her heart breaks with tears. It is gone, it is over. Alas! here is an empty grave, “and I know not where they have laid Him.” Paul, on the other hand, knew where He had gone, and that He, the blessed Son of God, counted him worthy to suffer for Him. And what is the result? He sings praises. God answers in

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power, and the jailor comes in trembling, and says, "What must I do to be *saved*?" God manifests His hand. The jailor himself is convicted. "What must I do to be *saved*?" He does not say, "What must I do to be pardoned?" but he finds himself a lost soul, yet in the day of grace, and he cries for mercy, and his very prisoner brings it to him. How wonderful, how simple it is! There are Paul and Silas, their feet fast in the stocks, at midnight, praying and singing praises to God. It is a blessed thing when, by the grace of God, we can have our hearts touched with what the power of God really is. "I take pleasure in all these sorrows by the way," he says, as it were; "for they are just opportunities that the power of Christ may rest upon me, that I may learn afresh what it is to be in his Hand, and how He, in His infinite love and favour, can express Himself out of me." *You* cannot express Christ in this world; you cannot do it. It must be real dependence on Him, and He will express Himself out of you. Wait upon Him. Thus we learn two things: the infinite capacity of the new nature, and the infinite power of the Holy Ghost.

Look for a moment at the way in which He speaks of grace. I want just to refer to that as manifested in connection with the judgment-seat of Christ. There it is that

we see the very essence of grace. The judgment of sin was borne by this blessed One on the cross. He has given us to trust in Himself. He has made us His, and now He has set us in this world for Himself; and when this scene is over, He brings us before His judgment-seat, and He goes over what we have done in this world—goes over what His own Holy Spirit has done through us in this world—and He counts it to us, and then, in the greatness of His grace, He says, ‘I will reward you for it’—for what His own Spirit has done through us. Was there ever grace like that? He begins with us on the ground of grace, and He never changes His ground; and we find that throughout the eternal ages His grace is glorified in us. He thus gave Himself for us—the blessed answer of His own heart to lay His own resources open to man in his guilt, his misery. His grace never ceases until we are there before His own throne, and even there it will be “to the praise of the glory of His grace.” Oh, it becomes us to walk softly indeed! People may say, “We do not enjoy these things.” Why is it? Because His Holy Spirit is grieved or hindered. We check the Holy Spirit, that alone can make these things real to us. Who could understand, save by the Spirit, what it is to be blessed with all spiritual blessings in the

heavenlies in Him? And His Holy Spirit delights to make these things good to us, and to fill our hearts to overflowing. But if His Holy Spirit is checked or hindered by anything in us, the present realization ceases. The things themselves do not cease, but our enjoyment often does, to our sorrow and loss. The infinite capacity of the new nature ever remains; but, alas! we have in our own souls so little realization of the presence of the Holy Spirit.

One verse struck me as it was being read—"It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I go, I will send Him to you" (John xvi. 7). "Another Comforter." Did you ever think of who and what the first Comforter was, who came into this world to take upon Himself our sins and our sorrows, to walk alongside of us? Do you know the One who came into this world to walk along with us, no matter what might come upon Him—the shame and the spitting, the cursing and the swearing? They did not know Him. Nothing rebuffed that love. Then, risen from the dead, and taken up to the right hand of the majesty in the heaven, He leads the heart to listen to what the Spirit of God reveals, and alone can reveal; all that Christ really has come down to tell us. And we are in Him—

"in Him." We are standing in all the blessed acceptance in Him ; we are "accepted in the beloved" (Ephes. i. 6). It does not say we are accepted in Christ ; it says we are accepted in all the blessed overflowing of the love of the Father's heart to that Son. God gives us that place ; it is the measure of my place before Himself. He tells it to us in order that our hearts may go up to Him in praise and thanksgiving—a heart that is too full of what the blessed God is not to praise Him.

Beloved brethren, when God touches our hearts, when in simplicity and reality we are before God and He really touches our hearts with what His love to us now is, there is no holding in, it is bound to go back to Him. The heart beats true to Him because the heart is His, He has won it, and He is interested in all that passes there. He puts us through these things to make good to us what His love and care really are. There is His love. It has been said that if He put us through the difficulties and trials, it was better than leaving us alone. Why, He has bought us with a price. Can He leave us alone? He will never cast us off He will never be the first to break the link ; or if the link is broken by us, so far as we can do so, He will hold us and put us through thing after thing, trial after trial,

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difficulty after difficulty, till we learn afresh His grace, and care, and love, and what it is to have to do with Him. You will find there is not a difficulty but the blessing, and the sense of His love and of His heart gets fuller and more real in every single sorrow and trial He puts us through, because the object of His heart is to draw us nearer to Himself. Not to cry for Him to come because we find the way weary, because we are tired and cast down. Let us remember this, that until He comes He has something for His people to do here. He has some manifestation of Himself of what He can do here, some grace that shall flow from Himself, that shall go back in answering glory and praise to Himself up to the last moment. We may say the way is dreary, and we want to be gone, and we want to be at rest. What does it show us? It shows restlessness. It is not a promise, it is a bright and blessed hope; but until He comes, let us go on, content to be here until He comes, in view of the blessed prospect. May God in His mercy give us to understand it really by His grace, and to seek to be ever in spirit with Himself until that moment when He comes to fetch to be there for ever.

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SERVICE.

“ Mary . . . sat at Jesus’ feet, and heard his word.” Luke x. 39.

“ Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair : and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment.” John xii. 3.

O Lord, among that faithful few
Who sought Thee for their guest,
More blest than all was one who knew
Thine inmost heart the best.

’Twas she who took the learner’s place,
And listened to Thy voice,
Which met her ear with words of grace,
Approving of her choice.

The knowledge of Thy fulness hers ;
She “ grace on grace ” received ;
The wish to serve most sweetly stirs
The blest one who believed.

And, oh, what odours, Lord, are shed,
Around, above, below,
When love, by love refreshed and fed,
Has sweetly learned to flow !

The waste of love, though some upbraid,
My lips shall own, O Lord,
To whom the offering is made,
On whom the ointment poured.*

It shows what we have seen in Thee
In fellowship alone ;
When fresh, as having been with Thee,
We give Thee of Thine own.

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It shows we've learned with great delight
 Thy resurrection power;
 And find in Thee the life and light
 Of every passing hour.



ON SERVICE.

We go on through the toils of service, where as good in Christ it has to make its way, and make itself effectual by divine strength in the midst of evil and alienation from God, and, as to testimony, adapt itself to it. That was what was so beautiful in Christ. In heaven all is good. God is there, and only goodness and holiness, and nothing inconsistent with it. We cannot but be simple, or want simplicity there, for God fills everything, and we and all are what He would have us. It is an infinite "I am" of good. But Christ was something else. He was divine good, and infinite, but good adapting itself, showing itself infinite in being always itself, and yet adapting itself to all the wants, sorrows, miseries, sins, that were in this poor world. We get to God, get to the Father, by it, because He has got to us. What a wonderful thought it is, to see Godhead emptying itself, thereby to prove itself love, as no angel could have known it—coming down as man even unto death, and to be made sin, that I might learn what God

is in death, where sin had brought me ; and absolute obedience in man, in what disobedience had brought us into ; death, the way of life ; the extreme of man in weakness—where (as to this world) it ended, the place where God is revealed and triumphant, and the power of Satan destroyed. But the Christian redeemed by this, and according to this, has to be this good, to express, walking in holiness, divine love in this world, by manifesting the life of Christ, and seeking the deliverance of souls.

What a calling ! and what a privilege ! But, oh, how we do shrink into self-judgment if we compare ourselves with Him ! We have to do it sometimes. God passes us through it when needed. We know there is no good thing in us, but to know the working of evil, which we always need at the beginning, and sometimes by the way, is another thing—overwhelming sometimes, I do not mean as to doubting His love, but as occupying us with self-vileness, instead of with His blessed love and Himself. But it is really put away in Christ, and hence when we have, in a certain sense (that is, as to the need of real uprightness of heart) adequately judged ourselves, all the flood of His grace flows in again, and we can think of Him, and not of ourselves. There are no shallows then, but they are there, and there

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is still the danger (until long and deeply exercised) of having to go through it again. And it is a terrible thing to think of turning the eye off Christ, and on to what is vile, for self is vile. It is this that marks the "fathers" in Christ. John has much additional to say to the "children" and "young men" when he repeats his warnings, but to the "fathers" he only says they "have known him that is from the beginning." That was their characteristic existence. How blessed it is! Oh, that we could walk so as to keep ourselves in the love of God! It is not knowing the Father (that was the "children's" place—the place of all) but Him that was "from the beginning:" Christ as manifested here.

I find the constant tendency (even of work for the Lord, and an active mind) ever is to take us out of the presence of God, and nature is instantly up: I do not mean evil in the common sense, but what is not God, and the condition of the soul when God is there. There is a will and a right the heart claims (not wilfully), instead of adoring reciprocity and lowliness, with confidence and trust of heart. For God present puts us in our place, and Himself in His place in our hearts; and what confidence that gives, and how self is gone in joy! Our great affair is to keep in His presence; and the diligent

soul shall be made fat. He that seeks, finds. May the Lord give us to labour on undistractedly. It is not, through grace, in vain in the Lord as 1 Cor. xv. 58 so sweetly assures us. Where He does not give present encouragement it may be our fault, certainly His wisdom—but let us be content to be anything in His hand, and thankful to be anything. A servant is to serve where he is set, and should be thankful to be allowed to be anything, even a “hewer of wood” and “drawer of water” to the saints—but if our hearts are not close to Christ, we are apt to get weary in the way. All is a vain show around us; but that which is inside abides, and is true, being the life of Christ. All else goes! When the heart gets hold of this fact, it becomes (as to things around) like one taken into a house to work for the day, who performs the duties well, but passes through, instead of living in, the circumstances. To Israel the cloud came down, and they stayed; it lifted up, and on they went. It was all the same to them. Why? Because had they stayed when the cloud went on, they would not have had the Lord. One may be daily at the desk for fifty years, yet with Christ the desk is only the circumstance; it is doing God’s will, making manifest the savour of Christ, which is the simple and great thing. Whether I go or you

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go, I stay or you stay, may that one word be realised in each one of us—"steadfast, immovable!" In whatever sphere, as matter of providence, we may be found, let the divine life be manifested—Christ manifested. This abides, all else changes, but the life remains and abides for ever, ay, for ever.

