THE

# PRESENT TESTIMONY,

AND

# Original Christian Witness Revived.

IN WHICH

## THE CHURCH'S PORTION

AND

## THE HOPE OF THE KINGDOM,

ETC.

ARE SOUGHT TO BE DEVELOPED FROM SCRIPTURE.

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לא בחיל ולא בכח כי אם־ברוחי

Zechariah iv. 6.

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## VOL. XV.

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# THE PRESENT TESTIMONY,

ETC., ETC.

## No. I.

## THE CHURCH—THE HOUSE AND THE BODY.

It seems to me that a few words, now, as to the church, though not bringing forward anything entirely new, will be opportune. The question of the church is agitated in every sense; and those who favour the Popish, or high-church view of it, profit by certain expressions which some find it difficult to explain. My notice of the subject will be brief.

There are two points to be considered which comprehend all that with which I am at present occupied. The first is one which I have heretofore noticed, and on which the confusion and discord that agitates believing Protestantism rests; namely, the identifying the house with the body, or the outward thing here on earth (including all who profess Christianity and are baptised), with the inward thing, or that which is united to Christ by the Holy Ghost. The other is taking the figure of a building (as Scripture does), and then confounding what Christ himself builds, with what is the fruit of the work of building externally—here on earth entrusted to the responsibility of man.

Confusion on the first point seems to me to have been the origin of the whole system of Popery, in its leading feature; and the Reformation did not get clear of it. I mean the attributing the privileges of the body to every one who was externally introduced into the outward profession of Christianity—to every baptised person. At the beginning, it was so, in fact. The Lord added daily to the church such as should be saved. There was no principle involved in this. It was the Lord's own work;

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come and are built up as living stones, a building which grows to a holy temple in the Lord. I have also what is called God's building, as that which is for Him, and set up by Him on the earth, but which is built instrumentally and responsibly by man, where I may find very bad building, and even persons corrupting it. The foundation well laid, and a good foundation, but all the superstructure to be in question. Thus the whole professing church stands in the position and responsibility of God's building; the actual building, or work, is the work of men and may be wood, hay, and stubble, or the mere corruption of the corrupter. It is not that of which Christ says, "I will build." It would be a blasphemy to say that He builds with wood, hay, and stubble, or corrupts the temple of God. Yet such the Apostle tells us may take place; and it has taken place; and he who sets the title of God upon the wood, hay, and stubble, or upon the wicked corruption of His temple, dishonours God by putting (as far as they are concerned) His seal and sanction upon evil—which is the greatest of wickedness. What our path in such case is, Paul (2 Tim. ii.) tells us; but it is not my object to pursue that here, but to distinguish between those admitted by baptism and the body; and between the church which Christ builds, and what man builds when God's building is entrusted to him. All that has been entrusted to man, man has failed in. And God has put all into his hands first: to be set up perfect in the second man who never fails. Adam himself fails and is replaced by Christ.

The law was given and Israel made the golden calf; hereafter, when Christ comes, the law will be written in the heart of Israel.

The priesthood failed, strange fire was offered and Aaron forbidden to enter the sanctuary, save on the great day of atonement, and then not in his garments of glory and beauty; Christ is a merciful and faithful high priest even now in glory.

The son of David set up in person wholly fails—loves many strange women, and the kingdom is divided. Nebuchadnezzar set by God over the Gentiles makes a golden image and puts those faithful to God into the fire

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and becomes a beast. Christ shall take the throne of David in unfailing glory, and rise to reign over the Gentiles.

The church was called to glorify Christ. I, says He, am glorified in them; but antichrists and a falling away is the result; even in the Apostles' time all seek their own, and the last days (John), the objects of judgment (Jude), were there. After Paul's decease grievous wolves would come, and from the bosom of the church those who turned away the disciples would arise, and perilous times and evil men and seducers waxing worse and worse, and if they did not continue in God's goodness they would be cut off:—but He will come, for all that, to be glorified in His saints and admired in all them that believe. The church has fallen like all the rest. Grace will produce and perfect its own work. Christ's building will be complete and perfect, but be manifested in glory. Man's building is ill built and corrupted, and will come under the worst and severest of judgments.

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It is remarkable that it is at the close of Paul's letter to the Ephesians—the church epistle—that we get the conflict with *spiritual* wickedness.

This is comforting; for if, in a day like this, any are set for the truth of the church, they will find every kind of opposition from the powers of darkness on high. Men, and Christian men, will stand apart from you; will say all manner of things falsely against you. False doctrine! is sure to be shouted against you. You are a legalist under law (because you preach the responsibility of man as a creature, and the responsibility of a saint as part of the new creation). You are an antinomian (you preach free grace). A fifth-monarchy man, and subverter of all order in the world and in the church (because you hold the second coming). A spiritualist who denies the Scripture (because you press the Holy Ghost, and Him alone as the interpreter of the true meaning of Scripture). A tither of mint and cummin (because you will press the acting out of every precept).

If you are a Nehemiah, you should remember that, of necessity there was such a person as Ezra went before you.

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## N⁰. II.

## THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, THE ONLY MOTIVE, WISDOM AND POWER.

How long it is before that believers in the Lord can understand that Christ must take the place of everything in and to the saints; that God's object in those "predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son" (He is the image of the invisible God, the first born of every creature," Col. i.) is, that they should, now in the liberty and power of the Spirit, "be changed into the same image from glory to glory" (2 Cor. iii.), that as the Lord, the gracious Lord Jesus, represents them above, where He is at the right hand of power, so shall they, in their measures, be representing Him down here. The Apostle could say "to me to live is Christ, to die is gain." Was this the possession of the life; nay more, its manifestation? "He that saith he abideth in Him, ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked" (1 John ii.), always remembering, however, that He walked without sin or corruption; the saint, of himself, sinful and corrupt, has to be a debtor entirely to grace, and get victory over these things (through mortifying them) by the power of the Spirit of the living God. But how long, I would repeat (alas! the heart knows *its own* bitterness) it is ere the true saint gets into any measure of the experience which Paul gives us in Phil. iii.—the Lord Jesus found by him as righteousness divine (and he refuses any other); all was settled for his soul before the eternal God. The Lord then becomes the object of the affection of his soul; the engrossing and only object—"that I may win Christ," may know the "fellowship of His sufferings;" go through anything to reach Him,—if by any means, I might attain unto the resurrection from among the dead. Man's guilty, selfish need of soul must, indeed, first be met; his conscience must find peace; he must learn the infinite value of that most precious blood, his full divine

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title to stand in the glory of God,—he must receive that Christ "has made peace, through the blood of the Cross," and go on to understand the wondrous provision of God's broad and deep mercy as unfolded in Rom. v., and here after that all have been brought in guilty, every mouth stopped, all found sinners before a holy God, we find the three-fold provision of God's grace to meet all the need and condition of His people. *First,* peace with God for all that is past; being justified on the principle of faith through our Lord Jesus. *Secondly*, for the present moment and wilderness journey, "access by faith, *into this grace wherein we stand*"; ample provision indeed! It is here that a stiff-necked people, alas! learn the riches of grace. *Thirdly,* for the eternal day "rejoice in hope of the glory of God." Such is our God and such our Father's everlasting mercy—His, who would not spare an only begotten Son, even Him that was in the bosom! Yet it is true of most of us, as the Lord once said, "O fools and *slow of heart* to believe," so true, that nearly the lifetime passes in arriving at that which a soul, subject to the Holy Ghost and to the word, might quickly know; and thus, alas! they fail to realise God's object for them; they fail to make everything of Christ their own,—fail to find Him, not only life and righteousness, but wisdom, strength, motive and all; they fail to find "fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ." They do not see that communion must go before walk and works, and all that which most may occupy their souls.

I would now refer to Scripture to open out and illustrate some principles of truth; and I would seek to press on my own soul and conscience, as well as on those of my readers, what it is which hinders our attainment of more power,—more, "ALWAYS bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body" (2 Cor. iv.)

It is not only the *fruits* (plentiful as they might be, alas!) of my evil nature that I am to judge, but the ROOT. It is not my besetments alone, bad as they may be, but the *cause* of them. It is the nature, the flesh (in the evil sense of it) that must be judged, in the light of the pre-

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sence of the Lord; where *alone* sin is seen and known in its *true* character; and that essential truth learnt, that "no flesh should glory in His presence"; that according as it is written, "he that glorieth, let him glory (boast) in the Lord." Many continue to mourn over and judge the fruits of an evil nature,—and thus carry on what a Puritan writer quaintly calls "*the trade of sinning and repenting,*"—yet never judge the nature itself in God's holy presence. Now, when the Lord was restoring Simon Peter (as in John xxi.), did He charge him with the fruit, the *consequences* of his unjudged nature? No, He pointed to the source; the self-confidence, the overweening presumption of Peter's nature. He judged the *root,* the *cause* of his fall. And so must we, if we are to know ourselves and to understand the true grace in which we stand. It is the perfectly good for nothing, totally ruined, helpless, wretched old man, which is put off, by the holy judgment of faith; the flesh seen reduced to the silence and contempt that belongs to it, before the glory of the Cross of Christ. Yet the new man, in the creation, is able to make his boast in the Lord and in Him alone. What illustrations we find in God's word, in each dispensation, of what man, believing man, found when in the presence of God. Whether Abraham (into the chambers of whose heart, the God of glory so shined, that he "obeyed and went out, not knowing whither he went") or poor Jacob; whether Job or Isaiah. "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, Jehovah of hosts." (the Lord Jesus, compare John xii. 41). Or whether it be Daniel, whose "comeliness was turned in him into corruption" or Ezekiel; whether Peter, or Paul, or John (who had to fall at the Lord's feet *as dead*), all show to us what the presence of the living God must produce on man when he gets there.

And now, dear reader, I would desire to make some close application to ourselves. Why is it that we know not more of power in our souls? more of that joy which the Holy Ghost gives to them *that obey Him*? It is a deeper joy than that which does with peace, accompany

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the full reception of the Gospel. We have *theorised* too much. We have been occupied with doctrine, yet detaching it far too much from Him, in whose glorious person all doctrine and all truth concentrate. Him, in whom though humbled down here, "dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." Some have been so occupied with their devotedness (excellent in itself), that that devotedness has been the object before the soul, rather than the person of the Son of God. The same may be said in regard of works and walk, both good in themselves; [and here alas! the writer may freely say how this is wrung from his own heart, when he remembers years of failure, *mixed motives*, years of not having the eye and heart on the Lord Jesus Himself]. And what was the cause of His judgment, whose "eyes were as a flame of fire" against Ephesus? Had they failed in works, in labour, in patience, in faithfulness against evil, in not fainting? No, but the sentence comes forth:—"Nevertheless, I have against thee, *that thou has left thy first love.*" The true *spring* of devotedness had failed. It was not the constraining power of the love of Christ. It was not Himself depended upon and obeyed. He had not found the works perfect before His God, as He speaks to Sardis. As for us, supposing there has been, in a measure, the true judgment of nature in God's presence, and consequently the tasting of some liberty of soul, we have for full blessing, to go on in the path of obedience and dependance (the main springs of Christianity); obedience to God and to His word, the power of holiness; dependance, the way of strength. Whatever be the struggle, the blessed work of mortifying through the Spirit must be carried on, and the sense of responsibility be maintained to walk in the Spirit *because we have the Spirit*, the Holy Ghost, and our bodies His temple. There is too the fear of the Lord ("the *secret* of the Lord is with them that fear Him," Ps. xxv.); and we have to walk, dear reader, *Alone* with God. Alas! (it must be confessed) often the meeting with saints, instead of imparting strength by communion, flowing from "fellowship with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ," brings weakness and disorder to the soul. To walk *alone*

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with God has been, from the beginning and with all His people, the secret of true power. It is there and in true dependance the believer may hear that voice full of majesty and grace: "My grace sufficeth thee, for My power is made perfect in weakness." Most gladly therefore, will I rather boast in my weaknesses, that the power of Christ *may have its dwelling place* upon me.

I would refer to John xiv. as to the Lord's plain practical teaching on obedience implying dependance. He reveals Himself there to the disciples (not as Messiah, but) in His full divine glory, as Son of God and Son of the Father,—the object of their faith (ver. 1); of their worship (ver. 9), "he that hath seen Me, hath seen the Father;" and, in the fulness of His love, utters those precious words: "I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there ye may be also; (what loving hearts, the *Bride's heart* should He find)! But, He continues: "At that day (the day of the Holy Ghost's presence), ye shall know that I am in my Father and ye in Me, *and I in you.*" Amazing responsibility, yet blessed truth for power. "He that hath My commandments (for He has a right to command), *and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me,* and he that loveth Me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him *and will manifest Myself to him.*" And in His answer to Judas (not Iscariot): "If a man love Me, he will keep my *words*" (implying more than commandments, the one who loves will diligently search the words and learn by the Spirit, in His intelligence, the mind of Christ), "and my Father will love him and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." Most of us know that the promise to the poor sinner is unconditional, sovereign grace, and mercy. The promise to the saint is *conditional*, and attached to obedience and a moral condition of soul. Consequently, I am not to be waiting for power to obey; but, having life and grace flowing from that divine and eternal fulness, *I am to obey, in order to get power.* There is the secret of hindrance to so many. It is not talking of grace, but the heart being "established in grace," we obey the written words and find the blessing *follows.* The Lord's words quoted above can bear no other inter-

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pretation, that is clear, and thus there may be the habitual waiting upon God, our expectation being from Him and Him alone, where all power is. To illustrate for every day practice. I meet men, even saints. My first turn is to be to the Lord, *i.e.*, I must realise His presence, where alone I can find wisdom to speak aright. I meet circumstances, trying ones too, it is in looking (off) unto Jesus, and seeing the glory there, and tasting the love, that strength is found "to lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset, and to run with *patience* the race that is set before us." It is thus, surely, that obedience, with dependance, will give great strength.[a] Satan, another has observed truly, has power against pretensions, mere knowledge, and the like; but none against obedience. We are to obey, in spite of difficulty, and not to allow our own will. Clear it is, that for all this I need the sense of the Lord's presence and that I am there, and to taste His love. His death has rent the veil, and brought the believer into God's presence, —but to realise it with an *ungrieved* Spirit's help,—and there to taste of His love. "The love of Christ," the Apostle says, "constraineth us." This is the spring of true devotedness;—here we may reckon ourselves dead and as risen. Men may mortify the deeds of the body, learning to live, in some way, a life of death in the mortal body. But, I would not dwell on the difficulty only—impossibility to flesh and blood; but I would dwell on this that we may reckon on the Lord's love. He gave Himself for us, laid down everything He could for the church; surely, then, we may reckon, and reckon holily, on every spring of power and sympathy in Him. It is well pleasing to Him, and to His Father and our Father that in the confidence of His love we may expect all our souls' desire. Yea, it is according to that word of His own Son Jehovah Messiah down here: "Thou hast given him His heart's desire, and hast not withholden the

[a] Oh to realise more of that blessed word in Ps. xvi: "I have set the Lord always before me, because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved." "Thou wilt show me the path of life; in Thy presence is fulness of joy, at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore."

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request of His lips." Wonderful that *we* may apply it in our little measure! May the reader and writer both find the faith that overcomes,—through the knowledge of the glory of the person of the Son to which the promises attach: "To him that overcometh, will I grant to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth, saving he that receiveth it." Wonderful token of His love! Amen.

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*** How many precious things are mine in Thee, Lord Jesus Christ!

1. When Thou, on Calvary, didst say:—"My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me,"—the wrath of the eternal God, due to me a rebel creature, was borne by Thyself.

When Thou saidst: "It is finished,"—no drop of wrath remained as against me.

*Thy drinking the cup of wrath, was my wrath-bearing.*

2. Thy life having been given, a ransom for me, and Thy body laid in the grave, Thy rising from the grave was proof before all of the efficiency of what Thou hadst done; and that he that believes in Thee is not still in his sins, but has been fully justified. Who shall lay anything to my charge? It is God that justifies. Who shall condemn me? It is Christ that died; yea, rather, is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God.

*Thy rising from among the dead is my justification.*

3. And not only so—beauty and loveableness, as before God and Thy Father are mine in Thee. Graced in Thee the beloved—Thou the glorified head sitting in the eternal glory on high; I, a member in particular of that body of which Thou art the ascended Head!

*Thy glory ascended, is my acceptance.*

4. Anchor and forerunner fixed within the veil; who makes intercession for me, the eternal lover of my soul, my spirit and my body; Thou hast made me a son of God, not being ashamed in heaven to avow myself as Thy brother. Thou first-born among many brethren! Thou guardest me through the wilderness—even from the time Thou didst bring me out from the world, until the time when Thou shalt have come again and received me, even *me*, to Thyself, my Saviour, out of the world, through this life unto and into glory and Thy Father's house.

*Thou in Thy life above art my guard and my guide.*

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## N°. III.

## CHRIST AND HIS OWN.

"I know my sheep and am known of mine."—John x.

FELLOWSHIP with Christ is the most precious thing that a heart can enjoy, whether here below by faith, or above by sight; and the more this fellowship is realised, or the more we, with open face, behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord, the more are we changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Lord the Spirit (2 Cor. iii. 18). We are always formed by the object with which we are most occupied. How blessed then, when Christ, the Son of God, and the reflection of His glory is for us this chief object! And surely a heart that loves Him and walks in His fellowship, will be rejoiced to hear from Him the words, "I know my sheep and am known of mine." He spoke them openly before all; yes, the whole world must know that between Him and "His own" there exists an intimate relationship, and "His own" must hear it from His lips that His joy may be full in them. Precious union, that is for ever secured by an indestructible love, by a love even unto death! It is true we know Him yet but most imperfectly; but He knows us perfectly, and nothing can sever us from His love. He too is ever seeking to manifest Himself more fully to us. All His leadings have this blessed end; and the more we realise His fellowship in the manifold temptations of this wilderness, the more shall we know the beauty and perfection that is in Him. And it is only Jesus, the precious Jesus, that can truly satisfy and rejoice the heart. All the difficulties of earth are nothing when He is present; but heaven itself would be for us solitary and joyless, if He were wanting there. We shall truly receive an immeasurable inheritance, for we are heirs of God; but the greatest of all gifts is Christ Himself, and our joy will be full in that we enjoy all with Him.

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In order to go somewhat deeper into what has been said above, let us tarry awhile in the lovely scene at Bethany, which is described in John xi. The Lord often stayed there. We find Him there as the days of His suffering approached, and also when He took leave of His disciples, and as He blessed them was carried up into heaven (Luke xxiv. 50). There was one house especially, in which Lazarus, Martha, and Mary dwelt, which he distinguished before all others by His visits. The brother and sisters were united to Him in love and confidence; and so far as it could be upon earth, His heart found in this privileged family a consolation which His love accepted. Yes, since the Lord was completely rejected by the Jews, and was revealing Himself as the resurrection, this house stood in the foreground a type of the faithful remnant, with which the Lord united Himself. What grace! Jehovah Himself, who had come from heaven here below to bring redemption to His people, tarries here amidst His own, as a Friend among His friends. He comes so near them that all fear must disappear. He wills also that they should be perfectly happy in His presence, and their intercourse with Him close and confidential. He calls His disciples His *friends,* and says also in the chapter before us, ver. 2, "Lazarus, *our friend,* sleepeth. He desires not only by His work to pacify our consciences, but also by His person to win our hearts, and to fill them with joy. He has given Himself entirely to us, and if we have Him as the centre of all our spiritual blessings in the heavenly places, we have Him also here in the wilderness as our daily Manna, and our faithful Friend amidst our manifold temptations. But how little is He in His fulness known and enjoyed here below by His people! Many, perhaps indeed most of them, see in Him only the Saviour of sinners, who delivers from death and destruction. Their conscience is pacified, but their heart is unsatisfied, and in the midst of their surrounding circumstances they are mostly restless and depressed. Jesus is wanting to them; not for their conscience as to forgiveness, but for their heart—not His work, but His person. His blessed presence is not realised and enjoyed

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by faith. He is not the beloved object upon which the eye rests, and with which the heart cherishes an intimate and confidential intercourse. If this were the case, there would be no fear, no restless care, but joy in the Lord at all times. Paul, in the most difficult circumstances, while a prisoner in Rome, with the prospect of death before him, possessed such joy that he could exclaim to his beloved Philippians, "Rejoice with me!" His heart was filled with Christ. Not only did his conscience rest in His perfect work, his heart also rested in His perfect love. He had Christ Himself, the object of the joy and delight of God, "the express image of His person." He knew Him and clung to Him with a devoted love; and, therefore, it was not hard to spend all for Him,—for Him to live, to suffer, and to die. He could confess "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things . . . that I might win Christ" (Phil. iii. 8); and again, "To me to live is Christ" (chap. i. 21). Christ Himself was his object and his only aim. He was ready to lose and to suffer everything, in order that he might learn to know Him. Such an one as Paul truly leaves far behind him both the world and all that it contains, and the creature and all that exalts it. He rejoices in this one thought, I know Him and am known of Him. Yes, if Christ be really the object of our hearts, we have always enough, for the fulness of God dwells in Him, and He in His fulness is our blessed portion. And where in our sorrowful hours shall we find a friend who so bears and sympathises with us as He, and one from whom nothing is hidden? There is no suffering so deep that He cannot comfort, no difficulty so great that He is not able to help, and even in the blackest cloud that envelopes us, He has His hidden hand. He is ever near, both in the smallest and the greatest of our circumstances; and we can ever, with all certainty, reckon upon Him. And in all His ways with us, in all the sorrows through which we have to go down here, He ever makes Himself more fully known to us. Oh! that we might more realise and enjoy His blessed presence, then would everything

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in our hearts and in our houses, our whole life indeed, be better ordered and more consistent with Himself.

The little family at Bethany knew well how to use the privilege of fellowship with their beloved Lord. Lazarus was sick, and his two sisters sent to Him, saying, "Lord, behold, he whom Thou lovest is sick" (ver. 3). They were convinced of His love, and made it the motive why He should help them. They might expect every benefit from this love, and therefore they could with all freedom turn to it. Had they spoken of their love to Him, they would have expected His help as a debt. But He owes us nothing; all is free grace; far rather has He made us His debtors. Therefore, is it said, "We love Him because He first loved us." All our blessings have their source in His love. He had given His life for us when we were still His enemies and far from God. And now nothing can separate us from His love; our wants and sins set no limits to it; there is nothing within us or without us that can weaken it. His love remains an open spring during our whole course below; it leads and bears with us through all the temptations of this wilderness, with perfect grace and patience, and we shall soon enjoy it above in all its fulness. If we love our brethren, and heartily sympathise with their weaknesses and sufferings of all kinds, we may always say to Him with confidence, "Lord, behold, he whom Thou lovest . . . ." We may be quite sure that He loves all with a perfect love, and that it is joy to His heart when we share His tender love and affection to His people, and for them as well as for ourselves make known our requests before Him by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving. But how ashamed must we stand if the answer to our petitions were dependant on our love to Him! How much then should we have to expect? Let every heart answer for itself. Oh! how good is it that all our blessings here and above spring alone from His perfect love to us! He is love and He is our portion.

If we now glance at the inner life, the spiritual understanding and the loving devotedness of the two sisters, it will not be difficult to perceive a great difference. It is

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true Martha believed on the Lord; she loved Him and received Him into her house; but Mary's heart was more spiritual, and therefore capable of penetrating more deeply into the object of His coming and the divine fulness of His being (or person). While Martha was busied with much serving, and caring about many things, she sat at His feet and listened to His gracious words. He had come to bring the word of God, and surely it was His joy when He found an open ear. This was Mary's good part. Her choice was to hear His word, she chose Himself. And He justified Mary. Her choice should not be taken away from her. Yes, it is the good part to sit at His feet and to listen to the word of God; and afterwards we may occupy the blessed place of a servant. There is so much Christian service in the world, which lacks true strength and beauty, because it stands too little connected with the source of all service, with Christ Himself, and is too little founded on the word of God. There are so many believers who, like Martha, are busied about many things, but, alas! have neither the desire, nor quietness enough, to sit at the feet of Jesus and listen to His precious word. To spend an hour alone with the Lord, would be to them far more difficult than to labour the whole day about all sorts of things. And whence comes this? It demands a far more spiritual mind to tarry in His presence, than to be occupied with service. In the latter even nature can find some satisfaction, while in His presence it must be entirely set aside. We are, however, only when we have gained the necessary strength and wisdom in His presence, really capable of serving the Lord in an acceptable manner. This we see in Mary. We read (ver. 2) "It was Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped His feet with her hair." She gave the most precious thing she had to testify her love to Jesus; she knew the right moment at which to refresh His heart. The Lord Himself was the one only object of her love and of her service. She was entirely dedicated to Him, and prepared to make every sacrifice for Him. It is true her conduct was not according to reason; no one understood her work, not even the disciples. They saw in it only an unnecessary waste; according to their

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opinion she might have served with the ointment in a much more useful manner. They judged as men, and therefore could not understand the work of Mary, which was divinely beautiful. She alone had understood the position of Jesus; she knew that the dark clouds were gathering thicker and thicker around the head of her beloved Lord; her loving heart foresaw the approach of the day, in which the wickedness of men would tear Him from the midst of those that did love Him, and therefore she saw that the suited moment had come to anoint Him beforehand for His burial. And the Lord, who could read the secrets of her heart, saw her deep and self-sacrificing love; and as He had formerly justified her listening to His word, so He now also justifies her work. He says, "She has wrought a good work upon Me." How fully must it have satisfied the heart of Mary, when she heard from His own lips, that she had wrought a *good* work on *Him,* when the token of her love was recognised and accepted by Him. Martha truly was occupied with much serving, and was so much taken up with her service, that she thought the Lord must wish Mary to leave her place at His feet and assist her; but the Lord said to her, "Martha, Martha! thou art careful and troubled about many things; but one thing is needful" (Luke x. 41). Her service was not owned by Him, because it proceeded too much from her busy nature, and had the Lord Himself too little for its source and object. It is only Mary who chose the "*good part*" and accomplished the "*good work.*" O may we resemble her! May we also often sit at the feet of Jesus, to hear the word of God from His lips; may we cling to Him with an intimate affection, and then fully consecrate ourselves to His service! Let us not forget that one work of Mary had more worth for the Lord than *all* the works of Martha; and the judgment of the Lord is alone of value. But He looks at the heart. He sees the spring whence all our service proceeds. And ah! it is to be feared that in our days there are many Marthas and but few Marys. There is so much Christian activity which indeed looks well before the eye of man, but has little worth in the sight of God, with whose approval we have alone to do. It often proceeds more from our own

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righteousness (see Phil. iii. 9), from a pious nature, than from love to Christ. We may well take this to heart. Those, alas! are not wanting who have not only little interest in the Lord Himself, but also little in His service. They live to themselves and to the world, and are content that their conscience is at rest before God as regards sin. But how unworthy are such thoughts! How ungrateful is such a heart for the unutterable love of the Lord, who has given His life for us, and has chosen us to be partakers of His glory! Dost thou belong to their number, reader? Remember that one great end of the work of Christ, and therefore one great blessing for thee, is lost; for "Christ gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto Himself *a peculiar people zealous of good works*" (Tit. ii. 14). "We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus *unto good works,* which God hath before ordained that *we should walk in them*" (Eph. ii. 10). But dost thou belong to those who like Martha are occupied with much serving? See to it, that thy service will meet with His approval. Otherwise it is worthless, be the things with which thou art occupied ever so good and Christian, and however much care and trouble thou givest thyself about them. Our service can only be truly blessed when Jesus is the object of our hearts, when we learn in secret intercourse with Him to understand what is acceptable to Him, and our heart is only truly happy when, like Mary, it has chosen the good part — only in the measure that it can say with the Apostle, "To me to live is Christ." Yes, such a heart is happy in all circumstances, blessed in service, and glorifies the Lord in its walk below.

But the question may suggest itself to some reader:— "Did not the Lord love Martha less than Mary, since her feelings towards Him were so weak and superficial?" To our great comfort we can most distinctly deny this. The Lord loved Martha with a perfect love, and Mary just as much, because He is love. His love to us finds its motive in Himself, not in us. It cannot possibly be indifferent to Him, with what feelings of love and affection towards Him our hearts are filled and manifest; but never can this



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awaken or direct His feelings towards us; we may be most weak and defective; but His love to us is ever perfect. "But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love *wherewith He loved us even when we were dead in sins*, hath quickened us together with Christ" (Eph. ii. 4, 5). The death of Christ on the cross for us, while we were yet sinners and godless, is the most perfect proof of His love. He found nothing in us that could have excited His love; on the contrary, we were "hateful." But when it is the question of our love to Him, we have a perfectly worthy object. He it is in whom God Himself has found His whole delight, and who is the great object of the worship of all the heavenly hosts. We ought also to love Him, because He has first loved us. Yet when we look at His perfect love to us, how must we with shame cast down our eyes, when we think of our weak and imperfect love to Him! How comforting is then the consciousness, that His love is ever matched by His perfect grace! Were this grace wanting, we could never be the objects of His love; but we are, and shall be so for ever; there is nothing, "neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, that shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. viii. 38, 39). The Holy Ghost can bear witness to the self-sacrificing love of Mary, and yet put Martha first, when He is speaking of the love of the Lord to them. "Now Jesus loved *Martha* and her sister and Lazarus" (ver. 5). Adorable love! We may at all times assure every saint, even the weakest, "The Lord loves thee; thou art a precious object to His heart. However unworthy thou may'st feel thyself of this love, and however much cause thou hast to humble thyself before Him — He nevertheless loves thee, loves thee perfectly!" Oh! how worthy is this love to be admired and adored by us! And the more we gaze upon it, the more will our heart expand in feelings of love to Him, and the happier shall we be in the consciousness of being objects of such a love, and able to rest in it for ever. And the more we know of the grace which goes along

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with this love, the more able shall we also be to love and bear with our brethren in all their short-comings and sins. But how useless is it to be occupied with the weakness of our love, if we would love more fully. All our efforts are in vain; the poor heart only becomes more restless and miserable, till at last, desponding and indifferent, we let our hands hang down. For the most part, such efforts and such wishes to love the Lord better are founded more or less on the righteousness of nature. We are far more inclined to bring Him something of our own, than with a thankful heart to rejoice in the gift of His grace—more inclined to rest in our love to Him, than in His love to us. What folly! And yet this disposition is far more wide-spread among Christians than is generally thought; and it is with many a hindrance to joy in the Lord and to the service for His blessed name.

We read further, "When Jesus heard therefore that he was sick, He abode two days still in the same place where He was" (ver. 6). How remarkable! Why did He not go at once? Was it for want of love? No! "The Lord loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus." But would not Martha, or even Peter, have gone at once upon such a message, if they could have comforted or helped? Most probably; because they were much more inclined to follow their natural feelings than the Lord. How often are these feelings of nature mistaken for the willing service of love to Christ! But the Lord walked here below in perfect dependance on the Father; in all things He first looked upwards. His heart was surely filled with tender affection to the beloved family, and with the deepest sympathy in their grief; but to glorify the Father was His first and highest concern. And He said: "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby" (ver. 4)—His whose walk below was always perfectly consistent with the will of the Father. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father do: for what things soever He doeth, these doeth also the Son likewise." Thus too even His work on the cross was not only for

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the disciples, and yet they feared to stumble on the way. The Lord answered: "Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. But if a man walk in the night he stumbleth, because there is no light in him" (ver. 9, 10). The Lord was always led by the good pleasure of His Father's will; according to it He stayed or He went. Never was He led by circumstances. As soon as the good pleasure of the Father's will had opened the way to Him, He feared neither the stones of the murderous Jews nor the cross. All was light upon His way, and in this light should His disciples now follow Him. But ah! unbelief kept their eyes closed, and they saw on the way to Judæa nothing else than death. "Then said Thomas, which is called Didymus, unto his fellow-disciples, Let us also go that we may die with Him" (ver. 16). How often does the fear of death seize our poor hearts when unbelief fixed the eye upon circumstances! But the good pleasure of the Father's will is also for us light amidst the temptations of the wilderness. We should never either enter or leave a place, a position, a relationship, or anything of the kind, till we are convinced that to do so is the will of our Father; and never will He leave an upright heart in uncertainty about a thing when it is needful to be certain. And if we walk according to the good pleasure of His will, we shall walk in the day. He has prepared the way for us; and whatever may meet us on it, all must work together for our good. Our heart has then comfort and certainty, and we can in quiet confidence look to Him and commend all to Him; yes, even in the heaviest trials, reckon upon His strength and help. But it is very different when we are led by the flesh or by circumstance. We soon get into difficulty, and the heart is full of fear and restless care. And how often is this the case? The boy Samuel needed to be called three times before he attended, because he did not yet know the word of the Lord; but many Christians run before the Lord has called once, and not unfrequently make the most sorrowful experiences. Therefore let us always wait till we know the good pleasure of His will, that we may never stumble,

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nor be disquieted and dishonour the name of the Lord by evil ways.

When Jesus came to Bethany, He found that Lazarus had been already four days in the grave (ver. 17). Death had entered the peaceful cottage. and had made a deeply felt gap. It had torn asunder the band that so closely united the little family, and had left nothing but grief and tears behind. And not once had the Lord, the dearest friend of their hearts, been present during this sorrowful scene. He came now indeed; but death had come before Him, and had ~~for ever~~ taken the beloved brother from their midst. "Martha then, when she heard that Jesus was come, went to meet Him . . . and said unto Him, Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died" (ver. 20, 21). She knew that He could have restored him to health; but her faith went no further. She acknowledged, however, that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God, and that He so stood in His love and favour, that whatever He should ask He would receive, and finally acknowledged that her brother Lazarus would be raised again at the last day. But however true this might be, these truths had little real worth for her, and brought her oppressed heart little satisfaction and comfort. For what consolation does the hope of resurrection give, if it is not connected with the certainty that the consequences of our sinful life and condition are for ever done away? But thanks be to God, we have this certainty. The Lord said to Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth on me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and he that liveth and believeth on me shall never die" (ver. 25, 26). In Him we have not only resurrection but also life. He has in grace become man, and as a man has taken upon Himself sin and its punishment on the cross. Now life coming through resurrection frees us from everything that death can grasp; it leaves sin, death, everything connected with our natural life, for ever behind. The Lord has by His death "destroyed him that has the power of death, that is the devil" (Heb. ii. 14), and also death itself, and "has brought life and immortality to light" (2 Tim. i. 10). God has quickened

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us together with Him, having forgiven us all trespasses, so that we, already triumphing by faith, may exclaim, "Death is swallowed up in victory. O Death, where is thy sting? O Grave, where is thy victory?" (1 Cor. xv. 55). The believer even if he be dead shall live, and he that liveth and believeth on Him shall never die; for Christ has conquered death; in His presence it can no longer exist. The whole effect of sin upon man is completely destroyed by the resurrection of Jesus by the power of life in Him. He has brought the power of divine life into the bosom of death, and it is annihilated before Him. Death is the end of the natural man, and resurrection is the end of death. What a deliverance!

But Martha, although she believed on the Lord and loved Him, is not able to enter into the Saviour's words. As soon as He comes she goes to meet Him, acting upon impulse; but as soon He speaks to her of the power of divine life displayed in His person, she draws back. She feels that intercourse with the Lord is rather Mary's affair, and she therefore calls her. Her own conscience is to her the voice of Jesus. And Mary, who believes herself to be called by the Lord, immediately hastens to Him, and casts herself weeping at His feet. She might understand no more of the bearing of resurrection and of life than Martha; but under the sense of death her heart is broken down in the presence of Him who was the life, and she now lays her need and her grief at his feet, where she had formerly sat to listen, and had learned to know the love and grace of her beloved Lord. He alone was able to understand the deep grief of her heart; He alone was able to sympathise as no mere man could.

"When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit and was troubled, and said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto Him, Lord, come and see. Jesus wept. Then said the Jews, Behold, how He loved him!" (ver. 33—36). What a sight! The Lord of glory, the Creator of all things, stands in the midst of His poor creatures who have entirely ruined themselves by sin, and sheds tears. He is troubled in the presence

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of death, which is the wages of sin, which, cold and heartless, tears asunder the closest bands of love, and leaves nothing but grief and tears behind. Yes, the Lord places Himself, full of the deepest sympathy, beneath the weight of the death which He had come to abolish. He fully takes part in the groans of the suffering creation, and brings death before God as the misery of man, as the yoke which he in vain seeks to escape. Jesus in His perfect sympathy, makes Himself one with it. He is troubled; He groans before God; He weeps with men, and all this out of love to those who are subject to this dreadful evil. We, too, who are quickened together with Christ, take part in these groans. "We know," says the Apostle, "that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body" (Rom. viii. 22, 23). The believer is now the channel by which all these groans ascend to God. But it is no groaning under the power of sin, which still, in some measure, holds us captive, or because we are in uncertainty with regard to our salvation or the love of God; no, we groan because, as partakers of the heavenly glory, we see how sin has impressed upon all around us, the stamp of vanity and destruction. Yes, we shall so much the more sympathise with the groaning creation, the more we are filled with the love and grace of God, the more we feel, as Jesus did, the misery which has come upon everything through sin, and the more the rays of that heavenly glory shine in our hearts.

Mary had now the opportunity of learning to know a new and lovely feature of Christ's perfection. She had often seen His goodness and His power, and had listened to His gracious words; but now she may also learn His perfect sympathy. And how could she do this save on the path of sorrow and suffering! She knew well that He had power to restore her sick brother to health; but as yet she had not experienced that when her brother had died, He could, full of the deepest sympathy, step into the gap and shed tears with her. What a perfect



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Jesus! In every position we have a fulness in Him; and which is more precious, which in the hour of our deepest grief is sweeter to the heart, we have to experience His unlimited power and His tender sympathy? Yes, such poor weak creatures as we are must have such a Jesus. Never is His arm too short; never does His help come too late; but also never does a sorrow, small or great, come upon us, with which He has not the deepest sympathy, and is at our side to comfort us in. What a consolation in this wilderness, in the manifold trials of life! How often do we experience that here below we are going through a vale of tears; how often does grief and pain enter our dwelling, or the cold hand of death snatch a beloved member from the closely linked circle, and leave a void behind that none is able to fill. But He is able—He alone. He can drop balm into the deep wound; He can most perfectly feel with us. We may cast ourselves with confidence at His feet, and let our tears tell forth our grief to His faithful heart. When no one understands us, He understands; when all forsake us, He is ever near. He, indeed, often permits us to walk in the path of sorrow, not only because tribulation worketh patience, but also because it affords Him the opportunity of manifesting to us the sympathy of His heart, and letting us see a new ray of His divine perfection. Oh, how sweet are such ways, and such experiences in any grief! They are experiences for which the glory above will afford us no opportunity. There we shall need His sympathy in sorrow no more, for there all tears shall for ever be wiped away from our eyes. "Therefore, beloved brethren, let us count it all joy when we come into manifold trials" (Jam. i. 2).

Some of the Jews, when they saw His tears, said, "Behold, how He loved him." Yes, He loved him, and He loves all His own with a perfect love. Yet it was not the loss of Lazarus which drew from Him groans and tears, but the presence of death, and sympathy with the bereaved and sorrowing sisters. He knew where Lazarus was; he was not lost for Him, for He could say, "No man can pluck them out of my hand." They remain in His hand, even when death has taken them from our

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midst. They live even though they be dead. He never loses them, for He has abolished death, and has brought life and immortality to light. How consoling this conviction for those who remain behind! Their beloved ones who are gone home are ever in His hand; nothing has power over them; nothing can rob Him of them. The same hand keeps them there, which keeps us here below. They are in perfect rest, and are with the beloved Lord, to whom we too shall soon go. It is only a separation for a short time.

Others of the Jews that stood by, said, "Could not this man, who opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?" (ver. 37). Only unbelief, the unbelief that murmurs at the ways of the Lord, speaks thus. It is the source of all the sin on account of which misery has overspread creation; it ever keeps man's poor heart at a distance from God. The Lord felt this, and "therefore again groaning in Himself He cometh to the grave" (ver. 38). His tears were changed into the unutterable groaning of a heart that sympathises from its inmost depths.

Martha's heart is as ever occupied with circumstances. She says, "Lord, by this time he stinketh" (ver. 39). Jesus saith unto her, "Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldst believe thou shouldest see the glory of God?" (ver. 40). He had brought death before God, and now He could lift up His eyes and say, "Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard me. And I knew that Thou hearest me always: but because of the people that stand by I said it, that they may believe that Thou hast sent me. And when He had thus spoken, He cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth" (ver. 41—44). How fully did He here verify the words spoken in the former chapter. "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me is greater than all, and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one" (chap. x. 27—30). The corruption that had set in was no hindrance to

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His power; death must give back Lazarus as soon as He demanded him; every trace of death must disappear at His word. All is subject to His power; all has been conquered by Him; death, as well as him who has the power of death, that is, the devil. His people are ever under His control, whether they sleep or wake. They are ever in His hand, and He can at any instant call them to Himself. Every hindrance to our having part with Him in His glory is for ever set aside. Yes, there is such a power of life in Him that it is not even needful for us to die. He can change us in an instant, and cause the mortal to put on immortality (1 Cor. xv.). And this will actually take place at that happy moment of His coming, when the living shall be changed, and the sleeping raised and caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we be for ever with the Lord (1 Thess. iv.).

O what a certainty, what a consolation for all who believe on Him! They are for ever perfectly freed from death, and from all that is connected with it; they are for ever saved; for ever secured in His faithful hand. Neither the trials of the wilderness, nor death, nor height, nor depth, are able to separate us from Him, and from His love. May this precious conviction ever refresh and rejoice our hearts!

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*** When a poor sinner can say to God:—"The Lord Jesus Christ loved Thee with perfect love, but I—I have had no love to Thee whatsoever; and Thou hast ever found Thy delight in Christ Jesus, and I have found delight in every one and in every thing except in Him!"—it is an awful reality to which he confesses. But let him not keep back the confession; it is *truth*, and truth in the inward parts God will not turn away from. 'Tis a confession, too, which supposes self to be in ruins; God to be God and the Father of an only begotten Son—who is a Saviour of the lost, and a Giver of eternal life and of the Spirit to those that come to God through Him.

A strange and a distant place, without any well known and loved person in it, is heaven to the natural mind. "The Lord Jesus Christ is there," says the spiritual mind, "and to be *with Him*, anywhere, is enough for me. With Him in Paradise; with Him absent from the body; with Him on the cloud; *with Him* is all I want, and never to be without Him."

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## No. IV.

## NOTES FROM MEDITATIONS ON LUKE.

### LUKE I. and II.

I WOULD meditate for a little on the Gospel by Luke. It is impossible to read Chapters i. and ii. of this Gospel without feeling that heaven is opened, and opened very widely too, to the view of earth. Do you enjoy the thought of heaven bringing itself near to you? God is an intrusion to the heart that does not enjoy Him. We ought to read all Scripture with personal application. There was a very beautiful opening of heaven at Jacob's ladder. Again, it was opened to Stephen when he looked up and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. So in the beginning of Luke, we get the opened heaven communicating with earth, and we ought to have a welcome for such a sight, to be ready as the little hymn says, to repeat:—

"Nearer my God to Thee, nearer to Thee."

We find things had been going on in a very homely kind of way, since the prophets. Then heaven opened with a witness. So it will be by-and-bye, though there may be a pause now. Zacharias had been serving the Lord in the Temple, as others, and the angel's visit was a surprise to him. He was not quite prepared for it. Listen to the angel's language: "Fear not." Does the thought of nearness to God awaken alarm in your soul? Very right that it should, in one sense. We are all revolted creatures, but how blessed to see God quieting such alarms! The angel speaks the mind of God, "Fear

NOTE.—The MS. from which this is printed, was sent to and pressed upon the Editor: it was only rough notes, perhaps, of Readings; but the matter is precious, and calculated to refresh souls. He commends it as a basket of *broken* fragments, to the hungry and the thirsty of his brethren in Christ. As an article, it pretends to no finish. The truth it contains is certainly not ephemeral. Anonymous, it must stand or fall upon its own merits.—*Editor*.

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the times of refreshing; but have you lost Him? Could He leave a more graphic impression than He has done here? He has accomplished redemption, and He ever lives to bless you. Go to *your* Jerusalem and be ever praising and blessing Him.

There it drops. "We, through the Spirit, wait for the hope of righteousness." The trail of the serpent is *everywhere*, but in such shining paths as I see the feet of Jesus treading here. What He lays His hand to He accomplishes to perfection.

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

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As source and origin—Thou, Thou only, art God. As channel and means there is no God besides Thee. And lo! all and every thing, everywhere, turns itself around Thee—owning that Thou, and Thou alone, art God—as universal end of all.

Oh! that Thou wouldst then so care for Thine own glory and honour in me—as that little as I am, I may walk in Thy ways and seek Thine ends;—even the honour and the glory of the Son of Thy love, the Lord Jesus Christ!

And may I not say that Thou wilt do this? For, whence and from whom is the desire that Thou shouldst be thus the end of all I think, or speak, or do, or am? Is it not Thyself that has wrought in me to will,—to will for Thy glory and the honour of Thy Son Jesus Christ? and, if *Thou* hast wrought in me thus to will,—Thou wilt also, in Thine own time, work in me, also, to do of Thine own good pleasure. Amen.

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## N⁰. V.

## A FRAGMENT ON REPENTANCE.

THE setting a certain quantity of repentance first (as some men preach), as a preliminary process to believing, I hold to be utterly mischievous and unscriptural. According to such views, repentance must take place without the Word of God; for if it be by the Word of God, there must be faith in that word, or else repentance is founded on unbelief, which is absurd. That it should be wrought by the preaching of a full gospel, glad tidings of a free and finished salvation, is the desire of my heart.

In some tracts on this subject of repentance, there has been an unhappy mingling up of the means and the effects. Be it that the true means of working repentance *now* is a full free gospel ; be it, too, that there is a change of mind as to God in repentance. I believe both, yet neither of these is repentance itself.

According to Scripture, I cannot admit that *believing* the gospel is repentance, nor that a change of mind simply is repentance. I admit that the mind must be changed to have it, but it is not simply a change of mind. When the Lord said, Repent and believe the gospel, the two things do not mean one and the same thing; nor, here, was the gospel that which we now have consequent upon the death, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord.

But to turn to a few instances in Scripture. First, Acts ii., Peter charged the people distinctly with their sin and they were pricked to the heart and said, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" The Gospel was preached, and, being believed, produced godly sorrow. Then he says, "Repent and be baptised every one of you for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." Then came fruits and praise. Here it is not merely presenting the blessed and glorious revelation of God in Christ ; nor indeed is this finished work spoken of. The contrast is made between what *they* had

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done to Christ, and what *God* had done to Him. They had crucified Him ; God had exalted Him, and the Holy Ghost whose work they saw, was the proof of it ; and they, through grace, were pricked to the heart.

Secondly, again I may notice Acts iii. Here there is not a word of the Gospel. It is an earnest pressing of their sin in rejecting Christ upon them, and promising the blotting out of their sins and the return of Christ on their repentance. In this case we have, however, no record of the effects. For the chief priests and captains of the temple came upon them and stopped the discourse.

Thirdly, Acts x. Here there is no call for repentance at all. Cornelius was already a godly man ; his prayers and his alms had gone up for a memorial before God. It was a revelation that in every nation those who feared God and wrought righteousness were accepted of Him. It was *salvation* brought to a godly man, though he were a gentile.

Fourthly, Acts xiii. is more to the purpose. It is an announcement of the fulfilment of promise in Christ, His resurrection, and forgiveness of sins and justification to those that believe. But the question of repentance is not raised, though I cannot doubt it was wrought in them that believed.

Fifthly. In Acts xvii. repentance is spoken of, but in view of the judgment of this world, and nothing is said of grace.

But now let us see how repentance itself is spoken of in Scripture. And I beg you to note that I do not in the least plead for the call *to* repentance being founded on what it is founded on in the passages which I shall cite. It ought to be founded *now* on a full, free gospel. It is wrong to set it as a preliminary in man, though it may precede man's enjoyment of peace and solid assurance ; and I believe must. I quote the texts to show the ground in Scripture for what I said at first about repentance. In Scripture it does not mean believing ; though man must believe in order to repent. And that it does not mean change of mind as to God, though a man's mind must be changed as to God in order to true repentance.

