

THE
GIRDLE OF TRUTH.

‘Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about
with truth.’—Eph. vi.

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THE
GIRDLE OF TRUTH.

REMINISCENCES
OF A LECTURE ON LUKE XII.*

Torquay, Nov. 12th, 1863.

THAT which characterizes this chapter is that in it the Lord Jesus is bringing in the light of God upon everything in this world, everything that in any way connects itself with His people's passage through it. He takes up all they would have to meet with in their course, up to its very end, and brings in the light of God upon it. He marks the false profession of religion by which they would be surrounded, the hostility of the world, by whom He had been rejected, the fears

* Whatever truth and force may be found in these recollections must be ascribed to the lecturer, their defects to the defective memory of the writer of them.—ED.

and cares of His disciples, the testimony they were called to bear, the pursuits and aims of men, the gracious care of God on behalf of His own, marking here a morass, where men sink and perish, and there showing the bright issue of a heavenly course, mapping out in infinite goodness every part of the road His disciples would have to travel. And there is infinite grace in this. For it is not only bringing in the light, which makes all things manifest, but it is infinite grace in the Lord Jesus so to interest Himself with the path and circumstances of His people in this world as to take up everything for them, in order to bring in the light of God upon every step of the way, which He so wonderfully marks out for them beforehand.

The first thing that is presented in the chapter is the warning against the leaven of the Pharisees. "He began to say unto his disciples first of all, Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy." This is one of the more common and grosser forms of evil, and

does not therefore call for much remark. It was a false profession of religion, a zeal for outward forms and observances, without any reality or conscience. It was worthless: it would not bear the light. The evil and folly of it are shown by the declaration that everything is to be brought into the light. "There is nothing covered that shall not be revealed, neither hid that shall not be known." This is general and shows the worthlessness of that which is warned against. But He adds to His disciples: "Therefore whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetops." He shows them that there is nothing which will not eventually be brought out into the full daylight, and have its real character thoroughly manifested. Everything will be brought openly out. They are to act on the conviction that nothing will be allowed to remain concealed. All will be disclosed. Their testimony also, in whatever obscurity it might

have been borne, would be brought fully out. What they had spoken in the utmost privacy would in the most public manner possible be proclaimed. And they were not acting rightly, or according to the truth of their position, if they were not prepared for this.

He next warns against being afraid of the power and hostility of men; for He well knew the hatred which the world would always bear to those who were witnesses for Him. "I say unto you my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear. Fear him which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell: yea, I say unto you, Fear him." He would thus displace their fear by a greater fear; the fear of man by the fear of God. For after all, the power and wrath of man were limited to what he could do to the body; while the power and anger of Him whom they were to fear reached the soul. It is a lower motive, no doubt; but He guards us against un-

faithfulness through the dread of the consequences of man's wrath, by showing the more terrible consequences to which unfaithfulness would expose us from God's displeasure.

But there was much more than this, and higher motives to be addressed. There was the gracious care of God which extended, whatever the hostility of the world, to the counting of the very hairs of their head. "Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God." But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows." What a wonderful thing it is to be thus going through the world in the consciousness that, whatever the danger, or opposition, or malice of men, God's gracious interest and care for us is so constant and minute that He counts the very hairs of our head! There is nothing more wonderful than this, and when realized, it gives a heavenly tone and confidence to the soul that makes the path always bright, and reduces to a

matter of indifference the mere outward circumstances of the way.

He now comes to that which was the disciple's true position and calling, which was to manifest God in the world, as He had done at all costs. "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God; but he that denieth me before men shall be denied before the angels of God." It might cost them dear before men, but He would acknowledge them before the angels. And there was the alternative. It was the confession of Christ, whom the world had rejected; for the awakening of faith in those who owned this confession, and for condemnation where it was rejected when the light of God's judgment would confirm the testimony they had borne. It would bring to those who were faithful, whatever pain and trial it might induce, the confession of the Son of man when He should be manifested in power and glory. Moreover, He places His disciples in a certain sense above Himself in connexion with their testimony.

“Whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost it shall not be forgiven. And when they bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates, and powers, take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say: for the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say.” Blasphemy against the witness given would in their case be worse than blasphemy against Himself. That might be forgiven; it has been indeed to the Jews as a nation, and will be at the end; but whosoever spoke in blasphemy against the testimony of the disciples blasphemed against the Holy Ghost: this would never be forgiven. It was the Holy Ghost speaking in the disciples, in their witness, and this would bring more dreadful consequences than even blaspheming the Son of man himself. Such is the wonderful position that He puts His disciples into in regard to the witness they were to bear in the world! And what an amazing

encouragement to our hearts it is to be thus told that “if *you* speak they are more responsible, if they reject it, than in rejecting *me*!”

“And one of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother that he divide the inheritance with me. And he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?” He was not come to set the world in order now. He *will* do that by and by, and will set judgment in the earth and order it in righteousness; but His business was with men’s souls now. “And he said unto them, Take heed and beware of covetousness; for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.” This is a warning to the multitude. And He then adds the parable of the rich man. “The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: and he thought within himself saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns and build greater; and there will I bestow all my

fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years: take thine ease: eat, drink, and be merry. But God said to him, *Thou fool!* this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall these things be which thou hast provided?" He thus brings in the light of God upon the principles of the world, which men are acting on before us every day. It is not the worst aspect of the world, its unrighteousness and oppression; but its schemes and projects, its pursuit of riches and enjoyment in the present life. It is a perfect picture of what men are seeking, what they are spending their energies and anxieties upon. It is a provision for the life that is passing away. And that is it which especially characterizes the world. But what is there here that is a provision for the soul? The aims and pursuits of men are thus brought in only to be shown in their hollowness and set aside. God says, "You are fools!" The very objects of the world's pursuit, that which men are commended

for, which gains them respect and esteem, the Lord brands as folly. And to the men who are giving their life and energies to the pursuit of these things He says, "You are fools!" "What have these things to do with your souls?"

This is the world! And with such contempt are its aims and pursuits dragged into the light and dismissed. They are only noticed to be blown upon!

He now turns to His disciples. "He said unto his disciples, Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on. The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment." He notices thus these ordinary circumstances of life, because in truth a great part of life is made up of eating and drinking and caring for what we shall put on. But He teaches His disciples that all these things are the objects of their Father's care. He feeds the ravens and clothes the lilies—much more will He care for them. Though they are the things that are connected only with this life, and things which

perish in the using, still God's care is not shut out from them. He says, "Consider the ravens; for they neither sow nor reap, which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them. How much more are ye better than the fowls!" Besides this, He shows them how fruitless is the care which shuts God out. "Which of you with taking thought can add to his stature one cubit? If ye then be not able to do that thing which is least, why take ye thought for the rest? Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not: and yet I say unto you that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. If then God so clothe the grass, which is to-day in the field, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith?" His care is seen in nature around them, in feeding the fowls, and in clothing the lilies. Do they suppose it will not be exercised toward them? "Seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. For all these

things do the nations of the world seek after; and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things." He reminds them of their relationship to God, which of necessity would secure to them His care in their earthly circumstances, while their hearts were called to be set upon higher things. And He adds, "Seek ye the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto you." Their position in the world that had rejected Him would be such as to demand the exercise of trust in God, nor would it be possible to maintain it without; but on the other hand, He presses upon them that so far from their hearts being occupied and distracted with fears and cares about the things around them, they themselves were the objects of God's thoughts, and that He had counsels and a plan about *them*. They may trust in God, for they were of great value in His sight, however poor and worthless in themselves. "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure *to give you the kingdom*." But while declaring this plan and counsel of God about them,

He reminds them that they must be content to be "a little flock." The world that had rejected Him must not be expected to favour them. They must reckon upon being few and despised. The hearts of men generally would be occupied with anything rather than that kingdom which is so opposed in its characteristics to everything that commands the estimation of the world; and in truth will only be introduced by its judgment. But it was their Father's good pleasure to *give* them the kingdom. They would possess it as their inheritance with Christ. They would reign with Him when the kingdom was established in power. Meantime they were to be occupied with the heavenly treasure thus brought to light. "Sell that ye have and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, nor moth corrupteth." In the prospect of the kingdom their position on earth was to be that of strangers and pilgrims, having their treasure in heaven. Because where

their treasure was their heart would be also. People who have riches and worldly possessions may say that their hearts are not on these things; but the Lord says, "Where your treasure is, there *will* your heart be also." If your treasure is on earth, your heart will be on earth. If your treasure is in heaven, your heart will be there. The treasure commands the heart, wherever it may be. If a Christian is possessed of riches, he may, of course, use them in the service of the Lord; but it is a serious responsibility, and always a snare, because the heart is so prone to value these things—to make them its treasure. If I had, for example, a thousand a-year instead of not a penny, the temptation would be that I should *like* to have a thousand a-year instead of not a penny: and so far it would take my heart out of heaven. "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

These three things, then were to influence their hearts and set them free from the seductions and influences of the world. It was their Father's good.

pleasure to give them the kingdom. They had their treasure in heaven; and there was the expectation of the Lord's return. This last is now presented and enforced. "Let your loins be girded about and your lights burning: and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord when he will return from the wedding: that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately."

Until the Lord came they were to be found watching. Their whole position was to manifest the fact of their continual expectation of His return. The character of their waiting was to be like that of servants at the hall door, with their hand, as it were, upon the latch, that when their master knocked they might open the door at once, without a moment's delay. This is a figure, of course, but it expresses the force and effect of a constant present expectation. The whole walk and character of a saint depends on this, on his *waiting* for His Lord. Merely holding the coming of the Lord as a truth or doctrine is not

that which is here expressed, but the personal, daily waiting for the Lord Himself. Whatever the Lord's will may be, I should like Him to find me doing it when He comes. But this is not the point. It is, Am I waiting for Himself day by day? Is this the horizon that bounds my daily hope and expectation? It was that which stamped its character on the Thessalonians and on Paul himself. They were "waiting for God's Son from heaven." And though the apostle had a special revelation that he should depart, he does not suffer it for a moment to detach him from the common position and hope of the Thessalonians, to whom he was writing; but says, "*We which are alive, and remain unto the coming of the Lord.*"

People are saying, 'It is true that they did expect the Lord's return in that day, but they were mistaken. He did not come; and those who expected Him died, and, it is plain, did not realize their hope. It was simply a mistake.' This is the use that infidelity is making of the word of God; and Christians even

are infected by its spirit. But no! This expectation put them in the very position on which the Lord pronounces His blessing, when He comes. It made them have their loins girded about for service, and their lights burning, and themselves like men that waited for their Lord. They did not lose this character by dying. Their expectation gave its impress to their whole course on earth, and was the spring of that faithfulness and service which receives the Lord's approval when He comes. He had said, "Blessed are those servants whom the Lord, when he cometh, shall find watching." The departure of any before He came did not sever them from this blessing, nor hinder their being joined together in the realization of the hope they had cherished. The object of Thessalonians iv. is to explain this.

"Blessed are those servants whom the Lord, when he cometh, shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth

and serve them." As if He had said—
'I cannot help your being called to watch and wait now. I am waiting too. You *must* be girded up in watchfulness now and service in the midst of evil; but when that is done with, and I come again, and have things my own way, you shall watch no longer, but take your rest; and I will gird myself, and come forth and serve you. It shall be my business then to minister to your happiness, when watching and waiting shall have no more place.' I need not remark on the exquisite grace of this!

"And this know, that if the goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through. Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not."

This also shows the need of constant watching and expectation; for at last the coming of the Lord will be sooner than He was expected. "The Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not."

“Then Peter said unto him, Lord, speakest thou this parable unto us, or even to all? And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he hath.”

To this inquiry of Peter concerning the application of the Lord's instructions He replies by referring him to those to whom He had committed duties and the responsibility of service during His absence. There were those to whom the trust of stewardship was committed, and they were to be found in submission to their master's will and authority, faithfully ministering to the wants of His household. As the Lord said to Peter, “Feed my sheep;” “feed my lambs.” Watchfulness and service were to characterize the disciples during the absence of the Lord, in the constant expectation of His return. “Occupy

till I come." There was the watchfulness, with girded loins, which would be rewarded by rest and a place at that blessed feast when the Lord Himself would come forth with *His loins girded*, in infinite condescension and grace, to serve them. And there was the faithfulness in His service, which He declares shall be rewarded by having rule over all that belongs to Himself in glory. It is the double aspect of the blessing which will be the result of faithfulness at the Lord's coming.

But there is the other side of the picture:—

"But and if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming, and shall begin to beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken, the lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers."

It was the absence of the overruling expectation of the Lord's return, instead

of the heart and desire going out towards it, that opened the door to the unfaithfulness and usurpation of authority, and the indulgence of the spirit of the world which is here depicted. The servant said in his heart, "My lord delayeth his coming," and in the history of Christianity, when the Church began to say, "My lord delayeth his coming," it sunk down into the world, and the coming of the Lord was counted as a heresy. The Church did not say that the Lord would never come; but "My Lord delayeth his coming," showing that the immediate expectation of his return had lost its place in the heart. And the parable of the ten virgins shows that it is the very same testimony that called the Church *out of the world*, at first to go forth and meet the Bridegroom, that awakens it from its slumbers at last—"At midnight there was a cry made, Behold the bridegroom cometh, *go ye out to meet him.*"

There was no immediate expectation of the Lord's return, and this gave occasion for the relaxation of the bonds

of obligation. There was the withdrawal of the heart from the wholesome sense of being under the authority of Christ, an authority which, at any moment, might be exercised to take account of our doings, and which makes us feel that we are but *servants*, and thus keeps the soul in due subjection to the Lord. It was the putting off to a distant day the expectation of the return of his master, that led the unfaithful servant to give licence to his own will, and to usurp authority over his fellow-servants, and “to eat and drink and to be drunken.” This is just hierarchism, with its assumed authority, and its worldly spirit. But responsibility will not be escaped. Those who have assumed the position of servants, and have taken a place ostensibly as ministers in the Church, will be judged as servants, though strangers in heart to the Lord, who will judge them, and appoint them their portion *with the unbelievers*.

“And that servant, which knew his lord’s will, and prepared not himself,

neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more." A heavier punishment will be adjudged to those who, from their profession and advantages, assumed to know their Lord's will, without doing it, than to those who were ignorant of that will, but were, nevertheless, living in evil, which the Lord must judge when He comes. It is the difference between the professing Church and the world. Moreover, if persons are to be treated as guilty in proportion to the advantages they have received, who will be so guilty as those who profess to be ministers of the Lord, if they do not serve Him in the expectation of His return?

"I am come to send fire on the earth; and what will I if it be already kindled?" The effect of bringing God into the world

was to produce trial and conflict ! The Lord had to feel this, that His very presence here amongst men had already produced that effect. The fire was already kindled. Though He came in perfect grace, His presence brought in the light, and this was insupportable to men. It detected the condition of their hearts and produced, in spite of their profession of the knowledge of God, hostility and rejection. Still His love was perfect and divine. But it could not go forth and have free scope, until His death had opened the way for its exercise. And in the presence of conscious rejection He says, " I have a baptism to be baptized with ; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished ?" Nothing could turn aside His infinite love ! The grace that was in His heart might be driven back, as to its living exercise amongst men, whilst He was here on earth ; but it was only that His death might open a channel for its exercise in a power commensurate with the love that gave occasion for its display.

“Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division: for from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three. The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother; the mother in law against her daughter in law, and the daughter in law against her mother in law.”

“From henceforth!” What a condemnation of the world’s condition is here disclosed! “From henceforth”—from the time of the Lord’s coming amongst men in infinite goodness and love—was there this terrible result! His presence in this world, though in perfect lowliness and grace, was sufficient to kindle this fire and to provoke these divisions and conflicts. The passage is almost literally quoted from the Prophet Micah, and it is given as a picture of the most dreadful, moral condition of Israel by the prophet. It is well to read the passage, that the heart may perceive the

full force of the Lord's declaration, "From henceforth," &c. "Trust ye not in a friend, put ye not confidence in a guide: keep the doors of thy mouth from her that lieth in thy bosom. For the son dishonoureth the father, the daughter riseth up against her mother, the daughter in law against her mother in law; a man's enemies are the men of his own house." (Micah vii. 5, 6.)

But how terrible is it to think that this state of things should be produced by the presence and love of the Lord Jesus, and should be still produced by His testimony! For in this respect men will as little bear the powerful witness of Christ and true faith in Him, as they would Christ Himself.

"And he said also to the people, When ye see a cloud rise out of the west, straightway ye say, There cometh a shower; and so it is. And when ye see the south wind blow, ye say, There will be heat; and it cometh to pass. Ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky and of the earth; but how is it that ye do not discern this time? Yea, and

why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?"

In this appeal to the people the Lord draws their attention to the character of the time in which they were living, and to the signs by which it was marked. Everything hung upon a just moral estimate of this time, and they had the scriptures to guide them in their judgment. If they had had as much interest in what was then passing before their eyes, as they had in noting the face of the sky and of the earth, in order to guide their worldly business, they would have been able to discern this time. But there was another ground of appeal.

There were moral characteristics in what was passing before them, that, apart from the Scriptures, by the mere force of natural conscience and judgment, they ought to have been able to pronounce upon, and of themselves to have judged that which is *right*. There is this ground of appeal; and of many things it may be asked now, *is this right?* For example, when infidelity is being taught in the place of Chris-

tianity, it may be asked, *Is this right?* While, by the light of the Scriptures there ought also to be an ability to discern this time.

I take up the remaining verses, though they relate to the position of Israel as the consequence of their rejection of Christ, in order to complete the chapter, and that we may have it all before us.

“When thou goest with thine adversary to the magistrate, as thou art in the way, give diligence that thou mayest be delivered from him; lest he hale thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and the officer cast thee into prison. I tell thee, thou shalt not depart thence, till thou hast paid the very last mite.”

Were the people ever so blind, one thing was certain, that they were in the position of being brought before the judge; they were on *the way*. If through their rejection of their Messiah, they were once delivered up, they would not come out until the chastisement of God was fully executed upon them,

until they had "paid the very last mite." As in Isaiah it is said of Jerusalem, "She hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins."

The Lord grant that we may go through this world in faithfulness to Him who died to deliver us out of it and to give us our portion in that world into which He is risen, looking daily for His return to bring us into the inheritance His love has provided for us! May there be that confidence of heart in all the circumstances of this life that springs from the sense of God's care and interest about us, and the certainty that we are of value in His sight, and that He would, in His infinite grace, have us to reckon ourselves of value to Him, even in the midst of this hostile world. And above all, may He make us faithful as those who are waiting for Him, pursuing the path His wisdom has traced out for us, but always with this bright expectation before us, as men who are waiting for their Lord! It will be no joy to any that He should come and find them in the earnest pursuit of the things of

this world, or heaping up its riches; for there should not only be the individual hope, but a testimony to the world that He is coming. Individual faithfulness to Christ in the place His love has set us in is the first thing our souls should seek, and then love to Him and to souls will naturally flow out, and the more earnestly in proportion as we enter into His thoughts about what the world, through which we are passing is, as well as that world to which we are going.

The night is far spent and the day is at hand:

No sign to be look'd for; the Star's in the sky;
Rejoice then, ye saints, 'tis your Lord's own command;

Rejoice, for the coming of Jesus draws nigh.

What a day will that be when the Saviour appears!

How welcome to those who have shared in His cross!

A crown incorruptible then will be theirs,

A rich compensation for suffering and loss.

What is loss in this world, when compared to that day,

To the glory that then will from heaven be reveal'd?

"The Saviour is coming," His people may say;

"The Lord whom we look for, our Sun and our Shield."

FRAGMENT.

(1 Cor. xi.)

What is that claim of the Lord Jesus upon us, which most effectually subdues the will and touches the heart? It is the claim which His supreme and unchanging love brings home to us; a claim that is especially renewed as often as we are gathered in His name to show forth His death. Our ability to respond to that claim will be just in proportion to the power we get through the Spirit of entering into the joy of the Lord.

We should always remember that it was not by tradition from the disciples, nor from the record of the gospels, but by a direct revelation from *the Lord in the glory*, that Paul received his instructions about the Supper. Our call to this comes from *the glory*, and is a proof to us that Jesus is in the glory, and there still cares for us and watches over us. We are not to do it only as a command, not to keep it in remembrance of the appointment of the paschal supper; but in remembrance of His death and

coming again. Jesus "gave thanks;" not I conceive as we do, for things temporarily; not for having the table supplied by the providential care that supplies our every need; but there was a far deeper thought in His mind. He saw His death and what that would bring His disciples into. Death is nothing pleasant in itself: it is always terrible; but He saw what that would lead His disciples into; and "he gave thanks." My death is to become your life, your bond of union, your cause of rejoicing; and for this He gave thanks. And we have the blessed privilege of responding to the mind of Christ, in standing out for Him. "This do in remembrance of *me*."

APHORISM.

"Extremes meet. Truths, of all others the most awful and interesting, are too often considered as so true, that they lose all the power of truth, and lie bed-ridden in the dormitory of the soul, side by side with the most despised and exploded errors."

THE HIGH PRIEST OF OUR PROFESSION.

Heb. iii. 1.

A high priest. This tells a tale of God's grace and his people's failure. Of God's grace, because it implies a certain relationship instituted by God, and existing between Him and His people. Of His people's failure, because otherwise there would be no need of a high priest.

The relationship is founded on accomplished redemption. It was after Israel had been redeemed that the priesthood was instituted. Redemption having taken place, a settled thing, which nothing could alter, God made known he would dwell in their midst. Hence a sanctuary was to be built of the form and pattern prescribed, and for service in that sanctuary, an order of priesthood was appointed. For if God was to dwell in the midst of Israel, holiness must characterize their walk and their camp, (Lev. xix. 2 ; Numb. v. 3,) otherwise communion between them and the Lord,

enjoyed on the basis of redemption, must be interrupted. God could have no fellowship with sin. But when that communion was interrupted, on the part of the congregation or an individual, as the case might be, the offenders, whoever they were, had to present themselves at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation with the sacrifices for the priest to offer. The sin or trespass offerings being brought as the law prescribed, the victims were slain, the blood was shed and sprinkled on the altar of burnt-offering, or before the Lord, as the case required, (Lev. iv.,) a token at once of what the sinner deserved—death, and a recognition of that which alone could put away sin. Then forgiveness for that act was declared, and restoration to communion was effected. These offerings and the priesthood were for Israel. The Gentiles had no share in them as Gentiles. For them no priesthood had been appointed by divine command. For them no scapegoat went yearly into the wilderness bearing their sins into a land of

forgetfulness. These appointments were for God's people, His provision for the redeemed ones.

Redemption once accomplished, nothing, as has been observed, can alter it. A glorious truth this. But the maintenance of intercourse between the redeemed and the Lord, depends on the walk of His people, and when that fails, on the divine means of restoring it. We see this clearly illustrated in Israel. Each individual act of sin or trespass required certain offerings. But more than this, we see, on the great day of atonement, the whole congregation before the Lord, represented by their offerings, who needed atonement to be made, and thereby their communion to be maintained for them. When comparing them with us one great difference must be remembered—they were redeemed as a nation; we as individuals. Hence, among them, individuals could perish, though the nation could never cease to exist; whereas, of believers now, redeemed individually, the Lord spoke: "They shall never perish,

neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." (John x. 28.) If the carcasses of those who refused to go up to Canaan at the earnest entreaty of Caleb and Joshua fell in the wilderness, the nation, nevertheless, entered the land of promise. Israel sinned at Mount Sinai, and worshipped the golden calf. God's anger was kindled, and he threatened to destroy them. But would the whole nation have ceased to exist before Him? No, for He adds to Moses, "I will make of thee a great nation." (Exod. xxxii. 10.) Again, when they sinned as referred to above, the Lord declared, "I will smite them with pestilence, and disinherit them, and will make of thee, (Moses) a greater nation and mightier than they." (Numb. xiv. 12.) All that generation might have been cut off for their rebellion, but the seed of Abraham would have remained, and the promises made to the patriarchs fulfilled to their descendants. The nation could not wholly perish, for the Lord had redeemed it. And this fact furnishes Moses with a plea to urge

on their behalf: "O Lord God, destroy not thy people and thine inheritance, which thou hast redeemed through thy greatness, which thou hast brought forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand." (Deut. ix. 26.) So the remnant in the latter days will urge this same plea before the Lord. "Remember thy congregation which thou hast purchased of old, the rod of thine inheritance which thou hast redeemed." (Psalm lxxiv. 2.) Nor is this confined to Moses and the remnant; the Lord, too, when remonstrating with Israel, (Hosea vii. 13; Micah vi. 4,) records the fact that He had redeemed them. So the beautiful prayer framed by the Spirit of God for the remnant in their great trouble yet future, thus speaks: "Thou, O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer." And "We are thine: thou never bearest rule over them; they were not called by thy name." (Isaiah lxiii. 16, 19.) Thus, amidst all their backslidings in the wilderness, their grievous sinfulness in the land, the fact of redemption is acknowledged by God, and remembered by the people.

It had been accomplished once for all. The pascal lamb had been slain in Egypt, the blood sheltering from judgment sprinkled on the door-posts, and the people had passed in type through death, which overtook their enemies, and stood on the east shore of the Red Sea, a nation in the enjoyment of redemption. For all this no priesthood was required. They came to Sinai ere Aaron and his sons were set apart for their office.

Redemption completed did not imply the preservation of the people from failure, nor their fitness to be in the presence of the Lord. Hence priesthood was instituted, and the various sacrifices for sin and defilement, as well as the day of atonement, appointed. It was not a question of redemption that day shadowed forth, but atonement—*atonement for a redeemed people*. The high priest entered into the holy place with the blood “of others,” “for himself and for the errors of the people,” (Heb. ix. 7.) and “to make an atonement for the holy place, because of their uncleanness, and

because of their transgressions in all their sins; and so shall he do for the tabernacle of the congregation that remaineth among them, because of their uncleanness." (Lev. xvi. 16.) Repeated every year, the services of that day spoke of that blood-shedding which alone could put away sin. But it was the need of the putting away of sin, and the knowledge of forgiveness, and the maintenance of communion, which they set forth. It was not redemption. Israel commemorated the latter on the 14th of Nisan; they remembered their need of the former on the 10th of Tisri.

With us the case is different. There is redemption, and there is atonement and forgiveness. But the sacrifice, by which the former is secured, is the same by which the latter is assured. "By his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption." (Heb. ix. 12.) "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins." (Eph. i. 7.) For us both are accomplished; with Israel it was not so. The sacrifices continually

offered, brought sin to remembrance, but could not put it away. (Heb. x. 3.) Redemption then and remission of sins are distinct, as the history of Israel shows, though now accomplished by one and the same sacrifice. As High Priest, Christ has entered in once into the holiest of all, having obtained eternal redemption, carrying in His own blood. We know then both redemption and forgiveness. Israel had the pascal lamb speaking of the former as accomplished, and the day of atonement shadowing forth the latter not yet for ever assured. Is not this the condition of many souls now? They believe themselves to be children of God, yet cannot say they have "no more conscience of sins." (Heb. x. 2.) The normal condition of Israel before the Lord came they accept as their rightful position after He has died and risen again. A great mistake, and a grievous dishonour to Him, who, as our High Priest, has gone into the holiest once for all, and remains there. Aaron was admitted into the holiest on earth for a

brief space once a year. The Lord maintains his place in the heavenly sanctuary for ever. Can the question of sin put away be still unsettled, and the High Priest remain within the sanctuary? Assuredly not. They knew Aaron had been permitted to enter within the veil and had been accepted by his coming out and showing himself to the people. We know our High Priest is in heaven itself, in the presence of God for us, by the Holy Spirit sent down from above. (John xvi. 5, 7; Acts ii. 33.)

Having an High Priest, fulfilling the type of Aaron and his successors on the day of atonement, entered the holy of holies, but with His own blood, and sitting now at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having purged our sins, what remains for Him to do? He sits on high because He has once for all offered up the sacrifice which could, and has, put away sin. Is there anything else for the Lord, as High Priest, to accomplish? Nothing for the putting away of sin, but much for the comfort and sustainment of His people.

This leads to the consideration of the *present* work of the High Priest. Sin put away, forgiveness assured, eternal acceptance in Him announced—wonderful as these truths are they do not exhaust the list of blessings we receive now from the Lord Jesus Christ. There is a finished work, there is a work still going on. We have entrance into the holiest of all by His blood, but we need the services of our High Priest continually for worship, failure, and temptation.

As in Israel, when the priest was engaged at the altar in the court each morning and evening, offering up the appointed daily sacrifice, the high priest had his place before the golden altar in the holy place; and as the smoke ascended from the brazen altar outside, the cloud of incense went up from the altar within; so the intercession of the Lord Jesus, to render our worship acceptable to the Father, is continually required. “Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices

acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." (1 Peter ii. 5.) And again, "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually." (Heb. xiii. 15.) If we need the High Priest for worship, we need Him not less for failure. "If any man sin we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins." (1 John ii. 1, 2.) How amazing the grace which, not only pardons and sets us as children before our God, but provides for failure too after we have known the Lord. His care and watchfulness never cease, for His people need them continually.

But is He an advocate suited to our wants? Is He qualified for the work? Has He been called to this office by divine appointment? Where does He exercise it? What does He do for us? These are questions which the Epistle to the Hebrews answers. (Chap. ii.—viii.) Then we have the ground on which He can exercise this office, and the work as High Priest He has *already* accomplished. (Chap. ix., x.)

Let us now look at the *present* work the Lord carries on, as unfolded in this epistle.

In chapter ii. 17, 18, we get the first mention of the High Priest: "Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted." What a statement! A man having brethren, and made like unto them in all things, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest. And of this One it has already been said, "By whom he made the worlds." (Chap. i. 2.) Are His brethren partakers of flesh and blood? So is He. Are they in circumstances of suffering? So was He. Are they liable to death? He has passed through it. His brethren! Who are they? The whole human race? Scripture never tells us that. Children of men? Yes; but not all the descendants of Adam. It was

the seed of Abraham He took hold of; not his children by natural descent, but those who are really his children. (John viii. 39; Gal. iii. 29.) It was not by His incarnation that men were admitted to this relationship with Him; but by His death and resurrection. (Psalm xxii. 22; John xx. 17.) His brethren are the sanctified ones. "He who sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified are all of one; for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren." (Heb. ii. 11.) It is not here a question for whom He died, but for whom He is High Priest; for His brethren, "the people," i. e., those who stand before God on the ground of redemption—for these He is High Priest. And "having suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted." Mark, "He *suffered* being tempted." Do we? It is not suffering arising from the consequences of yielding to it, that He never did, for He was holy, harmless, undefiled; but suffering from being tempted. Tried in every way by temptation, yet never failing, He knows what it is, and

therefore can succour them that are tempted. What words of comfort ! Tempted as man once, now High Priest above, and able to help "the holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling."

Where does He exercise this office ? Chapter iv. tells us : "Seeing we have a great high priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God." He who is now in heaven, Jesus, is the one who was tempted as man down here. But why is He there ? Because there is the only sanctuary now recognized by God. Nor is this all. Not only have we His place of service stated, but His ability to sympathize made known. Here is something fresh. He can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities ; having been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. The high priest in Israel, compassed with infirmities, would, doubtless, be able oftentimes to sympathize with the people. But the Lord has no infirmity, and is where no trial or sin can ever come ; yet He can be touched with the feeling of

our infirmities. Whence then has He learnt to sympathize? Aaron and his sons would, the longer they lived, be the better fitted for this part of their priestly work, as each day they experienced something more or something fresh, of the trials incident to humanity. Their experience would increase with the duration of their priesthood. He was perfected in this before He became High Priest. Theirs would be always partial, but His was not. A tried and tempted Israelite might find the High Priest able to enter into his trouble, having passed through a similar one himself, but he might not; and though what he suffered might be nothing more than that which is common to man, the high priest might never have experienced what he complained of, and hence his full sympathy be withheld. But here is One who will never be found a stranger to the position His people may be placed in, by the temptations permitted to assail them; One who can always fully sympathize; for He has been in all points tempted as we are.

As He can help, so He can sympathize. Man can sympathize where he cannot help: Aaron might help where he could not, from want of experience, sympathize. But He who can help the tempted, can fully sympathize with them also. Do any ask when the Son of God became acquainted with all the sorrows of humanity consequent on sin, and the sufferings of those who are tempted? The next chapter, vi., answers, "In the days of his flesh." And the same chapter unfolds another important point, His authority to exercise the priesthood. His ability to help and sympathize having been set forth, the question is now set at rest how He came to take the office. Did he assume it of His own accord, or was He appointed by another? "No man taketh this honour unto himself," we are told, "but he that is called of God, as was Aaron. So Christ glorified not Himself to be made high priest, but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee. As He saith also in another place, Thou art a priest for

ever after the order of Melchizedec." (v. 4—6.) His authority being established beyond a doubt, the Spirit of God dwells on another thought, which the Psalm quoted, (cx.,) introduces, the excellency of this priesthood, yea, its surpassing excellency. (vii.) God appointed the Aaronic priesthood, He also instituted the Melchizedec priesthood. The Aaronic was first in order of time, but is superseded by reason of the superiority of the other. Aaron died, and his sons after him, but He lives for ever. Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedec, and, as the apostle argues, Levi, as it were, paid them in the person of his forefather. Melchizedec, as the greater, blessed Abraham the less ; not Abraham Melchizedec. The priests of Aaron's order were appointed without oath. But of Him the Lord sware and will not repent, "Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedec." The superiority of this priesthood is therefore conclusively established. He liveth for ever as priest, "Wherefore he is able to save them to the uttermost

that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them," vii. 25. An unchangeable priesthood, such is His office; hence able to save to the uttermost. No position His people can be in is beyond His power to save, because He ever liveth to make intercession for them. There is one point more to be noticed, and that is its royal character. Melchizedec was king and priest, so He who is appointed after his order is set on the right hand of the throne of the majesty in the heavens as priest and king. What a contrast between the life on earth and the place He now occupies." "Made perfect through sufferings;" (Chap. ii. 10 ;) "offered up supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death;" "learning obedience by the things which he suffered;" now at the right hand of the Father, there to save to the uttermost. And why? Because He ever liveth to make intercession. It is intercession, not redemption, though grounded on it. But He saves by inter-

ceding. It is not the offering up of a sacrifice, that He has done. He lives to intercede. It is in this way the high priesthood is now exercised. It is this His people need, and needing, never fail to have. We have not to ask Him to intercede. He lives to do that; and as He told Peter, (Luke xxii. 32,) so He assuredly acts. It is the result of His intercession that His people are restored; for them only is He represented as interceding. He died for sinners, He intercedes for saints. Souls not understanding this, (His present work of priestly service,) think that each sin requires a fresh application to the blood to wash it out. He has taken His blood in once for all to God. It is ever there, so He can effectually intercede. It is not a sacrifice they need to be again offered up, it is not the blood to be applied to their souls, but the intercession based on the atonement. Their ignorance of this mars their enjoyment of the truth, and hinders that peace of soul all His people may possess; but, blessed be God, it cannot

hinder Him in His work. What His people need, that He does. Yet we have no right to be ignorant on such subjects when He has made it so plain.