Not a single thing in which we have served Christ shall be forgotten. Lazy, alas! we all are in service, but all shall come out that is real, and what is real is Christ in us, and this only. The appearance now may be very little—not much even in a religious view, but what is real will abide. Our hearts clinging closely to Christ, we shall sustain one another in the body of Christ. The love of Christ shall hold the whole together, Christ being everything and we content to be nothing, helping one another, praying one for the other. I *ask* not for the prayers of the saints: I reckon on them. The Lord keep us going on in simplicity, fulfilling as the hireling our day, till Christ shall come; and then "shall every man have praise of God"—praise of God! Be that our object, and may God knit all our hearts together thoroughly and eternally.

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"If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour."

## TO-DAY—FOR ME—THE CROSS OF THE GLORIFIED ONE.

*(A letter from a distant land to one in England.)*

MY DEAR BROTHER :

You ask me for a few lines from (what you call) my "Patmos." When John was in Patmos, he seemed to have been rudely pushed thither by the persecutor ; but, if so, and if Satan was the instigator of that piece of wickedness, our God had His counsel and His plan to accomplish therein. The wickedness of enemies to the truth cast the servant out of intercourse with man, and saint into solitude : and God took occasion thereof to pour contempt on His enemies and to give to His servant a revelation and a service quite peculiar. What would you and I have done without that fruit of wisdom, grace and love divine which comes down to us from John in Patmos ? Moreover without it the testimony of grace and the word would not have been complete.

It behoves me to consider well what I pen after such an introduction, and it behoves you, too, to judge what I write. But the God of John not only divinely inspired him to write what he wrote, and guarded him in doing so, but He wills also that His children should, in brotherly love one toward an-

other, for His name's sake, and in humbleness of soul, watch the one for the other and be one another's keepers—first by prayer and then by ensample, but also by exhortation. So I feel free to write, and do you discern how far what I suggest is according to Him and the word of His grace.

We grow in capacity to understand the difficulties of the day we live in, but, . . . (I will not finish the sentence which I seemed about to write, but) I will make a few practical remarks. It seems to me that we have now one want in common. I think, too, that God is bringing it up before our minds, and, by various circumstances in various places, is teaching us that there is *to His eye* something wanting in us; and, by the film that many an eye finds over it when looking forth and forward, is impressing upon us the importance of the deficit: and often, because of the film and mist, many of us can not see whereabouts God is above in these things.

The cross of the Lord Jesus Christ: has it its due place in the souls of the saints now? Has it had its due place in *my* soul? I judge that "No" is the only truthful answer which conscience, or spiritual instinct, can give, and so I give it. Has it had its due place in *your* soul? Answer for your own self: and then point out to me those in whom, theor-

retically and practically, it seems to have had its due place. I write not as a mystic who supposes that the Spirit of God will ever cease to give to the believer, while down here, larger and larger perception of the import and meaning of the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ; but I write as one that has his all in Christ as one of those among the heaven-called people, one who has past Pentecostal blessing before his mind, and the faith and life down here of a man of like passions with himself in Paul, and that blessed hour too, when the Spirit and the bride having said "Come" will be ready for her Lord.

It is not mysticism that God has said of us in Rom. vi., "Crucified together with Christ," "dead together with Christ," "buried together with Christ." All that is of the first Adam thus separated from the believer, through the humiliation and death of Him who is the last Adam. Well, as it seems to me, it is only when faith *acts* on these things and that a man *reckons* himself to be dead—dead as to guilt and dead as to sin—that that side of the cross is duly held by any of us. Nor is it mysticism, again, as to the new man, that it is written we have been "quickened together with Christ," "raised up together with Him," and "made sit together in Him in heavenly places" (Eph. ii.).

Who of us are so abiding in Him as to be walking down here as He walked? Surely such only wear, *duly*, the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I do not say, nor do I mean, that the benefits of the cross and of the resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ for eternity belong only to the believer who understands and is consistent with his principles. Not so. But what I *do* say and press is that all they that are sons of God and heirs of God, quickened, sealed, and indwelt by the Holy Spirit, are the objects on whom Christ's heart and eyes are fixed continually; and that, if they live, He says they "should live unto Him who died for them and rose again" (2 Cor. v.). Ponder the principles of Paul (Gal. ii. 20), "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"—and you will see what I mean.

By the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ I do not mean the cross of One a-dying, but not yet dead (as many a modern thinks of it); nor of one hanging dead on the cross, nor of Him taken down and carried and laid in a grave (as a Jew or a Romanist may think of Him), but the old scriptural doctrine of

God, where His determinate foreknowledge and counsel were made good, when Jew and Gentile crucified the Nazarene who died and rose again. The cross of the Lamb of God seen in the light of the glorious presence of Him who, though once laid low in death, is gone up out of the grave in the power of being Himself the resurrection and the life—in the light of whose presence as He now sits at the right hand of God, the awful, solemn, and yet blessed, doctrine of the true cross is seen. So seen by faith, it has power over the heart and conscience of the believer and must have, for it is *taught of God*; and it is the grand subject of the Spirit of God's teaching.

If they in the North and they in the South West have not as individuals honoured the cross, how can they (not moulded individually by the cross) be built up together aright according to the heavenly calling, or the mystery, the coming of the Lord or the patience and hope of the kingdom.

The stolidity of the Northern races and the imaginative liveliness or dreamy musings of other races find, each for itself, the remedy and the death-sentence in the cross alone. It is God's test of everything and of everybody. It sentences and would check flesh and its worldly energy drawn from within and not working from and through

resurrection from the dead, amid things, in appearance, good. And it would detect and condemn, and stop flesh and selfish indulgence in acknowledged evil too. The adversary can hold his own against everything down here, except the cross and the blood of the ascended Christ; and the Holy Spirit knows no power over man as man apart from the same. He forms the soul by it for good, and He detects what is not of Christ; whether it be of the adversary, the world, or the flesh, by the application of the cross to it—the cross down here, the mind when down here of Him who now is glorified.

An assembly must be affected by the individual state of each component part of the whole. The building of God is of living stones; the body of the Christ is of quickened members; the family of God have all eternal life. I do not, in urging this, forget for a moment, that whatever the converts at Pentecost had been, they were converted then and had received forgiveness of sins as well as faith and repentance and the gift of the Holy Ghost; and this fitted them to be part of that edifice in which the Holy Spirit dwelt. Paul and each of his beloved Ephesians was a member in particular of that body, the glorified Head of which was and is the Lord Jesus Christ seated in heaven. And the



eternal life which was with the Father before the world was, is the portion of each child of God, individually, a member of that family which the Lord God Almighty is not ashamed to own as His: nor does the Lord Jesus Christ hesitate to declare Himself as the First-born among many brethren in it. We are all, and we know it, through faith, blood-bought, and the congregating and centralizing power is the Holy Spirit dwelling among us—but then He is here as sent down from God and the Lord Jesus Christ as a witness, according to the thoughts of God, of the personal worth and value of the work of the once crucified but now risen and ascended Son of Man. That the Spirit, in the power of His own gracious presence, does keep evil in check—and may Himself be grieved and quenched and resisted is also true; but His standard of truth is not Himself, but the import, worth, and value of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The cross of the Lord Jesus Christ is a great leveller of *self* in the flesh of man in the system of the world which man and Satan have formed for human self when out of God's presence; and the same cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, when seen in the presence of God as of His providing, gives shelter to the conscience and salvation from the world, self, and Satan, and God's wrath

to come to everyone that finds grace to receive it and God's instruction about it.

Let us see it in its detective power. Human mentality of the highest sort is as much part of fallen flesh as is the senseless creating and pampering the cravings of the human body. Not so offensive, but as much of it. Pathos is to the natural mind admirable; what would fallen human nature be without pathos? When a man does well for himself, all men speak well of him (Ps. xlix. 18). Men's praise would hardly now be openly expressed of the course of the drunkard, adulterer, fornicator. Yet all these have their root in the self-willed independency of fallen human nature. But everything that is in it is judged and condemned (as well as the man who stands before God upon it) which is inconsistent with Him who willingly was obedient unto death, the death of the cross.

If the Lord were to go through with you, or with me, whatever scenes we may severally have passed through since we were together, I judge that He would let out many thoughts that would astonish us as to the origin of troubles being want of honouring the cross in this one or that one; and also as to our realized weakness at such and such an hour, resulting from a want in us as to the cross. He measures out trial and He is

present with us in it (for destruction is not His object but) that everything should turn to our salvation through the supply of the Spirit and prayer. There is often a surprise in the mind in finding we have been unexpectedly at wit's end. It should not be so, for it is there faith lives and the believer should live; for what we know not now we shall know hereafter.

Note it. There is a connection in the very nature of things between the presence of God and self-judgment in man. Without knowing God as He is (that is in Christ) no sinner can judge himself truthfully. Without abiding near God no believer, seeing what Christ was and how He walked and what He has done, will know how to use this knowledge for his own rest and walk and the discovery of shortcoming in himself. If any have got away from God let them return to Him.

One effect of want of self-judgment in a Christian and watching unto prayer against self or anything else (for its sake) having a place allowed to it in what should be and is (or professes to be) Christ's alone—is dimness of sight as to God and His actings. Consequently discouragement is the present portion of such. They are dimsighted and cannot see what God's mind is, nor the cause nor the end of a wilderness, a Patmos,

or a storm. Faith in a believer can hardly be lively as to details of the pathway or any part of it (past, present, or to come) save where self-judgment is maintained.

I believe that God allows many a storm to rise, forms many a wilderness and Patmos too, for the blessing of His people. He will have *reality*. We must have it too. The purging out of chaff, the picking out of defective grain is solemn work, but needful if the merchant will have his ingathering worth much. Better for us to do it ourselves than to challenge Him, by our neglect, to do it. The moral glory of the cross is only fully known to God Himself: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It is better known in *heaven than on earth; in eternity than in time*. To us while here most precious, it will yet be better known and more precious in heaven, and eternity, and the presence of God, than here.

A few words upon it ere I close.

My Lord! Thou knowest all about Thy cross and the revelation of God by it, and Thou by Thy Spirit canst guide and guard my pen.