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But I must add that this change of mind does not in itself give peace or assurance.

The men of Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonas. Was that belief in the glorious, free salvation of the Gospel? No, but Scripture calls it *repentance.* I do not say Jonas's sermon to produce it should be ours. But Scripture says these men *repented,* and that thus repentance does not mean belief in the Gospel. Again, John the Baptist's ministry was a solemn call to repentance; but it was not the belief of that Gospel which we now so rightly preach. The axe, he told them, was laid to the root of the trees. They were to repent because the kingdom of heaven was at hand. The effect was, the people feared God, had their hearts broken about their sins, and confessed them; they repented like the Ninevites at the preaching of Jonas. When the Lord said, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish," it was not believing a free Gospel, but judging themselves and their sins with a heart turned to God. So when the Lord upbraided the cities where most of His mighty works were done because they repented not;—when it is said, if thy brother *repent,* forgive him, and that seven times a day—it clearly is not believing the Gospel but self-judgment, and recognition of his fault in sorrow of heart which is meant. In passages such as Acts viii. 22, we have "repent of this thy wickedness," a clear proof that repentance does not mean believing nor a change of mind as to God, for he was to repent *of something* done. So in Rev. ii. 21, "repent of her fornication." So in 2 Cor. xii. 21, as to the Corinthians' sins. So when it is said God by sorrow works repentance never to be regretted. They were already believers, but here the Apostle's reproofs had wrought in them repentance; as regards their allowance of disgraceful evil; and what wrought it was godly sorrow, not the joy of the Gospel. Again, when it is said, repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, we have distinct things: one a state of mind as *regards God,* the other faith and confidence in Christ. And repentance is justly thus applied to God, not ever, I believe, to Christ, as the object, as faith is; because it is in the heart and

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conscience towards God in this our nature and character as such, not faith in the means and power of salvation. So I read in 2 Tim. ii. 25. If God will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth, evidently a breaking down of soul; and will was to bow to God's word. Now these passages show to me clearly that though a full and free gospel may be the means of leading to repentance, yet repentance is a state of heart produced by it, and not the belief of it in itself. I repent because I believe. I repent of my sins.

Let me now take the rich exhibition of grace in Luke xv. In the two first parables it is sovereign grace, and nothing wrought in the saved one; but the third brings before us the work wrought. The young man comes to himself, and there is the change of mind as to his father, which is always the case when grace works; the hired servants had bread enough there. But the first effect was not joy. I perish with hunger. I will arise and go. Nor in going was there yet the knowledge of forgiveness. He proposes to say, Make me as one of thy hired servants. Nor had he yet met his father; he met him in his rags. Then he does not say, Make me as one of thy hired servants. He does then know what his father is; does then get the best robe and entrance into the house. But the effect of that, that there was goodness with God, was to find that he was perishing far from him; was to make him arise and go; to change his mind and to turn his face to his father instead of his back, not merely to change his mind as to God, but by that to produce a judgment of *himself*, and all his ways and state: in a word, the goodness of God led him to repentance. And this repentance was to be preached *as well* as remission of sins. Faith must be objective, is only objective, and the way of peace and confidence, the judgment of my own state never will be so, nor ought to be. But the faith in the objects presented, God's free and sovereign love, and the Saviour and His work, produces a subjective state which Scripture calls repentance. This is not a preliminary to faith, but its fruit. But there *is* the subjective fruit. There may have been a faith in Christ's person and words which has wrought a

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work in the soul before a free gospel may have been even heard; it may have wrought sorrow and self-judgment, made the soul weary and heavy laden. Then a free gospel will produce outward joy. But when a full and free gospel is preached, and is the first thing heard by a careless soul, it is not a good sign that "*they anon with joy receive it.*" So the parable, and so ample experience, shows a deep *subjective* work is a happy and blessed thing, produced by the gospel—not man's work on himself to prepare for it—still produced.

And now having plentifully quoted Scripture, I may appeal to experience, whether he who recalls what has passed in his own mind does not know that he was brought to a subjective state of hatred of sin, self-judgment, confession of sins, with humiliation and self-loathing. In a word whether repentance was not produced in his soul, if it were through the terrors of the law, with fear and dread perhaps, yet, if real, always with some drawing to God as good, some love of holiness, some sense of responsibility in grace whatever the terror, for mere terror of consequences is not repentance at all. If it be produced by a full display of God's love and grace, it will be a softer, deeper, fuller work; the humiliation and hatred of sin so much the deeper. If, as I have said, a previous divine exercise of soul has been already there, a full and free gospel will give liberty and peace. But I appeal to every soul that has believed the gospel if they are not conscious of a subjective work—the fruit of faith; and I ask them which, according to Scripture, is repentance? That, or the belief of the gospel, or word of God in any shape, which produced it. I do not ask about the form which the repentance took, that depends on the nature of the testimony that wrought it; but whether there was not such a work in them, wrought by the testimony, distinct from faith in it, and distinct from a change of their mind as to God, though produced by that change. I do not want them to attach importance to that work as something they are to bring to God. It would be a mischievous mistake. But the state of soul is in itself important. There is a question of the authority and claim of God in it, never lightly passed over.

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But I add here a word more. The forgiveness of sins is something different from the judgment of sins. And I do not believe there is settled peace, in respect of divine righteousness, till the latter work is wrought. A person may be joyous because of the forgiveness of sins, and rightly so, with very little knowledge of self and sin, and yet this has to be learned. If it has been learnt through the law, before forgiveness of sins is known, all the rest is easy; but with a free and clear gospel, specially such as is preached in these days, forgiveness of sins is often known where self is not, and this must be learnt. The epistle to the Romans treats of sins to the end of ver. 11 of chap. v.; it then takes up the question of sin, unfolded in connexion with the law in chap. vii., the result being, not that Christ was set forth for a propitiation through His blood, but that we are not in the flesh but in Christ. You will find more than one soul rejoicing in forgiveness that could not think of the judgment seat with peace. They do not know Christ as righteousness. The blood on the door-post was not one and the same thing as being out of Egypt by crossing the Red Sea. It will be said, But they were secure by the blood, surely. God was for them, but for all that they did not know it as deliverance from the state they were in, and when assailed by Pharoah at the Red Sea they were afraid. Once past that they were free. Do I for a moment mean that a full, free, finished salvation should not be preached to sinners? God forbid. Do I wish that a certain quantum of repentance should be insisted on as a preliminary? I reject such a thought altogether. I believe the life of Christ was just to win back confidence to God which Satan had destroyed; that this want of confidence preceded, and was the door of the entrance of lust into Eve's heart. But all this does not hinder my believing that the faith of that gospel produces in the heart a deep subjective work, in which it is humbled, broken, and subdued; in which it repents towards God; in which God's claim is owned; in which self, past self, is judged. You will tell me, a man has life when he does this. Be it so. But it is not the less true that the work is wrought and must be wrought.

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It is wrought before the reception of the Holy Ghost, according to Acts ii., consequently before joy and liberty, though the truth, and growing truth, will remain.

A gospel which makes light of this is a defective gospel. It opens the door to legalism and false views as to repentance. Men put repentance as a human preliminary. I abhor this, and rightly; but if anyone speaks of repentance in a way not borne out by Scripture, hundreds of souls, in finding him wrong, will suppose it as a question between his view and the Arminian doctrine, and take the latter to be right. It is because I reject the view such contend for, that I dread the use of the statements not borne out by Scripture which I have referred to, and because I think that so speaking of repentance, as if it was itself only believing the gospel of the grace of God, is calculated to give superficiality and self-confidence to newly-converted souls, even if the conversion be real. I believe many souls have been set free from legal apprehensions of repentance and untrue bondage by such erroneous statements, but we are sanctified by *the truth*, and an error imbibed with it always bears its subsequent fruit.

The Greek word signifies an after thought, a change of mind on reflection; but the question is a change of mind as to what. Not, I distinctly say, as to God, though true knowledge of God gives us, on reflection, a just judgment of self, involving, I believe, a sense of God's claims upon us, and our responsibility, which is a different thing from knowing Him. And thus a true judgment of *all our* past ways; godly sorrow is not this, but it works it. In repentance the bent of life is changed by the apprehension of God.

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THE mercy and the compassion of God are altogether marvellous! A man finds them, often, he knows not *how;*—always without knowing *why;* and when he has found them, he speaks of himself rather as known of God in Christ,—than as if he knew God, or Christ, or mercy, or compassion, as he would, fully.

If truth takes the form of attack, the greatest care should be taken to afford no handle to the enemy.

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## N°. VI.

## THE LORDSHIP OF JESUS; AS KNOWN NOW AND IN THE MILLENNIUM.

THE Apostle tells us (1 Cor. viii. 6) "There is one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things and we by Him." Again (Phil. ii. 11) "That every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of the Father." Not only were all things made by Him, and for Him, and by Him all things subsist; but He is head over all things, all power is given to Him in heaven and in earth. He is "heir of all things." "Thou hast put all things under His feet." He is constituted both Lord and Christ."

If then He be Lord, all power in heaven and earth being given to Him, it follows that He now holds all here in title and as His own, however rebellious the inhabitants of this world may be. The question as to His title, and the extent of His power, none can gainsay; the Old Testament Scriptures abound with it. They foretell how His kingdom shall be established for evermore; and in the New, His title is still more distinctly stated. He is Lord and Christ; and when He comes forth to take unto Himself His great power and reign, He has a name written, "King of kings and Lord of lords." No one knows Him now who does not know Him as Lord. The first utterance of divine teaching is to call Him Lord. No one could be saved by Him who did not know Him thus. "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in thine heart, etc., thou shalt be saved." His right and His power no believer can gainsay. Taking it, then, for granted that no one attempts to deny the full title and universal scope of the Lordship of Jesus, the only question for us to determine is—first, how far He is now exercising this His power, or acting as Lord in one domain of His power—even the earth; and

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secondly, how and in what His present acting differs from that which He will display in the millennium.

In order to be able to understand Christ's present position, we must distinctly keep in mind His rejection from the earth. If He is rejected from the earth, and if He is waiting, then this sphere of His power, must necessarily be deprived of His rule. The citizens would not have this man to reign over them, and He, called to sit on the right hand of the Majesty on high, has accepted that seat, consequent on the full rejection at the stoning of Stephen. Now, if He has accepted a seat at the right hand, waiting until His enemies are made His footstool, He cannot be exercising His power, or acting in a scene or among them by whom He is rejected; though He does, as we shall see, act in power in that (the assembly) which has been called into existence in consequence of His rejection, even where two or three are gathered in His name.

But it must distinctly be seen that He, as rejected, refuses by sitting down above to act at all in power on the earth *as such,* though it be a rightful domain of His power. He is, therefore, not seeking to re-establish it, but is on the contrary "waiting." So that His power with reference thereto, except in the assembly, is completely in abeyance; and the earth is deprived of His rule. He, for the time being, has retired from it, and remains waiting until His enemies are made His footstool. If then He be rejected from the earth, and is "waiting," it follows that He could not now exercise any power with reference to the earth, save in the assembly, His body, without setting aside His rejection, and also resigning His seat (the position of waiting) given Him on high. Whenever that seat is resigned, it must be in view of the resumption of His power, and indicates that He no longer waits, and that the time is come (though this will not be without preparation) for Him to take to Himself His great power and reign. When He leaves the Father's throne and comes in the clouds of heaven, all kindreds of earth shall wail because of Him. He will then be no longer waiting as now, but He will be ruling. The distinction between His position

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of waiting and that of rule should be accurately preserved; for though He is not ruling on the earth now, He is the believer's Lord; and the believer is under the most complete subjection to Him. What then is the nature and scope of His rule? But if He is now waiting, He cannot administrate respecting the things of the earth without setting aside His accepted position; and if, notwithstanding, I am entirely subject to Him as Lord, I must investigate where and how I am under His rule and authority.

The answer to this is that His Lordship over me not only as to title, but as to actual exercise of authority is in virtue of my belonging to that sphere in which He does exercise His sway, that which though on the earth is not of the earth and to which He is Head over all things—even His body, the Church. As part of that body I am given to Him out of the world, and set by Him and with Him in heavenly places. I am joined to the Lord, and He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit. I am through God's grace called out of the world and given to Christ, so that I am entirely the Lord's. I glorify God in my body and my spirit, which are His. The body is the Lord's; all of me belongs to Him. I defraud Him of that which is His, and which as the fruits of His redemption have been given to Him, if I in any way whatever regard anything as mine. I am His. He has complete title and right over me altogether. He has bought me with a price. If in anything I refuse the right of Christ as Lord over me I therein disallow His rights and the extent of His redemption, and under-rate the gain too that I derive from being under Him—cared and ordered for by Him, my Lord. Did He not redeem me? Did He not bear me back as I am from the mountains of sin and death where I lay in misery? Has He not paid the full price, so that the Father may, in the warrant of His own righteousness, receive the prodigal into the full circle of His joy and heart? If He has redeemed me, if He has paid the full price, I must be the Lord's; and if the Lord's, it is plain, that if I make any reserve of myself, or if I in any way dispose of myself but as He approves—I therein in a double way evince a want of simple

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integrity. I admit that He is the Lord and that He has redeemed me, and yet I make reserve, which denies the right both of title and redemption, and at the same time allies me in spirit with the world which rejected Him the true Lord. I am dishonest—as to both one and the other, for if I truly owned His redemption, or who He is, I should feel it as a necessary consequence that the body is for the Lord, and the Lord for the body, because He is the Lord. In nothing am I at liberty to act independently of the Lord, not in the most ordinary concerns of life; whether in deed or in word I am to do all in the name of the Lord Jesus. In the case of marriage the strongest word of warning used by the Apostle, is that "the unmarried careth for the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord"; for ordinarily it is the reverse in married life, and all the purport of the Apostle's writing was to this end, that they might attend on the Lord without distraction. The Lord's claim he marks still more significantly, when admitting that a woman released from her husband by his death may marry again; he adds, "but only in the Lord." His claim and right is to be paramount. Wives are to be in subjection to their husbands as it is fit *in the Lord.* Children are to obey their parents *in the Lord,* for this is well-pleasing *unto the Lord.*

Fathers are to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of *the Lord.* Servants are to obey their masters even as to the *Lord,* knowing that of the Lord they shall receive the reward of the inheritance, "for ye serve the *Lord Christ.*" Masters are to give that which is just and equal, because they have a *Lord* in heaven. We are to be subject to every ordinance of man for the *Lord's* sake. We are practically to own that for this end Christ both died and revived, that He might lord, or be Lord, over the living and the dead.

Now in all the instances that I have adduced, it is evident that while Christ holds a full and unqualified claim over the saints now, and requires of them in truth to submit thereto; yet I do not find that He extends His rule beyond the individual, that of course including all relationships and relation to Himself. He claims and



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rules the individual, but not things of *earth* (circumstances) with reference to the individual. The assembly is the sphere in which He rules, and I on earth walk, owning His full claim on me with reference to that sphere. As rejected from the earth, I do not find Him acting administratively with regard to things of it; though the individual subject to Him disposes of all his earthly things in true allegiance to Him, and owns Him in the use and disposal of them, for the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof. He too I know to be above Satan and his angels; therefore I am exhorted to be strong in *the Lord*, and in the power of His might, and to put on the panoply of God in order to combat successfully the wicked spirits in heavenly places. The Lord is set down far above all principality and power, and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come. He has destroyed him that hath the power of death. The prince of this world is judged. Satan is vanquished. He had often been controlled before; but in Christ's death he was vanquished, and he has therefore no power in the presence of Christ. He is allowed to continue, but he knows he is vanquished. We are not looking for him to be defeated, we are now looking for him to be bruised under our feet; and hence, whenever the power of Satan assails us, our resource and strength is in the *Lord*. It is not merely in God, who always did control Satan according to His will; but I have to do now with the ascended *Lord*—He who has taken from him the armour in which he trusteth, even the power of death, and who now holds the keys of death and of Hades in his hand. Wherever Christ is by His Spirit, there can be no effectual working of the power of Satan; nay, there it is always disallowed, and authoritatively resisted. If a messenger of Satan buffets the Apostle, it is the *Lord* he besought three times that it might depart from him. If a woman possessed with a spirit of divination follows him, saying even what was right and true in itself, in the name of Jesus Christ he commands the spirit to come out of her.

But not only does the Lord now assert and maintain

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His power over every spiritual foe, but He can arrest and determine every bodily affliction which befalls any of His people. He is head over all things to the church which is His body. And He often does. I believe the miracles which were done by the Apostles in the Acts were directly from the Lord. No doubt many of them were called for on account of the state of transition in which the saints then were, but that is not the point. It may at one time have been more according to His purpose to manifest this His power in a miraculous way than at another; but the main fact remains that the Lord, even since His rejection from the earth, and renunciation of all administration therein, in virtue of His waiting position, *still can and does use His power with reference* to the bodies of saints. He has the keys of Hades and of death. We know that He chastens in the church after this manner. "For this cause (says the Apostle) many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep." The prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the *Lord* shall raise him up, and for this end such were to be prayed over and anointed with oil, in the name of the *Lord.* Thus it is evident that the Lord has full control over the bodies of the saints, according as He wills, though in the government here on earth they may suffer, because in the scene of it. In a famine for instance, or an epidemic and the like, while the Lord could preserve His people, yet if they are classing themselves with men as men are in it, I should not expect Him to do so; nay more, if they are engaging with things here, in the spirit in which men are, I do not expect that in justice they should be more shielded, or come off better than man ordinarily. The Lord bears all our expenses in the "inn" (see Luke x. 35). "Take care of him" (he says to the host), "and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again I will repay thee." But I do not see that He saddles Himself with our expenses when we *leave the place of strangership. When, instead of using* the world as an hostelry, we resume our place in it. I believe that though He ever bears us on His heart, He is then more toward us, as in John xxi. He was toward the disciples who had returned to their nets and were

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fishing. He is as one standing on the shore, apart from us, thinking of and caring for us *where He* is; but not co-operating with or assisting us *where we* are. He would have us know that we are simply in His hand as *out* of the world, and in the Father's hand as *in* it, and therefore if anything be ministered to me in the "inn" besides what He has deposited with the host, He repays for that *when He returns.* I believe if I were walking simply with Christ, and for Christ here, that I should find my path daily more like His when here, and while I should know the preciousness of His love and interest in me, I should also know, though in desolation and dearth, the most invigorating consciousness of my Father's love also. Love may supply gifts, but gifts are not love, and love exists where there are none, and yet the expression of love to the heart is the highest and best gift, and without which all other must be barren.

The Father cares for me ordinarily in the world, and while being kept by Him in His own name, embraces all *the living blessedness of being in relationship to Him,* yet it also comprises the care and provision which He has for us, and in which He is abounding, so that He counts the very hairs of our head, and far surpasses us in our utmost thought. But the Holy Ghost, who is the promise of the Father to the Son, is working down here according to His will directly *for* Christ. At one time it may be as we have seen, in a miraculous manner, arresting the course of nature; in another, in some less striking but equally distinct way, but always acting through appointed channels in any and every way which is necessary for the service of Christ.

Now while carefully noting and comprehending the power of the Holy Ghost as acting here in Christ's absence, and for Him, we cannot fail to observe the difference between the acting of the Spirit in His absence and the acting of the Lord, if personally present in the exercise of His due power. If He were present, it would not be this or that thing that would yield to His presence, and which when done is to us now a miracle, because it is an instantaneous suspension of the course of nature, a display of Almighty power. This constitutes a miracle.

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But when He is *here*, everything small and great will bow before Him as universally as the waters cover the sea. And yet again in the church, when two or three are met together in Christ's name, the power and the effect of the Lord's presence are known, and where there is faith and Divine recognition of it, as palpable and as blessedly ruling as by His personal presence it would be. The Spirit is ever maintaining the lordship of *Christ*, for it is true, and known of God, and only refused and unaccepted by them who do not know God; hence no man speaking by the Holy Ghost calleth *Christ* accursed, and no man can say Jesus is Lord but by the Holy Ghost, and He is in the saints the sustainer and comforter and uniter with Christ, sent down here consequent on His rejection, to keep our hearts alive in Him, and receiving from Him. He necessarily maintains the full unqualified rule of Christ, leading our hearts to know very practically that there are different administrations but one Lord. Nay, more than this, that there is no happy or assured service when one is not simply conscious of being under the rule of Christ. Anything else would place us in feeling and conduct with the "citizens" who would not have this man to reign over them; and, therefore, as for Christ here, it would be miserable as well as incongruous if His servants were not permitted to have a full sense of His rule and authority in, and with respect to them.

Furthermore, no one will gainsay that the great failure in our meetings and in our services arises from our not cultivating sufficiently, as those verily believing it, that we are distinctly and fully by the Holy Ghost under His rule and authority as His people. But more than this, that the Lord's *relation* to us is that of HEAD, and from Him flows all power to us to act conformably to His will in our capacity as members down here. The fact that the church is not of the world, but chosen out of the world, of which Judaism is now a part, confines, so to speak, our blessed Lord's present rule to the church—His body, and in relation thereto, because He is no longer in the world in any sense, though we in one sense are in it, yet we are given to Him out

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of it, and by Him sent into it where the Holy Ghost is with us uniting us to our Head in heaven; and therefore there must be a difference in everything, as to the scope and manner of His rule now and when He ushers in and maintains His reign on earth.

I have above endeavoured to define the limits and range of His rule now during His rejection, showing that it is absolute: First, as touching the bodies of His saints. Secondly, with regard to every order of spiritual power and evil, because He is above it all Himself. Thirdly, He deals with His saints personally in chastening with reference to their walk in the Church. Fourthly, He has full care and regard to every service needed by them for which He is chargeable, though He does not pay for it until He returns. Fifthly, the Holy Ghost is acting here in all power for Christ's service, so that the course of nature may be arrested; and yet these very miracles prove that the Lord is not ruling, for then the course of things would be in accordance to His government. Sixthly, His rule in the Church is full and unlimited, but this very fact determines that it is not so in the world, because the Church and the world are in complete antagonism, and the Church's very existence is in one sense consequent on His rejection by the world.

Let us now examine for a little what will be the nature and extent of the Lord's rule on the earth when He comes to reign, and how His saints will be affected by it. When He comes, He will be to His saints as He was on the Mount of Transfiguration; they will sensibly and consciously feel and know the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ; they will be eye-witnesses of His majesty; the Hosannas will be full and many in acknowledgment of Him, the rightful King. First, when He comes to be glorified in His saints and admired in all them that believe, His people shall be willing in the day of His power. He will smite through kings in the day of His wrath. He will destroy the antichrist by the spirit of His mouth and the brightness of His coming. He comes to put down all rule and all authority. Satan will be bound, and the glory of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the seas. The earth shall yield her

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increase ; and God, even our own God, shall bless us. Take the blessings of the Lord's presence on earth seriatim, and we shall see at once the great and momentous contrast between His rule in the millennial day and that of the present day.

As to ourselves the first action and evidence of the Lord's power is to place us in bodies like unto Himself. Then, and not till then, can any saint have resurrection bodies. Our citizenship now is in heaven, from whence we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall transform our body of humiliation into conformity to His body of glory, *according to the working of the power* (mark !) which He has to subdue all things unto Himself. None of the saints of the former dispensation partake of resurrection, until we do, for " they without us cannot be made perfect "; and it is in virtue of the power by which He will bring all things into subjection to Himself, that He transforms the bodies of His saints. That is the first act of His power; the first movement (so to speak) from the throne where He is now waiting.

But with Israel, the millennial saints, it is the Deliverer *coming from Sion* which is the introduction of blessing to them. " My people shall be willing in the day of my power." " Then shall they say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord." They shall no more teach every man his neighbour, saying, Know the Lord, but all shall know Me from the least even unto the greatest. And so all Israel shall be saved; for there shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, who shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob. In that day it is said (Is. lx. 19,) " The sun shall no more be thy light by day . . . but the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended." Such will be the controlling effective expression of the Lord's presence on the earth ; and such is not seen now or expected by any one taught of God until the Lord reigns. " Thy people (we read) shall be all righteous. They shall call Jerusalem the throne of the Lord " (Jer. iii. 17, etc.) " In those days the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel, and they shall come together out of the land of the north to the land that I have given for an

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inheritance unto your fathers. . . Thou shalt call me My father, and shalt not turn away from me," etc. Such is the great and peculiar blessing to Israel from the Lord's rule on earth.

Then, as to its effect on the nations, we learn from Rev. xx. that Satan will be bound. In no other place in Scripture is it thus distinctly declared that the god of this world shall be bound and cast into prison, that he should deceive the nations no more. The nations consequently will be the more susceptible of the power that will then be manifested on the earth, and the light that shall emanate from the Lord will be a light for the Gentiles (Luke ii. 32). "And the Gentiles shall come to Thy light" (Is. lx. 3). "All kindreds of the nations shall worship before Thee, for the kingdom is the Lord's, and He is the governor among the nations" (Ps. xx. 2). "All nations shall call Him blessed" (Ps. lxxii. 17). "When the word of the Lord goes forth from Jerusalem, He shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off, and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Micah iv. 3). "He maketh wars to cease unto the ends of the earth" (Ps. xlvi. 9). "And it shall come to pass that every one that is left of all nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles." How wondrously and minutely do these Scriptures set forth the effect of the Lord's rule on earth among the nations! What a contrast to the present time! "Then (He says) I will gather all nations and tongues, and they shall come and see my glory."

Again, as to the effect on the animal creation, we read that the wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock, and dust shall be the serpent's meat. "They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain" (Is. lxv. 25). And to a similar passage in Is. xi. 9, is added, "For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the seas." And again in Hos. ii. 18, "In that day will I

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make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground; and I will break the sword and the bow and the battle-axe out of the earth, and I will make them to lie down safely." From this remarkable and universal change in the temper and habits, we are further admonished of the wide-spreading and general effects of our Lord's rule on the earth.

Finally, we have but to notice the effect on the earth itself. "Thou visitest the earth and waterest it; thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God." . . . "The pastures are clothed with flocks, the valleys also are covered with corn. They shout for joy; they also sing (Ps. lxv. 9, 13). "The earth is satisfied with the fruit of Thy works"; "The earth is full of Thy riches" (Ps. civ. 13, 34). "The fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely" (Is. iv. 2). "The desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose" (Is. xxxv. 1). "Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle-tree, and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign, which shall not be cut off" (Is. lv. 13).

How wondrously beautiful everything will be! The trees of the field clapping their hands for joy because the rightful Lord reigns; "therefore let the multitude of the isles be glad thereof; let the field be joyful, and all that is therein. Then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice." Surely we can hardly contemplate the marvellous and blessed effects which the presence of our Lord shall have on everything within His dominion. May we so understand the nature and the scope of it that we may not confound that universal character of it which belongs to the millennial days with the limited and peculiar line to which He is now confining it through the Holy Ghost; but understanding distinctly the manner and range of it, may we accord ourselves in mind and character to His blessed will. Amen.

*** The reader is referred, by the editor, to the preface of the French New Testament (Vevay), for some profitable instruction upon the difference of the words LORD and lord, as applied to Jesus Christ, who is both *Jehovah* and has been made *lord* of all.

A translation of the preface may appear in a future part of this work.



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# N°. VII.

## PSALM XXII.

THIS Psalm evidently contains two parts. One of humiliation (from ver. 1 to ver. 21); and one of rejoicing (from ver. 22 to the end). Both portions are of the very deepest interest to the believer. The former will be *felt* to be so by every sincere Christian, as it opens with the cry upon the cross of the Lord and Saviour, when He bore our sins in His own body on the tree. "And about the ninth hour, Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt. xxvii. 46).

I desire to present a few remarks on the sufferings of Christ at Calvary. Be it that they are simple; this, upon such a subject, will not take from any excellency of the matter which they may contain. First, I did not know peace with a holy, heart-searching, sin-hating God, until the Cross of the Lord Jesus Christ was known to me—its meaning, and God's gracious plan and counsel about it too. And more than this, seeing that all are sinners, it is, I believe, impossible for any to know peace with God, until they know this Cross as connected with God's answer to, and remedy for sin.

And yet there is one part of what passed on Calvary most important of all. It is a part which many overlook, though it is that part which secures forgiveness to the believer; a part without a distinct knowledge of which no conscience can have calm and quiet and settled peace in the presence of God.

The Cross and the death of the Lord Jesus upon it, took place centuries before I lived; that wondrous work altogether anticipated me; it was finished not only long before I existed, but, in itself, presents everything fearful and repulsive to sense, yet most precious to faith. In it men, in rebellion against God, expressed the crowning

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act of their godlessness and hatred, in putting the Prince of Life, the Son of God's love, to death, in a cruel, ignominious, wanton, and infamous way. The Jewish mind, in bondage to forms of divine appointment, may reject the thought that Jehovah of Hosts and the Nazarene were one, God manifest in the flesh; and the heathen mind, in its loose, care-for-nothing liberty, may stumble at the statement that perfect and divine wisdom, heavenly beauty and moral glory, are presented in that Cross; but God's ways are not as our ways, nor His thoughts as our thoughts, and every human being who knows not, in this life, the virtues of that Cross of Christ, will sink down by the very weight of their own sinfulness and sins, into the lake of fire and brimstone prepared for the devil and his angels.

How heartily will faith say with me, as it recalls what transpired on Calvary, Of a truth God has been before us in what He has done upon the question of sin; and how do His ways differ from our ways and His thoughts from our thoughts!

First.—He holds, by means of that Cross of Jesus Christ, the first place. He has done a work as to sin, before we were in existence. Secondly, He has taken up that question of sin *in a way* so peculiarly His own, that, indeed, His thoughts and ways about it have to be studied by us, and learnt by us, so contrasted are they with all our own.

True, we may have thought, when first we discovered sin, and sins and guilt, that *we* had something to do. And a creature who is in ruins, cannot be justified quietly to sit down at ease as to the ruin; much less can he, possibly, anticipate the consequences to himself, hereafter, of the ruin and be at peace. Yet the question of sin, when it is fairly weighed by a creature, must leave him in hopelessness, so far as anything that can rise or flow from himself is concerned or be found in his circumstances. Sin was, in Eden, man's setting aside of God; 'twas an open insult against God Himself as Creator, that His creature should voluntarily ignore His supremacy, and its own subjection and state of dependance. And, when sin got connected by that first act with the state

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of man's being; when this produced in heart and mind and will and ways its fruits innumerable, and each and all of these was a defiance against God; what *could* man do to remedy the broken relationship and all its fruits, and the dark anticipations incidental to this? He could do nothing, though he might not have the right to say so, until God Himself had given him such words as: Every mouth stopped and all the world guilty before God; who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean; who can make that which is crooked straight? etc.

But the Cross of His Son takes up the whole question of sin, and that, too, in a way such as conscience, in the light of God's presence, can approve and find rest in. It is a provision of God's own providing; and demanding, in the announcement of it, implicit submission to it, and obedience to God by the sinner *as a sinner*. If, as a creature, I were trying to remedy the fall of man and my own ruin in it, I should surely be quietly assuming *some* competency in myself; *some* intelligence, *some* desire to do what is right, *some* power. But the Cross, as God's provision, supposes the very contrary as to me. It assumes, and justly so, that I have no will to own God in the place which belongs to Him, or myself in the place into which sin has sunk me; it gives me no credit as to power to understand the extent of either my ruin or of God's claims; but it does present a work wrought by God, and His thoughts about it; and challenges me, a rebel, whether as a rebel I will submit to the salvation of God; and whether, when unable to obey as an upright creature, I will as a ruined creature become obedient to the faith. A ruined creature, as the *occasion* of God's display of His own right and pleasure as supreme to have mercy upon whom He *will* have mercy, and compassion upon whom He will have compassion, is (surely, man may see it) more to the praise and glory of God than a ruined creature, self-confident, assuming that though he cannot find God whom he has lost, or tell what to do that will not be counted a fresh insult to God, yet who will do *something* to save himself by. If salvation is of, and from myself, surely it will be to *my* honour. If it be of, and from the Lord, the praise

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of it is to Him alone. And this is all the more obvious when the salvation is such as that which is by the Cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, every part of which magnifies God and His character, and shows out the ruin and helplessness in himself of man who is saved; and establishes God in his place of supreme, and man in his place of subjection to the word of God.

Secondly.—Salvation is ours not by means of our intelligence. It is faith-wise, not wisdom-wise.

One little word upon faith, as separate from, and in contrast with sense. Man was in Eden surrounded with every testimony addressed to his senses, of the blessedness of being in the favour of God. Yet he remained not there; and why, but because he did not treasure up and act upon God's word—a warning word, then—"In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." After that, his conscience could not meet God with comfort. But God, unseen and outside, has now announced, down here, a word (multiform are the promises, but all so far as addressed to the sinner) calling attention to the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ; and that his Cross is the sinner's doorway to God. The power of the word of God was proved in Adam's ruin, upon his disobedience; its power is all the more blessedly proved by the eternal life that belongs to those who receive the word of promise. But the truthfulness of the word is in both cases established; both when spoken by a God present, where all confirmed, to sense, His might and goodness; and also when spoken, as it were, out of another world, to men far off from God, in a world of rebellion: God that cannot lie, who has magnified His word above all His name, whose word is as mighty to bring a ruined creature out of a ruined world into God's new creation, as it was to form that creature at first.

Faith, through which we are saved, being our reception of the word of promise (not as the word of man but) as in deed and in truth the word of the living God, though connected with intelligence in the spirit and leading into knowledge, has its own distinctive peculiarities. Its primary action is always upon the conscience, so much so that, until conscience gets at rest for itself before God, it

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makes us often dull to learn and slow to apprehend. On the other hand, quickness of intelligence and great progress in knowledge, in a young convert, are not happy or encouraging signs. It will be found too by most of us, in our after retrospects, that the first apprehensions of faith were often the soundest and most truthful, though we saw through a glass darkly; indeed, often, that felt dimness, that seeing men as trees walking—which we knew at first—is turned into a clearness and a supposed accuracy of knowledge which we find does not stand; and why so, but because it is made up more by theory from within ourselves than by the calm and quiet, but deep, teaching of God's Holy Spirit. Perhaps many can recall their first thoughts of peace as connected with such a passage as that in John iii. 14, 15: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life;" or that in Rom. x. 13, "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Mercy in God towards ruined man was clearly seen; Christ as the only way too was seen; His humiliation and His promise pledged were seen, and that rest for us was in God, and not in ourselves; that too was seen. The reception of His word was eternal life; for though we knew not the worth or the value of Himself, or of what He had wrought, God (to whom we had thus turned—being thus turned by His gracious word) made sure to us the benefit of that which was in His presence, about which He testified to us, which testimony through grace we received.

A little further on in our course we may have been studying the wondrous cross itself. The step was one of progress; and yet we may not have seen, as we then supposed we did, *the* deep lesson of the cross, though we thought we knew it; or occupied with our having believed and confessed Jesus as Lord, we may have supposed that we had full peace because *we* had done so. And yet after and deeper lessons were needful upon both these truths, ere we could justly say, "I see" and "I know," or could say, "Himself is my peace."

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To some it may enlarge the subject to notice that, while the gospels give us the historic account of the cross, they do not give us either the doctrine of the meaning of the cross, or God's counsel in it. The counsel, so far as Israel was concerned, must be looked for in such passages as Isaiah liii., and in its broadest connexions, that counsel and the doctrine of the meaning and import of the cross must be looked for in the Acts, Epistles, and Revelation, as containing the antitypes of the Old Testament Scriptures. The four gospels give us the historic accounts of what took place at the cross,—the Lord being looked at in the four several aspects—of Son of David and Abraham (Matthew), the servant of God (Mark), the Son of Man (Luke), and the Son of God (John). But what passed *inwardly* in the soul and mind of Him that suffered is to be found in our Psalm xxii., etc.

It will thus be seen that, while I attach pre-eminent importance to faith's apprehensions of the word of God about the cross, I do not mean to speak as though intelligence or knowledge were of little value. Far from being guilty of such a sin, I judge we all come short, in a way which we ought to be ashamed of, of diligence in studying the blessed subject as connected with the development of the counsels, and various exhibitions of truth as to the household of faith, God's channel of testimony, as to the service of the blessed Lord, as to man down here a fallen sinner, and as to God the God of glory, who has thus revealed Himself. For Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John has each of them his own aspect of truth in the gospel written by him.

I turn now to the Psalm itself, which gives us, as I have said, most of the inward experiences and feelings of the blessed Lord. I may compare its instruction with other portions of the word as I pass along.

Verses 1, 2. Cry to God of one utterly forsaken by him.

1. My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? far from helping me! the words of my roaring! 2. O my God, I cry in the day-time, but thou hearest not; and in the night-season, and am not silent.

Verse 3.—Whom, though forsaken, he yet vindicates.

3. But thou (art) holy—inhabiting the praises of Israel.

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Vers. 4, 5, 6. For Israel trusting God, had ever been saved; but himself had taken the place of a worm before God.

4. Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them. 5. They cried unto thee, and were delivered; they trusted in thee, and were not confounded. 6. But I am a worm and no man.

Vers. 6, 7, 8. He was, therefore, mocked by man.

A reproach of men, and despised of the people. 7. All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying: 8. He trusted on the LORD that he would deliver him; let him deliver him, if he delight in him.

Vers. 9, 10. —Although he was one whose birth and experiences, as a man, were a witness for God.

9. But thou (art) he that took me out of the womb; thou didst make me to hope (when I was) upon my mother's breasts. 10. I was cast upon thee from the womb; thou (art) my God from my mother's belly.

Vers. 11, 12, 13. — Though now surrounded by terrors and cruelty.

11. Be not far from me, for trouble (is) near; for (there is) none to help. 12. Many bulls have compassed me: strong ones of Bashan have beset me round. 13. They gaped upon me (with) their mouths, (as) a ravening and a roaring lion.

Vers. 14, 15. And with deep inward and personal experiences of weakness.

14. I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels. 15. My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death.

Ver. 16. Surrounded by the wicked and crucified.

16. For dogs have compassed me; the assembly of the wicked have enclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet.

Ver. 17. His person put to open shame.

17. I may tell all my bones: they look, they stare upon me.

Verse 18.—Clothes wrongfully appropriated.

18. They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.

Vers. 19, 20, 21.—Still the LORD was his own stay, and hope, and portion.

19. But be not thou far from me, O LORD: O my strength, haste thee to help me. 20. Deliver my soul from the sword; my darling [only one] from the power of the dog. 21. Save me from the lion's mouth: for thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns.

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The head of the first section of this Psalm might then, I think, in outline, be given and stand thus: "Utterly forsaken by God,—I cry to Him; whom, though forsaken, *I vindicate;* He was faithful to Israel, who in faith drew near to Him—but I am forsaken as having degraded myself to a point lower down than man. Mocked by man and scorned, though by birth and experience a true witness for God, surrounded by terrors and cruelty, full within of weakness, surrounded by the wicked, crucified, my person and circumstance put to shame—*thou, Lord, alone art my strength, and hope, and portion.*"

Satan in the mount had tried Him as Son of God and as Son of Man, but could find no dross of lust in Him. All was in perfect obedience to God and to His servant position. Man had tried Him, good and bad man, but all was perfect. Now, come to the end of His course here below,—Satan, man, and God, all try Him: He is perfectly subject unto God, even unto death, the death of the cross. But more than perfect subjection comes out; forsaken by God He does not forsake God: this is more than any mere creature, however high that creature be, could do. No *mere* creature has springs thus within itself, so that cut off from supplies from on high, it can still serve in subjection; forsaken of God, a mere creature must collapse in ruin. If thus perfectly subject, if thus divinely glorious in power, for whose sins was He thus smitten? Not for His own, that is clear. He was perfect as a man, and was Son of God too; He had no sins of His own, He was by nature apart from sin. For whose sin and sins was He then afflicted and bruised? Faith knows the answer. But I must not anticipate.

I pray that the various kinds of sufferings of the Lord, as here presented, may be noticed. They all meet together in the Psalm, as they did in the Lord's experience on the cross. But they are, some of them, essentially distinct from the others.

Take for instance *first* ver. 1. My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me? far from helping me! the words of my roaring. This forsaking by God—my God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me? What was there like it for sorrow; what the same as it in the rest of the

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Psalm, or I may say of the Lord's whole life? It presents Him in quite a peculiar place and position. He had, of His own accord, taken the cup of wrath due to others. As a substitute, the just one in place of the many unjust, He was bearing all the billows and waves of God's wrath against sin. Man had in the Garden of Eden refused to be subject to God, had, so far as in him lay, set God aside, and, so far as Himself was concerned, had set Satan in the place of director instead of God. The Lord, the seed of the woman, who alone knew no sin, was made sin for us, took up upon Himself the consequences of this first root-sin of Adam, and of all its ramifications. He was treated as though He had been *the* person that had alone done any or all the evil, and He experienced the consequences of being forsaken. My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?

Sin in man is always godlessness, the denial of God in His place of supreme. Who could take the place and the consequences of man who had done this? Let a mere creature be treated according to its deserts, and withering in the darkness and blackness of despair would be the prelude to the lake prepared for the devil and his angels—lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, where their worm dieth not, and where their fire is not quenched. And yet all the consequences upon the wicked give no adequate measure, save as being eternal, of what the result of such an insult to God is. But the beloved Son, He in whom God was always well pleased, He who was competent to take up the question of insulted Deity; He, God manifest in the flesh; He the blessed Son of Man, took up the question in His own person, of His own voluntary accord—took it up too, not in independent will of His own, but as the servant of God and His Father. Never, really, was His conduct more perfect, more according to His Father's good pleasure, than when He took thus the cup of wrath due alone to others, when he yielded Himself, who knew no sin, *to be made* sin for us; but yet the veil dropped, so to speak, between the countenance of God and His servant, the sin He had taken up made Him taste what it was to be forsaken.

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We must remember, too, that with Him there was no exaggeration of language, as there is with mere man. To man, the use of language is difficult, if he would be truthful. His *feelings* lead him to use words and terms often, which, in the calmer, cooler moments of reflection, he thinks are too glowing, too strong; feelings of another kind often, too, lead him to use words and terms which are not strong enough. This was never the case with the Lord. He presents facts, and no human language could ever express what He felt when He said, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me." My sin and sins, so to speak, borne by the Lord in God's presence, and the light of approbation and complacency was curtained in from Him. If sin is, indeed, the denial of God's rights and personal place relatively to me, how can He and it meet together in any wise? Be the sins but an appendage to Him who, because He was God manifest in flesh, could have no sin, could see no corruption, be they but as a garland round about Him, a spotless perfect victim—there could be no enjoyment by Him of expressed complacency and approbation from on high. My sins shut it out. The bullock for the sin offering (Lev. xvi. 27, 28), was thrust out of the camp, and seemed to mark everything unclean; though the blood afterwards might go inside and be before and upon the mercy seat, where God dwelt between the Cherubim. Sin is an abruption from God. Its judgment, God's abruption from it. What it is and what its real character and tendencies are, I only learn from the Lord forsaken by God, upon the Cross.

And until I can measure the calibre of Him that was there, and measure His relationship to Him whose servant He then and there was—made sin for us,—I can know no measure of what His forsaking was. To me, it is just immeasurable—my sin as against God and God only—not as an inconvenient thing to man, to my fellows, to myself, down here; but as against God and what it is in its awful consequences for eternity; what fellowship with a world that clings to God's adversary, Satan, what is it but sin as against God. And I confess I can in no wise measure it. He is from everlasting. He is the first

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and the last. Of Him, through Him, and to Him are all things. The head and centre of the universe; His glory the end of all that is. And can I measure what my insult to His person, to His government, what my setting Him aside, so far as I am concerned, is? Impossible. And still more impossible for me to measure the depth that knows no sounding, of what the Lord endured when He bore the wrath due to my sins in His own body on the tree; when he cried out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me."

If I wanted like a Jeremy Taylor to paint a scene hereupon, I think I could do it. I would recall the height whence He had come, His personal and recognised glory there; the only begotten Son of the Father, object of worship with Him; who could say, He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father also; in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily; Creator and upholder of all things; the titles of Prophet, Priest, and King down here (which even this Psalm shows to have been His, when it is carefully read and analysed); the contrasts between the approvals He had had from on high (Matt. iii. 16, 17; Luke ix. 35; John i. 32, 33) and the present experience, God's own servant forsaken thus, etc., etc. But no, His own simple unvarnished utterance is best description after all, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken Me!"[a]

This sort of sorrow is altogether *sui generis,* of its own kind. So completely is it *distinctively* peculiar and not to be confounded with other kinds of sorrows that they might be shared and partaken of by others; but, as to this one it is true that no one as yet ever tasted it, even in the measure in which a human being can taste it, save the Lord. And He took the full, whole potion as at the hand of God and His Father.

It is re-stated again, in ver. 11 and ver. 19, Be not

[a] As a translator I may, however, notice that if "Eli" [in contrast with Elohai] points to "nearness of conscious association," there is an element of sorrow marked there, which should be noted. So too should be noted the Lord's changing the word Hazavtani (a Hebrew word) to Sabachtani (a Syriac word) *forsaken me.*

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thou far from me, Lord; and what its cause was, in his holding our sin and bearing it, in Psalm xl. 12, "For innumerable evils have compassed me about: mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up: they are more than the hairs of mine head; therefore, my heart faileth me."

Well might the sun hide, in a way contrary to nature, its face; well, too, might an unnatural darkness cover the whole scene. Was ever sorrow like unto His sorrow!

But, *secondly*, there were other sorrows then and there the Lord's. For instance, ver. 3, the sorrow of the contrast between the shelter which the believing line of witnesses had ever had from God (in whom they in their measure trusted), and the way that all God's billows and waves necessarily rolled over Himself, as the one who, for God's sake (that he might be free to justify, and that without compromise the sinner), and who for man's sake, too, had thus gone down into the depths, below man's level, that through death He might nullify him that had the power of death, that is the devil, and deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage; might rifle the grave and bring away with him the key of Hades and of death; as he said to John (Rev. i. 17), "And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth and became dead, and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of Hades and of death." That he might break the power of Satan, set aside the power of the world, draw the souls of poor sinners to God, He became a worm and no man. What thorough humbling of Himself—obedient unto death, the death of the cross!

But, *thirdly*, more than this, and quite separable from the second, and in some respects contrasted with the first sorrow (ver. 6, 7, 8). Wicked men round about Him were against Him, though He was bearing their judgment before God. And His perfect self as a man could take notice of all the little things from man, as much as the great things from God! Reproach of man; contempt of the people; the laugh; the scorn; the pouted lip; the wagging head; the taunting repartee—He saw, He felt it

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all. It was not God's wrath against sin; but it was rather part of the sin against which God's wrath came; the swollen tide of it, the grand expression of it—to which the wrath was obviously due. In the wrath, He was all alone, and none with Him: in the taste of the sins, then swelling like a flood against Him, a Mary, a John, and holy women, a Joseph, a centurion, a Nicodemus might have their portions and drink it with Him. The wrath was His and His alone to bear.

*Fourthly,* the past nearness of God to Him (ver. 9 and 10) in contrast with (ver. 11) the consciousness of the present distance, was another sorrow. This, so far as experience goes in the walk of a man of God, a Job, a Prophet, a John might share in their measures—but who *shined* under it in the way that He did? It discovered but too often their love of ease, their self-will. A Job was irritated and cursed the day and the night connected with his birth; a Jeremiah sunk through faintheartedness, into the like sin. Timothy was fainthearted, etc., but the Lord's light only shined out the more brightly.

So, *fifthly,* might others share the surroundings of adversaries (ver. 12).

And, *sixthly* (ver. 14, 15), the sense of weakness and helplessness in position. Not that a weak one feels weakness, or one naturally helpless feels it as one who is the perfection of strength and power would do, such an one as He who bears up the pillars of the earth. And there were, also, here, points marked which none but one ever *fully* knew. "I am poured out like water. . . My heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels. . . Thou hast brought me into the dust of death," seems to me certainly language which, as to its pregnant fulness, suited only Him, the Power and the Mighty One of God when on the cross. Still, like that word "crucified through weakness," it might be true of many a sufferer in a measure; but the forsaking was His all alone.