What comfort, then, from the priesthood of the Lord, based on the redemption through His blood. Able to sympathize—the depths of that sympathy can never be fathomed. Able to save to the uttermost—the extent of His power none of His people can measure. Unfathomable and illimitable they are. But this we know, and this should suffice—We have a High Priest able to help, able to sympathize, able to save.

NOTES OF A READING ON JOHN'S GOSPEL.

(Continued from page 380, Vol. VII.)

It is because of sin that wrath comes. To deny this is to deny the word. If all that is meant is, that now God is dealing with the world in simple grace, there is nothing to object. But now, sin is the occasion of all His dealings

with the world; grace, mercy, and even providence, which has the character of patience towards the wicked, all have reference to the sin of man.

In this gospel, where grace towards the Church is so fully and distinctly brought out, the gospel towards the world is also much spoken of; it is always, in fact, the world-aspect we get in John, in contrast with the Jews.

It is not here "Lamb of God," in the sense of the Lamb suited to Him, but has more the idea of relationship, God's Lamb, as Abraham said to Isaac: "My son, God will provide himself a lamb," &c.

Ver. 31. "I knew him not." John did know Christ prophetically, hence he said to Him when He came to him to be baptized, "I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?" But he did not know Him as the Son of God until the Holy Ghost pointed Him out. The fact of John sending two of his disciples to Christ to enquire concerning Him, (see Matt. xi.,) is collateral proof that John did not fully know who

Jesus was. As in the first eighteen verses we get the testimony of what Christ was Himself, in 19—34 we get John's testimony to Christ, which was that He was the Son of God.

Ver. 35, &c. Here we get another thing—the gathering to Christ of the remnant of Israel. This is the present historical result of the manifestation of Christ among the Jews. First we have the gathering to Christ through the instrumentality of the Baptist, 35—42; then the gathering of Christ Himself and His disciples, 43—51; then the third day, a marriage in Cana of Galilee. There appears to be five days mentioned here: there are two days of the Baptist's testimony in Judea, a testimony first of darkness — “there stands one among you whom you know not;” (ver. 19—28;) then a testimony of light—“*Behold the Lamb of God.*” (Ver. 29 — 34.) These two days are preparatory to the others; in them the sphere of the subject is larger—it is the world—but there is no gathering going on. In the three days, of which the

marriage in Cana is one, Christ becomes the centre round which others gather. In verse 35 John begins to gather to Christ: he sends by his testimony two of his disciples to Christ. Then verse 40, Jesus begins to gather Himself. All this gathering is among the Jews—it is the remnant. In chapter ii. we have the third day, when Christ comes to a marriage in Cana.

A question was now put as to the real force of verse 29, in answer to which it was said, God is now, on the ground of the work of Christ, dealing in grace. This verse refers to the result of Christ's work. Infants are not at all concerned in it especially. It shows the value of the work of Christ, not the application of it. It is not that what people call the guilt of original sin is removed. God is not dealing with men about this, but He will take even this up at the end in judgment; but what is here meant is, that Christ is the one who will eventually remove all sin from the world, so as to make it clear of all evil, and a dwelling-place of

righteousness. *Now*, on the ground of the work of Christ, God is not imputing their trespasses to men; and upon the ground of Christ's being the taker away of the sin of the world, we can say to all men, "Come, for the blood is upon the mercy-seat." It is not merely from the men of the world, but from the world itself, that sin shall eventually be taken away. It is important to understand that I can go to every man in the world and invite him to come to God; but I can say to the believer, "There is something more to tell you, even that He has borne your sins in His own body on the tree." "Taketh away" is a more correct translation than "beareth away." In the passage "The living God who is the Saviour of all men, especially of those who believe," it is God in His providence as the preserver of all men, and especially of those who believe. It does not refer to salvation from sin at all.

It is very clear that God loved all and Christ loved all. Hence He says, "For my love I got hatred." Christ

died for all, gave Himself a ransom for all. "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." He is the universal point of attraction for all. We should keep to this—it is *for* all. The blood is upon the mercy-seat for all. When Paul says, "I beseech you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God," I get there the action of the Holy Ghost urging men to come to God. Sinners are besought to be reconciled by Christ's ambassadors, but it is very remarkable to notice the following statement of the apostle: "For he hath *made him to be sin for us*," &c. He does not say, He hath made Him to be sin for every man, speaking indiscriminately, as he besought them to be reconciled. No; he speaks of his own realization and blessing in company with other believers. It is a very important thing to keep clearly in mind the distinction between beseeching men to be reconciled to God on the ground of what Christ has done, and that special application of His work which enables the soul to say, "For he hath made him to be sin *for us*," &c.

We get the same distinction in figure under the law. There was the blood upon the mercyseat as a propitiation before God for sin, on the ground of which any soul in Israel could draw near to God; and, again, there was the high priest confessing the sins of a peculiar people over the head of the scapegoat who becomes thus a substitute for the people. The difference is between propitiation and substitution, and error is frequently connected with ignorance of this difference. We find this error in a good deal that is going on around us. It is owned by some that Christ gave Himself in devotedness and love to God for us, but directly substitution is brought in they deny it "in toto."

As to the preaching of the gospel to the world, the first fact I would present to men is, that God was here reconciling the world unto Himself. This strikes at the heart. God unmasks in the person of Christ what the sinner really is, but at the same time shows the fullest grace. Then I can say there has been a perfect atonement offered;

come to God through it and you will be received. If any come, to them I can explain what the blood has done for them that believe. A great deal of what we call preaching the gospel is really speaking of the effect of Christ's work; we are really in the epistles. I think that the more we keep to the facts which display God's love, the more power there will be. God is now beseeching through His servants. He has, so to speak, humanized the means of salvation. In His own nature God is abstract. He dwells in light in which none can see Him, and to which none can approach, but He appeals to us through man and in man. But I should take care not to think for a moment that I can *persuade* any one to come to God. No, the work is God's alone; *He* beseeches *by* us.

As to the question, "How can you reconcile the fact of God's loving the world and not using His own power compulsorily to bring it to Himself," it may be answered, first—We have no right to judge God, but He will judge

us. He has a perfect right to take what course He chooses. We cannot take up the question of God's justice. If the question was the result of a real difficulty in the mind, it might be suggested, that it is of more importance that God's character should be vindicated than that the world should be saved. God always acts for His own glory.

To return, however, to our chapter. When we get into the historical facts which were going on at the time, from the 35th verse, we get what did not occur before "the Christ;" for it is in Israel that the Son of God is found. This was during the first day of gathering. At verse 43 the second day commences. Philip is found by Christ, he finds Nathaniel. Here we find a difference. Christ says, Follow me. Philip gathers to Him. Christ is the centre. It is not here, however, of sinners in the world, but of a remnant in Israel. Christ owns Nathaniel as an *Israelite* without guile. He says without guile, although his heart is full of prejudice, and he does not know Christ.

Nathaniel's being under the figtree refers to his being in Israel. Nathaniel owns Him as the Son of God and King of Israel. The ground is completely Jewish. Nathaniel seems to have owned Him in the character in which he is spoken of in Psalm ii.

Verse 51. The word in this verse "hereafter," should be "henceforth." It is astonishing how not seeing things intelligently makes it impossible for a translator to give the true sense. There is the same mistake in the passage, "Hereafter ye shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven;" it really should be, "Henceforth ye shall see," &c. This verse (51) means that Christ was even then the subject of angelic attendance, which those who, like Nathaniel, by faith discerned in Him the Son of God and King of Israel, should henceforth see Him also as the one upon whom heaven opens and the angels of God ascending and descending upon Him. It refers to the time of Christ's earthly life. The Son of God was, as it were, Jacob at the foot of

the ladder. He is not, as is generally thought, the ladder, but is at the foot of it. Heaven is opened and angels are going up and down from and to Him. Heaven is opened upon Christ on earth as an object; until He was there there was no object on earth upon which heaven could open. In the case of Stephen in Acts vii., we get another thing. Heaven is opened to him, and he sees an object up there for us—the Son of man standing at the right hand of God. When heaven opened to Christ there was no object up there to Him, but He was Himself the object of heaven upon earth. He was heaven's object here, and now for us heaven is opened, and He is our object up there. Jesus is there, an object to fix our attention in glory, even as He was the object of heaven's attention when He was upon earth. It is a very important and blessed thing to see Christ upon earth the object of heaven. Here the Holy Ghost bears testimony to Him, and also the angels. It is not man which is the object, but the new Man,

Christ. Puseyism and infidelity, and almost every system of error, look upon Christ as one who is to help the old man, instead of seeing Him as the new Man, who has gone into heaven, where He has become an object for us. The reason of this is, that Christ in heaven brings into view the ruin of the old man, and man needs to be convinced of sin in order to receive it. It is therefore the more important for us distinctly to see in these days where so much is made of man upon the earth, that the word takes up a man in heaven.

POETRY.

“Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.”

Dear soul, couldst thou become a child
While yet on earth, meek, undefiled,
Then God Himself were ever near,
And Paradise around thee here.

A child cares nought for gold or treasure,
Nor fame nor glory yield him pleasure ;
In perfect trust, he asketh not
If rich or poor shall be his lot.

Little he recks of dignity,
Nor prince nor monarch feareth he.
Strange that a child so weak and small
Is oft the boldest of us all !

He hath not skill to utter lies,
His very soul is in his eyes ;
Single his aim in all, and true,
And apt to praise what others do.

No questions dark his spirit vex,
No faithless doubts his soul perplex,
Simply from day to day he lives,
Content with what the present gives.

Scarce can he stand alone, far less
Would roam abroad in loneliness ;
Fast clinging to his mother still,
She bears and leads him at her will.

He will not stay to pause and choose,
His father's guidance e'er refuse,
Thinks not of danger, fears no harm,
Wrapt in obedience' holy calm.

For strange concerns he careth nought ;
What others do, although were wrought
Before his eyes the worst offence,
Stains not his tranquil innocence.

His dearest work, his best delight,
Is, lying in his mother's sight,
To gaze for ever on her face,
And nestle in her fond embrace.

O childhood's innocence ! the voice
Of thy deep wisdom is my choice !
Who hath thy lore is truly wise,
And precious in our Father's eyes.

Spirit of childhood ! loved of God,
By Jesu's Spirit now bestowed ;
How often have I long'd for thee ;
O Jesus, form thyself in me !

And help me to become a child
While yet on earth, meek, undefiled,
That I may find God always near,
And Paradise around me here.

From the German.

THE CHRISTIAN PRIESTHOOD.

There are four terms applied in common to believers in the New Testament—children, (*υιόι*), brethren, saints, and priests. The two first express our relationship, as believers, to God and to one another; saint characterizes our walk in the world; priest, official position before God.

Saints by calling, our walk is to be regulated as befits such. (Ephes. v. 3; Phil. i. 27; Rom. xvi. 2.)

As priests, believers have other duties to perform, and another character to sustain, which furnishes additional motives for holiness of life. Priests! this designates, as we have said, official position before God, having access into His presence, and privileged to offer sacrifices which He can accept. None but Aaron and his sons among Israel could discharge the priest's office. The Levites had the charge of the tabernacle of the congregation, the priests that of the altar and sanctuary, and the stranger

that came nigh was to be put to death. (Numb. xviii. 1—7.)

But the priestly service was not confined to the brazen altar; there was the golden altar, at which none but a priest could officiate. Twice in the history of Israel do we read of the priests' office being desired or invaded by others than the sons of Aaron, and each time the aspirants to the privilege met with signal punishment from the Lord. When Korah and his company aimed at the priesthood, Moses commanded them to come every man with his censer to the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and Aaron to come with them. All should appear before the Lord, and He would decide whom He would accept for this office. They came as appointed, and offered incense; and the fire of the Lord consumed them on the spot. Again, when Uzziah the king, in the pride of his heart, drew nigh to the golden altar, he was met by the priests and sternly rebuked: "It appertaineth not to thee, Uzziah, to burn incense unto the Lord, but to the priests, the

sons of Aaron, that are consecrated to burn incense." And the leprosy breaking out on his forehead, proclaimed the sanctity of the priesthood and the sin of invading its prerogatives. God must choose His priests—for they are priests unto God. He chose Aaron and his sons in Israel. (Exod. xxviii. 1; Numb. xviii. 7.) He has chosen all believers now. By virtue of relationship to Aaron all the males of his family were priests; by virtue of union with the Lord all believers are priests now, as the song in Rev. i. testifies: "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us a kingdom, priests unto his God and Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

If, then, we are priests, what are the sacrifices we have to offer? 1 Pet. ii. 5 tells us—"Spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." What these are Heb. xiii. 15 states—"The fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name." And where is the sanctuary? where the place of ministry? Outside the camp,

though within the veil. By Christ alone can we offer these sacrifices. (Heb. xiii.; 1 Peter ii.) Outside the camp, the place once recognized of God as His dwelling place; and inside the veil, whither the blood has been carried, is the present place and position of priests. When Israel broke the covenant at Mount Sinai by making the golden calf and worshipping it, Moses removed the tabernacle of the congregation outside the camp, and thither went all who sought the Lord. So when the nation had crucified the Lord Jesus, and rejected the testimony of the Holy Ghost, the place for true worshippers was again outside the camp. Another thing to be noticed in this priesthood is, its double aspect. "Ye are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." And "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people, that ye should show forth the virtues of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." (1 Peter ii. 5—9.) A

holy priesthood as to its aspect towards God; a royal priesthood as to its aspect towards men.

A third point to be noticed is, the privilege of intercession, that which the ministry of the golden altar typified. The Lord "ever liveth to make intercession;" and His people are permitted to intercede for one another, and for those without. (Eph. vi. 18; James v. 16; 1 Tim. ii. 1—4.)

Such in brief is the nature of the Christian priesthood as exercised on earth, resembling, in some degree in its features, the priesthood established in Israel; but, unlike that, it is not limited to this life. It is carried on in heaven, as Revelation shows. When the door is open in heaven in chapter iv.—after judgment has been passed on Christendom, and before judgments are poured out on the world, and those connected with it—the evangelist sees the saints in heaven—symbolized by the twenty-four elders—seated around the throne, unmoved amidst the manifestations of its majesty, the lightnings, the thunder-

ings, and voices; though not unmoved, as has been observed, when the voice of praise is heard. Then, rising from off their thrones, they take the attitude that befits them. They sit no longer, for they are about to offer sacrifice. Yet they stand not as ministering at the altar, but fall down before Him who sits on the throne, cast their crowns before Him, to whom, in grace, they owe them, and pour forth from their lips the feelings of their hearts in adoration of the Creator of all. In the next chapter we see the saints again occupied in the priestly service of praise. It is not God as the Creator, but the Lamb as Redeemer, that is now the subject. When He is seen bearing the marks of His sufferings, "a lamb as it had been slain," they again take up the strain: "Thou art worthy to take the book, and open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made them unto our God a kingdom and priests, and they shall reign on the earth." (Rev.

v. 9, 10.) Before God, as Creator, the saints act as priests; before the Lord, as Redeemer, they make mention of the kingdom and priesthood. They have a kingdom, they are a royal priesthood. Each time the priesthood is mentioned in Revelation it is in connexion with the Lord, and the kingdom is associated with it. In chapter i. when the Lord's official title "Prince of the kings of the earth" is declared, the saints praise Him for His love, and go on to speak of the priesthood and the kingdom. In chapter v. we see the kingdom is connected with the redemption He has accomplished. Again in chapter xx. 6, when Satan is bound at the commencement of the millennium, we read the blessedness of those who share in the first resurrection described as (1) sitting on thrones, to whom judgment is committed: (2) the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God; (Rev. vi. 9;) and (3) those which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads,

or in their hands; (Rev. xv. 2;) all of whom shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years. Here again, when the Lord is mentioned, the kingdom is introduced, and priests and kings. But to return to chapter v. We get something more stated about the royal priesthood. The Lord is now about to commence that direct dealing with the earth which shall issue in the establishment of His kingdom. Hence the saints, having intelligence of the mind of God, do not simply speak of the royal priesthood as in chapter i. but state the sphere of its exercise, "they shall reign on the earth." Another feature is to be noticed, indicating the priestly office of the elders. They have every one golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints. They present the prayers to God. Throughout the millennium the priesthood lasts. (Chap. xx. 6.) The priesthood of the tribe of Levi is limited to this life. (Heb. vii. 23.) The priesthood of believers it is plain is not. Death, which terminated theirs, has no power to cut short ours.

Differing then in this respect from the priesthood of the Mosaic dispensation, it differs from it in other essential points. Their place of service was without the veil, ours is within. (Heb. x.) They fed on the food of the altar, so do we. The meat-offerings and the trespass-offerings were theirs, after the stated portion had been burnt on the altar. The peace-offering they eat of with the worshippers after the Lord had His portion burnt on the altar. The sin-offering, too, under certain conditions, was theirs, as the trespass-offering. We, too, have a sacrifice to feed on—that which these different offerings typified. They had the type, we the antitype; but “we have an altar whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle.” (Heb. xiii. 10.) The sin-offering, whose blood is brought into the tabernacle of the congregation, to reconcile withal in the holy place, shall not be eaten; it shall be burnt with fire.” (Lev. vi. 30.) The Lord is *the* sin-offering, and we can feed on Him, nay, it is what is provided. Another differ-

ence to be noticed is, they were priests of a ministration of death, we of the ministration of the Spirit. That was ushered in in glory, this subsists in glory. That has passed away, this remains for ever. (2 Cor. iii.)

If such is the nature of the christian priesthood, and its excellency surpassing that of the former dispensation, what should be the characteristics of those who exercise it? It is a holy priesthood. (1 Peter ii. 5.) None but those who are holy can approach a holy God. "Be ye holy, for I am holy," was the command of God to Israel among whom He dwelt. What less should characterize those who are admitted to the service of the sanctuary? The priests of old were formally set apart for their office by a service, which shadowed forth the need of separation from all defilement. Chosen by divine appointment from amongst the redeemed nation, they were brought to the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and there washed all over with water, and then clothed with the garments for glory and beauty.

(Exod. xxviii. 40—xxix.) The sin-offering having been first offered, followed by the burnt-offering, the ram of consecration was killed; and on their right ear, thumb, and toe, blood was put, (the rest being poured out on the altar,) in token that their obedience, their work, and their walk, should be such as befitted those brought into connexion with the altar. Next, they and their garments were sprinkled with the blood that was upon the altar, mingled with the anointing oil, foreshadowing the unction of the Holy Ghost by virtue of the sacrifice of Christ. Thus consecrated they feed on the sacrifices, God's provision for them, for the seven days of their consecration, never leaving the tabernacle of the congregation. On the eighth day they took their place, and waited on Aaron as he ministered according to divine appointment. Ere that day closed, a lesson had been taught them of the need of strict adherence to the Lord's commands, by the death of Nadab and Abihu, so lately on the mount feasting before God, for offering

strange fire on the altar. "I will be sanctified in them that come nigh to me." (Lev. x. 3.) Though their brothers were dead, they, anointed with the holy oil, were not to uncover their heads, nor rend their clothes, on pain of death. The priests set apart for God's service were to have His mind. Others might carry forth the dead bodies, and the whole congregation mourn for them, but they were to show no signs of grief, nor leave the precincts of the tabernacle. For the proper discharge of their duties and that they might be able to discern between holy and unholy, and between clean and unclean; they were not to drink wine or strong drink. Nothing of the joys of this world, or any stimulus they could give, would fit them for their service. Once washed all over they were never thus washed again. Once consecrated, Eleazer and Ithamar were priests till death. But each time they entered the court of the sanctuary for service, they had to wash their hands and feet in the brazen laver, showing that, though formally set apart, cleansed,

anointed, and consecrated, they contracted constant defilement, which needed continual application to the water provided for the purpose.

Leviticus xxi., xxii. further illustrates the holy character of the priesthood, divers things which caused defilement being pointed out. Any one with a blemish could not minister before the Lord; yet, as a priest, he eat of the sacrifices. But uncleanness, till removed by attention to the ordered ceremonial, debarred them this privilege. They could not eat of the holy things till they were purified. Blemishes they could not help nor put away. Defilement was different. In many cases they might avoid it. In all they could purify themselves. Blemishes, however, though they could not avoid them, prevented the exercise of their office, showing again that imperfection could not be accepted before God.

Another feature of the priesthood in Israel was the position of the priests with reference to the rest of the people. Taken from among them, they had a special place assigned them in the camp,

“before the tabernacle towards the east.” (Numb. iii. 38.) They had also certain cities given them in the land. Disqualified from inheriting the land like the other tribes, or “having any part among them,” (Numb. xviii. 20,) the Lord was their part and their inheritance among the children of Israel. A dress, too, was assigned them by divine appointment: coats, and girdles, and bonnets. (Exod. xxviii. 40.) Thus they were distinguished from the rest of the congregation. Their priesthood was given them as “a service of gift;” (Numb. xviii. 7,) consecrated for it, their food, place of encampment in the wilderness, and cities in the land, with the dress that appertained to their office, marked them as a peculiar people, separated from all around, even from their brethren of the children of Israel.

The ceremonies for consecrating the priests, as well as their position in Israel ever after, teach us lessons. “Ye are washed, ye are sanctified, ye are justified.” (1 Cor. vi. 11.) Such is the condition of believers corresponding to the consecra-

tion of the priests. But as they needed to wash their hands and feet, we need to wash our feet to cleanse them from defilement continually contracted in the passage through the world. They were, moreover, anointed. So are we—anointed with the Holy Spirit. (2 Cor. i. 21; 1 John ii. 20.) Before they could be anointed the ram's blood must be shed. Before we could receive the unction of the Holy Ghost the Lamb of God must shed His blood. That blood has been shed, and by virtue of it we as believers are anointed. As members of the priestly family, special injunctions were given to guard them against that which would hinder the discharge of their office. As members of the body of Christ, the great High Priest, the needed instructions how to walk are given in the New Testament. See especially 1 Cor. vi. and Eph. iv. 21; v. 12, where duties are inculcated, and sins warned against, because, as members of Christ, we are members also of one another, and no longer partakers with the ungodly Gentiles. The defiled priest could not eat

of the holy things till cleansed, so Christians, if defiled by sin, must seek restoration and cleansing by the word ere they can again enjoy the privileges of their position before God. The priest was a priest, even when defiled. Nothing could alter that position as long as he lived. We, too, are priests through union with the Lord Jesus. Nothing can change this. It is our birthright, may we not say, as the priesthood was that of Aaron's descendants. But our enjoyment of its privileges, and power of service will depend on our walk. If the heart has gone astray do we not feel shorn of our strength like Samson, when shaved? But restored through confession of our fault, like Samson, when his hair commenced to grow, the power of service is restored. Till the latter takes place the power is sensibly diminished if the heart is not altogether dead. Happy that it is so; that, conscious of our weakness, we are led to ascertain its cause in the presence of the Lord, and through His grace and intercession seek for restoration.

What instruction too in the peculiar dress of the priests! No one could mistake them. Their dress would proclaim who they were. Are we thus distinguished? Have we so put on Christ that men can see and take knowledge of it and know us as those set apart for God's service? The dress of the priests, as they are called, in the Roman and Greek churches, leaves no doubt on any who see them who and what they are. Are we so distinguished? What men would associate with *a class* of professing Christians, in reality belongs to all believers. All are priests. Need we guard against the supposition that because all are priests, and capable of offering sacrifice to God, all are able to lead the praises of others? There are those given to help the saints and to minister to them, resembling in some degree the Levites of the former dispensation. It was the office of the Levites, Heman, Jeduthun, and Ethan, with others of their brethren to lead in song. (1 Chron. vi. 33—47; xxiii. 30—31; xxv.) So in the assembly, whilst all can offer the sacrifice of praise,

all cannot lead the praises of the congregation. Every believer as a priest needs no one to come between him and God; he has access to the mercy-seat by the Lord Jesus, and out of the fullness of his heart can praise our God. But it is one thing to make melody in the heart, (Eph. v. 19,) and quite another to strike the note and lead the rest in worship.

Holy then is the office of priest. Holiness should characterize those who are called to it. But there is another characteristic—"the showing forth the virtues of him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light." Partakers of the divine nature we are to manifest it. The world can take cognizance of this. We may praise God in the heart: we should show forth His virtues in our walk. Light and love, these two characteristics of the divine nature (1 John i., iv.) should be manifested in us. The world once could say, See how these Christians love one another. It is a feature it can see and admire. It cannot see the heart, it may

not hear the hymn of praise as it ascends to God from the solitude of the chamber, or from one alone it may be, in the midst of a crowd. The personal communion between the soul and God may go on unknown to those around us; when no mortal ear can hear, the hymn can still be sung, and the heart be occupied in the priestly service of praise. But light and love, if carried out in the walk, holiness of walk, and therein conformity to God, and love to the brethren because God has loved us, are features of the Christian, which the world can see and estimate; "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." (Matt. v. 16; Phil. ii. 14—16.) "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." (John xiii. 35.) This characteristic, the showing forth of His virtues, is connected with the kingdom, "a royal priesthood, to show forth," &c.; so believers are exhorted (1 Thess. ii. 12) to walk worthy of God who hath called you unto His kingdom and glory.

This subject, but briefly touched on, might be expanded to great length. But the practical question for all is, how far we are acting in accordance with the place given us before God? Are we walking in that conscious separation from all evil which befits the members of a holy priesthood? Are we showing forth his virtues who hath called us into His marvellous light? It is a position given us in grace. Well might the apostle Peter say, "If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious." He had spoken in the first chapter of the heavenly inheritance reserved for those who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. Great as this is, it does not exhaust the grace of God shown us. He had spoken in the first chapter of the Christian's inheritance, now he speaks of the Christian's privilege, and gives three illustrations of it: first, "Ye are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood," &c.; second, the foundation-stone has been laid in Zion, so that "he that believes shall not make haste;" third, "Ye are a

chosen generation, a royal priesthood," &c. The *first* of these privileges the nation of Israel never possessed, and never will. The *second* is spoken of in Isaiah in connexion with the latter days. The *third* was promised them in Exodus on condition of keeping the covenant, which they shortly afterwards broke before leaving Mount Sinai.

That all the redeemed should be a holy priesthood, able to offer sacrifices as priests, was a thought never given to Israel. There were priests appointed for the people, as we see in Ezekiel xl. —xlviii. will be the case in the days yet to come. For the descendants of Zadok will be priests, according to God's promise to Phinehas. But, though appointed by divine command, they never, as we have seen, had entrance within the veil, unless in the person of the high priest once a year on the day of atonement. We have entrance there with boldness always. What grace then to us, the Church, composed of Jews, who never had this privilege even as priests, and Gentiles, who once were afar off,

now brought nigh, both now on common ground by the same blood and the one sacrifice.

Next, what was promised to Israel, as a resource in the latter days, we have now. The foundation stone has been laid. Isaiah xxviii. 16 shows when it will be applied to the remnant. When "the Lord shall be for a crown of glory and for a diadem of beauty unto the residue of the people." The mass of the nation are corrupt, and, seeing the overflowing scourge advancing, make a covenant with hell and death to escape it, but they cannot. "The hail will sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place." Any barrier man may erect will be carried away. Is there, then, any firm standing ground? There is. Because the foundation stone has been laid in Zion, and those that believe shall not make haste. Standing on it they have a secure footing, and can wait God's time for deliverance. That foundation, the apostle declares, has been laid, though Israel have not acknowledged it,

and the remnant will not know it till the latter days of the nation dawn. When he wrote, the Jewish Christian could see everything on which he had formerly built shaking, shortly to be dissolved; Jerusalem to be trodden down, and the nation again to be exiles in foreign lands. But here was a resting place, a sure foundation to build on, which would never fail. Building on the Lord they would have all the promises, though in a higher sense than Israel had looked for them. The unbelieving might stumble at it. But there it was, and all who believed could rest secure.

Thirdly, what God promised Israel conditionally, that we now possess—the royal priesthood. The strangers to whom Peter wrote, scattered abroad, away from the land of their birthright, could, nay, did, possess this promise. They were, he writes, a royal priesthood. What Israel forfeited they had through grace. True, Israel will have it made good to them, but it will be when the kingdom of the Lord is established on

the earth. They forfeited the conditional blessing through breaking the law. They will enjoy it when the law is written on their hearts. "Ye shall be named priests of the Lord; men shall call you the ministers of our God." (Isaiah lxi. 6.) Chapter lx. describes in glowing terms the future glory of Jerusalem, when she shall be called, "the city of the Lord, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel." (Ver. 14.) Chapter lxi. describes Him by whom all this shall be brought about. Further on we get, lxii., the Lord interceding with Jehovah for the accomplishment of this blessed state; and the remnant (ver. 6) who will be raised up to intercede for it. Chapter lxiii. commences with the Lord having overcome His enemies in order that the salvation might be accomplished. From lxiii. 7—lxiv. 12, we have the intercession of the remnant related, that prayer which is answered in the re-establishment of Jerusalem, the millennial blessing of the nation, and their position as priests in connexion evidently with the kingdom. But this is clearly future. The Lord did come, as Isaiah

lxi. 1, 2, quoted by Him in Luke iv., shows. But they cast Him out; the blessings are therefore delayed. But now says Peter, "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood." Jerusalem was about to be destroyed, and to be trodden down of the Gentiles till their time should be fulfilled, thus delaying the accomplishment of the happy condition predicted in Isaiah. Nevertheless, those who now believed on the Lord had the blessing at once, not in its full enjoyment but in assured possession. And what the believer from among the Jews then possessed we have likewise; for in Christ Jesus there is neither Jew nor Gentile. All they have we have, for we are one in the Lord. To these three the apostle adds a fourth privilege, what Israel will one day be, as foretold in Hosea ii. 23, that believers are now.

Such, then, is our priesthood, its duration, and its character. It is a holy calling; it is a privileged place; to us a gift. How far are we living up to this calling? Those who ministered at the

altar must be holy—no lower standard is accepted now. We may fail, and assuredly we do, but the standard remains unchanged—it cannot be lowered: “Purifieth himself even as he is pure.” Gracious indeed is our God in making provision for our failure in the constant intercession of our High Priest above. But that cannot relieve us from the responsibilities of the office. We are to be holy, for God is holy. May we each and all enter more into His mind about this; and whilst exercising our priesthood in the happiness of heart the Spirit gives, praising the Father for what He has done for us and given us; interceding for others and looking forward to the full understanding and full enjoyment of the priesthood in connexion with the kingdom; let us never forget that this place of nearness demands holiness of walk, separation from the world, and consecration to God.

WHEN HAS A BELIEVER RECEIVED HIS PARDON?

SUBSTANCE OF A LETTER.

OUR conversation yesterday has brought to my mind that which may be serviceable in truth and serviceable to conscience.

First, as to truth, or rather God's dealing by it, so to speak. I have lately clearly seen the mischief of counting forgiveness from the time of the revelation of grace to our souls. So very many date God's mercy from this as quite to affect in the Church the condition and growth of grace in a very extensive way. The cross is revealed to the soul as the answer to judgment. But more: Christ is (if any advance at all is made) revealed, who is not only dead, but risen and alive for evermore. Righteousness is revealed as presenting us to God, and we have access to God in believing; but if the cross begins my career in grace and not my apprehension in God's good time; of His grace to me in it, I am led to a much deeper use of it. I am presented to God not only in

forgiveness, but in resurrection, ascension, and glory. This is the beginning of the dealings of God with me in Christ in the cross ; not as manifesting me in Him, that would be as of His confessing body on earth. Beginning at the cross, there is a ladder of fulfilment of the thoughts of God towards me. To regard my course as merely commencing with a conviction of mercy, as God began with me in sense of judgment, leaves the cross so little as an effectual object of faith, that the whole dealing of God and the intelligence of His ways is arrested ; and should it not arrest us in the intelligence of His ways, it does so as to all thought of progress of the soul in light. Another mischief is, that it causes us to look to such a manifestation to our souls of the grace of God in the cross, as the only sense and certitude of forgiveness, and the consequence is, my assurance in Christ is easily assailed or displaced to make way, perhaps, for that which is not true as such, and myself kept back from real communion. But if under the sense of judgment,

I by grace have believed in the cross as the putting away of my sin, and of the sins of others who have by grace believed on the Son of God; and referring my acceptance to the time of this act of God and to His estimate of it and of those seen in Him; the cross becomes to souls, livingly coming to Christ, the power of God in the crushing and purging away of sin. I am dead in Christ, and in whatever measure sin still lives, it is still met in the power that the death of Christ ever has; and thus it is sin has no more dominion over me, for I am under grace. Great as is the blessing of the peace that is supplied in clear views of our standing before God in Christ dead, risen, and glorified, the fruits of the work of Christ are to be ours, and other assurances with it.*

A case within the knowledge of the writer would, though in part, strongly illustrate the effect of the difference as to assurance. F. G. had been a Roman Catholic, innocent in life, and became, by terrific preaching of hell, oppressed al-

* See 1 John ii. 5, 29; iii. 7, 14, 18, 19, 24; v. 4.

most to death. His deliverance through the word was full and wonderful. For two or three years afterwards his joy was unbroken; and when it lost its brightness he thought all must be gone with it. The writer was with him at the close of his life by consumption. He expressed himself thus: "Death is a black and terrible thing; oh! that God would give me some of the joy I had at my conversion."