Wonders seem to me brought to light by means of it; and brought to light too in such a way as to teach me, even me, the truth of God and the lie of Satan misleading man through the world and the flesh to de-

struction. I look back to the first creation, it was all very good. Invested in Adam's hand I see it all given up to a murderous rebel, Satan: and man losing himself and all. But then came out to light the mind of God against Satan that there should be One, the woman's Seed, whose heel first the serpent should bruise, but whose bruised heel should finally bruise the serpent's head. And there above, the seed of the woman, the Child born of the virgin Mary, now sits enthroned on the majesty of the Highest, waiting till God shall have made His foes to be His footstool. How unsearchable are God's ways and His judgments past finding out!

*No creature (according to its very creation) expression of the eternal power and Godhead ever could have devised such a thing. It is the expression of a mind infinitely greater than man's. He as a creature never could rise higher than that which may be involved in his original relationship with his Creator. Who, according to the thoughts of a mere creature, could have said *how* or *why* God should make One who knew no sin to be sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God in Him? How could it be? Alas! man's heart now that he has heard all about it is opposed to it. What! not *I* work, but God! Not my mer-*

its honoured, but all my vileness measured out in slow judgment upon One who knew no sin ! What, I to be blessed according to God's delight in the only obedient One ! I am conscious that man likes not God to have been before him and to be altogether above him ; that God's thoughts and ways stain too deeply the pride of fallen man, even in blessing him, for the heart and mind of man unreconciled to welcome it, or the truth that it is not God that wants reconciling to man, but man that wants reconciling to God. I know it all. But I must bow or be lost ; must bow to the most perfect expression of the divine character, told out too just where my present ruin and lost condition are discovered. And shall I turn from the God who in pity and mercy and compassion has taken occasion of my lost estate to make it a field for the revelation of the character and ways of God, and for giving a new glory to the Son of His love, and to me a better portion than Adam lost, a share of the blessedness of His own family and glory ? And see the glory that morally rests upon us when we bow to His grace. I then can say, "What has been, what is, what ever will be most for Thy glory, O God, has been and is and ever will be most for mine too. Thine own character, Thy being love, and light, full of mercy and compassion,

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Father, too, of an only-begotten Son, Thy wisdom and Thy power, the Lamb that was slain alive again for evermore—it is through His cross that Thou canst be just while justifying me a sinner. The blood that makes Thy throne on high to be a mercy-seat, makes my conscience perfect in the light. We understand one another now: I have been raised through faith in Christ crucified and risen, by the intelligence given by the Holy Spirit, and can say, Thy perfect way of calling me, O God! is through grace—my divinely perfect way of coming to Thee, of standing in Thy presence, and of delighting in Thee. A ruined sinner in myself, yet can I trust Thee and hope in Thee, as Adam could not in Eden.

At all events, the fall has subserved, through the cross, the manifestation of the glory of God. Without it there never could have been the new revelation of the character of God, which salvation and redemption give. To taste mercy in its reality one must be either the one that shows it or one that receives it. No channel for mercy but God manifest in flesh, slain on the cross as Son of Man.

Individuality, if not selfishness in its higher and better connections, finds its gain here, and here alone. The cross has broken all my bondage, baffled Satan of his prey,

slain the *me* that was, and, in Christ, crucified the world to me and me to the world, and He who bore it has become my life and my portion. Besides this, there is the moral glory and attractive beauty of the truth. And both of these presented to the conscience and heart of man to lure and draw him. Still, and it is that which goes beyond all, He that bore the cross gained by it for Himself as Son of Man the glory where He is, and He has made us partakers of the divine nature, and put His own Spirit in us. That Spirit rules and reigns in us, even the Spirit which He that was crucified gave to us: it needs be then that (if for privilege as He *is* so are we in this world so) our walk down here should be the fruit of our position, and as His *was*; and so, "For me, to-day—the cross of the glorified One." What can I suffer, what do for Him and His?

Yes, the cross of the Christ now ascended has broken my heart, broken Satan's power, stained the world that was guilty of it, shown out the contrast between His flesh who was holy, harmless, undefiled, spotless, who knew no sin and was therefore fit to be a sin-offering and mine—all, all, all within and all about me has become as dung and dross for the excellency of the knowledge of Him and His righteousness. May I live here below in the fellowship of His sufferings being made conformable unto His death until I am in His very presence and Himself as the prize. Amen and Amen.



## THE FATHER'S DELIGHT IN CHRIST AND OURS.

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We speak ;--the word does, of communion with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ, and I have often taken the Father's delight in Christ and in His work, as an expression of this ; for our delight, through grace, is there, too. But there is a difference, not only in measure as is evident, but in its nature, too, though it be divine and of God in us. God looks at Him in its own intrinsic perfectness. Perfect obedience, perfect love, no doubt of a man, but still divinely perfect, and that according to the abstract perfectness of His own nature. Hence it was abstract divine delight in what was divinely perfect, and that in the person of the Son of the Father, seeking His glory. We as partakers of the divine nature delight in this same blessed object ; but we delight in it by obligation, by finding the precious food of a dependent soul, by the sense of His perfect love, known to us in our need, and in death, as redeeming us. It is not that we do not delight in the perfectness of our Saviour in Himself, and glorifying His Father, but we delight in Him as our Saviour. There is a link of personal association connected with our own joy and companionship—He the firstborn among many brethren.

## THE WOMAN IN THE PHARISEE'S HOUSE.

*(Read Luke vii. 36-50.)*

The solution of all our difficulties in the study of Scripture, and of every enigma in the ways of God, and certainly the remedy for every practical trial of our hearts, is to be found in the knowledge of the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. And, when examined, the groundwork of every error will be found to lie in ignorance of the same.

But He must be studied where He is revealed. When God would make Himself known, He does so in living act, and not in abstract definition. When He would manifest His power, it is not by the declaration of His omnipotence, but by the creation of the world. His wisdom, too, He displays in the ordering, and control, and sustainment of all things, which, by His power, He has caused to exist. His long-suffering patience He shows in the history of the waywardness and provocations of a nation whom He had brought into special connection with Himself. His love, too, finds its adequate illustration alone in His having given up His only Son to death for creatures that were in rebellion against Himself.

Thus must the person of the Lord Jesus Christ be studied. For all that He appeared

to be, all that He did, and all that He said ; His every word and act and way, in His recorded history, go to make up the sum of what He is.

The histories of Scripture, we must always remember, are recorded facts. They may have their significance, typical character, or spiritual instruction, but they are still recorded facts. There is divine wisdom in recording some and omitting others, and the fruitful study of the Scripture consists in the discernment of this, and not in *spiritualizing* the divine word. There is a reason why those facts which are recorded in the gospels are left for our instruction, and others are suppressed. "If they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written." There is a reason, too, why the facts that are recorded are given in their specific order, and why they are varied in the record of the four gospels, the discernment of which, and not writing "harmonies," enters essentially into the unfolding of the character of Him who is their blessed subject.

It is infinitely important for me as a sinner to know *what He has wrought* ; but as a saved person by His grace, my heart cannot find its rest except in knowing *what He is* : however intimately the two may be blend-

ed, and never to be disjoined. I want, as the apostle says, I want "to know him." But blessed be God, it is a study for eternity, as it is the only lesson worth learning in time.

Now in this scene in the Pharisee's house—ininitely touching as it is, in these throbbings of a human heart, and in the unvailing of His who is divine—I think I see a practical truth unfolded, which it is of the last importance we should learn. It is this: the affections must be filled with Christ in order to the manifestation of that bearing and respect toward Him which is appropriate and due.

It is plain the Pharisee, by his invitation to our Lord, intended to do Him honour, but he egregiously failed. It is as plain, too, that the woman had no such thought in her approach to Him, but only sought to reach unnoticed the object of her affections, and thus she reached the acme of that which was appropriate in her bearing towards Him in the presence of others and of Himself.

"One of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him," and our Lord accepts his invitation. But there was another person of very different character and pretensions, who had watched the movements of this mysterious Stranger, and was drawn to where He was. "And behold a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew

that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at *his feet behind him*," etc. The woman was a sinner, not in the common application of the term only, but she was known as a person without character in the city, and an outcast from society.

We have no means of knowing what opportunity this woman had possessed of becoming acquainted with the character and teaching of the Lord, nor is it important for us to know. It is plain that she had marked His course and His communications, and had felt her heart irresistibly drawn to His presence. It was perhaps to herself an unexplained and undefined impulse that made her seek to be near Him and to feel that happiness was where He was. In reality it was the drawing of grace working in the instinctive yearnings of a heart desolated by sin that drew her to His feet, because for the first time in her life she had found one in whose goodness she felt she could implicitly confide, in spite of what she was. How mysterious are these cords of love! How out of place, in Christ's presence, is the soul that knows not their attractive force!

But this woman, on whom the eye cannot choose but rest, now that she has reached His presence, has no petition to prefer, no request to make. There is no cry of agony

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breaking from her lips. No "Lord, help me" uttered with half-convulsive energy. But in silent unobtrusiveness she stands at His feet, or bends down to kiss them, as her heart in its fullest tides is gushing forth without restraint. In utter absorption of feeling she is engaged in giving expression, as best she may, to the estimation she had of the object whose worth had so utterly captivated every affection of her soul. She is dead to everything that at the moment is passing around her. The order of the Pharisee's house is lost upon her. Neither his hospitalities nor his guests have any power for an instant to attract her eye. How could they? She had not a thought nor a look to throw away upon any object in the wide world, but on Him whose mysterious goodness had won her heart.

One does not like to turn away from the movements of a heart which one feels are so right, so suited to what the Lord Jesus is, and to be occupied with the man who is coldly speculating on the character of his guest, and pondering whether after all he had not been showing Him too much respect in inviting Him to his house. "This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner." It was a startling interruption of his reverie to hear

his thoughts answered by Jesus, saying, "Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee." His attention is demanded in a way that he cannot escape. There is nothing left for him but to hear the communication that had been so ominously commenced; and by the parable of the two debtors, he is so held to the point, that not only he is made to feel that he is in the presence of one who was, indeed, "a prophet," but to pronounce a verdict that laid the ground for his own condemnation and the vindication of the woman whom, from his ignorance of the workings of grace and of the person of the Lord, he had so abundantly despised.

"But wisdom is justified of all her children!" And what exquisiteness of grace is there in the way the Lord Jesus receives and expounds the action of this woman, who had thus proved herself to be one of wisdom's children! Far enough is His heart from any estimation of the respectable but cold formalities with which, like the Pharisee, we too often seek to give Him entertainment. "He turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in

hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment."