So also ver. 16, which is my *seventh* sorrow. And here I must digress a little, so as to take in some other Scriptures, as the subject is the crucifixion itself.

Till you can find another like unto Himself who could

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be His own and very peer (and that can never be), you will not find one whose Nazarite gaze at, and tenure of everything as in God's presence, and in its connexions with man, could give to His unselfish heart the same capacity of feeling as to God's glory and dishonour, and man's sin and misery, or His own anguish, as the one upon whom all sorrow fell as the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, that the guilty might go out free.

To Him too, as an Israelite, the Messiah and King of Israel, the perfect Israelite, the cross (a Gentile death, and a cruel one) must have been far more sorrowful than to the two thieves. They, of course, felt the pain of the kind of death and the death itself—in a bodily way; but besides feeling much more acutely than they did, His mind, His heart, His zeal for God, His love for Israel, His pity for the sinners and for Gentiles, all gave their tribute to His weight of sufferings. His mother, His disciples, etc., all enlarged its dimensions too. There was too, to Him, in addition to the pain of the death, the *legal curse* appended, by God's righteous judgment as King of Israel, to the form of death; as it is written, "Cursed is every one that hangeth upon a tree." But this curse of the law was not the same thing as the wrath, when he cried out: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me!" The thieves bore it as He did; that thief too, who went with Him to Paradise the same day, and who could go there to be with his Lord, because *He*, the Prince of Life, had borne the wrath due to sin in His own body on the tree. But the cross had been endured by many an unrepentant rebel against man and God; and the cross, in itself, would not take away sin. Yea, more, while the time in which He endured the cross was the period in part of which the wrath came on Him (when he endured the wrath of God's judgment against sin), He only, of the three that were crucified together, could or did bear that wrath, and the agony of that wrath, if His alone of the three, then and there crucified, was distinct from, though present to Him at the same time as, the agonies (infinitely lesser) of the cross of wood.

Any one that takes in by faith John iii. 14, 15, is

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doubtless saved; if he have studied the accounts in the Evangelists of the crucifixion, his mind will have been brought into a field as to the central object of which heaven and earth contrasted stood, in which His own soul as cleaving to and loving the Lord, will learn lessons of what man, good and bad, is; what the religious world, even that which was of God's setting up in Israel with all its worldly sanctuary and ordinances is; what high-priests and elders are, when they are mere men; what civil government (in Herod and Pontius Pilate and such-like) really is; and who the Prince of this world is. He may have learnt, too, what bad flesh is, to his heart's surfeit; and what the Lord judged was the use to which *He* could put that which was alone holy, harmless, undefiled flesh in human nature, untainted by sin or lust, or any such thing: it was fit to be made an offering for sin. While the conscience, heart, and mind may thus be enlarged, formed and fashioned as to things down here, he will yet *not* find, save in the cry, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me," that which touches even upon the settlement of the question of sin before God; nor, even so, does the lesson go far enough, without light from the Acts and Epistles, to give settlement to his own soul. For the forsaking is but the one side, that side of the subject, too, which shows the certain rejection and judgment of the sin by God, under any and all circumstances; God can know no mitigating circumstances in sins; and not that which shows how He can curse the sin and bless the sinner. The counsel and plan of God come not out in the scene as enacted and passed through on earth (though the effects do, in measure, in one of the thieves), but in the results seen in heaven, and announced thence with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. For man to know the divine certainty and eternal necessity of sin, his own sin, being cursed by God, is a lesson, and a great one, to learn; and it is taught on Calvary, there where Satan was allowed to have his own way, and to lead man to show out his hatred against God, in the one consentaneous act of man, as such, against the Christ, and where God gave the penal consequence to His Son to bear. Hopelessness as to sin, and as to self

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that has sin in its heart's core *is* taught then and there. But it was from heaven, after the resurrection and the ascension too, that such truth came as—For He who knew no sin was made sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. God's counsel and plan and grace by the cross come out in such passages (in the Acts and Epistles, and Revelation) as these—Acts ii., It shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord, shall be saved. Ye men of Israel hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders, and signs, which God did by Him, in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be holden of it (21, 22, 23). . . . This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. For David is not ascended into the heavens; but he saith himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand until I make thy foes thy footstool. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter, and to the rest of the Apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Then Peter said unto them, "Repent and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. Then they that gladly received His word were baptised, and the same day there were added to them about three thousand souls (32—41).

Without such additional light, whencesoever gained,



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conscience could not get peace. It would plead as it has pleaded when absorbed with the cross of the Lord, whose beauty and moral, excellent and divine perfectness had drawn it, "There, there, is the end, now, of all hope for me. The Son of God has been down here in all the beauty of divine and human perfectness, and we have murdered Him and sent Him back to God." It was a deep but a good lesson and accompanied with an honestly pleaded "Guilty of the murder of the Christ, and therefore mine is hopeless despair." The just and divinely taught appreciation of the curse of God, not in government merely, but in His own eternal divine nature of sin, is quite another truth in itself from the gathering of the poor sinner to God. I could wish there were a little more of it now-a-days; a little more appreciation of God's estimate of sin: it would deepen the soul and tend to set it more decidedly in its Nazarite position, as against Satan, the world, and the flesh; and for God and God alone—that is, it would do so when the heavenly and divine estimate of Christ, whom man rejected, was known; an earth-rejected, but heaven-owned; a man-despised, but God-honoured Christ.

I might pass through Romans and all the epistles, and the Revelation too, and gather up passages showing the same truth of God's counsels and plans in various connections and ways, through His use and estimate of the truth: He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us that we may become the righteousness of God in Him. But it seems needless to do so; yet I note that crucified together with Him, dead together with Him, buried together with Him, quickened together with Him, raised up together with Him, and made sit together in heavenly places in Him, clearly is not merely the cross of Calvary and the curse borne by Him in His forsaking; but is the doctrine of God and heaven about faith in an ascended Lord, and is through the gift of the Spirit, seal and earnest of the inheritance.

Until the soul can say, He who knew no sin was made sin for me, and forsaken for my sins' sake, that I might become the righteousness of God in Him,—the soul cannot have conscious intelligent peace with God. It

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does not see how the sin was cursed though the sinner was saved; God's character was thus revealed and brought out to light; and the soul to be at peace in itself (and that amid such a world as this and in spite of such an one as Satan), must know God aright; if it is to share His peace with Him, His who rests in the Son of His love. The rest of the soul for its own sake, and for the sake of its service in the hour of trial and the glory of God (that He may be known as He has revealed Himself), make this subject to be one of pre-eminent importance. When known, then, the truth and holiness, the justice and the equity of God are seen to be as much for the believing sinner as are His compassion, and mercy, and grace.

For one who, as only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father,—to lose down here the enjoyed consciousness of the complacency of God, and that, too, at the very time when He was doing the most arduous and difficult part of the work which was given to Him (as God manifest in flesh) to do down here; so that, instead of God's nearness to Himself, His distance and being afar off in forsaking was that which He tasted (viz., when He bare our sins), is a subject of the very deepest and most solemn kind.

No one like unto Him! Nothing like unto this in all that through which He passed, of the unsearchableness of whose person it is said, No one knows the Son save the Father.

His position; His experience; what he was suffering; what would be found involved in it,—what the varied issues and results!

And what *did* it cost Him to take up sin (fruit of Satan's wickedness and of man's breaking his relationship with God and setting himself up as God); and to have God's estimate of that sin expressed as to Himself?

However deeply one's soul may have been exercised herein, faith says, "The best answers to this are, if made by man, then left in the form of a question, "And what did it cost Him?" Or if otherwise answered, then only His own words will suffice: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" His solace however, here, was "forsaken, I do not forsake," and "treated as made sin,

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I vindicate him that does so." But, 2. For Him who was the object of all faith—the one from whom the testimony shined down,—to be the only one connected with the faith whose position was too low down[b] for Him to find any shelter or support, was another character and another experience altogether, It had had, however, its picturings in some of old, though all came short of *the measure* which He now presented. It is found even in the imagery of Deuteronomy: "As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings, (so) the Lord alone did lead him." It might and would be true, in measure, of every one standing in office, where that position involved the blessing of a subordinate party. Moses as mediator, Aaron as high priest, Joshua as captain of the Lord's host, and Samuel, and David, and Jeremiah, etc., might all in measure illustrate it, and so might the more homely truth of a mother with her offspring. Then,

3. Having in grace gone down to the lowest place of all, there found himself to be the obloquy of those for whose sake He had humbled Himself.

4. But His position as a man was all, all of it well defined to Him. Mat. i. 18—25, Luke i. 26—33, etc., both show it, and give what the power of the sorrow to such an one would be. Still this could be shared in measure by a Jeremiah ch. i. ; by a Paul, Gal. i., etc. So,

5. The sense of weakness. Though the causes of weakness differed in Him and in a Paul. 2 Cor. i. 18—20, and xii., and compare Is. xl. 10—31, etc.

6. He tasted, too, the floods of the ungodly and the agonies of crucifixion. And

7. The dishonour put on man by men—man made in the likeness and image of God: in how peculiar a sense was this true of Him, and He knew it. Yet faithful to God when forsaken, and amid the dust of death cleaving to God.

[b] Of course, if "I am a worm and no man" is not said by Him of Himself as to the immeasurably low place He had taken in order that He might become the object and end of faith, the interpretation of the section would be altogether different.

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## N°. VIII.

## 2 KINGS II.

ELIJAH'S path had been a peculiar one. It had been marked by testimony against evil; and it had been, I judge, more or less one of loneliness. But it was about to close, and it would seem to me that it closed characteristically. "The Lord would take up Elijah into heaven," it says, "by a *whirlwind*." His ministry, I judge, was of a *whirlwind* character. In one sense rightly so. But his course was closing, and "Elijah," it says, "went with Elisha from Gilgal." Now the character of Gilgal was, as shown, Joshua v., *separation to God* on the part of Israel when they had crossed the Jordan. In such separation and power did God start his people when first the Spirit was sent forth, according to Acts ii., &c. But it says further on, "they went down to Bethel." Now, Bethel was one of the places where Jeroboam set the golden calves. It was the mark of the distinct *religious* apostacy of the Ten Tribes. Alas! Israel in its history got from Gilgal to Bethel. Such, too, has been the history of the Church. It should have been united in itself, separate from the world. It has been thoroughly divided within itself, and united *with* the world. Religious apostacy has taken place, and now intelligent faith has to act in such a scene as Elijah did in his day. Further on, it says, "So they came to Jericho." Now, Jericho told another tale respecting Israel. Destroyed by the immediate intervention of God, it was left as a standing monument of His judgment. A curse was pronounced against the man that should rebuild it. But it was rebuilt in the days of Ahab (1 Kings xvi. 34)—one sad proof of the state of things. It was an *external* proof of departure from God. The two things go together—spiritual departure from God, and external failure of walk. It is God's way to let it come out thus, though the walk with God is the deeper question. I may notice that in Rev. i. we get two

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things—"stars" and "candlesticks" (lamps). It suggests to my mind the double character of responsibility which the saints have: a star gives light in heaven, a candlestick shines upon earth. Thus the saints in responsibility have to meet *God*. (Wondrous privilege in one sense.) "I have not found thy works," it says (Rev. iii. 2), "perfect *before God*." They should yield a light to men, too. But the former is the deeper thing; and when there is failure in heart before God, corporately, or individually, the Lord may let it come out before men. Thus the Ephesian Church had begun to fail as the *star* ("thou hast left thy first love"); and the threat was, they should fail as the candlestick, too, unless there was return of heart to God, according to verse 5. It further says the seven stars are the *angels* of the seven Churches; and *the angel* is addressed in the vision in each case, suggesting, it would appear to me, *a oneness* in an assembly, a corporate character—a *character* attaching to a particular assembly. There might be one or more persons in a given assembly embodying that character; but that is a different question. Nor does it, I judge, refer to a person presiding in any way on earth. In a scene, then, characterised by Bethel, and Jericho, Elijah had to move. But he was going to have done with it, and now was led by God, I judge, in some special sense, over the ground. Happy thought, that those things which have cost us so much pain and sorrow upon earth, if faithfully met, will be sources of joy above, according to that word: "Well done, good and faithful servant." Thus, then, we may meet the Bethels and Jerichos. Further on it says: "they two stood by Jordan." Jordan, to my mind, represents Death met in victory—in resurrection-victory. Israel had crossed the Jordan to reach the land of Canaan on the other side. Elijah was crossing, I believe, the other way, and, as the expression that God, in one sense, had gone out of the Israel of the Ten Tribes. Still, it was the expression typically of resurrection-power. And so it says: "It came to pass, *when they were gone over*, that Elijah said unto Elisha, "Ask what I shall do for thee," etc. Yes, to know ourselves risen with Christ, that is the place of power. Taken

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out of this scene, taken out of the first Adam, and put into the second Adam, there as a member of the one Church! How few Christians know that they are on the other side of Jordan, altogether there with Christ. Yet this is the place of power—to know *that*, and, in connection with it, the Spirit dwelling in us down here, as thus united to Christ. And so, answerably to this "double portion of the Spirit," we get Christ presented, in John xiv. 12, as on the other side of Jordan, and saying, "*Greater works* than these shall he do." How far do we use the power that belongs to us? And so important is this truth that we get the word, "If thou see me, *as I am taken* from thee, it shall be so," etc. Intelligent communion with the Exalted One—with Him who has been *taken away*, as rejected by man, but who has been glorified and exalted by the Father, is power indeed. Ah! blessed to know that that Exalted One belongs to *us*. He does not belong merely to Himself, in one sense; as Elisha says, when it was a chariot of fire and horses of fire *for Elijah*, "the chariot of *Israel* and the horsemen thereof." Blessed always to *get in* the Lord's people, whatever blessing is given. But "he rent his clothes." Yes; *He* is in the repose and glory of the Father, we are amidst the sorrow of the world and the Church. But there will be a reunion. Let us notice, further, the conduct of Elisha. In the first instance, Elijah takes him over the Jordan; in the second case, he takes himself over. Happy type of the saint who has been taken over the Jordan, as to his standing before God—his sins taken away by Christ—himself lifted up by Christ in company with himself—"raised up together with Christ, and seated with him in the heavenly places," but who, as put there, has to walk on this side of Jordan for a season—should walk on this side, as one who is really on the other side *with* Christ. In John xx. we have, I believe, both principles: the other side in verse 17—"I ascend unto my Father, and your Father, and my God and your God," &c.; and this side in verse 21—"As the Father hath sent me, even so *send* I you."

There was power in Elisha's case, and I believe it

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manifested itself, as witnessed in the sons of the prophets. I just add one thing more as to this wondrous journey—as to verse 17. Similarly judged it will be when the Church is taken. It is a wondrous mystery that sinful men here on earth—that what I may call sinner-saints in our present condition—should yet be one with Christ in heaven. (Their sins, of course, are clean gone as to condemnation.) But so it is; it is a wondrous mystery, and the end, I believe, will be according to the whole thing. It will be a mystery—a thing, in a certain sense, between Christ and ourselves. The world will miss us, I doubt not, when we are gone. But we are gone. And, beloved brethren, I judge that blessed event will be *soon*. Happy, but solemn consideration!

Let me, then, dear brethren, put this solemn consideration to our souls: Have we got both our feet on the other side of Jordan? We shall be there, I believe, in person soon. How far is it true in spirit now? G.

*** The lordship of Jesus points us to His rightful mastership as Son of Man over everything. As Son of God He is, in nature, Jehovah; but as Son of Man He has been *made* "Lord and Christ."

God exalted Him . . . made that same Jesus both Lord and Christ . . . and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He shed forth that which was seen on Pentecost (Acts ii. 33—47).

The first exercise of these two offices by Him was, then, in heaven; and from heaven down to earth the blessing came, and it has remained and will until He rises up and comes forth again. His action was in behalf of a people down here whom He loved, before whom He had gone into heaven, who were to wait down here until He came back to fetch them. But it was to them power to be aggressive in love upon a world out of which they had been taken, and to pluck brands from the burning.

He who has gone before us to heaven has no idea of making for us a home or a nest down here. This is not our rest, it is polluted. The gentleness, however, wherewith He leads on His flock, and the power of the personal glory which is His as Jehovah, must not be forgotten by us; nor how He causes all these things to work together for God to them that love God.

Heaps of wealth were at Pentecost laid down at the Apostles' feet, yet their hearts were for heaven, heavenly. None of it was kept or stored up by Peter, or invested in church lands.

Paul, too, knew how to abound and how to suffer need.

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## No. IX.

## "OUR GOSPEL."

Is "our Gospel," as the Apostle calls it (2 Cor. iv. 3) known in this day? It seems irrelevant, if not presumptuous, to ask such a question in this great Evangelical day; and yet I am assured that, if any one will give patient attention to the subject as I may be allowed to set it before him, he will agree with me that it is either very rarely or indifferently known.

The first thing to be understood is the nature of the distance between God and the sinner. Now, the distance is of a double character: there is the distance on God's side, and there is the distance on man's side. The distance on God's side is on account of sin, as He says to Cain, "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?" *Sin and its penalty alone caused the distance between* God and man. Sin was the barrier. When Abel owned the ground on which God alone could meet him, the distance on God's side ceased, and He counted Abel righteous. Man had sinned, and his sin raised a barrier between God and him. If the sin were removed, and the penalty borne, there would be an end to the distance on God's side. But man was also at a distance, and the character of his distance was not only that he had done wrong, which wrong he desired to atone for, and which, if atoned for, he would be assured that the distance into which he had fallen would be at an end, but he had imbibed from Satan a wrong idea of God—he was "an enemy in his mind by wicked works"; the mind of the flesh was now enmity against God. Unless we know the nature of the distance to be repaired, we never can know the nature of the reparation. The distance on God's side cannot be repaired unless sin be removed and its penalty borne, and the distance on man's side cannot be repaired unless man gets a new mind with respect to God, and consequently a new nature.

Let us briefly examine how the distance occurred, and

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what it involved. Man was set in the garden of Eden as subject to God, surrounded with everything that could indicate the thought and care of God for him. Here Satan, the power of evil, entered, and suggested to man that, though so enriched with every natural blessing, yet that God had interdicted the eating of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, because it would greatly advance man. This idea man accepted through Satan, and acted on it, even that he could do better for himself than God could do for him. He took thereof, and did eat. He did so in distinct distrust of God. The power of God was not denied; but the love of God to use His power was utterly ignored; and hence enmity followed unbelief; for the bitter feeling was engendered that God had that power which, if man had, would enable him to do what he (in the spirit of his mind, now poisoned by Satan) was conscious God would not do for him. Now, this distance involved on God's side the judgment of death, and on man's side all that terrible sense of impending doom and the uncertainty of life which hangs around the neck of every man in fallen nature. The penalty of sin is death; and, while death is the penalty, no amount of natural blessing—not even the return to Eden—could assuage the terrible fear which at times, or at any time, may invade the heart of man. Nay, rather, while the accumulation of comforts panders to man's necessity and ambition, they provoke, alas! the deepest anguish in the apprehension of losing them.

How the distance is repaired is now the great inquiry. It is evident that three ways are open to repair an ordinary distance between any two. First, as I am the offender, it may be repaired by my own means; secondly, by means given to me; thirdly, by the one whom I have offended, according to his own way and mind. As to the first, it is plainly the duty of the offender to repair the distance which his offence has caused, *if he be able to do so* of his own unassisted ability and means. This Cain tried, and he was not successful, neither could he be, because, the penalty on him being death, he could not ward off the penalty unless by a substitute bearing it. He had not a true idea of the nature of the distance. If

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he could have repaired the distance without death or discharge of the penalty, there would have been no righteousness; for righteousness is the exaction of the penalty. The one on whom the penalty of death lay could not exonerate himself from it by any means in his power. He had no second self, every way equal to him, and yet *not liable*, that he could present to God as a substitute to bear the penalty under which he lay; and if he had, he could not have repaired the distance on his own side, which required in him an entirely new mind with reference to God. So that the idea of man repairing the distance from his own side, and by his own means, is at once dismissed as untenable and impossible.

Now, the second mode is, that God may grant to me, the offender, means whereby I may repair the distance. This mode Abel and those who presented offerings to God in a measure exemplify. The animal offered—the life of it—all really came from God, and was not chargeable with man's sin. It typified what was required, in order that man might be justified before God. But, after all, the blood of bulls and goats could not take away sin; and the relief which accrued to the believing worshipper was evidently from his faith in how God would accept, and deal with, a sinner, through a sacrifice acceptable to Him. The offerings availed nothing for many. The believing Israelite was carried by faith to see God dealing in sacrifice. The principle of faith, in himself being entirely new, gave him, according to its force, a true sense of how the distance was repaired. The blood of bulls and goats did not take away sin; still souls, while, through the type, they had a sense of God's righteousness, rested in His mercy.

Now, the question is, May what was done by a believer aforetime with the type be done with the Antitype?—*i. e.,* Can a believer now present Christ to God as his atonement, and thus find peace with God? for this truly would be the second mode. In making this inquiry, it is important to see that the type could only be what suited the believing Israelite's *need.* It could not, as a type, be either sufficient to remove the distance on his side or on God's. He expressed in it mainly what would

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meet God, and remove the distance on God's side; but, as a mere type, it could not do so really. It did not take away sin. "Burnt offerings and offerings for sin," it is written, "Thou wouldest not." The type merely declared to faith what was required from man to counteract the distance which was on God's side toward man. A declaration of what was required helped faith; but it only the more imperatively engaged and bound the worshipper to the necessity and value of a true and sufficient sacrifice. The distance on man's side was overborne and set aside according to the extent of the faith which engaged the soul with God; for that faith was entirely new and of God, and not of unbelieving man in his own nature.

But the Antitype—Christ—cannot be used after this manner. No one can offer Him; He offered Himself to God. No one can present Him to God; He presented Himself. So that it is plain it cannot be with Him as with the type; for the type set forth what was required of me. Christ has done what was required. I do not set it forth. That which was required on God's side is not now required, for it has come. It is done, and done without any intervention on my part. God, so to speak, could not give me the means of repairing the distance between Him and me on His side; for then I must offer Christ and present Christ, which evidently I cannot do, seeing that both are already done. But some may say, Could I not present His merits and blood to God, and thus obtain forgiveness and peace? I may have faith in it as presented; but I could not present it, because that has been already done. Neither under the law did the worshipper ever present the blood; the priest always presented the blood. But in the Antitype—Christ—He has both offered Himself (and, therefore, I cannot offer Him) and He has presented to God His blood, which cleanseth from all sin (and, therefore, I cannnot present it). Hence we see that means are *not* given me of God to repair the distance between Him and me; and we must perceive the fitness of this. Firstly, because I cannot truly estimate the nature of the distance. How could *I* tell God's estimate of sin? It would be making

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God's claim on man, which is law, the measure and limit of Christ's work. God alone can measure it, and His will, and not law, was the measure and limit of Christ's work. Secondly, my distance is only consciously repaired, as I, in a new mind, am engaged in the knowledge of God as He is in Himself. If the means to repair the distance were placed in my hands, and the distance on God's side thus repaired, the distance on my own could not be, without the revelation *in me* of what God is in Himself. Now, as the distance is not repaired by means of my own, or by means given to me of God, it remains that it must, if repaired at all, be repaired by God Himself, and entirely from His side, both as regards *me and Himself.* The Gospel—the "good tidings"—is, that it is repaired already. If not, there is no Gospel, no good tidings to me, a lost one, nor is there good tidings for the heart of the "blessed or happy God" (1 Tim. i. 11). The Gospel is, that it *is* repaired on God's side. Man, the offender, ought to have repaired it; but he had no means of his own, neither could he apply means given to him of God to do so, if there were any; for to use means provided of God would imply, on the part of man, an innate readiness and inclination, together with a true apprehension of God which we know man in his alienated mind and nature could not have. God, therefore, repairs the distance from His own side. And why? Because He is love! That is the spring of it, and the only way to account for the fact. He said that there was "none righteous—no, not one." Then "His own arm brought salvation." "He laid help on one that was mighty." Man had failed in innocency—under every trial had he failed; and the more so, the more gracious the trial. Whether after the Deluge or in Canaan, the alienation of man's heart and mind was only more and more exposed and betrayed. He had done nothing of himself which God had required. If God recognises man as man on the earth, it must be by claim. Righteousness demands it. Therefore, law came in on those whom God recognised, or who sought recognition. Under law, there is a sense of recognition; hence the enmity and repugnance in the more religious, as seen in the chief priests in the

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Gospels, against the doctrine which establishes grace at one and the same moment, setting aside claim or law, and, together with it, man in himself, which law had recognised. Man prefers the claims which he cannot meet, because it recognises himself, to the grace that eternally blesses him, because it, by making no claim on him, ignores him. Christ was crucified because there was an end of man as man. There was at once the end of him before God, and the judgment of him as he was. If Jesus Christ was set forth crucified, it plainly declared, to any one not senseless, that there was now no ground for that for which He was crucified. If it were crucified in the Son of God, as bearing the judgment on it, surely it could not then be called up again; it must remain *a caput mortuum* (a dead thing). The great and simple thing for me to apprehend and abide by is this, that God, the blessed and happy God, repairs the distance between Himself and the sinner, and the sinner and Himself, entirely from His own side, and from His own love, which of itself dictates to him what He will do. It is in keeping with this that the Son says, "I come to do Thy will"—a "body hast thou prepared me." At this juncture, man having been proved a wreck, lost and abandoned in the sight of God, the Son says, "I come to do thy will." Man in himself had done none of it, and God cannot deal with unrighteousness. Not only what God required—*i. e.*, law—but everything worthy of God, or consistent with His nature, is righteousness. My righteousness is as nothing in comparison to what is comprised in His righteousness. His righteousness could not be established among men, unless by one who could, in Himself, maintain everything worthy of God and consistent with His nature, *in addition to everything required of man* (which latter the law ONLY referred to). Hence the Son came, and was born of a woman, and took upon Himself the likeness of flesh, in order to establish this righteousness for God; for, if this righteousness for God were established, then God's heart would be at liberty to flow out to every one believing in His Son, who is the channel of His grace. This the Son did. He says: "I have glorified Thee upon the earth; I have

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finished the work which Thou gavest me to do." He received the judgment that was against man in His own body on the tree; and the moment He bowed His head and gave up the ghost the veil of the temple was rent from the top to the bottom. There was an end to the distance on God's side. He could now, in the strength of His own righteousness, express His heart as He desired to express it. It was not merely what he had required of man; *that* was the law; but all that was worthy of Himself had been maintained by the Son, as man bearing the judgment against man. God's love now has nothing to check or delay it, and it can flow out with a righteous warrant to express its amazing interest and desires towards us, poor lost ones. The thief can be taken from the cross of judgment into the third heaven; the half-dead wanderer from Jerusalem is now set on His own beast—the very power which wrought in Christ. It is the knowledge of the love of God which can now only explain what God will do for His lost one returning home, or what is the manner of God's acceptance of him, or thought about him. The sinner awakened has the sense of his need; but his need is not the measure by which God deals to him. The measure is His own love. Its thoughts and ways infinitely surpass those of necessity! The Father runs to accept the returning one; falls on his neck and kisses him; love has triumphed, and love rules. The returning one, like a babe with regard to its mother's caresses, may be unable to interpret the *manner* of the love which greets him; but, as he matures, he learns, *by the love he enjoys*, to apprehend the nature of the reception *first* accorded to him. It is God's love acting, without let or check, towards the objects of it, on the ground of righteousness established by the Son of God in manhood down here. Can we comprehend what a relief, as I may say, it was to the heart of God, when righteousness was so established, that His love in its own mighty volume—in the strength of His eternal righteousness—of all that was worthy of Himself and consistent with his nature—could flow forth to His lost children, not only as they needed, but as it, of itself, liked to express itself? I speak not of

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my need; I allow it not to suggest, when I am conscious of a love acting for me far and away beyond my need.

God is just or righteous now to justify the ungodly, the distance from His own side being entirely removed; and in His doing so, two things are declared—one, that He has repaired the distance, in a manner suited to Himself, seeing that He did it Himself; secondly, that, in doing it Himself, He showed the sinner that He on His side desired (O, how much!) that the distance, and that which caused the distance, should not continue. But not only so, for this alone would not be available to us; but He also repairs the distance on *our* side. The manner of His love is, that we should be called the born of God. "Of His own will begat He us by the word of His truth." "Which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." "By which will we are sanctified." The natural man knoweth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him. If we were left as we are by nature, we never could avail ourselves of the redemption accomplished in Christ; "but God who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, when we were dead in sin, hath quickened us together with Christ." "By grace are we saved through faith, and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God." We are born from above. All comes anew from God. God is free to act in the boundlessness of His love. He is righteous to do so—to me, a sinner; for judgment has been borne by His Son, who has done all His will; and He was made sin for us; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. I am, as a believer in Christ, a new creation. It is Christ that liveth in me. If I have not the Spirit of Christ, I am none of His. The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. I am on entirely new ground. Instead of the natural mind, which is enmity against God, I have received now the mind of Christ, and Christ is my life. All comes out entirely new for me from God, and *as His love would confer it*. Every one in Christ is a new creation. It is not so much that this is *necessary*, as many understand the

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saying of the Lord to Nicodemus. Of course it is necessary, but it is the love of God, that, having removed the penalty of sin under which we lay, and having now shown how He can be just; He of Himself begets us unto Himself by the word of His truth. He not only proclaims that all things are ready; but that He is free to open out all the treasures of His love; and therefore, that the message is, "All things are ready, come to the Supper." But not only this, He compels the outcasts to come in. God in a remarkable and distinct way draws us into the light; sometimes as the prodigal, by a long and severe famine in this evil world; and when hope is lost, and there is the consciousness that there can be no room for hope; the light penetrates the darkness, and the voice of the Son that quickens the dead is heard. God works in the soul. "Of His own will." He begets, as Paul says, "When it pleased God to reveal His Son in me." There is a new being formed of God; born of water and of the Spirit. God's word is that which is the quickening element. It is by it that we are born again; "not of corruptible seed (the first Adam), but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever. "And this is the word which by the Gospel is preached unto you." And, therefore, in God's mercy it is preached abroad, as one would sow seed, in order that according to God's purpose, it may light where He would have it light. He prepares the soil and He sends the seed; His distinct gift is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. He can now give as His heart loves to give! He can give His own life; eternal life in His Son, who enabled Him in righteousness to act out His love to us lost ones. He works out all anew, so that the most abandoned now hears that "he which drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst." "This is God's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes." The heart of God is set free, and it is free to express itself according to its boundless greatness. And therefore it makes us a new creation in Christ Jesus; gifted with the life that was with the Father, now mine through the Son who is my life; I am entirely on new ground; the only ground that there was is condemned; and the judgment of it borne by the Son

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of God (become a man), and there ended it; but having ended it by bearing the judgment on it, gave liberty to God to express His own heart in grace as well as in righteousness to the sinner, and this He does by making the sinner a new man in Christ Jesus; so now it is, Christ liveth in me, and I have through the gift of God, eternal life in the Spirit; fellowship with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ.

Paul is the pattern or outline of all this, and therefore he calls it "our Gospel;" and if it be hid, it is hid to them who are lost, in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them who believe not, lest the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ who is the image of God should shine into their hearts."

When the Son came from heaven there was sung, "Glory to God in the highest." The will of God was about to be done on earth, and for man, a Saviour is born. When Jesus had finished the Father's work He was received up into glory; and now when there remained no acceptance for Him from Israel on earth, the heavens having opened to take up Stephen, they will not be closed again. The light of the glory is shed forth for the lost one down here; and, hence it arrests Saul of Tarsus, in order that, as he says, "in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting" (1 Tim. i. 16).

God by the light of His glory arrests him; silences in a moment all his pretensions as under law, for as under law the glory would have consumed him. But instead of "blackness and darkness and tempest" (so that one "could not endure that which was commanded"), it is a Saviour which is revealed to him in the glory. Everything on earth and of nature is shut out in the dazzling light of the glory, above the brightness of the sun; and there he sees Jesus, and there he is told that he should be a minister and a witness of those things which he had seen. What did he see? Jesus in the glory of God, identifying Himself with His suffering saints down here. In the glory there was a Saviour. God then had no claim against a sinner brought nigh, for in His own glory

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there reigned perfect satisfaction for sin, and for what was due to it. God makes this known to Saul of Tarsus; and that in the light of the glory (which excludes everything of man, while giving the soul of the sinner, through God's revelation, sure ground of standing in His presence, for there was no charge there); there was a Saviour there, and there only; the glory testifying of His finished work.

The more I am in it, the more do I know how at ease I can be there, because there I can only know God's unbounded satisfaction about sin through Jesus my Saviour. God's satisfaction enters my heart in the glory; hence it is the "Gospel of the glory of Christ." God is satisfied about sin, the glory tells of His satisfaction. His being there convicts the world of sin, because they believe not, and of righteousness because He is there; and the moment I am there, I understand the Gospel in its true greatness and grandeur. It is *there* I know God's satisfaction about sin. It is *there* that the more I am, the more at home I get, because *there* I am not only in the sense of God's satisfaction about sin, but God's new work and revelation in my soul, enables me to comprehend what is there presented to me. I am in Spirit with Jesus there, for there Jesus is; and there though I may not know it, my first acquaintance with Him was formed. If God's Son be revealed in me, He is revealed in me where He is. He is in the glory now, a glory that is full of and charged with God's satisfaction about sin, in and through His beloved Son. He reveals Him to me as my Saviour; the light of the glory reaches me. Any light that reaches me from God is from the glory, and as it does, it tells me of how God is in the glory. Jesus is there, and the more I am with Him in it, the more I am in God's satisfaction about sin; and the more also I am in the sphere where His love can conduct me into the circle of His delights, and make me know how His joy abounds in my participating with Him in the fullest richest circle of His thoughts and purposes; eating with Him of the fatted calf.

Then and there, I learn what the Gospel is, the Gospel of God; "*our* Gospel." The glory which

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excludes everything of man changes me into what suits itself. I am changed from glory to glory as by the Spirit of the Lord. All is new, all is divine; and I "press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus," according to Paul, my pattern.

The Gospel then is not merely salvation, or even the richest, fullest salvation; it is a disclourse to me of the heart of God, and of the delight He takes in having me in adoring nearness to, and fellowship with Himself, in the deepest and most secret purposes of His heart. May we learn to apprehend the Gospel, in order that we may more truly respond to the purpose of God in His love, in preparing and securing such wondrous blessedness for us in accordance with the joy of His own heart. Amen.

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"MY BELOVED IS MINE: AND I AM HIS."—(Cant. ii. 16).

"I AM MY BELOVED'S, AND MY BELOVED IS MINE."—(Cant. vi. 3).

LONG did I toil, and know no earthly rest;
  Far did I rove, and found no certain home;
At last I sought them in His sheltering breast,
  Who opes His arms and bids the weary come.
With Him I found a home, a rest divine;
  And I *since then am His*, and He is mine.

Yes, *He* is MINE! and nought of earthly things,
  Not all the charms of pleasure, wealth, or power,
The fame of heroes, or the pomp of kings,
  Could tempt me *to forego His love* an hour.
Go, worthless world, I cry, with all that's thine!
  Go! I my Saviour's am, and He is mine.

The good I have, is from His store supplied;
  *The ill* is only what *He* deems *the best:*
He for my Friend, I'm rich with nought beside;
  And poor without Him, though of all possess'd.
Changes may come,—I take, or I resign,—
  Content to *know* I'm His and He is mine.

*See ending p.* 192.

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## No. X.

## SHALL I EVER DIE?

"OF course! you will, sooner or later," most men will answer.

"I DO NOT KNOW," is the answer which most Bible-students *ought* to give.

Of believers, it is only those who have a special revelation that they will die, as Peter had had (John xxi. 19, 2 Pet. i. 14), and Paul (2 Tim. iii. 6), who are justified in saying, "certainly I shall die." Peter *could* say so, for the Lord Jesus had promised to him in particular the martyr's crown; Paul knew the same of himself. But *I* am only an ordinary Christian, and I do not pretend to be either a Peter or a Paul, and I do not either pretend to have had any revelations direct from the Lord Himself to me about my own private self in particular. Therefore, I am obliged to be satisfied with the general light which God, in His word, gives to His family as such,—that clear and broad light which shines upon the people of Christ as such.

I am thus obliged to be satisfied with such words as these, ver. 27. *As* it is appointed unto men [man as a sinner? not (as often wrongly quoted), unto *all* men] once to die, but after this the judgment; [so far we read of what awaits man in fallen nature: death and the judgment.

Then comes what is true of the believer only] ver. 28, "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."

AS mere man is a sinner, and as such is appointed to death and judgment:

SO the believer (every believer) had all the penalty due to his sins borne by Christ. He looks for Him—"to them that look for Him He will appear a second time, without sin, unto salvation" (Heb. ix.). Again (1 Thess. i. 9), "ye turned to God from idols, to serve

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the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come."

Again (1 Cor. xv. 51), "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed."

Again (1 Thess. iv. 15), "This we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive, and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise *first*. *Then* we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

Again John (in the Revelation i. 7) says, "Behold, He cometh with clouds; and (chap. iii. ver. 11, the Lord says to John, and to us too,) Behold, I come quickly; and (in chap. xxii., ver. 7 and 12) Behold, I come quickly; and ver. 20, when the Spirit and the Bride (ver. 17) invite Him to come—"The Spirit and the Bride say, Come."

He answers, "Surely I come quickly. Amen." To which John replies, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

These Scriptures and many others show: first, that the path of the believer, as laid down in Scripture, leads the mind, not down to the grave, but up to meet the Lord at His coming; and secondly, that the believers in apostolic days did look up that bright and shining way to the Lord returning as their hope, even as it becomes those "whose conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Phil. iii. 20).

Thus did they, as I, having no special communication of my death,—act up to the word of the two in white apparel, who stood looking up steadfastly toward heaven (where a cloud had received Jesus from their sight): Why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven (Acts i. 10, 11).

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Being myself only one of the flock—nor bell bearer, nor shepherd—the prospect of the flock is my prospect, nor more nor less. Special communication to myself, as an individual, as to what ought to be looked for by myself in particular—have I none—so I must content myself with the hope set before all Christians, and seek to be like unto one that waits for his Lord from heaven, "who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working, whereby He is able even to subdue all things to Himself" (Phil. iii. 21).

It must be so, the Lord has not yet fulfilled the promise which he gave to poor self-confident Peter (see John xiii. 38, and xiv. 1, 3).

"Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice."

"Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." Yes! such is our hope—"that when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory" (Col. iii. 4).

Some one may say, If these things are so in the Scriptures, how come the religious people of our day not to see them?

To this I answer the Pentecostal Christians were by faith and through the Holy Ghost occupied with the ascended Lord who, having by His death cleared them of all guilt, was in heaven caring for all their heavenly and spiritual interests, and about to come again that He might receive them unto Himself.

Few of the religious now-a-days know even what the value of His death and resurrection is to them; they therefore cannot study His glory in heaven; and they do not long for His return, or even wish to do so.

It may be said, "Are you alone right" and "every one else wrong?" I reply, "Thank God I am not alone

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in this; but if I were alone I would be alone in truth rather than with a multitude in error."

But are you sure you are right? Of this I am sure—first, that God's word is with me; and secondly, that God will not suffer those that prayerfully search His word, and lean not to their own understanding, to err in their faith and hope.

Certainly Christ in His coming, and not death, was the hope of the early Christians. Certainly, too, *it is written* at the end of the Revelation (and it cheers my heart to read it for others' sake as well as for my own),

"The Spirit and the Bride say, Come."

"Surely I come quickly. Amen."

"Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

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*Continued from p.* 188.

Whate'er may change, in Him no change is seen,
  A glorious Sun that wanes not nor declines:
Above the clouds and storms, He walks serene,
  And sweetly on His people's darkness shines.
All may depart,—I fret not nor repine,
  I *know* that I am His, that He is mine.

He stays me falling; lifts me up when down;
  Reclaims me wandering; guards from every foe;
Plants on my worthless brow the Victor's crown,
  Which, in return, before His feet I throw.
Grieved that I cannot better grace His shrine,
  Who deigns to own me His, as He is mine.

While here, alas! I know *but half* His love,
  *But half* discern Him, and *but half* adore;
But when I meet Him in the realms above,
  I then shall love Him better, praise Him more;
And feel, and tell, amid the choir divine,
  How fully I am His, and He is mine!

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## N°. XI.

## NOTES OF A DISCOURSE.

### 1 Tim. i.

Wherever the Spirit of God reveals truth, it is the revelation of Christ to the soul. It is essentially practical. It fills the soul, the affections with Christ. The Lord said, "For their sakes I sanctify myself." The foundation once laid, God forms and fashions the soul by the revelation of Christ, at the same time delivering us from present things and associating us with Himself.

What characterises the Christian is that which takes him out of the world altogether (he has his relationships to fulfil in this life), makes him an epistle of Christ, manifesting the life of Christ, and leading him to long for the time when he shall find himself in the Father's home, like Christ, with Christ for ever, nothing more to jar.

God has associated him with Himself and with that place; and our part is, as Christ's was here, to manifest that our place even *now* is there. Aye, our place is in the last Adam, not in the first.

This "charge," the "end of the commandment," was Timothy's commission. His mandate, as it were, was to make manifest this place which saints had in association with the life of Christ. He speaks of "the glorious Gospel of the blessed God." We are called to inherit blessing, to inherit it from one who dwells in blessing. "The glorious gospel" tells me how man is brought back to God, and thus shows the triumph of God and blessing over evil.

The first beginning of the history of man gives us the triumph of evil over natural blessing. Consequent on this came judgment. Next comes the law, a requisition from man who had pretensions to good. A rule was given of righteousness (if man could make it out).



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There was no triumph of good here, but a requirement from man of what man ought to be. The law was not given to Adam, the law was given to sinners—to fallen man. The law would have been of no use to Adam before the fall; he would not have understood "Thou shalt not steal," etc. The law brings out evil to our consciences. Who has loved God to-day as he should have done? Who has loved his neighbour as himself? It is not the blessed truth of the triumph of good over evil; but it is most useful to bring to the conscience these two things, first, not only that we have sinned, but *why* you and I have sinned. Shall I tell you why? Because we liked it. "In me, in my flesh, there dwelleth *no* good thing;" and, what is more, when I desire to do good, evil is present with me.

If we are to be *with* God, we must be *fit* for Him. When Isaiah saw His glory he felt he was a man of unclean lips. I cannot go back to Paradise and natural blessing; I cannot stay where I am; but I must be able to look into the light of that glory and say it is my joy, or I cannot walk with God who is *light*. To this end I must learn what verse 5 speaks of "the end of the commandment," love, faith, and a pure conscience.

A good conscience is only conscious of what the pure heart should be in the presence of God, having an entire unclouded confidence (faith unfeigned) in God. "That your faith and hope might be IN God." If I fail, I fly back to God; if I am weak, I fly back to God with faith unfeigned in Him, as *the One* who has delivered me; counting upon God, as the One that is for me, to bring me back to my place.

Verses 8 and 9. The law never gives life; the law never gives strength; the law never gives an object. If the law could have given life, righteousness would have been by it. The law gives no power against sin, but slays. The law gives no object. But when we turn to Christ, in His person we find the one good, all purity, all goodness, perfectly divine. Oh! if I could get such—as Paul says, "win Christ." One above all my wretchedness; One who comprehends me, but in so doing brings such grace and peace; One who was brought into the

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midst of evil, but who was superior to it. When He is once known, we do not want to excuse sin, we want to get *rid* of it. Does He hide sin? *Nay*, He would have *truth* in the inward parts (not the truth of doctrine now). When once thus known, God is *trusted* in all love. In the Gospels we have a full, perfect exhibition of the triumph of good over evil. See the woman taken in adultery, the leper who was not only defiled, but whose touch defiled another, but *not* Christ. What grace (however imperfectly) to know God! I discharge my heart into the bosom of Him whom I can trust. To whom could I ever tell out all sin? not to any friend out and out, but to Him unreservedly. And mark how He carries me on. Having opened my heart by the goodness He has shown me in bringing me into His *presence*, I learn sin put away by Him who needed not to be spared, but was able to bear the full brunt of God's wrath.

Oh! that *one* work by which He put away sin! God being perfectly glorified by that which met sin! Not as the Jewish sacrifices did—sin and sacrifice—sin and sacrifice—and sin again: but *done* for ever! I get then this truth, that in virtue of what Christ has done, this Christ is set at His right hand; God having stepped in; this blessed One having met sin and put it away. It is done! If it is not done, when is it to be done? Can Christ die over again? It never can be done. He cannot return from glory to do it. It *is done*, and now we see why it is called "the Gospel of glory."

I am brought into light. No light is like the light which shines on the cross. Your sins were as scarlet, they are made white as snow. I am brought in conscience through a new and living way into God's presence, spotless. By the Comforter sent, I get the power of it. The true conscience is one that knows nothing in the heart but what the Holy Ghost puts there.

The estimates of the conscience are always according to the *presence* it is in. Duties flow from the place we are already in. Some think the knowledge of grace releases us from duties. Nay it founds them. A child of God for ever, I have the duties of a child for ever. A

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pure heart will reject what is contrary to the Holy Ghost. In a good conscience Christ is *all.* Whenever I have failed, I have left Christ out.

Faith unfeigned trusts Him ever, and keeps a good conscience ; a perfect and pure heart confides in that love, and whence did it come? It sprang from *Himself.* By Him we believe in God, and what He expects from us is not only that we should know we are blessed in Him, but *with* Him. His perfect love is shown by bringing us into blessing with Himself. Driven out of earthly paradise by sin, we are brought into heavenly paradise by redemption ; and He leads our thoughts, desires, and affections after it, founded on His perfect work ; faith unfeigned giving us the knowledge of His heart, a heart to enter into all our sorrows and trials.

The smallest thing jars let in contrary to Him. We belong not to ourselves: we are Christ's, not our own. We ought not to have good consciences if indulging in what is contrary to Him.

*I ask if He came this night would He find you with* a whole heap of things to huddle out of your heart, or is it ready? Is your heart waiting, full of affection for Him? There is no truth so powerful to empty the heart of all that is contrary to Him. If waiting, how much freer and looser should we sit from all on earth. The Lord apply the question to your hearts, whether, if He came, you could open to Him immediately, and so look with joy unclouded to see Him.

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"Men ought always to pray and not to faint" is ever before me at present. For ourselves, broken in pieces—our prayer is for oil on every part. That our sorrow may be such as shall magnify Christ in the very character of it ; under any and all parts of it. And the prayer for this has been, as it must be, alleviation to the deepest human anguish that I have ever tasted.

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Who can, when they are in the furnace, care for His glory and not find that which suages the worst of pains—removes at least the bitterness and poison from the sting, and gives rest as to circumstances—all one's uncertainties notwithstanding.

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## N°. XII.

## "I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE."

### JOHN XI. 25.

THE person of the blessed Lord, the words and works that flow from that person, and the teaching or doctrine of the written word about Him—what He is and what He has done—are three different ways in which the Holy Spirit has shown to man the truth of God.

It is blessed to see how, before His words were spoken, or His works were wrought, the Lord, knowing who and what He was and is, and ever will be, presented *Himself* as the one in whom, as a person, all that God had to give and all that man stood in need of was found.

Was the time come that God would make sons of God? In the first chapter of John we get, first, the setting forth of the glories of this Son of the Father who had come to give power to as many as received Him, or believed in His name, to become sons of God (ver. 1—28); then, secondly (ver. 29—34), the two great offices which devolved on Him—"the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world," and "He that baptiseth with the Holy Ghost." Then, thirdly, there is the account of His taking the place—His alone of right—of drawing people after Himself. Andrew and Peter and Philip and Nathanael are, each one of them, drawn to and drawn after Him, each one under the attracting power of His person—made to get into His wake as One sent to draw after Himself.

See, again, in Matt. xi. Doubted of by John, rejected by the people, He takes the place, openly, of being the only One, down here, who can give rest to the weary. "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 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" (28—30). What a speech!

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Who but God Himself could know His bosom large enough to receive all the weary and heavy laden to it! Who but He could will to open such a receptacle for the afflicted! But how exquisitely consistent with His Person—God manifest in flesh—the Man of Sorrows! His burden is as the wings to a dove—power and means to mount up and flee away and be at rest.