A brother of experience passing by the place where our sick brother was, when told of the above, said: "It will put him into a legal state." A few days proved the truth of it. He lost all communion. It was gracious, most gracious of the Lord that Satan was not allowed to touch the question of salvation in his mind in the least degree. He called it "the triumph of faith." No service in the word or in prayer altered, however, the case, and he felt it most bitterly, and entreated most fervently in vain. On the writer's telling him one evening that he was about going to a prayer-meeting, he said: "Pray for *me*." On joining the

brethren, the case was related to them, and a deep interest felt, and much pleading with God followed throughout the time they were together. On coming to him on the morning following, the first words he said were: "*Vos prières ont été exaucées, ne me parlez que de la croix.*"* The morning of his decease he said to the writer: "If any one ask about me, say that I would not be otherwise than as I am."

Now this is a history exemplifying one part of the subject; but it is not of the same importance as that which touches the injury done to the advance of the soul and its fruits according to the word. The writer has found the extreme difficulty of welding on the most necessary truth on souls that had been converted (if they were so) at revival preaching. They finished there, even when it is sincerely believed they had received Christ. They preferred to continue to attend these meetings to any other opportunity.

* "Your prayers have been heard; speak to me only OF THE CROSS." He had relinquished his desire of his joy as his peace.

Another mischief of believers not seeing that to date their forgiveness at the cross and death of Jesus, is that it takes away from the ordinances their true character. The writer knew cases in which they were carried no further than to look at them as representative of the course their own souls had gone through. This was to the writer then manifestly false. But even if not in this measure of false use, what has been expressed above leaves them still in a false position. They were appointed in respect of the position and confession of the Church on earth and for earth, and receive as such a substantial character. This is necessarily lost in the case supposed ; and some mystical and confused notion adopted in its place, when nothing can be more clearly applicable to the reality of position given to the Christian in Christ on the cross—risen with Him, and warring the warfare of his new confession. They are a reality. The character of an ordinance is essentially separative, and *of a people* where fellowship comes in, as it is in the table of the Lord.

A SERIES.

No. 11.

B A P T I S M.

Our last subject of consideration in this series was the Testimony of the Church. We may now proceed to consider the different leading expressions involved in the testimony. I would begin with baptism, confining myself to the elucidation of the subject, and not treating of the question as to *who* are the proper recipients of baptism; the determining of *that* point I would leave to the enlightened conscience.

As a preface let me remark, that the more commonly any truth of God is received and adopted in the world, the more carefully must any honest enquirer after that truth exclude from his research any construction given to it by the world, or even by the most pious and learned expounding it for the world. Our only course, one that the servant of God ought never to have deviated from, is to disengage our minds from everything man has said on the subject, and

apply ourselves to the word of God, as if we never had heard of the subject before. It would reveal one of the mysteries of the mind if one could trace the prepossessions about the truth of God, with which Christians come to the Scriptures; in fact they too often do so more to establish their own convictions than to derive convictions therefrom.

These remarks apply, I think, peculiarly to baptism, for no truth has been so popularized and adopted by the world, and none on which there has been so much controversy and dogmatism among men. Now I desire to dismiss entirely every preconceived thought on the subject borrowed from man; and apply myself to see how it is declared by the word of God.

Baptism is first brought before our notice by John Baptist and is introduced in connexion with his ministry as if every one at once understood what it meant. It was not a novelty which required to be explained, but a practice in such common vogue that when adopted by John in his ministry

every one knew the import and intent of it, and it is from not understanding this practice in its common and general use that we do not easily seize the import of it when attached to John's ministry. Baptism was simply using water as a symbol to declare a dissociation from what I was in, in order to leave me free for entrance into another order of things. John is called Baptist because his ministry is characterized by baptism. He comes as between the law and the prophets, and Christ. He calls on Israel by baptism to declare separation from all that was contrary to their proper ground, which in repentance they reached, looking for the remission of sins, and consequently they who were baptized of John when they heard of Christ justified God. (See Luke vii. 29, 30.)

Now the other side of the baptism necessarily expressed the demand for which the recipient of it was freeing himself. He first freed himself by baptism, and then the responsibilities were begun. Those who were baptized

of John declared that they separated themselves from their present failure, and from that moment were waiting for remission of sins; so when they had heard Jesus, they glorified God, inasmuch as that they had reached that for which they had prepared themselves.

If a Gentile were baptized in order to become a Jew, he knew that the rite determined his past and his future, and therefore had a deeper significance to him than if he had only baptized after coming from the market in order that he might eat bread. The rite was the same in both cases, but the claims consequent on the subject of the rite lent a different significance and weight to it in each case. In either or any case the rite of baptism is a dissociation from present engagement; but it is the ground I enter upon therefrom, which determines my liability and the extent of my responsibility on account of it. The nature and extent of my separation from my present engagement must be determined by the ground for the entrance on which I am baptized. By baptism I

free myself to enter on it, but the nature of the ground entered on, and the responsibilities undertaken, must necessarily define the extent to which I may distance myself from my former self.

There were then necessarily two sides to baptism—the new ground and the old; the former declaring the extent to which the latter was abandoned; baptism declaring the abandonment. The disciples baptized, but it is evident with different demands to those of John, for Christ had come; yet, the declaration in the baptism was the same, for the recipient declared himself freed from present standing, in order to engage in a new one; which new, I repeat, gave a character to the baptism, for it entailed certain claims on account of which he entered baptism, declaring that in order to put himself under those claims he had detached himself from his former engagement.

Although baptism was a well-known rite, that of John was a new thing among God's people, for hitherto they had been called on to reform *as they*

stood ; now they are called to renounce their failure, just as much as a Gentile was called on to renounce his, in heathenism, when he desired to enter on Jewish ground. In order to fulfil all righteousness, the motive for baptism, our Lord took His place with the repentant remnant, not, I need hardly say, to recover from the low ground which the unrepentant occupied, but in grace to identify Himself with those; the poor of the flock who had recovered lost ground; i. e., repentant. Now after He had risen from the dead, and had all power given to Him in heaven and on earth, He authorizes the apostles to go and disciple all nations, (the commission to them being as unlimited as His sway was universal,) baptizing them to the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. In a word, man was called to surrender himself to Him who had now entire claim on him. Christ had died for all, therefore all were proved to be dead; and now risen, He had full claim over the dead, and Lord of all; and therefore by His apostles

calls on all men to own His claim and be baptized in the name of God as now for the first time fully declared. All who were baptized in this name renounced their own.

Now when it is understood that it was the death of Christ which gave Him this claim, it must be seen that every one who submitted to His baptism placed themselves in His death, admitting His claim because of it, so that baptized *unto* Christ, they were baptized *unto* His death. The ground which Christ's baptism imposed on me was death, because His death proved that all were dead, and therefore when I owned this in baptism I placed myself, not in any of that which caused His death, but in His death I start with renouncing all. In the baptism I declare that I drop myself in His death; I find, that if I would assume His name, which is my duty—He is both Lord and Saviour—I must place myself in His death, and must renounce that which would interfere with the profession I am assuming; so that my entire self as son of Adam

must be renounced, and to do this I place myself in His death. *If I have faith* I rise out of it in newness of life, to walk in the name of the Lord; but *whether or not* such is the ground on which I place myself. Literally in baptism I assume to dissociate myself from that which interferes with the association I am about to enter on; consequently, when baptized in the name of Christ, I must in the outset place myself in His death, where all of myself is put an end to, and from whence alone I could start in His name. The baptism of John fell far short of this, because, as we have seen, of the different ground on which its recipients entered therefrom; therefore the baptism of John was insufficient to express the baptism of the Lord. (See Acts xix.) I am only saying here what the baptism of Christ entails; I do not say that every baptized person understands it in this full way. But we shall best arrive at the true import of baptism by examining the passages where it is spoken of in order. First, then, in Mark xvi. 16,

we read, "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved." Now it is evident it is not baptism that saves, but that baptism was the expression of separation unto Christ, which true faith would maintain. In Acts ii. 38, we find Peter saying to the anxious souls, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." Here we see that the recipients of baptism professed to separate from old ground, and to take new for a certain expected end, viz., for the remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Ghost. If they repented, and in the name of Jesus Christ abandoned the ground they were on for the remission of sins, they would receive the gift of the Holy Ghost; the baptism would be declarative of their renunciation of old ground, and of the reality of their profession in assuming new. In Acts viii. 12, we find that when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized

both men and women. Simon the sorcerer was also baptized, but on none of them had the Holy Ghost as yet fallen. All we can gather from this passage is that they who submitted to baptism put themselves on new ground by dis severing themselves from the one they were on, and were as yet without the power of the Holy Ghost to keep them in it; and in which *one* (Simon Magus) was not kept.

The next passage is verse 36 of the same chapter. "What doth hinder me to be baptized?" says the Eunuch to Philip. He feels that there is now no hindrance to his assuming new ground on the clear renunciation of the old, which baptism would imply, and which was, in fact, the way to the new, and presumed that there was no obstacle thereto.

In chapter x. 47, we find Peter saying, "Can any man forbid water that these should not be baptized which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?" In former cases they were baptized *in order* to receive the Holy Ghost; here

they had already received it, so it is plain that baptism placed the recipient on new ground professedly, although he already possessed, before his baptism, all the qualities of that new ground. The rite, then, was to class him with others of the same standing; and this same standing the apostle here in demanding baptism claims for the Gentiles, they having received what the Jews were baptized for, and what the Samaritans were baptized for.

The next passage I would refer to occurred earlier, though not related till chapter xxii. I allude to the words used by Ananias to Saul, "Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." Now we know that Saul had already seen Jesus in the glory; the Saviour had been there revealed to him, and therefore he must have known that there was no charge against him before God; and that before Him he had nothing more to do. But he was to stand professedly apart from himself, and his own standing as a man; he is called on to

separate himself FROM himself; washing away his sins professedly, not in order to clear himself before God, but to express his dissociation from his former standing in his sins, (as he stood on earth,) and consequent freedom to enjoy his new one, calling on the name of the Lord. Thus Ananias exhorts him to arise and declare by baptism his dissociation from it.

In chapter xvi. 15, we find that Lydia being baptized and her household, *thereon* besought Paul, and those with him, to enter into her house, which, I think, supports the idea of the complete exclusion from a previous state, which baptism declared. Further on in this chapter, we find that the jailor was "baptized and all his straightway," intimating again the completeness of the change which now existed. Baptism properly set free from everything in order to connect the recipient with a new profession, which new profession gave a character to the renunciation. Consequently, when we come to Acts xix. we find that John's baptism will

not do for the Lord's. The former only entailed on me that I surrendered any ground which interfered with looking for remission of sins; the latter declared I surrendered everything which the assumption of His name involved. I might not have understood this at the time, but the more I entered into the responsibilities of the profession, which I avowed to take consequent on baptism, the more I should understand the import and exclusion from other and former things which baptism involved.

Now when I come to Romans vi. 3 I get the true meaning of baptism looked at from the resurrection-side of things. Paul explains and determines it according to the gospel committed unto him, and therefore in its true signification to the Church. Paul was not sent to baptize (1 Cor. i. 17)—the twelve *had been* sent—but he takes up baptism and explains its true spiritual meaning, and therefore says, "As many as have been baptized unto Christ have been baptized unto His death. Mark! it is *not* said "*unto* His resurrection," but simply

unto His *death*. Baptism declared the separation which the death of Christ determined. In being baptized unto Christ, I necessarily declare myself no longer connected with that which His death determined in judgment, even my old man. How could I be baptized unto Christ, and stand in that which was judged in the death of Christ? "If Christ died for all, then were all dead;" thus no one could assume His name or profess to do so; but in the act (whether knowing it or not) which made him responsible for renunciation of what the death of Christ determined. The death of Christ has declared us all, as the seed of the first Adam, morally dead; and hence any one baptized unto Christ necessarily makes the death of Christ the line of demarcation. Nothing which caused or needed that death could the baptized one assume to retain, and therefore baptism to such an one declared renunciation of everything interfering with the profession of Christ and which His death judged. He bore death, the judgment on the first Adam;

consequently I, a child of Adam, could not assume His, but by first putting myself in His death to lay aside all that for which He bore judgment. How could I take His name, and still admit the existence of that for which He died? I declare myself apart from it in baptism, and this only the death of Christ truly does for me; therefore baptism morally reaches to it. It does not imply resurrection. Faith in the baptized one connects the soul with the risen Jesus, and makes good the profession assumed in baptism, but that is going beyond baptism, for it is not unto His resurrection we are baptized, but unto His death. It may be said that the passage in Colossians ii. 12 connects the idea of resurrection with baptism, but I think if the words be carefully weighed a different conclusion will be arrived at. The apostle had said that they were circumcised in the circumcision of Christ, and if circumcised with Him, I am also raised up with Him, baptism having expressed the fact that I was buried with Him. It is *in Him*, not in baptism,

that I have the resurrection. ("In whom you have also been raised," &c.) The baptism only expressed my burial with Him, my thorough dissociation from everything which His death determined. I can place the old man in the water of baptism, but it is plain I do not profess to raise it out of it. It is "*faith* in the operation of God who hath raised Jesus from the dead," which raises me in Him.

I think the passage in 1 Corinthians xv. 29 confirms what I have advanced, viz., that baptism simply declared the character of renunciation implied by the profession about to be assumed—"What shall they do who are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not?" I understand this as showing that the baptized took the place of dead ones, and that the argument is, that if they took the place of dead ones, had they done so without any ulterior hope? Would any one give up present existence professedly who never expected any better? The present might be very indifferent, but it was better than nothing; and skin for

skin, all that a man had would he give for his life; *therefore*, if the resurrection were past, this was an inconsistent standing.

There is only one other passage which I think it necessary to refer to. (See 1 Peter iii. 20, 21.) Here to me it is very clear, that the water is death and the ark resurrection; and it is introduced here because the apostle is pressing on saints that they should not suffer for sins, inasmuch as Christ had once suffered, and that professedly in baptism they had taken the ground of death; His death, out of which they were saved by His resurrection. It was not mere washing away the "filth of the flesh," as under the law, but it was radical, *out* of death, into resurrection; and, therefore, with the testimony of a good conscience before God. Instead of suffering for sins I am practically with the *επερωτημα*, (question asked and answered,) of a good conscience as before God touching sins.

Thus briefly I have attempted to gather from Scripture what the true

meaning and import of baptism is, and I trust the Lord will lead His people to study the subject, in order that they may put it in its right place, and know in their souls its full moral bearing unto the praise of His grace who has "begotten us again to a lively hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from among the dead." Amen.

NOTES OF A READING ON JOHN'S GOSPEL.

(Chap. ii., iii.)

(Continued from page 380, Vol. VII.)

In this chapter we get particulars as to the third day. In chapter i. we have from verse 35 two days of testimony, during which we see a Jewish remnant gathered; and now in chapter ii. we get the third day, in which we get two things—a marriage and a judgment; the marriage is at Cana in Galilee, the judgment is in Jerusalem, where Jesus drives out those who were defiling the temple. In the chapter, however, we get intimation that after all the temple

was only "empty, swept, and garnished," for He was the true temple. The whole of this and the following chapter comes in before John is cast into prison, so that we learn that, before the commencement of Christ's ministry in Galilee, mentioned in Matt. iv., there was a dealing of His with those of Jerusalem. The scenes in John's Gospel are mostly laid in Jerusalem, but in Galilee in the other gospels.

The miracle of turning the water into wine, in connexion with the marriage at Cana, is a figure of the marriage of Christ with the Jews—His recognition of that people as His own in the latter days. Its taking place at Cana sets forth His taking up the poor remnant of His people and leaving those of Jerusalem. When this marriage takes place, He will change the water of purification into the wine of joy. Water was set there for purification. It is a figure of the *word* which, in His absence, is here for our purification, not as the wine of joy. We are said to be "washed with water by the word."

Our way is to be cleansed by taking heed to the word.

As to the judgment, it is the Lord whom they sought suddenly coming to His temple, according to Malachi. He did not, however, present Himself thus, but coming to it He finds these things in the temple, and therefore puts them out. The cleansing is by judgment here. He *puts out* those who defiled the temple. Thus have we in figure the two things which characterize the third day—the marriage of Christ with the remnant, when He will turn the water of purification into the wine of joy; and the judgment, by which He will put away those that defile God's house. The Jews asked for a sign in proof of the authority on which He did this; and He refers them at once to Himself. "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."

It is beautiful to see the two things in this chapter, but they are morally instructive as well as figurative. The present separation of Christ from the people is seen in what passes between

Himself and His mother. When she comes He would not have to do with her, but the hour is coming when He will have to do with her. Still we find He went down with her to Capernaum. Having really done with the people after the flesh, He says to His mother, "Woman, what have I to do with thee;" and yet although thus separate from her He goes and dwells with her. We have the same thing in Luke, when he was twelve years of age. When He provided for His mother at the cross, it was in a certain sense the hour when He should do so. Going away Himself He provides for His mother as a thoughtful, dutiful son would do.

In the end of this chapter (ii.) we get into a transition. When He was at Jerusalem, many believed on His name when they saw the miracles which He did; but now He will not have it. Man may sincerely believe many things in the flesh, but this is what Christ will not own. Come here in a *divine* character He will not take Israel up on the ground of the flesh. That kind of

faith which can be in man naturally He will not have—in fact it was valueless, even as far as man was concerned. Jesus did not commit Himself to them, although they had an honest conviction that the man who did all these miracles must be what He said He was.

Chap. iii. Then comes Nicodemus on the same ground, but with his conscience exercised. He comes apart from the world “by night.” The Lord meets him with what was needed (by Israel it is true, but also) for everybody. Christ here clearly shows that He is not come to fall in with Judaism, but He brings out at once that God needed something else. Christ would not teach flesh. “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” The original word is weakly translated “again;” it really means “*anew*,” from the beginning (*ἀνωθεν*, from above, from the beginning, anew). The real force of the expression is apparent from the answer of Nicodemus, who took it to mean a new birth. Now without this new birth, the kingdom of God could

not be *seen*. Christ could not teach the old nature, or at least would not. The flesh or old nature is never spoken of in the Old Testament as such. In Genesis vi. 3 we get, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh;" but this striving was between the Spirit of God in the ways and words of the godly, and the evil course of the ungodly. The spiritual nature in contrast with the flesh we do not get in the Old Testament. We do not read of any such conflict as this in one man of old. The full character of the flesh in man is brought out in the New Testament. It was in the death of Christ that sin got its condemnation. This brought the flesh fairly out—put it in its own place. Law never brought it out thus. It is true that the moment I get to know that the law is spiritual, then I get fully upset, condemned. "I had not known lust unless the law had said, Thou shalt not covet." But even this did not condemn sin in the flesh, because I am still hoping that I may do better. But when I see the

death of Christ, I see that the flesh contains no such thing as good. "The carnal mind is enmity against God, and is not subject to the law of God neither indeed can be." It was condemned by the death of Christ as a *sacrifice* for sin, by what He bare for us, in our place. This, therefore, settles *what* and *where* it is. A true heart is often harrassed by the presence of the flesh, but there is deliverance when I find that God *has condemned it by Christ's death* on the cross, and that I have got another spring of life, on which the fruits of the Spirit grow. Now in the third chapter of John we get the thought that an entirely new thing is needed, and that it came down with Christ, was manifested in Him. It was with Him before He came down into the world, but it came down to us in Him, acting, it is true, in man's faculties and feelings, but still a *new* life. The thing is that we *must* have a nature capable of enjoying God. The Holy Ghost is, of course, required to reveal God, but when He is so revealed, I must have a

nature capable of receiving and enjoying God and the things of God. For the character of this new life, see John's Epistles and also in Galatians. It should also be remembered that our life is not its own source, it is not *the* fountain, nor even *a* fountain, but a communication, quite derivative. It is not said that life is in me, but in Christ from whom I have it, have it in Him.

Verse 5. The bearing of this verse upon the life is, that water represents the application to us of the word of God, and that the Spirit is the divine communicator of life. Water is a common figure of the *word*. "Ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you." The word is the instrument by which the Holy Ghost works. It is that which appeals to men, and made effectual by the Spirit, purifies the person—the individual. The person is not a different one,* but a new life which

* A distinction must be made between the life and the person—but here human language is defective, and care must be taken not to push matters too far.

was not in any sense there before is put into him. We are thus begotten again, connected with which there is the washing of the person from the impurities connected with the old life. The result of the work gives us the fact of a new thing in us, but that it is not of us, but derived from another, see verse 6: "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."

Verse 7, &c. *All must thus be born again*—not Jews simply—but all. To see the kingdom of God is to apprehend it, to enter it, is more the idea of going in, taking a place in it. One might see it before it came, but one could not positively enter it until it was set up.

Verse 12, &c. Here Christ mentions the distinction between earthly and heavenly things. The new birth belongs to both. New birth was requisite for the earthly blessing of the Jew as Nicodemus ought to have known. Still the heavenly things in principle begin with the new birth, but as to their actual historical introduction, we do not get

them till after the cross. Hence, when Christ comes to speak of the cross (ver. 14) He drops the kingdom and talks of eternal life, without which there could be no enjoyment of what is heavenly; but this revelation of what is heavenly brings out the complete ruin of what is natural; for so far from man being capable of enjoying what is heavenly, he is perishing, so we get the wondrous statement of the Son of man being lifted up, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish. The thought of perishing is deeper than the question of the kingdom. There was a *must be* that man should be born again, and there was a *must be* that Christ should be lifted up. Everything for man depended on this; even the Jews get their earthly blessings in connection with the heavenly man. But the Jews never get to that fulness of blessing which belongs to the heavenly people. Even in the millennium the Jews will not have the vail rent. They will not see Christ even as we now see Him by faith. They will see His manifestation on earth, but this is very

different to what He is in heaven to us now, much more to what He will be to us in the glory. In the millennium the Jews do not see Christ as the light of the heavenly city, but they see His light through the city, through us. There is however, a manifestation of Him outside on earth which they will see, but this sight of Him will be very different from what we shall see of Him in heaven.

New birth depended, for us, on the death of Christ. All blessings come to us from that death. We get life through a Christ that died and was raised again, and we get it *in the power in which He is risen*. This is that which distinguishes the saint of the present dispensation. We are blessed in and with Christ. *Death and resurrection are our portion, even His death and resurrection*. We are not simply blessed through His death and resurrection, as the Jews will be at the latter day.

From verses 14—17 we have, as it were, the two sides of truth. Verse 14 brings out the necessity on man's side

for Christ's being lifted up,* "The Son of man *must be* lifted up, that whosoever believes might not *perish*." In verse 15 we find the other side, even that God in the greatness of His love has given His Son for us. These are the two sides of truth, necessity in man and love in God. Eternal life is precisely the same as everlasting life. The difference is one instance of the bad habit in the translators of the Authorized Version in using different words to represent the same word in Greek. The literal meaning of the word translated *perish* is utterly marred.

Verse 17, &c. Here we get this great truth that God did not send His Son to condemn the world, but to express His grace towards man. Hence is brought out man's sad condition, for the world would not have Him. The word *condemn* here is very unhappy; it should be *judge* the world: "He that believeth on him is not judged, but he that believeth not is judged already." The thing is that Christ did not come to judge the world, yet in one

* The lifting up of the serpent seems to allude to the cross in the fact of Christ's being *made sin* for us. The serpent was made like to that which had bitten the Israelites. So that very thing through which we were perishing—sin—Christ was made, and as such lifted up, that whosoever believeth should be saved.

sense He did judge. He was light, and the fact of His coming was necessarily judgment. But still His purpose was grace. If a man do not believe he is judged already, for his very rejection of Christ manifests his condition, proves him utterly lost; hence

Verse 19. "This is the *judgment*, that light is come into the world, but men loved darkness rather than light." His presence *had the effect of judging*, although He did not come to judge. There is a difference between condemnation and judgment. Judgment supposes an action of judging, but condemnation is simply telling out the sentence. It is here that if God judges the result must be condemnation, for man is a sinner. If I were the maker of this table, and I examine the table for the purpose of judging its real character, I am in reality judging myself as a workman; so if God had judged man as He made him, He would have been judging Himself. But if man has departed from God, then God judges him, and it must be condemnation. This principle goes further, explaining why it is God will not judge the new life, because it is of Himself, and He cannot judge Himself.

All these verses up to verse 22 are addressed to Nicodemus, although, as John generally does, he gets into great general truths.

Verses 22—36. Here we get John the Baptist giving place to Christ, and rejoicing that he has to do so. He especially testifies that Christ is from above—from heaven—and hence *that no man receiveth his testimony*. A very solemn statement. John's spirit here is very beautiful—the Bride is Christ's. To see gathering to Christ going on was a great joy to John, but there are some interesting details here.

The question arises about purifying between some of John's disciples and the Jews. It was a question about Christ and John, and, with a very low thought of the case, many went to Christ and left John. But John answers those who come to him about it, by showing that he is not the Christ, yea, never pretended to be. It was the One who came from above who was above all; but if this is so, there remains another solemn thing, and that is, if Christ came from above, no man receives His testimony. We have here also John's abdication, he gives up to Christ in solemn contrast with the Jews, who *give up* Christ. How different the spirit of the two! The Pharisee and John's disciples both seemed stirred up at the thought that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John. Not that He Himself baptized, but His disciples baptising gave currency to the report. This John met by giving way to Christ

with joy, although, as to man, none will receive Him. But while no man naturally receiveth the testimony, yet it is said, "He that hath *received* his testimony," showing us that divine grace has come in. Merely human belief Christ would not have. (See close of chap. ii.) To receive Christ's testimony, evidently supposes something quite new in the heart, and in connexion with it we have the words of God and the Spirit given. And further, the Father having given all things into the Son's hand, Christ as the Son appearing on the scene alone, life in Him, but wrath abiding on those who believe not.

Christ did not begin publicly to preach until John was cast into prison. (See Matthew and Mark.) Christ was teaching and working miracles, but still He did not offer Himself as the Messiah, saying as He does in Luke, "Now is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears."

It is John the Baptist that speaks in these closing verses. It was not John's every-day preaching, but so to speak, his dying note. Some have said that the language of these last verses is that of the Apostle and not of the Baptist, and have grounded upon it an objection to the gospel. But the notion of such is that man is the author of the gospels and not God.

THE EPISTLE OF JUDE.

It is affecting to think that the darkness and error, the corrupt wanderings of the human mind and consequent estrangement from all true knowledge of God, which it was the purpose of the gospel to dispel, and which it did dispel wherever it was effectually received, and put to shame even where the light only externally shined, should find their way back again, through the corruption of the truth, into that very sphere of light from which by its brightness they were originally expelled.

It is scarcely possible to conceive the extent to which every true notion of God had become eclipsed, and every fragment of traditional truth had become overlaid with error, and how every notion of religion only served more effectually to debase the heart, and in many instances to nourish directly its grossest lusts, when the gospel came to shed its light on all the forgotten and perverted relations of man towards God, and of God towards man. For the gospel, as light,

dispersed the surrounding darkness, as well as revealed the way of deliverance from Satan's usurping power over man by a God of infinite goodness coming down to man in compassionate love.

In the narrative of the gospels, we find in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, apart from His atoning work, the perfect light in contrast with the darkness of the world, and in conflict with it: "The light shineth in darkness and the darkness comprehended it not." To this the system of Judaism, now become formal and effete, presented no exception: for "the light [which was in Israel] had become darkness."

In the Acts of the Apostles we find the planting of churches as so many spheres of light, through the power of the truth and the operation of the Holy Spirit, apart from the deadness of Judaic ordinances, and the darkness and corruption of surrounding heathenism. In the earlier epistles, which are occupied in unfolding and establishing the divine foundations of the Christian faith, the abominations of heathenism are only

glanced at or sketched in brief but wonderful outline, and condemned; as in the first chapter of the Romans. In Ephesians ii. their condition Godward ["dead in trespasses and sins," applies alike to Jew and Gentile] is summed up in the energetic words, "Without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." But in the later epistles, the very evils of heathenism, which in the earlier ones had been so emphatically denounced, are presented as having obtained a lodgment in the Church, and the very worst forms of moral corruption are presented as having their development in the bosom of Christianity itself.

In the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians the evil for the most part is matter of prophetic testimony, though the apostle could then say, "the mystery of iniquity doth already work." But in the Second Epistle to Timothy, it had so far advanced as to give occasion to the apostle to describe what

would be the character of the last days of Christianity as a profession here in the world. In doing this it is striking to notice that the Spirit employs almost the same terms as those used in depicting heathenism in the Epistle to the Romans, to which allusion has already been made.

In the Second Epistle of Peter, where the same ground is gone over as that in Jude, the instruments of this evil are more especially before the Spirit's mind; and false teachers, answering to the false prophets of a previous age, are denounced as bringing in destructive heresies and corruptions, which are represented as spreading wider and wider until arrested by the hand of judgment. The practical application to believers is given in the words, "Seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness."

In the Epistle of John, Antichrist, or the Antichrist, is foretold as coming, and the "little children" of the epistle

are warned that already "there are many antichrists." This, even in John's day, gave to the profession of Christianity the characteristic of "the last time." Because there, where the claims and authority of Christ should alone have place, the corruption had already begun which would issue in the development of Antichrist himself. But in John these corruptors of the truth are exhibited as leaving the holy association of the Church and going out as deceivers into the world. In Jude, on the contrary, they are presented as having "crept in unobserved," and remaining in, so as to endanger the apostacy and consequent judgment of Christianity as a responsible profession in the world.* Both, alas ! are true.

In the prosecution of his subject Jude adduces, as examples of warning, the

* When Judaism became apostate by the rejection of Christ and the testimony of the Holy Spirit God gathered believers out of it into the Church. When the apostacy of Christianity has actually come, the saints will have been gathered out of it into heaven. See 2 Thess. ii.

people of Israel, the apostate angels, Sodom and Gomorrha and the surrounding cities of the plain; and in application he shows that the judgment he was announcing had been marked out beforehand, as that which would fall on these "ungodly men." Moreover, he declares that Enoch's prophecy would have its accomplishment in the judgment of these men whom he traces through the whole course of Christianity, from the time of their introduction in apostolic days until its close in the coming of the Lord with His holy myriads to execute the judgment announced.

It is a very common thing in commentators to treat these scriptures as referring only to the old heresies of the early ages of the Church and thus, of course, to cut off the continuous use of the warnings and instructions they contain. But the smallest attention to this epistle will show that there has been no such lapse in its instructions. The "ungodly men that had crept in unobserved" the apostle declares were corrupting the profession of Christianity

when he wrote, and that they, in their corresponding types, would be within the limits of its profession when the Lord comes to execute judgment on all the ungodly. Nothing, therefore, can be more evident than that they are there now. And it is most important as regards our walk with the Lord through the world, that we should be able to recognize them as there. The evil would, doubtless, become more developed in its course, but the elements of it were so marked when Jude wrote, that the Spirit could trace it on, and depict it in its final consummation and judgment.

The first thing that is noticed of these ungodly men is, that they turned "the grace of God into licentiousness," and denied the authority of Christ as the only Master and Lord. The grace of God was not denied, but it was turned into an occasion for the indulgence of the flesh and dissoluteness of walk. It is not formal infidelity, however it may issue in that and coalesce with it. It is the acknowledgment of the grace of

God apart from holiness of life as its legitimate fruit. For what can man, with an unchanged nature, do with "the grace of God," which, as a doctrine, he acknowledges, but in one way or other, corrupt it? It is only the renewed man that understands how "the grace of God which brings salvation teaches us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope," &c. But these men not only denied the holiness of the grace of God, but also the rights of our Lord Jesus Christ in His sovereign unlimited authority.* They would not own subjection to Him as the only Master (*δεσποτης*) and Lord. But where there was not walking according to the flesh the apostle could say "the weapons of our warfare are mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds, casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing

* One error seldom travels alone.

into captivity *every thought to the obedience of Christ.*"

But it is apostacy that is warned against though this is its commencement.

The tendency of any principle that is not of God can never be known, nor even suspected, apart from the light of the divine word. The Spirit of God sees things in their commencement and their final issues. At first those who are denounced in the Second of Timothy are marked out as persons that "creep into houses and lead captive silly women." But these beginnings of error are shown to result in the utter corruption of Christianity in "the last days" and "perilous times." And in this epistle (it ought not to be forgotten by us) the first point of divergence from the truth is marked as consisting in laxity of conduct in connexion with the profession of grace, and the refusal to submit the heart and will unreservedly to the authority of Christ. But the non-recognition of these claims of Christ, which are absolute, is the assertion of

the right to pursue my own will. But this is the principle of direct and absolute apostacy. "The king shall do according to *his will*."