But what is there, let me ask, in all this which so meets the heart of the Lord Jesus, and so commends itself to the heart that has any just estimate of His transcendent worth? Is there anything in it but the simplest working of love, which proximity to the Lord Jesus has put in action? It is not doctrinal clearness surely; nor is it the certainty of spiritual intelligence. It is simply and alone the instinctive working of love, love wrought in the soul by living contact with the "grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ." Moreover, it is love expressing itself in unaffected naturalness. But it is alone when love *possesses* the heart that it may be allowed thus to take its own way, and then how true and how perfect will be that way! It is heaven's pathway, and not the way of nature or of earth.

It is not far for the heart, where Christ's presence is supreme, to fetch these tokens of honour and regard. The washing of the feet, the kiss of welcome, the anointing oil, these marks of respect were not supplied by the courtesies of Simon, nor by the arrangements of his house. They are drawn forth only from the love that has now found its



home in this poor sinner's heart ; " for she loved much : but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little."

Simon may coldly wonder at the intercourse between this sinner and the Lord, and the lookers-on may murmur at his declaration : " Wherefore I say to thee, her sins which are many are forgiven ;" but it only serves to bring out *to them* more fully her vindication by the Lord—for it was but the vindication of His own grace—and to *herself*, the wondrous ground on which she now stands before God. " And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee ; go in peace !"

Before, when she entered the Pharisee's house, she had no eye nor regard for anything around her but the person of the Lord ; for it was no place for such as she, if He had not been there. And now she is leaving, think you has she any ear or care for the voices of complaint that may be uttered around her ? None—none at all. She is deaf to everything but these accents of grace that are reverberating in her soul—" Thy faith hath saved thee ; go in peace."

And what are all the discussions of men, or the clamours of those who object, to the soul that is near enough to Christ to be occupied with His excellency alone, and that has heard His voice—the voice of Him that

is judge of quick and dead—saying, “Thy faith hath saved thee : *go in peace*” ?

And if I look at this woman, thus absorbed with Christ in the house of a formal Pharisee, I see a picture of what the heart should be occupied with of those who seek to worship the Lord in the midst of the formal profession around them, and which is no better than the order of this Pharisee’s house. It is not that this formalism should be before the thoughts, much less that it should give its tone or colour to aught that is transacted in His presence, which alone is the sanction and the power of separation. Occupation of the heart with Christ not only draws His blessed eye and sanction, but it gives the true character of nothingness to everything that pretends to honour Him, where His grace is unknown, and the heart consequently is its own centre of action.



## A READING ON GALATIANS II. 19-21.

You get four things brought out in this passage : the law, the cross, Christ the life, and Christ the object.

First. It is the righteousness of the law ; the rule and measure of what man as a child of Adam ought to be—loving God with all his heart, and his neighbour as himself, and

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doing nothing forbidden in the ten commandments.

People forget the *character* of the law : it comes and requires obedience, and pronounces a curse if you do not keep it. It is very different to come and exact a debt, and to come and pay it. The law only *exacts* : and the moment we have got a sense, not merely of being outwardly sinners, which a man may escape, but of the law reaching the inner man, it is all up with us : "sin revived and I died ;" "I through the law am dead to the law." Just because the law is perfect, it says you must not have lusts ; but I *have* when under it, and I like to gratify them, too ; and, if not, cannot get rid of them. Then it *kills*. And that is just what we want as to the old man.

But then there is another thing. If it kills, it *condemns*, too ; and that is why it is said to be a ministration of death and a ministration of condemnation (2 Cor. iii.). But the way God has set about it is this : "I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God ;" and the way to that is, *He* did it through Christ ; He took the condemnation, and I have got the death, and lost the condemnation.

He takes the law in its nature first, and through it I am dead. But being by Christ, and the crucifixion of Christ, I get the

death, but not the condemnation; that Christ took; and then I am to reckon myself dead. Not merely Christ crucified for my sins, but I with Christ—the way of getting rid of the old man and the condemnation together. The old man condemned in Christ, and I dead: “What the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh” (Rom. viii. 3).

Very well, then, I say, I am dead.—Then there’s an end of you!—No, say I; “nevertheless I *live*, yet not I, but Christ.” It is death for the old man, and I have got another life; “not I, but Christ liveth in me.”

We have thus got three things spoken of: the law, and the cross, and the life. Now there is the fourth, the object: “The life I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God.” As it is said in Colossians: He is “all” as the object of life, and “in all” as the power of life. It is the same thing here in other words. His only object in living was Christ.

What is “the faith of the Son of God”?

The faith which has Him for its object.

Is “the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ” (James ii.) the same thing?

Yes. Some take it as if it were the faith Christ had; quite true, He did live by faith in perfect dependence; but when you say “the faith of God”—which it is, where tran-

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slated, "have faith in God" (Mark xi. 22)—you cannot take it as God's faith.

It is sweet to see how Paul's heart turns to what the Christ is whom he knows: "Who loved me, and gave himself for me." God speaks of my loving Him, but I must know first that He loved me: "Not that we loved God, but that He loved us."

It is a distinct thing to hold ourselves dead (knowing that we died with Christ) and to say He died for our sins. The Red Sea and the Jordan give us His death for us, and ours with Him. At Jordan the ark went down, and stayed there till all Israel had passed over, and then they were circumcised; the reproach of Egypt was never rolled away in the wilderness: it was at Gilgal.

What is "the reproach of Egypt"?

They were not dead—had not put off the the body of the flesh. Worldliness is the reproach of Egypt: we are "dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world" (Col. ii. 20). If the world sticks to a Christian, he is going on as one who is not dead. It was a reproach for Israel to be in Egypt; he ought to be in Canaan. Till a person is dead and risen, he does not get out of Egypt. If I see dress, money loving, etc., I see Egypt in people. There are plenty of other things, of course. I cannot bear about

in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, unless I reckon myself dead. Through Jesus, I have died with Him and am in Canaan; and then comes the practice. They went and won victories, and came back to Gilgal. So you will find with us; if one has been blessed in ministry, and does not come back there, he goes back in his soul.

Does the Red Sea go beyond forgiveness?

Yes; it is redemption: "stand still and see the deliverance of Jehovah." He is a Saviour, and He takes them out.

As to doctrine; will it go as far as Colossians?

Not quite.

As far as Romans?

Yes. But you do not get the full result in Romans.

Is the Red Sea being risen with Christ?

Yes. The Red Sea and Jordan coalesce. The wilderness is no part of the purpose of God. It is of His ways. The wilderness is not spoken of in Exod. iii., and vi., nor in xv. The Red Sea is Christ's death and resurrection, which deliver us; Jordan our death and resurrection with Him, which brings us into a new position—into Canaan. All is complete, in a certain sense, at the Red Sea—they are brought to God; but there is a new position in heavenly places not revealed there.

Where would Colossians come in ?

Colossians takes a man as risen with Christ, but does not take him into heaven. In Ephesians he is in heavenly places, just where you want the armour. People do not understand what that means. The moment the Israelites crossed Jordan, the man with the drawn sword meets them. Satan says: "I will not have that.—But I am *the Lord's host*. It is no question now of saving me, but I have to act for the Lord in spiritual service.

There are two distinct things in which the Ephesians' starting-point is completely different from Romans. The starting-point in Romans is man's responsibility : he is guilty, all the world is guilty. There are proofs of sin both in Jew and Gentile ; man is looked at as alive in sins. In Ephesians he is dead in them ; a different thought altogether. Alive in sin in Romans, but, for that very reason, dead towards God—not a movement in his heart towards God. After a man is dead he neither speaks, nor moves, nor feels. I want to be dead to sin, and alive to God, and then everything changes. The point is to get sins and sin dealt with : the fruit cleared away, and the tree dead ; and this is fully brought out in Romans, : " Propitiation through faith in his blood ;" and then, " Reckon ye yourselves dead to sin."

In Ephesians I get nothing of the responsibility at all, nor a man being justified, but the counsels of God according to the good pleasure of His will. Dead in sins, quickened together with Christ, and so you can get all the fulness of blessing in Ephesians. Christ comes into that place for us, and having put away our sins, in coming down to death, God raises us all up together. In Ephesians you do not see Christ till He is *dead*: "Which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenlies." It is a new creation; there is nothing about being justified, for I am a new creation.

In Colossians you get both (Col. ii.); only he does not pursue it on to put us into heavenly places. "The hope *laid up* for you in heaven" (Col. i. 5)—not yet *in* heaven: "Seek those things which are above" (iii. 1) *seek* them.

In chapter ii., you get both things: "In him dwelleth all the completeness (I put it so to connect the two words) of the Godhead." He, all the *completeness* of God, and I, *complete* in Him. "In whom also ye are circumcised . . . in putting off the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ." True Christian circumcision is practically realizing that I have died. "Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen



with him, through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead." Here I get Romans and something more. Then in verse 13 I get Ephesian doctrine as to our natural state: "You, being dead in sins, hath he quickened together with him." But it is not carried on to sitting in heavenly places. In Romans he speaks of being dead with Christ, but does not go on to show us risen with Him. The moment I am risen with Christ, I am getting into the same place as Christ; not merely justified as an individual before God, but on the way into the new place of being united to Christ in heaven.

"You being dead in your sins . . . hath he quickened together with Christ, having forgiven you all trespasses." I was dead in my sins, and Christ dies and puts them all away, and the sins I was guilty of are all gone. He has forgiven us all trespasses *because* He put them away; and then God comes and takes Christ, and takes me, and raises me up from the dead; and He goes further and says: "Your life is hid with Christ in God." Now you are to have your affections on things above, not on things on the earth. Ephesians takes us on from having our affections in heaven, to being ourselves in heavenly places.

## PAUL WITH THE ROMANS AND AT ROME.

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After a long, wearisome, and changeful journey, through chapters xxi.-xxviii., of Acts, during a period of two long years, for which time he had not seen any brethren, the apostle at last finds himself approaching Rome (chap. xxviii. 13-15). He had, some time before, written to the saints there, expressing his desires towards them, and his prayer that he might come to them prosperously and with joy, and that they might be refreshed and comforted together. (See Romans i. 10; xv. 32).

They met him on his journey: some at Appii Forum, a distance of fifty miles; and some at the Three Taverns, a distance of thirty miles.