That place and position He took and stood in, in the midst of this world of sin and sorrow. See how he takes another when the world is turning its back upon Him; and, in love to His disciples, He looks forward for them into another world.

Read John xi., and you will see this, and the various bearings of that truth which He knew essentially and distinctively attached to His own self. "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." I am the resurrection and the life! Himself the fountain of existence for another world, and the one in whom the virtue of resurrection dwells! The disciples that came with Him, the pious Jews who sympathised and sought to comfort Martha and Mary, and Martha and Mary themselves were all at fault here, in this His light now shining out. Martha, shut up in circumstances and by sorrow, had just reproached Him: "Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." Reproached Him even while owning to His power over sickness and death! She then goes on to hint that He should use the power which was more than power over the circumstances and her sorrow—an appeal to God. "But I know that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it Thee." The Lord's answer is simple; yet, for her ken, too full: "Thy brother shall rise again." [*When?* In the fullest sense, surely in the first resurrection, out from among the dead. This she sees not; but] she says: "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection *at the last* day, [for the general judgment of the great white throne.] What a difference that from what was in His mind: "I am—the resurrection and the life." A glory, inseparable from His person; a glory twofold in character—"resur-

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rection and life"—yet multiform in its development, as to the fruits of it. *Destruction and death* were the characteristics of Satan, and widely had he spread them all around in various ways. In contrast with Satan, here was One whose characteristics were *resurrection and life*, and who had a world beyond, in which His glory in the full expression of these glories should be seen in poor sinners saved by grace. He had given to the poor Samaritan woman water, which opened within her a well of water springing up to everlasting life; on the surface of whose transparent life His own blessed face was seen reflected, as "the man that told me all things that ever I did, is not this the Christ?"—the soul-searcher who searched for sin to save the sinner from it, with whom a poor adulteress could find refuge! There also was seen reflected the Father seeking those that could worship Him in spirit and in truth. Water, which not only could bubble up, onward into heaven and eternity, but which could flow forth rivers of refreshing, from the inward parts, gladdened withal by it.

Death's doings were around that scene: hearts which were ready to seek to put both Him and Lazarus to death, when He had raised him from the grave—hearts dull and slow to look beyond things present—death, the wages of sin (illustrated in Lazarus), and the Lord's own death close at hand, the fruit of perfect obedience. What has He to give? Life eternal—a life not of human nature, but of the divine nature, which, when given to a soul, brings it up out of a death in trespasses and sins. And see the condition upon which the virtue which He knew to be in Himself personally flows out to man, and the form it takes of blessing in them.

The condition is *believing in Him.* The fulness that is in Him flows *not* forth into any one who does not believe in Him; but it flows surely into every one that does believe in Him. A heart waiting on Himself; a mind which contemplates Him; a soul that acknowledges not only its need of what can meet death and destruction (both already in itself), but which sees God's provision of resurrection and life presented in Him, the Son of God's love, for the whosoever will take of the fountain

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of the waters of life: such an one becomes a channel into and through which the treasures in the Christ Jesus flow. And what the form of blessing? Have they believed in Him, and the body like Lazarus gone to the grave? "Yet shall they all live." Do they still live and believe? They shall never die—never know in themselves what the import of death is. How magnificently He speaks!—this One that could say, "O death! I will be thy plague. Grave! I will be thy spoiler. Death shall be swallowed up in victory"—this One who, through His own death, meant to nullify him that had the power of death (that is, the devil), and deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage—this leader of captivity captive. It was a wonderful glory that now streamed out from His person! What a one did He now, in His person, stand confessed to be, and was so consciously to Himself!—the answer of all death's doings in the mind, heart, soul, and body of ruined man. What a Lord is He in His person as thus displayed! Then revealed amid the darkness of Judaism, broken hearts, puzzled minds, and all that sort of thing; now alive in honour and glory, where we, amid all our sorrows and trials and tears, yet by faith see Him, and leave and give up all for His sake, while we wait for His appearing.

Let Him that still has a soul *un*satisfied see what He gives where He is received—life and resurrection; but not these apart from *Himself*. Receive Himself, and all is yours.

Resurrection of soul, out from man's world, into God's presence is mine and ours, since He was received; and with Him resurrection from death in trespasses and sins. Eternal life flowing down from Him on high, who was the Rock smitten for our sin—eternal life which brings us into fellowship with the Father and the Son on high, and Himself the better part, better than the gifts, whose best value is that they fit us to be in fellowship with Himself and His Father—is ours. He raised Lazarus from the tomb into a dying, sinful, perishing world, to become the occasion for Jewish spite to put Himself to death. His saved ones now are risen into another world,

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another state, whereof the model and the fashion is Himself, who is the resurrection and the life. The trial of faith *then was,* What can He mean? The trial of faith *now is,* to substantiate such things as that He is ours and we are His, as true of such as we are, in a world of death and dying. And yet we know Himself on high, the first-born from among the dead. Pre-eminent is He. He had power to lay down His life as a man, and power to take it again. The light of Him has shined into the grave of this world, into and amid the death that ruled in our hearts. Satan has been cast out before Him that came in. Life, and life abundantly, is ours. He takes souls, too, from out of bodies, to be absent from the body and present with Himself, the Life, which *is* far better. How far better! to wait with Him (the Life) above, for the glory, than to wait for it, amid death and sin and dying, down here. And what is it to be *with* Himself?—to be *with Him* in paradise, *with Him* whose glory and graciousness the poor thief discovered when a-dying? It was a freight of blessedness to him. And what the blessedness now, there above, of a Stephen, a Paul, a Peter, a John! What the perfect rest in Him, and with Him, of every departed one who clung to Himself! The grave is no prison-house to a believer. It is the cave in which He, the Prince of Life—He who has pledged Himself to us for resurrection of our bodies—puts away His dead—those that sleep in Him until the hour comes when He will show out *openly* what the worth is of our clinging to Himself.

And yet a little while, and then Himself, enjoyed now by us while down here—God's remedy and panacea for every evil and every woe—Himself, the rest and solace and gladness of those who have followed Himself and Stephen on high—Himself will appear and gather up the dust and the bodies of those that sleep—Himself the resurrection; and then will He speak the word and fulfil with life the bodies of those that are alive and remain; so that they, without seeing death of the body, shall join the risen ones, and mount up together with them, to be for ever *with* the Lord. What could we do without Him? What want we yet, Himself being ours?



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## N°. XIII.

## BELIEVER, WOULD YOU LIKE TO DIE?

THE person of the Lord, the works which He has wrought, and the light which He has shed down from on high,—would justify fully "Most earnestly" as faith's answer to this question.

Paul's answer may be gleaned, I think, easily:—"to die is gain" (Phil. i. 21); "I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better" (ver. 23). "We are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord . . . . . we are confident, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord" (2 Cor.).

And this, in the very nature of things, is the result of faith.

1st. The person of the Lord is not down here, but up there, where I should be if I left the body. The beauty and the attractiveness of that person fills the throne on high, and fills heaven and the minds of all that have heaven's estimate of Him. I know Him. Precious in God's sight, is He not precious to me? my Lord and my God, my life hid in God is He. He loved me; He loves me; He will love me even unto the end. High on the throne, higher still in the Father's love and approbation than even His present place with the Father, in the glory which He had with Him before the world was, can tell; Himself, object of worship on high,—His heart, His mind, His affection and thoughts are all told out there, by His actions, to be upon me! If He call me to heaven, shall I not go, and go *cheerfully?* If that word reach me, "the master calls for thee," or "rise up and come away," shall no glad joy fill my soul? Such love in Him provokes desire, in the heart that knows it.

2nd. His works, in doing which He has told out *the who* and *the what* He is, clear the way too, not only

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for our saying, What love! but clear the way of all the real difficulties to desiring to depart.

He came down from on high once to become a man (Phil. ii.), and in His course down here showed out His will-lessness and His subjection unto death, the death of the Cross. His will-lessness and subjection have convicted me of wilfulness and of insubjection. But in that death of His, He bare all the wrath divine which was due to my wilfulness and insubjection; and now risen from among the dead, He is alive without any reference to my sin, save that it has been borne by Himself in my stead. My most gracious loving Lord! alive there He has proclaimed what are the thoughts up there of God and His Father about me. Crucified together with Him, dead together with Him, buried together with Him, quickened together with Him, raised up together with Him, made sit together with Him—six unsearchably full privileges! And, there above, He cares for all the interests of His people; secures all for them up there and secures them down here for Himself and His Father up there. And what was the blessedness of the use of these fruits of His death, resurrection, and ascension to be? "I live, yet not I but Christ liveth in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God (a living person, seen by faith,) who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Gal. ii. 19, 20). "I . . . . live to God." "He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them and rose again" (2 Cor. v. 15). A life to Himself up there He maintains in us; and this is inseparable from conflict with Satan, and bearing the Cross upon one's own shoulder down here, through a hostile world that knows us not. To live to Him supposes a new life and nature to have been given to us, consists in living to Him and not to ourselves, and flows out of occupation with things in heaven where He is. But what is a Son of God, an heir of God and joint heir together with Christ, to do while he finds himself down here? Surely to have divine freedom from all around, and Nazarite occupation with Christ and His things in heaven. To be in our

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measure, each one down here, for Him and His representative, as Himself on high represents our portion and place and hope. Everything which I needed to be done down here He came and did. Everything which I need to be done up there now He is there to do it. Everything which I shall need to be done hereafter He will come again out of the glory to do.

3rd. And has He not shed forth, on His people down here, that which bears ample testimony in their souls who have committed themselves to God and the word of His grace, that, in and through Christ Jesus, all things are theirs?

"Children of God by faith and Christ Jesus," and "because ye are sons God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying Abba, Father." "If children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs together with Christ, if so be we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together."

Believer! have I drawn an untruthful picture of the claims of the common faith upon your heart's desires to be at once with the Lord? And how is it with you in this matter? I ask it kindly—not legally, so putting upon you a burden as a man, according to what you were as a creature; but spiritually, as raising the question according to the place you have as a new creation in Christ. Have you that enjoyment of Himself and of His way as to make it a matter of *self-denying patience* in you to remain down here, only because He wills you still to be away from home for a while, a pilgrim and a stranger still, where you find no rest for the sole of your foot: your affections and thoughts being in another scene than this, even above where He is, and conflict down here your portion?

The cares of this life prevent this with some, that is, they know not how to fulfil their duties down here *as unto Christ* up there. The poor man, called to eat bread *in the sweat of his brow*, oft forgets that it is not His labour that feeds him and his children, but God who gives him both labour and its guerdon. *In* the sweat, etc., marks the state (the streaming forehead, or toiled laboured state of him that eats,) not the source *from*

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which he draws what he wants, be it bread and rent, or be it planting or watering the seed of life. The deceitfulness of stores down here in the hand, present possessions in the things of the world, or it may be in the Lord's field, hinder some (who walk through nature, according to things seen,) from remembering what they have in God of Christ Jesus. And wherever energy of nature from within is at work, it will both snatch at what it can get, and, therefore, necessarily keep the soul out of present occupancy with Christ in heaven.

Intellectual perception of the justness of faith's claim to a ready, "I come, Lord," is well, as showing forth God's having well cleared our way. But the eyes of the heart must be enlightened, if I am not only to generalise and say: "It is of the very nature of the new man to say, I long, Lord, to be with Thee;" but if, myself a member in particular, I am to say to Him, "*I* long to be with THEE." To do this truthfully, I must be able to present to God, in the secret of His presence, a heart weaned from itself. It may be through disgust at what I, as a human being am, in contrast with what my Lord, whom I adore, is. I so wilful, He so will-less. I so would-be independent, He so subject to God and His Father. And yet, too, there is power in the contrast in what I, as a descendant of Adam, am; and what, as a new creation, in Him. And His love so full and free, so unselfishly proving itself every day down here to the poor silly sheep whom He has picked up in the dreary desert, saving it from the lion and the bear, and the desert itself; joying and rejoicing in heaven over it now, and about to let it *soon* in a renewed body, glorious like unto His own, into those courts above, that house of His Father's love!

But I must add that the one great reason of the want of boldness and confidence now-a-days, the want of desire to be with Himself so soon as He will,—the sooner felt to be the better—is the want of individual practical dissociation from the present evil world and victory over the flesh, with its affections and lust. Through want of these things the shadow of darkness of the enemy rests upon many a lot. Such clearly have a part to act, a

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something to do. Even to retrace in thought their course to the first point of divergence from the path of that faith once given to them, and having owned that failure before God, then before man, to begin and cease to do evil and learn to do well. The extent to which the world, with its pleasant pictures, is sanctioned by believers, in the present day, is solemn in practice; and how opposed to the wearing upon heart and mind and in life down here, the Cross of Christ (Phil. iii. 18, Gal. vi. 12—15). Self-judgment for past if not present ways and habits and thoughts is called for, and a taste of the contrast between our conduct as representing Christ down here, and His conduct on high as representing us. Can we bear the test: "I represent Him down here as and because He represents me up there."

Many, I am persuaded, have to begin there. They must go on afterwards with us in daily learning how to have their souls occupied with Christ and His things in heaven. Heaven alone can displace earth in a soul; Christ alone can displace myself, with all its likings and dislikings, and lusts.

Christ Jesus in heaven upon the throne, my Lover, Saviour, and my Lord; head of that body of which I am a member—is all I can turn to amid the ruined state of all around me.

Read Col. iii. 1, 4; study Phil. iii. (*especially* from 17 to 21); mark Gal. vi. 12, 15; and deal faithfully with yourself as one who feels called up to examine *for Christ's own name sake* that part of His property which lies under your own eye.

The Lamb upon the throne who said, I am He that liveth, was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore. Amen. And have the keys of death and of Hades—Him you will find your only place of rest, the only restorer of your soul, if your heart has so lost its first love as not to long and yearn still *to be with Him.* Amen and amen.

How happy should I now be if I had died.

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## No. XIV.

### JOHN XI. 47—53 AND XX. 17.

THERE is a remarkable contrast between the commencement of the eleventh chapter of John's gospel and that portion which is found in v. 47—53. "Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation. And one of them named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. And this spake he not of himself; but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; and not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad. Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put him to death."

Conscious that Israel had, in heart and principle, already entirely rejected Him, the Lord is shown to us in the early part of the eleventh chapter, *purposing* to display in Israel a new and last sign for God, viz., the resurrection of Lazarus from among the dead. He loved Martha and Mary and Lazarus, and they knew that He loved them. When Lazarus was sick, the two sisters had sent word, "Lord, behold he whom thou lovest is sick." Sympathy there was in the Lord's heart. He is the master of sympathy; especial sympathy for all that look to Him; but He had a guarded heart and the loins of His mind were ever girded up; and therefore "the glory of God" (v. 4), took the lead in His mind and action. He kept sympathy in its proper place, and made it the channel of a higher and better glory than

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its own. We read, "He abode two days still in the same place where He was." Then, Lazarus being dead, He announces to His disciples, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth, but I go that I may awake him out of sleep."

Come now (according to the thought of man) *too late* to be of any use, He meets the bereaved sisters and presents to their faith those two glories of His own person, "I am the resurrection and the life." Occupied with circumstances and absorbed in their own sorrows, they could not rise to meet his mind. But He, bent now upon letting the glory of God and His Father shine forth in a new way, openly enters into the full character of the circumstances which led to the sorrow; and the taste of what death was; death the wages of sin; death about soon to be realised by Himself; because of the very state of His own disciples who loved and yet could reproach Him with forgetfulness of them and with inconsiderateness; and because of the state of the world around—"Jesus wept."

The sisters wept, for they had been bereaved; they had lost Lazarus. He, conscious that he was about to restore him to them, could not have wept for this loss, this bereavement. With their view of their circumstances He could not sympathise; but with them under their circumstances, as He viewed them, He could and did; "Jesus wept." He purposed to use their necessity and their deep-felt sorrow as an occasion of glorifying God, of showing his own recognition of the Father, and that these glories of His being, the resurrection and the life, were displays from the Father. How true His love to them and how wise! And yet, in preparing to set aside the power of darkness and of the devil, He must needs feel the pillars whereon the temple of sorrow and sin was built. He felt them and "Jesus wept"; and then, for the hour was not come in which He would bow His own head in death and set aside sin and man and Satan, He gave them the display of resurrection in their own circumstances. And glorious the display was, yet was it, because it was in man's circumstances and day, the seed and harbinger of deeper sorrows to them all. For His own life and Lazarus's will be sought for,

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and His own He will give up. This portion of the chapter ends with the 46th verse. In contrast with it we have, in what follows, the deep counsel of the mind of God as to the death of Jesus which He Himself had seen and felt to be close at hand; and it is announced in a marvellous way by means of the prophetic testimony of a wicked man that was an enemy to God and to all righteousness.

"47. Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. 48. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him; and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation. 49. And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto to them, Ye know nothing at all; 50. Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. 51. And this spake he not of himself, but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; 52. And not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad."

If he spake it not of himself (wretched man!) he had his own feelings and thoughts in speaking it, and, in thus encouraging the council to seek the Lord's death, he showed his *own* enmity to God and his own darkness in trying thus to suggest the way of preventing the Romans taking away both "our place and our nation." "It is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not."[a]

But he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation, and not for that nation only, but that he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad."

Of the connection between His death and the blessings of that nation I need not now speak. But there was another result of blessing alluded to, namely, "that he

[a] How exactly God can speak a word of eternal truth in one sense His own, which Satan and wicked man can take up in an opposite sense, which is their own.

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should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad."

When that nation would not have Him, He was free to turn to another work than gathering them. And when they rejected Him and put Him to death on the cross, He was free to think of *the children of God that were scattered abroad.* But more than this, while the kingdom of Israel was God's sphere of manifesting Himself in government, the children of God were a hidden people, scattered here and there, and not gathered together at all, much less gathered together in one. For the expression "gathered together in one" is a much fuller and more distinct one than that of being gathered. In the twentieth chapter of this gospel we get, among the first words of our risen Lord, the instruction about "the children." Risen from the dead He could speak of things of which He never spoke until His humiliation was ended. Till then, He never but once, I think, called God "my God," and that was when on the cross; never once called His disciples "My brethren." But His humiliation ended and now no fear of their mistaking the force of such a testimony, He says to Mary, "Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended to my Father; but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God" (v. 17). Risen from the dead, He would both that God should have the first fruits presented to Him, and that His people should understand that the Father's presence was the place where they must look for, find, and enjoy Him in their new character of blessing as sons of God. The Father's presence—His Father and our Father, His God and our God—is the place in heaven to which He ascends and where we know Him. It is His presence there, known to faith and sealed by the Spirit, which enables each one of us to say, "children of God by faith in Christ Jesus" (Gal. iii. 26), and also "because ye are sons, God has sent forth the spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying Abba, Father (Gal. iv. 6). Yet this, while true in a company and so the means of realising brotherhood, one with the other, as seen in the light of a risen and ascended Lord now with the Father—is first of all

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an individual thing; for the heart of the individual believes, and Abba, Father, is the cry of the individual.

How little do we recognise that the root and truth and power of this blessing is in the earth-rejected, heaven-honoured Lord Jesus. Yet so it is—and as the full blessing of each one of those thus blessed will be in the Father's house, so now all our springs of blessing are in Him who is in heaven. This brings death, and the needs be of death—death of Him who was the Prince of Life—before us; and also the needs be of that which our selfish natural hearts turn from, the needs be of death to selfishness entering our own souls, if we are to be blessed at all; and of death being laid home to our souls if we are to be blessed as practical partakers of the blessing.

When we look at the Lord's death, our need of it was fully seen by God, whose love, perfect as Himself, showed itself thus. God is love (1 John iv. 8), and how shown? "In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him" (v. 9). Yes, but what would the gift of life to us *as sinners* have profited us? This too is met. For it is added (v. 10), "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be *the propitiation of our sins.*" Here He was all alone in His death. No one could enter into that sorrow or bear part of it. He was utterly forsaken of God, when the cup of wrath due to us was put into His hand. The sting of death He bore Himself—Himself alone. I get the benefit, we get the benefit of His sufferings—the fruits of His death; but He, the just one, was all alone as the substitute for the many unjust, when the cup of wrath was emptied, ere He said, "Father, into thy hand I commend my spirit." The question of God's wrath against a rebel creature in its guilt finds no answer save in the death of the sinner's substitute; the divine wrath against myself personally and individually spent itself upon the Lord on the cross. He bare my sins in His own body on the tree. Not so the question of God's displeasure with the ways of death of any whom He makes to be His children. They have to be corrected in us, and the power of them

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to be put aside when we have been made to see their practical inconsistence with the pardon and life which God has given to us.

Other parts of the Lord's sorrow we are allowed to share, to drink into. The Lord as Son was isolate and separate when down here from all the scene around us; His portion and blessing lay there, whence He had come. And, if we are sons of God, is there no isolate, no desolate separateness from all around to be tasted and felt by us? It will be the more tasted and felt in proportion as we live above with Him, and know what our portion there is. And yet, as we carry, oft, our dead to the burial, how do our souls realise, as with a certain surprise, that we can hold, retain no blessing in circumstances here below. A father, a mother, a husband, a wife, a child pass from our side, absent from the body, present with the Lord; but we are bereaved, desolate, and not only does our gourd that sheltered us wither—our staff whereon we leaned break in our hands—but we find out then and there, perhaps, how little we were really living as those that were beyond death, dead and alive again in Christ; how little we were walking under the yoke with the blessed Master; pilgrims and strangers in a land of shadows, not our rest, for it is polluted. I know "it is good that a man bear the yoke in his youth." And yet how have I been as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke; yea, as a bull in a net, when death has thus reached the quick of my own soul. How little able to be still and dumb because "Thou didst it;" to still and silence my soul, as taking the cup at His hand: "The cup which my Father hath given shall I not drink it?" It is not our weakness, it is not God's way with us in our weakness, it is not the power of our circumstances, which in these hours leaves us what we are. But it is this, rather: want of individual, practical conformity to the likeness of the Lord who knew how to be crucified through weakness, and who knows how to perfect His strength in our weakness, and who has given to us the sentence of death in ourselves that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God that raiseth the dead. I justify God when He thus brings death in upon myself, and

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discovers to me how little I have, as yet learnt of bearing about in my body the dying[a] of the Lord Jesus, being always delivered unto death. And if this is not sympathy with the Lord in His sorrows, it is, His name be praised, a means to that end. Discovery, it may be, most humbling to me, discovery which makes me abhor myself in the dust, and count myself vile, and lay my hand upon my mouth. Oh! how little like the Lord! how much in contrast with Him! but it is good to learn what man is; and nowhere can it practically be better learnt than in such seasons. And if learnt, it is, surely, the realisation of weakness, a weakness which can have His strength perfected in it. Surely, if we are as water spilt upon the ground which no man can gather up, this only fits the more for the blessed truth that the Father's heart on high, the Father's presence in Heaven, is there where alone we find the spring, or thence the stream of joy, peace or strength.

He lets us taste, too, the uncertainty of all below in these scenes of sorrow, the vanity of all our plans, and contrivances, and reckonings; the real character of *earth*,

[a] The word here used (*Nekrosis*) only occurs twice in the New Testament.

Rom. iv. 19, the *deadness* of Sarah's womb.

2 Cor. iv. 10, bearing about in the body the *dying* of [the Lord] Jesus.

In the first of these two passages, it is used figuratively, and marks the state of death, the absence of vitality. If this is the sense of it here also, of course, it means the deadness of [the Lord] Jesus *to this world and all its allurements*, which was true of Him when here, and which He ever exhibited. I think the rendering it "*the crucifixion*" (as does Dr. Wordsworth), is not doctrinally allowable; because then the believer could not look upon himself as already crucified, dead, and buried, together with the Lord Jesus, but as in the act of being crucified and dying, which would destroy the power of *reckoning ourselves dead* (Rom. vi. 11), and so ceasing from sinning. I say this though (according to Suicer) Chrysostom, Theophylact and Cyril, seem to be against me. As also, Bengel, Alford, and Wordsworth, etc. But, doctrinally, I think they err. Jesus's *deadness to this world* and all its allurements gives to the word the same force exactly as in the other occurrence, and in doctrine it seems to me deeper and less questionable than *the dying*. Deeper, in that it presents to me One who was *dead to the world* as the One who, in Heaven, is my life, though I am down here.

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and the real nature of sin which brought in death. The deaths frequent thus become mementoes to saints to live *above*, and within their own sphere of blessing—"Behold, I ascend to my Father and to your Father, to my God and to your God."

Having Himself died under the penalty due to us, He has taken a place on high where He is our life, eternal life. But, there on high, in His wisdom He uses the circumstances down here which were proofs, among men, of the sin (the penalty of which He bore), to discover to us all the roots of that selfishness and sinful worldliness which may still remain in us. And so He leads us to judge and separate from it. And thus, too, do we the better estimate the pureness of the grace which led Him to become the propitiation for our sins, and to see how (if shut up to Him for our all) blessed is it to walk in the power of His life and light and love.

If this be so, it is a grand display of His power against Satan, to gather out of the field and harvest of Satan's sowing and culture, the very sins which made His own death necessary as a propitiation for sin, and to use them as the spears of Pharaoh's horsemen to thrust us out of this world, while His own love lures and leads us on.

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I have no doubt that in the present breaking up of what did seem steadfast to man, and in the rapid progress of evil, a testimony to the truth, however simple, by those who are not shaken when all around is, and who have, in the midst of acknowledged weakness in themselves, found peace and rest and stability by the truth, is of the greatest value and may be a help to thousands. Hence, I rejoice in the wide dissemination of writings which proclaim the truth and unfold and lead to the study of the word. And I can say this, though some of them should not be without defect of judgment, or should be deficient in exactitude of expression.

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The value I have for a friend, the fact that he is largely associated with myself in walk and service, the being aware that he is a devoted and zealous servant of the Lord, ought not to be a motive for my not taking notice of statements made by him which Scripture does not bear out, which do not perhaps even present what the writer means and which may be injurious to souls."

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# N°. XV.

# ON THE PROPHETIC PASSAGES IN THE GOSPELS AND EPISTLES.

## INTRODUCTION.

A GOOD introduction to the Apocalypse would be to take up those characteristic passages in the New Testament where prophetic truth is looked at, not in every detail, as in the language to the centurion, but the great leading passages—such as Matt. xiii. 24 and 25, and the Epistle to the Thessalonians, &c. But before we begin, we will have a meditation introductory to prophecy itself, because we ought to enter on it with our consciences and our sympathies—not with our intellects. So it is well, before entering on it, to put our souls somewhat into right order.

The word of prophecy treats us as *friends*—not as *sinners* nor as *saints*. The word of the *Gospel* treats us as sinners, and proposes relief; and the *preceptive* parts educate us as saints. But the moment we come into *prophecy* we forget our character as sinners—it is disposed of—and we listen to that which addresses us as friends of Christ. A special dignity thus attaches to us the moment we come to listen to prophecy. I am an intruder upon prophecy if I do not enter upon it as one entitled to call God my Father, and I am open to the Lord's rebuke to Nicodemus—"Go and make *yourself* your object." When I can read my title clear as a sunbeam, *then* I can come to Christ as a friend. And this clothes the mind of the saint with great moral dignity. It is another *kind* of relationship from that of the sinner or of the saint.

Then, prophecy came in on corruption. There would have been no prophetic voice heard in Israel if the priesthood had not corrupted itself. It broke in on Israel in a day of corruption. And the prophetic voice is the introduction of the Holy Ghost. Aaron might

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have discharged his office, and the daily services of the temple might have been discharged, by a title of flesh, without the Holy Ghost. But the moment Aaron and the sons of Levi had corrupted themselves the Holy Ghost comes forth, and fills a vessel with *a new thing* altogether. So in prophetic ministry I am in company with the Holy Ghost at once. This shows that God always has a remedy for our mischief.

In these ways we must read the prophetic office, and these thoughts are very seasonable before entering on the prophetic details themselves.

There is a way in which you may *use*, and a way in which you may *abuse*, the prophetic words; and these two ways you will find in Matt. ii., which I propose to consider now, as a sort of introduction to our subject. We have gathered how it was that the prophetic voice was awakened in the story of Israel—that corruption was the parent, or rather the occasion of it; and you will not have really entered on the prophetic dispensation if you do not see in it God bringing forth His resources when man has destroyed himself. Now, when you come to *listen* to the prophetic voice you have to inquire, How am I to *use* it? and, How might I *abuse* it? Both are illustrated in the passage before us.

The Evangelist himself shows the first use of prophecy. We are to have it so stored up in our minds, that nothing may be a surprise to us. The Lord Himself rebukes the Pharisees for not knowing the signs of the times. When the hand of God comes to realise what the Spirit of God has already announced, that is "the signs of the times"; and we should be able to identify the voice of God with the hand of God, as the Evangelist does here. When the manner of the birth of the Child was announced, he says, "Oh yes, that fulfils Isaiah viii." Here was the greatest wonder that had ever transpired in the story of human nature; but Matthew is prepared for it by Isaiah viii. This is to be a real *friend* of Christ. He has prepared me that I may not be surprised with what takes place. So, again, when the Child is taken down into Egypt, *Hosea* comes to the mind of Matthew, and he now links Hosea xi. with the

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Child's coming forth out of Egypt. He is able again to identify the *voice* of God with the *hand* of God. Is not *that* walking in the light where God is?—enjoying fellowship with Christ? All He knows He makes known to us. He puts us in the light where Himself dwells.

So, when the terrific fact of the destruction of the children takes place, the Evangelist is prepared for it. He may be shocked at Herod; but he is not amazed. And again, when the Child is carried up to Nazareth, the Evangelist is able intelligently to gather up all the mind of the prophets that attached to the moment that began His humiliation. When He was turned away to Nazareth, the Christ of God began His humiliation in this world. He ought to have been the royal Bethlehemite—He becomes the despised Nazarene; He ought to have been King of Kings and Lord of Lords—He becomes a nothing and a nobody; and the Evangelist is prepared for it. So you and I should be able to interpret the events of the times by inspired interpretation; nothing baffles the Evangelist.

That is the first use of prophecy.

Then, another use, and the highest use of it, is illustrated in the action of the wise men of the East. These men were *ignorant,* if you please; they knew nothing of the *first* use we have been speaking of, but their *hearts* travelled far beyond the speed of their *heads.* And what do they show me? They show me this: that they treated the prophetic word *as a reality*—as a thing worthy of all their thoughts. When the star of Bethlehem shone, they did not delay a moment. As Abraham, at the call of the God of Glory, went out, not knowing whither he went, just so these men, the moment the star appeared, gave witness that *everything* was secondary to the leadings of the God of Glory. This is not the same thing as the Evangelist being prepared to interpret events. *That* is beautiful; but here I find an honest-hearted people that *act* on the prophetic word—treat it as a reality. They set themselves on their way to Jerusalem. I could with much pleasure go through their journey. They come to Jerusalem and inquire, saying, "Where is He that is born King of the Jews?"



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They keep their gold, frankincense, and myrrh treasured up; they do not spend it on Herod. Their eye was very single; they were not fascinated by the magnificence of that king. They came to inquire after the star of their prophet Balaam. And when they are travelling from Jerusalem to Bethlehem the star reappears. That was the consolation of faith. Nothing is so entitled to the consolations of the Spirit as the victories of faith. They had conquered the fascinations of Herod, and the star greets them. It had left them to themselves on the road to Jerusalem. That is the trial of faith. Does not God sometimes seem to leave you alone? But let faith get a victory, and God will reappear.

When they got to the poor, mean manger, *then* there was something to draw out their gold, frankincense, and myrrh; whereas not a grain of their frankincense is given to Herod—all that they have is laid at the feet of the rejected, neglected Child. They saw things invisible, and the degradation was only a dark ground to set off the brightness of the glory of Him who lay there.

Now, what use did the chief priests and scribes make of prophecy? They *abused* it; they treated it with an unbelieving understanding and an infidel heart. Do *we* ever treat Scripture so? If we had not infidel hearts, what manner of persons should we be! The scribes read out most accurately their warrant from Micah; but they did not take a single step with the wise men. We must charge our *hearts* to learn their lesson, as well as our *heads.* I see the wise men *acting* on their lesson; I see the scribes intelligent of the prophetic word and indifferent to it.

We have now just introduced ourselves to the prophetic Scriptures. When I look at prophecy, am I in company with that with which God *began?* No, indeed I am not. He put the kingly office and the priesthood into the hands of man, to see if he could hold the blessing. When man proved unfaithful, then God must maintain a line of prophets to show that all the good that is done on earth must be done by Himself. "The earth and all

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the inhabitants thereof are dissolved: I bear up the pillars of it."

## MATTHEW XII. AND XIII.

WHAT we are proposing now to do, is to go through those passages in the New Testament that have a prophetic character, and I want first to review one thought we have already looked at. When we meditate on prophecy, we ought to seek the temper of *friends* of Christ, entitled to know His secrets. Because prophecy becomes the speculations of intellect, if it is not the communications of friendship. Therefore, it is a very holy thing to read prophecy. It recognises us in the deepest and most intimate relationship we can fill. We are pardoned sinners—we are adopted children; but *more*—we are *friends* of Christ, entitled to listen to His secrets.

Now I turn to chapters xii. and xiii. of Matthew, beginning at ver. 38 of chap. xii. Chap. xiii. gives us the parables of the sower, the tares and wheat, the mustard seed, the leaven, the treasure hid in a field, the merchantman seeking goodly pearls, and the net. This is our material.

In all this Scripture the Lord is anticipating two great scenes. The first is corruption in Israel, the second is corruption in Christendom, and we shall see how these are connected together.

In ver. 38 of chap. xii. He is asked by the Pharisees to give them a sign. This was the full expression of the infidel principle, to ask for a sign in the presence of the substance of all signs. The Lord at once (because His spirit was very quick) apprehends the total moral downfall of Israel, and what does He say? "There shall no sign be given you but the sign of a cast-out people. You will now put me to death,—you will lose me." Yes, when Israel crucified Christ they lost Him. So that that was a beautiful moral answer to their question. The Lord answered according to the *moral* of their question. He never answered an *inquiry*, but the moral condition of the *inquirer*. The men of Nineveh

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had repented at the preaching of Jonas; the queen of the south had gone from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, yet here was the great Divine Prophet in their midst, and they were challenging Him for a sign! Then in the unclean spirit He shows their total downfall. This is not yet accomplished. There is no unclean spirit there now. The house is empty, swept, and garnished. By-and-bye, he will return and find it more ready for his use and occupation than ever. So we find in the prophet Daniel. The idols shall be on the walls of Jerusalem. And again, in the Apocalypse we find how an image is made to the beast, and all the world worships it. The unclean spirit comes in, in more terrific form than ever. The day is coming in which the last state of that house shall be worse than the first. "Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation." "Generation" here means Israel. In Matthew (chap. xii.) the Lord limits the application of this to Israel. In Luke the Lord goes through the same thoughts, and *does not* say, "So shall it be," etc., because there He is saying it *morally*, in connexion with Christendom as well as Israel. For I have no doubt that the Reformation was the sweeping out of the house in the case of Christendom, and now the unclean spirit (Popery) is looking carefully into the swept and garnished house (Protestantism).

Then the Lord, having thus anticipated the moral ruin of Israel,—having looked out through the great vista of ages to the apostacy, when the desolator shall come in,—then His mother and His brethren come, desiring to speak with Him. But He answers, "Who is my mother, and who are my brethren?" He is here disclaiming everything in the flesh. Israel, that was connected with Him in the flesh, now stood out in apostacy before His spirit, and He begins to disclaim all connexion with flesh. He looks to the new creation, of which there was a little pledge and earnest in those now gathering around Him. Do not let these beautiful touches of the mind of Christ escape you; I stand in admiration of this moment. The Lord, having anticipated the full downfall of Israel, being challenged by His kindred in

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the flesh says, "No,—flesh has disappointed me, and I do not own it any longer. Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? Those who sit and hear my words." "Of His own will begat He us, by the word of truth." Are we, you and I, gathered there? Do we know that we are new creatures, children of the word of God? Not children of the loins of Abraham, but the product of the sowing of the word by the Holy Ghost.

Then in chap. xiii. He unfolds that very thing. He shows Himself *not* as one who had come to gather fruit. He had looked for fruit in the old creation, and had been disappointed. Then He becomes a *sower*, and is the husbandman who begins the work of the new creation. He is a labourer who has gone forth by commission (not from the *throne of God* but) from the *bosom of the Father*. Sometimes He dates His commission from the *throne*. When He comes to publish *grace*, it is from the bosom of the Father. So now He comes to prepare fruit for Himself, and He will never gather any fruit that *He* has not prepared Himself. In this parable we find the *seed* was the same in every case. But it had this property, that it *tested the soil*. So now the gospel is preached to all, but it tests the hearts of all.

Now why does the Lord link Satan with the way-side hearer? Because if Satan can bear away the seed from the heart, all his work is done. If it finds admittance to the heart, then he tries to corrupt it. Then comes the stony ground hearer. We hear the word, and something awakens a tasteful emotion of mind. There is nothing in the stony ground hearer that intimates a work in the conscience, and *nothing* is done if the conscience is not reached, because the conscience has revolted from God; and, till that breach is repaired, nothing is done. The stony ground hearers never deal with the word *as sinners*.

Then the thorny ground hearers are those that treat it with great gravity. They acknowledge the importance of eternity, but then they own *time* to be a serious thing also; they own the weighty importance of their place in the world, and they have no manner of mind to sacrifice the one to the other. And thus the two kingdoms go

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on together in their hearts, and no fruit is borne. Oh, with what divine skilfulness He unfolds and exposes the heart!

Then, the fourth case is what He calls "good ground." What made it good? Was it by any refinement of flesh? No, it was the Spirit of God. *Satan* corrupts the highway hearer; *nature* makes the stony ground unfruitful; the *world* destroys the thorny ground hearer; the *Holy Ghost* is the husbandman in every piece of tillage that brings forth fruit to the Lord Jesus. Oh, how fruitful in moral warning all this is! Do not let us, you and me, refuse to be exposed. It is good for us. Now, in that parable, the Lord is not giving the likeness of the kingdom of heaven, but the tares and the wheat begin the parables of the kingdom.

Now, we are getting into the story of Christendom. "The kingdom of heaven," here, is the Christendom that surrounds us every day. And has not the Lord anticipated it truly? How did this field become a mingled field? "*An enemy hath done this.*" And how are we to deal with it? We are not to attempt to cure it; and the moment the church begins to purify the world, she has mistaken her business. They were servants, but *mistaken* servants. This stares me in the face, every hour. I see saints occupied with that which Christ has never set them to do. The Church's business is not to purify the world. Let the Church busy herself in calling out sinners; not in purifying the world. The Lord here sweetly owns they may be servants, but they are mistaken servants, and they will not prosper in their work. Now, I want to pause and ask are *we* listening to these things, as *friends* of Christ? I do dread entering on prophetic truth in a spirit of intellectual speculation. If I have not faith to take the place of a friend, I must let the prophets and myself part company for the present. If I want my conscience or my heart regulated, I must go to the Gospels or the Epistles; and after that, let me come and sit at the feet of the prophets, and learn divine secrets. That is walking in the light as He is in the light. Did *He* want to wait for this nineteenth century to tell what the tare-field of Christendom would be? And here He invites the disciples of that day to walk in

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the light as He is in the light. Every attempt of the Church to regulate the world is one which has been taken up in ignorance of the mind of Christ.

Then He gives two parables in which He is pursuing the story of the tares; and in the next two, He is pursuing the story of the wheat. He is giving the story of the tares, in the parable of the mustard seed; and He shows that the sowing of the wicked one, was to grow to be a most important thing in the world. Then the leaven working is varied *doctrinal* corruption. The one is *external, political* corruption; the other is *internal, doctrinal* corruption. And has not all that taken place? What is Romanism? A great thing, more important than heathenism, or any other thing you can name. The mustard seed is there, and the leaven is there,—political and doctrinal corruption.

Then He comes to two sweet little parables, in which He is pursuing the story of the wheat, and under what figures does He present it? First, as the treasure hid in a field. Are the tares hidden? No, they stare me in face on every side. But when I look after the children of the kingdom, do *they* stare me in the face? When I look abroad, do I see some reflection of Christ everywhere? The tares occupy the wide-spread moral scene before me. I have to *look* for the wheat. Could anything be more accurate than these anticipations of Christ? And the pearl in the same way. He *seeks* it. But that is not all. If the mustard tree be occupied by the unclean birds, the treasure and the pearl are unspeakably dear to the heart of Jesus. You see an unrenewed man *there* and a saint of God *here*. How little do we realise the immense moral distance between these two! One is the representative of the thing which the unclean birds delight in; the other is nearer to the heart of Christ than anything in His whole creation. How little do we apprehend these things! The treasure was a treasure to *Christ*. The pearl was a pearl in *Christ's* eye. Oh, how beautiful these things are! And, yet, I say, here is Christ, not as the Saviour of sinners, or as the teacher of saints, but as a Prophet in the light, asking you to walk in the light of Him who knew the end from the beginning.

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He is my Saviour, my Master, my Lord; and He is a friend who invites me to sit by His side and listen to what He, and He only knows, the bosom counsels of God.

Then in the close, we get the parable of the drag-net. That anticipates a moment that we do not yet see. We have seen the public apostacy abroad. We have seen the heart of God hanging over His hidden thing in this world, but we have not yet seen the drag-net, because that represents the close of Christendom; the fulness of the dispensation. We have not yet seen it brought to its appointed end, and the good gathered into vessels—the bad cast away.

And now, I just ask; are we behaving ourselves as those nearest to the heart of Jesus, or as the thing in which the unclean birds find delight? Are we savouring of the spirit of the world, or the spirit of the Church of God?

## MATTHEW XXIV. AND XXV.

WE are now to look at a very serious Scripture. When we reach Matt. xxiv., we have done with the testing of Israel. I mean that if we discern the structure of Matthew's gospel, we shall find that the Lord is conducting thus far a very elaborate testing of Israel. He first proposes Himself to them as the Bethlehemite of Micah; then, as the light from Zabulon and Nephtali; and lastly, as riding on an ass, He proposes Himself as king, to the acceptance of the daughter of Zion. So that, all through His life, read in one great light, He is testing the state of the daughter of Zion; and John, in his gospel, draws the conclusion, "He came to His own and His own received Him not." How beautiful it is to see the ministry of the Lord in such a light! He was the patient tiller of the vineyard, to see if, at the eleventh hour, He could get any fruit. But when we come to chap. xxiii., the testing is over, and He gets up on the judgment throne and pronounces their guilt, and the judgment that attaches to their guilt. Just as a judge, He sums up the evidence and pronounces the verdict. Then He turns

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His back on them, saying, "Ye shall not see me henceforth till ye shall say blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord." There is great exactness in all this, and we are not in a position to meditate on chaps. xxiv. and xxv., if we do not apprehend what I have said as a preface.

If I were to link Zechariah xi., and Isaiah l. with this prophecy, it would be beautiful to see such distant lights forming so beautiful a constellation before the eye; and these different stars contributed by one part and another part, all shining together.

Then, having pronounced the judgment, Messiah, being rejected, takes leave of Israel. He goes out from the Temple. Here we are introduced to thoughts that attach to ourselves. Chapter xi. of Zechariah tells us of two staves, called "beauty and bands." Here, at chapter xxiii., the Lord broke the staff called "beauty." (He did not break the other till the Acts of the Apostles.) Here He withdraws Himself. Now, I ask, should we see beauty in that which Christ has rejected? It was a poor thing for the disciples to come and show Him the beauty of the Temple. They ought to have said, "If our Master has turned His back on the Temple, its beauty is gone." Instead of that, Nature hangs about that which faith has left. If the counterpart of the Temple of Solomon were here, it might be beautiful still; but we should not be giving it our admiration. You will say, Are not the mountains, the valleys, the woods beautiful? *Exquisitely* beautiful; but you ought to accustom yourself to say, The trail of the serpent is over every bit of it. All will be revived in Millennial days; but *now*, do not you turn aside to mark the exquisite scenery of Nature for its own sake. That is where the disciples failed. Well, the patient Jesus says, "What you are admiring, I have left." There shall not be left here one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down. Then, in verse 3, their minds are restored under the correcting hand of Christ. "We believe it, since Thou hast said it, and now tell us farther when shall these things be." Then the Lord pronounces the solemn prophecy that fills chapters xxiv. and xxv.,



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and gives the characteristics that are to mark the judgment of Israel. He begins to answer them in verse 4, and He carries the first part of His answer down to verse 14, and details the story of what shall be before the end comes—what He calls the beginning of sorrows. Having reached that point, in verse 15, He anticipates the story of this Israel, who is now His subject. And mark, *the Church is not here.* It was a stranger to His thoughts while He was talking of Israel. He was invited to speak of the Temple, and the end of the age, and to that He applies Himself. In verse 15 He begins to speak of the Antichrist—the abominable desolator who shall come. The moment that takes place (it will not be till the Church has gone from the scene) He begins to instruct His disciples how they are to act. "Let them which be in Judea," etc. This is the great tribulation of which Daniel, Jeremiah, and the Apocalypse speak. *There,* there is a constellation again. *Do* be looking out in Scripture for such constellations. You will find Jeremiah, Daniel, Matthew, and the Apocalypse each contributing a star. A little skill and industry will constellate them, and in the glory of the light they give we are invited to walk.

Then down to verse 28 He is telling them how to behave themselves, and in verse 28 the judgment is executed. That is the rider on the white horse of chapter xix. of Revelation, and His armies. They come down to execute judgment on the carcase. The Lord here is represented under the figure of an eagle coming down for his prey. Then in verse 29 He shows the *action* of judgment. And what verses the 29th and 30th are! What a solemnity the judgment of God is? Has not man mimicked that 29th verse? and we may ask whether rightly so? When the judges of our land pronounce sentence of death, they array themselves in blackness. Here the sun and the moon and the powers of heaven do the same. It reminds me of chapter xxvii. of this very gospel. When God was judging sin, the whole earth was darkened for three hours. There is a moral suitableness in this. When the blessed Surety for sinners was bearing the judgment of sin, the earth

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arrayed itself in sackcloth. God retired from the scene, and the whole creation felt the moment. So, when the rider on the white horse comes forth to execute judgment (not on *sin*, but) on *sinners*, "the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light," etc. How little do I know of my spirit being arrayed in darkness when I talk of judgment, or in brilliancies when I talk of glory! Would to God one knew a little more of that! Our spirits should be in sympathy with these different things.

Then, the judgment being executed, in verse 31 we get a mere glimpse of the kingdom that is to follow; because judgment never closes the scene—it only purges the vessel which is to be filled with glory.

Having left verse 31, we have left, in one sense, the prophetic part of these chapters, to take up a moral parenthesis. This is a style which I find constantly in the Book of God. When the Prophet Isaiah is relating historical facts, he is turned aside every now and then to look at the operations of the Spirit. That is the style of the parenthesis which we are looking at—from verse 42 of chapter xxiv. to verse 30 of chapter xxv. Here the Lord is morally talking to our souls, and telling us that we ought to sustain two beautiful characters. We should be *watchers* and *workers* while He is absent. He turns aside to give a look at each one of us, for all this moral teaching attaches to our very selves, or to the Jewish remnant by-and-bye. While He is absent, His elect people ought to be watching and working. Do you enjoy this style in the Book of God? I would the saints of God partook of His *style*, as well as of His *spirit*. We are not set together merely to pick up knowledge; but to quicken and animate one another's souls. These watchers and workers are here represented by the wise virgins and the faithful servant. Now, what I observed on verse 31 of chapter xxiv. I am going to observe a little carefully in this chapter. No communication I get from the Lord puts me right into the kingdom. He stops short of anything like a detail of the kingdom. He gathers His elect who are to *constitute* the kingdom; but we do not see them *in* the kingdom. So in this

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chapter. Do you see the wise virgins in the kingdom? No; they are only seen at the door. So with the servant. He was to enter into the joy of his Lord. We are not told what the marriage-supper is, or what the joy is; but they are invited to enter the one and the other. The moral of this is deep and exquisite; because it tells us what the *moral material* is that goes into the kingdom, and what it is that is kept out. Is not the *character* of your friend more important to you than his *circumstances*? So the Lord does not tell me the circumstances of the kingdom; but He lets me breathe its moral atmosphere. You will have glories, too, I grant; but moral atmosphere is much more important. So He tells me that all that finds entrance into it is that which was *waiting* for Him in His absence. And in the parable of the servants we see what goes in—those who honestly owned Him as Master while He was absent. These two materials form the moral element of the place. How unspeakably blessed to go into a place that teems with love to Christ, and teems with a desire for His service! If the Lord were to take me into all the material beauties of the place, He would not gratify my heart so deeply by the *scenery* of the kingdom as in these few little verses.