The examples of apostacy that are adduced are exceedingly solemn, and they can only be lightly contemplated by those who lightly esteem the authority of the word of God. Learned men occupy themselves with discussions as to the sources whence these examples were derived, but to the simple mind there will be little difficulty. Whatever floating traditionary notices of truth, amidst the general wreck of the knowledge of God after the flood, were preserved, God could use. And that many of these notices were existent is plain, however much they might be mixed up with the corruption and fable that abounded in the leading nations of the Gentile world. But God could arrest and fix these elements of truth, which seemed to be held in solution by the corruption with which they were associated; and He has doubtless done so here, and also in that part of the

Second Epistle of Peter that is similar in purpose to that of Jude. There seems to be nothing more futile than the discussions of commentators as to which epistle was the prior written and to be considered original, and which quoted from the other. These traditions, from the days of Noah, were all floating in the common mind, mixed up with all sorts of fable and perversion; but the Spirit of the Lord could separate them and direct the mind of each writer to that which was suited to the specific object of each epistle. If man's mind is viewed as inditing Scripture, the difficulties connected with the subject are endless; if God be the author all difficulties vanish.

But there are other characteristics to be noticed of these "ungodly men." In verse 8, they are called "dreamers," indicating that, as not being guided by the truth, all their thoughts and speculations, their hopes and confidence, were but idle dreams. For what are the thoughts of men's minds in regard to the things of God, whether they be

learned or ignorant, if they are not guided by the word and the Spirit of God, but the dreams of their own imaginations? The power of God is not in these, nor the restraints of His grace, in a renewed nature; consequently there is no curb to licentiousness, nor any yoke or chain for the pride which disdains the restraints of authority and spurns with irreverence and contempt everything that is above itself. "They defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities."

This haughtiness in a fallen and impotent nature is contrasted with the spirit of an archangel, and condemned.

The head of the highest order of created beings of which we know, when in conflict with Satan did not assume, as belonging to himself, the right to bring against him a railing accusation, but said, "*the Lord rebuke thee.*" That is, in this loftier nature, just in proportion to his nearness to God, there was the reverence which is ever due from a created being to the Creator, which was absent from these proud

men, who were near to God in profession, but strangers to Him in heart. Nothing so hardens the spirit as occupation with religion without the heart having been brought to God by it.

“ But these speak evil of those things which they know not; but what they know naturally, as brute beasts, in these things they corrupt themselves.” Whatever things they did not know, that could not be brought within the range of their understanding, these things they utterly contemned. It is the error (rife enough) of reducing everything in God’s revelation to the standard of human reason, and speaking against everything that pretends to rise above it, as coming from a higher source. Man’s mind is the measure of all that he will receive in a revelation from God! But what these same men know naturally, as the unreasoning animals, in these things they perish. For what has man in the highest reach of his nature that does not perish? It is not that man in his nature is here reduced to the scope of a beast’s knowledge, but that,

in his own sphere, with all that he possesses naturally, he perishes in the pursuit, and the possession, and the enjoyment of these things. "Man that is in honour and understandeth not is like the beasts that perish."

In pronouncing their woe in verse 11, three new examples, taken from the historic scriptures, are cited as together giving the embodiment of the principles by which these "ungodly men," yet professing Christianity, were swayed.

"They have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core." "The way of Cain" is natural unbelief, accompanied by hatred of righteousness: the first developed form of evil in man, after the fall. It is nature proudly refusing to own the ruin of sin, and to take God's revelation as the only means of man's knowledge of his relations toward God; with, that which always follows, hatred of those who are in the enjoyment through grace of the divine favour. "Balaam" is the embodiment of the

principle of religious corruption. He possessed the truth, but used it for corrupt ends. It was not the rejection of God's revelation, but the employment of the light he possessed without the exercise of conscience, and without seeking God's ends. He used the light only for self-advancement, and as the means of securing his own advantage through it. "He loved the wages of unrighteousness;" and hence, notwithstanding his pretended *seeking to God for guidance*, he did not scruple to use his knowledge to corrupt directly the people of God. In the Revelation, when speaking of some who held the doctrine of Balaam, it is added, "who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication." "Corah" was a Levite who joined himself with the heads of Israel in rebellion against Moses and Aaron, seeking to usurp the kingly and priestly authority which God had in their persons set up. It is a type of the last phase of apostacy; when the ecclesiastical and civil power

will be found in open revolt against the kingly and priestly rights of the Lord Jesus Christ; like the beast and the false prophet of Revelation. The three examples present the progressive character of apostacy, and the principles by which it is wrought, and the foreshadowing of the judgment which will fall upon it in connexion with God's final revelation.

Then follows with intense energy the further description of these men. They were spots in their feasts of charity, (or perhaps sunken rocks endangering shipwreck;) clouds without water; trees without fruit, twice dead and plucked up by the roots; raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, &c. They were present in their feasts of charity—the *agapæ* or love-feasts of the early Christians. It was with no godly purpose, however, of cultivating feelings of holy fellowship; for they were only feeding themselves without fear in the pastures of the faithful.

But judgment would overtake them,

as Enoch's prophecy (ver. 14, 15) showed. For the Lord with His holy myriads would come and execute judgment, and convict all that were ungodly amongst them, &c.; showing that the evil which began in apostolic days would be present within the scope of the profession of Christianity when the Lord comes to judgment. Other scriptures show that the true Church, the body of Christ, will have been taken out of this scene by Christ before this takes place; as it said, "when Christ who is our life shall be *manifested*, we shall be manifested with him in glory;" and also in this prophecy of Enoch, "Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints to execute judgment," &c. When judgment is executed the saints come with the judge.

But the unbridled licence of the tongue, which is next noticed as a characteristic of these ungodly men, should not be passed over without remark. There were the hard speeches of these ungodly sinners, who were saying, in principle, "Our tongues are our own,

who is Lord over us ?” There were the murmurers and complainers, the great swelling words of those who had men’s persons in admiration for the sake of profit, and the mockers of the last times, when there would be a confluence of all the evils warned against in the epistle.

It is a dreadful picture of the various features in which the self-will and self-exaltation of man will eventually display itself in connexion with the profession of discipleship to Him who emphatically said, “Take my yoke upon you and learn of ME, for I am MEEK *and lowly in heart*,” and which, in all its essential features, we are warned is working now. But the evil having been foreseen and described, in its actual coming in, only serves to confirm the faith of those who are guided by the divine word, and seek to walk in subjection to the light it gives.

It remains but to notice, in the warning part of the epistle, verse 19: “These be they who separate themselves, sensual, not having the Spirit.” This is not a separation for any purpose, holy

or otherwise, from the professing body; but while they were in it, as “spots in their feasts of charity,” they drew a line of distinction around themselves—perhaps by a claim to the only prescriptive right to minister in the Church as in the line of succession from the apostles—but the Spirit of God disowns altogether their claim by saying, they are “natural men (*ψυχικοί*) not having the Spirit.” The contrast to them in every point is presented in the exhortation to believers, “But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.” With them was the power of true holiness, or separation to God, as it is said, “they were sanctified by God the Father and preserved in Jesus Christ.” The faith they held was “their most holy faith;” and so far from not having the Spirit, they were to be found “praying in the Holy Ghost,” &c.

Having gone through the subjects of

warning in the epistle, it is exceedingly comforting to notice how the Spirit of the Lord, in thus denouncing the evil, while traversing the whole course of apostacy in order to warn the more solemnly by the examples it affords, preserves untouched the blessing and standing of believers, and says not one word that could rightly disturb the confidence, or the true grounds of confidence, of the feeblest saint in the family of God.

This is presented with divine perfectness in the commencement and the close.

In the commencement there is the distinctive address of the epistle. It is to those who, having been called, were "sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ." They were in the effect of Christ's prayer in John xvii. "Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me." And thus sanctified and kept, they were exhorted "earnestly to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints." The apostle's purpose was to write to them of the "common salvation," but he was turned aside from that by the presence

in their midst, as a professing body, of the germs of that evil which we have already noticed, and which gives its special character to this epistle. It was now no longer a question of enlarging the boundaries of their faith, but of zealously guarding the divine deposit they had already received. It is a great thing, when the tide of corruption sets especially against the integrity of divine revelation and the living association of believers with God through the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, that He should be able to say to us, "Thou hast kept my word and hast not denied my name."

"The faith once delivered to the saints" is the sum of christian truth, as presented in apostolic teaching, the record of which is preserved to us in the New Testament, and especially in the *Epistles*. This they were to contend for, or, in other words, were to maintain inviolate, at all costs. It is by this faith which was once for all delivered to the saints that the soul is put into direct communication and association with God.

The conscience is purged from guilt and there is the living action of the new man in a recognized relationship with Him. For we are begotten by the word; and there is a real life of God through union with the Lord Jesus Christ. Where this living power is not known there is no safeguard for the soul. It is not that God will not keep His own but that which gives a vital power against error, in the living possession of all that divinely meets the need of the soul, is not present. Error finds its place in the heart that is not at rest in God—the heart that has something yet to *seek*, and is not in the position where it has only to enjoy and to advance in the knowledge of that which is possessed. The Apostle John says, “That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us, and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.” And it may be added that it was their most holy faith on account of its bringing the soul into association with God in the light even as He is in the light.

It is a ruinous thing to stop at the truth of doctrine as doctrine and not to go on to the blessed reality of the truth in the enjoyment and responsibilities of that position in relationship with God to which the truth is designed to bring us.

“Praying in the Holy Ghost” assumes the normal position of the believer to be that of having the Spirit, in contrast with those who are characterized as “natural men having not the Spirit.” But it is not the doctrine of the Holy Spirit here, but rather the recognition of the known and blessed privilege of those who are born of God, that they are “born of the Spirit, led by the Spirit,” and have the indwelling of the Spirit, as the blessed link of their communion with God. Neither is it the laying the foundations of the faith nor enlarging its scope for the general profit of the saints. On the contrary, the perfectness of its revelation is assumed, and the exhortation is to maintain it incorrupt. The doctrine of the Holy Ghost is abundantly given in other

scriptures; here it is presented in a practical way as the only power of communion with God, the blessed link of connexion with Him as the source of light and holiness when all was being corrupted around.

“Keep yourselves in the love of God.” This is the true element of the present life of God in believers and is the result of their building themselves up in their most holy faith and praying in the Holy Ghost. By the occupation of the heart with the blessed revelations God has given of His character and of His infinite grace in Christ Jesus, and by turning, under the influence of these truths, to intercourse with God, from whom the truth comes, the soul is kept by the power of the Holy Spirit in the brightness of that love which is characteristic of God and which never changes however little apprehended by us in its divine perfectness. But this can never be known by the mere workings of the human mind nor indeed in any other way than through the faith of the believer in the divine word and in the

operation of the Spirit of God in the soul.

“Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.” Deliverance was to be looked for out of all around them that would be judged, into the full enjoyment of that eternal life, which is at once the present and future inheritance of the saints. It was mercy in the sense of deliverance from the apostasy and corruption which the coming of the Lord would judge, but much more so in the sense of having been morally separated by grace from what was so contrary to God, and truth, and holiness, in that wide spread sea of evil which under the guise of Christianity was pouring its waves around.

This completes their own personal position, but there was something else. If we have the truth for our own salvation and joy, and the light for guidance along our heavenly road, we have it also that we may be witnesses for God and for Christ, as long as we remain in the world. Hence, in the midst of evil, which cannot be restrained, charity is

still to have its exercise; not indeed by the relaxation of the holiness of our own walk, but in the ability which walking in the light gives to help others who may not thus be in the light. But there is a difference to be made between those who are deceived and misled by others, and those who are discerned to be themselves deceivers and active corrupters of the truth. Towards the one compassion is to be exercised; but with the other there is to be no kind of association, but in any attempt to deliver them, there is to be the exercise of that fear which is the only preservative of the soul from their contagion. "And of some have compassion, making a difference: and others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh."

The apostle now turns in heart and address to God as the only unfailing stay and safeguard of His people. He may warn, and exhort, and encourage, but the power of evil would over-pass every barrier, were it not for the sustaining and restraining hand of God.

“His eyes run to and fro in all the earth to show himself strong in behalf of those whose hearts are perfect toward him.” For whatever may be the power of the enemy, or the broken condition of the Church here in the world, the power of Christ does not cease to be exercised in its behalf; and it is certain that God has linked the well-being of every soul that trusts in Him with His own eternal counsels. It is not only, as the apostle Peter says, that their inheritance is reserved in heaven for them, but believers, as heirs of the inheritance, are “kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation.” “God is faithful,” says the apostle Paul, “by whom ye are called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ.”

But how wonderful is the issue of the exercise of that power and grace to which the apostle turns as to the source of all his confidence for the saints! Apostacy has been the subject of his epistle: examples the most solemn have been passed in review for the warning of the faithful: the evils which gave

rise to these warnings were already in the midst of their assemblies, and were seen by the ken of the prophetic Spirit in darkening features going onward until arrested by the coming of the Lord to judgment; still he can say, "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy. To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen."

There is no mischief that a will not subject to Christ is not capable of; and there is no remedy for the evil in the Church of God, but in the full recognition of Christ's absolute rights over us. He is more than Lord. He is Master, (*δεσποτης*), with absolute, unlimited authority. God has "given him power over all flesh;" and "He is the only Lord and Master." But there is nothing that gives such rest to the heart as the full recognition of this absolute supremacy. There is a supreme will, an absolute authority, to which

we must *needs* be subject. But who is this absolute Master, with unlimited rights over us? It is God, and the Lord Jesus Christ! Then, I reply, my destinies for time and eternity are in the only hands to which my soul, if it could choose, would absolutely entrust them.

“My times are in thy hand,
Father, I wish them there;
My life, my soul, my all, I leave
Entirely to thy care.”

Until this is practically owned, the will, in one way or another, will seek to assert itself. But what of necessity is the moral character of a will in action that does not implicitly bow in everything to the Lord Jesus Christ, this epistle has fully shown. An independent will is of necessity an opposing will. But the exhortation of the Spirit to us (and all our blessing hangs upon it) is, “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the

form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth: and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Amen."

F R A G M E N T.

The very place which Christ holds, is inseparably connected with God's love to some one else. If He is the *firstborn*, it is among many brethren. Could any one of us have held such a place, our stress would have been upon the first-born—*I* am the firstborn. Not so with Christ. If He is the firstborn, it is to bring His *brethren to God*. What would all the pre-eminence be to Christ

if it separated from God? Eve, in order to gain the pre-eminence, risked the loss of God; but Christ being from the Father was associated with the Father, and when seen pre-eminent in glory, it will be in full communion with God.

The delight of Christ is, to bring all the fulness of God's character to bear upon every little crevice in our hearts.

What is that which is most precious to Christ? That, through Him, God would make known to the "many sons" all the fulness of His heart, the riches of His grace.

How comforting, too, is this love of Christ's heart with reference to the poor Jews, who are becoming more and more the subjects of interest in all that is taking place on the earth.

Every trait in the divine character, everything which was morally glorious in God, shined out in Christ. As seen in Psalm i. light in the midst of darkness, the Son of man gave the thorough indication of the character of God.

He would not be alone in the glory.

“He bringeth forth his fruit in the season.” “I am the true vine; ye are the branches.” Here is the full thought even with regard to God’s earthly purposes. There is nothing before God, but one single Being, as the Root and the channel of all blessing. Observe, that the provision has been made for us, and it is always so; when mercy comes in, it is on the ground of that which is in us, not being that which God can like.

The peculiarity of the blessing connected with this Root is, that there is *culture* and *success*; unlike Luke xiv., where all the culture so sadly ended in failure and disappointment. Success! “All things work together for good to them that love God.” Is this truth fresh in our hearts with respect to God’s dealings with us now? Each of us has some peculiar trial, some thorn in the flesh. it may be, rankling and festering; but seen in the light of this truth, we may not, we cannot call this otherwise than “good.”

JEREMIAH AN EXAMPLE.

How instructive it is to remark the instruments God uses wherewith to accomplish His designs. As His resource when all had failed, by which He could show Himself just and yet the justifier of them that believe in Jesus, surpasses all that man had conceived, or could have dreamt of, so often when He works, the instruments selected are just those which man would have rejected as utterly unfit for the occasion. But those very instruments, when taken up and fitted for the object God has in view, bring out His power and redound to His glory. Of this Jeremiah is a striking instance, who, naturally timid and retiring, is yet made by the Lord as bold as a lion, and able to do and to brave what the stoutest heart might well have shrunk from.

To testify against evil, to expose the wickedness of a generation, and declare the sin of a people, is ever a difficult task to the creature. It shrinks back at the bare thought of it, and well it may, for what power has the earthen

vessel in itself? But if the Lord is with it, if He deigns to use it, weak and fragile in itself, in His hand it can become a "defenced city, an iron pillar, and brazen walls." (Jer. i. 18.) One thus situated is brought into opposition to the current thoughts and feelings of the world, making him clash with the opinions, maxims, and habits of those who, whatever they profess, are really opposed to God, and under the power and authority of the great enemy of the Lord. "The friendship of the world is enmity with God." (James iv. 4.) It must be a work of faith, and the work of faith attests the impotency of the creature, and the power of God. For if confident in its own strength, and assured it can overcome by its own power, it seeks not elsewhere for assistance; but if the task assigned is felt to be too great, it can only go forward in the strength of another. And if it then turns away from all earthly sources, and looks alone to God, it walks by faith. And the walking by faith is the going contrary to that which nature would

dictate, the incurring that which worldly prudence would avoid, and the doing that which a regard to personal comfort and ease would counsel the individual most strongly to leave alone.

Weak and timid as a child is Jeremiah as presented to us in chapter i., when the prophetic commission is announced to him. "Ah, Lord God, I cannot speak, for I am a child." (Ver. 6.) Such are the first accents of the future prophet which burst on our ears. He stands aghast at the task assigned him—"A prophet unto the nations." "I am a child," he says. Did not the Lord know this? Assuredly He did; for He had already said, "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest out of the womb I sanctified thee; I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations." His commission now delivered him was clearly no after thought. The One who sends him forth to the nations had formed him from the belly, and sanctified him from the womb for this very work. Before Jeremiah entered on the future scene of his prophetic

ministry, the Lord had sanctified him, and ordained him a prophet to the nations. This announcement, so comforting and cheering to one who has learnt to trust the living God, failed to support Jeremiah. He was occupied with his weakness; he saw that; he felt that. He could give no heed to the words, "I formed thee, I sanctified thee." He urges objections, "I cannot speak, for I am a child." His youth he thought a reasonable objection to obedience to the divine command. His inability to speak is in his eyes a fitting reason why the Lord should not send him; yet the Lord had ordained him from the womb for this work. How often do we see similar conduct in God's children, perhaps have experienced it in our own case. God calls, His servant objects. There is a difficulty, an obstacle which we have discovered that God has overlooked; an obstacle which must prove a most effectual hindrance to compliance with His will. He cannot speak, he is a child: as with Jeremiah, so with Moses; objections of

personal inefficiency are urged. Has God made a mistake? How could He? He has formed him. It is well to be thoroughly sensible of our own weakness, and to feel that we cannot do anything of ourselves. "When I am weak, then am I strong." But it is never right to make our sense of weakness an excuse for disobeying God. We cannot be too sensible of our nothingness, but let us be as fully sensible of God's all-sufficiency. Obedience to God is always right. God had called him to the office, however unfit he felt himself for it. Doubtless, humanly speaking, he was unfit. If man had been selecting a suitable person, it would probably not have been Jeremiah. Jesse never thought of presenting David before Samuel. Samuel thought Eliab was the one God had chosen; but till David came they could not sit down to meat, and when he came the Lord's anointed stood before them.

In objecting Jeremiah was wrong. Conscious of God's express command objections could have no place. Besides

what good was gained by this? Could he turn aside the Lord from His purpose? Sooner or later he must obey. Jonah, dismayed at the work given him to do, attempts to fly to Tarshish to avoid its execution. He could delay its commencement by his disobedience, but he could not change God's counsel concerning him. Go he must, and go he did. Israel in the wilderness shrunk from personal conflict with the nations of Canaan. The war was delayed for forty years, but had to be encountered at last; and the very enemies which their fathers feared to meet, the children had to overcome. Jeremiah endeavours, but in vain, to change the mind of the Lord. "The Lord of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it?" The prophet's failure gives occasion for the manifestation of the Lord's graciousness who allows his servant to reason with Him, not to change His mind, but to be overruled by assurances of His help and protection. "Say not I am a child; for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee

thou shalt speak. Be not afraid of their faces; for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the Lord." (Ver. 7, 8.) If his being a child is no valid objection to his employment as prophet, neither is his inability of speech to be an hindrance for the work. "And the Lord put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the Lord said unto me, Behold I have put my words in thy mouth. See I have set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build and to plant." (Ver. 9, 10.) What a commission is here! To nature most appalling, to faith God's will, and that is enough.

But his work does not end here. He might have discharged the office of prophet to the nations without once coming into contact with the subjects of his prophecies, by sending them to the different nations by the hand of messengers, as he did in some cases. (Chap. xxvii. 2; li. 59—64.) What follows, however, cut off all hope of seclusion. He must face men, prophecy against Judah, and

announce judgments against Jerusalem. "Thou therefore gird up thy loins, and arise, and speak unto them all that I command thee; be not dismayed at their faces, lest I confound thee before them. For, behold, I have made thee this day a defenced city, and an iron pillar, and brazen walls against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, against the princes thereof, against the priests thereof, and against the people of the land. And they shall fight against thee; but they shall not prevail against thee; for I am with thee to deliver thee." (Chap. i. 17—19.) From this there could be no escape. If he drew back the Lord would confound him before them. If he went forward it would be to incur their hatred, and encounter their opposition. "They shall fight against thee." To stand still was impossible; retreat was out of the question; to go forward is all he could do; and "I am with thee to deliver thee," is all he had to trust to: but that was the word of His God.

His message was to be one of reproof and judgment, though many precious

promises were mingled with the announcement of coming wrath. There are some who seem to take pleasure in predicting evil, and foretelling the judgments which impend on their adversaries. Had Jeremiah been one of this class, he might have found his difficulties in some degree counterbalanced by the pleasure of foreseeing the confusion and misery of his oppressors. But he was a man of a different stamp. In accordance with the spirit of the dispensation under which he lived, he could pray for the punishment of his enemies. (Chap. xv. 15.) Yet we find him grieved to the heart at the evil he was the medium of predicting. (Chap. iv. 19—26; viii. 18—22; ix. 1; xiii. 17.) In no way, then, was the office of prophet congenial to his nature. Naturally timid, he shrank from conflict with the wicked; and when uttering the word of the Lord, foretelling the punishment and misery coming on his people, his gentle soul is pained, and the spirit of intercession, which arose from the depths of his heart, is only checked by repeated injunctions from the

Lord to refrain. (Chap. vii. 16; xi. 14, 15; xiv. 11; xv. 1.)

From the beginning to the end of his ministry he is obliged to face the ungodly part of the nation, and even to enter the king's house, and there deliver his messages of woe. He is continually put forward and made by the Lord to take a most prominent place in his country's history. How does he comport himself in this, to him, unwished-for position?

His first public acts are to press home on the conscience of the nation, if possible, a conception of the enormity of their guilt. From chapter ii.—xii. he is occupied with setting before them their iniquities, which may be summed up under three heads—general corruption, idolatry, and covenant breaking.

From chapter ii.—vi. he unfolds their general corruption, crying in the ears of Jerusalem—The Lord had only done them good from the earliest period of their national existence. They had requited Him with the blackest ingratitude, having forsaken Him, the fountain of living waters, and hewn out for them-

selves cisterns, broken cisterns that could hold no water. From the Lord they had turned to Assyria, and when that failed, they had looked to Egypt for help. Their glory they had changed for that which did not profit. Idolatry was established, with its concomitant vices, for which the prophet reproves them. (Chap. ii. 27; iii. 9; v. 7—9.) The Lord's word was disbelieved. (Chap. v. 12.) They were rebellious. All classes were corrupt. Providential dealings had no effect. (Chap. iii. 3.) "As a fountain casteth out her waters, so Jerusalem casteth out her wickedness." (Chap. vi. 7.) No shame could be seen on their face, not a blush on their cheeks. (Ver. 15.) Reprobate silver would they be called, because the Lord had rejected them. (Ver. 30.) Among such was Jeremiah placed "as a fortress and tower to know and try their ways." (Ver. 27.)

From chapter vii.—x. the prophet is sent to speak to the men of Judah in the house of the Lord, to show up their abominable sins carried on whilst calling out, "The temple of the Lord, the tem-

ple of the Lord are these." (Chap. vii. 4.) They were hypocrites. They could steal, murder, commit adultery, burn incense to Baal, and come to the Lord's house, saying they were delivered to do all these things.

Their idolatry is then denounced. But in this they were not alone. The heathen were guilty of it likewise, therefore a message is sent to them by the "prophet to the nations," announcing (in Chaldee) (Chap. x. 11) that "the gods who have not made the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth and from under these heavens." After this we have the contrast between idols and the Lord God brought out, (x. 14—16) and judgment is prayed for on the heathen, "for they have eaten up Jacob and devoured him, and consumed him, and have made his habitation desolate."

But if Judah was guilty in common with the Gentiles of idolatry and its accompanying vices, there was a sin peculiarly their own—they had broken the covenant. This is next charged against them. (Chap. xi., xii.) God

has therefore forsaken His house, left His heritage. (Chap. xii. 7.) Prayer for them is now of no avail. (Chap. xi. 14.) Yet afterwards the Lord will be gracious. The nation shall be restored, but in the meantime those who have provoked His anger will suffer for it.

These three grand charges having been pressed on them, the prophet is next shown, under different figures, the certainty of the Lord's rejection of His people. The girdle marred at the river Euphrates, (chap. xiii.,) is explained to mean the bringing down of their pride. God "will dash them one against another, even the fathers and the sons together." (Ver. 14.) He will not pity, nor spare, nor have mercy. By the occasion of a dearth, the prophet learns again, when desirous to intercede, that the Lord will not accept it now, and even if Moses and Samuel stood before Him, He would not hear them. The sword, the famine, death, captivity will be their portion, and nothing now remains for the faithful but separation from the ungodly. (Chap. xiv., xv.) The two

next chapters (xvi., xvii.) bring out in full relief how far the separation is to be carried; not merely separation in heart, but in act. (Chap. xvi. 1—8.) Difficult indeed must such a path ever be, but the faithful are strengthened by the assurance of blessings to those who trust in the Lord, and the curse that should follow those who trusted in man. (Chap. xvii. 5—8.) The potter's vessel marred in the potter's hand, and the vessel broken by the prophet in the valley of the son of Hinnom before certain of the elders of the people and elders of the priests, illustrate God's power and right to do as He will with His people, and the certainty of their being broken before Him. (Chap. xviii. xix.) Chapters xxi.—xxiv. comes in the royal house of David, its punishment, and the future glory attaching to it. Shallum, Josiah's son, will return no more, nor see his native country again. Jehoiakim will be buried with the burial of an ass; Coniah, a despised and broken vessel, should die in Babylon. Zedekiah will be childless, yet the family of

David shall not be cut off for ever. "Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his day Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, Jehovah our Righteousness." (Chap. xxiii. 5, 6.) But this was future, and is future yet. At the time Jeremiah lived, how different the scene! In the midst of unrighteousness of kings, prophets, and priests this prophecy comes, a bright spot in the surrounding darkness. Before, however, it could be realized, and the reign of righteousness commence, a general judgment of the nations must take place. The cup, drunk first by Judah, must be afterwards drunk by all, and by Babylon, the scourge used of God to carry out His purposes. This is the subject of the following chapter (xxv.)

Another part of the book now commences. The sovereignty departing from Judah was to be transferred to Gentile

hands, and all must submit to him, for so had God willed. The prophet is now placed in a very difficult position, he must exhort his countrymen still in Judæa, and these already in captivity, with the nations around the land, to accept the sovereignty of Nebuchadnezzar. But it would be only for a limited time. Afterwards Israel would be restored, and be again governed by their own rulers, and David their king be in their midst. This is the leading subject of chapters xxvi.—xxxiii. From xxxiv.—xlv. we have illustrated the different ends of those who profess, and those who practise, obedience. Those who manifest profession without reality are destroyed; those who are obedient have life. Jonadab should never want a man to stand before the Lord for ever; and Baruch's life is given him for a prey. The concluding portion is occupied with the predictions against certain nations, two of them descendants of Ham, the others descendants of Shem.

Throughout his ministry we see the prophet brought prominently forward,

the consequences to himself it is not difficult to guess. Four times is his life in danger. (Chap. xi. 19—21; xxvi. 11; xxxvi. 26; xxxviii. 4.) The hostility of the people is not confined to threats. Once is he put into the stocks, (chap. xx.,) twice into dungeons, to be kept in prison, when delivered from the pit in the house of Malchiah, till Jerusalem was taken. (Chap. xxxvii. 16; xxxviii. 6, 13; xxxix. 14.) The book ends with the prophet in Egypt, carried captive thither by Johanan, and the remnant left in the land. Truly he was a man of woes. "Woe is me, my mother, that thou hast borne me a man of strife and contention to the whole earth! I have neither lent on usury, nor men have lent to me on usury; yet every one of them doth curse me." (Chap. xv. 10.)

What a place for him to occupy. From the thirteenth year of King Josiah to the flight of Johanan into Egypt, for a period of more than forty years, was Jeremiah before his people, reproving them and warning them of

coming judgments. On several occasions their rage against him was openly manifested; yet he persevered in spite of all. A good illustration of his boldness and faithfulness is afforded us in chapter xxvi. 14, when his life was threatened by the priests, the prophets, and their partisans among the people. There is no drawing back, no cringing, no temporising. "As for me, behold I am in your hands; do with me as seemeth good and meet unto you." Death he is ready to meet, anything rather than withdraw his words, or refuse to utter what God had commanded. How different his words here to what we have in chapter i. There he feared the faces of men, (i. 8, 17,) now he only fears God. He speaks as directed and leaves the issue with the Lord. He suffered much. He suffered from foreseeing the calamities which were coming on his country: he suffered in showing her calamities when they came. He suffered from his countrymen, who 'rewarded him evil for good and hatred for his good will.' From the heathen monarch, the destruction of whose king-

dom, and capture of whose metropolis he foretold, he received nothing but kindness. (xxxix. 11; xl. 4.) From his own countrymen, some bright examples excepted, as Ahikam and Ebed-melech, he experienced nothing but bitterness, hostility, and persecution.

We see in him the feebleness of the creature and the strength which God can give. He failed sometimes. Who is there but One who could tread such a path without failure? But if we refer to this it is not to make a spectacle of human infirmity, still less to sit in judgment on the prophet. If any take pleasure in such a task let them perform it, taking care that he that is without sin should cast the first stone at him. For us his failure, weakness, and natural timidity of character are occasions for illustrating what the power of God can do; how He can fit the most unlikely instrument to human eyes to perform the greatest work, and how the agent least suited apparently for such a service may be enabled effectually to perform it.

This leads us to the consideration of the

secret of his success. He obeyed God unhesitatingly, and brought all his difficulties to Him with the simplicity of a child. When first called to his office, as we have seen, he questions before he obeys; ever after he obeys before he questions. He learnt his lesson of obedience at the commencement of his ministry. Have we learnt ours? Grievous to him, indeed, were the messages he had often to give, but he delivers them as received; hence his boldness. Assured it was the word of the Lord, he goes forth to encounter the opposition of priests, prophets, kings, and people. No matter who opposes, or who may threaten, he must speak, and he does. See him in chapter xx. after he has come out of the stocks, put into them by Pashur, the governor of the house of the Lord, for predicting the desolation of the city: he has felt the power of man for his faithfulness to God. When let out the next day he repeats the unwelcome truth, directly charges Pashur with prophesying lies, and calls him Magor-missabib. Then see him before

God: "O Lord, thou hast deceived me (or persuaded), and I was deceived (persuaded): thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed: I am in derision daily, every one mocketh me. For since I spake, I cried out, I cried violence and spoil; because the word of the Lord was made a reproach unto me, and a derision daily. Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name, but his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay." (Chap. xx. 7—9.) Before the Lord he unfolds his thoughts and fears. Before men he is bold as a lion, the brazen wall and iron pillar. Before God we see him pouring out his complaint, confessing his hesitation, setting forth his troubles. He unbosoms himself to the Lord. This gives confidence. For the Lord, before whom and to whom he speaks, was with him "as a mighty and terrible One; therefore," he says, "my persecutors shall stumble and they shall not prevail; they shall be greatly ashamed; for they shall not

prosper ; their everlasting confusion shall never be forgotten." (Verse. 11.) With this confidence he can sing unto the Lord, and exhort others to do the same, on the ground of deliverance accomplished, " He hath delivered the soul of the poor from the hand of evildoers." (Ver. 13.) With Jeremiah the path of obedience is the only safe path, and he walks therein in faith: obedience carries him forward, faith keeps him up. Obedience did not bring him into an easy place. It did not put away difficulties. It seemed to create them, but it always afforded a way of surmounting them. To go forward was the command to Israel at the Red Sea ; here their obedience was tested to trust in the Lord to open the way ; here their faith was tried, so with Jeremiah, and with all God's people. The only safe principle is obedience on the ground of faith. He went through difficulties, suffered imprisonments, had his feet made fast in the stocks, passed some time in the dungeons, sank deep in the mire. He suffered this and much more because he was obedient ; he could

trust the Lord, and therefore he could look each difficulty in the face, and go forward ; not that his faith never failed. In this very chapter we have an instance of failure. (Ver. 14—18.) But the principle that he acted on was obedience, and he found it one which could stand every test to which it was subjected.