This was their answer to his letter, and this was also the Lord's answer to his prayer. For now, on seeing them he was refreshed, just as he had prayed; refreshed, let me say, by their love, a richer refreshment than that which gift or communicated knowledge provides for the soul. When he saw them, we read, "he thanked God, and took courage."

This was, indeed, receiving a lovely answer both to his letter and to his prayer.

When he wrote his letter, we may be sure

that he little thought he was to see them as Rome's prisoner. He made request that he might have a prosperous journey to them (Rom. i. 10), and had told them to pray that he might reach them with joy (Rom. xv. 32). But it is beautiful and blessed to see, that though the hand of the Spirit of God had given his journey to them and arrival among them this character, he does not treat it as anything less than a full answer to his desires. "He thanks God" as owning the answer of his request.

All the ends, I may say, of the mercy he looked for are fulfilled to perfection. He had prayed:

First, that he might come to the saints at Rome;

Secondly, to be comforted in them;

Thirdly, to have some fruit among them.

These had been his desires (Rom. i. 10-13), and these are, each and all of them, answered (Acts xxviii. 15-24). He sees them, he takes courage, and, through preaching, gathers fruit there as well as among other Gentiles.

I would add a little contemplation of Paul at Rome to this of Paul with the Romans.

It is said that sorrow has a tendency to make us selfish; that when we are in trouble ourselves, we think we may be indiffer-

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ent to others in the demands and pressure of our own necessities.

The way of the Lord Jesus has been noted as the contradiction of all this. Not only through His life of sorrow was He ever ministering to others, but in the agony of the cross remembering the sorrow of others, and saying to John, "Behold thy mother."

So also His dear devoted servant, the apostle of the Gentiles. He testified to the elders at Miletus that bonds and afflictions abided him. He had nothing but personal sorrow in prospect, but he was even then full of concern for others, his own case not moving him. And so, when he reaches Rome. He was there for two years, bound with a chain, and kept by a soldier; but he was thinking of others. He reasoned with the Jews, received all that came to him, and, caring for all the churches, he wrote to Ephesus, Colosse, Philippi, and Philemon. He appears to have then been called before Cæsar, and to have been striped. Finally, at the time of his second call before Nero, when he was "ready to be offered up;" in still deeper solicitude for others, he wrote his Second Epistle to Timothy.

Beautiful fruit of divine workmanship! Sorrow may *naturally* lead us to indifference to others in the care of ourselves, but the Spirit forms character as well as nature, and what is the bearing of that last letter of his, the Second Epistle to Timothy, but an urging on his dear son in the faith to toil, and serve, and watch for others in spite of all disappointments.

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DOXOLOGY.

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Holy, holy, holy Lord,  
Hallelujah ! Amen !  
Ever be Thy name adored,  
Hallelujah ! Amen !  
All creation's works proclaim  
Thee, the ever-great I AM ;  
Jah-Jehovah is Thy name,  
Hallelujah ! Amen !

Abba, Father, God of love,  
Hallelujah ! Amen !  
JESUS, name all names above ;  
Hallelujah ! Amen !  
Abba, Thou didst Jesus give ;  
Jesus died that we might live ;  
Our united praise receive ;  
Hallelujah ! Amen !

Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,  
Hallelujah ! Amen !  
Praise Him, all ye heavenly host,  
Hallelujah ! Amen !  
Saints, awake each golden string ;  
Loudest anthems let us sing,  
While the vaults of heaven ring,  
Hallelujah ! Amen !



A FEW WORDS ON THE TRINITY.

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The application of numerals to divine or any moral being is absurd. We do not mean the same thing by unity in figure and in minds. But I deny that God was, or ever could be, fully *revealed* as one. He is one ;

but He never was revealed as one. He was revealed to be one in contrast with a multiplicity of gods. But when revealed to be one, He was not fully revealed. He existed always in trinity in unity—not that I pretend to fathom this, but I know it, because, when fully revealed, He is so revealed. When He was revealed as one, He did not suffer Himself to be approached, carefully showed this, dwelt (as so made known) behind the veil; in a word, He used various sensible figures to show that He was not known, that the true light did not shine, and that the way into the holiest was not yet made manifest.

But when He does reveal Himself, the Son is on earth yet in the bosom of the Father. He is the image of the invisible God. He that has seen Him has seen the Father. The light of God was in the world, but man did not see nor comprehend it. The revealed One, the Father, was known or to be known in goodness, by the Son. Though the invisible God was made known by Him who was His image, yet if He had ceased to be invisible, Christ would have ceased to be a special revealer and image. If He had not *perfectly* shown and revealed Him as really manifested (*i. e.*, if He had not been God), no love, goodness, forbearance, patience, power—no revelation would have

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been. If He had not been Son, He could not have revealed the Father to us as such.

But this is not all. The darkness comprehended not the light. The Holy Ghost became power (when the needed work was done to put us according to God's holy, righteous nature into that place, without which He would not have been so known, *i. e.*, in truth) to give competency of apprehension, and to reveal, not as object but as communicating power, having quickened us so as to have a capacity to apprehend. I am not saying this *a priori*, but from the revelation of God.

Without the trinity love was not known, righteousness, holiness—the spiritual nature of God and purity as such. That is, He never was revealed as He is and always was. All the true nature of God, *i. e.*, what He is, without the Trinity is unknown. The Father wills; the Son quickens whom He will; but because we have separate wills, why necessarily have the Father and the Son. The Spirit distributes to whom He will; but this not separate from the will of the Father and the Son. They have not the same counsel but one counsel, mind, purpose, thought; yet they act distinctly in the manifestation of that counsel. The Father sends the Son,

and the Son the Spirit. Yet when the Son comes, He is not thereby separate from the Father: "The Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works." So He casts out demons by the Spirit of God; yet *He* casts them out. There is unity in all that constitutes oneness when we speak spiritually—not unity as one by arriving at the same things, or union, or by being united as we are by having only one Spirit dwelling in all, but—by being one in eternal being; so that all else flows from that one will and counsel, yet so as that distinction in action in that will is revealed to us: not distinct will but distinct willing.

Not that I have the least pretension to fathom this divine mystery where all are God, all one God, God all three; yet the Father is revealed, the Son reveals, the Holy Ghost quickens and makes known. The Son who reveals is not different from the Father whom He reveals, or He would not reveal Him. By the Spirit who quickens and makes known, we are born of God and know God dwelling in us. He reveals Him to us by His own presence and is in every way the power of God, active in the creature.

Nor could the creature reach to God; or God would not be God. It is simply impossible: for if finite reach to infinite, there is



neither finite nor infinite. And the infinite God could not as such reveal Himself to a finite creature. Nor is this mentally true only; for if God in His glory had done so, the creature could not have existed before Him. So if morally revealed (*i. e.*, as righteous and holy and simple glory), man could not have stood before Him. There was contrariety morally. Not even love would do; for what was it to man as he was? No link, no desire, and, if man was a sinner, no fitness in the simple display of it.

But in the Son by the Holy Ghost, by the work of Christ and the operation of the Holy Ghost, God is revealed and in the love of the Father, righteousness and holiness are maintained and glorified, with capacity of communion in enjoyment of both the Father and the Son and intelligence of all these ways conferred by the presence of the Holy Ghost.

Hence while John says, "God so loved the world," we find whenever he speaks of grace and power bringing man into the knowledge and enjoyment of God, he speaks of the Father and the Son, adding afterwards in the words of Christ the presence and work of the Comforter. John is the one who speaks specially of the revelation of God, not of the presentation of man to God, though he does this; as Paul also

speaks of the revelation of God, but specially of man's presenting to God.

Thus we see that there could be no full revelation of God, but through the Son by the Spirit, and thereby of the Father. The full revelation of the one God is only thus Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. This, this only, is *what* the one God is, one identity of will and being, so that they are essentially one and one only, yet distinct in willing and acting (and we can distinguish them in willing and acting: hence we commonly speak of persons), yet never willing or acting but in the common will and unity of nature.

I fear much human language on this. But I affirm that the *only* full revelation of the one true God is the revelation of Him in the Trinity. Our prayers rise up the same. Through Him (Christ the Son) we have access by one Spirit unto the Father (Ephes. ii. 18).



## A MEDITATION ON THE PERSON OF THE LORD.

*"My meditation of Him shall be sweet."—Ps. civ. 34.*

How beyond all our wonder and praise is the Person of the blessed Lord! As an apostle could say, and more because he knew it better, "Great is the mystery." But in one respect He was one with us all, great as His revelations were. No man knows the Son, yet He lets us see that He is that which no man knows. Who could say but there "God is known in death"? Is it not there

love, God's love, is known, never known really till known there? Yet it is weakness, and, as to His place as man, the very end of man. But in Himself God is known in love by His being down here with sinful men, by that love reaching even to us. He made Himself of no reputation, emptied Himself, not that He could be other than God (there is the mystery), but as to the form of God He did. Hence having taken the form of a servant, He is always such—receives all. Even when He takes the kingdom, He goes a long journey to receive a kingdom; and, when by His perfection in power He has subdued all, He gives it up to God, even the Father. He gives up His own spirit when the time comes, but recommends it to His Father; raises up the temple of His body, but is raised by the glory of the Father; grows in wisdom, speaks what He knows, but He is the wisdom of God; He can do nothing of Himself—is obedient, but He is the power of God, and quickens, too, whom He will; created all things and upholds them by the word of His power. And this was His perfection, with the whole power of evil against Him, never to go out of the path of dependence and obedience, never to use power by His will. Thus He bound the strong man as in the wilderness—in death how much more even; He could have had, even in dependence, more than twelve legions of angels, but it would not have been obedience fulfilling the Scriptures.

But what an emptying that was when He who was God could come into death, though suffering, though obeying, bring all that

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God was in His moral perfection into death, and then when it was needed, in man's extremity through sin, in man's weakness, in the place of Satan's power, there glorify it—love, righteousness, majesty, truth, all found glorified there. God is glorified in Him, yet it was in death, and because it was death in all it meant for God; but it was all the power of love, *i.e.*, God, in the emptying. I do not here turn to John's writings, where the divine nature of the Lord is so distinct,\* where He comes out as God (not genealogic from Adam, or Abraham, or David), and yet, as made flesh, always takes the place of receiving everything. It is contemplation of the wondrous and unsearchable fact I seek, not proofs which are everywhere where He is.