Now, in verse 31, He resumes the prophecy, having turned aside, in the parable of the Virgins, to address our hearts; and in the parable of the servants, to address our conscience. Now, He resumes the prophetic current of His thoughts.

But, here again, we are not properly in the kingdom. It is a scene just at the opening of the kingdom. The kingdom has not yet arrayed itself; but, just on the Lord assuming the throne of His glory, He calls the living nations before Him to judgment. Now, *you* have nothing to say to that. It is not a resurrection scene; it is not the great white throne; but it is the Lord Jesus, when He has assumed the throne of His millennial glory, coming to inquire how the living nations have treated His poor messengers; how the nations have treated those Jews who have gone out with the everlasting Gospel. The settlement of that question is given in the parable of

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the sheep and the goats. And let me add one thing. The moral feature of this parable is just as beautiful as that of the others. The element that gets into the kingdom is not selfishness, but those who had loving, gracious care of his poor people. Do you wish to carry the selfishness of man's world into Christ's world? Could you be happy if you thought the foolish virgins, the unfaithful servant, and the selfish nations could enter there? So the Lord conducts us by the help of the wise virgins to the borders of the kingdom; and again, He conducts us there by the faithful servant, and now, by those who sympathised in the day of distress, with the people of an unmanifested Jesus. The Lord keep us near Himself in these thoughts, for they are holy and deeply beautiful. Oh, that we may give our hearts to Jesus, our hands to Jesus' work, and our sympathies to Jesus' people. Amen.

WE will now read a little cluster of scriptures in Matthew's *Gospel; part of chaps.* xvii., xix., *and* xxi. *and one verse in* chap. xxvi. These four scriptures belong to each other, as presenting a prophetic scene to us. I think we shall find they beautifully combine. They point our thoughts *onward.* We see the *future*, but we see it in very different lights.

Now, you see, in a short passage in chap. xix. 28 we get the future spoken of under one simple title, "The regeneration." Now that is a title which we only find in two places; here, and in Titus. *Here* it does not mean the *process* of regeneration, but the *condition* of the regenerated world; what is commonly called the Millennium. It is called in Hebrews, "The world to come." We call it, for convenience sake, the Millennium. But we often, for convenience, lose that which is important. If the only sense I have of the future is that it will last (as the word implies) a thousand years, that is a very poor thought of it. The Millennium will be the scene of a regenerated world—a world in new moral conditions. Now, in Titus, the Apostle uses the same word, but there he is speaking of the *process* of regeneration, not the thing fully regenerated; and beautifully these things go together. Your being regenerated, or born of the Spirit, is your

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title to stand in the regeneration of glory by-and-bye. Titus uses the same word to express the *process* in the individual soul which is used in Matt. xix. to express the *result*.

Now this regeneration is to have various departments of glory. The Son of man will then sit on the throne of His glory. But when He seats Himself in that blessed and glorious scene, He will have the heavens with Him and He will have the earth with Him, as the great departments of that scene. Now the office of the transfiguration in chap. xvii. is to present a sketch of the *heavenly* part of the regeneration. The office of chap. xxi. is to present a sample of the *earthly* part of the regeneration. Thus we see a beautiful link between three of these passages, chap. xvii., xix., and xxi.

We will now turn to chap. xvii. We find here that the Lord takes them up to a "high mountain." There is a meaning in that. Just as when the Lord took Moses up to the highest summit of Pisgah. God is conducting Moses mystically to the very same spot as that to which the Lord takes Peter, James, and John—the heavens of the millennial world. Moses sees the land before him just with the eye of God. He was looking at the footstool in company with Him who sat on the throne. And just what God was doing to Moses at Mount Pisgah (which was mystically heaven), the Lord is doing here with His disciples. And what did God show to Moses? He showed him glory. The earth will be the scene of glory in one style; but the glory of the terrestrial is one, and the glory of the celestial is another. Exactly so, the Lord takes these three up, to be witnesses of the glory that is to fill the world to come. And then He Himself is transfigured. This is a pledge and sample of 1 Cor. xv. The Lord here appears in His glorious body, just as the elect will pass into their glorious bodies. In a moment, His face shone as the sun and His raiment was as white as the light. He had a title to pass into the glory at once. He might have had twelve legions of angels; but if He had taken it alone, He would have abided in it alone. The Lord need not *die* to pass into the glory, but if He had not died He would have passed into it alone. But the house *must* be filled. It was

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morally impossible that the Lord should dwell there alone. The love of God, the counsels of grace, all forbid such a thought. So we find Him here in company with others. Moses and Elias represent the quick and the dead—Moses, I believe, being already raised, and Elias being translated. Here, they are *in glory* with Christ, and *talking* with Christ. If there is a blessed secret in Scripture it is the intimacy of the Lord and his people. Whether He comes down to be in *our* conditions, or He takes us up to be in *His* conditions, there is the same personal intimacy between us. They are not only *in glory* with Christ, but *talking* with Christ. Will glory estrange Christ from you and me? If my *necessities* did not throw me at a distance from Him, His *glory* will not throw Him at a distance from me. This is a volume of delights. I want, in one sense, no other writing to show me the blessedness of the millennial heavens.

"*Like* Him and *with* Him for ever to be." Moses and Elias are talking intimately with Him, face to face. You may say there is very little told me there about heaven. *Volumes* are there, and enough to satisfy the heart. You get them "like Him," and "with Him." Then Peter feels the power of the place, in spite of himself, and says, "Lord, it is good for us to be here," etc. Nothing could be a more exquisite picture of the moral power of the place. It took Peter *out of himself*, and that is just what you and I want to make us thoroughly happy. Peter was willing to work, and let others enter into his labours. His heart was satisfied.

So we learn here, that glory will not throw us a single inch from Him, the blessed Lord; and it *will* take us out of ourselves. When Peter had spoken, the cloud came and separated the glorified from those in flesh and blood, just as it will be in the regeneration. The glory of the celestial will be one, the glory of the terrestrial will be another. The glorified saints may visit the earth, there may be a ladder, but the two glories cannot commingle. The cloud comes in to do its own office. It takes, within its folds, the glorified family, and leaves outside those in flesh and blood. The disciples were not at all

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prepared for this; "They fell on their face and were sore afraid." Then, Moses and Elias returned to heaven. The Lord Jesus had still to travel on to Calvary, and when they saw Him, His robes of glory were laid aside, and there He was in their intimacy as Jesus again. One moment in the intimacy of glory; the next, in the intimacy of Him who was bound for the altar.

Now we come to chapter xxi., and we find ourselves in a scene altogether earthly. It is a scene of royalty. We get no royalty in heaven. People sometimes call the Lord Jesus King of the Church. This is great ignorance. He is King of Israel. He is the elder brother in heaven, having the pre-eminence there as well as here; but I do not see Him as a King there. I see Him there as the firstborn among many brethren. He has the pre-eminence wherever He shines; but He will shine there in *celestial* glory as He will shine here in *terrestrial* glory.

Now the Lord sends out two disciples to bring Him an ass; and if any man said anything to them, they were to say, "The Lord hath need of him." Now we must be a little careful here. We are about to pay a visit to the earthly part of the regeneration. Here we get the Lord Jesus in two distinct glories, in His lordship and His kingship. There is a sample of each given here. His lordship of all things, and His kingship in Jerusalem. We get His lordship first, where He sends for the ass. He assumes that the cattle on a thousand hills are His. The owner might have the title of a *purchaser*, but Christ had the title of Creator. The two disciples were the representatives of the rights of Christ. As they were about unfastening the ass and the colt, the owner naturally says, "Do not be touching my property." "*The Lord hath need of him,*" and just as Peter was made to feel the power of the holy mount, so this man was made to feel the lordship of Jesus. Human nature keeps what belongs to it, and gets more if it can; but this man was crowning Him Lord of all, and blotting out his own title deed. So the Lord gets the ass and the colt, according to the prophecy of Jeremiah. Then He gets on the ass, and as soon as He is seated there He is trans-

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figured into royal glory. The Lord of the whole earth, and the king of Jerusalem are only different glories in one person. So the moment that as Lord of all He gets on the ass, He enters the city in royal glory. Then the whole multitude is forced, just as the owner of the ass, to express the power of the moment. They hail this coming king, and cry, "Hosanna to the Son of David." How beautiful! Is it a happy thing to you that Christ has your heart in His power? He can twist about that wretched heart of yours, and make you to feel the proper virtue of His presence. As we read somewhere, "the hearts of kings are in Thy rule and governance." Peter was made to feel the power of the moment, and the owner of the ass, and the giddy multitude were forced to take the impression of the occasion and cry out, "Hosanna to the Son of David,—blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord." Now we have paid our visit to the earth, the picture has faded and passed away. I do not see the lordship of Christ on earth now, and He has been rejected as king. And now, was not I authorised in placing these three passages together? They are different departments of the same regeneration. And do not you be saying, "I wish the Lord had spread out a larger picture of the millennial heaven and earth." Make much of what you have got, and you will find it enough for the moment. I have *Himself* in various characters of glory. The whole regeneration has been mapped out before me.

Well, now just go with me to the 64th verse of chapter xxvi. You will say, What connection has this with the other three? I say if you do not introduce this verse in connection with the passages we have already had, you will have a very imperfect knowledge of the whole way of God in the future. The intimation of the Lord is this, "I am coming back *in judgment*." He sits in *power*, not in *grace* at the right hand of God, not till His *elect* are gathered in, but till His enemies are made His footstool. The soldiers of Cæsar had seized Him. He was the world's prisoner and the Lord lets the world know that when He came back it would be in judgment. The judgment of the world introduces Him to the scene

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of His brilliant glories. Judgment lies in the foreground. The cloud is constantly in Scripture, the symbol of judgment, as in Isaiah, "The Lord rideth upon a swift cloud"; and in Revelation, "Behold He cometh with clouds"; and so here.

So we see the kingdom shining in the distance, and then a solemn awful intimation is given to the world, that the Lord will enter on the scene of His glories through judgment. Till He has judged the present evil world, the world to come cannot be displayed. Till He has set aside a world of corruption, He cannot enter on a world of glory.

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

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

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

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

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If I sanction my eye resting upon any one but a risen and an ascended Christ now in heaven,—my heart, my mind, my very soul must (if led by the Spirit—if true to Christ) feel a chill, a darkness, a void. If I feel it not, it is because I am worldly in walk, and not led by the Spirit and by faith.

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## N°. XVI.

## LOVE UNTO THE END.

### JOHN XIII. 1—5.

"NOW before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour was come that He should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end."

"And supper being ended (the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray Him), Jesus (knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He was come from God, and went to God) riseth from supper, and laid aside His garments, and took a towel, and girded Himself. After that He poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith He was girded."

This is a deeply affecting and beautiful passage, exemplifying in a wonderful way the Lord's love to His own, at the close of His path upon earth, when about to return to that home which for a season He had left for their sakes, and still more for the sake of Him whose name it was His object to glorify. It opens as follows: "Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour was come that He should depart out of this world unto the Father." Now here, observe, *a set time is fixed, a given moment is specified;* leading us surely to look for *some equally definite act on the Lord's part, something either to be done or uttered by Him at the time expressed.* However, on reading the close of this passage, all that we find is, that, "having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end." Now love, an inward affection of the heart, as it is, and not of necessity issuing in any act of the hand or utterance of the lips, in its very nature is neither *bounded by time nor fixed to a moment.* What, then, we ask, has He done, as shown in the passage

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before us? Apparently nothing. HE HAD LOVED THEM BEFORE, AND HE STILL LOVES THEM. Hence we are tempted to think that no conclusion is reached, that the thought is imperfect, the sentence unfinished. This, however, is wholly inconsistent with Him whose words are the very essence of divine wisdom and knowledge; and hence, on looking a little more closely at the passage, we are led to the conclusion that the verb *agapao* (*to love*) is here intended to convey the thought of love not merely *felt*, but of love *carried out and embodied in action;* and that it prepares us for what we find in the sequel — namely, Jesus girding Himself, and washing the feet of the twelve. This, observe, was a mystical, typical action—a pledge to His own of His guardian care of them when He should no longer be with them: it showed that, as they passed through a world where they would be sure to encounter defilement, He would be at hand to wash the stains away from their feet, to keep their consciences clean, and enable them to walk worthy of their high calling as the children of God in the midst of a world sunk in iniquity. And this He would do for them as long as they needed it, even "*to the end*"—to the last hour of the sojourn of the Church upon earth. For, observe, the love here expressed is by no means confined to the Apostles—it reaches to all, they being a sample at that moment of the whole elect body. So, were we to paraphrase the closing words of this paragraph, we should express ourselves thus: "Having loved His own which were in the world, HE GAVE THEM A TOKEN, A PLEDGE, OF HIS UNCHANGING LOVE TO THEM UNTO THE END; He showed them that, as He had loved them before, He would love them for ever."

And now, having explained the former of the two above paragraphs, we will proceed to the latter, in which we find that for which the first had prepared us—namely, the actual description of Christ's washing the feet of the twelve. The bare narrative, divested of everything extraneous, is as follows: "And supper being ended, Jesus riseth from supper, and laid aside His garments, and took a towel, and girded Himself. After that He poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the

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disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith He was girded." These are simply the facts, the two passages here omitted being each of them evidently *parenthetical,* and, as such, not actually needed as regards the *bare history,* and yet at the same time most needed in order to set forth and illustrate that love which led Jesus to speak and to act as we find Him here doing. They are as follows: First, "*the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him*"; Secondly, "*knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He was come from God, and went to God.*" How striking, how contrasted with each other, these two passages are! In the first we find the powers of darkness marshalling their forces—the traitor moved by the devil to compass the destruction of Jesus. In the latter we learn how the Lord at that moment, in view of His death on the cross, was realising all that He was, and all that was His. From heaven, from God, He had come; and to heaven, to God, He was going again, there to be seated, to take His place on the throne of the Father, as Lord of all things in heaven and in earth: and He, blessed Lord! in the face of all this, in the full realisation of the hatred and rejection of man on the one hand, of God's love and complacency, His full acceptance of Himself and His work, on the other—of His humiliation, in short, and His glory, He thus humbles, He girds Himself, and washes the feet of those who were so soon to forsake Him, and one of them, alas! to betray Him! What marvellous grace, what unspeakable love, what amazing humility! Well may we take courage and go on our way rejoicing, when we see what a Saviour and Guardian we have to keep and defend us. Our object, however, is not so much to comment upon it as to bring out the structure and sense of the passage, believing that when these are discerned it will come home with fresh power to the heart. Observe, the two things which we have noted above are, the true meaning of the verb *agapao* (*to love*), as used in this passage, and the moral connection of what we find in the *two parentheses* with the action of Jesus in this scene at the supper-table. E. D.

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## N°. XVII.

## LAODICEA.

THE expression, "the beginning of the creation of God," as used by the Lord in addressing Laodicea, is very significant. Everything had failed on earth, and, so to speak, everything had ceased to be regarded by God as a testimony for Him in its actual state. All was a moral chaos in His sight. Christ alone remained; and, therefore, the Spirit falls back on Him as the "beginning of the creation of God": the faithful and true witness, the only real and permanent one, the head of the new creation; and, therefore, the one in whom alone there was deliverance from chaos. In Col. i. He is called "the first born of every creature," which expresses His title and pre-eminence. To Laodicea a like expression is made use of, but it is more a presentation of Himself as the last reserve, as men say. His own people had failed to witness for God on the earth, though thereby the Father would have been glorified, and now things on earth were about to be judged, and there still remained the true Noah—"the beginning of the creation of God." And though there had been loss all the way down, there was recovery in Him. All now reverts to Him; and anyone who would escape the evil influences in Laodicea must know themselves in spirit connected with Him in this peculiar aspect; nowhere else was there recovery. Still further,—His counsel to these overcomers is to *buy of Him* "gold tried in the fire," white raiment, eye-salve. I think "gold tried in the fire" is walking with Christ —to me to live is Christ—through the difficulties, association with Him in the trial; the felt expression of of His grace in the soul assured to it while breasting against the evil influences at work around. No one who is acquiring "gold tried in the fire," who is really spiritually exercised in the difficulties of the day, can

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have sympathy with the religious exultation of Laodicea. He finds his path daily more difficult and narrow; but, reverting to the faithful and true witness, he obtains succour from Him, and the empty profession of the day has no interest or attraction for him. Gold tried in fire,—grace known in trial, is the internal strength and power to rise above the evil influences; while the white raiment is the manifested power and walk of victory, and the eye-salve the word of God. No one would anoint his eye with eye-salve, unless he felt that he needed to improve his sight; and this is what souls most require, viz., the sense of how much they need the counsel and succour of the word to enable them to see their way through the present confusion. It is the only thing for faith to cling to, and it is in dependance on God's word because it *is* God's word, that the soul is strengthened in God, and not merely from the blessings which flow from keeping His word. The more the soul feels its journey to be a journey of faith, the more unceasingly will it seek the word as the trellis-work on which its faith may climb.

The faithful adherence to God's revelation is the great necessity and the only bulwark in the now existing state of things, when all is verging on the Laodicean state. The influences which, without let or hindrance will, when the Church is taken away, conform nominal Christianity into Babylon, are now in their elements working and seducing the unstable and the wilful into the circling power of that vortex. In proportion as man attempts, through progress in science or discovery, either to contravene or dispense with the revelation, he is deluded by a false light; but in proportion as I am guided by the true light held in faith, shall I be in the intelligence and power of that which will openly certify God's wisdom by-and-bye.

If I read Jude's epistle and the address to the church of Laodicea together, I see two evil influences at work, which must inevitably ensnare any soul not elevated to a sphere above them. The one is the improvement of the world materially, the other the extension of religion. Jude gives us the former, the address to Laodicea the

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latter. Under the head of material improvement I class all advancement of man in any form of development. The strides which this advancement has taken and is taking in the present day are almost fabulous. An artisan now is more advanced in comfort and information than was the highest peer two centuries ago. Is it any wonder that a man who has no region for practical citizenship, beyond the present, should be allured by an improvement so flattering to himself? Could Cain have believed in a curse while he sedulously gathered the fruits of the earth? And he gathered them for God too. Now this *last*, gathering the fruits of the earth for God, reaches out into the other evil influence set forth in Laodicea, by the extension of religion. Who by merely looking at the world in its present state, with all its advancement and religious extension, its prodigious circulation of Bibles, etc., could believe that it had suffered anything by the rejection of its true Lord? Let my eye, even as a Christian, have no range but earth, and I know not where my soul may be carried. I see rationalists giving importance to man's mind above the word of God, at least regarding the latter as only a by-way help and not as a guide; and this contributes to swell the sense of self-importance, which the education of the present day likes to produce, while the Popish element affords to man the feeling of being religious, which supplies all that is wanting for self-satisfaction. I believe that nothing but the heavenly portion of the Church, and practical association with her rejected Lord, now the only "faithful and true witness" for God, can possibly preserve the saints of God from these evil influences. It is true a godly soul, who feels the entire corruption of human nature, may be preserved in a measure; but it is wonderful how little the completeness of this corruption is believed in, in practice or sentiment, when the soul becomes occupied with *its* religiousness; and if with the religiousness, it sees how much man can effect,—there will be no check to its going in the way of Cain, Balaam, and Core. If I have a heavenly place, and find my existence above, I must necessarily be looking for the Lord to come and emancipate me bodily

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from the scene here. I cannot be practically heavenly without looking for the coming of the Lord; for, as heavenly I feel myself a stranger here, and there is no hope of full release for me until He comes.

It is a solemn and humbling thought that we have been entrusted with the truth which is alone effectual in delivering souls from the "hour of temptation," which is to come on all the "habitable world," and the elements of which are evidently now at work. I believe that all, whether young or old, who have drawn back from the responsibility which such truth claims from us, and have allowed their eyes to rest on earth, have been ensnared, possibly unknown to themselves, by these evil influences. In such cases there is, no doubt, where there is life, a relief for the conscience in the Laodicean prosperity, in which, while there is no testimony for God, salvation is, through mercy, granted to some, though the whole system is to be broken up and spued out of Christ's mouth as a worthless and evil thing. It is most important for us to understand our responsibility as to our testimony for God; but to retrograde is to take the direction of all this vortex of evil and delusion.

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Paul was a model man: a model-man—not of human perfectness, but of what divine grace and goodness could now make of a man who was led by the Spirit and walked with Christ.

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The word of God carries divine certainty inseparable from it. And yet there is uncertainty, divinely appointed to us, as to many things in it. The reality, which is certain, is ours; but our apprehensions are imperfect: we see through a glass darkly and not as yet face to face; we have not yet apprehended that for which we are apprehended.

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There is a difference between "law," the principle of law as a condition of blessing, and "the law," viz., that of Moses: the distinction often escapes us.



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# Nº. XVIII.

## NOTES OF READINGS OF EPISTLES.

### PETER I.

BEFORE we enter on the 1st Epistle of Peter, we will look for a moment at Peter himself. There is one very comforting thing to see, in looking at the Apostles: there were three classes among them;—those who were unnoticed but by name, as Thaddeus and Bartholomew; others who were occasionally named, and some who are always prominent, as Peter, James, and John. We find these distinctions still in the Church. We find some very active, and others coming only occasionally forward. Then there were other distinctions. Thomas was a very *reasoning* man ; Peter a very *uncalculating* man. Peter, again, was a very *social* man; John very *retiring*. It is very happy to find these modern distinctions in what passed under the eye of Christ.

Among the Apostles we get three very prominent persons; and, even among these three, we get Peter greatly distinguished. Peter was ecclesiastically the first, and as long as the apostleship was the apostleship of the twelve, he was the primate. *Now*, we have lost sight of the apostleship of the twelve and are under the irregular Gentile apostleship. And not only so, but Peter was brought into special exercises. He was separated by mistakes and by affection, and we find him distinguished by the Father and by Christ. "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but *my Father*." The rock of the Church was disclosed to Peter by *the Father*. Then he was distinguished by the *Lord* at the close. "Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have *you* that he may sift you as wheat, but I have prayed for *thee*." This is very striking. "And when thou art converted strengthen thy brethren." And now let me ask, did

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Peter fulfil this commission? He did, eminently. We see Peter, in the first twelve chapters of the Acts, strengthening the brethren, and feeding the sheep. In the opening of the Acts, he is the man in the gap, as we say. In chapter i. he shows the secret of the 109th Psalm. In chapter ii. he interprets the day of Pentecost for the strengthening of the brethren. In chapter iii. he stands in the face of Jewish persecutors; and so on to chapter xii. When we look at these things, there is something very comforting in them. If we see our brethren more signalised than ourselves let us rejoice. We see in the Lord's dealings with the Apostles, the same variety that we see among ourselves. Are there not social Peters among us, and retiring Johns? Thaddeus was as evangelically dear to Christ as John, but the Lord was training John for special service. But as to His love from everlasting to everlasting, it is a common affection, though in the midst of its commonness we find this beautiful variety. Peter gives place, when we find God about further to unfold His purposes. The Apostle of the flesh gives place to the Apostle of the glory. Those who say Peter was not the chief of the twelve, are ignorantly contending for a piece of protestant truth. But you and I are under a ministry that began from the glorification of the Son of Man (see Acts ix.)

Having said this, we will address OURSELVES to our chapter. The first twelve verses of chapter i. are the foundation of the epistle; because we enter then on hortatory matter at once. The Apostle addresses himself to *strangers*. Now the moment you get God looking at Israel as a *stranger*, you get everything on earth out of order. That is the secret of James's epistle. We get the twelve tribes exhorted to poverty and patience. If things were in order, the twelve tribes would be *at home*. Now things are out of order in the earth, and while they are so, the saints should be prepared for poverty and patience. And they should be prepared for heaven. Heavenly calling is a relief. It is *more* than a relief, because it is God's necessary way to bring a better thing out of a ruin; but it *is* a relief. Consequently Peter addresses us as having "an inheritance reserved *in heaven*."

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He is looking at strangership,—a terrible condition. Shall Israel be in Babylon and I not mourn? No, but God is working in grace all the time. All that the earth can give to the foot of the people of God, is a *travelling* place, the scene of wearied travelling pilgrims, looking for an inheritance reserved in heaven. And we see they are separated unto two things, obedience and the blood of sprinkling. Then he blesses the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has begotten us again "according to His abundant mercy." It is *abundant* mercy, because, let man fail as he may in the earth, mercy abounds over it all. We are glancing back here over man's constant failure, and looking for God to be weary. Is He wearied? No, by His abundant mercy, He is still at work, and He has now established a *lively* hope—a hope secured by the resurrection of Christ from the dead. It is not now the garden committed to Adam, the new world committed to Noah, or the land of Canaan committed to the Israelites. It is a *lively hope* through the Lord risen from the dead. God has now found eternal relief in Christ, and He invites you to partake in that relief. That is faith. *Christ* now has secured in heaven for you "an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away." A rich exposition of the divine mind Peter gives us here! His very *communications* are lively and abundant. Then he says, as the inheritance is kept for *you, you* are kept for *it*. It is now unrevealed—it is kept for you, and you are kept for it. Then he gives us an *individual* thing. The inheritance is a common property, there are no eldest sons in this family estate. But now he looks a little at individuals. "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." The trial of faith does not work the incorruptible inheritance; *Christ* worked *that*. The trial of faith works praise and glory. Let the dear martyr company go on to that! We must distinguish things that differ. We shall have an inheritance in common, and we shall rejoice to see the crown of glory that may never be on our own heads.

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Then He comes to look at us again in our *proper* place. Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of "your souls." You have got to the end of your *faith*, but not to the end of your *hope*. There are two salvations. The first is the end of your *faith*, you are at peace with God. The salvation which is the end of your *hope* is to be revealed in the day of His appearing. There is a salvation already accomplished, and a salvation about to be revealed.

Then he closes this beautiful preface by another wonderful communication—that the things of which we are talking have been the gaze of prophets and angels. We have been carried along in a current of most wonderful revelation. A travelling company of Gentiles are bound for glories, into which prophets have searched diligently, and angels have desired to look! Verse 12 closes the foundation of the Epistle.

Now if we were to read from chap. i. 13 to chap. ii. 3, that is the way I should separate it. Here the hortatory part begins. We have had the didactic teaching in the first twelve verses.

Peter is eminently a nourisher of *hope*. *Paul* establishes the conscience in peace and the certainty of faith. *Peter* opens to the eye of hope the glory to be revealed. Well, the girdle (ver. 13) suits a *hoper*, because the girdle is the symbol of the thing that denies present enjoyment. The girdle and the lamp are the symbols of an expectant. The girdle refuses to let the affections dally with present objects; the lamp signifies that I am a traveller along a dark road till the day dawn. So the first exhortation is, "gird up the loins of your mind." Do you and I daily do that business; or do we think we may let the eye and the thoughts and the imagination sport themselves as they please? I am sure I have no business to be a servant to my thoughts and imaginations. They may *surprise* us, but we are not to *serve* them. Then, "hope to the end." Not till to-morrow or the next day; but till the journey is over; because the object of hope lies the other side of the journey.

We are addressed here in three relationships. As children, as brethren, and as newly born. We are to be

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obedient as children (ver. 14). That refers to ver. 2, "*Sanctified unto obedience.*" The Holy Ghost has separated you to obedience, as well as to sprinkling, and what God has joined together, let no man put asunder. Consequently, in ver. 14, He addresses us in the character which He had attached to us in ver. 2—as "children of obedience," which is the force of the word in the original; a well-behaved family. "And, if ye call on the Father, etc., pass the time of your sojourning here in fear." In that fear which would become a child; walking in reverential love in his father's house.

As children, we are to walk as knowing we are under discipline; as brethren we are to love one another; and in our persons, as newly born, we are to lay aside those poisonous ingredients that would hinder the action of the unmixed milk of the word.

So we have had a preface and a first series of exhortations, and there we will stop. It is the first section of the Epistle.

## Chapter II.

We read to chap. ii. 3, and now if we go on to chap. iii. 9, I think we shall find there is a connection. There are two things here. It begins by a wondrous and beautiful piece of teaching, and, upon that, a very distinct exhortation. From ver. 1 to ver. 10, is a profound piece of teaching, that lets you into dispensational light, but it does not touch on what we have in the Ephesians, the elect *body*.

This mystery of the *stone* occupies the whole book of God. We find it in Genesis, the Psalms, the Prophets, the Evangelists, the Epistles, and the Apocalypse. A *mystery* is a divine revelation. I will just remind you of the passages. Jacob's words to Joseph, in Gen. xlix., begin this great subject. He says in a kind of parenthesis: "From thence is the Shepherd, the stone of Israel." The moment he was looking at the sorrows and glories of Joseph, the Holy Ghost takes him, in a kind of rapture, to look at Christ as reflected in Joseph. We see here the quarry out of which the stone was formed;

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the sorrows and glories of Joseph. This mighty rock was formed in the death and resurrection of Christ. The moment the Spirit touched on the story of Joseph, He thus glances forward to Christ.

In the Prophet Isaiah, we find the stone again taken up, "Behold I lay in Sion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation." There is no sure foundation that is not a *tried* stone. The true stone was tried to the uttermost, and glorified to the uttermost. When Isaiah takes Him up, he goes beyond; Jacob had spoken of Him as a *stone.* Isaiah tells you additionally that the tried stone is laid down as a foundation. Now what did Israel do with the stone. This tried stone was laid down as a foundation, and *they dis-allowed it.* This the Lord tells us in Matt. xxi. He is quoting Ps. cxviii. So the Psalmist tells me something of this wonderful stone. It was rejected by the builders; and the Lord quotes that, and says, "Here I am, and you have rejected me."

Then, what did God do with this dis-allowed stone? He took Him up and exalted Him to the highest heavens. That is the meaning of "the head-stone of the corner."

Psalm cxviii. anticipates this, and Peter speaks of it in Acts iv. And there we see the stone, at this very moment. How blessed and delightful an operation it is to be tracing out these things, picking up the mystery at these distant parts of the Book, bit by bit. And how wonderfully exact it is! God is not afraid of showing His perfect, blessed mind thus in parts. He is not afraid of making a mistake. If *I* taught in that way, how I should be looking back, to see that I had made no mistakes! But these scattered rays at last shine as the noon-day sun in glory and brightness. It is as if the Spirit had written a treatise on the very subject.

So we have travelled with the stone from the quarry where it was formed, in death and resurrection (it would never have been anything without that), till God takes up the rejected stone, setting Him in the highest place of dignity in heaven. And what is God doing with Him now? Having been rejected by Israel or Zion, He is offering Him *to all the world* as a stone of foundation.

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He is offered to you and me for life and salvation, and Peter comes to tell me what He will be to me if I receive Him. He tells me two things about myself. I shall become a *living* stone as He is, and a *precious* stone as He is. "Unto you who believe is the preciousness." He communicates his preciousness to us as well as His life. I become a living stone; but I become also a precious stone; and when we come to the Apocalypse, we find these precious stones glittering in the New Jerusalem. So I see Christ, first, formed in the quarry of death and resurrection; secondly, offered as a foundation; thirdly, rejected by Sion; fourthly, seated in the highest heaven by God; fifthly, offered for life and salvation to every poor sinner; and sixthly, what He will be to those who accept Him. He will impart His life and He will impart His glory. He will make them pearls, topazes, emeralds, &c. But now, what of those who still reject Him? He will fall from the elevation where He now is, and grind them to powder. The blessed God offers Him to sustain you for eternity. You say, "I will not have Him." Then He says, "You must meet me from my head of the corner-place, and I will grind you to powder." Then, this stone not only crushes the unbelieving sinner, but it smites the nations, as I read in Daniel. He will fall, in the day of wrath, on the whole image. This is national, not individual. Then this stone is to become a great mountain, and with its glory fill the whole earth. Now, what defect is there in the story? You carry it on from the quarry to its character of a mountain-kingdom to fill the whole earth; and you are carried along with it. Every individual has to do with the stone—in preciousness or in crushing. But now I must speak a little particularly of the chapter before us. The Peter of Matthew xvi. re-appears here. In Matthew xvi. he owned the person of the Lord Jesus. He was given of the Father to own Him as Head of Life. The moment Peter acknowledged Him thus, Christ said, "On this rock I will build my Church." Peter now, as it were, went beyond his Master. Christ did not say what He would do with His Church. Peter goes on to tell us that we are built up a spiritual house—

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a holy priesthood—"to offer up spiritual sacrifices." Is it not exquisite to see the Holy Ghost's light advancing on the teaching of the Lord Jesus? The time had not come when He was here for letting out all these divine secrets. "I have many things to say unto you; but ye cannot bear them now." Peter, by the Holy Ghost, advances beyond the Son's teaching, and tells us what He will do with His house.

There is another thing. We find that Peter stumbled in Matthew xvi. He made a beautiful confession; but he could not understand the disallowance. "They will cast me aside," said the Lord. "Oh, Lord, that be far from Thee. Would *we* allow them to do such a thing?" "Get thee behind me, Satan."

Now, that same Peter who, with decision and strength, denied that the Lord should ever be rejected, delights in the thought of the disallowed stone, and, with decision and strength, he takes Him up as such, and tells us that we shall never build on Him aright if we do not build on Him *as* a disallowed stone.

Peter addresses us in the beginning as strangers and pilgrims, and now, in the hortatory part, he cannot look at us in any character that he does not tell us to have a *subject spirit*. That is the very quality that suits strangers. If I am a king in my kingdom, I may exercise authority and dominion; but, if I am a cast-out stranger, the temper that suits me is a spirit of subjection all my life through. Put the stranger in company with what relationship you please, the Spirit of God expects this spirit of subjection, as James challenges a spirit of poverty and patience. How we mistake Christianity in its moral qualities! We play the hero when we should play the part of a girded servant. Christendom has mistaken Christianity; and I boldly say, if I do not understand dispensational truth, I shall never build aright on the foundation-stone. So here begins: "Abstain from fleshly lusts." Is not that a spirit of control? Then, "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man." Do not be talking of your rights. As one has said, "If you talk of your rights, I tell you your only right is to go to hell. Then, "as free," but not using your freedom



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for anything but service. How beautiful to see the free man bound as a servant! Then you are told to love the brethren. If you love another, will not you serve him? Then, "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow His steps, who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth; who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not." Is not all that a spirit of subjection—putting a rein on the ways and tendencies of nature? Then, "Ye wives be in subjection to your own husbands." "Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them, according to knowledge." The husband should be the bearer of light in the domestic circle. "Giving honour unto the wife." The husband is in the place of authority; yet he is to gird himself with this spirit, and to be the informing principle of the house. So, whatever the relationship we are in, this is the spirit He girds us with. Will that be the style when Christ is on the throne of glory? We may then ungird our loins and give loose to our affections; but now, in company with a rejected Christ, we are to behave ourselves in a holy spirit of restraint. "Finally, be ye all of one mind: love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous, not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing, but, contrariwise, blessing, knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing." That brings us to ver. 9 of chap. iii., and there we will leave it. The Lord give us light in these things! They are written for our learning. I would rather love Christ than know a great deal about Him. But it is beautiful to love Him in the light of His own mind—to *know* the person that we love.

## Chapter III.

We will read now from chap. iii. 10 to chap. iv. 11.

This Apostle is eminently carrying on the education of the saints. He does not take us as Paul does to heavenly places, and tell us to look around, and see the place in which God has put us; but he is educating the saints for their passage onwards, and charging them to exercise patience, wherever the pressure may come from. He

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opens the epistle by speaking of the *trial of their faith.* That is the general way in which trial comes. Then, in chap. ii. he begins to look at trial in the *details of life*, as in the case of servants with froward masters. In chap. iii. it is trial arising from righteousness, and in chap. iv. trial for the name of Christ. In chap. v. it is trial arising from the immediate pressure of Satan himself. So, from beginning to end, the Apostle keeps you in company with trials. He is educating a stranger people; and a stranger people passing through the earth should count on passing from wave to wave.

But there *is* a form of trial that we should *not* encounter. Did not Lot incur a trial in Sodom that Abraham could look down upon? Lot fell into trials that Abraham escaped, because Lot had his eye on Sodom; and the more you and I handle pitch the more we shall be defiled by it. He tells us to count on trial; but there *is* a trial we ought to escape. Do not suffer for anything morally wrong. There is a way in which we *may* love life, and that is by not making trouble for ourselves. Then he shows us that two things will attach to this way of loving life. The eyes of the Lord will be over us, His ears open to us; and no one will harm us. These two things will rest on us if we avoid these self-made trials.

In ver. 14 he looks on us as *asserting righteousness.* We ought to be both practising what is good and asserting righteousness. If you only practise what is good, you will get loved and respected in the world. Who is he that will harm you if you give all your goods in charity? But we must take care to be *righteous* as well as *good*—that is, we must stand in fidelity to Christ, and assert the rules of Christian righteousness as well as practise the ways of Christian goodness. The Spirit here tells that righteousness will provoke suffering. The moment we assert the peculiarities of Christianity, and stand apart for righteousness, we shall suffer.

Well, suppose you suffer, what are you to do? "Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts." Do not be troubled. It only presses you a little more closely into God's presence; and, forth from that sanctuary, be ready to come

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and give an answer to every man that asks you a reason of the hope that is in you. What an exquisite attitude for a saint of God to take! Pressure from around forces him into the sanctuary of the divine presence, and forth he comes in full peace of conscience to answer every man "with meekness and fear." Meek in carriage, giving respect to others, and carrying all through a good conscience before God.

"For *it is better*, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well-doing than for evil-doing." It is *well* to suffer for evil-doing. Do not you count it so? If you go astray, would not you rather God visited you than that He let it all pass? It is among our privileges that He should visit us for it, but it is *better* to suffer for *well*-doing. There is no honour if I suffer for evil-doing, though there may be healthful discipline; but in suffering for *well*-doing the spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. Then he brings forward the Lord Jesus, who is the grand prototype of suffering for well-doing. The first order and character of it is seen in Him, having this great purpose in His sufferings, "that He might bring us to God." "Being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit." He died in the flesh, as thoroughly as any of us, but He was quickened because of what He was in the spirit. And then the Apostle directs your attention to what He was doing of old in this resurrection-character. This glance back at Noah is exceedingly beautiful. Two things occupied Noah for 120 years. He was preaching to His fellow sinners, and, in his own person, he was getting everything ready to pass into the new world. Every knock of the hammer had that in it. Could anything be finer than to see a saint of God undistractedly going on with these two businesses? And it was the Spirit of Christ in Noah preaching righteousness. Noah in himself had no capacity. It was the Spirit of Christ that animated him, and he preached to the spirits in prison. It was an imprisoned generation—that is, it was *under sentence of death*, though the sentence was not executed for 120 years.

"The like figure whereunto, baptism, doth now save

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us." But there He checks. Baptism is a beautiful figure of death and resurrection; but here the Spirit puts in that check—"not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God." Now let me ask, have you been simply and undistractedly put into that secret,—"that the resurrection of Christ has given you an answer to God?" What was the resurrection of Christ? It was deliverance from death. Death is the wages of sin. Would death ever have been conquered if sin had not been put away? When the Lord Jesus Christ rose from the dead, He rose as a divine witness that sin was put away; and, if sin is put away, I have a good conscience. Does not guilt make cowards of us all? It is the very opposite of a good conscience. Now if I read in the resurrection of Christ that sin has been put away, I read in it my title to a good conscience before God. I can look up now without being abashed, in the blessed sense that God has settled every matter between Him and me. This is divinely magnificent, yet simple to the plainest understanding.

Then an uncommonly fine thought attaches to this. "Who is gone into heaven and is on the right hand of God, angels and principalities and powers being made subject unto Him." He has your conscience *there with* Him. He has not got your *person* there yet. Paul teaches me that I shall be there by-and-bye. Peter, in his more homely epistle, teaches me that everything that might startle me is rolling under my feet, and that my conscience is up in the highest heavens with Christ; and there I sit, smiling at every accuser, taking up the language of Romans viii.:—"Who shall condemn"—"who shall separate." Angels, principalities, and powers are rolling under. This is a state of *justification.* There will be a state of *glorification* by-and-bye. There is a moral glory in the gospel we know very little about. God comes, in the gospel of His grace, and answers the necessity of sinners. He will come, by-and-bye, in the kingdom of His glory, to answer the expectation of saints.

Now we come, in chap. iv., to another form of trial,

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the trial of *holiness*. "Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind," etc. *There* is a cultivation of holiness. And do not we all know what it is to contend with our lusts and vanities, and the spirit of this carnal world? We could not be saints of God if we were not conscious of the battle. It is a trial within,—a trial that everyone knows for himself. "For the time past may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles"—he is talking in Jewish language here a bit. "Who shall give account to Him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead." Nothing is indifferent to God. You may say, "it is over and gone." There is nothing that is over and gone. There is not a scintilla of moral activity that God *as a Judge* will look over. He is perfect in every glory that attaches to Him—perfect as a *Saviour*—perfect as a *Judge*.

"For this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit." We ought to let the flesh know, as we go along, that it is a doomed thing already.

"And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins." James uses that word, "hide a multitude of sins," in connection with justification. Preaching and restoring of souls hides a multitude of sins *from God*, and you and I should so walk, one with another, that charity should do the same office *between us*.

Then he goes on still to keep us in the place of service. "Use hospitality one to another without grudging," and it should be used in a spirit of service. A great deal of hospitality is the hospitality of vanity. It ought to be used in the spirit of those that cordially wish well one to another.

Then be a servant in your *gifts*. The Corinthians were making a display of their gifts. Many of us (as I remember one sister used to say) array ourselves and adorn ourselves in the gifts of God. How pure and searching the word is! It is "gold, seven times tried." Things sometimes may look very like one another to us, but try them by the seven times refined gold!

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"If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God." I believe there ought to be the authority of an oracle. What was an oracle? It was a mere voice. "The *voice* of one crying in the wilderness." An oracle is the mere utterance of the mind of God. "If any man ministers let him do it as of the ability that God giveth, that *God* in all things may be glorified, through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." He could not let the Lord Jesus pass as a medium, without giving Him His full divine honours. He is the *channel* to bring down every blessing to us; and He is also the *source*, from which all blessings flow; and when the Apostle mentions Him as the channel, he ascribes to Him His divine glory. And there he pauses for a moment.

What moral glory attaches to us in our calling! When we think of it we may well cry, "Ah, my leanness, my leanness, the treacherous dealers have dealt very treacherously."

## Chapter v.

We have reached chap. iv. 12, so we will read from that to the end. This Epistle we find, maintains its own character to the very end, and as we have said, it is the Epistle of the *girdle* and the *lamp*, and, we may add to these, of the *furnace*, that being the symbol for trial; as the girdle is for holy self-government, and the lamp for hope.

When we come to look at the furnace, we get it in very large detail. In chap. i., it is shown you in the *general* way, "The trial of your faith;" but when he goes on, he shows you the *peculiar* heat of the furnace from day to day. In chap. iv., he shows us a heating of the furnace by martyrdom, and in the last chapter, by the direct assaults of Satan himself. It is very important to see what the Spirit is about here and there. When a writer shows me that he keeps his original intent in view, and is true to it from beginning to end, I say that man's heart is in his subject. In this Epistle it is eminently so. If we come to read the second Epistle,

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we shall not find anything of the kind as we have here. It is not a time of *suffering*, but a time of *seduction*, so that while the Spirit is true to His object, His subject may be very different at different times.

Now we see in chap. iv. 12, we are in the furnace as heated by the fires of *martyrdom*, not by the maintenance of integrity or holiness, but by direct putting to trial as the test of faithfulness to Christ. Then, "Count it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you." I have often said that a saint does not die a natural death, if he dies in his bed; because the saint is to be an unresisting witness against the world, and do you think the world will be insulted without resenting it? If we properly behaved ourselves as saints, we should die at the stake. "If any man *will live godly*"—not if any man is a saint, but "if any man *will live godly*—in Christ Jesus, he must suffer persecution;" that is, if a saint will behave as a saint *ought* to behave. Therefore the Spirit says, "Do not count the fiery trial *strange*." No, indeed, I may be very little prepared for it, but I do not count it *strange*. Pray what was the death of the Lord? He was a *martyr* as well as a *victim*. The world that crucified Him knew nothing of His victim character. They put Him to death just because they hated Him, and in that martyr character of the Cross it is that Paul gloried. "We preach Christ crucified." I believe he meant the Cross fully understood, as the place where the *martyr* bled, and where the *victim* bled. Are you prepared to glory in the Cross as the place of rejection? Paul had communion with the Cross, as one in companionship with the *rejected* Christ. We want to have communion with it as those whose sins have been blotted out and as those who are the companions of a rejected Christ.

Then we have spoken, again and again, of that which is *common* and that which is *peculiar* in Scripture. For instance—the glorification of the body is common property to me, and to all who are in Christ. Yet the New Testament abundantly tells us of that which is peculiar. We get it in Peter's 2nd Epistle, where he speaks of the "abundant entrance." Do you think that *that* is common property? So here. "That when His glory shal

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be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy." This is a thing peculiar to those who have known the fiery trial. What poor things we are! How little divine ambition we have! Will not it be something to rejoice before Him by-and-bye with exceeding joy? No, it is not common; *entrance* is common, but *abundant* entrance is not common.

So in the next, "The Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you." If at any time we suffer reproach for Christ, suppose we were just by a simple act of faith to say, "Is God now impressing on me some pledge of the coming glory?" These things stand out before us as living realities; should we read them as the flat page of the book?

Then in ver. 15, he shows out what we saw before in chap. iii., after speaking of the dignity and glory attaching to certain kinds of trouble. Now, he says, "Do not suffer as an evil doer." We instanced Lot as having made trouble for himself. Do let us encourage one another to avoid self-wrought sorrow.

Then he enters on a very serious matter; judgment beginning at the house of God; and he asks, "What then shall the end be of those that obey not the Gospel of God?" This proves to me very much that the spirit of Peter was impregnated by Jewish associations. If you read the prophets you will find that God deals in that way. He begins His judgments with Israel for purifying; and ends with the Gentiles for destruction. "Though I make an end of all nations, yet not of you;" and again in Jer. xxv., where the prophet says, "I begin to bring evil on the city which is called by my name, and shall ye be utterly unpunished?" That is judgment beginning at the house of God, and here the Spirit turns round and applies it to you. So Peter's mind was eminently formed on a Jewish model. Well, it passes on to us, and I am perfectly sure that many a child of God as soon as he is quickened, finds the hand of God dealing with him in a way it never was before. "For if the righteous scarcely" or *with difficulty* (that is through these purifying judgments), "be saved"—therefore, the beautiful close is, "Commit the keeping of

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their souls to Him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator." As much as to say, Do you believe, that God has re-created you for final destruction? No; but He purifies the vessels He has formed for Himself. That word "Creator," there, is very beautiful. What were you created in Christ Jesus for? You were created for final glory. Though the vessel may pass through the potter's hand in a certain skilful way, that which his hand was dealing roughly with in forming, the potter's eye will rest on by-and-bye with satisfaction and delight.

Well, he tells the Elders to feed the flock of God. This is the first business of an Elder. The combination here is beautiful. When a teacher can stand out as a witness of the suffering of Christ, that is to be an Elder indeed. "Not for filthy lucre—neither as being lords over God's heritage." The Spirit of God has no eye for such nobility. There is no more attraction to Him in it, than in the seeker for filthy lucre. The two-edged sword does not spare corruption. And would you have your corruptions spared? Do not you rather say, "Make enquiry between joint and marrow, search me and try me." I do not understand a saint of God wishing to have his corruptions spared. Then there is something *peculiar,* "Ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away." There is nothing more fruitful than to be looking into the world of glories. If now we want intimacy with the Lord Himself, we want next to that, intimacy with His home. If we love a person, he himself is our first thought; our next is the things that surround him.