Again, see him in chapter xxxii., when told to buy the field of Hanameel, the son of Shallum, his uncle. He does not understand it, but he buys it according to the word of the Lord. After he has bought it he asks the Lord about it; and He, who always responds to His people's faith, answers him with words of comfort, telling of the blessing yet in store for the nation and places the prophet so truly loved.

In all this there is much instruction for us. The prophet, when obedient, finds God always faithful. He had promised his enemies should not prevail against him. This always came true. They could oppress, they could afflict, they could threaten, they could

imprison, they could attempt his life, but never take it. Pashur should die in Babylon. Hananiah must die that same year he prophesied, and he did just two months after his prediction, (chap. xxviii., 1, 17,) because he taught rebellion against the Lord. Shemaiah the Nehelamite should not see the good the Lord would do to Israel, nor have a man to dwell among his people. (Chap. xxix. 32.) But the Lord's promise to Jeremiah never failed. "I am with thee to deliver thee." (Chap. i. 19.) Few though these words are, how much was conveyed by them. The presence of the Lord to deliver him. Into a strange land he would go. With the remnant of the people he would share the affliction of his nation. But who could break the iron, even the northern iron and brass? (Chap. xv. 12.) The Lord made him a *brazen wall, which could not be broken.*

A man of sorrows truly he was. Yet he had a joy in spite of his circumstances and even in the midst of his greatest trials. His joy was the word of his God. That which seemed to

outward eyes the cause of his troubles afforded him solace in these troubles. "Thy words were found and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O Lord God of hosts." (Chap. xv. 16.) But if the word received into his soul gave him joy, it was the instrument which separated him from the surrounding evil. "I sat not in the assembly of the mockers, nor rejoiced; I sat alone, because of thy hand; for thou hast filled me with indignation." Personifying the faithful remnant, he expresses what they suffered. But grievous as their position was, it was the place of testimony and the sphere of influence. What follows shows this. "If thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth: let them return unto thee; but return not thou unto them. And I will make thee unto this people a fenced brasen wall: and they shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail against thee: for I am with thee to save thee and to deliver thee, saith the Lord. And I will deliver thee out of the hand of the

wicked, and I will redeem thee out of the hand of the terrible." (Chap. xv. 19—21.)

We see what the word of the Lord was to him. According to it he walked in obedience. From it he drew comfort and joy. By means of it he was separated from the evil around him. What the word was to him, that it should be to God's people at all times. Is it so with us? He went not by his thoughts, his feelings, his surmises. He walked according to the word as soon as he was assured it was the word. Nothing more is required of us. It is to the word, the doctrine, we are to give heed, the doctrine, according to godliness, the word of God's grace. That word separated him from evil. Does it so act on us? It should: but if we are to walk in obedience to God's word it must be in separation from all that is contrary to it. Comfort there will be from the word in the assured presence of the Lord, and the joy which the truths He has made known give to the heart which feeds on them; but separation there must be. How often is the bait held out of greater

influence at the price of unfaithfulness. Too rigid conformity, it is said, to the word of God offends some. A little relaxing, a little yielding to the opinion of others will enable personal influence to have its due weight. Such are man's thoughts. How contrary to these are God's. So chapter xv. 19 and 2 Timothy ii. 21 show. "If thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth." "If a man purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified and meet for the master's use, and prepared for every good work." We cannot want more. Here is influence indeed. Be as God's mouth, a vessel meet for the master's use, and prepared for every good work. But this can only be reached by separating from all that is contrary to God.

May the Lord give to all His people the desire to know what this is and to act on it. Obedience to God's word is the safeguard in days of evil. That leads to separation, a painful and difficult path, but there is then found a joy from the word which was unknown before. And we can only be happy, only be

strong, only be influential when walking by faith in child-like obedience to the Lord's revealed will.

THE TEMPTATION.

(Matt. iv. 1—11.)

“Then was Jesus led up of the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungered. And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, and saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down, for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord

thy God. Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; and saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him."

The first thing suggested to the mind in reading this wonderful scene might be, How exceedingly unlike are we to Jesus. He was the only Man who ever trod this earth in whom Satan had nothing. How much he has in us; and if we know it not, it is because of the darkness of our minds. Jesus was tried in many ways, but always found perfect; as here, when tried by Satan; also when tried by man in the case of the scribes and Pharisees coming to Him to entangle Him in His talk; and last and worst, when tried by God in the last scene on the cross! Not one failure is in Him. Satan's temptation was of a threefold

character, like as it was in the garden of Eden: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. But how differently is it met! Satan knew, if this was the Messiah, he was both God and man, so he puts his temptation accordingly, so as to place the Lord in a dilemma; He must deny one of the truths, either His power as God, or His subjection as man. Eve was tempted to disobedience in the midst of surrounding abundance, but the Lord Jesus was faithful when in the urgency of nature's wants. He was only pressed to use convenient food. The Lord answers him meekly, and takes His place amongst the failed family of Israel by quoting from Deuteronomy, the book of the failure. The second temptation partakes of the character of the lust of the eye, which includes more than the desire of the objects of beauty, to gratify the eye, which are in the world. It goes farther, it cannot trust God's word, it *wants a sign*. The Holy Spirit is not known by the world because it *seeth Him not*. And here the devil tempts Christ to prove by a sign whether He was the Christ or

not. But though he comes with God's own promise to Christ in the Psalms, he finds no particle of this lust of the eye in Jesus. He would not tempt the Lord His God to give him a sign that He was with Him. He believed, he *knew* He was. He again took his place among the failed ones. But when the devil comes with the last temptation, the Lord answers Him quite differently. He calls him Satan, which means *adversary*. The other two temptations had been as the accuser, "I do not know whether you are the Christ?" But this last, "If you will fall down and worship *me*," proclaimed him God's enemy, aiming to possess what alone belonged to God; and immediately the Lord's indignation rose, and He answered, "Get thee hence, Satan."

WHY MAY WE NOT ADORN OURSELVES?

Because it would be quite contrary to the character of our dispensation, which is that "the body is dead," and that we have died together with Jesus; and

therefore it would be quite contrary to the nature of the dispensation, if we took the adornment of these things according to the flesh and the world, to which we wish to show that we are dead.

In the next place we must remember that we are set in the midst of a *groaning creation*; and more than that in the midst of a *ruined Church*. And do those adornments which befit the house of joy and the house of the Bride seem suited to such a condition as this? Could Jeremiah have adorned himself with the adornment of the world when he was entering into the ruined and fallen state of Jerusalem? No. When he was feeling the call for his head to be waters, and his eyes to be fountains of tears he would find no temptation ever to take up these adornments.

In the third place the necessity of the time should urge us to give all our adornments to the need of others, both of that of the Church and the world.

Lastly, the Lord Jesus took the place of uncomeliness in this world, which is sufficient to mark it as our right path.

A SERIES.

No. 12.

THE LORD'S SUPPER AND THE LORD'S TABLE.

In undertaking to enter on the above most interesting subject, I am, on the one hand, impressed with the gravity of it, and therefore approach it with caution; while, on the other hand, I look to the Lord to keep me in accordance with His word; and the blessedness of the subject assures me that the more we seek the mind of the Lord in reference to it, the more gain and blessing will redound to our souls.

By baptism we have seen we profess that the death of Christ is our starting-point. Now if we accept this in faith, we find ourselves, as to earth, in the place where our Lord died, and it is as we realize this that we come to understand the import and value of the Lord's Supper, whereby we "shew forth His death until He come."

It was when the Lord's death was at hand; the very night in which He was

betrayed, that He first engaged His own with this supper. He, though still living with them, was on the eve of departing. He was going to leave them, and the scene in which they were, through death; and with this death, of which He was in full contemplation, He would connect them in this most solemn and united way. What else could He connect them with while they remain here and He remains absent? What else but that, which, *as to place*, severed Him from them (death being the portal through which He left the earth), especially when that which He was to pass through was for their eternal gain and blessing in association with Himself? They were to remain here; He was by death departing from them; and hence His heart demands of them to remember Him *as He LEFT THEM*; and that was His body broken and His blood shed for them. Mark! how specially it is noted for us, that on the "*night in which he was betrayed*" He called His disciples around Him for this purpose. Now is disclosed the terrible fact that

there is no escape for man but in the death of the Christ. At one and the same moment—at one and the same point—the dire ruin of man and the infinite love of God are to meet, and there alone find what completely suits both one and the other. It has come to this—the Son of the Blessed must die, “the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God.” And for those who know His service and enjoy His love, what would be their true and happy link or expression in the scene where all this occurred? What but His death, through which all who believe on Him are judicially severed from everything which caused it. Hence, in this world, where everything being against God conspired to cause the death of Christ, on whom the judgment of it was laid, it must of necessity be the great place of the saints as on earth to remember Him in His death; to connect Himself with all His people in united, solemn remembrance of Him, in that act by which they are judicially delivered from the judgment on all that with which they are surrounded.

First, there is personal affection to Himself attaching the heart in remembrance of Him in the scene of His death till He comes; allowing nothing else to fill up the interval from His death to His coming, which is all, in this sense, a blank to us. If we speak of ourselves here, it is with reference to His death; and if we would turn our eyes here from it, the only point He presents to them, is His coming from whence He sat down on high. He was rejected from the earth. They who in their hearts would not have Him to reign over them, were condemned as enemies. The days had come in which the Bridegroom was to be taken away from them, and what could His disciples—those who knew and loved Him—be but widows in heart? They could not but “fast in those days.” Mary Magdalene felt the blank; for though repaired to faith at God’s right hand, it was *never repaired here*. The heart true to Him, and not partaking of the spirit of His enemies, who refused His rule, must own His Lordship in connexion with things here,

and be ever reminded of Him in His death. Who can for a moment survey the evil and contrariety to God in all around him, and not be reminded that the death of Christ, which the same evil perpetrated, is the only escape from divine judgment on it all? and as this is pressed on the soul, so is the Lord in His death brought before it. Himself in all His love and mercy comes freshly before our souls, and the more we know the hope of His calling and the riches of His inheritance, the more deeply do we, in deep devotion of heart, remember Him in that hour in which He rescued us from all man's evil, and made a way through the rent veil into the brightness of our Father's presence, where He now is, and we with Him, and from whence He calls us to remember Him in the scene of His death down here.

But still further. While calling to remembrance Him in His death for us, our souls are carried afresh by the Spirit which leads to remembrance, into the sense of the efficacy of it before God for us; so that we can afford to judge our-

selves in the light of it. Nay, the more clearly I see that judgment has been borne for me, and the more fully my soul is in happy remembrance of Him who bore it, the more easily do I judge myself, and according as I really discern the Lord's body I *must* do so. His body being broken was for a purpose—the blessed purpose of delivering me from the bondage of corruption; consequently, as I enter into the reality of the one, so must I know in myself the necessity and value of it. In dealing with the things of God, there is no superficial action. The Lord's supper is the Lord's call to us—His disciples on the earth where He died, and from which He is now rejected—to remember Him as the One who gave His body to be broken for us, and His blood to be shed; and as we do so by faith through the Spirit, our souls are not only brought into sensible remembrance of Him in the act as a cheer and strength to the heart, but we are brought to realize by faith sensible contiguity to Himself and that personally in connexion with His death.

For not only is our heart invigorated by the occupation of our link to Him, but the value of His work is revived to our conscience, and we judge ourselves *pari passu* as we discern His body which was broken for us. It is not a mere remembrance and cheer to the heart, but the great effect and value of His death for us operates so as to place us in happy remembrance of Him in His death. His death judged all in me which caused it, so that it is my practical relief from everything in me contrary to God; and therefore the more fully and truly I remember Him in that act, the more fully must I see that I, as I am naturally, am judged; and therefore, the relief as to my conscience is to accord the judgment borne in His broken body, and judge myself. If I did not see the judgment in His broken body, I dare not judge myself; but if I see it, I must apply it; for it is as I apply it that I truly realize and know the value of it.

And here came in the "eating and drinking unworthily?" There was the

appearance of responding to the call and mind of the Lord, while in heart there was no such thing; hence there was no self-judgment while there was an ostentatious partaking of that which, if done in truth, must have occupied the soul with the great transaction in which judgment for all sins was effected, and therefore giving it fresh liberty to judge itself as the remembrance of Him who was judged in death for it, was the more vivid to it. Eating unworthily was eating without apprehension of that great act of judgment—with indifference, as if it were a common supper. But its being the LORD's supper, as in everything, the greater the blessing if received according to the mind of God, the greater the judgment, if assumed to be received, but with indifference—so here. If partaken of unworthily—with indifference—I am guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. I am made liable to a forfeiture and judgment proportionate to the blessing I have slighted. Not only have I lost the blessing which the apprehension of the judgment borne by Christ

in His broken body and shed blood would have yielded me, but I have incurred a serious penalty. (1 Cor. xi. 30.) And it could not be otherwise. If I answer my Lord's call, I am in faith reminded of Him giving His body to be broken and His blood to be shed for me; and as I am occupied with Him in this great transaction, my conscience is free, and empowered to discern myself, because I discern the Lord's body. I judge myself in the light of His death, where all judgment was passed for me. I practically comprehend the ground of self-judgment; a moment of pain surely, but only a moment, that insures an entrance into one of no pain, but a fuller realization of the value of my Saviour to me. On the contrary, if I eat and do not remember Him in His death, I am neither occupied with the magnitude of His love for me, nor with the effects which, at the moment, flow personally to me from it; and therefore judgment from the Lord comes on me; it may be on my body—weakness, sickness, or death.

In 1 Corinthians xi. the supper is for all, but with individual exercise. The first thing is, I must hear the Lord calling me to eat of His supper. The Lord having called me to do so is the only title I ought to assume, and the only one the Church ought to acknowledge; and not without this solemn assurance on both sides ought any one to present himself to eat of the supper. It was no light thing when first instituted. If the first communicants did not quite understand all that was involved in the act which they celebrated, they at least were impressed with a deep sense of their relation to their Lord at the moment; and even if Judas were present, it is not too much to say that the scene aroused his nature and made him a more ready prey to Satan.

If the Lord has called me to remember Him, I am assured in myself of my title, and can happily and eagerly respond to it, and the Church cannot disallow it, unless I act inconsistent with my title and disqualify myself by

what they can see. But this part of the subject I reserve till I come to that of testimony in connexion with the supper. I confine myself now to the individual condition suited and necessary in any one partaking of the Lord's supper.

First, he is called of His Lord to remember Him in His death, and he could not be called to remember Him but as knowing Him. All the disciples knew Him, and it is the soul that knows Him best, and has entered most fully into all He has consummated and secured to it according to the heart of God in the riches of His inheritance, who can with the truest and deepest appreciation, and satisfaction of heart too, revert to the scene of His death, and see Him in it establishing and securing all that blessing in which He now is, and from which he can estimate in some degree the greatness of the act by which he has been brought into it. I do not say that a babe in Christ may not in deep reality remember Him in His death, but it is evident that the one who knows him best, who has learned most

deeply what a Saviour He is, and the joy unspeakable there is in the Father's presence as presented there spotless by Him to the satisfaction and delight of the Father, must in a deeper and a fuller way remember His Lord when He gives His body to be broken and His blood to be shed, and therefore the supper must engage a soul bright and full of a present knowledge of Christ in a far more significant and comprehensive way than one only just looking to Him as a refuge, or restored to the sense of it. I am sure the latter may be sincere and engrossed, but in no degree remembering the Lord as the One who comes to the supper from the inner circle of God's presence, from the joys of the Father's favour to remember of His Lord on earth, how He died for him, and gave him title to, and a place in, all that scene from which he passes to remember his Lord's wondrous act on earth. I think this most important. Great spirituality only conduces to a deeper entrance into the foundation of all our blessing, or rather as it is here, into remembrance

of Him as He opened our way into it. He calls me to remember Him in His death; but the better I know Him, the more I am in fellowship and nearness to Him in the circle of glory, the more I appreciate the call, and the more I invigorate my heart in remembering Him in the only scene on earth which marks my connexion with it; for it alone, like the blood of the paschal lamb, severs me from the judgment on the earth. No just idea of the Lord in His majesty or value can be acquired, but as He is known in glory; and the idea I get of Him there lends a character to my remembrance of Him in His death. I do not *acquire* it in His death. I bring it with me into the remembrance. The remembrance acquires a depth and a tone from my present knowledge and appreciation of my Saviour. It is not in the remembrance that I get the knowledge; I get there that which recounts my title to the joys which I have already found in my Lord. I believe it a mistake, and one which has led to great corruption, that the

Lord's supper in itself produces the knowledge or any condition of soul in me. The remembrance of Him in the supper renews the existence of a fact, and the blessing of necessity is determined by the fact. The fact imported to me in the remembrance of the Lord's death is that of His great love for me; but it is as I know Him and the results of the fact that I import into my remembrance just and true ideas about Him. The remembrance in the most blessed way authenticates my right and title to the endearing acquaintance which I through grace have made with Him; but it is not in the remembrance that I get the acquaintance, it is the latter which gives a character and depth to my remembrance.

How can I remember but in proportion to my knowledge and appreciation of the Person and ability to enter into what should engage my remembrance? If I do not know a person who has done some great act of service for me, how much will the remembrance of him in that act contribute to my knowledge of

Him personally? None at all, though it may awaken my gratitude; but if I know Him, and in proportion as I know Him, will my remembrance be characterized by what He is. And so if I look at the Lord *only* in His death and expect to get *there* power or delight in my remembrance, I shall find myself mistaken. I must bring to my remembrance, like the disciples, all the interest and depth of my acquired acquaintance; and according to the fulness of my acquaintance will be the depth and interest of my remembrance. It is the condition I am in previous to the remembrance, which will characterize it, rather than the remembrance generating the condition—though, of course, it establishes it.

Let me explain. If I go into the presence of God the light rebukes me, and according as it acts on my conscience I am formed to its claims. My condition is improved—I know in myself the effects of the light. If I walk in the effects of it through grace, I do not lose my condition; nay, I confirm and consolidate it, but it was the power of God's

presence; and that above where He is, and not down here where I am, that formed my condition and which will characterize my walk. Thus in the same way it is not the remembrance of the Lord's death at the supper which forms my condition, (I am not comparing the supper to walk or to service, but merely applying the principle,) but my condition, as I remember, gives a character to the remembrance. I may be but a babe, and though I know little, I am full of my Saviour. Well, then, my remembrance of Him will be according to my condition of soul. Another may be realizing his fellowship with his Lord in heavenly places; and having made acquaintance with Him *up there* in the glory, as Paul did, will he not, as led back by his glorified Lord to the scene of His death, bring into his remembrance an apprehension which the other, however true, knows nothing about? In neither case did the remembrance, while confirming and assuring the condition, produce it. And here the word, "Let a man prove himself and so let

him eat," applies to the condition I am in when I come to eat. It is not said what the condition should be, but states the fact that a man should know his state before he did eat; that he should prove himself—certify to himself his own spiritual existence. It did not imply any course of preparation as involving any period of time; it simply required that a soul should be, so to speak, master of its own state, i. e., acting in full consciousness not only of title but of its mind and interests. It was to come to eat deliberately, knowing what it was about; conscious of whose it was and how it was, alive to its own position, and with this true sense of itself, it was to enter on and engage in the solemn act of partaking of the supper.

We now come to the second part of our subject. The first and greatest, as we have seen, brings our Lord personally before us in death for us, connecting our souls with Him in that act, and thus in a practical sense assuring us of the great foundation of all the blessing we enjoy

through Him. But there is another, which is properly included in the first, and which we have already touched on, but which is not spoken of by the apostle until he takes up the subject of eating and drinking unworthily. If I had eaten worthily it would have been secured in my condition of soul; and he then shows that the one eating and drinking with indifference has not judged himself, which necessarily implies that if he had eaten worthily he must have done so. If I had discerned the Lord's body broken for me, I must have judged myself; because my soul must, in that case, be occupied with Him in His death where judgment was effected for me. And if I partake of this supper without apprehending the Lord's body broken for me and His blood shed for me, I entail judgment on myself, because if I am not occupied with the great transaction of His death—remembering Him in it, I am not awakened to a sense of how judgment has been effected for me, and without this I cannot judge myself. In the light of it, self-judgment is accepted

by me and easy. The soul, apprehending truly the judgment borne for it, gets liberty to judge itself; but instead of being deterred from eating by the sense of its own ruin and folly, it finds its own title to eat the more confirmed, the deeper it dives into the sense of the judgment borne for it, and (what is inseparable from this) the judgment due to it.

I believe that according to our apprehension there is presented to us a distinct sense of Christ in each of the offerings, and all combined in the supper. Each has its own note to which the heart is awakened, but all being struck in unison, like a chord in harmony, the effect is *one, full, and controlling*, and the more so, the better the heart is strung. How blessed when, in deep, hearty remembrance, the soul enters into and knows itself in a scene where all these impressions are recalled; and when it lingers in all the assurance of its title and blessing through Him whom it remembers, though with the sense of how it needed and needs, all that in which He is remembered !

As I have already remarked, though all the saints are regarded as coming together to the same place, yet it is the state of the individual soul which is considered here. At the supper, it is the individual experience in company with all the saints there; the individual condition being the true ground of preparation for strength in the united condition. Hence, in celebrating the Lord's Supper, the *first great thing*—the one singularly kept before our souls by the apostle—is the individual state and experience. Because if this be true and well-founded the collective responsibility will be easily and naturally maintained. And here follows the exhortation, "When you come together tarry one for another." Though an individual exercise, it was yet to have a collective expression, which each truly exercised soul would acknowledge and contribute to. Now this leads us to pass from the individual thing to the collective expression, and the Lord's *supper* I apprehend in the latter, (the collective aspect,) is designated by the Lord's *table*; an expres-

sion which we only find in 1 Cor. x., where the whole subject is the testimony; my responsibility being insisted on, and not the experimental issues of my soul, as in chapter xi., in connexion with the supper. And here I may say, that the Lord's supper conveys a more touching idea to the soul than the term the Lord's table, and though one and the other are the same thing, I have no doubt that each present it in a different aspect. The supper is what my soul is individually connected with; the table is my responsibility and position. Now as I enter into and am empowered by the first, so am I skilful and qualified for the other. It is evident that there can be no strength for responsibility when the soul is not experimentally invigorated; and that as one becomes cold and indifferent in oneself, so must there be indifference about and incapacity for the responsibility. True is it that many have attempted to maintain respect for the responsibility when they had no personal supply, which alone could have sustained them in it. And when we

come to scrutinize, we shall always find that the failure in the maintenance of the responsibility really arises from a sensible defect in the soul experimentally. And in no particular responsibility is this more apparent, than with reference to this interesting subject we are occupied with. I think it can be shown that when there is any weakness or defectiveness about the Lord's table—the responsibility of the communicants—that there exists a more marked defect or ignorance of souls as to their true privileges connected with the Lord's supper, or the individual part of it. If, for example, I find that the cup is forbidden to the laity, then I am assured that the knowledge of salvation is denied; and with this great experimental loss, I need not be surprised to find that the sense of the responsibility which becomes the Lord's table is entirely unknown. When responsibility is spoken of, the cup is put foremost, showing, I suppose, the solemn engagement under which the communicant placed himself, and to which, if he be true, he could not have

communion with any other; i.e., his having communion with the Lord's table precluded his having participation in any religious ceremonial outside of it. Partaking of the true, the highest, and the greatest, necessarily excluded him from all others; and if after his solemn adoption of it in communion with the blood of Christ, he stoops to another, the only retort or rebuke is the impossibility of holding both. Two things so utterly foreign the one from the other, could not be compatible; and this being so, the next word is, "Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy; are we stronger than He?" which, to my mind, conveys the idea, Do we attempt to provoke Him to jealousy? Jealousy is cruel. "Who hath hardened himself against him and hath prospered? Can thy heart endure, or thy hands be strong in the day that I shall deal with thee?" It is the last appeal or warning, intimating the issue which awaits the soul that forgets his solemn responsibility to the Lord's table by joining another. If I have drunk of the Lord's cup, and been a partaker at

the Lord's table, how can I partake of any cup not His, or at any table not His, which has a religious profession having any reference to God? For that was the idol's temple. I am absolutely bound by the position I have taken, and if I depart from it I ignore my testimony and expose myself to the jealousy of the Lord whom I have despised. But not only so. In this communion with the body of Christ, we being many are one loaf—one body. The united action is looked at here rather than the individual experience, as in chapter xi. We are all the body of Christ in communion with the blood of Christ. We present this aspect, and it is our responsibility, because we being many are one loaf, one body; and then the table becomes the distinct object of the care of each and all. Every member is responsible for it, the whole body is responsible for it.

Now, in conclusion, I may add that the true and becoming badge of the saints during the absence of their Lord was His supper. This is their only point of contact with this scene, and

from this point they count no interval up to His return. His death has separated us from the judgment on the world and our remembrance of it is therefore our only true and happy place in the midst of it. And besides this, it connects us in heart with Him as to His place here. His point of departure is our point of contact as to present things; though in our souls we have the light and joy of His resurrection, but this puts us out of this scene, and does not connect us with it, save as giving us power to understand Christ's love for us in His death.

May our hearts in truth enter more into the Lord's supper; and may we, in the spirit of our minds, be as "widows indeed," remembering Him here in His death; and as our personal tie to Him is deepened, we shall be the more careful and scrupulous that His table, where we, being many, present ourselves as His body, should be preserved unpoluted and undishonoured for His name's sake. Amen.

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 longsuffering patience He shows in the history of the waywardness and provocations of a nation whom He had brought into

special connexion 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, goes 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 blended, 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—infinately 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*,” &c. 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 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 has 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 is he 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.

(To be Continued.)

THE WOMAN IN THE PHARISEE'S HOUSE.

(Read Luke vii. 36—50.)

(Concluded from page 224.)

“ 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 com-

plaint 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.

THE ARMOUR OF LIGHT.

1 Thess. v. 8.

“But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for a helmet, the hope of salvation.”

In the outset of this epistle, the three cardinal principles of Christianity, “faith, hope, and charity,” are presented as formative of the divine life of a believer here on earth, of which the epistle itself affords us so striking an example. It was, in all likelihood, the first inspired writing of the apostle, and it exhibits the ardent glow of his affection toward those who, in so powerful a way, had received the testimony of the gospel

through him; and at the same time exhibits the bright and lovely freshness of that morning of Christianity, to which its testimony especially belongs. With delighted heart he says of these Thessalonians, "Our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." And he adds, "Ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost: so that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia."

It is comforting to find, in a subsequent epistle, the apostle declaring that, amidst much that would pass away that distinguished the history of the early Church, the three great principles, that figure so prominently here, would remain as long as Christianity should remain, as its characteristic power and force. "And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three, but the greatest of these is charity." "Faith," that lays hold of God's past and present revelations of Himself and of His ways, that

brings to the soul "the evidence of things not seen," *abides*; for, without it, His salvation is unrealized and Himself unknown. "Hope," too, *abides*, and is the power of patience to the soul. As the apostle says, "If we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it." So essential is it to the Christian life, that he says, if the future, which is hope's province, were once withdrawn, the most absolute misery would be his lot. "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." And, blessed be God, "charity," or love, *abides*. For when faith shall have gone with us until we pass the veil that hides the world unseen; and hope shall have no further aspirations, because all that was once longed for has become the scene of present and eternal enjoyment; love will still abide. Faith may drop its glass, and hope may quench its torch—they were our needed companions and instruments in a world of darkness and of sorrow—but for love to depart would "unheaven heaven." For "God is love,"

and heaven is the place where love eternal and universal reigns.

“The Lamb is there, my soul—
There, God Himself doth rest,
In love divine diffused through all,
With Him supremely blest.”

And where is the heart that has not known enough of strife and sorrow to make it long for a world of perfect peace and goodness—a world of perfect love? This I know, that I would gladly pillow my aching heart on the bosom of eternal love. Well, the day will come, and till then I wait.

But the order of these three principles is different in the epistle on which we for the moment rest. Here their energetic and appropriate action is presented as forming the life of the believer in this world. “Remembering,” says the apostle, “your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope, in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father.”

Each aspect of Christian life is here seen taking its spring from its only true and legitimate source, and linked with

its appropriate heavenly object. They were distinguished not only by work and labour and patience; these might exist in the Church's life, and yet leave room for reprehension. "I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience." But then it is added, "nevertheless, I have against thee, that thou hast left thy first love." But here it was work in which faith was the direct and immediately inspiring power. It was labour that was undertaken and continued at the bidding of heavenly love. It was patience that sustained itself by a constant gaze toward the object of christian hope. This is seen where the apostle describes the utter revolution which the reception of the gospel wrought in their hearts and lives, their habits and their aims. He says, "They themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead." Here, without naming them, the apostle presents faith's work, and love's labour,

and hope's patience; and how needful is it in a day like this to watch that they be not in their action divorced from their divine and essential spring!

But I pass from this to notice how these three principles, in altered aspect, re-appear in the close of the epistle. Having given us the bright picture of christian life, as exhibited in these converts to its power in the early dawn of that day of which we have nearly reached the troubled close, the apostle turns to present by prophetic ken what would be the condition of the world, and the thoughts of men in the midst of which Christianity had run its course. He says, "But of the times and seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you; for yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the

children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore, let us not sleep as do others, but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep, sleep in the night; and they that be drunken, are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breast-plate of faith and love, and for an helmet the hope of salvation; for God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him."

Christianity does not alter the circumstances of the world, nor change its course; but, by its own intrinsic power, it raises the Christian above the world, by the impartation of a life which is divine, and whose whole energy results, as we have seen, from its connexion with God, and Christ, and the things which are eternal and unseen. It was of force in early days to detach the heart from earth, and from all things that are seen, and to set the soul to battle its way to immortality and a crown: moreover, it

furnished him with armour to contend against principalities and powers, who would fain prevent his enjoyment of the portion to which he is brought by the travail and victory of his Lord. And in that sphere where fighting is not his work, but the quiet expectancy of deliverance by the coming of his Lord, it holds forth to him "the armour of light"—the attire of those who are "the children of light, and the children of the day." For it must be remembered, when the world is in question, separation from it, by the energy of grace, is that which is enforced, and not conflict with it in its own arena. When the surroundings of evil and the false security of men, whom the clarion of judgment will alone awake to listen to the claims of God, are contemplated, what is the rightful posture of the Christian's soul? It is not to evolve some new truth or power in Christianity that he has not known before, but simply to take its cardinal principles, and to bind them the more earnestly to his heart: "Putting on the breastplate of

faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation," and thus to stand forth a child of light—a child of day.

God grant that it may be so more and more with us all !

NOTES ON EPHESIANS III., IV.

The reference which Paul makes to his being a prisoner, is not so much because of *himself*, (as also in Colossians and Philippians, where it brought out the grace of the Church too,) but his object *here* is to bring out the weighty matter he was made prisoner for: "The prisoner of Jesus Christ for you *Gentiles*."

We have in Acts xxii. the train of circumstances which led to Paul's being made a prisoner. They gave him audience until he declared his mission was to the *Gentiles*. Then they threw dust into the air, and said, it was not fit that he should live. It was no less than "the dispensation of the grace of God." It went beyond all promises to the Jews. The promises were indeed made, but

this went beyond them all—a great deal farther. It was not only adding the Gentiles and sweeping away all difference, but bringing out a full revelation of His counsels, and showing His secret purpose of giving sinners a place *as sinners*. This dispensation of the grace of God was to put forth something worthy of Himself, and suitable for the exaltation of His own Son, even *the Church*. “To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God.” He gave the Jews the promises. These were very gracious, but they were limited things, and by no means the full adequate display of what God was. Promises are not *God*. By Christ He made a glorious display of *Himself*. The ways of God with Israel and the character of His government revealed Him dimly. The express and only image of Himself was Christ.

What unspeakable grace to take us poor, wretched, defiled, polluted sinners, and set us in the glory with His Son,

yea, in the same glory as His Son. But it was, as already quoted, "to the *intent* that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God."

All the grace we meet by the way is founded on the fact of His having set us in this place. The priesthood of Christ does not bring us into it, but maintains us in it. There is something besides the person of Christ, though this is first; there is the grace which is brought out through Him. Sin is put away. There is "no more conscience of sin," no more fear; because through the blood of Christ applied through faith, there is no more *imputation* of sin. The soul is brought by the kindness of God in Christ Jesus into nearness to God Himself. Christ came into the place where Satan had been triumphing unto death, according to the just judgment of God, who had given him power over death, and here breaks up his power. He comes into the very place where it was greatest, and is made *sin*, that death

thereby taking *hold* on Him, He might destroy it. He assaulted the whole powers of Satan in his own *fortress*, and led captivity captive. This expression is taken from Barak's song. "Awake, awake, Deborah: awake, awake, utter a song; arise, Barak, and lead thy captivity captive, thou son of Abinoam."

What a sense we get from this fact of the agony endured by Him, as the sacrifice for sin on the cross! It was not simply bodily suffering, though the recital of that alone might melt any heart; but the bitter grief of having to allow in the presence of those who taunted him with the fact of God having cast him off, "Thou hast forsaken me!" This was not merely a seal to the truth of Scripture, but necessary for redemption. Man deserved to be forsaken, and so vicariously He suffered the forsaking. This was the keenest anguish, the bitterest drop in His sorrowful cup!

Whenever you find saints spoken of, you find Satan with devices peculiar to their circumstances. *In Peter* they are addressed as strangers and pil-

grims scattered—and Satan is as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. In Colossians, Satan's devices are various, seeking to sever the saints from their Head, to obscure Christ's glory and Godhead, &c—beguiling and enticing. Here in Ephesians, where the saints are looked at in the heavenly places and power of resurrection life, Satan is spoken of as vanquished, captivity led captive. In their conflicts, however, they have to meet him in heavenly places in order practically to maintain their position.