But I would weigh some facts in the Gospels as to the manifestation of God in Him. When the blessed Lord had to do with unbelievers whom He knew and had to treat as adversaries, though His being God comes out (save His knowing all men, as yet not judging), what God is does not come out at all; it is only when driven, by the wilful blindness and hostility of the human heart, to speak of things as they are, that, forced and driven to the necessity of it, so to speak, the fact of His being God comes out, "Before Abraham was, I am. Then took they up stones to cast at him, but Jesus hid Himself." There is no revelation of Himself in John viii. He does not come to judge, and

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\*John v. gives plainly this position of the Lord; vi. is more distinctly as man, still He comes down and goes up again.

the woman is not condemned—she is to go and sin no more. He gives divine power to the law, or rather He is, by His word, divine power in the conscience, no grace is in question, and they all go away one by one—divine power in the Word awakes the conscience. He is the light of the world, and he who follows Him does not walk in darkness. But here there are none such; it is simply the light shining in darkness and the darkness comprehended it not.

But Christ is divine: He can bear witness of Himself, yet He says, “as the Father has taught me”—as ever, in John, receiving all. Nothing inconsistent with grace, but the simple absence of all contrary to it. He could not contradict Himself, but He is only light in darkness. As man He hardly appears here, for that is grace; other cases present themselves where grace is at work. We may first take the woman of Samaria—but here away from Jerusalem, where with the Jews (not *the* people) He is always in judgment—where the great change of leaving them and having to do with the world, and bringing men to have to do with the Father and with God spiritually, and that by life in the power of the Spirit, are brought out, and where Christ is the rejected Man and feels it, but is thereby thrown into the consciousness that He is the divine Giver of Eternal life in the power of the Spirit. But here we have the Lord fully as a Man. The Jachin and Boaz of Christian truth had been set up in chap. iii.; man or Jew was naught, must be born again, and the Son of Man must be lifted up. God

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had loved and had given. Christ was a rejected Christ—He left Judæa where the Pharisees were jealous and would none of Him. Christ must be a rejected Christ for us to have part with Him—sad thing to say, but so it is—if it die not it abides alone. No doubt He could always quicken whom He would, but without His death we could not righteously see God, and if a man received a new nature without His death, there would be no putting away of the old; we must be risen as well as quickened (a new place as a new life), and that is only by His death. But He was rejected, felt it, afterwards wept over the city, felt it deeply as none of us could feel; we see Him comforted (as rejected by His own to whom He came) by fields white to harvest.

He was weary with His journey and sat alone in the world—Oh, wondrous place! The world He had created, but more, into which He was come in love: and here only a weary Man feeling the rejection of His love; but, as to the place he had taken, dependent for a drink of water (He who had made it) upon this poor, sin-wearied woman. But He had come where He could only come in grace, salvation was not of Samaria but of the Jews (whose were the promises, but they had rejected all); grace had its work outside, but then it was humiliation, and on rejection He must *needs* pass through Samaria. He submits to human circumstance and conditions—He acts in divine grace. Here, therefore, where grace—free grace—works, we find Him fully Man, a weary, rejected Man, bound in spirit on a

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way He must needs take, and waiting on the kindness of another for a drink of water. Grace is in the humbled and obedient Man—there it is that what God is shines out. It is not, “Before Abraham was, I am,” but “if thou knewest the gift of God,” *i. e.*, grace, “and who it is that saith to thee, give me to drink.” It is not the supreme God forced, so to speak, to say to heartless adversaries without conscience, but God revealed in what He was in a lowly Man, and by His being a lowly Man; and surely, if grace is, that is grace.

What heart is in the words! What a need, to win the confidence of a weary soul! Yet the simple expression of what His own heart was full of, of God as goodness and brought out, as to circumstances, by the pressure on that heart of the rejection by His beloved people which He was suffering under! How wonderful to hear Him saying just then, “Salvation is of the Jews!” Perfect owning of God’s counsels and ways! But in His rejection in them, grace flowing freely out—the natural expression of what He was full of, but as that was love, love which seeks to bring a weary soul to confidence in God by bringing that love down to lay its wants at the feet of such an one, to win confidence in a love that could do it. “If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith”—there He was—“give me to drink”—come even there—“thou wouldest have asked”—He would have given, for He was the Giver. What a scene! Such a lowly place! And to learn what God is in it! Yea, what He is by it!

There is no feeling like that of the perception of the Person of Christ, and His words and He are one; He was what He said, always. Yet it is thoroughly in human nature I look at Him here; yea, that is the way, and here I learn it. With adversaries he is simply God—in grace He is a Man yet God, and only precious as a Man because He is, and, as a Man, dependent. Yet we have seen the Father in Him.

I do not go into the state of the woman—that is another part of the question of the chapter. But He is the object of adoration for eternity.

I turn then to the Syro-Phœnician: here it is “He could not be hid.” It was not the flowing out of a pressed heart to sorrow and need, but what God, so to speak, must be where faith is—Himself; He cannot deny Himself. Still grace rises above all promise and curse, and God is revealed. It is not as in John iv., where the pressure on His heart of the rejection of His beloved people, and all it implied, had brought out what was in that heart; deeper still, the divine overflowings of goodness not meeting promise, but finding its comfort in going out in free grace to need where no promise, no title was—rejected love making new channels for itself; God giving, and hence naturally where need, not promise, was, and giving eternal life and bringing to God in Spirit and in truth, for God, as He is, was revealed, and so the Father seeking worshippers. This was John iv., and hence we find the opened heart of the Samaritans wider than promise, knowing more than appropriating pride,



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own Him as the Christ, the Saviour of the world.

But in the Syro-Phoenician woman it was different; He goes to the borders of His earthly mission, retires to be alone (Mark vii.) and would not have it known. Here it is not His own rejection, He labours among the poor of the flock—His mission according to prophecy, and as to Israel the designs of God—He is servant of this mission, nothing more, as to the place He takes; He is not rejected by proud Jerusalem, but sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. But He is in His mission, but in His divinely traced, not free, path, He goes out of the sphere of active service to the borders of the curse without.

Meanwhile moral truths had come largely out; ceremonial observances contrasted in Israel with divine commandments; but, still further, the heart of man, called in question in contrast with all such mere ordinances, lost in importance, not merely in contrast with divine commandments, but in their nature as merely external; God looked at what came from the heart, not what went into the belly—a simple truth, but which for man is hard to learn. God goes to the true nature of things in respect of man—what comes out of the heart—what he is. But what did come out of it? Murders, evil thoughts, all manner of evil, and the Lord had no more to say. Then He leaves this scene of labour, is alone personally—as Man in position He would not have it known; but it was. Then we come to what was known: He goes, as I have said, to the bor-

ders of the curse—the place which served Him as an example of hardheartedness—the people on whom God's curse rested as compared with Israel. What wondrous elements are all brought together here! But He sought to be alone, *i. e.*, out of His sphere of labour; His mission, as a sent one, a servant, He insists on. But a want was there, a want which sought goodness in power, and God was there; the poor woman drawn by it, though purposely repelled to prove her faith (the disciples would have got rid of her—neither owned promise, nor in fact exercised love as above all promise), draws out what is above all promise, what recognizes fully the right to possess where promise was, but appeals to goodness as, after all, reaching over it fully recognizing man's complete misery and wretchedness without a title—a vile dog, which there was saying everything that was unclean and vile, but appealed to a riches in goodness which could reach in mercy even to that. Could Christ say, “No! God is not that”?

No! God was there manifested, and faith had all it sought for—it had found Him; there was no need of claim or goodness, but the confession of worthlessness and absence of all title—a need whose resource was in the goodness of God. The Servant who held Himself to His mission, as service He had to do, was after all “the God of all grace,” and God revealed in Him, and while owning God's ways in Israel, standing alone in the presence of the curse and the absence of all claim, what faith owned, but therein found

God and infinite goodness—Israel's servant was God manifest in the flesh, was goodness, above all evil, above all curse, was God and God manifested. What God is is known in His being revealed in Man—being a Man; for that was infinite love.

But there was more than the revelation of His person and the exercise of His power. I turn to another case, Luke vii., the Pharisee and the sinner. Here we have not the rejected state of man and free grace rising above it all, but actual degrading sin in contrast with human righteousness—a legal condition as man stands in it, and what this blessed One was for sinners. Three hearts—man as he stands in his own righteousness God's in Man—and the poor and degraded sinner touched by grace and won, in a certain sense unconsciously (*i. e.*, with no dogmatical knowledge) by what was manifested in the Lord, what He was in blessed love first, then forgiveness. The legal man thought to judge, by human competency, if the Lord (this Preacher going about the country) were really a prophet, but he judged according to human righteousness—what man should be for God, but only in an outward way; his own heart, God's heart and light, and even this poor woman's heart unknown—light and love, light and conscience, and love in the heart, *i. e.*, God, alike wholly unknown. God was in his house, in light, as He showed, and love, and he never found it out—despised Him—had no civilities or courtesies for Him—and judged from his own heart—while He was not like it, He could be no prophet. Here self-righteous-

ness, divine grace and sin come together in fullest *juxta*-position and contrast, and divine light which makes all things manifest, too, and that in the Person of the lowly Preacher, the Son of God. The Pharisee is wholly blind—says he sees—judges from his own heart, and sees neither the manifestation of God in Christ, nor the work of grace in the woman. Light and love are alike wholly foreign to him.

The Lord shows fully that He is the light that makes all manifest—knows what is in the Pharisee's heart—knows the woman's sins—and what the Pharisee was thinking of Him and her. But more—His grace, the grace that was in Him had attracted the heart of this poor sinful woman—her need was great, her shame great, her sin deplorable; to no human eye could she turn that would not scorn her but One, and that was God; there her heart found confidence—the more she was distressed and brought low, the more was her comfort in finding that heart; there, in that mercy, her shame could hide itself, for it was grace to her—scorn was not there. But all this, through grace, had won her to hate and own her sin. It was the meeting point of sin and grace, confession of a convicted heart through confidence in goodness in Jesus—sin seen and God seen, and because God was seen in love. Divine sight was there, not blindness, divine love had brought in divine light, so that God and sin in self were both known, and God trusted, and a guileless heart produced because grace was trusted. How deep a work to bring a soul to God, and have sin

judged and God known! And then Christ was all—she thought little of Simon and his guests save One—Jesus was there and that absorbed her; she was delivered from her shame even as to all the rest, but not her shame before God. Then a silent heart wept, and washed His feet with her tears. There was boldness in her confidence, yet lowliness and thanksgiving in the boldness; she kissed His feet, too, and spent what she had of precious on Him. Then as He had occupied that heart with Himself in grace, He occupies Himself with that heart—He has done with Simon and the rest—to such a heart He must give peace. But first He takes her part in that which shows not only that He knew Simon's heart and all about it, but there was that of which Simon knew nothing (besides blindness as to His Person), forgiveness. God, happily for her, knew all her sins and had forgiven them—wondrous revelation! The grace that revealed love and goodness, had brought forgiveness with it—relief, full and perfect, from God—when sin had confounded the soul before God, was seen as sin because God was seen and in grace, the grace could tell that it was all gone—before God forgiven.