Then he comes to the girdle again in ver. 5; "Likewise ye younger submit yourselves unto the elder; *yea, all of you* be subject one to another." He will have the girdle on *every one.* The flight his spirit takes here is beautiful. He could not be satisfied with telling only the *younger* to submit themselves; "*Yea, all* of you put it on."

Then in ver. 6 there is another form of humbling. We are not merely to humble ourselves to one another, but to humble ourselves "under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time; casting all

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your care upon Him for He careth for you." That reminds me of Joseph. He treated his brethren roughly enough; he kept them in hold for a day and a night. Yet all the time his heart was yearning over them and taking a very different direction from what his hand was doing. So God has a mighty hand which seems to be pressing you, but all the time His heart is making your sorrow its care. And there is the deepest consistency in a mighty hand working in company with a careful heart.

Verse 8 opens the furnace for the last time. There it is heated by the devil, who "as a roaring lion walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." What are you to do with this? Be sober, be vigilant, resist the devil, take (as Paul tells you) the shield of faith to quench these fiery darts, that come at times we know not from where. Hold up the shield of faith. As that fine hymn says, "What though the accuser roar of ills that I have done;" and then the answer, "I know them all and thousands more, Jehovah findeth none." Then he beautifully closes. "The God of all grace, who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you." The doubt here attaches not to God being the God of all grace, or to His having called us to eternal glory, but to the strengthening. He prays that we may have grace so to use the furnace, that we may find it strengthening. That God is a God of all grace is an eternal verity; and that He has called us to eternal glory. But there is a condition attached to this; whether by being thrown into the furnace, we shall come out perfected, stablished, strengthened.

"By Silvanus, a faithful brother unto you as I suppose." Silvanus was a constant companion of Paul. "Paul and Silvanus and Timotheus unto the Church," etc. Peter does not pretend to know more of him than he does; and he speaks of him, not at all in the way Paul would, who knew him better.

"The thing in Babylon." What! is it possible that Peter, who represented the circumcision, can for a single moment strike alliance with Babylon, the sworn enemy

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of Jerusalem. Ah! this is the true grace in which we stand. For this age Jerusalem has lost its sanctity and Babylon has lost its apostacy.

Then he says: "Greet ye one another with a kiss of charity. Peace be with you all that are in Christ Jesus. Amen."

It is a deep and precious Epistle, true to itself, keeping constantly before our souls the furnace, the girdle, and the lamp. Ah! we are rebuked. The Lord teach us, strengthen us, and help us to get a little bit outside the camp, and blessedly, sweetly, inside the vail! Amen.

## 2 PETER.

### CHAP I.

THE second epistle of Peter takes us into a different character of truth from the first. Of the first the symbols were, the lamp, the girdle, and the furnace. In this we have (ch. i.) the husbandry which is to be our security against corruption; then (ch. ii.) the corruptions unfolded; and finally (ch. iii.) the judgments which follow and the glory. We live in the midst of the second chapter. If there are different forms of glory, so there are different forms of corruption, and they fill the present world. That is what is anticipated here, and the story of Christendom has verified it all.

We shall find the structure of this epistle to be less *evangelic* than *moral* and *prophetic*, as in verse 3, "According as His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain to life and *godliness*, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us unto *glory* and *virtue*." Observe, also, that the *promises* in verse 4 are the occasion, not of *gladness* but of *purification*. Thus does the Spirit keep Himself true to His purpose.

"Exceeding great and precious promises, that *by these* ye might be partakers of the divine nature." See what beautiful instruments God is using to fashion you to His hand! "Divine nature" *here* is the *moral* nature of God. If He puts us down to our husbandry, it is not

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at our own charges. (Ver. 8) "If *these things*," etc., that is, these features of godliness ; and mark what they are. You need not go to the end of the world to be fruitful to Christ. (Ver. 9) "But he that lacketh these things," etc. If he is feeble in present things, he has neither an *eye* to apprehend the coming glory, nor the *memory* of what Christ has done for him. The whole moral man has his strength reduced.

(Ver. 10). "Give diligence to make your calling and election *sure*." In other words, "If our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God." "*Sure*," not abstractedly; the Book of Life has done that. "If ye do these things ye shall never *fail*" or trip; but, instead, an *abundant* entrance shall be ministered. An abundant entrance is not the common property of all saints. The Spirit links it with the cultivation of "these things." An abundant entrance I believe to be a *natural* entrance. The more the journey savours of the *end* of the journey, the more easy and natural the entrance on the glory will be. The world to come has many characters. If on the way to it, *as the Father's house*, we are not cultivating *brotherly* love, is that the way to get an abundant entrance into it? Would not those that I should find there be moral strangers to me? *Rest* is another character. The moment I say "there *remaineth* a rest," I am not consistent if I take my rest *now*. Do not let me talk of *future* rest, if I am enjoying *present* rest. Again, it is a place of *purity*, and if I am careless about the cultivation of purity on the road, am I in moral company with the glory I am looking for, and can I expect an "abundant entrance" into it? Let us see to it that we are cherishing those things that have a welcome for Himself.

(Ver. 16). Now he opens the distant view. "Eye-witness of His *magnificence*" it should rather be. "Majesty belongs to Christ as Son of David. What was seen on the holy mount was more than this. It was *heavenly* majesty.

(Ver. 18). Observe in this word "*holy*," how the purpose of the Spirit breaks out. Naturally it would have been called the *glorious* mount, but His business here was to

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keep the thoughts of the saints in company with that which was to be their security against the corruptions which He was about to unfold. So (ver. 21) "*Holy* men of old."

(Ver. 19). "More sure" may mean as in contrast with the vision. "Till the day dawn"—till all struggles between light and darkness be over, and prophecy gives place to that which shall be its fulfilment. Some take this as an intimation of the gospel which Paul was to bring in.

## Chapters II. and III.

That which we get in the foreground of these chapters is corruption. In the middle we have the judgments which are to clear the scene, and the kingdom that is to succeed shines in the distance. Because God is holy, judgment must come after corruption; and because He is God, glory must follow the judgment. If we doubt this necessity, we have not, as Paul speaks in 1 Cor. xv. "the knowledge of God." The corruption that is to fill Christendom is not doctrinal merely. In Galatians the Apostle lifts up a standard against doctrinal corruption; but that would not *dispose* of the history of Christendom. Here we have apostacy from the *godliness* of the truth. The *promises* of Scripture have reared one class of watch-towers, and the *admonitions* have erected another. We must build various watch-towers, and plant ourselves on each of them.

The most prevalent form of corruption in these days is moral relaxation: "turning the grace of God into lasciviousness." We do not read here of a denial of grace, or of the value of the blood, but of the *lordship* of Christ (v. 1), as though it were not fitting that those who have refuged in Him as *Saviour* should bow down to Him as *Lord!* There is a character in these days which should put us all on the watch-towers that Peter builds for us. We see terms made with the flesh, vanities, covetousness, and the various spirits of the world; corruption intruding into the place of holiness. "They promise them liberty." Aye, and the liberty of the gospel,

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too! But am I to be the servant of my eye, my imagination, my covetous nature? Do we not know that we have a *present* Christendom before us, when we read the 2nd of Peter? It has been remarked from a comparison of the Romans i. and the 2nd Epistle of Timothy, that the same pollutions attach to corrupt Christianity as to heathenism.

"For, if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world" (*i. e.*, escaped from heathenism into Christianity) "through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour" (*i. e.*, through *the Christendom knowledge*)—the 22nd verse showing that the *nature* (dog and sow, *not sheep*) was still unchanged.

The opening of chap. iii. sets down the saints to the cultivation of their *pure* minds—the *new*, not the *old* nature. There was plenty abroad to stir up the *im*pure mind; so he would put remembrances before them.

Scoffers should come, wise in their own conceits, their own wisdom, and conclusions—taking their own analogies. "Since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." Why should any interruption be looked for? All is simple cause and effect. For this they willingly are ignorant of—that God interferes *how* and *when* He pleases; that, *by the word of God*, first came the flood, and, secondly, "By the *same* word" the world is "reserved unto fire."

When we look at things, are we in company with God's word or with our own wisdom? "But, beloved, be not ignorant," etc. We ought to know how to interpret the long-suffering of God. (Long-suffering is patience under injuries.) The delay is not indifference. How beautifully He puts out human thoughts, and brings in divine! It is not slackness; it is long suffering—it is grace. He is not imputing trespasses to the world, in order that this aspect of Him may lead sinners to repentance. Grace is gratifying itself now. Amid all the expressions of what God is, the Cross is the greatest. *Love* gratified; *righteousness* satisfied.

(Ver. 10). "But the day of the Lord will come"—as the great surpriser. "The *coming* of the Lord" is as a

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*bridegroom.* "The *day* of the Lord" is as a *thief.* As a bridegroom He will come to the Church; as a thief He will come to the world. These are the correspondencies. Could the cry of "Come, Lord Jesus," be answered as by the coming of a thief in the night?

(Vers. 11 and 14). Two things are looked at here: the dissolving of the present world, and the coming in of the new world. And we are to be looking for and hasting unto the day that is to consummate this—the glory that is to be, the eternity of God and us.

## Epistle of Jude.

If we travel on in the line of light that God has cast up for us in Scripture, we shall see the fitness of the arrangement by which Jude lies on the threshold of the Apocalypse—that is, as we have said before, judgment must follow corruption.

The Evangelists give us the foundation of everything. The Epistles give us Christian education—education carried on not under law, but under grace; the unfolding of grace being the great instrument used for this purpose.

Further on, as in Peter, and especially in Jude, we get notices of how Christendom will treat this grace. Judgment follows, and then glory. If we look back to the history of the Jews, we shall find it an introduction to what we get here. Apostacy, from one thing after another, characterises it all through, let God change His hand as He may. He pleads "I have risen up early"; all is failure, corruption, and departure.

There is profit in seeing this, because we thus get to see what *we* are. In the face of all this, the Son is sent from the bosom of the Father; and apostacy from grace has followed *it.* But we have not done here. Revelation xx. tells us there will be apostacy from glory. The Amalek of Exodus xvii. prepares me for this last apostacy. I find there the cloudy glory hovering over the ransomed of the Lord, and Amalek is infidel enough to come out and defy it by drawing the sword against them.

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Let us now examine the Epistle somewhat more in detail.

(Ver. 1.) Jude, whose surname was Thaddæus (Matt. x. 3), is the Judas spoken of by Luke (Acts i. 13). He was one of the twelve, and both he and James were cousins of the Lord, called also His brothers. We find nothing of all this here. Jude simply takes his place as "servant"; for, "though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him no more."

(Ver. 2.) "To them that are *sanctified* and *preserved.*" If it were not for this, they would be swept into the corruptions which now abound on all sides.

(Ver. 3.) He is not, so to speak, at his natural work here—*i. e.*, writing "of the common salvation." He has to turn *aside* and contend not for the *Evangelic*, but for the *holy* character of the faith.

(Ver. 4.) In Peter we find the Spirit anticipating and forewarning, "There *shall* be false teachers," etc. Jude now tells us that they "*are* . . . crept in," and are at their wretched work, talking loudly of grace, and yet practising evil. "Ordained" here is forewritten — *i. e.*, they read their histories in those of these fallen angels.

Vers. 5, 6, and 7 give samples of the judgments that will overtake Christendom.

(Ver. 8.) Demagogues in every age have illustrated what we get here. These deny the authority of Him by whom they profess to have been saved. You ought to write the lordship of Christ upon your eye, your ear, your thought, your everything.

(Ver. 10.) Would you have thought it possible to know the Gospel as a brute beast? That is what we get here: know in a merely natural way; know, but not in the conscience, not in broken affections, not in the moral power of the soul. All this should put us upon a sensitive and jealous watch-tower; we should be stirred up to consider *how* we handle the Gospel.

(Ver. 11.) We get here the three grand moral stages of Christendom: Romish times, Protestant times, and the infidelity which is to mark the last days.

Protestantism has light; so had Balaam. Balaam loved and clung to the very world the judgment of



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which he was prophesying. Core gainsayed divine right in the person of Moses.

(Vers. 12 and 13.) "Clouds," "trees," "waves," "stars," are all figures that mark apostasy from Christianity—corruption found in the place where fruit *ought* to be found.

(Ver. 14.) In beautiful moral fitness Enoch is brought in here.

(Ver. 20.) "*Holy* faith." Jude stands for its holiness, as Paul would have stood for its Evangelic simplicity.

(Ver. 21.) Is God's love to you a thing taken up and laid down at pleasure? Is it so with yourself? Would failure in your child touch your personal love to him? It would touch your complacential love; but your personal love—*never*. The ways of God with us are *real* ways.

"Looking for the *mercy* of our Lord Jesus Christ." When Jude is looking at the corruption that is to set in, he can but speak of preservation from it—the not being borne away on its strong currents—as a special *mercy*.

(Ver. 22.) "Of some have compassion making a difference"; for they are rather the captives than the captors, as Paul speaks in Galatians, "There be some that trouble you"; and, again, "He that troubleth you shall bear his judgment, whosoever he be."

(Ver. 23.) Take care that you keep yourselves free from the evil that you are meddling with.

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What a great and wonderful thing it is to be a full Christian! A half Christian is in no wise interesting or magnificent, which a full Christian is. What a wonderful thing, to walk about the world feeling that you are an object with God!

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Christ, the golden key that opens the way from God even the Father to sinful man—Christ, the key that opens the hearts of sinners to God and His Father—Christ, the key that opens death and the grave, the prison where Satan keeps his prisoners—Christ, who changes all the sorrows and fears of those that serve Him to peace and cheerful courage while they follow Him.

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# N°. XIX.

## THE INTERCESSION OF CHRIST.

SOME obscurity seems to hang over the doctrine of Christ's intercession in the minds of some saints, which I feel it would be profitable to seek to dispel.

Some, and it is a common case, put it in the wrong place, viz., as the means of obtaining righteousness and peace, and thus enfeeble (and that because they are ignorant of) the true character of redemption: others, seeing that this is perfect and complete, set intercession aside as incompatible with that perfectness, as if it enfeebled or denied it.

Both are wrong, and both mistake the nature of Christ's intercession. Christ's intercession is not the means of obtaining righteousness and peace. It is mischievous to use it to this end; and it does, so used, hinder the apprehension of our being made the righteousness of God in Christ. It is mischievous, too, to deny its use when we do know Christ as our perfect righteousness; the doing so makes that righteousness to be a cold and heartless security, destroying the deep and softening sense of His constant love to us and our dependance on the daily exercise of that love.

The former class, not assured of God's perfect love in righteousness, go to Christ to get Him to undertake their cause and go to God for them, and, so to speak, settle matters. They really, though they would not say so, see love in Christ and judgment in God; and go to Christ to move God to compassion, mercy and forgiveness. It is very natural we should go through this state, particularly with the current teaching; but it is not really Christian ground. God's love is the source of all our blessings and of the hopes of our salvation; and that love is fully exercised in righteousness, because of Christ's work and glorifying of God. Grace reigns through righteousness; we are the righteousness of God in Christ;

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*we* could not go to God, the very contrary of what Christianity teaches. But it is none of these. We go boldly to God, because Christ is there as our high priest. We have no thought of imputation, but our being the righteousness of God in Him does not make us slight our inconsistencies in the path in which we walk. He takes notice of them and is our advocate in virtue of being the righteous one and a propitiation for us. Thus the personal sense of fault is maintained, enhancing, not enfeebling the sense of grace; and yet our acceptance in righteousness is never touched so as to put us back under law or bring divine righteousness ever into question, or cause our conscious relationship to God to be ever at all weakened. All passes on the ground of these. Yet the holiness of God is kept fully up as regards our conduct, and a full spirit of confession maintained when we fail; our inward estimate of good and evil is kept alive and in growth without a particle of servile fear; and blessed confidence maintained in this very respect. I have already noticed the difference between the advocacy in respect of restoration and communion with the Father, and the approach to God, and help in our infirmities as men. But on the ground and nature of their exercise they are the same, founded on assumed relationship in righteousness and applicable to our walk in weakness here, when in that. If John shews us the advocate with the Father when we have sinned, the Hebrews presents us with one who can sympathise with all our infirmities, can be touched with the feeling of them, though now all power is His in heaven and on earth. He is constantly occupied with our case and state. Hence not only holy judgment of sin is maintained, yet the sense of grace is intact, but confidence in unwearied love which has made itself like its brethren in all things, to be a merciful and faithful high priest. Thus the gracious affections of dependence and confidence are maintained and cultivated; and that not as if we went to the priest in a difficulty, ran off to get help, but in the free blessed care-taking activity of His own love. It is not that He relents when we turn in due humiliation; right feeling is *the fruit* of His blessed activity in grace.

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I know not that I need add more. My object was not to expatiate on this grace and the fruits of it in us, but to give the scriptural place of priesthood and advocacy, as founded on the establishment of divine righteousness and the accomplishment of propitiation, and the place we have before God by it,—not clouding this, but founded on it, and applying itself to reconcile our actual weakness and failure here below with that place, so that neither it should be uncertain in grace, nor any inconsistency with it be borne, though nothing can be imputed, and instead of a cold and heartless certainty of being safe, dependence, confidence, and affection, united to security in Him who is the object of them, till we come where it is no more needed.

I. N. D.

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"Tell —— that I often pray for him. Tell him the Lord has *a crown* in reserve for him, let man and Satan strive as they may":

The Lord will not retreat,
  Nor change His glorious plan,
Though all the devils meet
  To aid rebellious man;

When once His word is passed,
  When He hath said "I will":
That thing shall come at last,
  God keeps His promise still.

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"The world" (says H.) "is passing away before our eyes. *To-day* will soon be *yesterday*,—*to-morrow* will as soon be *to-day*. We always remember the past, but FEEL the present; yet a little while, and the life to come will be *felt*, and the past only *remembered*."

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## N°. XX.

## THE FATHER'S HOUSE.[a]

A COMPARATIVE view of the preaching at Thessalonica first, and then of the Epistles to that Church afterwards, is very interesting. The Apostle first, in his preaching, testified to the Jews that their Messiah or Christ was to have been a *sufferer*, just such as Jesus was (Acts xvii. 3). This was a prime matter, and before which nothing could really be done. Having established this, he also asserted, that this suffering Christ or Jesus was also a King (Acts xvii. 7). The Jewish scriptures called for this, as well as for the other; but by these two testimonies, the whole Jewish expectation of Messiah, as founded upon the Prophets, would have been answered.

But another thing which had remained hidden from ages, was now to be manifested, and that is the interval between the suffering and the kingdom of the Messiah. The Jewish Prophets had not looked at that interval, or told us how it was to be filled up, but this we get in the Epistles. The preaching at Thessalonica had asserted,

1st, The suffering of Christ;—and 2ndly, The Kingdom of Christ.

In the Epistles we get the interval between these things supplied, for here we are told that after the sufferings, the Christ returned to heaven, and the saints are to wait on earth till He come back again from heaven. These three distinct actions will take place.

1st. The saints will meet him in the air (1 Thes. iv. 16).

2ndly. They will then be presented to the Father (1 Thes. iii. 13).

3rdly. Afterwards they will return to the earth with the Lord as children of the day (1 Thes. v. 5). The result of these three actions will be the kingdom in which Christ

[a] This is from a paper circulated in MS. more than one and twenty years ago. It is evidently from the very pen itself of an honoured brother (I. G. B.) now gone on high.—EDITOR.

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will be glorified in His saints (2 Thes. i. 10), of which the Prophet spake, and which Paul preached at Thessalonica. Thus the preaching and the writing together give us a blessed view of the Christ of God, and His heavenly saints. The place of Israel in the kingdom is not filled out here, for his writing as an Apostle of the Church, and not as a prophet of Israel, did not call for such details. Israel's place in the kingdom we have in such Scriptures as Isaiah lx.

Our immediate and personal interest lies in the way in which the interval is supplied. And it is supplied by our sojourn on earth, and consequently sorrow during our Lord's absence. And when He leaves His present place in heaven, it will be to meet us in the air (1 Thes. iv. 16, 17).

Having accomplished this, He will then present us to the Father. Now this presentation is the most blessed of all, and is that of which John's Gospel especially treats. It treats of it in the way of promise (chap. xiv. 1), and in the way of sample or pledge (chap. xxi. 19). That Gospel leaves us in the *Father's House*, telling us of *Mansions there,* and only in a faint and distant manner looks forward to the glory of the Son in the kingdom over the earth. But the glory of the kingdom is for us as well as the joys of home. The Book of Revelation (in its turn) tells of that,—tells us of the day of the Lord,—of the coming forth from the presence of the Father where the saints had been presented unblemished, to return with the Lord to the earth, in the day of the Lord.

That action (the coming of the Lord) will commence in judgment, and close in the glory of the kingdom. The breaking of the day will surprise the sleepers and the drunkards,—the people of the world—who have fellowship with the night and its darkness (1 Thes. v. 3-7). It will overtake and lay hold on them as a thief in the night. The great object upon which it will rush (the carcase of the eagle) will be the *man of sin,* and those who have pleasure in unrighteousness (2 Thes. ii. 8, 12). But the saints will be of the day. They will form the atmosphere (as one has expressed it) that will surround

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the rising sun, the very rays or wings (as Malachi speaks) of the Sun of righteousness in that morning. They will be in the sphere out of which this rising sun is to rise (1 Thes. v. 5).

There will, it is true, be a remnant of Israel on whom that sun is to arise in blessing, while it rises on the nation in wrath, because that day will discern between the righteous and the wicked, and be a burning sun to the one, and a healing sun to the other (Malachi iii. iv.).

The saints will have previously met the Lord in the air, so as to form with him the atmosphere, or the power of the coming day. They will have been previously presented without spot, and will then come forth as assessors with the Lord in the judgment of evil and darkness. It is of this action the Book of Revelation treats. It does not exhibit the presenting of the Church to the Father. The Gospel of John had promised that and shewn it in a sweet action at the close, but the Book of Revelation takes no notice of it. The rapture into the air takes place I believe, between the 3rd and 4th chapters of Revelation; that is, after the Lord's government of the Churches had been shewn (i. to iii.), and before He prepares to return to the earth (iv. to the xxii. Rev.).

You see the Church in heaven in chapters iv. and v. but it is not altogether in the repose of the Father's House that you see the saints in these chapters, but in such an attitude and with such words on their lips as indicate that preparation was making for the great action which is to vindicate Christ's title to the kingdom, and the consequent revelation of His saints in the glory of their royal Priesthood on earth. According to this foreshewing or introduction, you get in the book a series of judgments and a display of action (whatever it may be in detail) that clearly has this in view. The preparing and setting up of the Lord's glory, or the revelation of Golden City. All this shews two things:—The Father's House, and the Golden City; or, in the language of the Apostle to the Thessalonians, "the coming" and "the day" of the Lord. When the Lord went up from the grave He made two stages: He stopped on earth, and

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then after forty days ascended into heaven. He will come also into the air, and there meeting his saints present them to the Father, and then after an interval (the measure of which is not defined) He will come down to the earth.

The first of these movements is called "*the coming*," the second is called "the day" of the Lord, in these Epistles. We read of children, then heirs. How suitable is it then, that our adoption (which we have now in spirit) should be fully and formally owned, by our being presented to the Father before we come to take the inheritance. The coming of the Lord, according to this, is to usher us into the presence of the Father. The day of the Lord is to prepare for us the inheritance of His children; we are children first, and then heirs, and the Golden City is the place of heirs, the place of the glory where the power that is to rule the kingdom is lodged. We travel from the Father's House to the Golden City, not that we lose the comfort of home when we take our place in the City, but this is the formal distinction. We may bring with us all the bliss, the personal satisfaction of the many mansions in the Father's House, but still the Golden City is the place more formally of heirs of the inheritance, of the power of the kingdom, than of the children of the Father.

The Gospel by John is the Gospel of the family—the Revelation by John the Gospel of the inheritance. The Gospel tells us of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, and of our blessed standing as children in the knowledge of the Father, and the Son, through the Holy Ghost, and it trains us for fellowship with them in the gladness and confidence of children. It leads us in spirit up to the Father's House; that is our personal satisfaction—the bliss of our hearts.

The Revelation tells us of the glory and the kingdom, displaying the solemn judgment of the world, which must precede it, and then the brightness of the day that shall know no cloud; that is our official dignity, the honours that are to hang around us.

And both are ours, the hidden bliss of the heart, and the manifested insignia of honour and praise; that we may

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know how divine love can withhold nothing from the sinner that will trust it.

I might add from all this, that it is the *order of the events* which lead to the glory that we have especially in these Epistles,* while it is the *character of the glory* we have in the Epistle to the Ephesians; that is, therefore, a writing of still deeper import, though these Epistles fill a place of all but equal interest and value to the Church.

* I apprehend he means the Epistles to the Thessalonians, and here marks the characteristic difference between them and the Epistle to the Ephesians.

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## FRAGMENTS.

The Scriptures present to us *God's mind.* In our reading them, God is, in a sense, speaking to us. This is in itself a higher order of things than our speaking to God, which is prayer.

How, after a long stream of prayer, have I sometimes longed for the Word as a *descending* current, pure as the source whence it comes down. For I have felt exhausted and too much in my own circumstances, like a silk-worm from which the silken thread was drawn, drawn, drawn out, until I was left but a chrysalis enveloped in a ball of my own silk.

—— Says his thoughts of prayer are pictured by the scent and mist, which in summer time, rise from the sun-parched earth after a heavy rain :—earth, allegiant, giving back to heaven the moisture of day rain or of night dew.

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If some have an ardour and a devotedness which I could covet, it may be that the seriousness and greater coldness of my mind may be used for good to detect what the ardour of others may pass by unobserved.

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We are not given sorrow for sorrow's sake; but if it is sorrow for the sake of association with Christ is not that blessed? Is it not an honour?

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"Murmur not as some murmured." Discontent is alien from God. Murmurs, discontent, temper—are of the fumes of the bottomless pit.

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## No. XXI.

## THE GRAVE-CLOTHES.

John xx. 1—10.

### Mary.

"The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre. Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him."

### Peter and John.

"Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulchre. So they ran both together."

### John.

"And the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre. And he stooping down, and looking in, saw THE LINEN CLOTHES LYING; yet went he not in."

### Peter.

"Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth THE LINEN CLOTHES LIE, AND THE NAPKEN, THAT WAS ABOUT HIS HEAD, NOT LYING WITH THE LINEN CLOTHES, BUT WRAPPED TOGETHER IN A PLACE BY ITSELF."

### John.

"Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulchre, and HE SAW, AND BELIEVED. For as yet they knew not THE SCRIPTURE, that he must RISE AGAIN FROM THE DEAD."

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BOTH.

"Then the disciples went away again to their own home."

WHEN the angel of the Lord, as described in Matthew xxviii., descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone from the door of the sepulchre, we are nowhere told that his object was to open the tomb, as is often assumed, to let the Lord out. It was, on the contrary, to tell the women, Mary Magdalene and the others, that Jesus was risen; to give them a view of the inside of the cave, so that they might see that the Lord was not there; to furnish them moreover, as we shall presently see, with an undeniable evidence of the truth of the happy tidings which he had come to announce. The fact is, before ever he came the Lord had awakened to life, had emerged from the sepulchre. The great stone which closed up its mouth being no obstacle to Him, clothed, as He now was, with a spiritual body, He could as easily pass through it as a spirit could do; in fact, as His own disembodied spirit had done in the act of reuniting itself with His body; just as afterwards, when, the doors being shut, passing through every barrier, He came and stood in the midst of His assembled disciples. All which, observe, was done, not by independently putting forth the almighty power of Deity, which of course had He chosen it He could easily have done; but that, acting still as the servant of Him who had sent Him from heaven into the world to bring life and immortality to light, and who now had raised Him to life, He, as the risen Man, was shewing that He was no longer in a natural body, such as He previously had, but on the contrary in a spiritual one, the Firstfruits of them that slept, the Head of the new creation of God.

And now let us turn to the chapter alluded to, Matthew xxviii. 5—7, and hear how the angel speaks to the women:—"Fear not ye; for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here; for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from

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the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you." Here we have the blessed announcement that Jesus was risen, and at the same time the angel's invitation to the women, either to look into or enter the tomb, and thus to prove for themselves that such was the fact. And how, it may be asked, were they to do this? The mere fact of His not being there would be no proof that He was alive, inasmuch as that the body might have been stolen, as Mary Magdalene thought it had been. There must then be more meaning in the words of the angel than at first sight appears; and when he says, "COME, SEE THE PLACE WHERE THE LORD LAY," he must have meant to direct their attention to something more than the *mere spot* where the Lord had been lying. And that such was the case we gather from Luke xxiv. and from John in the above passage (ch. xxi.), the latter especially, where the grave-clothes are noticed as lying on the floor of the cave, the trophies, as I believe, of the resurrection power of Jesus over death and the grave. But how is this? it will be asked. How did they prove that Christ was alive? and in what sense are they to be regarded as trophies, seeing, as we repeat, that the body might have been taken away, and its wrappings left behind in the sepulchre? In answer to this we reply, that we believe it to be quite a mistake to suppose that they lay, as in ordinary circumstances would be the case, scattered in a confused heap on the floor of the cave. The fact, I apprehend, was quite otherwise. There they lay, undisturbed, unchanged as to their appearance and form, just as they were when the body of Jesus was in them. They had not been unrolled by the hand of another, as in the case of Lazarus when he came forth from the tomb: He had passed out of them as a spirit would do, with no effort whatever, by the divine power of God, even His own power, and that also of Him who raised Him to life. This was miraculous,—quite supernatural. None but Jesus Himself could have freed Himself thus from the thraldom of death. This then is that which the angel meant when he said to the women, "COME, SEE THE PLACE WHERE THE LORD LAY." He pointed,

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we may suppose, as he said so, not to the *spot merely, but to the grave-clothes which lay on that spot*—the marvellous, incontrovertible evidence that the Prince of Life, the Mighty Victor, had conquered: that He who had passed through the valley of the shadow of death had taken up that life which He had laid down for His people.

All this, as we have said, we gather from the description in Luke xxiv. and in John xx. When Peter, we read, went into the sepulchre, he beheld the linen clothes there, *μονα—alone—"by themselves,"* as it is rendered (Luke xxiv. 12), that is, *without the body*, which had miraculously disengaged itself from its cerements, leaving them there just as they were. *κειμενα*, "lying"—that is, lying there undisturbed and at full length as when the body was in them, watched over by two angels, one at the head the other at the feet, during the three days and nights, we believe, that the Lord slept in the grave; in the same spot where Mary Magdalene afterwards saw them. Then as to the napkin or cap that was about His head: this we find was "not lying with the linen clothes," but was "wrapped together in a place by itself," wreathed together in folds—*εντετυλιγμενον*, as it had been when on His head: it lay apart from the garments the length of the neck, namely, the distance that the head is from the rest of the body, at the point where the neck comes, all just as it was when Jesus was there. Such I believe to be the simple explanation of John's description of that which met the eye of the two disciples as they entered the sepulchre.

And now with regard to the passage at the head of this paper, John xx. 1—10. Here we find the two disciples, Peter and John, on the report of Mary Magdalene, who fancied that the body of Jesus had been taken away, making together for the sepulchre; John outstripping the other. John however does not enter the tomb; but looking into it, is struck with something strange and unusual in the disposition and general appearance of the grave-clothes. After which Peter, overtaking his companion, goes in, and has a full view of the grave-clothes; he sees the linen clothes, as we read, lie, and the napkin that was about the Lord's head not

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lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself. What we are to understand by this description we have already said. As to Peter, however, we do not here learn what impression the peculiar appearance of the grave-clothes makes upon *him;* whether he was convinced or not that Jesus had risen. Not so as to John: he next going in, *sees and believes:* while Peter was inside and he outside the sepulchre, he had time to ponder on what he had had only a glimpse of at first: and now, on a closer inspection, finding that the casket, though despoiled of the jewel, so to speak, is still locked, he is convinced by this fact that the whole thing is *supernatural—miraculous*—that the body, though not there, had surely not been stolen, according to Mary's report; and that Jesus had, by His own power, freed Himself from the grave-clothes, and consequently that He was alive. His faith however, it must be allowed, is of a very low order: both he and Peter ought to have believed *the scripture* on this point; both the written word and the word of Jesus Himself having taught them to believe that He would rise again from the dead. But they lost sight of both. And now, assuming that they *both* were convinced, when they do believe, it is, as in Thomas's case, not on the *scripture of truth, but on the evidence of their senses* that their faith rests. Hence their faith is inoperative: they go away from the tomb, and seek their own home. Love surely, had it been fully in exercise, would never have allowed them to rest till they had either found Jesus Himself or ascertained what had become of Him, whether He was still upon earth or had ascended to heaven. A sad failure this; the result, as we have seen, of their defective views of the word as to Christ's resurrection; too much, alas! like that of the Sadducees as to the doctrine of the resurrection in the abstract: all springing, in the case of the latter, from the same evil root—*ignorance of scripture;* as shown in the answer of Jesus to their cavilling arguments, "YE DO ERR, NOT KNOWING THE SCRIPTURES, NOR THE POWER OF GOD." (Matt. xxii. 39.) This surely reads a very solemn lesson to us: it shows us that, so far as we fall short of simple faith in the word, we of necessity

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dishonour the Lord and lose our own blessing. Miracles, providences, mercies, all hold their due place in the economy of God, and as such are to be valued by us: but let them take the place of the word—let us make *them* the ground of our confidence—that moment we sink into the weakness of nature; and whenever the temptation arises, we shall assuredly act like the two disciples, when they went away from the sepulchre and listlessly sought their own home. E. D.

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## FRAGMENTS.

Boaz's wealth and stores were the Lord's, and he knew it,—and so did Ruth, when she had gleaned in his field,—and so did Naomi when Ruth had returned to her.

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In 2 Pet. iii. we get the evening, post-millennium judgment. In Jude the morning judgment. Was it to be expected that Christendom would prove faithful to a position when all others (Adam, Noah, Israel, &c.) had failed.

"The day of the Lord" is that which establishes the kingdom of Christ. "The day of God" is at the close of the day of the Lord, and introduces us to the delivering up of the kingdom that "God may be all in all" (1 Cor. xv. 24—28).

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I have spread your wish about S.A. and S. before One Friend who never makes mistakes—never is too quick—never too slow—who IS.

Who or what He IS—'tis not for me to attempt to say. Yet He IS—which is a great thing to say in a world of shadows.

If you cannot lay hold of that, it may help your infirmity to notice that IS might stand for *Jesus Saviour* if it be allowable to put a stop between the two letters, thus I.S.

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# No. XXII.

## MARRIAGE.*

"And He answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that He which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they twain shall be one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

"They say unto Him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? He saith unto them, Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, suffered you to put away your wives, but from the beginning it was not so."

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An old proverb says, "Marriages are made in heaven," and in a certain sense I believe it to be true; I mean in the sense of the preceding words—namely, that husband and wife being one flesh is of *Divine* ordaining, and their oneness is a oneness of God's own making. "What, therefore, *God* hath joined together, let not man put asunder."

What then is marriage? I believe that but comparatively few are rightly instructed concerning it, and that many and many enter into and continue in the state, without ever having understood its divine origin, or sought divine sanction.

In the majority of minds the bond of marriage depends

* This article seems to have been written in the presence *only* of scenes in England. Had the bearing of what is passing in Prussia, Switzerland, etc., and what *has* passed in Madeira, the South American Isles, China, etc., been before the writer's mind, the importance—1. of our having a code on marriage and divorce from God Himself, and—2. of the living assembly of God down here on earth holding itself responsible to God for the observance of it, would doubtless have been more fully opened up.

Where God's mind has been expressed in Scripture, He holds His assembly down here on earth, *if He has one*, responsible to see His mind carried out into practice.—Editor.

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on a legal ceremony of some kind or another, performed in what is called a place of worship, a registrar's office, or other lawfully appointed place. Their thoughts rise no higher than this. Connected with this legal act, there is often, indeed almost generally, the desire for a religious act, hence the preference shown by most persons for marriage in a "church." But if we search God's word, where truth alone is to be found, whether concerning things eternal or things temporal, we learn that marriage in His thoughts depends not either upon a legal or a religious observance. "He that made them in the beginning," ("the beginning," when there was neither legal nor religious ceremony known), "He which made them in the beginning, made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they twain shall be one flesh." That is, *He* which in the beginning made them *two*, namely, male and female, ordained that in their union they should become *one*, and that for this cause (because of this new oneness, which He had made out of twain), a man shall leave father and mother, that is, he shall forsake the nearest and closest of existing natural ties, and cleave to that new tie, that other, who is now made *one* with himself—"his own flesh" (Eph. v. 29). Then, adds the Lord Jesus to those who raised the question, "What therefore *God* hath joined together, let not man put asunder."

"What God hath joined together." Is not this then something more than a legal or religious ceremonial? Surely it is. It is a mystery, but withal it is God's truth, and not all the sin, nor all the confusion which sin has brought into this most solemn and sacred subject, can alter the fact, that the man and the woman who mutually agree and consent to live together, are in the sight of God "one flesh," joined together by God's own ordinance, and of such and to such it is said, "let not man put asunder."

But it will perhaps be asked, are the legal or the religious ceremonies then to be put aside, for you speak as if they were unnecessary. No, I answer, by no means; but we must give them their right places. Neither

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legal nor religious ceremony makes marriage as before God, but like Moses' bill of divorcement, legal marriage is necessary because of the hardness of men's hearts.

The laws of men are necessary because of man's natural lawlessness and sin. So the law of every country as to marriage is needful because of the lawlessness of man, and his utter ignorance of, or disobedience to, the ordained and revealed will of God upon the subject.

The law, therefore, says that unless the man and woman appear before a legally appointed authority, and witnesses, and declare their consent, which act is then and there registered, their union is not marriage but *sin.*

The Christian, therefore, who is subject to the powers that be, "and owns that they are ordained of God," gladly on his part complies with the law of the land in which he dwells, and conforms to whatever rule the law requires of him to render his marriage valid in the sight of man; but for all that, he must know that *mere* legal compliance will not suffice as before God, however needful it may be as subjection to man's ordinance for the Lord's sake.

I say the legal ceremony will not suffice before God, and I say so for the following reason. What the *law* joins together, the law *can* put asunder. A legal marriage can be legally dissolved. The law tolerates divorce. It does not profess to rise to the divine standard. It says to the man and the woman, "If you mutually desire it, I will bind you legally, and give you certain legal rights as married, and if you disagree, I will, under certain conditions, loose you again, and you shall be free. If you then desire to re-marry, I will bind you again, and it shall be all 'legal,' from beginning to end." The law does not, cannot own that God has joined together, and that even though sin may outwardly separate, the divine decree remains unchanged,—they whom He has joined are inseparably "one flesh."[a] The law does not

[a] It may be a question how far sin, committed by either party, such as is spoken of by the Lord (Matt. xix. 9), may break the marriage tie between Christians. Without confession it must of necessity outwardly separate, but I doubt not that before God they are yet bound. There is no liberty at all events for

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profess to dissolve the relationship of parent and child; but ignorant of the divine ordinance of marriage, it professes to dissolve the relationship of husband and wife, which God has put on higher grounds than the former.

It is evident, therefore, that the legal idea of marriage comes short of the requirements of God, for He who is above all law says, "What God hath joined together let not man put asunder," and He then explains that the divorce permitted by Moses was not so "from the beginning,"—was a thing tolerated because of the hardness of heart of the children of Israel. That is, they were so carnal that divorce was permitted to avoid worse evils.

The Lord Jesus, however, does not confirm the permission of Moses; and thus to those who are under grace, to Christians in fact, as distinguished from Israelites under law, there is no toleration for divorce. The workings of the flesh, and the hardness of the heart, are not legalized nor consented to, but are to be judged, and all their fruits condemned and mortified; but nevertheless Paul is permitted to say, "let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband" (1 Cor. vii. 2). Blessed permission of a gracious God who knoweth the frames, the necessities of His poor creatures, who cares for their joys, and for their sorrows, and who says still "It is not good for the man to be alone." (Compare Gen. ii. 18, John xvii. 11, Eph. v. 25, 33.)

What, then, is required of those who desire to marry? I write more especially for Christians, for those who know and believe the love of God in Christ, who take His name, and who thus through grace are able to know and do His will.

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re-marriage, except the tie be dissolved by natural dissolution or death. (Rom. vii. 1, 2; 1 Cor. vii. 10, 11.) Even the law recognises condonation of such sin, and grace can surely do no less, on confession and evidence of true repentance. But if the tie were broken or dissolved by sin, there could be no condonation. It must be admitted that there is a difficulty, but can sin create a difficulty which grace cannot meet? I think not.

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Firstly, let us remember (even if it humble us) that though marriage is good and blessed, yet to be unmarried, free for God and Christ, is better (1 Cor. vii. 1, 7, 8, 27, 29). To walk in the Spirit, above the claims and affections of nature in this matter, is a higher path than to follow nature: "But every man hath his proper gift of God, and if thou marry thou hast not sinned" (1 Cor. vii.), and the Lord himself says, "All men cannot receive this saying" (Matt. xix. 11).

If, then, marriage is your desire, seek to know the mind of God concerning it (and this is equally needed by those who are already united). Do not measure marriage by man's standard, nor limit it to what is often called by its name in an evil world. Remember that the union of those whose hearts are leading them, or have led them together, is *inseparable*. God made the woman for the man, and yet neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man in the Lord (1 Cor. xi. 9—11). He made them the one for the other, and being joined they are *one* in the flesh, even as it is true "in the Lord," and none can separate. Never mind what sin has done, or is doing in this evil world, but hold fast what God says about it, not only in its first institution, but in "the great mystery," the type of human marriage, "I speak concerning Christ and the Church" (Eph. v. 32). There in that wondrous mystery, the union of Christ and His bride—the two made one—is seen the thought of God concerning the union of man and wife, of whom He says, "Wherefore they are *no more* twain, but one flesh." None can separate that which God hath joined together in Christ, and let none put asunder those whom God hath made one in flesh.

And next as to your individual case, there should be, surely, perfect conviction before God and before one another that the proposed step is according to His will. It is greatly to be feared that many enter on marriage without any such conviction, or any dealings with God about the matter. The motives are often low and altogether unworthy of the Christian calling, or such as should dictate his acts. To ensure a good and peaceful

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conscience before God, and an ordinary prospect of mutual happiness together, neither party should have a shadow of doubt that the person of their choice is *the* only person to whom they could be united, and that it is the will of God distinctly that such union should take place. Some have said that this is rare, and the standard is too high; but is it too much to ask the Christian never to act in doubt before God, and above all in a step which, if any step can, may make for or mar his fellowship with God all through his earthly path? If then there be a doubt, wait patiently until the Lord resolves it.[b]

Then as to the outward form of marriage to be observed. I doubt not that in this the Christian's path is clear. God's word says, "Submit yourself to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake" (1 Peter ii. 13). "Avoid all appearance of evil," and to such words he bows. The law of man requires an outward observance, and it must be observed. But amidst the confusion and variety which arises from the self-will of man, who does that which is good in his own eyes, the Christian needs discernment, lest while following the letter, he fails in the spirit.

It has been already shewn, that the legal standard of marriage falls far short of the divine thought, and yet the world, and Christians in the world, for the most part desire to *combine* a religious with a legal observance, thus placing them on an equal footing as to the bond they form. Hence the large preference which is shewn for marriages in so-called "places of worship," in which, though the religious element predominates, yet the law recognises the act and registration there as "legal." But herein is sad confusion. The religious act or ceremony, is professedly the seeking for divine sanction and blessing on the marriage. Professing Christians prefer marriage by a "minister of religion," for this reason;

[b] It is not a question here as to whether the Lord in His grace and pitifulness, is not a resource, and has not a remedy for our mistakes even in marriage. We know what He is, and what His grace can do.

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they profess, and many sincerely desire to ask the blessing and sanction of God upon their act. But the ceremony in such places constitutes, by law, a legal marriage, and we have seen that what the law binds, it can also loose. Is it right, therefore, to seek the divine sanction on marriage, in an act which comes quite short of the divine ordinance? Can we, if we think of it, honestly come into the presence of Him, who says, "*Let not man put asunder*" in a form or ceremony, which can be undone or dissolved? Surely we cannot, and thus the ordinary combination of the legal and religious ceremony in one act, only proves what I said at the first, that the divine thought of marriage is but little understood, and moreover, that in a day of professing *Christianity*, marriage law is still based upon the standard and permission of Moses, as adapted for the people of Israel, and is not founded upon what "God made in the beginning," "and SAID," and confirmed by the lips of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Christians—believers who know God in Christ, who bow to *His* word, and who desire to be in communion with *His* thoughts, and to own *His* will in all things—ought not then to approach Him in that which is confessedly short of His requirements, but in any religious act in which they seek His blessing and sanction on their marriage, they should do so in spirit and in truth.

They should bear in mind the distinction as to marriage in the laws of men and in the ordinance of God, and then give to each the recognition which is due. If man's law requires a certain observance, observe it. If God claims a higher motive and acknowledgment, render them to Him.

And in the land in which we live, the Lord has in His goodness made the path for faith and conscience very easy. The Christian in this country can satisfy the claims of man's law, without being compelled to combine with it a religious element distressing to the conscience; for the law of England permits the registry of marriages apart from any religious ceremony whatever.

It may then perhaps be asked, what more then is necessary, if the motive is pure, and the marriage has been legally registered, that may suffice?

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But I would answer, though it may suffice for the worldling, or for the one who gladly avails himself of the registry office, to evade anything like religious form or profession, (as many do in this age of growing infidelity,) it is not enough for the Christian, who should desire the prayers and fellowship of fellow-believers, in seeking the blessing and sanction of God upon his marriage. And for this end, how blessed and real a thing after having complied with the law's demands, to assemble with those "who call on the name of the Lord out of a pure heart," and seeking their prayers and fellowship in the marriage, solemnly confess *before* them and to *God*, that in it His *own* institution is owned and recognised, that those whom He joins together may not be put asunder.

It has been truly said by a servant of God, that the Church of God claims a higher confession from the believer in his marriage than the law of man. The Church has a right to ask, and to expect, that the believer shall enter upon marriage on higher grounds than mere outward conformity to a legal observance; and more than this, the assembly with which remains the presence of Christ and of His Spirit, *must* judge, and may even withhold its sanction and fellowship in any doubtful case which may come before it, for it is evident that there might be marriage which, though *legal*, the assembly could not sanction, and on account of which communion at the table of the Lord might even be withheld from those contracting it.[c] Hence the pro-

[c] It gives much rest and comfort to the soul to trace everything to its source, and have a good and valid reason for all that we do. Therefore in marriage, whether in the legal observance, or in the communion of saints, it is right to acknowledge and to seek the sanction of *God*, in both as His ordinances. "For as the powers that be are ordained of God," and He has delegated to them government in the earth, it is happy to be subject to them not "for wrath," but "for conscience sake," not in fear of them, but submitting to them as "the ministers of God." Again, in seeking the fellowship of God's saints, to own in them as gathered in Christ's name and by His Spirit, the assembly of God which can bind and loose, can remit and retain, can pronounce in His name sanction or refusal of our acts. The sanction of *God* should therefore be that which is before our souls, whether by His "ministers to us for good," or by His Spirit in the assembly of His saints.

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priety of separating the two acts, conformity to the law, and the seeking and blessing God in the presence of His people.

I would now briefly recapitulate the points which I have sought to press.

1. Marriage rightly undertaken is sanctioned by God.

2. That what He sanctions and joins together, man may not separate.

3. That though sin has brought in confusion, the divine thought of marriage has not been thereby changed, nor the facts altered.

4. That, what man joins together, man can and does separate.

5. That conformity to man's law as to marriage, does not by itself satisfy the divine requirement.

6. That nevertheless, man's ordinance *must* be observed for the Lord's sake.

7. That having conformed to man's law, it is good and blessed to own before God and His people, His higher claims and standard, and to seek His blessing and sanction, and their fellowship, prayers, and testimony in connection with marriage so entered into.