What place do we find the Church put into here? The position of power, by virtue of the accomplishment of His glorious work. The Church is the vessel of the power of God. Christ places the Church at the right hand of God, as the fruit of His work. As man he perfectly glorified God here? As *man* He takes the place, and by right upon the throne of God above.

Till He had placed this title of His *own* upon the throne of God, He could not send down the Holy Ghost, who

delights to present to the soul the *knowledge* of this full and perfect redemption wrought, and so set the soul in fellowship with Him that is there. I have to do with a Christ in heaven. If I get a Christ on earth, He can have nothing to do with me, for I am a Gentile. We receive grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ, *till* we all come unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.

Now, we have to keep the eye on the glory there. If the eye be off this heavenly place, in which we are set, we shall never keep the earthly position befitting our place there. It is the spring of all godly action. As a fact, we are down here; but, so far as I realize my place and portion up there, and only so far, shall I be the expression of Christ upon earth. As the apostle says elsewhere: "the *epistles of Christ*, known and read of all men;" and as Jesus said of Himself while on earth: "the Son of man which is in heaven." "If the Spirit of Christ *dwell* in you." This is what

He worked for—to make a dwelling-place down here for Himself on earth—a witness for Himself below. In figure we have this blessed truth given us by the tabernacle, the temple, Christ's own body. The character of the Church of God here is that it is—"builded together for an *habitation of God* through the Spirit." The first effect of realizing this wondrous glory is, "lowliness, meekness," &c. Who could be proud in the presence of God? The mind, and heart, and spirit, growing up into the fulness that is in Christ, would be formed and fashioned by what He has done. So completely has Christ done His work, that there never ought to be a moment in which the saints' walk is not the result of His victory over the power of Satan. Our union with Christ is most real, even now, though, alas! we have to be thankful if a saint is not in a snare of the devil, instead of being able to rejoice because of his power over him.

Did not Christ cherish her as His own body, where would the Church be

now? Our very infirmities, grievous as they are, and should be to ourselves, *prove* that He loves us, even as His own flesh. The continued outflowings of His grace testify the constancy of His care over us. The apostle would have us keeping the eye fixed on Jesus. Resist the devil and he will flee from us. Why? Because he has met Christ in us, who vanquished him. The delight of the Spirit is to testify of Christ's work and unfold it to us. But in very faithfulness of love, He cannot show Christ to us when we are living to ourselves and indulging the flesh. Then He must show us our sin. *That* is not the natural office of the Spirit; but His grace makes Him willing to do it, that restoring may take place.

The vessels of the Holy Ghost should be the enjoyers of the Holy Ghost, so as to be testimony to the work of Christ, who sent down that Spirit and enabled it to dwell in such hearts as ours.

It is by the power of faith alone that we walk practically. I do not say that we are able each moment to be occupied

with the glory. By reason of the weakness of these bodies, we are not able always to be thinking of these heavenly and holy things. I am not at least. And we have most of us earthly duties and secular callings. But, realizing my place and power as a risen one, I go forth into the world armed with that which enables me to walk separate from it, and worthy of that glory which is before my eyes. Let a servant, for example, be treated harshly, accused unjustly, and he, by grace, take it patiently, he will return to his communion with God, happy, and only enjoying the more his place and portion in those heavenly places. But, if he have answered again, or spoken unadvisedly with his lips, he will come back ashamed and abased, and remember his place only to feel he has acted unworthily of it, and dishonoured Him who brought him into it.

If that which is not of the Spirit should enter into our daily walk, at the seasons of our return to Christ, we shall have sorrow of heart instead of joy in the Spirit.

But there is always grace in Christ for every emergency. We need not slip with our feet; He has that which is suited for every moment's need. Only let the eye be fixed on the glory, and we shall walk as becomes the Bride who is to inherit it, and have done with ourselves, through the power of the revelation of His work, and the grace which makes it ours.

NOTES ON REVELATION II. 18 ; III.

These three churches, Thyatira, Sardis, and Philadelphia, have a peculiar character, the coming of the Lord being that which is set before them as the sustaining point of faith. In the three first there is a difference in the place where the exhortation comes in. "He that hath an ear," &c., comes before the promise, while in the three succeeding it comes after, as though applying to the faithful few, instead of being addressed to the whole Church. It is not a better state of the Church that is set before them, but the Lord's coming.

There was much that He could commend in Thyatira; but there was Jezebel, a deliberate, settled form of evil, and those who were born and bred in the system, under the name, too, of a prophetess. Great tribulation for those who were *in* the evil, but destruction for those who were *of* it. The progress of evil, which corrupts that which God introduced, goes on till there is no remedy. It was so with Israel. There might be good in Josiah and Hezekiah, but the people "corrupted themselves more and more." God might go on rising up early and sending His prophets, but evil went on till ripe for judgment. And so will it be with the mystery of iniquity till destroyed by the brightness of His coming. And, therefore, He fixes the eye of the faithful upon His coming. There was much to be gone through; but He says, "Hold fast that which ye have till I come." He holds out two promises—association with Himself in power, and the possession of the Morning Star. It is not enough for our hearts to be occupied with Him as our Saviour;

we must go on to contemplate our share with Him in the coming glory. We cannot apprehend the fulness of God's blessings till we know that the thought of His heart is to give us a place *with His Son*. "Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me be with me," &c., and John xvii. 26. We can only be thankful in proportion as we *know* our blessings. Our utter unworthiness is no hindrance. "The Morning Star" not only the glory of the day, but Himself, as the One we have been looking for through the night in that aspect. To be for ever with the Lord is the best part of our portion. It is Himself we desire, and He will be ours, before the manifestation, as the One waited for. This hope is to keep us stedfast, "holding fast."

Sardis. The outward activity of life, yet dead. Works enough, but they were not perfect before God. It was not the soul identifying itself with Christ in the work, and if not done to God it is nothing. Only so far as Christ is the object in it is it worth anything. The

works at Ephesus (chap. ii. 23) the same as at Thessalonica, "work of faith, labour of love, patience of hope." The abiding power being that they were done in direct connexion with Christ. Not the habit of doing much, merely from duty; but in the patience of hope. Not in the thought of how much there is to bear, but while waiting for Him who has the affections of the heart. All this was wanting in Sardis, and what was the result? The world's portion. I will come on thee as a thief. (See 1 Thess. v. 5.) Not upon the Church "as a thief," for we are children of the day. And that expression is used when He puts the Church in contrast with the world. Miserable portion for those who had a name to live!

Philadelphia. "I have set before thee an open door"—we see an amazing rising up of the power of evil—but "no man can shut it." So in John x., when the shepherd is seeking the sheep *nothing can hinder*. "To him the porter openeth."—"The word of *his* patience." *He* is waiting, and we are to have fel-

lowship with Him in *His expectancy*. We know He is not slack concerning His promise, but His long-suffering is salvation; so, while longing to see Him, we can be satisfied to wait. "The patience of Christ" (chap. i. 9) is not the patient waiting for Him, but this fellowship in *His* patient waiting. To such the Lord says, "I come quickly." I ask you, Would you *like* Him to come quickly? Have you so understood the things around you; have your hearts enough the sense of what they would be if God had it His own way to make you love His appearing? The promise to such is especial association with Himself. It is not only to be "a pillar in the temple of God," but of "*my* God," and "the name of *my* God"—"the city of *my* God"—"*my* new name;" as He said, "I go to *my* God and *your* God, my Father and your Father." This is our greatest happiness. *He gives us His* PLACE. In Him we are brought into the holiest of all—to walk in the light as God is in the light—the Father in Him and He in us! And His place *here*, too, of rejection and hatred from the world.

I know some would be searching their own hearts. Dare you present your hearts before God? I know you cannot. It is only in Christ. There is no place at all for us before God except in Christ. How can there be? It is this "in Christ," or destruction. We can have no other place. *In Him* and *as He is*. It is our only place even now as to communion. Why do you not take it? How do I get into this place of goodness? Because He came into my place of badness. Where sin brought me, grace brought Him, and puts me where He is. He was with the thief on the cross, and the thief must be with Him in Paradise.

However bad I am, the unfolding of all my affections will follow the reception of His love and goodness. The consequence will be, that *here* we shall be pressed with all the evil around us: but "hold fast till I come." "*My* patience."

PHILIPPIANS I.

The Apostle Paul in this epistle is the *servant only*, the loving brother, one with the saints, a partaker of their joy, not reproving or commanding, but whatever of exhortation is found comes in the way of his own experience. All his affections are let out on these saints, because they had entire fellowship with him in the gospel.

The apostle had been two years in prison. He was the depository of the truth; humanly speaking, all hung upon him. How unfortunate, men would say, it was, that a man like Paul should have been stopped labouring and shut up in prison. Perhaps Paul thought so himself at first; but, during these two years, he learnt infinitely more than probably he could have learnt in other circumstances. He learnt what resources there were in God both for himself and for the Church. He found in God for himself such a spring and source of joy, that lifted him above all circumstances, and

enabled him from the monotony and retirement of his imprisonment to pour forth the love and rejoicings of his own soul to these Christians at Philippi, which we get in this epistle. Observe, in everything he can rejoice. If he thought of and prayed for the saints, it was always with joy, being confident in what God could and would do for them, though he himself was still shut up. If he heard that some thought by preaching the gospel in a spirit of contention to add affliction to his bonds, yet in this he could rejoice, because "*CHRIST was preached.*" If he was permitted to come to see them, that would be for their mutual joy; but if the Lord appointed otherwise, and he should be offered up on the sacrifice and service of their faith, as a libation poured forth, he says, "I joy and rejoice with you all." The secret of Paul's joy was his knowledge of what Christ was, what God had made Him to him. He had seen the righteousness of God, and faith had made that perfect righteousness his. He had therefore thrown behind his back whatever

was of himself, and counted all that he once boasted in as dung. Christ was now his object; God had set Him before him as the object of his affections, his desires, his pursuits. To follow on after Him was Paul's ardent desire. God had done everything for him, and the apostle could trust Him for all things. This made him free from all anxiety either for himself or the Church. He stood fast in the Lord, and could say to the Christians, "be followers together of me." Which of us could say so, could point to himself as an ensample? We have not Christ before us as our sole object, we all have some object, and what our object is that we are. Is your object the world, you are of the world. Is your object Christ, then you are Christ's. So Paul says in chapter iv., "So stand fast in the Lord, dearly beloved;" and, feeling the tide of joy rise in his soul from the position in which God had set him, he says, "Rejoice in the Lord alway, and again I say rejoice. Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand." The word

‘moderation’ might be rendered ‘softness, gentleness.’ And the apostle, set in the power of life in Christ, and realizing the speedy return of the Lord, (like Jesus, knowing that He came from God and went to God, took a towel and washed His disciples feet,) he could go forth and become all things to all men; he could rise above all circumstances, either poverty or abundance—he could rejoice in all. And so he exhorts his beloved Philippians. Trust all to God, and *His* peace shall keep your hearts. Not peace *in* God for the soul, but the peace in which God eternally dwells, so that the heart, free from ~~care~~ and anxiety which distract, is unfettered to pursue whatsoever is lovely, just, pure, of good report, and worthy of praise, and the *God of peace* shall be with you. Not peace from the harrasments of a guilty conscience; and more than the peace in which God Himself dwells, even the *presence* of the *God of peace*. “The God of peace shall be with you.”

EXTRACT.

“Do you not hunger and thirst after righteousness? and I pray you, saith not He who cannot lie, that happy are such? How should God wipe away the tears from your eyes in heaven, if now on earth you shed no tears? How could heaven be a place of rest, if on earth you find it? How could you desire to be at home, if in your journey you find no difficulty, distress, or grief? How could you be made like unto Christ in joy, if in sorrow you never sobbed with Him? If you will sit at Christ’s table in His kingdom, you must first abide with Him in His temptations. If you will drink of His cup of glory, despise not His cup of ignominy. If you were a market sheep, you should go in more fat and grassy pasture. If you were for the fair, you should be stall-fed and want no wealth; but because you are God’s own occupying, therefore you must pasture on the bleak and barren heath, abiding the storms and tempests that he may send down upon that and upon you.”

THE MEEKNESS AND GENTLENESS OF CHRIST.

There is a voice of very deep instruction in that appeal of the apostle to the Corinthians, "I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ." (2 Cor. x. i.)

It is so unusual a thing in this world for power to be possessed without making itself felt, or authority without its ostentatious display, that the apostle is obliged, as it were, to excuse himself for the lack of assumption and magisterial bearing in his intercourse with the Corinthians, by appealing to these prominent characteristics of his divine Master, "the meekness and gentleness of Christ."

He does not abandon his claim to authority as the apostle of Christ, nor disclaim the possession of a power which, in a sense against his will, he might, after all, be obliged to use; but he simply brings before them the characteristics of *His course*, who at any rate they must acknowledge as having the

absolute power and authority of "Master and Lord."

The whole chapter runs on this thought, and receives its colour and complexion from it. His presence might be base among them; but he did not walk in the flesh, nor war after the flesh. "The weapons of his warfare were not carnal, but mighty through God." His object was not self-exaltation, but to "bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." His bodily presence might be weak and his speech contemptible; but if he were to boast somewhat more of the authority the Lord had given him he would not be ashamed. He remembered, if they did not, that this authority was given him for "edification and not for their destruction." And in this he intimates that they would have respected his authority more, if the *grace* that marked its exercise had been less. He had said in a previous epistle "What will ye? shall I come unto you with a *rod*, or in love and in the spirit of meekness?" Putting it thus to their option whether his presence should be

marked by gentleness or severity; for this would depend on their condition. Here, however, he but refers to "the meekness and gentleness of Christ," and leaves them to make their own application of his appeal. It could hardly fail to recall to their thoughts the memorable words of our Lord, "Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart." At any rate it cannot fail to recall them to ours, and, if so, it takes us away from the exercise of apostolic or any other ministry merely, to think how far we are individually, and in our own walk as Christians, cultivating "the meekness and gentleness of Christ."

It is never right, Scripture does not do it, to separate doctrine from practice. The revelation of Christ claims to have as much to do with the formation of our characters and the regulation of our affections, as it has to do with the saving of our souls. In the apostolic epistles ordinarily, the truth that characterizes the believer's position in grace and relationship with the Lord is first given,

and then the suited conduct and spirit are enforced. For, I may observe, that Scripture is never occupied with teaching *the world* morality. How could it be? How train to obedience the very spirit of rebellion? How give precepts and injunctions to a hostile will? If men are inconsistent, Scripture, at least, is always consistent with itself, and it is one witness of the divinity of its revelation. It does not, in one place, teach that "the carnal mind is enmity against God; that it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be," and in another begin to enforce on it principles of obedience, as if, after all, there were some good in it, on which the truth might work. No; it tells the world of its ruin and coming doom, and beseeches it to be reconciled to God, through the redemption wrought by Christ. But it tells the believer of all the motives to holiness and love which are wrapped up in that infinitude of grace by which he has been brought out of darkness into God's marvellous light. It does not call us, however, to listen to the Spirit of

God for truth, and refer us to our own spirits for its application; or leave it as a matter of indifference. All is divinely given, and given completely. And much it behoves us in a day like this to hold fast that testimony, that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." The Christian who in faith admits the comprehensiveness of this claim, will find in it a citadel of strength, which the enemy can never command; and a light that will never flicker nor fail in the darkest parts of his road.

It is in the nature of things that any divine movement of truth and grace in this world should gradually lose its force when its first freshness in the minds of men begins to decay; and individual souls can only be kept in their first energy as they are near enough to the Lord to receive from Him the constant communications of His grace. It is only Christ who never changes; and

it is only His grace, and that constantly received, that is sufficient for us.

In the earlier days of the Reformation the recovery of the truth of doctrine was the grand concern of the reformers; and in its recovery the liberty and energy of souls were great. In the later periods of this movement, apart from its political character, its leaders had enough to do in repressing error and in the enforcement of godliness of walk. Not that those who held to the corrupt system of popish doctrine were holy in practice, but the reverse; for it was the debasement of morals in what was called the church that mainly brought on the Reformation. There may be, it is true, a careless, easy-going religious life in connexion with professed purity of doctrine, but there cannot be real holiness of life apart from that truth which gives Christ to the soul in all the efficacy of His work, by which we are placed in association with God, and are brought to "walk in the light even as he is in the light."

Recovered doctrine has gone widely forth in our day. "The heavenly calling

of believers," "resurrection life," "the presence of the Holy Spirit," "the hope of the Lord's coming," "peace through his blood," "perfect acceptance," are familiar in our mouths as household words. Whether our souls have grasped the wide import of these phrases, it is to be feared, in many cases, admits of serious question.

But there is another part of truth that must be regarded, if, morally, everything is not to go to decay. That Scripture has never yet been reversed, that, "we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." Nor this, "if any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross, and let him *follow me*." Christ must be followed as well as be believed in. There is a certain truth in Penn's motto, "No cross no crown."

There may be a legal, Thomas-à-Kempis kind of imitation of Christ, or there may be a free, joyous, Pauline following of Him; but Christ *must* be followed. Nay, the exhortation comes to us in a most wonderful and startling form, if its force had not been so dulled

by use, "Be ye therefore followers [imitators] of God, as dear children; and walk in love as Christ also hath loved us." But lofty as this exhortation is, and strange to us from its loftiness, we have been presented with an embodiment of it in human form. The lowliest of men—yet "God manifest in the flesh"—has presented us with its embodiment. He has done more. He has taught us how to reach it also. The rule is given in that deepest, simplest form of words, "Take my yoke upon you and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Misery is the inevitable result of a Christian's following his own will; but what rest is there and calm satisfaction, in the feeblest effort to "prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God!"

But there is a careless holding of doctrine—learning but not attaining. It is the consequence of dealing by the natural understanding with truths that can only be spiritually discerned, or discerned by the Spirit. Christians are

in danger of this as well as others. But truth so received is never practical. It is like the seed in the "stony ground:" it brings no fruit to perfection. I see all around me the signs (perhaps exhibit them in myself) that the truth, which is deemed *distinctive*, has been allowed to slip away; or has never been really grasped. There is a reciprocal action and reaction between truth received and the spirit in which it is held. Heavenly truth, if it acts at all, acts in the way of producing heavenly character. Man is moulded (it is a universal principle) by the objects, not perhaps that he professes, but that really occupy his thoughts and heart. It is not different in heavenly things. A heavenly walk opens for the soul a clearer perception of heavenly truth and gives it a firmer grasp. But heavenly truth cannot long be even professed in connexion with an earthly walk, except where all is hollowness. The profession is reduced, sooner or later, to the scale of practice, where the practice is not raised to some measure of agreement with the truth.

To possess and to exhibit the "meekness and gentleness of Christ," belongs to the very profession of Christianity, and belongs to it at all times. It will display itself differently under different circumstances, but it belongs to Christians in all circumstances, and belongs alike to all. Let us listen to the heavenly oracle, "Even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that ye should follow his steps Who when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him who judgeth righteously." What we want is to have the blessed Son of God more the centre and substance of our creed. To believe IN HIM, as we see in the case of the apostle, is the living power of practical Christianity. "That I may know him," is his word, "and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death." What we all want is, to have the Lord Jesus more livingly in our thoughts and in our hearts. It is not

to write an essay on meekness and gentleness that is needed, but to have the great example of meekness and gentleness more habitually in our view. If our hearts were but stirred up to say, this is to be my work, this my study, to be "meek and lowly in heart," to be like Christ, what might not be hoped? To seek in all honesty of purpose to have Christ's character brightly before our souls, and then as honestly, in spite of manifold failure, to seek to imitate it—this is the way to "walk and please God." To make the attempt, with this definiteness of aim, would not long be without its manifest result; at least, it would not be without result to our own souls, though not of a kind, it may be, to increase our self-esteem. At least, it would bring the Lord Jesus more habitually nearer to us, even if that nearness discovered to us other failures besides the want of meekness. There is nothing more profitable to the soul than to find itself alone with the Lord Jesus, in conflict, it may be, with some conscious human besetment or in seek-

ing the acquisition of some divine disposition. Nothing more effectually teaches us the force of those words, "not as though I had already attained."

It is when one thinks of who He is, and what He has done, that the heart is bowed in His presence, and asks, Can it ever be? Can it ever be that I have this place in His heart? that He has ventured thus far for me, and that I am no more constrained by His love? No more like Him in spirit, walk, and ways? If He, who was thus immeasurably great, instead of being proud and contemptuous, and awing men to a distance from Him, carried Himself in the presence of His own creatures, in all imaginable meekness, can there be room for pride in me? No; none ever was proud in God's presence. None ever was other than "meek and lowly in heart," for the time at least, when near enough to Christ to know Him in His real character. But, then, what a secret does this betray!

When I think of what Christ is in Himself, and not only of what He has

done for me, though in the heart that is thus brought to God the two cannot be separated, I worship and adore. I am filled with admiration and delight, and I want never to look on any other object, as having moral beauty in it or attractive worth. But when I look at what I am toward Christ, not in outward act so much as in inward feeling and intrinsic estimation of Him, and consequently my little power to imitate Him, I hate myself. I do not speak of returns. What *returns* can I make for love like His?

“Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.”

But I speak of estimation of Him, and of the constraining power of that estimation on my mind, my temper, my habitual carriage, my estimation of everything around me, of the world, men, Christians, the things of the world, time, life, death, eternity.

Whatever the Lord Jesus *was*—and how wonderful is it to think of what He was! this we find was His distinguish-

ing characteristic as a man amongst men, He was "meek and lowly in heart." And amidst the drifting current of this world's usages and its sanctioned moralities, how necessary is it for the heart to be constantly schooled in this one principle, "all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but it is of the world. And the world passeth away and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." Meekness and gentleness are not the dispositions which the world has taken under its patronage any more than the path to greatness in it is to become servant of all. Whatever is of God morally must needs be contrary to the world. This is plainly a judged question to a Christian, whatever it may be to the advocates of human perfectibility. "If the world hate you," says our Lord, "ye know that it hated me before it hated you." And, more than this; He says, "they have both seen and hated both me and my Father." That ever the world

should have hated Christ! But it is different now," say some, "and His mission is beginning to be rightly understood." Let us not be deceived. It is not the Christ of *revelation* that men are professing to honour. It is a mere simulacrum, a phantom Christ, such as superstition and the priest are pleased to give to men, or such as each man embodies forth for himself.

If I am ever to cultivate the meekness and gentleness of Christ, or to reduce to practice His injunction, "Take my yoke upon you and learn of me," I must understand the substratum of truth on which this injunction rests. This is emphatically given in our Lord's words, by which this injunction is introduced. (Matt. xi. 27.) He says, "all things are delivered to me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." Here we have, then, the divine Son of God revealed in the world, and, though unknown in the unfathomable mystery of

His Person, except by the Father, still the revealer of the Father—the revealer of God. For man's misery is that, otherwise, he knows not God. In another scripture He says, "all things that the Father hath are *mine*," speaking of the depth and claim of His eternal Godhead. Here, as the humbled man, He says, "all things are delivered to me of my Father," speaking as the head of divine communication to the labouring and heavy laden whom He invites to Himself that He may give them rest. But, then, as the Son He speaks of the mystery of the Father's Person, known only by the revelation of the Son; unknown and unknowable except by that revelation. Here we come to the exigency of man's condition and to the essence of what the gospel effects. It is the revelation to the soul, by One competent to the work, of God, in His character of infinite grace. And it is this revelation of the Father to the heart by the Son that gives it rest; however otherwise labouring and heavy laden. But, then, in the knowledge of this, and in the power of

a divine life so imparted, the believer is set forward on his path heavenward through the world, bearing Christ's yoke and learning of Him. For all truth of doctrine and precept is based upon what He is, and our practical failures and lowness of walk arise from the imperfect revelation of the Father which *we have received* of the Son. Nor should it be omitted to notice here who they are to whom this revelation is made. "At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight." (Matt. xi. 25, 26.)

It is just as impossible for the sun to shine without giving light and heat, as it is to have the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ shining in our hearts without producing in us some measure of conformity to His blessed image. And here, let me say, it was not truth, but Christ, that the apostle's heart was occupied with when he said,

“One thing I do: forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth to those things which are before, I press toward the mark.” Neither is it truth of doctrine nor truth of interpretation, valuable as these may be in their place, but *Christ*, in His living person and grace, that is set before us in this same Epistle, (Phil. ii. 5—10,) when he says, “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus,” &c. It is true that a *written* Christ is given to us in the Scriptures, but it is that a *living* Christ may thus, by the Holy Spirit, be revealed to our hearts. I am not speaking now of that revelation of Christ to the soul, which is the basis of salvation, and through which we are born of God. But I am speaking of Christ as the object of our affections, and of the heart’s engagement with Him as the end and aim of all our purposes and hopes while passing through this world to where He is.

All truth with all its various applications, what is it given for but to make God and Christ known to the soul? The

occupation of the apostles was to make *Christ* known, and through Him, God, in a world that had lost this knowledge, and, I may add, *has* lost it. The aim of the Apostle Paul in "warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom" was, that he might "present every man perfect in Christ." And as to his own personal aim, apostle as he was, it is summed up in this, "that I may know *him*," &c.

But if we trace for ourselves the Lord's course through this world in the various scenes in which He is presented, what is it that strikes the heart? What is it that makes us feel the immeasurable distance there is between Him and every other character that we ever did, or ever can contemplate? Is it not His lowly meekness—His gentleness, His unutterable humbleness of carriage, in contrast with all that was around Him, and in contrast with all that we know of our own spirits and of the world? Think of Him in the presence of His enemies and their provocations! Think of Him in connexion with His dull and

inapprehensive disciples—how He meets their difficulties, bears with their ignorance, corrects their prejudices! How does every scene in which He is viewed add some fresh illustration of the truth of His words, “I am meek and lowly in heart,” until the impression of the whole becomes overwhelming, and in one sense oppressive to the soul!

I have lately studied the gospels, as every one may study them, not for critical ends, nor with any outward helps, nor even with a view to see what Christ has done for me (this I know), but simply to see what Christ was like, and how He carried Himself as a man in this world, and passing through similar scenes to those with which I am connected from day to day. I do not state the result. Let my reader so study them, and he will be at no loss to guess the issue! This, however, I may be allowed to say, that I had not before seen the depth of the apostle’s appeal, “Now I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ.”

Meekness is most seen in bearing

with what we meet with that is in any way contrary to us. Gentleness has the field of its exercise in active dealing with others. And it may be well, before I close, to notice how extensively this spirit is directly inculcated in the New Testament.

In the first place the Apostle Peter teaches us that the characteristic calling of a Christian, as to this world, is to do well and suffer for it, and take it patiently. (See 1 Peter ii. 20—23.) And in suffering for righteousness, on which our Lord has pronounced His blessing, the same apostle says, "Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts ; and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with *meekness* and fear." (1 Peter iii. 15.) And when speaking of what kind of dress is becoming in the light of God for christian women, he says, "Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel ; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which

is not corruptible, even the ornament of a *meek* and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price." (1 Peter iii. 3, 4.) Our Lord in giving the characteristics of those who would have part with Him in His kingdom, says, "Blessed are the *meek* for they shall inherit the earth." The Apostle James in presenting to us the spirit in which the Divine word should be received says, "Lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with *meekness* the engrafted word which is able to save your souls." (James i. 21.). And again, "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble." (James iv. 5.) And if we turn to the epistles of Paul, we find him in the Ephesians speaking thus in relation to the walk that is worthy of the Christian's calling: "I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and *meekness*, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love." (Eph. iv. 1, 2.) In Colossians he says, "Put on, therefore, as the elect of God,

holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, *meekness*, longsuffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye." (iii. 12, 13.) In Galatians he says, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, *meekness*, temperance." (v. 22, 23.) In the same epistle he teaches us in what spirit brotherly discipline, if it is to be effectual, must be administered. "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of *meekness*, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." (Gal. vi. 1.) In his epistle to Timothy he says, "But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, *meekness*." (1 Tim. vi. 11.) And in the second epistle, where especially he is concerned that Timothy should act rightly in the midst of opposition and evil and the corruption of the truth, he says, "But foolish and un-

learned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes. And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in *meekness* instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth." (2 Tim. ii. 23, 24, 25.) In Titus, speaking of what is the duty of Christians in their carriage towards the authorities of the world, he says, "Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work, to speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, showing all *meekness*." (Titus iii. 1, 2.) And when speaking of servants he says, in the same epistle, "Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things; not answering again, not purloining, but showing all good fidelity: that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things." (Titus ii. 9, 10.) There is not a relationship in life, nor a condition in which we can be placed in which this spirit is

not demanded of us. But, finally, let us listen especially to the exhortation, "Likewise ye younger submit yourselves unto the elder, yea all of you be subject one to the other, and be *clothed with humility*." (1 Peter v. 5.) Other things may be of occasional requisition in a Christian, but "*humility*" constitutes his daily attire, the livery of his heavenly Master and Lord. And it is added, (as already quoted in James,) "For God resisteth the proud, [sets Himself in battle array against them,] and giveth grace to the humble."

I again warn that this is not the spirit of the world; nor is it the spirit that will make its way in the world; nor will it be cultivated by the Christian that has the least respect for the esteem of the world. Put aside the presence of God and His approval, and the study is hopeless. Consult nature and it is in vain. Forget the one perfect model, and the task may be given up. But I seek in Christians, surely, for the morality of the cross as well as the salvation of the cross. I do not believe,

whatever others may do, in grace without responsibility. The grand witness for Christ, that is so lacking amongst Christians, is the spirit of Christ.

I close however with this question to myself, which I am sure every one of my readers that is in earnest will adopt: How much is "this meekness and gentleness of Christ" displayed in me? And how much is it a matter of daily study, in the presence of my meek and gentle Lord and Master, in order to attain it? What is the verdict of my own conscience? What the conviction on the minds of those who know me best? Wife, children, servants, brethren, the world?

CHRIST AS A SON OVER HIS OWN HOUSE.

Hebrews iii.

The constant tendency of our hearts, even when brought up to our privileges, is to slip off from them. When Satan finds he cannot resist the introduction of the power of the gospel by false doctrine,

he then seeks to get something before the mind—vanity, worldliness, the cares of the world, and a thousand things, to keep the soul from simply looking to Jesus. When the truth is first presented to the soul he tries to hinder its reception; but when it is received his effort is to diminish its power in some way or other, and the only remedy for this, is the heart being occupied with Christ Himself. We need an increasing knowledge of Christ. For the heart that is learning Christ, cannot stay about the things that the world presents, but desires to know *Him* more fully. In looking to Jesus, it is not knowing a doctrine merely, it is *Himself* we want to know. It is “the truth as it is in Jesus” that has a charm for the soul, for grace and truth came by Jesus Christ; and it is never known in the power of faith out of *Him*. And never can there be that power which detects the course of false doctrine but as the soul is dwelling in Himself, “rooted and built up in him.” The heart centred in *Him* is able to look out and see all the extent of the

divine revelations to the soul. "Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling," &c. There is always a tendency to slip back and thus lose all practical power. But because of this, does the apostle try to shake their confidence as to what they are? Not in the least. God never does this; but He shows us our inconsistency with what we are; and so the apostle calls back their hearts to the place of grace, where God was dealing with them. As with the Corinthians, the apostle says, "I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ." Now they were puffed up by evil. It is not that the apostle would allow the evil to pass, but he first sets them on the ground where God had set them. So he comes to our hearts and says, Do not you turn away from the grounds where God has set you. He calls us up to the spring of it all, in the heart of God, and then says, Now, can you be seeking the world and what it has to give, when you have such a portion in God? I would now say a

word of the manner in which he presents Christ. He is going to speak of Christ in the most glorious way he can, but, observe, he does not begin with it. He first speaks of what is a link between their hearts and this blessed and glorious One, and having knit up our hearts to this, he then shows us His glory. Now there is great grace in this. It is not merely as an abstract truth, a system of theology, saying, "this is God." No; he says, I am going to speak about One who brought God nigh to you, who was amongst you, the One between you and God, and stood for you toward God. I am going to talk to you about Him "who was faithful to him who appointed him." Here we get this glorious Person in an official character; and so He was appointed, and we look at this blessed, glorious One in office, "who was faithful in all his house, *whose house are we.*" And this is of the greatest comfort to us, for it is thus we get this glorious One so very near to us; so close to us as to be interested in everything that concerns us. "For Christ as a son

over his own house" was interested in carrying on all God had entrusted to Him, as Moses, the servant, was interested in bringing Israel up out of Egypt. But he presents Christ to us as worthy of more glory than Moses, "inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house. For every house is builded by some one, but he that built all things is God." Thus I find myself brought into union with Him who created all things. I was brought close to Christ, where I get this blessed familiarity, and then I find that the One who condescended to be in this blessed place of nighness to me, was God. Thus I learn that all my concerns are in His hands who is God. Moses was faithful as a servant, but Christ is faithful as a *Son*, who knows the house belongs to Him. "As a son over His *own house*, whose house *are we*." It is His own house, for Christ as a Son over His own house, is not only the God who created all things, but the One who takes an interest in everything that concerns us, just as a Son over His own

house. Thus I find myself brought into the whole universe *in Him* that created it. And now, beloved, this is the way the Spirit of God would carry us on through the world, not as merely leading us through the world, but keeping our hearts above the things of the world while passing through it. As the Son cannot but be faithful to Him who appointed Him, when I see the One that is thus interested in His house is the glorious One who created all things, I learn it is God Himself, and I can trust Him. He also makes us see it is the interest of the Son, and not merely an official appointment; thus the heart knows Christ has all the interest in it as a Son over His own house. And as our hearts are fixed on Him, and enlarged towards Him, our affections are drawn out and enlarged in their own proper sphere, and the heart thus kept from worldliness is enlarged in a divine way. And that is what is such a comfort that the most ignorant soul, if taught of God, gets enlarged and sanctified affections.