The Person of Christ had drawn—she loved much. The grace of God in Christ had forgiven—of that, of God, Pharisaism knows nothing. The Lord takes up the woman's case in presence of the Pharisee's contempt, and shows what he was, what she was, what God was, what He was in Himself. Then He occupies Himself with the woman alone, "Thy sins are forgiven;"

their remarks do not arrest Him—"Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace." He had sounded the Pharisee's heart, sounded and brought to light hers, revealed God's, and conferred forgiveness; confession of sin and forgiveness of sin (and that is the cross for us) are the meeting place of the sinner in truth and God in love. Here again we have God revealed in a Man, but specially in respect of sin.

In the first case He does not come to judge, but He is simply with adversaries, and is simply in result "I am." In the woman of Samaria, He is rejected of the Jews and grace flows out giving life, going up to eternal life above, bringing to the Father—God known as a Spirit—and this by grace going out where promise gave no salvation and no claim to righteousness, but sin and need.

In the Syro-Phoenician, where faith comes, grace rises where grace is gone above all barriers—God is revealed to faith, and must be above them all, must be what He is in grace, cannot deny Himself, and faith pierces through all barriers urged by need to appeal to what God is in Himself, in grace, and He cannot but be what He is, or be kept in by the barriers when that was reached, though He was there in One serving as sent where promise was; still God was there.

Luke vii., goes deeper and light is there—Pharisaism and sin brought fully to light; the utter and deplorable blindness of Pharisaism manifested what man in self-righteousness is—no perception of God at

all, nor of anything in Him. Then to the sinner a deep, true perception of what He was as grace meeting need, and hence brought to God according to the power of His presence, and the grace of His nature, He being known, humbled fully before Him, and brought to Him according to what He was, the bond of the heart with Him formed, with Him known, and forgiveness, peace, and salvation received. It is deeper, because it goes into the full moral question of the state of man with God—light in the heart and soul of man as he was.

The case of the palsied man in Matt. ix., is somewhat different. It is not God revealed in His nature of goodness, what He is in Christ for men; it is relative—Jehovah of Psalm ciii., manifested in Israel, His ways in Israel in grace, but relative—what He was of course, but according to promise and prophecy.

I do not again enter into the full bringing out of the three hearts in Luke vii. 36 to end, the Pharisee's, the sinner's looking to Christ, and, blessed be His grace and name, God's own heart already spoken of; light and love were there, neither the least known to Simon—he was blind, thinking he saw. Christ, in whom it is revealed, is the subject of our adoration. I only notice now "Thy faith hath saved thee."—how God owns, as that which He sees in the heart of the poor convicted believer, what He has wrought. Tears and repentance were there, true love to the Saviour, excellent fruits of faith, but faith by grace, gave her Christ; hence faith saved her—God's work in the

heart, by which Christ was seen and appreciated. Her heart was thus shown, what God indeed had wrought in it, but in it; but then it was what it was fixed it wholly on another, it was not objectively itself nor reflectively—it knew Christ only. It produced lovely fruits, most lovely, which the Lord owns, but it saved because it saw Christ only. But what is lovely here, that Christ owns, attaches value to what was in her heart, wrought there surely, but was in it; its action on Him as its object gives us to see divine appreciation of the state of the heart thus having Him for its object. He does not say, “Grace has saved thee,” though true; “My work, My blood-shedding has saved thee”—that would have been speaking of something in God, of His own works; but He speaks to her of divine value for something in the heart of the poor woman. This is unspeakable goodness, divine tenderness and favour. If it be a wonderful picture in presence of Pharisaism, we have to leave the Pharisaism to itself, as the Lord did, and see the Lord owning what was of God in the heart that turned to Him. The poor, desolate, and lonely woman could go away and say, “I have His approbation on what is in my soul”—the comfort of His approbation, yet thinking of Him still, not of herself; for thinking of approbation, a father’s approbation, is not thinking of what is approved, or of self. Faith had saved her, and she could go in peace (she had it from Christ) and her faith in His Person gave divine weight and grace to His words.



## THE REST THAT REMAINETH.

*(2 Samuel vii.)*

It is a natural thing for the heart of man to seek present rest; it is a snare even to the saints in one form or another. And happy are they who, by the power of the Spirit of God, are able to detect and watch against it. But it often comes in very subtle guise, and takes the shape of piety itself. Where it is not connected with anything that seems of the world or self, as with one's family, and the like, it may be to seek present rest for what bears the name of Christ upon the earth. Now, it was particularly this that was at work in David's heart. For he was a blessed man of God, and earnestly desired that God Himself should have a house worthy of His name in the midst of Israel. It was unnatural to his mind, it did not seem right, that *he* should be so favoured of God, and that God Himself should have only a tent to dwell in. But this chapter brings out that the portion of faith is the best portion of all. Whatever might be the harvest of joy in circumstances, whatever even the power of God appearing for His people, putting down every obstacle, and creating a scene glorious and bright here below, yet, for all that, the portion of faith in patience is better still.

Now, this is a most wonderful truth for our souls to learn. Because, no doubt, nature would greatly prefer the place of Solomon to that of David. But David's lot was, morally, far superior. Outwardly, Solomon had everything that the human heart could wish, and it came from God, who Himself was crowning Solomon with every natural blessing. What was the issue? There are very weighty things for our souls to take heed to in this, because we all know what it is to have some exercise of heart about that which is precious to God. It may work in many ways, so as, perhaps, to trouble our hearts, and damage our confidence in the Lord; or it may weaken our affections towards the people of God, in whose ways there is, doubtless, much that is trying and sad. But this is not the question. These are things that the enemy of souls has always sought to stir up against the name of the Lord. We have to consider, not only what is His side in each question, but what is the temper of soul that He would have cultivated in us, in respect to the evil that we see around, and that we cannot set aside. It is of the greatest importance, because, in one or other form, you will find the same feeling at work among saints now as there was in David--the desire for God's rest before the time. And it is striking to see that

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Nathan was not able to judge it. He thought it was perfectly good. He was a prophet of God, yet he did not understand. It is only God Himself who can give the happy conviction that the portion of faith is the best of all; and this must now, in Christ's absence, find itself in the midst of evil, which it abhors. Nothing would be easier for God than to set everything right at once by His power; to put an end to all that disturbs and causes sorrow. But He does not, because He has something better in store for us. There will be judgment, no doubt—God's sentence executed on everything that is contrary to Him; and then there will be a bright time for the earth as well as for the heavens. But we have to remember that the heart of the saint should enjoy a far better portion now, by faith, than even if the days of heaven upon the earth were come. For those days will not be so bright as that inner, higher, light which is in heaven, in the presence of God Himself. And it is the drawing out of the tender love, the restoring mercy, the long-suffering goodness of God, through all this time of weakness and need, that brings out the depths of His character—His grace.

“In the desert God will teach thee

What the God that thou hast found,

*Patient, gracious, powerful, holy,*

All His grace shall there abound.”

And faith has to learn, in the midst of a scene of contradiction and difficulty, and apparent frustration, too, of all that our hearts desire for the Lord's sake, not to doubt God, but to be sure that everything is in His hand, and working onward, strange as it may seem, for the glory of His Son. Many of these things cause the utter crushing of all that is dear to the heart. Everything that pertains to man, or that springs from him, is withered up by this word of the Lord that alone abideth. But God exalts Himself, blessed and blessing, above all, for ever.

So David had to learn on this occasion. In one sense it was a very pious thought of his, and not unworthy even of a godly spirit. He felt rebuked at his own dwelling in a house of cedar, and where was God to be? But God must give us what is worthy of Himself if our hearts desire Him. And He knew David, the man after His own heart, and gave him accordingly. It might be by no means that which we should choose, but what God chooses for us. When Nathan had told David, "Go and do all that is thine heart, for the Lord is with thee," that very night the Lord comes in, saying, "Go and tell my servant David, Thus saith the Lord, shalt thou build me a house for me to dwell in?" Then, in the most touching way, He shows how He had been a pilgrim Him-

self, how He had wandered about from one place to another. "I have not dwelt in any house since the time that I brought up the children of Israel out of Egypt, even to this day, but have walked in a tent and in a tabernacle. In all the places wherein I have walked with all the children of Israel, spake I a word with any of the tribes of Israel, whom I commanded to feed my people Israel, saying, Why build ye not me a house of cedar?" He never sought a place of rest then. "Now therefore so shalt thou say unto my servant David, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, I took thee from the sheepcote, from following the sheep, to be ruler over my people, over Israel." And further on: "Also the Lord telleth thee, that *He* will make thee a house." The Lord always must take the place of the better. He would not allow such a thought as that David should be building the Lord a house. He must build a house for David, and better far than anything that Solomon could raise.

Thus, not in word only, but in deed and in truth, did David learn the deep feeling and love of God towards him. There was, also, no doubt, the circumstance that he was not a suitable person to build the house of God, because he was a man of blood. But grace ever comes in and triumphs. It was not so much to hinder David from doing good that

the Lord thus dealt, as for the purpose of giving him something better. Wherever the heart is towards God, and the desire is for what is according to His mind, if He takes away any thought of ours, it is always to accomplish a higher counsel of His own. And so it was on this occasion. The Lord brings out before David the divine future of his house. David goes in and sits "before the Lord;" and a more beautiful and touching rising up of David to the thoughts of God never was seen before in all his history. "He said, Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?" All that the Lord had hitherto done! And was it a little thing? "And this was yet a small thing in Thy sight, O Lord God; but thou hast spoken also of thy servant's house for a great while to come"—yea, it was for evermore. "And is this *the manner of man*, O Lord God!" It was the manner of God!