Finally, may all whose hearts are exercised about the marriage state, look to God and to the word of His grace for guidance upon the subject. It is more fully entered into in the word of God than any other of our natural relationships. In type and in substance it is constantly referred to, and good it is for the present peace and happiness of husband and wife, when their affections, their relationship, and all their mutual claims and duties, are founded on this sure and eternal guide.

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God of all grace! I gladly own
What in His death Thy Christ has done:
What HE is there upon Thy throne,
What Christ is *now*, and Christ alone,
Is all my joyful plea;
HE's all *my* trust! HE's all my boast!
For, since He died to save the *lost*,
*I'm sure* He died for *me*.



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# Nº. XXIII.

## THE NOBLEMAN GONE TO A FAR COUNTRY.

Luke xix. 12—27.

We will meditate on the parable of the nobleman who went into the distant country. But I refer to it as illustrating a cluster of Scriptures in Luke, just as we got a cluster of Scriptures in Matthew.

We are going to look at the 21st verse of chapter xvii., the 11th verse of chapter xix., and the 8th verse of chapter xxi.; and, together with these three, we will look at a passage in the 1st chapter of Acts, and we shall find that, though in *different* language, they speak *one* language. The terms may be different, the teaching is the same.

Now, as you read these passages, does your mind suggest this thought as common to each of them :—that it was the suggestion of the human mind in the Pharisees, the multitude, the deceivers, and the disciples, that the kingdom of God was ready to appear? There may be a little progress, perhaps, but in each the coming of the kingdom was a question of time and circumstances, not a *moral* question. I get the Pharisees asking, "when the kingdom of God should come"? just as if nothing delayed its manifestation but reaching a certain moment of time. Then, the thought of the multitude was, that they had only to reach the city and the kingdom would appear. The deceivers come with this lie: "I am Christ; and the time draweth near"—the positive deceit that the kingdom was at hand already. Then we get the same mind in the disciples in the 1st of Acts. We shall see presently that the Lord answers each suggestion by saying that the kingdom of God does not depend on the mere lapsing of time, but on certain *moral* conditions. And if any one say, now, the kingdom may be here to-morrow, he is fraught with a lie from the devil. This is the answer to a quantity of moral

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energy that is abroad at present. If you were asked, Do you think the kingdom of God is about to appear? you ought to say, "Indeed I do not,—the earth is not in a right moral condition to receive it. God could never deposit His glory in such a vessel as this present evil world. He must rid it of the evil before He can fill it with His glory." That should be the moral conclusion of your soul. The Lord Jesus would be utterly ashamed to own the world as it is *now* as His kingdom. And it is blessed to see how the prophetic leading concurs with the righteous judgment of the mind.

Now, we will just go over the passages a little shortly, because I am going to contrast with the manifestation of the kingdom the rapture of the saints. The rapture of the saints may be at *any* moment; the manifestation of the kingdom not till a certain *moral* action takes place here. But before we go to the rapture we will look at the kingdom. Now, we will turn to chap. xvii. The Lord is asked *when* the kingdom should come. "Oh," he says, "the kingdom of God is a moral, spiritual thing. It takes a form *within* you, now. I must take you to your own moral conditions. Do not be talking about it as a foreign thing. It is *within* you." Then He turns to His disciples and talks to them about what must take place before the kingdom shows itself in external, moral glory. He tells them that they are first to tread the path of desire after an unmanifested Jesus. "Ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man and ye shall not see it." Then He goes on to details. Deceivers shall come—and so on. And the kingdom will be introduced, when the world is lying in iniquities by the judgment of the carcase. That is His answer to the Pharisees, who thought it was a question of *time.* Christ must pass through a time of rejection; the church must pass through a time of desire; the world must pass through judgment; and *then* we may talk of the manifestation of the kingdom. So, if people say, "Oh, it is only a little progress, a little evangelical labour, a little advance of science and civilisation," it is all a lie.

In chap. xix. we get the multitude, awakening the

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same line of thought in the Lord's mind. With them it was a question of progress, as it is at this very hour. Your men of science and literature are in the company of the poor multitude. They thought that when they got to the royal city the kingdom would show itself. The Lord rebukes them in the parable of the nobleman. A different phase of the interval, I grant you, from that which He showed the disciples in chap. xvii. He tells them that the nobleman went to a distant country, and the spirit of the age sent word after him, "We will not have him to reign over us." And is not that the language of all the activity of the children of men? Has *pride* a welcome for Christ? Have selfishness and covetousness a welcome for Christ? No. In every lust of the human mind the language is, "We will not have this man to reign over us." There is a thing here that must be judged and got rid of before God can manifest His glory. So when the Lord comes back He judges the citizens. And here He shows the interval also in Christendom. The servants have gone forth, some faithful, some unfaithful, to occupy till He comes. Thus the Lord is teaching us, in the mouth of witness after witness, that things are not morally ready for the kingdom.

Then in chap. xxi., where the Lord speaks His great prophetic word, which we were looking at in Matthew, they ask, "when shall these things be?" He says, "*Take heed that ye be not deceived.*" There will be two declarations on the lips of the deceivers in the last days. "I am Christ; and the time draweth near." "*Go not after them.*" And the Lord, in order to rebuke the thought, goes through a solemn portraiture of what must take place before the kingdom can possibly appear.

Now we come to the disciples in chapter i. of Acts, "Lord wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" Is not this a kindred thought with what I have just read? The blessed Lord had words of tenderness and of rebuke for them. "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons. Leave them in the hands of Him to whom they belong; but do you go about your own business." Now we see how differently

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the Lord treats the mere ignorance of the disciples, and the captiousness of the Pharisees. For the Pharisees He fills up the interval with the most awful scenery. For the thoughts of the disciples He fills it up with most blessed scenery. "Ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem and in all Judea." But in all these passages we get the same mind, and that mind disposed of in exactly the same way. And we must boldly take our stand on this well accredited ground. If we went through the prophetic words in the Old Testament we should find exactly the same language. God will have a testimony to His own name to go forth. Then judgment will purify the scene, and the purified vessel will be filled with glory.

I will remind you now of a few Scriptures in which we see the rapture of the saints in contrast with all this. When we turn our thoughts from the kingdom to the rapture, we find Scripture after Scripture speaking in a totally different way. I will give you four Scriptures to show this, as we have had four Scriptures referring to the kingdom. In John xiv. we read:—"I go to prepare a place for you—and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to myself, that where I am there ye may be also." Now, I ask, is there a single thought in the Lord's mind here, that any necessary *delay* attaches to that moment, or, that before we can be taken to meet Him in the air a single thing must take place? Why cannot the Lord return to His kingdom? Because He must first cleanse the scene. You cannot put Christ and Belial in company. The earth must be *prepared* for glory. But what does He tell us in John xiv.? He is doing now, by His presence in heaven, for the resurrection-saints, the very thing that judgment will do for the earth by-and-bye. Heaven must be prepared for us, but the Lord does not tell me that *that* scene wants judgment. *His presence* will do there on our behalf, what judgment will do on behalf of God's glory on the earth. The presence of the Lord Jesus in heaven is all that is needed to get it ready for me—judgment is not needed *there*.

Then we come to 1 Cor. xv., where we get the story

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of the children of the resurrection again. And is there a single breathing there that tells me I must *wait,* till I put on my glorified body? There is a thing shining before me, for which everything is ready. It may take place to-morrow.

So, when we travel on to 1 Thess. iv., there we see the *rapture* of our glorified bodies. I take up my glorified body in 1 Cor. xv., I carry it to heaven in 1 Thess. iv. And, is there a single suggestion that that cannot take place till something else takes place before it? As for any necessary delay, there is not the slightest word about it. Here we are in company not with the manifestation of the kingdom on earth, but with the children of the resurrection,—the saints of glory in heaven—a different mystery and connected with a different line of thought. I am a liar if I say the kingdom is immediately to appear:—I am astray if I say I may not be glorified to-morrow. If we keep in mind these two mysteries, that will introduce us to the second chapter of 2 Thess., because the Spirit there comforts them against the *day* of the Lord, by the *coming* of the Lord; thus distinguishing these two things. Therefore the saints of this day are to comfort themselves against the thought of the *day*, by the thought of the *coming*. It comes to keep these two mysteries apart in our minds.

Then in Rev. iv., we read of a door opened in heaven. And when John looked into heaven, he saw the glorified saints there. *How* they got there I know by 1 Cor. xv. and 1 Thes. iv., but *when* they got there, not a Scripture tells me. They are there when God pleases. The fulness of that time is known to Him.

So that in these two strikingly beautiful clusters of Scriptures, we are in company with two distinct thoughts;—the manifestation of the kingdom *here*, and the appearing of the sons of glory *there*. O that we may know a little of the constraining power of these things, if we have apprehended them! What manner of persons should we be? Should we be busy with calculations about things down here? We have reason to be humbled when the Apostle Peter stands before our hearts and says, "What manner of persons ought ye to be?"

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# No. XXIV.

## PREFACE TO THE VEVAY NEW TESTAMENT, 1859.[a]

In presenting to the reader this new translation of the second part of the Holy Scriptures, it is well to give him some information as to the plan which we have followed, and the principles which have guided us in our undertaking. With regard to the details of this work, we will only mention those which have appeared to us as needing some explanation.

Thoroughly convinced of the Divine inspiration of the Scriptures, we have endeavoured in translating them to reproduce as exactly as possible in French, that which God has given us in another language, unknown to the greater part of those who read the Bible. We have rendered the Greek as literally as was consistent with the perspicuity needed for the understanding of what is said. The depth of the Word of God is infinite, and the connection that exists between all the parts of the Divine mystery is not less admirable; although this mystery is not revealed to us as a whole, for "we know in part and we prophesy in part." Therefore, it is that we often meet in the Word with expressions that, flowing from the depth of the mystery in the mind of the inspired writers, make us perceive (under Divine teaching) the connection of the different parts with each other, and that of each of these parts with the whole. To retain these Greek expressions is sometimes disadvantageous to the style of the version; but, when the clearness of the sentence was not injured by it, we have allowed those to subsist which might help the reader to

[a] This translation may be of interest and profit to many who are not acquainted with French.

The parts which refer only to the French language are printed thus, in brackets [*] with a star inside them.

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felt in the grace of God emboldened us to undertake that which might be useful to souls and tend to glorify Him who alone can bless. May He deign to bestow His blessing on His own Word and on yourself in the use of that Word!

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## "OUR EARTHLY HOUSE OF THE TABERNACLE."

### 2 Corinthians v. 1.

That which Paul says of the "*outward man*" and the "*inward man*" in 2 Corinthians iv. 16, and also the expression "*The house of the Lord, namely, the house of the tabernacle,*" in 1 Chronicles ix. 23, signifying the temple, help us to understand what the apostle means by "*the earthly house of this* (or the—τοῦ) *tabernacle*" in 2 Corinthians v. i.

The *temple,* as a whole, was "*the house of the tabernacle;* "that is, it contained within it the tabernacle, or holy of holies, wherein God more especially dwelt, the place of the Shechinah or glory. So of the *body,* or the "*outward man,*" it is the "earthly house of the tabernacle," the *house of the soul, of the* "*inward man,*" which is the tabernacle in which God dwells in us. Observe as to 2 Corinthians v., the tabernacle in the *first* verse is the *soul:* the tabernacle in the *fourth* verse is the *body. God* more especially dwells in the *former; we* dwell in the *latter.* Thus every saint is in his own person *a tabernacle inclosing a tabernacle,* in each of which God dwells. That He dwells in the one, even the soul, we have already seen; that He dwells in the other, namely, the body, we learn from 1 Corinthians vi. 19, as is written, "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?" Then again we have both, namely, that which is *outward,* and that which is *inward,* in 2 Corinthians iv. 6, 7: "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our *hearts,* to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in *earthen vessels,* that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." Observe here, the "*earthen vessel*" corresponds with the "*earthly house;*" in the passage before us—the "*heart*" with the "*tabernacle,*" as we have seen in the same passage, the especial abode of the Shechinah, or divine glory within us.

E.D.

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## N°. XXV.

## THE REVELATION BY ST. JOHN.[a]

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

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

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

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

In the preface (i. 1—8) we first learn that this wondrous book deals with "The Word of God," and the testimony of Jesus Christ—that is, God's counsels made known by Jesus Christ. Then we are told the manner in which Jesus Christ ministers this testimony to the churches, and blessing is then pronounced on him who acts righteously by this Book, by either reading or hearing it, and then by keeping the things which are written in it.

After this the seven churches in Asia are called to listen, and after a benediction on them, the Lord Jesus Christ is announced as the One who is about to come "with clouds" or in the solemnities of judgment (Dan.

[a] Though written one and twenty years ago or more (by J. G. B.), this paper was never, the editor thinks, printed before.

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and then those who were "athirst," having some affection towards her Lord just stirred, to come up to the full measure of her desire, and lastly, through the largeness of her heart, whosoever would, in whatsoever mind or state they may be, to come and drink of the living waters with her. Thus was her soul divinely moved upwards and around her. But this was an interruption of the more orderly progress of the book (like i. 5, 6) on Jesus being revealed. But we should be prepared for such interruptions; we should not expect that the Lord could be revealed without the Church being moved, as in these places. Praise must fill her, if His grace be revealed, as there (i. 6); desire must move her, if His person or glory be revealed as here; and we should all, beloved, be cultivating that longing of heart after Him that will lead us to take a ready part in such raptures of the Spirit in the Bride as these.

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

Here Jesus the Lord and His ministering angel close their testimony. The Apostle then in his turn takes his leave of the saints, saying, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all." In the love of the Spirit he commends them to that which is their

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only provision in the way till their journey is ended. Till He comes, come when He may, bringing His glory with Him, they must stand in His grace; for the Lord gives both, and grace leads to glory.

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

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

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## FRAGMENTS.

THE spectres of long buried hours
  Throng round me,—thick and fast;—
"The might have been" of life is lost
  In the unreturning past.

How surely do these lines apply to a waster of life! Insupportably melancholy would they be if there were not the great Repairer of breaches to look to. But humbled in his retrospect as the spendthrift of life must be,—if he come to Christ all will be well; well for him in eternity, well for ever and ever. Well, according to God; and well according to the thoughts of the renewed hearts of saints. Himself, too, shall be able to say, even in time, "It is well!"

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NOT as Thy ways, our ways!
We bow before Thy face;
Not like Thy thought, our thought,
As by Thy Spirit taught.

Not as our ways, *Thy* ways!
Father, Thy name we praise;
Not as our thoughts, *Thy* thoughts,
Told by the love-work wrought.

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"The leaf may fall and perish, not less the Spring will come;" beautiful because true, divinely true. Oh, what a thing faith is, to stand in the midst of such ruins and to feel that *all is well*.

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One sweet yet solemn thought
  Comes to me o'er and o'er,—
I'm nearer home to-day
  Than e'er I've been before.

Nearer my Father's house,
  Where many Mansions be;
Nearer my Father's throne;
  Nearer the crystal sea.

Nearer the verge of life
  Where burdens are laid down;
Nearer leaving the cross;
  Nearer wearing the crown.

But lying dark between—
  Winding down through the night,—
Is a dim unknown stream
  That leads at length to Light.

Saviour! perfect my soul!
  Strengthen the pow'r of faith!
Let me feel Thee near when I stand
  On the rocky shore of death,—

Feel Thee near when my feet
  Are slipping over the brink,
For it may be I'm nearer home,—
  Nearer now than I think.

(Carey.)

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## N°. XXVI.

## NOTES OF A MEDITATION ON ACTS I. TO VII.

I PROPOSE this morning to meditate on the first seven chapters of the Acts of the Apostles. They have a great prophetic character. I must introduce them by a few observations. When the Son of man was refused, God had still a reserve left, that was, *the Holy Ghost*. The mission of the Spirit comes after the mission of the Son. It is always the divine way, that the Lord will not give us up till He has made every trial of us. Thus God tried innocent Adam by a law. The *innocent* creature having defiled himself, God tries the *guilty* creature again and again, and does not give him up till He has spent all His resources on him; so, though the Son of man had been refused, yet God had still the Spirit, and that opens the Book of the Acts of the Apostles, or, as it might more properly be called, the Acts of the Holy Ghost. That being so, we enter on the book, and we find it is God, in His abounding grace, testing Israel by the Spirit. The result of this last trial is reached in the first seven chapters; it is as to man found utterly to fail, just as the mission of the Son had failed as to man. So that when the Potter came to that, He had nothing to do but to declare the vessel to be worthless.

Now in these seven chapters you will observe that the Spirit is unhindered for a time, just as the Son was. If we travel through chapters v., vi., vii., viii., and part of ix. of Matthew, we shall find that the Lord is unhindered. And so the Apostles are here; but at length the enmity reaches such a height, that Stephen is cast out as the Son was, and is taken to heaven as the Son had been.

Now we turn to chap. i., and we find the Lord in ver. 3 speaking of things pertaining to the *kingdom* of



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God. He keeps their thoughts in connection with *the earth*. The Lord Jesus was born King of the Jews, and it was because of the unbelief of the Jews that He was not received as such. So the Lord here, in His forty days' resurrection-sojourn, keeps their minds in connection with *earthly* glory. And when they were looking up, ver. 11, the angel comes and says:—"Why stand ye gazing up *into heaven? That* is not the place of your hope. You are not to follow Him *there*,—He is to come to you *here*." All this is a ministry keeping the hopes of the elect in connection with the earth.

There is no thought yet of ascension to heaven. Then Peter and the rest continue in Jerusalem, and appoint another to the bishopric of Judas, because an apostleship of twelve was suited to a nation distributed into twelve tribes. So before the Holy Ghost could come down with a ministry to Israel, the vacancy must be filled up.

Now I will linger a little here. Pentecost arrives, and the Spirit is given; but in what form is the presence of the Spirit manifested? "They began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance." Did you ever think *why* the Holy Ghost was manifested in the gift of tongues? If we go back to Genesis xi., we shall find that the children of men had so far departed from God, that they took counsel to make themselves a name that they might not be scattered abroad. That was an attempt affecting divine rights—a universal monarchy. In the counsels of God a universal monarchy is reserved for Christ. So, though it has been the effort of one Beast after another, and in later days of the great Napoleon, it has never been reached. When they thus affected to defy the God of heaven, He stopped their purpose, by scattering them. Now when God comes down to repair the mischief, He comes down on the humiliation of the Son to re-gather, to bless and to establish. The Lord Jesus has gone through the scene of His humiliation, and upon what Christ has done the Spirit is given to re-gather the human family—"and they heard them speak, every man in their own tongue the wonderful works of God." Man was scattered and confounded;—there was no brotherhood left in the earth,

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because *man had exalted himself.* Because *Christ has humbled Himself* for the glory of God, all this is to be reversed. Pentecost is just the reverse of the scene at Babel. God is restoring man to Himself and his brother by the accomplished work of the Lord Jesus.

Now that gives entrance on this ministry of the Spirit. The Jew begins to betray his ignorance. "These men are full of new wine." Then Peter opens his mouth and takes for his natural text the thing before him,—the fulfilment of the prophecy of Joel, and upon the occasion delivers a precious sermon on the glories of Christ. He finds Christ in Joel, and Christ in Psalm xvi. He is discovering the glories of Christ in the Scriptures of God. Is there any such witness of the fresh power of the Spirit as that? A sermon on the glories of Christ as embosomed in Scripture. A very blessed thing it is that the Spirit should begin His work by testifying to the glories of the rejected, crucified Christ. Not a word as yet about *grace;* but, going into the bosom of recondite Scriptures in Joel and the Psalms, and finding Jesus of Nazareth there—the crucified One, of whom the rabble of the earth had said, "Crucify Him, crucify Him"—the Spirit takes up and says, He is the God of heaven and earth. He goes to Psalm xvi., and says, *David* is not in that Psalm; and He goes to Psalm cx. and says, *David* is not in that Psalm. It is Jesus of Nazareth whose soul was not left in hell. It is Jesus of Nazareth to whom it is said, "Sit thou on my right hand till I make thy foes thy footstool." It is admirable, beyond all thought, to find such an opening of a freshly anointed lip. Under this preaching there was pricking of heart. Nothing causes pricking of heart like the disclosure of the glories of Christ. Was not this disclosure the confusion of Saul of Tarsus, and of Peter on the Lake of Galilee, and of the prophet in Isaiah chap. vi.? We have all sinned and come short of the glory of God; and if I am introduced to any sight of it, I cannot bear it, until I know that He who occupies the glory has reconciled me by blood. So they cried out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" They are convicted. They have found out that they are sinners.

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Peter is ready at hand, and says, "Repent," etc. They received the word. "Convicted yet confiding": *that* is eternal life. The next passage is beautiful. They were *satisfied,* and they could part with everything. It was "the expulsive power of a new affection," and the things they had boasted of before now might leave them.

Then, in chap. iii., Peter again uses *the occasion* for his text, and *now* he is presenting *grace.* Having spoken of the glories of Jesus, he now speaks of the grace that is in the name of Jesus. What God hath joined together let no man put asunder. And will you not consent to let His glories go before?

Now, we must mark this. In all this testimony there is *not a thought of heaven.* No. "Repent . . . . . and *He shall send Jesus.*" Ye men of Galilee, keep your eyes *down here.* Heaven is not your home. Repent, and Jesus *will come.* Most advisedly the Spirit is keeping the hopes of faith in connection with earth.

Up to that moment the work of the Spirit had not been hindered. Now the Sadducees begin to resent it. The self-righteous Pharisee stood up in contradiction to *grace* in THE SON. Now, the *resurrection* is spoken of and the Sadducee stands in contradiction. Peter and John are put in prison; but Peter has now been "converted." He cannot now be intimidated by a maiden. He can confront the Pharisees, and lead his brethren on from strength to strength.

Then they go on through chap. iv.: and it is lovely to see two qualities of boldness and tenderness in that fourth chapter:—the *boldness* with which they confront the enemy, their *tenderness* with a poor lame beggar; and the exultation yet brokenness when they address themselves to God. Would you blot out such beautiful *qualities* of action? We are clumsy. We ought to clothe right things in right qualities, put "apples of gold in pictures of silver." Then in chap. v. we see a beautiful action, the keeping of the House of God clean. Ananias and Sapphira are beguiled by this; they wanted to appear on a level with their brethren; they did not like to appear to come behind, yet they had

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not faith to part with their goods, and that ensnared them to death. I do not say that it was anything more than judicial death,—the death of the body.

Then through chap. v., Peter was bold as ever. "We ought to obey God rather than men." Here is the man that denied the Lord before a damsel! Then Gamaliel stands forth and, for the time, is a kind of partition-wall between them and the enmity.

As we enter on chap. vi., we must pause on a very humbling thing. Could you believe that before such heated enmity from the world around, they should have bickerings among themselves? We often say persecution binds the Church together, but here is a witness that it is not enough. The chapter opens with the domestic bickerings of the saints; and closes with the martyr spirit that was in their bosom all the time. How the Book of God leads our thoughts hither and thither, and exposes us to ourselves!

But now comes the crisis.—Just as in the cross of Christ, in the martyrdom of Stephen we get two critical eras. Chap. vii. closes the Book of Acts, so far as it is kindred with the four Evangelists. The path of the Spirit is critically the same as the path of the Son. The Spirit, like the Son, comes down with hopes for the earth, finds indisposedness, and takes His flight to heaven, just as the Son was forced by His rejection to find His inheritance in heaven. There were two different aspects in which the Lord was looked at in His death, —as a victim and as a martyr. As a poor sinner, I go to the cross where the *Lamb of God* bled;—as a saint, I go to it and say, "That is where my great Exemplar was cast out, and I was cast out with Him." That is how Paul looked at the cross when he said,"God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."—So in 1 Cor. i., "We preach Christ crucified."

Commonly when people speak of the cross, they limit their thoughts to it, as the place where the *Lamb of God* hung. As a sinner, I know nothing else; but as a saint I take another look at it, and see that my great Exemplar

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hung there because He was a witness against the world. In this way Stephen followed the path of a martyr. He was a witness against the world, and the world cast him out. So the Spirit in Stephen meets the same reception as the Son.

Now, let us mark it. Stephen was cast out; there was no angel to open the prison doors for *him*. But before he meets his death he is made a child of resurrection. Before ever a stone disfigured his face, God had glorified his countenance. God put His beauty on him, before ever man had put his marring touch on him. Now, just as Peter in chaps. ii. and iii., takes *the occasion* for his text, so Stephen here takes his own beautiful glorified visage, takes *himself*, as his text. Will not you take *yourself* as your text for eternity.—"Worthy is the Lamb." We ought to be able to preach a sermon on ourselves *now*. Stephen takes himself for his text, and what does he say? He says, "Why, *I am* no novelty in your history. It has been the same thing from Abel downward." There has always been a heavenly parenthesis in the bosom of the earthly story. For instance, Abraham went forth from his father's house, into a strange land, where his only company was his tent and his altar. In due time, God said his children should inherit the land. Joseph in the same manner became a heavenly stranger. He was cast out by his brethren and sent down into Egypt.

Abraham's heavenly strangership in Canaan was a picture of Stephen's heavenly ascension, and Joseph's dignity and joys and new-found family in Egypt are a picture of the heaven Stephen was going to. In the same way *Moses* was taken for a time to the back of the mountain, where he found a new family and was happy with his dear Zipporah. And when we come to the history of Christ, we find the same thing. He came with glad tidings. They cast Him out and heaven received Him. And heaven is just about to receive Stephen. And now I ask, Are you in company with Stephen? Do you believe you are occupying the heavenly parenthesis in the bosom of God's history of the earth? What were stones to Stephen? "Ye are dead, and your

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life is hid with Christ in God; and when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory." What did He see when He looked up? "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven?" Was that still the voice? The Holy Ghost directed Stephen's eyes. The scene of our expectation is transferred; Stephen went there as our representative. How beautiful to see him thus on the confines of the two countries! His left foot on the earth where he was about to be martyred, his right foot scaling the heavens that were about to receive him! From that day to this the Church has been travelling the path of a heavenly stranger. As far as you and I are pulling down our barns and building greater, as far as we are covetous and worldly, we are not in chap. vii. of Acts; and let me not dare for a moment to disfigure the work of God, and take myself for my text.

It is the path of the Church from that day to this, and will be, till we are taken to meet the Lord in the air, and be for ever with Him.

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## JABEZ.

1 Chronicles iv. 9, 10.

And Jabez was more honourable than his brethren: and his mother called his name Jabez [sorrowful], saying, Because I bare him with sorrow.

And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying,

HIS FOURFOLD PRAYER ANSWERED.

1. Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed,
and
2. Enlarge my coast,
and
3. That thine hand might be with me,
and
4. That thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me!
and

God granted him that which he requested.

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## No. XXVII.

## ROMANS IX., X., XI.

WHEN we enter on the Epistle to the Romans, and look for prophetic truth, we find it very distinctly standing out. The epistle consists of three parts.

The first part closes with chap. viii., and is the education of the *individual* saint. You are there *alone* with Christ, and you are introduced to the justification of your person, and may shout in spirit, "Who shall condemn?" "Who shall separate?"

In chapters ix., x., and xi., you get the dispensations of God, or His dealings with the earth from beginning to end, and there you get prophecy. It is most desirable for the soul to acquaint itself with God's story of the earth.

Then, when we close chapter xi., it takes up practical details, still addressing itself to the saints of God, but now they are looked at, not alone with Christ, but in company with one another, in their *social* place. It is very important to see these distinctions.

Now supposing we direct our eye to chapters ix., x., and xi., the second great division of the epistle. They introduce our thoughts, as I have said, to divine dispensations — the dealings of God with the earth from beginning to end. Chapter ix. opens with a very fervent protest on the part of Paul. He is about to tell the Israel of God that they are going to be cast off for a time, and he could not approach such a subject without feeling it. He begins, therefore, by a very fervent utterance of his heart—"I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ, for my brethren," etc. He shows how he had continual sorrow of heart for them. Then he recalls their ancient dignity. The promises were theirs, — the fathers were theirs, — Christ was theirs, concerning the flesh. That takes him down to ver. 5. Then, in ver. 6, he goes on to relieve himself and you.

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It is not that the present ruin of Israel has broken God's word. Nay, it has fulfilled it. It does not follow that all who are *of* Israel *are* Israel; and he goes on to prove that in the case of Ishmael and Isaac, Jacob and Esau. When you are tracing the dispensational ways of God, you are always in company with His *word.* His *hand* always verifies His *word.* We see this in the opening of Matthew's gospel. Was the child to go down into Egypt? He turns to the prophet Hosea and finds it there. Was the Bethlehemite to be called a Nazarene? He turns to all the prophets and finds it there. When you mark a correspondence between the word of God and the events passing under your eye, you are dealing with "the signs of the times." Therefore, in the second part of the chapter, he says, Do not think the word of God has failed. I have the book in my hand, and you under my eye, and I find you are *fulfilling* His word. That carries us down to ver. 13. Then, in ver. 14, he says, "What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God." No, that cannot be; but there is *sovereign mercy* with God. And then he illustrates this in the beautiful parable of the two vessels. Pharaoh was a vessel of wrath. Israel was a vessel appointed to mercy. Mark how beautifully he speaks of these. Did *God* prepare Pharaoh to be a vessel of wrath? Indeed He did *not.* When Pharaoh forgot Joseph he was fitting himself by his iniquity for the righteous judgment of God. But as to the vessels of mercy, it is Himself who prepares them from the very first; and if He did not, not one of us would ever be a vessel of mercy. If He did not begin to set His love upon you, and to make you His object, you never would be prepared to glory. Did not He prepare Israel in Egypt? that wretched people that said, "Who made thee a prince and a judge over us?" If God had not prepared them, they had entitled themselves to no better treatment than Pharaoh himself.

In those two figures the necessity of sovereign grace shines out, yet the perfect responsibility of the creature. Could Pharaoh have forgotten Joseph, who had made Egypt the queen of the earth, and been guiltless? Then, when the Apostle comes down in the close of the 9th



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chapter to assert sovereignty as a necessary thing, he shows that God will act in sovereignty in behalf of the Gentile, as well as in behalf of the Jew. In the 30th verse he draws up his soul again to another meditation. "What shall we say then?" This is what I say:—"That the Gentiles which followed not after righteousness have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith." Israel is now cast off for their own unbelief. "They stumbled at *the* stumbling stone." Then chap. x. occupies itself with that subject. He is still breaking his heart over them, and is a beautiful model for you and me. If we sit in company with the prophets, we should not be unmoved readers of them. "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge." Now, it is not their ancient dignity, but their *religion* that moves him. If there is a heart-breaking thing in the world it is to have to mourn over a man's religion. We are living in a nation that is steeped in religiousness, yet every bit of it is cause of sorrow to us. And what is his prayer? "That they might be saved." What! does a religious people want to be *saved?* Yes; they want to be saved from their own religiousness, as well as from their own corruptions and lusts. "Being ignorant of God's righteousness." Not taking righteousness as a gift, they go about to establish their own righteousness, and have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God. A fine moral word is this word "*submitted.*" If you take divine righteousness you have *subjected* nature. Then he discusses the two righteousnesses. The first duty of the heart is to believe in Christ, and the first duty of the lips is to confess Him. The righteousness of faith says, "I will sit as still as a stone and let the salvation of God pass before me."

Then, having established that, he says beautifully in the 14th verse, "How can you attach guilt to Israel? Perhaps they have not heard." Yes they have. They cannot plead that; they have looked for righteousness in an unscriptural way, and cannot plead ignorance. For "to Israel He saith, All day long have I stretched

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forth my hands to a disobedient and gainsaying people." He leaves Israel under the guilt of not having found the righteousness which is by faith.

Then in chap. xi. he looks at the dispensations of God. He opens by saying, "Hath God cast away His people?" This epistle among other things checks our own inferences. Here is one of them. "Hath God cast away His people?" *No*. That is your own conclusion. I myself, being an Israelite, am a witness that He has not cast away His people. The Apostle stands forth as a beautiful witness that God has an election in the midst of the nation, as He had in the time of Elias. But, for the present, the *nation as such* is still an outcast nation. "But now I want to know" (he says in the 11th verse) "has the *nation* stumbled?" In the 1st verse the inquiry was, "Has God no people among Israel?" I am a witness that *He has*," says Paul. "Well, then, has He cast off Israel *as a nation?*" The rest of the chapter discusses that question. We shall never be in the light where God dwells if we do not see that Israel, *as a nation*, is to be restored. Now he comes to answer the question. "Have they stumbled that they should fall?" No. It is a *remnant*-day now; it will be a *nation*-day by-and-bye. That is, God will by-and-bye deal with them nationally, as He is dealing now with an election in their midst, and with the very grace in which *you* stand this moment. This dignity attaches to you as Gentiles that you stand out before the nation of the Jews as a sample of the standing into which they will be brought by-and-bye. The blood-bought sinner can look in the face of Israel as a nation, and say, "Look at me and read your own future story." "I speak to you Gentiles—if by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and might save *some* of them." I am not seeking to save them *as a nation*. The nation will never be saved by the preaching of the gospel. Do people go out to the Jews in expectation of evangelising the nation *as* a nation? It is a great mistake.

But then he says, "You Gentiles that are graffed in, take care that you are not boasting. Do you mean to infer that they will not be graffed in again? That is

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your own speculation. Because of unbelief they were cast off, but let me tell you, if He spared not the natural branches, take heed lest also He spare not thee." Do you believe Christendom has continued in the goodness of God? You *could* not say it. And what shall be its end? The Apostle tells you it shall be cut off. And there is not a ray of hope for Christendom. There is nothing before it but the judgment of the day of Christ. But there shall come out of Zion a Deliverer to turn away ungodliness from Jacob. *There* is the answer to the question. Has He cast off His people? By-and-bye they will be beloved as a nation, for the fathers' sakes. If you do not mean to deprive God of one great article of His own delight, the nation of Israel must be restored. Do you think God is going to tell Abraham He has repented of His covenant when He promised him the land? "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance."

"For God hath concluded them all in unbelief that he might have mercy upon all." Whether it be the Gentiles for heavenly places, or the Jews for earthly places, it is all one story of boundless grace, warranted and perfected in the blood of Christ. Redemption is too precious a story not to be rehearsed in every part of God's creation.

Then he breaks his heart over it all. "Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God." It is not here the tale of mercy. Here it is the shout of his spirit over the wisdom and knowledge of God. "For of Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things; to whom be glory for ever. Amen."

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## FRAGMENTS.

Circumstances are the looking-glasses which show us where we are.

Circumstances are the moulds which determine the shape which grace has to take.

The link of eternal life can never be broken, but the link of communion may be snapped by a look of the eye.

God seems to rise higher as man falls lower.

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# No. XXVIII.

## ANTICHRIST.

In the second chapter of the first Epistle of John we read (ver. 18), "Little children, it is the last time: and as we have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists, whereby we know that it is the last time."

Antichrist, or *the antichrist*, is spoken of here as being expected by those to whom John wrote as one that was to come, and as distinguishable from *the many antichrists*. This is to be taken notice of; so also is the fact that the mention of both the one antichrist and the many is found in an epistle which treats upon the subject of the life of God's children displayed down here, in the interval between Pentecost and their removal to the Father's house on high. He is then, I judge, a power which will rise in connection with the corruption of true worship,—the worshippers in spirit and in truth sought by the Father, rather than in connection with the kingdoms of the world and with God as the ruler over them. When the evil is come to the full, it will be the lamb-like prophet, not the beast-like king.

But again, in the fourth chapter and the third verse, we read—

"And every spirit that confesseth not [that] Jesus Christ [is] come in [the] flesh is not of God: and this is that [spirit] of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world."

I give the verse in full as it occurs in the English authorized version; but there can be no doubt whatever that the sense is obscured, if not changed, by the introduction into it of the words [that], [is], [the]. Insert them and the meaning of the passage then is, that no false spirit can assent to the fact that Christ is come in the flesh: but demons did own to Christ that He was

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come in the flesh, in the days of the Lord's sojourn upon earth; and since too: see Matt. viii. 29; Mark v. 7; Luke viii. 26; Acts xvi. 17, etc. Leave these words out and then not *the fact* of Jesus Christ having come in flesh is in question, but the confession *of Himself*, which is quite another thing. As an illustration of this, the spirit which led and guided Paul in the life and scenes which he describes in writing to the Philippians in chap. i., was but the same spirit and mind which he says (in chap. ii.) Christ Himself had displayed. The true Christ of God and the true Spirit of God and of Christ go together. If you have and hold by faith the true Christ of God, then you have the true Spirit of God and of Christ, and your life will be accordingly. On the other hand, if you have and hold to another Christ than the true One, then you will have another spirit than the Spirit of God and of Christ, and your life will be accordingly. This is a very solemn truth, and we shall do well to take heed to it as to our own selves: as John says in this same epistle (chap. iv. 1), "Beloved, believe not every spirit, *but* TRY *the spirits* whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world."

The word *antichrist* means "*a substitute-for-Christ*": but, from the very nature of the subject, a substitute for *Christ* must be an antagonist to Him. There is but One who is the Anointed of God. Any one who pretends to assume His place, to substitute himself for Him, is an enemy of His; and every one whom we, even unconsciously, may substitute for Him, will be found to be antagonistic to Him.

The Galatian Churches got another Christ and another spirit and another life, through judaizing, than they had had; and Paul insists upon it that the true Christ had sonship for all that believed in Him, and also the Spirit of adoption and of liberty. The Hebrews also were in danger of doing the same thing.

It will I think be found, if people will look down the line of time from the days of the true Christ and the Spirit given on the day of Pentecost, that there have been *many* false Christs substituted by man for the true

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at various times, and that another spirit than the Holy Spirit has thus been let in and the character of the individual disciple thus altogether changed, and the character of the assembly of disciples spoiled.

I am persuaded that the object before the mind and upon which we stay ourselves, the motive power connected therewith, and the character which is produced on us, either individually or in a company, are inseparable.

The true Christ in heaven, seen by faith, has the action of the Holy Ghost accompanying the faith ; and free service flows from this into the individual and fellowship of life hence into the body. Another Christ than the true will not be witnessed to by the Holy Ghost, though there is a spirit who will witness to such and produce a character consistent with himself, in the individual professor and on the company. The Galatian Churches, the Hebrews, the Colossians, the Ephesians, in the respective epistles to them show it.

And do not the Papist Church, and the Greek Church, and the Protestant Churches show the same thing? In these cases there is, at least, such a MIXTURE of evil with good, of the human with the divine, that the character of the individual disciple is altogether other than what it should be; yes, and another character is set up as a standard than what Paul set up,—and the assembly is likewise all spoiled; at Rome and among Romanists, and in the various parts of the Greek Church too, it is so. The rationale of this is evident and easy to trace. Let us take a case or two.

1. A man preaches and teaches a gospel which supposes a Christ who had sin in himself, who, therefore, had to overcome sin in himself. Such an one not being holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sin himself, of course could not be the sinner's perfect substitute in bearing the wrath due to sin; could not be made sin, that we might become the righteousness of God in him. If such a gospel were mooted and were not the result of mere stupidity in man, but of the *immediate* work of Satan, a false spirit would accompany the preaching of it. The believer in it could not be saved by it, get rest

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before God, or peace, or holiness. An assembly formed upon it would not be the letter of Christ, known and read of all; and various would be the marks and signs of an evil power present and at work. The mould of the golden coin called "a sovereign" could not form a one pound note; nor are the processes by which the two are formed the same or similar.

2. Again, a gospel which teaches a Christ born under guilt, and necessarily under guilt from his association with His people, presents that which substitutes a different Christ from Him, who, Son of God as well as Son of man, voluntarily and of His own accord, took up the guilt of His people, and undertook to take away the sin of the world. The counterfeit, here, is a reproach to the true Christ, is an antichrist. If the Holy Ghost works in holy energy in the case of testimony to the Christ of God—certainly He will not work in connection with an antichrist. Is there a spirit at work? It must be from beneath. And as is the object proposed to faith, and as is the power that works with that object, so is the life of the individual that receives the testimony, and so is the company connected with it. The royal arms of one country stamped uniformly in ink, cannot be mistaken for the royal arms of another country stamped uniformly in lead. The armorial bearings, the processes of imposing them, would readily suggest two classes, and not one; and under these two classes all the respective individual specimens should be arranged.

3. The same might be said if, as has often been the case in history, such a one was preached as *the* Christ as had but part of the character of Christ — love without holiness; or love and holiness without heavenly mindedness; who had only pardon to give and not eternal life, as a present gift, leading the disciples to walk as He walked, and through the presence of the Holy Ghost dwelling in the body, setting His own people clean outside the world and in communion with the Father and the Son in heaven, waiting for the Son from heaven.

In this case, I am aware, the evil being much more one of deficiency as to formative truth than of positive antagonistic evil, the result might be more difficult to

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judge than in the preceding cases which have been supposed. But God in heaven and the Spirit of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ dwelling on earth in God's people, would discern how far the results down here were in accordance with the discipleship and the assembly of God as displayed on the day of Pentecost.

The principles of truth as presented on the day of Pentecost, the power accompanying that truth, the character issuing thence in individuals and in the assembly of individuals, remain just what they were. No other Christ than He who was then preached (as having been raised from the dead and placed at God's right hand in heaven, sender down of the Holy Ghost) is *the* Christ of God. No other gospel is *the* gospel than the gospel of God's thoughts concerning Him, the Son of His love. If He is *the* truth, *He*, certainly, is not changed, and His power is not changed. Does a sinner now want less, to satisfy his soul and heart and mind, than he wanted eighteen hundred years ago? Why then is another gospel to be preached now than then? This question is a solemn one to every lover of Christ as *the* truth. Is He preached now in the same way in which He was preached then? I cannot say Yes. I know indeed that God's grace has brought out afresh, through one man and through another, portions of truth, the truth. Adoringly, I bless His name who has restored *in measure* what man had wholly let slip; but to say that the gospel as preached at Pentecost is preached now would be (not to recognise God's grace in spite of man's failure, but) to cover over man's wants, by naming that very grace, the re-gift of which, on God's part, was meant to awaken the sense in man of His failure and deficiency before God. I bless God that the least ray of the light of Christ is unto eternal salvation. For that light, where received, brings with it the blessing *for eternity* of all that God sees Christ to be or to have for His people. But if the blessing of being Christ's for eternity is mine as much as it was Peter's or John's, *why* am I not to have, too, all the blessing of being Christ's *in time*, which they had?

This naturally brings one to the question of the difference between Pentecostal blessing and the Reformation in every part of it.

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God's mind about His assembly is not changed. Still does it live in His counsels and mind and plan, that His assembly is to be the Bride of Christ in the glory. Alas! nor in the earlier fruits of the (so called) Reformation, viz., the national churches, nor in the after-crop, viz., the Nonconformist bodies, nor in the bastard produce from the one and the other, is that to be found which can bear the test of being tried by such questions as, Is Christ preached in the same way now as then? Is the motive power now unique as then? Is the path traced for the individual and for the company the same now as then?

Alas! at Pentecost faith recognised that the Christ in heaven was the treasury, even He who had carried off the hearts of His people with Him. From the world they were shut out; on earth they were pilgrims and strangers. They enjoyed His and the Father's love, and awaited His return. Satan, before the Greek or the Roman Churches existed, had got men's minds out of heaven down to earth as the seat of the mind and heart too. This could not have been had the Christ in heaven been the object of their faith, and the power of the Holy Ghost the alone power. It was the second not the first step in evil, to teach that the Church was queen of the earth and world. So Greek and so Roman Churches did teach. It was a third step for Emperors and Kings to say, and to act upon it. "The civil power is head of the Church." Nonconformity saw, everywhere, I can suppose, that the sword of Cæsar under God and the Holy Ghost under an earth-rejected heaven-honoured Christ, were powers of a very different nature and could not be mixed. But in no case, so far as I know, have Nonconformists known how to "render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and unto God the things which are God's." It is difficult to take forth the precious from that which is vile. But it must be done, if ever, in such a state of things as that of to-day, we are to get full blessing. I bless God for *all* the good. Wherever I can say, "That is of God," I must own it. But the pool of Bethesda with its five porches, "in which lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered,

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waiting for the moving of the water, because an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water, and whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in, was made whole of whatsoever disease he had" (see John v.), blessed as it was, was in principle opposed to two other things—God's promise to Israel if obedient on the one hand, and the healing power of Christ on the other. These were the promises to obedience: "Ye shall serve the Lord your God, and he shall bless thy bread, and thy water; and I will take sickness away from the midst of thee. There shall nothing cast their young, nor be barren, in thy land; the number of thy days I will fulfil" (Ex. xxiv. 25, 26); and the Lord will take away from thee all sickness, and will put none of the evil diseases of Egypt, which thou knowest, upon thee (Deut. vii. 15, comp. chap. xxviii.)

The virtue of the Lord, on the other hand, was that Himself was the spring and source from which, in His own divine power and grace, the stream flowed to those that had no strength in themselves whatsoever.

Bethesda stood in Providence, and had its upbraidings and its limitations, and its requirements; yet was a witness for the God of Israel. But Christ's virtue was in Himself, without upbraiding, without limitation, and presupposed no virtue in those that He blessed. Absence of all need if obedient, limited and conditional help after failure, and unlimited unconditional help—are three very different things. I own to the five porches, each one, perhaps, a differently shaped one, of the Bethesda of our day. I deny not the virtue that is there displayed, but can it satisfy a divinely taught heart? Surely no more so than that Pool of Bethesda could satisfy the cravings of the heart of Messiah when He had entered it. And He uses, remarkably enough, that incident of His healing an impotent body as the basis of His teaching in the rest of the same chapter about Himself, as the Resurrection and the Life for eternity of those that hear His word and believe on Him that sent Him (v. 24).

The first energy and blessing under the Reformation has always been of God. But what afterwards? Has there been a growing up into Christ? Has there been

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an abiding in Him so that we may become indeed His disciples? Certainly not. I say *certainly not,* because the world-wide feeling of need of reformation, from the Pope of to-day down to the lowest seed of non-conformity run-wild, all proclaims the felt need of reformation. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me," still remains true; and where it is the vital principle of any, then there must be purpose of heart to follow Him. I do not charge Protestants with having set out with a false Christ at first, but I must charge *many* in this day with not going on with the true Christ; and it is not doctrinal truth, which is the only question; there is also the question, Have you the energy and purpose of life? Are you with that which God is leading on? If you are connected with an antichrist, necessarily all is over with you as to any true confession here on earth as an individual, or in the ranks of the Lord's people. But if you are not connected with any thing doctrinally unsound, in which another spirit than Christ's is practically owned and is working, what of the aim and purpose and object of your living while down here? What as to your being in company there where the shelter and energy and guidance of God is?

I commenced with the one final antichrist and the many historic ones; I would close with an exhortation to my reader to compare the assembly of God as set up at Pentecost, and as illustrated by Paul in his letter to the Ephesians, with the gospel on which it was formed, and the Spirit who wrought with the gospel; and let him, after so doing, compare what man now boasts in as being the church with its essential principles, and with the energy which works in it. And let each man see whereabouts he himself is as to his position and walk. G.

God substituted Christ His Son, who knew no sin, in place of the sinner on the cross: man will substitute any one else in place of the true Christ, and in the end will substitute a devil-inspired antichrist in place of Him who was The Truth.

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## No. XXIX.

## JUDGMENTS, THE EXPRESSION OF DIVINE DISPLEASURE.

SOLEMN as the subject is, it is healthful to the soul to remember that God is a God of discernment—of evil, as well as of good; and that it is His way to express His thoughts and estimate—as of the good—so likewise of the evil.

Let us look at some of the more salient proofs of this in the Word as to evil.

God placed man, whom He had created, in a certain position and relationship to Himself in Eden, the paradise of man. When the condition upon which man was to continue there had been broken by him, Adam's evil and wicked violation of that condition is brought out to light; arraigned and convicted, he is expelled *for ever* from his paradise, though mercy, by introducing the woman's seed, blots not the rebel from off the face of the earth; nor lets judgment take its full final course then and there. The last Adam is brought in, in promise, just before the first Adam is driven out. Adam's primeval position and relationship were lost, lost for ever: this was the righteous expression of divine displeasure against Adam's unfaithfulness to the duties of his position: God's introduction of the last Adam in the seed of the woman was the merciful expression of His delight in the last Adam; in whom there was salvation for time and salvation for eternity open to the condemned rebel; and so the first Adam passed out of his paradise, under the displeasure of God, though, for the sake of the last Adam, he is left on earth, for time, and might through Him win a place in the paradise of God for eternity. His position was lost, his first relationship was broken—the second death in eternity was before him, the punishment in full of a creature's independency of its Creator. But these he had not yet come to.