APHORISMS.

The last thing that a man should look for in the Church, is comfort. I never expect anything but trial. We must not look for anything else. Paul had but little comfort in the Church. He sought only the approval of Christ.

There is no question whether this world in the end is to be a place of blessing. It will eventually be abundantly blessed. But God alone will bless it. It is folly for man to attempt to bless it. Six thousand years of fruitless effort have told them that they cannot do it. The world has rejected Christ and is judged in consequence, though execution of judgment may be stayed in the longsuffering mercy of God. "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." There will be no blessing to the world until the "manifestation of the sons of God."

In all circumstances make God the great circumstance.

THE DEATH & COMING AGAIN OF THE LORD JESUS.

“For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; for then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment, so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.”—Hebrews ix. 24—28.

What above all things is needed in the reception of divine truths is, the exercise of a faith which gives them a living embodiment to the soul, and thus takes them out of the region of merely admitted and inconsequential doctrines. Other reception is of little worth. It fails utterly of the end for which they have been given. The end of all revelation is to act on our hearts in the highest possible way by making God and His counsels known. Even when

speaking of the salvation of the soul it is said, "This is life eternal, that they might *know* thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." And every subsequent step of our progress may be summed up in this—"Increasing in the knowledge of God."

The inspired writer in this chapter is unfolding the difference between the position of believers, in regard to their approach to God, since the full revelation of His mercy in the person and work of His Son, and that which characterized it during the continuance of the ritual and ordinances of the law.

The arrangements of the tabernacle form the basis of his instructions: "When these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle accomplishing the service of God," &c. Hence there is great vividness in his statements, as he presents this difference in a series of contrasts.

In the first place, the worship of the priests, who had the nearest access to God, was with a veil interposed between them and the holiest of all. The high

priest alone once a year passed inside the veil, with the blood which he "offered for himself and for the errors of the people," which was a type, as we learn, of the entrance of the Lord Jesus into heaven with the blood of his own accomplished sacrifice for sin. But, while this arrangement was in force we are told it gave, in figure, Israel's position under the law; namely, that God's presence was never reached by the worshipper. "The way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing." So far as God had revealed Himself He might be truly worshipped. But what God was in the light was unrevealed, and consequently unknown. The reverse of this is now true. It is the blessed privilege of believers now to come into God's presence without a veil. As it is expressed, we have "boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus." All the necessity there was for man's being kept at a distance from God, because sin and holiness could not exist together, has been removed by the death

of the Lord Jesus. The sin which demanded the condemnation of the sinner in the presence of a God of holiness has been put away by the death of Christ. It was "when he had by himself purged our sins," that the Son of God "sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high." And the perfect love of God is manifested, inasmuch as He gave His only begotten Son to accomplish this work, which no other could accomplish or undertake. There is nothing in the character and claims of God that is now concealed. "The darkness is past and the true light now shineth." Because that which is true of Christ is true of the believer also—true as to life, and position, and acceptance. If we come to God at all now, it must be in the light and without a veil. It was of the highest possible degree of significance that on the death of Christ "the veil of the temple was rent from the top to the bottom." The consummation of man's sin in rejecting and putting to death God's Son, was met by the consummation of God's holiness and love in giving

Him to die for the sin which thus reached its crowning act. At the death of Christ the veil was rent, because there it was that holiness and love rose to the height of their manifestation—holiness which received its vindication in the death of the Son of God, for He stood in the sinner's place; and love, that it could thus rise above all that sin had deserved in putting it away. It is beyond all expression a rest and happiness to the soul to know with certainty the ground on which we stand before God. Abiding confidence and peace cannot be maintained without it. It is liberty and rest to know that I am in the presence of the eternal God, because He has given His Son to death to meet the claims of His holiness; and that I am brought as it were face to face with Him on the ground of His own declared efficacy of the work of His beloved Son. I do not see how perfect confidence toward God is possible, except on the ground that we are brought into His presence perfectly in the light. If there could be a thought of horror it would arise from

the suspicion that perhaps after all there was something in the character of God that was concealed, something that was yet unknown, that another day might bring to light. But it is not so; "God is light," and "God is love." And both have their illustration in the cross of Christ. "The darkness is past and the true light now shineth." We have "boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus."

The next point of contrast is given in the condition of the conscience of the worshipper now and under the law. While God was hidden by a veil and only worshipped at a distance by means of external ordinances, there was nothing that could set the conscience at rest and at ease. For the law was only a shadow of good things to come; and in its ordinances there was no power to remove guilt from the soul or purge the conscience. But when once the veil is removed, and God's presence in the light is reached, it must be either utter condemnation, or the sense of fitness for His presence by a conscience at rest in

the light. And this is accomplished by the work of Christ. For His death for sin, which, Godward, removed the veil from His presence, toward man, at least toward the believer, perfected the conscience. We are called to walk now in the light as God is in the light, on this simple ground, that "the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin." On any other ground this would be impossible; for light cannot have fellowship with darkness. But how wonderful is this position, that I, a sinner, without disguise or palliation, without turning away from the thought of the claims of God's holiness or the greatness of my sins, should still find myself at ease and at rest in His presence, where I am well sure that not a single sin that has ever stained my conscience is hidden, nor a single wandering from God in heart or desire is unknown! No contrast can be greater than that of "the worshipper once purged having no more conscience of sins," and that of "a remembrance made again of sins every year." But this is the specific

difference of the position of the worshipper under the law and under Christ.

The next point presented is the character of the redemption accomplished by the Lord Jesus. "By his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." It is no provisional redemption that believers are now made partakers of, as under the law, but one that is perfect and eternal in its character. God dealt with man's whole condition as a sinner in the cross of Christ, and delivered him eternally from it, at least where faith rests on his atoning sacrifice. The entrance of the Lord Jesus into the holy place with His own blood, never to be repeated, was the witness that a true and eternal redemption was accomplished, of which the day of atonement was but a shadowy representation. The Lord Jesus came into our condition in infinite grace; he undertook our cause; His death was the penalty of our guilt; and His resurrection and ascension into heaven was the divine witness of His having accomplished the work he under-

took. "He obtained *eternal redemption* for us."

Another thing is that the believer is now brought into the perfect liberty of serving God by virtue of this same blessed sacrifice. The blood of bulls and of goats, &c., had a certain efficacy in purifying the flesh; that is, by their application external or ceremonial defilement was removed. But it is argued that the application of the blood of Christ has a still greater efficacy in removing defilement from the conscience, and thus giving liberty to the soul in the service of God. "*How much more* shall the blood of Christ who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" This is the blessed position in which the redemption of the Lord Jesus sets us in this world as to service. We are delivered altogether from dead works and are brought in perfect liberty to serve the living God. As it is said of the Thessalonians, "They turned to God from idols to serve the living and

true God." It is this which gives its spring and energy and freedom to the soul, that God is known, and that He is in a known relationship to the believer; that life is to be spent, not in a round of prescribed duties or dead performances, but in the liberty of a service which is constantly recognized by Him, and which gives the heart the joy of having the witness that we please Him.

But the last contrast presented is between the often-repeated sacrifices under the law, and the one sacrifice of Christ. "Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us. Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; for then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself," &c.

The whole force of this statement lies

in the expression, "now once in the end of the world," or in the consummation of the ages. For it gives, and was designed to give, a probationary character to all God's dealings with man in His recorded history of this world's eventful course, until probation ceased by the rejection and crucifixion on the part of the world, of the Son of God. There is infinite wisdom in this, that the remedy for man's guilt should be brought out only when that guilt had reached its height; and that grace should be seen in its true character by the demonstration that nothing but the absoluteness of grace could avail. There had been many dealings of God with man before the coming of Christ, all of which, more or less, disclosed man's condition before God, as well as God's character toward man. But it is only when all these dealings of God, which the Scripture history unfolds, had proved inefficacious in bringing man back to God, that the last resource of God is brought out and He sends His Son—which issues in the cross. So far

from men using these means which God had presented for the purpose of returning to Him, they were the occasion of bringing out more fully the opposition of man's heart to God. So manifestly was this so, that in the ratio of the clearness of God's revelation of Himself to man, was the ratio of man's hatred to God displayed. As the Lord Jesus, who had fully manifested the Father, who was, indeed, God manifested in the flesh, had to say, "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloke for their sin If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin; but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father." *This* is what was brought out as to man's moral condition in this "consummation of the ages." And blessed be God for ever that it is in this consummation His full and adequate grace takes its character in its presentation to us. My individual experience of sin, however extensive and sorrowful it may have been, does not give the

measure of what man's guilt is, that was met by the atoning blood of Christ. To have any just sense of this, I must needs glance at the record of those ages which found their issue and consummation in the cross. It is the use that God would have us make of the history of man which He has given. After the introduction of sin by the fall, man was left to himself without any external restraint, and we learn that in this age lust and violence filled the earth. "All flesh had corrupted its way upon the earth." "And the earth was filled with violence through them." In spite of the testimony of judgment by Enoch, and the warnings of Noah, this age closed its history in the waters of the flood. The world commences from this point its history again, planted on every hand with the beacons of judgment. But there is no change in man's course. There is no fear of God before his eyes. If the world begins its course anew, sin begins its course too. The scattering of the nations at Babel, and idol worship; the separation of Abraham, and the

destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, are the witnesses of this. Neither the giving of the law nor the sword of the Lord on the inhabitants of Canaan wrought any arrest of sin, even in the nation whom God had redeemed by His wondrous power out of Egypt, and planted in Canaan in place of the nations He had judged. Nay, we learn that the law which taught the people what was right and demanded obedience, only brought out transgression. So far from their availing themselves of the light of the law to walk by it, they, through breaking the law, dishonoured God worse than the Gentiles. So that the practical effect of the law was that "through the commandment sin became exceeding sinful." Prophets were added in the goodness of God; but they killed the prophets, and stoned them that were sent unto them. John calls to repentance, and Christ comes in grace. It is a new test of man's heart. But it issued in their killing John and hating God in the person of His Son, saying, "Not this man, but Barabbas." God's final

appeal to man's heart in the way of goodness is given in these affecting words, "Last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son; but when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, 'This is the heir, come let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance. And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him.'" There is nothing further to be done. Man's probation ceases here. The highest goodness of God has only brought out the highest hatred of which man's heart is capable. Now, it is plain that either man's sin must conquer God's goodness, and there can be no meeting for him with God but in eternal judgment, or there must be another remedy than that which looks to man's nature to use. It is this remedy that is presented in the supremacy of God's grace. It is "now once in the end of the world [the end of the world as to its moral condition] that Christ appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself."

It is well for the soul to stay on this.

It was not to give the world's history in rounded periods, that God has caused *His* record of its course to come down to us. No, in these successive epochs of man's history and God's dispensations, to which brief reference has been made, there has been the trial of the principles of good and evil under the hand of God; and the issue of this trial is the proof of the utter and hopeless alienation of man's nature from God, and his absolute need of that grace which has put away sin by the bloodshedding of Christ and brings man to God in a new nature and in the power of a new life, of which Christ, as the second Adam, is the source.

It is too much the habit of our minds to forget the moral bearing of these preliminary dealings with men, on the part of God, and to act as if in the grace of the gospel, we had God's first address to men instead of His final testimony. "God who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets hath in these last days [or in the end

of these days] spoken unto us by his Son." It is quite true that, individually, the first message I hear effectually from God may be that of His infinite grace in the gift of His Son; but I must not forget at what point in the moral history of man this grace has come in. It is "Now once in *the end of the world* [as to God's moral dealings with it] that Christ hath appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself."

But that wondrous work which Christ accomplished in the putting away of sin is often obscured to our apprehensions by the measure which, in our carelessness, we apply to sin. Can I measure what sin is by my own experience only, or by the unhappiness it has wrought in me? Surely not. I must see in it the destruction of the image of God in the first Adam, and his expulsion from Paradise, and all blessed intercourse with God forfeited and gone. I must estimate it by Abel's murder and the call of vengeance from his blood. I must measure its character by the labour and toil it has brought into the world, and

the tide of misery that age after age has desolated human hearts. I must read its character in opening the sluices of judgment for the waters of the flood; in the fires of Sodom and the thunders of the law; the rejection of the prophets, and the slaying of God's Son. But what has sin not done? Look at the world through which we are passing. Look at its wars and oppressions, its murder and rapine, its diseased bodies and broken hearts, the corruption to which it reduces, the death it has wrought, and the judgment to which it brings! Now it was to meet this ripened sin of man that Christ came. It was sin in its essence, sin in its character fully worked out in man's sad history, that Christ came to put away. This is what He triumphed over. This is what God's grace in Christ Jesus delivers us from. Not from sin as *I* may estimate it, in the misery it has wrought me, in the trouble of my conscience and my dread of death; but sin as it has ripened up in man's history under God's gracious dealings, and

as it appears in His sight—Christ came to deliver me from this. “Once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.” He came to roll back the tide of evil which was engulfing men, and which was engulfing you and me, if He had not rolled it back.

This, then, is the work which Christ came to accomplish; “to put away sin,” in all its pollution and all its consequences, to meet its penalty and to remove its guilt, to fit those who were its victims for the holiness of God’s presence, and to reign in life with Him. This is what He came to accomplish. He came “to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.” This is the work He accomplished by His sacrifice, and in the power of which believers are now set.

As to the world, this is its position, “It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the judgment.” This is God’s original appointment for man as a sinner. Nothing in His dealings has ever reversed this. The law did not

change it, and the gospel does not modify it. Christ's death has not altered the doom of *man*. Nothing in the overtures of the gospel, nor in the doctrines of Christianity, touch for an instant this doom of man. The grace of the gospel opens to him indeed a city of refuge, to which he may betake himself from the pursuit of the avenger of blood and be safe. But apart from this, it leaves him to his doom. Whoever meets death without faith in the sacrifice of Christ, meets it as the judgment of God for sin; and whoever thus passes the portals of the grave is held a prisoner by death until claimed by judgment. The course of ages has not altered this. Man's achievements have not set aside this. Pride, luxury, the intense love of life, philosophy, science, development, carelessness of the future, forgetfulness of death, have not in a single instance set aside this, the common doom of man, this appointment for man at the hands of God.

But as to the Christian. What triumph is there in the statement, "As it

is appointed unto men once to die and after this the judgment; so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and to them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation." Christ's death, with all its efficacy stands over against the claim death had against me. The very death of Christ is my deliverance from the claim of death. I own as a sinner my part in the common doom of man. I own I had no power to deliver myself from this doom. But it is exactly here that Christ's death meets my case. "When we were yet without strength in due time Christ died for the ungodly." It is no question whether Christ conquered death. For "in that he died he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth he liveth unto God." But then He did not conquer death for Himself. Death had no claim against Him. Death, as we have seen, is the penalty of sin. But in Him there was no sin. He took the penalty for others; and now His death stands to their account by faith. It is their deliverance. And as to judgment,

His coming again is to deliver those who look for Him out of it. If we speak of "the day of judgment," and day of judgment there surely is, we are told, in another epistle, that, "Herein is love with us [God's love] made perfect, that we may have *boldness in the day of judgment*; because as he is so are we in this world." Nothing can go beyond this in assuring the soul; nothing can equal it as a display of the perfect grace in which we are set in Christ. Death and judgment, the bitter results of sin which nothing in man can meet, are here utterly changed for the believer. Death is exchanged for life in Him, who conquered death, and the day of judgment is the day of boldness and triumph on account of our connexion with Him to whom the solemn awards of that day belong. The saints' boldness in the day of judgment is based on their association with Him who will then appear as judge. "As he is [the Judge of quick and dead] so are we in this world!" Such are the wondrous consequences deducible by the Spirit from our union

with the Lord Jesus Christ ! Such the life and victory wrought by the death and sufferings of the Son of God !

But in the passage before us the position of the believer is not pursued up to the point of personal union with the Lord ; it is the efficacy of Christ's accomplished work before God for us, seen in His first and second coming, and in contrast with God's appointment of death and judgment to men as sinners. That which was accomplished by Christ's first coming was the bearing of our sins, which had brought on us the doom of death : " He was once offered to bear the sins of many." " Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree." That which will be accomplished by His second coming for believers, who are " those that look for him," will be their gathering to Himself apart from all the judgment which His coming will then bring upon the world. He will come not about our sin then. This was what brought Him in His first coming. But when He comes again it will be entirely apart from the question of sin

with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with the blood of others; for then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world; but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation."

NEARNESS OF THE GLORY.

The sense of the nearness of the glory should be cherished by us—and here I mean its nearness in *place*—and we need be at no effort to persuade our-

selves of it. The congregation of Israel were set at the door of the tabernacle and as soon as the appointed moment comes the glory is before them. (Lev. viii., ix.) So at the erection of the tabernacle, and so at the introduction of the ark into the temple. (Exod. x. 1; 2 Chron. v.) So, when it had business to do (though in different characters) with the company on Mount Tabor, with the dying Stephen, or with Saul on the road to Damascus, wherever it may have to act, and whatever it may be called to do—to convict, to cheer, or to transfigure; to smite to the earth the persecutor, or give triumph to the martyrs, or to conform an elect vessel to itself—it can be present in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. It is but a thin veil which either hides it or distances it; the path is short and the journey rapidly accomplished. We should cherish the thought of this, beloved. It has its power as well as its consolation. And so, ere long, when the time of 1 Corinthians xv. arrives, that moment of the general transfiguration, as soon

as the voice of the archangel summons it, the glory will be here again, as in the twinkling of an eye, to do its business with us, and, bearing the *image* of the heavenly, to bear us up, like Enoch, to the country of the heavenlies.

Then shall the Lord be glorified in His saints, not as now, in their obedience and service, their holiness and fruitfulness, but in their personal beauty. Arrayed in which and shining in our glories, we shall be the witness of what He has done for the sinner that trusted in Him.

ON THE COVERING OF THE FEMALES IN THE CHURCH.

1 Cor. xi. 5, 6.

It has struck me that there is large and peculiar meaning in the ordinance touching the covering of the females in the Church. (1 Cor. xi. 5, 6.) It is clearly (on the first reading) to be re-

garded as signifying that subjection which the woman owes the man, who is her head, or the subjection which the Church owes the Lord. Power or covering on the head was the sign of that, and therefore it was suitable to the female in the congregation.

But there is more than that, for the apostle adds, that "if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn;" and he says, that the being uncovered was "even all one as if she were shaven;" and to be either shorn or shaven would have been a shame to her. But what was the *shame* of which the shorn or shaven head of a woman was the expression? This must be determined, I judge, by a reference to the law, and under that we find two occasions in which the female was shaved or uncovered. First, when she was a *suspected* wife; (Numb. v. 18;) secondly, when she had been lately taken captive, and was bewailing her father's house, not yet united to the Jew who had taken her in battle. (Deut. xxi. 10-13.)

The shaved state of the woman thus

expressed that she was not enjoying either the full *confidence* or the full joy of a husband. Now the female ought not to appear with such marks upon her. The Church ought not to be seen as though she were *suspected* by Christ, or still felt herself to be a sorrowing captive; this would be her shame. But the covering on her head shows the Church to be in neither of these conditions; but, on the other hand, *happy* in the *confidence* of her Lord; and this is as it should be. Thus the female covered in the assembly shows out the two things touching the Church. First, her *subjection* to the Lord; secondly, her being under his full *protection*, trusted in, and comforted by him. As the Church both owns the Lordship but enjoys the cherishing presence of Christ, which puts away the sense of captivity, and the uncovered head would be a denial of both, a *dishonour* to the man and a *shame* to the woman, and it would bear a false witness, therefore, to angels, who are learning those deep mysteries of Christ from the Church.

(Eph. iii. 10 ; 1 Cor. xi. 10.) Christ was seen of them first. (1 Tim. iii. 16.) They marked and attended His whole progress from the manger to the resurrection; and now they are learning from the Church, and mark her ways, and if the women in the assembly were to appear uncovered the angels would be taught the lesson incorrectly.

THE GOSPEL OF GENESIS III. 15.

This gospel published in the first promise in the face of the devil himself, is maintained in these last days by the apostle in the face of men on earth and angels from heaven. (Gal. i. 8.) Whether it be the earliest or the latest preaching of it, this glorious gospel is still the same. It is "the testimony of God which he has testified of his Son." It is the gospel of the bruised and yet victorious Seed of the woman. In the bright and perfect idea of it, man is

silent and passive. Abraham had only to *believe* and righteousness was imputed to him. Israel had but to *stand by* and see God's salvation. Joshua, in Zechariah iii., the prodigal, the convicted adulteress, are all in like case. And here, at the beginning of our sin, and the beginning of God's gospel, it is just the same. Adam has only to *listen*, and through hearing to believe and live. The word is nigh us, and we have but to receive it, without working anything in the heights above or in the depths beneath. The activities are God's. The sacrifices are God's. The profoundness of our silence and passiveness in becoming righteousness, is only equalled by the greatness of the divine activity and sacrifice in acquiring righteousness for us. In the sight of such a mystery we may well stand and say, "What has God wrought!" "Simple indeed it is to us," as one once said, "but it cost *Him* everything."

ISRAEL AT MERIBAH.

(Numb. xx. 1—13.)

In the First Epistle of John we are told what God is. "God is light," and "God is love." Here we get these statements illustrated by God's dealings with Moses and Aaron on the one hand, and Israel on the other.

The forty years of wandering were drawing to a close. The thirty and eight years which were to elapse since their rebellion at Kadesh Barnea in the wilderness of Paran, would, ere long, be run out. The brook Zered, the boundary between the wilderness and that part of the land eastward of Jordan, which they were to possess, would soon be crossed. And now the fortieth year from the exodus commences with the events spoken of in this chapter, a year so full of subjects of deep interest to the nation at large: during its first month, Miriam died; ere the fourth month had run its course, Israel murmured afresh against God; Moses and Aaron failed in obedience through unbe-

lief, their punishment was announced, and on the first day of the fifth month it commenced to take effect—Aaron died. (Numb. xxxiii. 38.) The events of their wilderness life after leaving Sinai are soon told. Numbers x. 33—xxi. 1 comprise them all. On the part of God, it is a record of patience, grace, and goodness; on the part of Israel, of stubbornness and iniquity, relieved only by their conduct as related in Numbers xv. 32-36, and their vow to the Lord about the Canaanites. (Numb. xxi.) At chapter x. 33 we read of the ark of the Lord going before the camp instead of in their midst, to find them out a resting place, a three days' journey; a beautiful picture of God's thoughtfulness for the people he had redeemed from Egypt, and was leading by the path He had marked out to Canaan. The first stage on their journey, as given in the itinerary of Numbers xxxiii., is Kibroth-hattaavah. (Ver. 16.) The first notices we have of Israel's conduct after leaving Sinai, are their complaining at Taberah, and lusting for flesh with the mixed

multitude at Kibroth-hattaavah, dissatisfied with the miraculous supply God had provided for them in the manna. We next find them despising the pleasant land, and proposing to return to Egypt, and then madly going forth to encounter the armies of the Amalekites, against God's express command. (Chap. xiii., xiv.) God's authority in the person of Moses having been despised by Aaron and Miriam, (chap. xii.,) we have some of the people now following the example set them. Korah and his company seek the priesthood, (chap. xvi. 10,) whilst Dathan and Abiram refuse obedience to Moses. (Chap. xvi. 12.) The earth opened her mouth to swallow up the congregation of Dathan and Abiram, and the fire from the Lord consumed the company of Korah. With this fresh in their minds, the people on the morrow are found in rebellion, murmuring against Moses and Aaron, saying, "Ye have killed the people of the Lord." (Chap. xvi. 41.) To this succeeds the murmuring in the passage before us. Their last great sin in the

wilderness is related in chapter xxi. Discouraged by the way, loathing the manna, they speak against God and against Moses. On the part of the people then, we read of little else than rebellion and iniquity; on the part of God, we read of patience that never wearied, grace that never tired, goodness that never failed.

Punishments there were, yet the people remained unchanged. The burning at Taberah, the graves at Kibroth-hattaavah, the death of the spies before the Lord, the slaughter at Hormah, the awful end of Korah and his company, as well as of the congregation of Dathan and Abiram, and the plague which broke out the next day, failed to make any lasting impression on their hearts. When another occasion presented itself the people murmured afresh. In the midst of this picture of a people's iniquity how the character of God shines out. Those who had refused to go up to the land must wander in the wilderness, and die there, but their children shall enter on the promised inheritance. Sad, indeed,

must this announcement have been, though less, far less, than they deserved. But, to assure them of the fulfilment of His promise, God immediately afterwards gives ordinances for their observance, which could only take effect when their children should have entered the land He would give them. (xv.) They may fail, but He cannot; and though the children, by their perverseness of heart, deserve to die like their fathers in the wilderness, they are brought out of it, and do enter on their inheritance at the appointed time. On the 14th day of the first month they left Egypt, and forty years after on the 10th day of the same month they crossed the Jordan. (Joshua iv. 19.) But neither grace nor government makes any permanent impression on the people. Miriam has just died, another testimony to man's sad condition, and the wages of sin; yet, the moment they want water, they are ready, because of this, to give up all hope of the land.

They gather themselves against Moses and Aaron, and chide with Moses:

“Would God we had died when our brethren died before the Lord; and why have ye brought up the congregation of the Lord into this wilderness, that we and our cattle should die there? And wherefore have ye made us to come up out of Egypt, to bring us into this evil place? It is no place of seed, or of figs, or of vines, or of pomegranates; neither is there any water to drink.” (Chap. xx. 4—6.) But why chide with Moses? Was it that he had once before brought water for them from the smitten rock? Apparently their thoughts here, as often before, could not rise above the instrument. They come not to him as the mediator to intercede with God on their behalf. They turn not direct to God in their trouble, but chide with Moses, and hold him responsible for their distress. A distress it certainly was, and a great one; but they turn not to Him who could relieve them. They first gather together against Moses and against Aaron. They next chide with Moses instead of crying to God and asking Him to help them. God is left out of

their thoughts as far as looking up to Him. It is man, Moses, not the Lord, that they are thinking of. How often was this the case in their history in the wilderness. At the Red Sea, at Marah, in the wilderness of Sin, at Rephidim, and now in Kadesh, they find fault with Moses instead of looking to God. But iniquity waxes bolder, and they exclaim, "Would God we had died when our brethren died before the Lord." Thirty-seven years had elapsed since that event; for of the ten spies is it said, "They died by the plague before the Lord." (Numb. xiv. 37.) Unbelief working within leads to such thoughts as these. Their brethren had died as a judgment of God. They declare their readiness to have died then. What profit was it to have wandered so long in the wilderness? What availed them all their marches in the desert? The land for which they left Egypt seemed as far off as ever. "Better to have died," they imply "at once," than have dragged on such a weary burdensome existence. Thus unbelief reasons, if it can be called reason; it

can only judge by sight. The way was long, but who had made it so? What might have been accomplished in eleven days was taking them near thirty-eight years. (Deut. i. 2.) Better, they thought, to have died at once, better to have died long ago, than suffer a little now to be hereafter abundantly recompensed in the land of delight. Death in the wilderness seems preferable to life in Canaan, if it can only be reached by such a path.

But this is not all. Why in the wilderness at all? Full of this, they accuse Moses and Aaron of having brought them up into an evil place with nothing but death before them, instead of the vines, pomegranates, and fig-trees they expected; and they were the congregation of the Lord. (Ver. 4, 5.) The Lord's people they now call themselves, yet they look not to Him in their trouble. When a difficulty is before them they hold Moses responsible; when they want an occasion against him, it is the Lord's people he is thus ill-treating. How inconsistent man is! What blindness! If the Lord was

their God, if they were His people, why so faithless? Whose arm had smitten the Egyptians, and broken the chains that bound them as slaves? If He was their God, and they were His, how could Moses and Aaron attempt anything against them and succeed? Had He power over the armies of Egypt, and was He powerless before two of His creatures? Besides, who had brought them out of Egypt? They say it was Moses; their fathers had sung that it was Jehovah. (Exod. xv. 13.) Then it was for blessing, now it is for destruction. The Lord's people in the wilderness about to perish for want of water, brought there by Moses and Aaron, as if against their will! "Wherefore have ye made us," &c. (Ver. 5.) What dishonour to God in all this, affirming by their words that there was a difficulty too great for Him; and that two of His creatures could prevail against the Lord Jehovah, the Creator of the ends of the earth! What dishonour, too, to God, in preferring Egypt without redemption to the wilderness with it. Death in the

wilderness, life in Egypt — anything seems preferable to their present condition.

To what a pitch of iniquity has unbelief brought them! They are ready to part with all they had in prospect, and to return to Egypt. Freedom with the Lord in the wilderness is worse than slavery with the fleshpots in Egypt. They know not the Lord, they have no conception of what He can do. Unbelief cannot apprehend what resources there are in Him. At the Red Sea we see the same spirit, (Exod. xiv. 11, 12,) indicating that they had no idea of deliverance. All they looked for was death. Thirty-nine years pass away, and we find their children, who witnessed how God had always delivered their fathers, using very similar language. They were truly in a great strait, but God was there. He had a resource they never dreamt of. He had before opened a way in the sea, and delivered them for ever from their taskmasters, the Egyptians. But this fails to impress them with a belief in His ability to save

them. Fresh difficulties arise, they murmur against Moses, and can see nothing before them but death. The different circumstances bring out the unbelief of their hearts, and show at the same time what Jehovah can do.

There is another phase of unbelief which this history brings out. We may doubt God's power at all to help us as Israel did; or we may doubt His ability to deliver us in any way different from that which He has already made use of. This Moses did. Till they leave Sinai we see him steadfast in his confidence in God. As long as difficulties arose which had never arisen before, he counts on God, and counts truly. He may not know what God will do, but feels assured when the want is set before Him He will act in delivering power. When, however, a difficulty, similar to that which has been met, has to be solved, he does not understand how God can meet it in any way but the one. What He has done He can do, Moses believed, which the people did not. But his faith fails when a different manner of acting

is announced. God delivers His people as He will, varying the manner as He sees fit. This is a truth of deep, practical importance to each one of us.

The waters of Marah were healed by a tree, the waters of Jericho by salt. (Exod. xv. 25; 2 Kings ii. 21.) At the first contact with the water by the priest's feet, who bare the ark, the Jordan was divided, and the people passed through as on dry land. Elisha smites the Jordan with Elijah's mantle, and finds the way made for him to pass over. (Joshua iv.; 2 Kings ii.) Elijah stretched himself three times on the lifeless body of the widow of Zarephath's son, and he revived. Peter spoke to Dorcas, and she lived. (1 Kings xvii. 21, 22; Acts ix. 40, 41.) The hosts of Israel have water from the smitten rock at Rephidim. The allied armies of Judah, Israel, and Edom find ditches filled with water without wind or rain in the wilderness of Edom. (Exod. xvii.; 2 Kings iii.)

Moses was to learn the resources at the command of Jehovah. When God

promised Israel flesh for one day in the wilderness of Sin, he believed He would make it good. But when He promises them meat a whole month, his faith is staggered. (Numb. xi. 21, 22.) But the Lord performed His promise. A wind went forth from the Lord that night and brought quails from the sea; and the people stood up all that day, and all that night, and all the next day, and gathered the quails. So in the passage before us. The rock had been smitten before ere the water flowed out. He thinks it must be smitten again. Do we not know something akin to this in our individual experience? We may trust God to a certain point, because He has acted before. But the circumstances are a little different, and we do not trust Him to act as He will. We would dictate the manner of acting, indicate the way of deliverance, instead of leaving it with Him to originate His plan, and carry out His design. We, thus, practically limit God as Israel did. (Psalm lxxviii. 41.)

The people want water. We never read

of their wanting manna, after it commenced to fall, till they could eat of the old corn of the land. That never failed throughout their wilderness existence. Food to support life, heavenly bread, was always supplied. They might loathe it, and ask for flesh; but they never had to cry a second time for bread. Not so with the water; that did fail, till God intervening supplied it in His own way. Food for our souls will never fail us; but with the refreshment by the way which the Holy Spirit gives, the case is different. That may stop to make us realize our dependence on the Lord, then it will flow out again. The Spirit may be grieved, then refreshment will cease, till, the soul being restored, the stream can burst out anew. This the people learn in type, and we in its literal exactness. God knew their thirst, and He would satisfy it. They may murmur against Moses and Aaron; chide with the former, and forget what God has done—He answers all with patience and grace. This is worthy of notice. Before they came to Sinai, as each fresh

need was felt, they murmur, and He gives what they want in pure grace. But, after they have promised at Sinai to obey His will, when they murmur again, judgment befalls the rebellious among them. Not so here, He sends them no judgment. They were ready with this difficulty before them to give up the land of promise, and renounce all the privileges of redemption. He bears with them, showing that He is love. He gives them water, and that abundantly. It is no scanty supply: "They drank and their beasts also." (Ver. 11.)

But how can it come out of the rock? At Rephidim the rod of Moses, associated with God's power, as displayed in Egypt and at the Red Sea, is the instrument selected. Now the rod of Moses gives place to the rod laid up before the Lord. (See Numb. xvii.) Moses is now to speak to the rock and the water will flow out. Why this change? What is the use of the rod if he was only to speak to the rock? The Lord would teach a lesson here, not to Israel only but also to us. The rod

was the rod which budded, blossomed, and yielded almonds; a mere rod cut off from the root from which it derived its life, apparently dead, yet giving evident proofs of vitality in itself. By it God had settled for ever in Israel the question whom He would choose to draw nigh unto Him. This rod typified priesthood, the priesthood of the Lord, as exercised in resurrection. Armed with this they were to present themselves before the rock, and speak to it. That rock, we are told, typified Christ. (1 Cor. x.) Water by the way for His people must come from the Lord, but He must be smitten ere it can flow. Once smitten the rock needs no smiting again, for He died but once, and lives for evermore. But the stream it contains can only come as ministered through the Lord, the priest on high. Without the rod no water could come. Without the Lord no blessing can reach us. It was from the rock the waters came. It is from Christ we have the living water. (John iv.) It was in the rock the fountain was. It is in Christ

all our blessings are centered; and the Holy Ghost, typified by the water, (John vii. 39) sent from Christ, ministers of Christ to our souls. It is the Lord as priest His people need for conveyance through the wilderness till they rest in the land. We see this illustrated in Israel's history. (Numb. xvi.—xx.; xxvii. 21.)