As bearing upon our souls and what is before us, is not this full of instruction? We might desire a reign of the gospel, and union among all saints; and it would be great comfort to us in one way, supposing everything were going on in the church, if not in the world, as we might value and find rest in. Assuredly we ought to feel every departure, and judge, specially in ourselves,

wherever we fail, not only in our personal walk, but also in grace and wisdom to meet the difficulties around us. Certainly we ought to feel for and groan with the church of God.

But while all this is true, have we not to remember that the heart which desires present establishment, would be too glad to hear that, if not all the church, at least the part we have to do with was going on prosperously? But what would be the consequence? We should forget the present lone state of the church altogether. So narrow are we that we should cease to mourn. If David had had that beautiful house to build and adorn, would he have realized as he did how such a God was dishonoured in Israel and all over the earth? Whenever things go on according to our desires and feelings in the little circle that surrounds us, we are apt to think that it is all well. We ought to be thankful for it; but if we are in any way resting there, it shows that we fall short of His mind, who never fails to look onward to the full glory of Christ. On the other hand, the heart often wastes itself in querulousness about things around us, and is thus taken away both from the truth and from the hope, our thoughts and exercises being more about others than Christ. The effect of having Him before us more simply

is, that we are able to meet the case of others more fully and deeply. Thus everything will be thoroughly and holily judged; but it will be in a spirit of intercession, because it is along with Christ.

The Lord takes a far deeper and fuller judgment of evil than any of us. But how does He act toward His beloved ones?

What God would give us, is the portion of faith while things are trying; that so, spite of the sense of all present contrariety, our comfort may be in God—not our rest yet, for that will be entirely heavenly, when the Lord will come and take us to be with Himself in glory. But even now, the place into which the knowledge of this would bring us, is one of quiet, and peaceful, and humble waiting upon God. Had David ever such lowly thoughts of himself as when the Lord had thus spoken, and he sat before Him? Had he known before how precious he was to God? Never. Instead of having our best affections undermined by constant suspicion and anxiety, if we understand God's thoughts and desires, we shall know deeper lowliness, but more simplicity and confidence in God in our souls. And all this comes from a fuller acquaintance with Christ.





## THE COMING OF THE LORD.

### *Acts i.*

There is much to remark in the way the Coming of the Lord is presented to the disciples after the resurrection. They, poor things, after their Lord was risen, were still running on Jewish things, and looked for the kingdom to be restored. But God has His plans: He says, as it were, "No, the time is come for a testimony of *grace* to go forth, beginning at Jerusalem." There is another thing; they see Jesus go up, they gaze after Him, their hearts are up with their Lord. So ought our hearts to be looking after Him—nothing ought to satisfy the believer's heart but the Lord Himself. Well, the promise comes to them, "*This same Jesus*, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven." What a distinct putting forth of the coming of the Lord Jesus as the hope of the believer's heart! and the *security* of it is, the *absolute* manner God here presents it as His plan.

The mystery is the very essence of the church. The Jews are waiting for a Messiah—the church on quite a different basis. We have *pretrusted* in Christ (Eph. i. 12). We know Him as One who has come, who has got everything, yet *He* got *nothing*.

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What has a Christian got here? Literally, *nothing*. The infidel may say, "Show me something." I *know* what I have got—*Christ in heaven*. He is my anchor, my whole soul resting there, my heart in heaven with the Lord Jesus. The heavenly Bride's place is that which Christ took below. He had nothing here. He could not turn to this or that person and say I can trust to this. His *spring was in God*. He could trust Him and Him only: and so we. If I have got the Son's heart on the Father's throne, the Father's heart and Father's house are opened to me. We find daily His sympathies can flow down to His people. While passing through the sand of the wilderness, the feet cut and bruised, Jesus has a heart that can sympathize, and make *all* "work together for good."

What polar star have you got to guide you? None but the coming of Christ Himself! What hope have I apart from the coming of Christ? *Literally none*. The Bride of Christ has nothing as a future, save the coming of her Lord.

One thing very touching to the heart, is the way in which Christ conforms our removal to His own. Because He loved His Bride, no one can be trusted to fetch her save Himself—not a power in heaven—not if legions of angels volunteered it.

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He will so arrange it, that all shall recall His own removal. He will present her to Himself. It is part of His special privilege as Son, to arrange all for His Father, as well as for the church. He will purge the heav-  
enlies; He will come down with the same chariot of cloud to fetch her up and present her to the Father.

Every little thing in which we can be con-  
formed to Him is sweet; but when it is something put on her by His own hand, it is sweeter still.

Like the disciples, we, too, should want our Master back, want to see Himself—personal love is the answer to that love which proved stronger than death. Had not Christ proved His love to be that which they could count on?—a rock nothing could beat down? “If you have given me up, I have not given you up.” He proved His love a fountain entirely independent of them. He settled the matter with Peter, went through it with Thomas—proofs enough of love. Their hearts could not rest satisfied without being with “*this same Jesus.*” It is very sweet to have the Lord looking down on us here—but nothing like being *with Him.*

What is the force of my saying, “This is a wretched, howling wilderness”? What is it but saying, “Nothing can satisfy my re-  
newed nature but to *see Him, Himself.* He

set His heart upon His Bride; He "loved her and gave Himself for her."

The heart that gets the simple thought of the personal love of Christ to the church will feel it is no use wincing from the wilderness. What we have to do is to be where He puts us, because the great thing is to taste His love, and *I can taste it down here*. There is no question but that I should taste it much more with Him; but if it is *His will* for me to stay, that makes me happy to stay.

When Christ is displaying power, there is Satan to oppose Him. It does not suit him to be in opposition where Christ is not.

Have you ever said, "Come, Lord Jesus"? Why do you say it? He is waiting, not satisfied till He presents His church. Have you felt nothing will satisfy you but seeing Him and being like Him?

Have you felt in the quick of your soul, that if God were to give you heaven without Christ, *it would be a blank place to your hearts?*

Why do you say "Come!"? Because God has not forgotten His own plan. God would have some associated with Him up there in the desire of the Holy Ghost; that is why you say, come. It is part of God's plan about Christ. Where does that put your nature? If God says, "I have got you, and am working part of my plan

for my Son in you"—I do not understand people saying, "Oh! I'm this or that." You would be far more humble if you thought more about God and less about yourself.

Why do the sympathies of Christ flow forth to you? Dare you say, "Because I was so faithful to the sympathy He showed me yesterday"? Yet it does flow forth to you. Unless you are blind, you can lift up one stone and another, and find water flowing under all. Why? Because He has a good lot in you? No! He looked out for such bad clay, no other potter could make anything of it. There is only one way God can keep such vessels full—by keeping you close to the gushing fountain. Do His sympathies depend on you? Not a bit! We can't be trusted with full amount of joy. We should be puffed up. Peter must have his hands tied or they would grasp to take off the crown of martyrdom. Are you better than Peter? Nay, but worse. You are looking for Him from heaven. Go about your work. He will come in due time. Your looking won't bring Him; *but you will be happy if you are looking.*

The only spring of living waters, Christ knows, is in God. It is not the will which Christ sets in movement in your heart that is the power, but *Christ's love*. I am ashamed

when I think of Christ's patient waiting to fetch us. Do you think Christ in the glory of the Father has a heart large enough to have a *care* to come and fetch us, and are you not ashamed? He says, "There is that poor thing stumbling through its duties, but I will soon go and pick him up."

*The Father's House.* Higher up than the manifestation of glory, the New Jerusalem, the court of the Kingdom, Christ will delight for the world to see the Father's glory in a way it can admire. But there are sweeter things than that—home ties—relationship. The name of Father hardly comports with the pageantry of rule, but it meets our hearts.

Rev. xxii. 20: "Surely I come quickly." Here is the answer to the call of the Bride—God's thought when man had forgotten the hope, "I will trim the lamp again." I believe God is moving, and that it is impossible in the riches of His grace, that there should be none to meet His testimony. Even in Malachi, *some* were looking for Him. He could not have come three hundred years ago, when all was in gross darkness; but now, were He to rise up from the throne this night, there are many who, through grace, from the depths of their hearts have cried, "Come, Lord Jesus." Does *your* heart answer, "I am one"? I find myself pleading

that He would revive the testimony in the hearts of His people.

“I am my Beloved’s, and my Beloved is mine.” I am His *first*. I can only tell of His belonging to me, in the sense of my belonging to Him.



FRAGMENT—When walking in communion the believer is happy, Christ being everything; when out of communion the heart is not happy, all goes wrong. In the world there must be constant change to try and make people happy, yet souls are not happy—are not satisfied.



### “I COME QUICKLY.”

“I come quickly.” Blest assurance!  
 Lord! to meet Thee I arise,  
 ’Tis Thine own—Thy special promise;  
 “Even so,” my heart replies.  
 In this scene where all disown Thee,  
 I, a part of Thee, still roam;  
 Left to serve Thee here while list’ning  
 For the “shout,” to call me home.

Let not din of earthly voices  
 Here, distract or fill mine ear—  
 What a moment, gracious Saviour,  
 When *Thy* blessed voice I hear!  
 That same voice which by Thy Spirit  
 Oft my spirit’s yearnings staid;  
 When Thou hast, in wondrous favour,  
 This poor heart Thy mansion made.

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*Then* 'twill call me up to mansions  
 In the Father's house above,  
 There to know more deeply—fully—  
 All Thy glory, all Thy love.  
 Sure that shout of resurrection,  
 Like one chord of mingled tone,  
 Will sound forth in thrilling cadence  
 All of Thee we here have known.

In that joy of full communion  
 Each shall have his special part,  
 Each a spot reserved, O Father,  
 In Thy house, and in Thy heart.  
 Every vessel brimming over  
 With its prize—the Christ of God;  
 Small and great in joy ungrudging  
 Thou, our centre, Holy Lord.

*Now*, Thy wisdom we are learning,  
 Now, by faith, Thy glory see;  
 As we gaze, our hearts are filling,  
 Satisfied, O Lord, in Thee.  
*Then*, when we reflect Thine image,  
 When Thy beauty nought shall hide,  
 Thou shalt see Thy soul's deep travail  
 And *Thy* heart be satisfied.

Come, Lord Jesus, claim Thy people,  
 Here we wait and watch for Thee;  
 Thy blest voice shall be the key-note  
 Of eternal jubilee!  
 Gath'ring us—Thine own creation—  
 To Thyself in Thine abode;  
 Like Thee—with Thee—and for ever  
 Near Thy Father and Thy God.