But Moses disobeys and smites the rock. The disobedience of one does not deprive the rest of the water. God gives that in grace, only the more conspicuous for the failure of Moses and Aaron. He is love. But He is also light. Hence, while giving Israel what they want, acting towards them in grace, He deals with Moses and Aaron in government. "He spake unadvisedly with his lips." The Lord will not let it pass. "And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron. Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them." (Ver. 12.) What a view this gives us of God.

Moses, with whom He could speak face to face, as with a friend, who had been admitted to such close intercourse with God as none before him had enjoyed, and Aaron the saint of the Lord, (Psalm cvi. 16) are not allowed to enter that land to which they had so long looked forward. But Israel, rebellious Israel, who "often provoked him in the wilderness, and grieved him in the desert," do enter in. To sinners He will act in pure grace. But His saints, those who are privileged to come nigh, must learn that He deals in government. Perfect grace, perfect holiness—such is our God, and such we see Him here. Aaron indeed had sinned twice before—once in the matter of the calf, and once in the rebellion with Miriam. But Moses till now had been obedient. His faith might be weak before, but He had obeyed the Lord's commands. Here he disobeys, and judgment is immediately pronounced on both. These two who had before interceded for Israel, and that successfully, when the anger of the Lord had been kindled against them, are now

the only ones made to feel the effect of disobedience. What a view it gives of His character. He deals in grace, but He acts in government.

This opens up a very solemn question for His people in all times—government in His house. “I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me,” He had said before. (Lev. x. 3.) The two who had the closest access to God, the mediator and high priest, are the two on whom the governmental dealings of God here fall—“Because ye sanctified me not.” Their faith failed, they disobeyed. Occupied more with the sin of the people and the authority with which he has been invested than with God’s grace, Moses exclaims, “Hear, now, ye rebels, must we fetch you water out of this rock?” How far below the thoughts of God do His people often fall. God did not upbraid Israel; He did not show His anger. He heard their complaints, witnessed their sin, but acted in grace. How slow are we to learn what He is. But if we fail to sanctify Him, He will be sanctified. Israel strove with

the Lord. He gave them water. He is sanctified in them. Perfect in His grace towards Israel, He yet visits on Aaron and Moses their disobedience. He can forgive sin, but He will chasten His children. 1 Corinthians xi. 30; James v. 14, 15; 1 John v. 16; Heb. xii. 7—11, tell the same tale. It may be death as here, (see 1 Cor. xi.; 1 John v.,) or it may be temporal trouble of some kind, out of which we are delivered, whilst in this life, through the intercession of others. (James v. 15, 16; 1 John v. 16.) Miriam smitten with leprosy was healed at the intercession of Moses. "The prayer of faith shall save the sick." Moses and Aaron must die ere Israel pass over Jordan. "For this cause many sleep." "There is a sin unto death." In this, dispensations make no difference. God's character is the same. He may reveal more of Himself to one age than He did to a former age, but His character is unchanged. If He deals in grace, which far surpasses human thoughts or man's expectation, He acts in government. While forgiv-

ing iniquity, transgression, and sin, He will by no means clear the guilty. He pardoned the iniquity of the people at the intercession of Moses, but dealt with them in government. (Numb. xiv. 20, 22.) He does forgive, He does save sinners, but the wheels of His government still revolve; nothing can turn them aside. If admitted into His house we are subject to His governmental dealings in a way, perhaps, of which few are aware. "Holiness becometh thine house, O Lord, for ever." Do we admit this? Do we act as if we did? For we are told, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth, therefore, I will punish you for all your iniquities." (Amos iii. 2.)

We should have been disposed to have punished Israel and spared Moses and Aaron. God spared the former, for He is gracious; He visited the disobedience of the latter, for He is holy. Love and light, such is our God. We bless Him that He is love; we should fear Him because He is light. "There is forgiveness with thee that thou mayest be

feared." (Psalm cxxx. 4.) "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. And if ye call on the Father, who, without respect of persons, judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear." (1 Peter i. 15—17.) Who are we to fear? The Father who has redeemed us with the precious blood of the Lamb, showing at once His grace and holiness. If partakers of the former He would have us partakers of the latter. He may chasten us, deal with us here in government when the question of salvation has been settled, but it is that "we may be partakers of his holiness." (Heb. xii. 10.) However great our privilege, however rich the grace of which we are partakers, and free and rich it is beyond man's conception, we are never set free from obedience, we are ever responsible to do His will. We are elected "through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." (1 Peter i. 2.) He delights

in grace, He is sanctified in showing it; but His nature, His character, never changes—He cannot deny Himself. We are to be holy because He is holy.

THE ROD OF MOSES.

(Exodus xvii.)

THE ROD OF AARON.

(Numbers xx.)

What an eventful journey lies between these two chapters, between the day that the rock was smitten by the rod of Moses at Rephidim, and the day that the rock gives forth its refreshing stream at Kadesh at the desert of Zin! Jehovah had brought out a people from Egypt, and they had sung the song of Moses in Exodus xv., with all the freshness of joy that the sense of perfect and eternal deliverance and redemption gives. On the shores of the Red Sea they had passed the barrier which eternally separated them from the land of slavery; and which effectually shut off the pur-

suit of every foe. Here they begin their journey onwards to the promised land, a journey in which they are to learn the deep and precious lessons only to be learned in the wilderness. Here they have to learn that there is nothing, absolutely nothing, to attract the eye, nothing to supply their need; but that God alone must be their resource. And in learning this, they are to learn too, the pride and unbelief of their own hearts, and the grace of the heart of God who had redeemed them. "Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldst keep his commandments or no. And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna (which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know) that he might make thee to know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live." (Deut. viii. 2, 3.) In Exodus xvii. they

have to learn what it is to thirst, as in chapter xvi. they had learnt what it was to hunger; and the resources of God to meet this need. The lawgiver's rod had to smite the rock *once*, and for ever, and the refreshing stream flowed forth to quench the thirst of the hosts of Israel. Blessed stream! Blessed source! "They drank of that spiritual rock which followed them, and that rock was Christ;" type of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, the promised Comforter, after the true Rock was smitten for us. What food was theirs, what drink! Bread from heaven, and water from the smitten Rock! Happy people whose God is the Lord!

He was even taking care of their clothes. "Thy garment waxed not old upon thee." How naturally we should expect in a journey, with such a God, to hear of a people wholly given to Him, fully alive to the grace that was theirs as having Him in their midst. But when we turn to Numbers xx., what a sad tale of unfaithfulness on their part and faithfulness on Jehovah's marked

the way during that long, weary journey of forty years, to traverse that which was but a journey of eleven days! (Deut. i. 2.) They had seen the cloud by day, and the pillar of fire by night, going before them instead of eyes, to search out a resting-place for them—Jehovah charging Himself to do what man had no heart to do for them. (Num. x.) Yet, in spite of all this grace, we find them, in chapter xi., murmuring in heart and loathing “this manna,” their portion from heaven by the way, and turning back in heart to Egypt, longing for the leeks and the onions and the garlic and the flesh-pots of Egypt, though nothing but bondage was there. Again, we find them sending up the spies to search the land, and, on their return, eating the grapes of Eshcol and hearing the report of the spies. “We came unto the land whither thou sentest us, and surely it floweth with milk and honey; and this is the fruit of it.” But the word was not mixed with faith in them that heard it, and they think of the Anakims and themselves, and forget

their God, except to say, "Would God we had died in the wilderness." He granted their cry, and sent them back again that the murmurers might have their desire, "Would God we had died," &c. They had seen the excellent glory go back and become a wanderer with them, while dealing thus with their sin in His wondrous grace. Again, He would, in chapter xv., refresh their ears by detailing their services for Him, which He would have them observe "when they would be come into the land of their habitation, which I give unto you." He would bring them in for *His own name's sake*. But we would fain draw a curtain over the scene that follows here, were it not that such lessons are so necessary for our souls. They have been recorded by our God for our learning, and for ensamples for us upon whom the ends of the world are come. (I speak of chap. xvi.)

How unbelief leads to hardness of heart by the deceitfulness of sin! This we find fully exemplified in the rebellion of Korah and his company. The

people had begun by forgetting that God was among them, and had measured their enemies with themselves. Then they had charged the Lord with bringing them up to die by the sword. And now we find them attempting to approach the presence of God in their own way, rebelling against His servants, Moses and Aaron, who represented Him. They sought the priesthood also. Where is it that unbelief will not lead, when it commences its insidious attacks upon our souls! Jehovah had one provision more, when rebellion was at its height, that He might not consume them altogether for their rebellious heart. This was the rod of priestly grace, Aaron's rod that budded. The dry stick "budded and brought forth buds, and bloomed blossoms, and yielded almonds." Living and victorious over death, the rod of priesthood was instituted as that alone which could *now* lead them into the land. Now at last we find the people abiding at Kadesh, on the borders of the promised land, a long journey passed, a wearisome way,

in which they had learned their own hearts much, but they had learned the heart of God more. Yet, blessed as these lessons had been, deep and precious, we hear the voice of rebellion here as rife as ever. "And the people chode with Moses, and spake, saying, Would God we had died when our brethren died before the Lord! And why have ye brought up the congregation of the Lord into this wilderness that we and our cattle should die there? And wherefore have ye made us to come up out of Egypt to bring us in unto this evil place? it is no place of seed, or of figs, or of vines, or of pomegranates, neither is there any water to drink." Had the thirsty hosts forgotten the day of Rephidim? Was the wilderness more full; or the Lord less able to supply them now than then? No. But now there was no need for the Rock to be smitten. That had once been done, once and for ever. The Lawgiver's Rod had stricken one blow on that Rock, never to be repeated. From what source then was the supply to

come? "And the Lord spake unto Moses saying, Take *the rod*" (the rod of priesthood living and victorious over death which had brought forth fruit in resurrection power, that a blow would only injure and bruise) "and gather thou the assembly together, thou and Aaron thy brother, and *speak* ye to the rock before their eyes, and it shall give forth his water." No smiting is needed now; that had *once* been done by the rod of the lawgiver. Nothing now is required but to show the sign of priesthood, of grace, and to *speak* to the Rock, and *all* the wants of the people would be supplied. Alas! the "meekest man," indignant at the conduct of the people, forgets himself; and thinks of the injured honour of Jehovah, and of the chiding of the congregation. He rises not up to God's thoughts, who can be above the evil in grace; and he sanctified not Jehovah before their eyes. He took "*his rod*," and "lifted up his hand and *smote* the rock twice." The Lord, ever gracious, rises above His servant in this too, and yields the supply to refresh the

hosts of Israel, "And the congregation drank and their beasts also."

But Moses had exalted himself, and he who does so must be abased. "He spake unto Moses and Aaron, because ye believed me not to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them." And yet in His infinite grace He can take His servant, Moses, up to the heights of Pisgah, and show him the land of promise, and permit him to survey in His presence "all the land of Gilead unto Dan, and all Naphtali, and the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, and all the land of Judah, unto the utmost sea and the south, and the plain of the valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees, unto Zoar." (Deut. xxxiv.) He permits him to step from thence to the mount of transfiguration and see His glory there, and talk with Elias of His decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem; but He could not permit the lawgiver to bring them in to the land. Nothing but priesthood founded on grace and triumphant in resurrection,

could give to drink the water to the thirsty hosts, or lead them into the land. Priesthood founded on redemption, "ever living," "saving completely," from the beginning to the end of their journey could alone do this.

How beautifully we have its perpetuity shadowed to us in this chapter. (Numb. xx. 22—29.) Aaron clad in his high priestly garments going up to the top of mount Hor to give up his priesthood there, and Eleazer, his son, coming down clad in those robes of glory and beauty, in the sight of all the congregation of Israel. No break is in the chain, not a link wanting; a living priest, clad for service, goes up before them, and a living priest comes down, clad for service too. Precious figure of Him* who is not made after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life. (Heb. vii.)

F. G. P.

* In "Hebrews," the Aaronic or successional priesthood is not used as a figure of the perpetuity of the priesthood of Christ. The Melchisedec priesthood is the type of this. The Aaronic is presented in contrast to it.—ED.

A SERIES.

No. 13.

MINISTRY.

When the Lord was about to leave the world and go unto the Father, He exemplified, by washing the disciples feet, the nature and the effect of the service He would render to His own during His absence. We have seen in No. 7 of this Series that He is now sanctifying, having cleansed us by the washing of water by the word. Christ is now the great minister of the word, He was the living transcript of it when on the earth. The principle of His life was, "Man shall not live by bread only, but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord shall man live." And according to the principle of His own life, so would He keep us by the action of His word, separating us from this defiling scene, and in the power of his life associating us with Himself above and apart from the world. The Spirit communicates His word to us. But not only this. When Christ as-

cended, He gave gifts to men, and that for a distinct purpose; viz., for the perfecting of the saints through the work of the ministry. There are diversities of gifts, but the one Spirit. Christ having gone on high, the Holy Ghost has come here to carry out His mind, and to make known His words, and the power of them, in the souls of the saints. But not only this. Distinct gifts are conferred through the self-same Spirit, according to the gift of Christ for the perfecting of the saints. Ministry is one channel through which the mind of the Lord is made known: it is the great channel. The Lord is Himself the great minister of the word, and those gifted by Him are His deputies. They are nothing in themselves, and nothing in any sense but as they carry out His mind and purpose. To understand ministry I must see that the Lord is the one who charges Himself with the perfecting of His body, the Church; and therefore, though there be distinctions of service, there is the same Lord. The Holy Spirit confers gifts

according to His mind, so that the ministry, when true, is nothing less than the Spirit using individuals, one after one way, and another after another way, to communicate the mind and interest of one common Lord to any part of the body which He may appoint.

It makes the idea of ministry very simple, solemn, and responsible, when I see its true nature, and origin, and purpose. The Lord is absent. He sanctifies, He washes, and He will present the Church to Himself. In His absence the Spirit communicates His mind and interest, through the ministry of the word, either to oneself directly, or through members of the body whom He has specially gifted for the service in concert with the mind of the Lord, so that the saints are as responsible to hear and attend to the one as to the other. There is much blessing lost to souls in not seeing that true ministry is of the Lord, and that it is as incumbent on them to attend and hear it, as if the Lord called out of heaven. It is the Lord's voice by the Spirit

sounding through His vessels and servants, or it is nothing. Of course there may be assumption and pretension. But counterfeits are only dangerous as they represent something precious; and then assumption does not excuse saints from seeking and preserving a sense of the great blessing and the great responsibility of hearing the Lord's ministry, either directly to themselves through the word, or through servants appointed by Him, and gifted by the Spirit, according to His will.

Ministry is a new and wondrous commission conferred on man; and not till the ascension of Christ was it conferred. Man was unable to take the place of His brother's keeper in any sort until Christ rose from the dead, and became the head of the body, the Church. Now He, the head in heaven, uses His members down here according to His will by the Spirit, to carry out and express His mind, and effect the service He desires for each, so that he who receiveth the servant receiveth Him. I ought to look for service from the servants of Christ.

If I were to refuse it by saying I could get it from the Scriptures myself, I should only circumscribe the mode and means by which my Lord tells me He will carry out His service to me; and by which He is now sanctifying me in order to present me to Himself; not but what He may, and does, as I have before stated, minister the word directly to ourselves, as He sees fit. But to make this a plea for refusing His appointed channel is no way to obtain either. Any instruction, which a servant of Christ imparts to me through the Spirit, is as true, as binding, and as salutary to me as if the Lord spoke it audibly from heaven; and the man who assumes to learn nothing from ministry will be found little able to impart anything. The apostle was helped by the ministry of others. There was mutual comfort from their mutual faith. And how dependent was he on their prayers!

The first and most important point with respect to understanding what ministry is, is to have clear ideas of its origin and scope. No body of men were

ever set in the peculiar and distinct place in which the Church is now placed. It is quite new and unique. However great might have been man's responsibility to be his brother's keeper, not till the ascension of Christ was any man gifted to wash his brother's feet. There were priests and prophets, but they were manifestly unequal to perform a task which, if they could have done it, would not have left those whom they served "clean every whit." Ministry, as it is now, came in on the ground, that the saints were "clean every whit" through the work of Christ. The atonement must necessarily have preceded an institution that was founded on it. It will be seen that, prior to the introduction of priesthood, God's servant on the earth did not feel himself charged with the failures of his brethren, or responsible for their conduct. Joseph served his brethren, but he was not charged with their failings or appointed to correct them. Moses is sent to serve his people; but when God dwells among the redeemed, Aaron and the priests

are chargeable and responsible for the sins of the people, to put them away from any who sought to them. The priests and the Levites maintained the ritual, and afforded the benefit of it to any sincere applicant. They took cognizance of any breach of the law, not to strengthen the delinquent or to exonerate him, but to condemn him, and to exact the claim of the law from him in sacrifices, where there was no transgression. But now, through Christ our Saviour, not only are our sins and transgressions washed away through His blood; that is to say, those of every believer, but our blessed Lord undertakes to wash our feet; in other words, to detach us in mind and conscience from the defilement of the scene through which we are passing. On this ground is it that He appoints His servants to wash one another's feet; and to every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ for the perfecting of the saints. Here, then, we have both the principle and the power. The principle is the perfecting of the saints,

and could be only on the ground of the fact of their being perfected for ever by one offering; and the power is the measure of the grace of Christ imparted by the Holy Ghost distinctly and peculiarly.

Now, we must have imperfect and inadequate ideas of ministry, unless we understand the principle on which we serve, and the power by which we serve. Who could understand ministry, and who could serve, if he did not know the nature of his commission, or why he is entrusted with grace from the ascended Christ, and that by the Holy Spirit this gift is maintained for exercise in him?

The first great point, then, in apprehending what ministry is, is to comprehend that "to every one is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ," by the Holy Ghost, for the simple and distinct work of perfecting the saints. The ascended Christ—Head of the body—the Lord, from His place in the highest heaven, stands forth without let or hindrance now, to dispense gifts to men; in order that His saints'

perfection, through the work of the ministry, and the edifying of the body, may be consummated. If there be any misapprehension of the source and object of ministry, there must be a corresponding failure and deficiency in attempting to carry it out; while if the soul be kept in the Spirit, it is ever made conscious that from the ascended Lord it derives the gift for serving Him; and then there is strength and wisdom in the use of it. Nay, if there be not most rigid simplicity as to this, if the soul do not confine the source of the gift, and the power to use it, to the Lord, the minister or servant will be coloured and perverted by anything which intervenes. And here, doubtless, lies the root of all the misdirection and darkness respecting ministry.

From inattention to the source, power, and object of ministry, arises all the confusion, and human efforts to reach the needed thing, from the highest ecclesiastic, or Romish priest, to the most scripturally taught. I need not pursue this part of the subject, but it is

easy to see that if either the source, power, and object be unknown, there cannot be efficient or pleasing maintenance of the gift.

Christ our Lord is the source, whatever be the measure or nature of it; and the Holy Ghost is the power by which it is maintained and exercised. The gift from my Lord is distinct and defined; but is known and maintainable by the Holy Ghost. Consequently two things are necessary for the due ministry of the word: first, that I recognize that the gift comes from Him, and therefore that I can distinctly refer to Him as His gift any measure I may have; and if I do so, I cannot easily mistake its nature and extent. Secondly, that it is only by the Holy Ghost that I can maintain the gift in any measure of power or effectiveness. The Spirit is the power by which it is energized; and from a neglect or ignorance of this fact, many who are gifted (I do not mean by gifted those merely who are pre-eminently so, but all who are so in any degree) are feeble or ineffective in the

exercise of the gift. The gift is always a positive thing, though it requires a certain intelligence to understand the nature of it. To us the gift of Christ is always most assured when we are most near Him; and while it is positive as a thing conferred, it is, I may say, only known to faith, and faith is assured in proportion as one is near the Giver of it. The more I am walking in the faith of the Giver of it, the more am I able by the Spirit to declare it. It is evident that the gift is a speciality; and that though it may never be taken from me, it may become unprofitable because I do not use it as I ought. Timothy is desired by the apostle to "stir up the gift" that is in him. The speciality of the gift should be ascertained; and this knowledge in a great measure may be arrived at by the greater ease one feels in one particular line of service rather than another. I am sure that one gifted as an evangelist will naturally and easily turn to the work of addressing the unconverted. He will (I say it reverently) find himself in his element

when so employed, however he may need instruction as to the exercise of his gift. In the same way a teacher has in himself the sense and value of communicating truth. His turn and inclination, so to speak, is in that way. By nature he might have been silent and reserved, and delighting in his own acquisitions; but now he longs to communicate what he knows; not, indeed, to parade his knowledge, but to impart it. And the effect which he aims to produce, determines the nature of the gift more than anything besides. There is no act without a motive; and we know how often there are acts of service of one kind or another which spring from questionable motives. A public charity for instance, or a funeral sermon: the motives in both those cases might be merely human and carnal, and therefore all connexion between the gift and its source would be lost; and in such a case the gift could not be determined. For unless I am walking near Christ and in the faith of Him, I cannot determine the gift to be of Him. If I am, I get

assured, and the ease with which I act in any certain line corroborates to me the nature and speciality of my gift. Nor is it a very difficult matter to determine it. It may be for one to do so for another. Though even here the spiritual would soon determine it. But if a soul be walking near the Lord, he will soon know his gift; and the saints will, sooner, or later be sure to acknowledge it. On the other hand, though the gift be a speciality it is conveyed by the Holy Ghost; hence the one walking in the Spirit must always best exercise it.

It is quite possible for a gifted person to turn his gift to no account, or to an unwise account; for if the gift be not held from the Lord and directly under His control, its possessor will always act unwisely and perversely. The right thing will never be done at the right time. The right truth, or the right service, or the right place of service, will not be seen, and thus the value of the gift will be compromised. A pretended gift is "a cloud without water;"

a real gift, not under the Lord or kept under His eye, is rather a cloud with water, but in the wrong place and the wrong time. The gift is a certain aptitude to do some distinct thing, and therefore it must be cultivated and exercised according to its particular property. Whether "prophecy, let it be according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministry; or he that teacheth on teaching." The gifted one is to wait on his gift, to engage himself attentively with it. It will be found that one who has been occupying himself with things foreign and uncongenial to his gift will when he essays to use it, be feeble and profitless. A gift ought to command the man, because it is Christ's, and if he be occupied or engaged with something else, (I mean, of course, unnecessarily so,) his gift is compromised and straitened. It should be nourished, as the apostle says to Timothy, "Stir up the gift that is in thee." I am sure that gift is continually impeded by the engrossment of a man's occupations. I

do not mean by the mere labour of the occupation which is right, but when the mind is involved in the cares and interests which get clogged to it. How can a person oppressed and swamped in heart by the cares and business of this life be ready and free to be the platform or vessel for the activity of an entirely different interest? Many feeling this embarrassment seek to escape it by using their gift; but the result is that they help themselves very slightly, if at all, and not any one else. To use your gift you ought to be under the control of it. For if you are pre-occupied, you cannot "stir up the gift that is in thee," or wait on it. Hence, "Meditate on these things, give thyself wholly to them, that thy profiting may appear to all." The one who meditates on the things of Christ and gives himself wholly to them; that is, who is controlled by *His* mind, must necessarily become an efficient vessel for expressing it according to the nature of the gift vouchsafed to him.

Thus we see that the object and in-

tention of ministry is edification, and therefore the gift for it is conferred by the Lord Himself according to His own will; and as the gifted one is walking near Him in faith, he is empowered by the Holy Ghost to exercise it usefully, and in keeping with the Lord's intention. Gift, by no means places one in any degree of independence. On the contrary, the gifted one who would use his gift truly and solely for the Lord must wait on Him unreservedly for counsel, as to place, time, and subject. I think here again, many gifted ones fail. They allow circumstances and human impressions to sway them as to each of these points, and not the mind of the Lord, which in faith they could have ascertained. There are different ministrations but the one Lord. Therefore I should know that in the exercise of my gift in every act of service I am in the place He would have me to be in; that the right time for me to exercise it is come; and that I have the right subject. How different any one thus sensibly ordered by the Lord would be

in spirit and power ! Nay more, there must be a great and marked lack in the ministry, when this responsibility to Him is not vividly and rigidly maintained. From the neglect of it has arisen all the misrule and unprofitable utterances which are the reproach of christian assemblies. Not that it always follows that there is no sincerity when there is an overlooking of this responsibility, by no means; but if it be overlooked, nay, if it be not strictly observed, oneself becomes the measure of one's thoughts and desires, and neither time, place, nor subject is chosen with reference to the mind of the Lord; but with reference to one's own mind. In this case it may all seem suitable enough to the mind of the individual thus carried away; while it is entirely out of place and unprofitable to the assembly. I think it is plain that the neglect of this responsibility is the cause, not only of all the misplacement of gift in Christendom, but the palpable inadequacy of many true earnest men to set forth truth needed for the edification of the saints.

Now if it be the cause of this evident and sorrowful confusion, how careful should all be, who have had their eyes opened to this sad state of things, to seek grace continually, to rise above what in their hearts they must so much deplore ! Distinct, constant reference to the Lord on these points can alone preserve one from dropping into independence ; and if in independence in the smallest degree, oneself is one's centre ; for even the things of the Lord and the gift will be exercised as for individual benefit and with reference thereto, and not to the assembly as such. The service may be very true and genuine, but it is so individual that it is unsuited to the assembly, and does not edify. Often when one is ministering with great fervency, the assembly is not moved ; because the minister, though very true and earnest, is not in the mind of the Spirit of God ; and therefore, I may say, the key-note is not struck. This is more distinctly felt and known in public praying than in other services. If I have the Lord before my mind, and

my responsibility to Him to use His gift for Him, I wait on Him as to time, place, and subject; and when I do, I am sure, according to His will, to edify, though, apparently, the effect may be small. I am sure it is a great mistake for any one to conclude that because a certain line of truth, or a certain hymn, is at any moment delighting and edifying to himself, on the *ground of it*, he should consider himself authorized or entitled to communicate it publicly. If he has the Lord's mind in communicating it, it is right and happy to do so. But that the mere fact of any truth being presented freshly to my own soul, should afford me title to communicate it, is subversive of the obligation which I owe the Lord, as *my Lord*. I believe that very often those sudden flashes of light to the soul are more for the individual than for the assembly. I do not say that they are never for the assembly; for we read, "If any thing is revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace." Did not the disorder at Corinth arise from this, that every

man was occupied with his own psalm, or his own doctrine, and not the edification of the assembly? I cannot edify the Church except under Him who has the ministrations in His own hand. "There are differences of ministrations but the one Lord." And if this be lost sight of, the exercise of His gift, whatever it may be, will never be in time, place, or subject as He would have it; and so the edification, if there be any, must be very partial.

In conclusion, I merely reiterate the importance and necessity of continued and continual reference to the Lord, as Giver of the gift, as the only safeguard for the efficient use of it; and that the gifted one proves his value of the gift by the measure in which he fosters and cultivates it; always using it in the sense that the Lord gave it to *His* servant for *His own work*. And for this reason it is that the servant should so prize it as to seek in every way to cultivate and afford it full expression; and thus both Giver and gift will ever be distinctly and prominently before his

soul ; each contributing to the other, and according as it is so is he happily a minister of the word.

High and blessed office ! May the Lord keep us so near Himself that our hearts may rejoice in being dependent on Him and in doing His will !

WORSHIP ; OR, "THE ALTAR OF EARTH."

"Ye shall not make with me gods of silver, neither shall ye make unto you gods of gold. An altar of earth thou shalt make unto me, and shalt sacrifice thereon thy burnt offerings, and thy peace offerings, thy sheep, and thine oxen : in all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee. And if thou wilt make me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stone : for if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it. Neither shalt thou go up by steps unto my altar, that thy nakedness be not discovered thereon."—Ex. xx. 23–26.

In this well-known chapter the Lord is presenting Himself to the people of Israel in two distinct characters. In the first part of the chapter He is seen in His majesty as the righteous dispenser of law. In the close of it He exhibits Himself as the attractive source

of grace. The correspondent effects of the one revelation and of the other on the minds of the people are also given.

When the majesty of the Lawgiver is before them with His holy requisitions, the effect is to fill the minds of the people with terror and to throw them to a distance from God. "All the people saw the thunderings and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they removed and *stood afar off*." Thus, in a figure, we are presented with the truth that under the dispensation of the law there exists no possible ground of a sinner's approach to God. For in the first place it may be observed that the commands of the law, almost without an exception, are prohibitory and are as a hedge of restraint around the rights of God, either in direct connexion with Himself or in connexion with man as His creature. And in the next place, if it were possible that the whole requisitions of the law could be fulfilled, it does not appear that under it there is any ground of communion or

intercourse with God. It leaves man, so far as appears, in the distance of a creature under subjection to the authoritative commands of the sovereign creator.

Hence it is said in Hebrews xii., which is an inspired commentary on this chapter, "Ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire," &c. Their fathers were gathered to Mount Sinai, with the effect that we have seen. For even "Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake." But it is emphatically said they were not come to this mount, which was the symbol of law and of terror; but to "Mount Zion," the symbol of heavenly grace, and to all the array of blessing which follows, and which inspires the heart with confidence and joy.

So here. For while it is said, "the people stood afar off," it is added that "Moses drew near to the thick darkness where God was."* As mediator he

* How striking is this expression in contrast with the words, "Having boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus.....Let us draw near," &c.!

receives the instructions of grace for the people; and in connexion with the altar we read the gracious declaration of God, "In all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee." The altar is the meeting-place of the worshipper with God.

The first thing that is presented in these directions about the altar and worship relates to the absolute separation of God from every rival object of man's esteem. "Ye shall not make with me gods of silver, neither shall ye make unto you gods of gold." No symbol of creature holiness, nor expression of righteousness in the creature is for a moment to be associated with God. "An altar of earth thou shalt make unto me, and shalt sacrifice thereon thy burnt-offerings and thy peace-offerings," &c. Whatever is expressive of acceptance on the part of God, as the burnt-offering, or of communion between the worshipper and God and the priest who offers it, as in the peace-offering, is connected with the altar of earth. For it was on earth that "Christ gave himself

an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour." And on earth He made peace through the blood of the cross, and came and preached peace to those that were afar off and to them that were nigh.

It is in the excellency of the Lord Jesus Christ in His person and accomplished work, as accepted of God, that we find the elements and grounds of worship. It is for the soul to be occupied with these in the presence of God, in the expression of wonder, gratitude, joy, thanksgiving, delight, anticipation, hope, desire, in order to present true and acceptable worship. The altar of earth is surely found in the cross, the symbol of which Christ has ordained, should constantly be brought before us when we gather together in His name. And so exactly answering to the declaration here, "In all places where I record my name," &c., is the promise of the Lord, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

But in connexion with this worship

of the altar of earth two things, expressive of man's work and man's order, are forbidden. "If thou wilt make me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stone; for if thou lift up thy tool upon it thou hast polluted it. Neither shalt thou go up by steps unto mine altar, that thy nakedness be not discovered thereon."

Nothing can be more important than for our souls to bear in mind that in worship we have nothing to bring to God, nothing to work out by way of effort; nothing by way of external form, or by an effort of internal feeling, to raise ourselves up to God. He meets us at the altar of earth. God comes to us where we are. It is to have our souls filled with the sense of what His grace has done, and how He has come down to meet us where we are, and to be occupied with the sweet savour of Christ, "who, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot unto God." For worship is the reflex of this, the heart expressing its delight and satisfaction, its adoration and praise for what Christ is for us as this blessed provision of God.

Now it may very well be that where human works are rejected and human order in worship is eschewed, there is still the presence of the two things, in a more subtle form, that are here forbidden. The bowings, and crossings, and sprinklings, the attitudes and order of an ordained ritual may be refused, while, at the same time, there may be an attempt to raise the feelings in order to come to God by some mental process, altogether different from the occupation of the heart in God's presence with what Christ is and what He has accomplished. It may be thought indeed that the generality of the saints are so occupied in the world during the week that it is necessary to act on their feelings when they come together, in order to produce in them the tone of worship on the Lord's Day. But this is a wrong assumption. A life of leisure is not necessarily a life of greater spirituality than one of toil. Where the Lord is owned as ordering our worldly circumstances, and is acknowledged in the daily walk of life, the heart, when brought into His presence, will naturally respond to the exhibitions which He gives of His grace when met to worship in His name. Moreover, worship, if true, is that of the assembly, and not the effort of an individual to act on the minds

and feelings of the saints, in order to bring them up to his sense of what is fitting in the tone of worship.

In the first place the very constitution of the assembly, as composed of the children of God, is that they may be able to worship: for "the Father seeketh such to worship him." Another thing is, that being possessed of a nature in common that can delight in God, it is the proper and spontaneous action of that nature to worship, when brought into His presence. Besides this, believers being partakers of the Holy Spirit, each member, in his measure, is made responsible for the worship of the assembly. Worship is for spiritual persons who are led by the Spirit. To lower the character of communion in order to meet the assumed unspiritual condition of some who may be supposed to be present, is emphatically to make steps up to the altar. Rather let spiritual worship proceed; and if there be souls that cannot join in it, let them judge their condition in the Lord's presence on account of it. But I may resume the subject in its more practical bearings.