2. The antediluvian world. "And God saw "

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wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the Lord that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him at His heart. And the Lord God said, I will destroy man, whom I have created, from the face of the earth; both man and beast, and the creeping things, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth Me that I have made them. But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord" (Gen. vi. 5—8).

The utterance of His thoughts, about the fulness of the wickedness of—and of His righteous unqualified displeasure with—that world is solemn and awful.

"The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth. And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence through them, and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth" (11—13).

Peter gives us the concise account of the execution of this sentence and its awful completeness; and also its typical character; and how Noah passed through the fearful expression of divine wrath (2 Peter iii. 5, 6,) . . . "by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water, whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished:"—all perished, heavens and earth that then were; it was a type of the coming destruction of the heavens and earth that now are by fire,—"the heavens being on fire, shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat" (2 Peter iii.). God "spared not the old world, but saved Noah, the eighth, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly" (ii. 5; and Gen. vi., vii and viii.); Noah passed through the desolating judgment.

3. The displeasure of God at the conduct of Ham—when Noah, into whose hand the present earth, and the government of it (in the power of life and death) were put, had been drunk.

"Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be

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unto his brethren;" Gen. ix. 25; and compare Deut. xxxii. 8.

4. The Tower of Babel. All were scattered.

"So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of the earth: and they left off to build the city. Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth" (xi. 3, 9).

5. When God took up Abram, of the family of Shem (chap. xi. and xii.; compare Jos. xxiv. 14, 15), he left the idolatrous world where it stood.

6. 2 Peter ii. 6—we read of His "turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes, condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that should after live ungodly; and delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked; (for that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds;) the Lord knoweth how to deliver the ungodly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished" (6—9). Awful overthrow and bare escape (as of one saved so as by fire) have we here, as also in Gen. xviii. and xix.

7. We see the same nearness of God to each of the three, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in their individual walks, and to their families; and to the twelve patriarchs and Joseph;—and a constant notice of chastening, more or less severe, for practical heedlessness of walk.

8. Job, as an individual and the head of a family, may be noticed here, and the kingdom of Israel taken up by God in Egypt and His sore plagues on Egypt, and passing of Israel out of Egypt.

9. All His judgments too, as each successive part of His people, failed.

The people and Aaron as to the calf.

Nadab and Abihu with the strange fire.

The sabbath day and the sticks picked up thereon.

The Israelitish woman's son who blasphemed the name of the Lord and cursed.

Aaron and Miriam.

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The murmuring at Taberah.

The lustings of the mixed multitude.

The failure of the spies, with their discouraging the people.

The failure of the Levites and Kore, etc., etc., etc.

The judges, the prophets, the kings—all provoked the Lord; and the judgment of the Lord was upon them—proof of His displeasure at their sin.

But all these sins were theirs according to positions and relationships which were *in time* and on earth, in the which He had placed them. As providing for man and as ruling over man down here, God expected honour to be paid to Himself; and when, instead of honour He found contempt,—His displeasure was expressed and acted upon. But in none of these cases did He act upon the great position and relationship of the Eternal God, the Creator, on the one side, and man as His creature and as sustained in being by Him, on the other. All the longsuffering patience of God, too, was possible because of the presence of the Son with Him; that Son who, before the question of the creature in rebellion with its Creator should be tried, was to die upon the cross as Son of man under the hidings from Him of the light of God's countenance. He, the power and the wisdom of God, bare that wrath once, and bare it in a fulness and in a way that none other ever could bear it. He became the gauge, the mark, whereby the power of that wrath could be measured in its immeasurableness. *That* the saint of God never can know,—that the unbeliever will know and will learn (what never can be fully taught to man, save through an eternity) what the agony is of hatred and defiance of the living God, full of goodness, in a creature such as man is.

As a believer, I might possibly suffer with the world around me, under any of God's sore judgments in time: the plague, the sword, famine, and the noisome beasts.

But that is not the wrath of the Creator God expressing itself, as from His own sphere and place, against the state and condition of a rebel creature.

As a believer, judgments of God, in time and as Ruler upon earth might surround me; providential judgments

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of various kinds too; the chastening of God as the head of a family, which should be holy, even as He is holy; or the same upon myself for individual failure:—but I pass through it all, if with humbled heart, yet with confidence. The condition upon which blessing now hangs, in this position or that, in this relationship or that, may have been violated by me; and I may have to bear the consequences thereof at the hand of God,—this is part of His governmental order and ways; but it is quite distinct from the settlement by the eternal God of heaven of that abruption between my soul as a creature, and Himself as Creator. That is settled; His love gave His Son to be the propitiation of my sins. In *His* death there was the expression of more than the wrath of God in government, down here, in time; that, for man —must be in time and on earth.

And this Son is now my life; eternal life in heaven and in God.

## FRAGMENT.

*Response to the Fragment, p.* 347.

" The spectres of long buried hours
Throng round me, thick and fast;—
*The might have been* of life is lost
In the unreturning past."

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1. Hush!—These are tones unfit for thee,
Heav'n's chos'n one! It cannot be
That *thou*, in mere humanity,
Canst chide " what is."
2. What " might have been " is none of thine;
It sounds no chord, no note divine;
It tells of earth, of man, of time
That " might have been."
3. Or knowest thou not what hand has traced
Thy path,—thy portion through the waste?
There's nought of chance, of loss, of haste
In His " *What is.*"
4. 'Tis He who once was very man
And knows man's need, and will, and can
Make part of His eternal plan
Thy " might have been."
5. Amen! Amen! (the soul replies)
Blest hand that curbs, controls, denies!
Each loss with Thee becomes a prize;
Each " might have been " a loss!



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# No. XXX.

## COLLECTANEA.

### 1.

THE word "*Conscience*" is made up of two words; *con* (meaning with) and science; and means the knowledge which a man has since the fall, intuitively (*with* himself) of a right and wrong.

Man as created was innocent, and had no knowledge of good and evil.

He got his knowledge of good and evil by insubjection and insubordination to God, and at Satan's suggestion; but he [man] had not a correct view of what Satan meant to do. A murderer and a liar from the beginning, he meant, by a lie, to drag man into a share of his own condemnation, so ruining creation. It was an afterthought of Satan's, but could not prevent God's forethought of redemption glory taking effect.

Remark that there was no answer to the see-saw of right and wrong within a man in God, so far as revealed, in Eden. Man had to say, "God created it and me, and gave it all to me to continue mine so long as I was subject. I cast off allegiance to God, at Satan's suggestion, I broke away from God, lost my innocence and have been turned out of Eden." In God as giving blessing into man's own keeping, there is no answer when man has lost it.

Nor in God as a God of providence, saying, "Man is so desperately wicked, that I declare I will not destroy the earth again with water," was there an answer.

What answer do I find in myself? I know God has been cast off, and I cast out of Eden; this knowledge of good and evil, with all its results of loving evil and hating good, and in practice of loving good and doing evil, has no answer to it,—in me.

Well! what answer is there to this very state as to death, as to God—if there be one? For sin once in the

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world, all certain knowledge passed out of it, so far as itself was concerned. Man worshipped stocks and stones. Saul of Tarsus, in the midst of all the Jewish ordinances, every one of which pointed to Christ, thought Christ an impostor, and persecuted His name unto death—thought he did God service in putting Christians to death. Man has no certainty as to anything looked at as fallen.

Chap. x. of Hebrews gives the only answer. God says, "*I propose* to make a good and a perfect and a purged conscience for myself in man." In God so saying there is hope for me.

But further, therefore, Christ died.

And that according to a counsel which was from before the foundation of the world; and He is risen.

And is owned in heaven itself as that which justifies God in dealing in blessing with a Saul of Tarsus, with Ephesians, etc. Now when I come there, I find, even now, that my whole standard of right and wrong is fixed, and fixed according to the character of God glorifying Himself in grace through a crucified and risen Son of His love in poor sinners.

By faith I can say, "Now I see that God is; that He is good; and that He has known how to glorify Himself more amid the ruin of man than in creation." What a God He is! What goodness! and how peculiar its character! The beauty of Christ too, how good; how good that I should fall to *His* lot! What a new discovery of evil too! Because I sinned Christ died. What a measure too of sin! The sin of a worm of yesterday, that will not be to-morrow, transferred to Christ, and the curse was His. What a disentangling of all Satan's jumble too, is to be found there!

And if I, when under Satan, in sin, and sin in me, in a world of sin and darkness, have had a ray of light from Christ above, making the cell of my heart the dwelling place of Christ, and have got the perfect answer in myself as to every thing in God, in heaven, in hell, in earth, through Christ as the accepted sacrifice,—can *He* ever forget me—while I live here below; if I die; if He comes; if I see Him on the judgment throne?

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No: that which has given me a purged conscience, a conscience full of life, Christ the accepted sacrifice in heaven, that is my present and my future answer.

Note too, that not only God and His Son are in question, but the Holy Ghost gives the testimony as the witness, so that there is *power* in the word in us,—for the Holy Ghost is with it.

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## 2.

### Ex. xxxiv.

Ex. xxxiv. 6 and 7, was the Lord's proclamation of His name before Moses, after that Israel had danced before the calf, and that Moses had broken the tables of the covenant.

"The LORD, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear (the guilty); visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and fourth (generation)."

Truly, the longsuffering of God, not willing that any should perish, is admirable!

When He sets man in any position, man cannot be displaced from it by any external power. Nor Adam innocent,—nor Noah in his headship of the new earth,—nor Israel brought out of Egypt in a new relationship to God—could lose the blessing of the relationship *save* by voluntary surrender of it through sin. And so, onward, I judge, as to every fresh position assigned to man in blessing.

And when man has failed in any given position, and has lost thereby all right to its privileges, neither, on the one hand, does judgment come at once; nor, on the other, is man ever re-instated in that position, or the judgment of his failure forgotten. With what multiplied long-suffering patience did God wait on Israel, after its first fall; trying every various expedient with it, in grace, until it became self-condemned even upon

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its own line of principles. Then judgment, at last, took its course. Mediatorship, priesthood, prophets, judges, kings, all had their day in the already *failed* house of Israel; and there was even this honour put upon some, that they took up the dishonour put upon God by their generation, and knowing God's purpose about Israel, made it their honour and honourable service to sigh and to cry before God for all the abominations that were wrought. Eze. ix.; Ezra ix.; Neh. ix.; Dan. ix., etc. At last, the time came when He to whom the vineyard belonged acted on the thought, "I have one Son; they will reverence My Son"; and sent Him to them.

They were a failed thing at the time; but two out of twelve tribes in the land; the kingdom divided; and the divisions ruled over by the Roman power; and the whole state of Israel told it was a failed, self-condemned thing. Sickness, want, devils, heresies and sects, all through the land. But the Son came and offered Himself to them,—ready and able to turn their captivity, would they but be willing to own God and their own sin. With His presence, there was power put forth, and the virtue and light that shined around Him checked Satan's power and course, and stayed his triumph. But they would not have the Son as shepherd, prophet, ruler, or King. He was rejected like all God's witnesses who had preceded him, in a ruined house, in a kingdom whose power was usurped by an enemy. But, while this witness was continued, it was a check on the adversary: and God's check, still lingering in mercy, was there. Mercy lingered, and Christ kept His place with the God of mercy, for the sake of the poor of the flock. The sentence of judgment was recorded on high, had been reported down here, on earth: but mercy and long suffering still waited, if haply there might be repentance. When the time, the hour, the moment was come that longsuffering any more would have been the sanction of sin, toleration with man who would not have the king, what did He do? Withdrew Himself and the power flowing forth from Him, which had kept the evil in pause; and let man and Satan have their hour and the power of darkness. This was the Lord's own act as the servant of God, when in a place that

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would not have God's Son as king; but He hid not Himself from the fury of Satan's power and the hour of darkness, on the one hand, nor did he cease to identify Himself with the God of Israel, who had set him as King of Israel. A king then whom a rebel people refused. The testimony closed; God gave the people up to the prince of darkness of their own choosing. This was as much the first part of God's wrath on the nation and people, as was His giving up Pharaoh and Egypt to their own blind, hard hearts, the first part of His judgment on Egypt.

The Lord Jesus was under no necessity of position or relationship as a man, to oblige Him to go through the sorrow of God's displeasure on Israel, of Satan's hour and the power of darkness. Yet He could not, He would not cut off the hope of Israel, nor cease to hold and manifest fellowship with the God of Israel and His counsels. So he would tarry and go through the storm. It was not wrath from God, *on Himself alone*, as the sin bearer in God's presence, *that* came afterwards on the cross, and was His and His alone. It was not like some other sorrows and sufferings either, in that it was the yielding to man's course of wilfulness when they had preferred Satan to Himself, and bowing to God's displeasure thereon. It was a peculiar, a distinctively peculiar, sorrow; but it was a real one. Had it lasted for any time whatsoever, there was no atonement in it. It was not a new position taken by Him. Israel was, in principle, judged long before; Israel had been rejecting testimony; how long! But He ceased when they had made deliberate choice against God and Himself; He ceased to strive, ceased to put forth the virtue and power which had kept evil in check, and taking His own place, consciously God's King with God, He let the restraining effects of God's presence to cease. Though none could stand, besides Himself, in that hour—though God, then and there, gave up the nation (and for God to withdraw in wrath, and leave any thing in Satan's hands is awful and fearful judgment), yet it reached not unto, touched not the Lord's conscious complacency in God and in His nearness to Himself,—now become the only visible witness of God, the one in whom God now saw shut up all

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the hopes of Israel. None that had loved Him and followed Him, as Israelites, could cleave to Him then; they were unable to follow Him, though loved by and loving Him. The nation, though upon other grounds than they, would not have Him. The nation had, in principle, renounced Messiah living among them as a man. The ground on which the disciples had known and loved Him would become heavenly and not earthly; divine and not human; and the real eternal ground of their relationship to Him be made evident.

When the Church is gone on high there will be governmental displeasure enough, to be passed through by those that cleave to and witness for the Lord; little as they may know Him. The woe trumpets, Satan come down having great wrath because he knows he has but a little time, etc., etc., seem to point out a state of things, in which behind and above the power of Satan, allowed on earth because man has chosen him, God (the pardoner of sin) will, for the sake of Him who bare God's wrath against sin, be drawing and leading a people near to Himself. But their experiences of the governmental wrath of God will not be the knowledge of wrath to the uttermost borne once, and but once, by Him; whether they be of Israel or from among the Gentiles.

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## 3.

## Providence, Government, and Salvation.

These three subjects differ the one from the other; each, indeed, has its own distinctive peculiarities, yet they are united together in one, from having their source and centre in one God, and also from the same parties often being the subjects of all three of them, and all working to one end.

1. The sphere of the providence of God down here and for time has its principles laid down, neatly enough, in Gen. viii. 21, 22; "And the *Lord* said in His heart,

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I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake: for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth: neither will I again smite any more everything living, as I have done. While the earth remaineth, seed time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease."

The rainbow became the sign of this covenant. And the longsuffering patience of God, on account of man's wickedness, solemnly pledged itself for certain blessings. It was a sphere of blessing as to earth, guaranteed by God to man.

That God's oversight and care is over *all* His works is true; and that He that made them cares for what He has made is also true,—but here we have His providence in a formal way put forward—and the rainbow its sign. A sort of formal kingdom of providence made known on earth.

2. Rule and a kingdom in government in time, under God, got its development in a tangible form when Israel was taken up as the people of the Lord: He would be their King. But if this came to light when the kingdom was formed, He had, before that, divided the peoples,—so as to give to Israel a first-born son's place; and the sword, while in Israel's hand, was to keep the Gentiles under. The Gentiles got the sword of government into their hand only when Israel had failed to own God as its King down here on earth and in time.

3. Salvation took its definite form of display when, the Lord Jesus Christ having been rejected by Israel, heaven opened beneath Him, and it was proclaimed on earth by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, that God in heaven was the God of eternal salvation to all whosoever should call on the name of the Lord. But while salvation got its unique place when Israel as the kingdom became lost among the nations, salvation had been going on covertly from Adam and Eve in Paradise; just as the principle of providence and of government had been acted upon from the beginning, before the respective principles got, each of them, a definite embodiment.

They were all three of them principles, which in

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themselves, and in their embodiment into constituted systems, had man for their respective objects; and the place which the emblems of each of them hold, in the glories of the throne of the Lord God Almighty (in Rev. iv. and v.), show how near and dear they are to God.

Man has been tried under each of them, and under each of them has signally failed. Noah got drunk in his tent and exposed himself to his sons; Israel danced before the calf which it had made to supply the place of the God of Moses; and Christendom, instead of being as the espoused virgin waiting for her Lord's return, has been as Babylon the Great. On the other hand, however much manmay have failed in the part he ought to have fulfilled, God still goes on, according to His own pleasure, acting upon the principles of each of these kingdoms, toward ruined man.

We may remark that, obviously, providence and the kingdom are for man upon earth; and when set up, were for time, though they may have been blessings to those who were to be saved for heaven and eternity, and they may also have pointed on, as types and shadows, to better things to come, even to that time when, at least, the King will be eternal, and will, with His court, reside in heaven. Still in itself government was for Israel, God to be its King down here: and the providence of God was for man as such down here upon earth, under the heavens and the earth which now are.

If I take *the principle* of God's governing man: man has resisted it and refused to be subject, from the beginning. Witness Adam and Eve in Eden; Cain and Abel outside of Eden; witness the whole world before the deluge; witness Noah and Ham, and Nimrod and Babel's tower. If, instead of the principle, I take *the formal embodiment* into a kingdom for Jehovah in Canaan, the golden calf tells of resistance, as well as does the whole of Israel's conduct. Now, when man has failed, being thus tried of God, man loses at once his right to blessing. God may deal in patience with him, but the judgment is sure to come, and He who is patient during the interval, will bring it in His own time. It is



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important to remember this, and also to recognise that when once that which God has dispensed to man has been perverted, we are thenceforth no longer upon the ground of blessing through the original gift, but upon the ground of the mercy of God, not willing that any should perish. This was the ground which the prophets of old acknowledged: Israel, the stock, had failed under the blessing through Moses, they must go back to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—the root.

If any of us do not understand how it is possible to live under God there where what God put into man's hand has been turned to God's dishonour,—there, where He has announced that judgment is at the door, we have not yet learnt *the obedience of faith;* we have lost our proper standing as identified with God Himself in the midst of what bears His name, but has a name to live though it be dead.

Not so Moses, when the Lord said to him, "Let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them; and I will make of thee a great nation (Ex. xxxii. 10)..... Moses besought the Lord his God, and said, Lord, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand. Wherefore should the Egyptians speak and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swarest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven; and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit [it] for ever," ver. 11—13.

So again: "And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses said unto the people, Ye have sinned a great sin: and now I will go up unto the Lord; peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin. And Moses returned unto the Lord, and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet now,—if thou wilt forgive their sin;—and if not,

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blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written," ver. 30—32. Here was the wrath of the God of Israel, threatening to blot out Israel and to begin afresh with Moses. Here was Moses identifying himself with the people who were under God's displeasure and bearing their cause and pleading the Lord's own glory, as the reason why He should not begin afresh with him (Moses), but must spare the people.

And he gained his suit; for the Lord said, "Behold, mine Angel shall go before thee; nevertheless, in the day when I visit, I will visit their sin upon them.

"And the Lord plagued the people, because they made a calf, which Aaron made" (ver. 34, 35).

Moses' heart was right with the Lord in all this. He stood in the gap and turned aside the threatened destruction of Israel for that time. And this was not a solitary act in Moses' life; nor was it peculiar to him alone.

There was fierce wrath too in the days of David (2 Sam. xxiv.) about numbering the people. David too knew his own place here; and he said, "Lo, I have sinned, and I have done wickedly; but these sheep, what have they done? Let thine hand, I pray thee, be against me, and against my father's house" (ver. 17).

Time would fail me to tell of all the rich expressions of this principle in the word. The providential ways of God are for time: for a witness of His goodness in time, He gives fruitful seasons: the governmental ways of God too are for time. Any good man might stand under the sore displeasure of God in judgment, though he were not a Moses, or a Samuel, nor a Jeremiah, to whom the Lord said: Cast them out of my sight. Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my mind could not be toward this people; cast them out of my sight (Jer. xv. 1). Paul did stand under the sore displeasure of God against Israel (Rom. ix. 1—3). It is a matter of fact, too, a plain substantial fact, that Jerusalem was broken up and Israel ceased to be in its own land. And yet many a Jewish convert may have passed through the crisis. And will not some, yea many, in the end go through the time of trouble such as never

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was: will not the Lord Jesus bring His people through the times of Matt. xxiv.

God's desolating judgment swept the earth with the deluge, destroyed Pharaoh in the Red Sea,—but made the very judgments which destroyed to be the means of salvation to His own. Noah and his were saved by the deluge; Moses and Israel were placed in safety by the very waters of the Red Sea which destroyed Pharaoh and his host. It was solemn to be thus in the midst of the judgments! most heartsearching; but most blessed to find God, in the midst of judgment, remembering mercy to His own that walked with Him.

But when I speak of being saved from the wrath of God revealed from heaven,—this is quite another subject. I am not then looking at myself as for a time upon earth, or under a government, the head of which was God as King. I am an immortal soul before an eternal God that made it, and against whom it has rebelled. God's wrath here leads me to look onward to resurrection from death and the great white throne and *eternal* judgment: where their worm dieth not and where their fire is not quenched; in the lake of fire and brimstone prepared for the devil and his angels. As to myself, or any mere man bearing that, passing through that, it were impossible. But I know One who took the place, in subjection to His Father's will of bearing this wrath; and who could and did bear it in my stead. Happy and blessed do I count myself that that *is finished*, and that my conscience is at rest with Him as to this wrath of God revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. He has borne it for me.

FRAGMENTS.

How little can we say as Christ could, "I live by every word of God," everything in His moral nature being the expression of that word.

Does every thing in you so flow from God, that your minds are merely channels of His word? *That* is *Christian* life. Is your life spent either in looking to God, or in coming forth from God? That is *Christian* life. Or, how far are you going on merely holding your head just above water, that you may not be drowned, and may breathe the fresh air of heaven enough to preserve life?

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# No. XXXI.

# ISRAEL'S TWOFOLD FAILURE, AND GOD'S TWOFOLD MERCY.

ROMANS IX. 1—13.

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"Who hath begotten me these, seeing I have lost my children, and am desolate, a captive, and removing to and fro? and who hath brought up these? Behold, I was left alone; these, where had they been?"—Isaiah xlix. 21.

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## THE APOSTLE'S SORROW, AND BLESSINGS PERTAINING TO ISRAEL.

"I SAY the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart (for I did, or used to, wish that myself were accursed, or separated, from Christ) for, or on account of, my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh: who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen." (ver. 1—5.)

(Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect.)

## THE TWOFOLD CAUSE OF THE APOSTLE'S SORROW.

A. "For they are not all ISRAEL, which are OF ISRAEL:"

B. "Neither, because they are the SEED OF ABRAHAM, are they all CHILDREN." (Ver. 6, 7.)

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THE TWO CASES IN WHICH THE WORD OF GOD TAKES EFFECT.

B. "But, IN ISAAC SHALL THY SEED BE CALLED. That is, They which are the children of the FLESH, these are not the children of GOD: but the children of the PROMISE are counted for the seed. For this is the word of promise, At this time will I come, and SARAH SHALL HAVE A SON." (Ver. 7—9.)

A. "And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac; (for the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to ELECTION might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) it was said unto her, The ELDER shall serve the YOUNGER. As it is written, JACOB HAVE I LOVED, BUT ESAU HAVE I HATED." (Ver. 10—13.)

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BEFORE entering upon any attempt to explain the above passage, with a view to arrive at the apostle's meaning therein, we will for a moment divest it of all that which we believe to be parenthetical, or merely accessory to the sense; and read it as follows:

"I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience
"also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I
"have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my
"heart,

* * * * * * *

"for, or because of, my brethren my kinsmen, according
"to the flesh:

* * * * * * *

"For they are not all *Israel,* which are *of Israel:*
"neither, because they are the *seed* of Abraham, are
"they all *children.*"

Here, observe, we have two distinct points:

I. THE APOSTLE'S SORROW BECAUSE OF HIS BRETHREN.

II. THE TWOFOLD CAUSE OF HIS SORROW.

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With regard to the *former,* we here find how heavy his heart was, how continual his sorrow, at the thought of the lost condition of Israel, his kinsmen according to the flesh; and that *for two reasons,* as we shall presently see. In the meantime, however, we turn to notice one point in connection therewith, namely, the import of that sentence which, on referring to the *whole passage* quoted from Romans ix. at the head of this paper, it will be seen that we have ventured to treat as a *parenthesis*, and also to give a *new rendering* thereof, viz., "FOR I DID, OR USED TO, WISH THAT MYSELF WERE ACCURSED FROM CHRIST." To this, it is likely, objection will be offered by many: in order therefore to clear the way before we enter upon our proposed explanation, we beg to remind the reader that ηυχομην being the *imperfect tense,* the true rendering is, not "*I could wish,*" according to the received text, but "*I did, or used to, wish.*" This, be it observed, is unquestionably right, as all are agreed who are competent to form a judgment thereon. And now, having settled this point, let us consider the passage, and see whether our thought as to its *parenthetical character* is as open to objection as may by some be supposed. Our explanation is as follows: The apostle, as we have seen, is here mourning over the sad state of his people, his brethren and kinsmen; and in doing so his thoughts naturally revert to *himself and his former condition.* Ignorant of his need as a sinner, he had willingly lived without Christ, and therefore without God, in the world. This touches his heart; this deepens his compassion for them; and so he breaks off, and in a parenthesis gives vent to his feelings, and says, "FOR I DID, OR I USED TO, WISH THAT MYSELF WERE ACCURSED, OR SEPARATED, FROM CHRIST." He did not of course know that to be separated from Christ was to be accursed; but he has made the discovery, and hence this strong exclamation, this expressive parenthesis. This is quite natural, often indeed the way with ourselves in similar circumstances: when we think of poor perishing sinners, the next thing that we do is, to remember that such we formerly were; and this serves to heighten, to give greater emphasis and point to, our compassion for them.

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Such then is the interpretation we offer; and we ask, Is not this simple and natural? More consistent, surely, than that which is commonly held; which represents the apostle as wishing that he might be accursed from Christ for his people: a thing which we venture to say never entered his thoughts, however deep his affection for them; and which, supposing it could possibly happen, would never avail for the deliverance and blessing of those over whom he was mourning. Even Moses, with whom Paul is often compared in this passage, never surely meant to say that he was willing to lose his soul, to be accursed for his people. It was, we believe, in his *official character* that he spoke of himself as he did, even as the *lawgiver and leader of Israel;* and in this sense he asked, sooner than that God should not forgive them, that he should be blotted out of His book. (See Ex. xxxii. 32.) And now as to the second point; namely, the *twofold cause of his sorrow.*

I. THEY ARE NOT ALL ISRAEL, WHICH ARE OF ISRAEL:

II. NEITHER, BECAUSE THEY ARE THE SEED OF ABRAHAM, ARE THEY ALL CHILDREN.

As to the *former,* Israelites *born* they were; but not Israelites either *in spirit* or *in heart.* Instead of prevailing with God and with men, as their father Jacob had done, and consequently received the new name of Israel, Satan had prevailed over them, and caused them to fall.

As to the *latter,* they were the *seed* of Abraham, it is true, according to the flesh; but still they were not Abraham's *children.* To be this, in the divine sense, they must have Abraham's faith: and this they had not; the evidence of which was their rejection of Christ, the promised Seed, the Deliverer of Israel.

There is, however, comfort in the midst of this ruin, a ray of light in the darkness. God, he well knew, had AN ELECTION, a people, among them: so eager therefore is he to find relief in this thought, that *before he proceeds to speak of the twofold cause of his grief,* of which we have spoken above, we find him breaking off for a

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moment, and in a PARENTHESIS *anticipatively* touching on what he speaks of at large when he comes to tell of God's dealings in grace with His people; "NOT AS THOUGH THE WORD OF GOD HAD TAKEN NONE EFFECT," he says, comforting his heart as he approaches the sorrowful thought of Israel's failure. This is surely according to Him who, as His eye looks down on the thousands who are living without God in the world, singles out from among them those blessed and chosen ones on whom His own name is called.

And now we pass on to the cheering part of our passage; that which, as I have just said, the apostle briefly and parenthetically anticipates; *a two-fold exhibition of grace:* an exception, as we shall see, to the twofold cause of his sorrow.

It is as follows: First, "BUT IN ISAAC SHALL THY "SEED BE CALLED: that is, they which are the children "of the FLESH, these are not the children of God: but "the children of the promise are counted for the seed. "For this is the word of promise, At this time will I "come, and SARAH SHALL HAVE A SON." This, observe, is at once connected, and at the same time contrasted, with that which stands just before it; namely, the second statement of Israel's failure, viz., "*Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children.*" Here the meaning is, that as in the case of Abraham's two sons, Ishmael and Isaac, the one who was born according to nature, or the will of the flesh, was not owned of God; while he who was born according to promise was the elect seed: so *Israel hereafter, regenerate Israel,* the nation under the new covenant, will be accepted and owned as the people of God. And so also we find in chapter xi., there are individuals now, at this present time, out of the nation, the unregenerate ones, those still lying in the deadness and darkness of nature, are rejected; while those who are looking to Christ, the true Child of promise, are children of promise themselves, the people of God. That there were such even then, a believing remnant among them, with whom the word took effect, this was the thing that gave relief to the heart of the apostle, that filled him with

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joy. Israel as a nation may have stumbled; but notwithstanding this, how many beloved ones are among them whom he will yet meet in heaven!

Secondly, "And not only this; but when Rebecca also "had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac; (for the "children being not yet born, neither having done any "good or evil, that the purpose of God according to "ELECTION might stand, not of works, but of him tha "calleth;) it was said unto her, the ELDER shall serve "the YOUNGER. As it is written, JACOB HAVE I LOVED, "BUT ESAU HAVE I HATED." This, observe, like the former, is connected by contrast with something noticed before, namely, with the first view of Israel's failure; viz., "*For they are not all* ISRAEL, *which are* OF ISRAEL;" meaning, that as of Isaac's two sons, Esau and Jacob, one, namely the younger, was chosen; while the other, the firstborn, he to whom according to nature the birthright, and at the same time the blessing, belonged, was rejected; so is it now, as to individual Jews: "They are not all *Israel*, which are *of Israel:*" it is the elect, and the elect only, those who are trusting, not to works, but to God's grace in Christ, to whom the blessing pertains. Here again there is comfort: there will be a remnant hereafter, and there is a remnant even now according to the election of grace, over whom his large and loving heart can rejoice. Thus then, on reviewing what has been said, we find that the two passages in question teach us two truths, distinct from each other and yet closely connected; that in which Abraham and Isaac are named having relation to *sonship;* while the other, wherein Isaac and his two sons Jacob and Esau appear, bears on *election.*

E. D.

*** While reading 1 John iv. 1—6, on Antichrist, S. called attention to the difference between "Jesus Christ *come*," vv. 2 and 3 [*come*, here, being in the Greek a *past* participle], and 2 John 7, "Jesus Christ *come*" [*come* here being the *present* participle. See also Matt. xi. 3, and Rev. i. 4, "which is to come"]; "that came" and "that is to come." "His having come in the flesh," and his "being about to come in the flesh," would both be denied by the adversary.

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# No. XXXII.

## 1 CORINTHIANS XV.; AND 2 CORINTHIANS V.

I PROPOSE looking now at a prophecy in 1 Cor. xv., and at another in 2 Cor. v.

Now I read these two Scriptures together, not only because they have each a prophetic character, but because they supply two thoughts on the prophetic subject; the story of the body, and the story of the spirit: therefore, I put them together. There is nothing of the story of the spirit in 1 Cor. xv.; you would not learn from that chapter the life of the disembodied spirit. 2 Cor. v., comes to supply that.

The subject of 1 Cor. xv., is the resurrection. He introduces it by the simple gospel, that the Lord Jesus died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day. Now Paul saw the Lord Jesus, not merely as risen, but as risen and glorified. He was the Apostle of the ascended Christ. The twelve Apostles were the Apostles of the Lord in the flesh, and also in resurrection, for the lost apostleship of Judas was supplied before the descent of the Holy Ghost. The Apostles were sent forth by the Lord, not only in the days of His flesh, which, in a certain sense, failed, and nothing was gathered; but an apostleship of the same order was instituted after His resurrection: and till Matthias supplied the place of Judas, the Spirit did not come down, for there was not a complete thing for Him to anoint. Then in the beginning of the Acts, we see that the early ministry of the Apostles confined itself to the house of Israel. But when Stephen was martyred and the hopes of *faith* were transferred to heaven, when the eye that had been diverted *from* heaven by the angels in the first chapter, had been directed *to* heaven by the Holy Ghost in the seventh chapter, then the whole dispensation took a new character, and Paul's apostleship was established upon the

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new condition of things. Consequently Paul was called into office from the glory, by the ascended heavenly Christ, and that is where the Church dates her formal beginning from. So he beautifully says, "As of one born out of due time." I only speak of this passingly, because of what he says, "I am not meet to be called an Apostle." Then he enters on the great theme of the chapter,—Resurrection. We will look at the resurrection in its prophetic, not its evangelic character. The resurrection has an evangelic character. It is the thing on which the whole gospel rests itself. But we will look now at its prophetic character, and there we find three resurrection eras. The first is of Christ Himself; the second is "at His coming;" and the third is "the end." The first fruits, the coming, and the end. The Lord occupied the first of these resurrection seasons, entirely alone. "Of the people, there was none with Him." It was a victorious resurrection, and so is yours, but His was wrought out entirely by Himself. He had a title in His own person to rise. God was debtor to raise Him. It infinitely distinguishes itself from yours in this feature, that *you* are a debtor to grace for it. It was morally due to Him, therefore He must rise alone. "Of the people there was none with Him," and of the people none *could* be with Him. Did not His *person* demand resurrection? Was it *possible* He should be holden of death? The glory of God owned His title, He was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father.

Then the second resurrection era is called, "at His coming." That is confined to "those who are Christ's," an innumerable host from Adam to the present time, and on to the very end. The first was Christ's, because He was *what* He was. The second is yours, because you are *whose* you are. You will be a witness of victorious resurrection, but the difference is that your title is *in* Him. He shares the victory *with* you, but He gained it *for* you. You never gained it. "Thanks be to God who *giveth* us the victory." How could death hold its conqueror? He had conquered death, and Him who had the power of death. So He gained the victory, and He has imparted what He earned to you.

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Then the third era comes, in the 24th verse, and is called, " the end."

This is a mere resurrection of the dead, not *from* among the dead. I find the Lord anticipating it in John v. The Spirit is here discussing it, and in the Revelation xx., the thing is historically verified. The Lord speaks in John v. of a rising to life and a rising to judgment. The rising to life is the second of these eras. The rising to judgment is the third, which is awefully illustrated in Revelation xx.

The first resurrection era was a triumphant one, by *worthiness*. The second is the gift of *grace*, and the third is merely *judicial;* they come up to stand before the throne of judgment. So in these two verses—the 23rd and 24th—the Apostle is exposing to our thoughts this great mystery of the resurrection seasons.

Now he goes on to open to us wonderful prophetic truth. In verse 24 he had told us that the end would not come till the Son of Man had delivered up the kingdom. Then I ask, am I to expect a kingdom to be manifested between the first and second of the resurrection seasons? No, I am not. But I am to look for it between the second and third. The indefiniteness between the first and second is striking; but I am stopped then, and told that the third cannot take place till the kingdom has discharged its duties. Need a wayfaring man err as he reads this? Is there any intervening object between the first and second era? Is there any intervening object between the second and third era? Indeed there is.

Now we will inspect the kingdom. Do you know the difference between grace and power? This is the age of grace. The millennium will be the age of power. *Grace* is fully performing its duties *now*, but when the kingdom comes, *power* will be put into commission, and will fulfil its duty with the same fidelity that grace is doing now. How beautiful to see this lovely dispensational order! If power went before grace, not one of us would be saved. Grace does its business, and then, and not till then, power will take its place. Then he shows the kingdom.

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"For He hath put all things under His feet." "He must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet." And do you think, if that be the commission of the sceptre which is put into the hands of the Son of Man, He will give it up till He has discharged His duty? The last enemy which shall be destroyed is death. Then when power has done its business, and verified its faithfulness, "then shall the Son also Himself be subject to Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all."

But, now, mark here a little word, pregnant with moral beauty, in the bosom of this argument.[a] That fine little word is "*delivered.*" There never has been a kingdom delivered up to God yet. Every other steward of power has been unfaithful to his stewardship. Every beast—the head of gold, the breast of silver, etc.—every imperial steward of power, has been unfaithful to his commission; and power has been taken away from him. Was not power taken from the head of gold and given to the breast of silver? God has committed the sceptre to one after another, and in due time has sent some one to take it away. But when the Lord takes the sceptre, He will hold it faithfully till He "delivers" it up. The blessed Lord Jesus has been the only one, from the beginning hitherto, who has been faithful to God. Was Adam in the garden faithful? Was Israel in the land faithful? Has the candlestick of this dispensation been faithful? Christ is the grand and solitary exception to the unfaithfulness of all. Now this is the way the interval between the second and third eras is shown to you. Between the first and second you are to be gazing up into heaven. Do I wait for a circumstance *here?* No, I wait for a circumstance *there.* But suppose I were living *after* the second era, I should know that the kingdom could not come till certain events had taken place here. Then in Rev. xxi. you find what is intimated here—God all in all.

If we had read the rest of the chapter we should see

[a] I call it an argument, for Divine reasoning gives substance to Divine revelations. Some one has said, "Paul is very fond of proving his points." He clothes Divine revelations with Divine reasonings.

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that it referred to the second of these eras. It *assumes* the first—does not concern itself with the third—and *discusses* the second, and what manner of body you will occupy. It will be like the Lord's glorious body.

We do not here get the story of the *spirit* at all. But now, suppose we turn to 2 Cor. v., we shall have a beautiful supplement. You might say, What will become of me if I die between the present time and the glorious resurrection? Well, "we know, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God," etc., etc. "For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened, not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon," etc. You see several conditions here,—a *burdened* condition—an *unclothed* condition, and a *clothed upon* condition. A burdened condition is our present state. Then, to be unclothed, there must be SOMETHING to be unclothed. Now, he says, I do not groan for the unclothed condition, for the body would be still earth to earth, dust to dust. Now mark how beautifully he gives the story of the spirit. He says it is to be *with* Christ. "Absent from the body—present with the Lord." If our affections were right we should say, this is enough for me to know. I remember a dear brother in the Lord, who was dying some years ago, saying, "If a person were to come to me and say, 'I will go to heaven and bring you word if all you have believed is true,' I should say, 'Friend, you may save yourself the trouble.'" And if any one would give us large volumes of descriptions of the heavenly country, we ought to be able to say, It is enough for me to know that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. With one stroke of the pen he satisfies the heart as to our condition if we die.

"Wherefore we labour," etc. That is how we should actively supply the interval, viz., by doing that which is acceptable to Jesus. We shall fill up the interval between the second and third eras by reigning on thrones. Between the first and second we should fill up the interval by doing the good pleasure of the absent master. And let me ask, When did the story of the spirit begin? It began when the Lord Jesus said, "Father, into thy

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hands I commend my spirit." It was continued when He said to the thief on the cross, "This day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." It was continued in the person of Stephen, and very beautiful it is to see the new creature, born but a minute before, going to the same place as the martyr, who was sealing his testimony to Christ by his blood. We get the story of the spirit also in Paul—a man in Christ, carried up to heaven, whether in the body, or out of the body, he could not tell. So we have seen the story in a *promise* to the dying thief, in a *vision in the case of Stephen, in the rapture of Paul*, and its blessedness is didactically taught here.

This is the prophetic meditation that Corinthians furnishes. The Lord keep us with obedient and desirous minds, abounding in hope, and letting the world in its best conditions know that it is by no means good enough for us. Amen.

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FRAGMENT.

The displeasure of God against Israel as His nation led Him to take away the one that He had Himself set before them to be their King. In his overruling wisdom He caused "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews," to be put as a title on the cross; and it was written in Hebrew and Greek and Latin: and there, in spite of the Jews, it remained. The title, forced on them by Pilate, was left among men on earth, while Jesus of Nazareth went on high, and hid, amid the glories of the eternal throne there, the titles of "The Lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David" (Rev. v. 5); "the root and the offspring of David" (chap. xxii. 16); titles which He still wears there, as dear to Him—titles too which He puts before those that now, amid fallen churches, know, and love, and wait for Him "as the bright and morning Star."

The displeasure of God against Israel as His nation will lead Him, so His word assures us, to let them have, in a day yet to come, a king of their own choice. King of wilfulness and man of sin will he turn out to be. Him they will substitute as king for the Christ of God whom the nation once rejected. Coming in his own name and sitting in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God—he will forsake the counsel of the old men—he will chastise them, too, with scorpions. But God, on Whom and on Whose Son, they turned their backs, rejecting the King of the Jews *before the wide world—He and the King of His anointing* will not be unmoved lookers-on. His King will destroy both the kingdom and the king of their making; and, coming in the name of the Lord, will then be counted blessed.

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## N°. XXXIII.

## GALATIANS, EPHESIANS, PHILIPPIANS, AND COLOSSIANS.

I MIGHT observe, as introducing the present meditation, that prophetic truth in the New Testament is given in fragments. There is no one digested treatise on the subject till we reach the Apocalypse. Prophetic truths lie scattered through the gospels and epistles, and all the fragments we have been able to glean in them we get, put together in order and consistency, in the book of the Apocalypse.

Now we are going to read four short passages from Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians, and our subject is to be, "the redemption of the purchased possession" (Gal. v. 5; Eph. i. 14; Phil. iii. 21; and Col. i. 20).

These four short and fragmentary passages suggest to our thoughts "the redemption of the purchased possession." What does the Spirit mean by saying that? In these pregnant and fruitful words we get three ideas presented to the mind. 1st, that there is the *purchase* of the possession; 2nd, that there is the *redemption* of the possession, and 3rd, that there is an *interval of time between* the purchase *and* the redemption. If words mean anything, they mean this.

Now the possession itself is the creation of God; and when we get the creation in a purchased and redeemed condition, we have what is called the "*new* creation"; and when we get to that in its fulness, we shall be in "the world to come." That is the subject we will now look at.

When was the possession purchased; and when will it be redeemed; and what is the difference between purchase and redemption? The *purchase* was by the *blood* of Christ. Redemption will be by the *power* of Christ. Purchase was the fruit of His *first* coming. Redemption [or appropriation] will be the fruit of His *second* coming.

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Is there anything logically difficult in this passage? Nothing can be simpler. We make difficulties for ourselves by our partialities and early prejudices. I say, then, that the inheritance has been purchased already, and the blood of Christ has paid for it. Now look at Col. i. 19, 20, and tell me if it is not so. "By Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by Him I say, whether they be things in earth or things in heaven." Does reconciliation confine itself to believing sinners? No, it does not. The value of the blood of Christ will be felt throughout the whole creation. Here you get the great mystery, that the possession has been purchased, —reconciled,—brought back to God in a new character. Now I linger over a few thoughts here, for I want to get them impressed on our spirits. For we speak of things which for many years have lain outside the range of Christian thought. Could you stand forth before the world on the authority of that verse, and say the blood of Christ is to stretch beyond the believing sinner?

Then when we come to Phil. iii. 21, we get redemption by *power* when Christ comes the second time. Here it is a question of *ability*. "He is *able* to subdue all things." That is *power*,—put forth for the redemption of all things. If Col. i. taught me the *purchase* of all things, both in heaven and earth, Phil. iii. teaches me the *redemption* of all things by Christ, who has ability to subdue all things unto Himself. We are now passing the interval between purchase and redemption. Is your body yet redeemed from pain and sorrow? Redemption by power has not yet gone forth in your behalf. You are in corruptibility—within the clutch of disease and every malady. It is an age of humiliation; you are the companions of the rejection of Christ, and left in your miserable circumstances of life.

Now these two things we find put together in Eph. i. 14, "The earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession." Then, when we go back to Gal. v. 5, we find one little intimation of a *hope*—"We through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith." We are *in* the righteousness of God by faith, and by the Spirit in us we are looking

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out for something, the object which the righteousness of faith entitles us to look for.

When I come to analyse that hope, I find it is the new creation. If we turn to Rom. viii., we shall have that verified. The creation was made subject to vanity—that means decay and ruin—in Gen. iii., under the touch of the sin of Adam. "Not willingly;" the trees of the wood and the beasts of the field had not sinned, but Adam had sinned. This passage tells us in a larger and brighter form than the others, of the *redemption* of the inheritance, not of its *purchase*. "The creature itself also shall be *delivered*." That is redemption by power, and is it not in company with the other scriptures?

Now let me ask you, is this to be a surprise to us? Have I had notices, in earlier times, of the difference between purchase and redemption? To be sure I have. How beautifully we see it reflected in the book of Exodus! Was not Israel redeemed by blood in chap. xii., and by power in chap. xiv.? In chap. xii., if the blood had not been on the lintel, the first-born among the Israelites would have fallen as surely as the first-born among the Egyptians. There was no question yet between *Egypt* and Israel, but between *God* and Israel. As a sinner you are cast alone and entirely with *God*. The blood of Christ has settled *that;* and so, when the blood was put on the lintel, Israel was not yet delivered from Egypt, but from the claims of God. They could smile on the sword of the destroying angel. But when we pass on a few chapters we get then the question between Israel and Egypt. Christ is the Purchaser and Christ is the Redeemer, and when Israel stood with the hosts of Pharaoh behind and the Red Sea before, the One who had put the blood on the lintel looked forth from behind the cloudy pillar and delivered them.

This is the difference between the old and new creation. Supposing I had been in the garden of Eden, could I have looked in the face of the serpent, and defied him? No, I must *take care* and beware of him. And could I have looked in the face of the Creator, and rested in having everything settled between Him and me? No, I was yet to be tested. But in the new crea-

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tion I can look at the enemy and say, "he has been *conquered* for me;" and I can look at God and say, "He has been *satisfied* for me." Shall I, by-and-bye, have to keep myself on the watch because of the serpent? I shall be able to say, the trail has been blotted out for ever and ever. But we are passing the interval now between purchase and power. Do you see yourself purchased but unredeemed? and are you passing the time of your sojourning here in fear, as knowing that power has not yet been put forth to quell the strength of the enemy? How *softly* yet how *gladly* should we pursue our journey day by day! The moral glory of such a position is inestimable; a creature, carrying in spirit the sense of entire acceptance with God, yet walking softly through unredeemed circumstances, happy as to God, yet mindful of his ways!

Now, let me ask you again, if we had figures of purchase and power in Old Testament times, had we figures of the purchased and redeemed thing? Yes; the new earth in the time of Noah was that.

Is Christ in this world the representative of God in *power* as King of kings and Lord of lords? No; He is the representative of the *Father*. The day will come when He will say, "He that hath seen me hath seen the King of kings." God has not yet thrust Himself forward in kingly power, but 1 Timothy tells us that "*in His times* He shall show who is the blessed and only Potentate, King of kings, and Lord of lords." Is there not blessedness in the thought that the Lord has come forth as the image of God the Father to tell the secrets of the Father's bosom, and to reflect the grace of the Father's heart? When He comes forth as the image of the King of kings, we shall have a world kept in beautiful order. Have you that now? The only thing you have now is a conscience at ease.

Well, then, we have figures in the Old Testament of these things. Noah's new world was that. Egypt under Joseph was that. The feast of tabernacles was that. The land in the palmy times of Solomon was that. God is telling out, in figure after figure, the story of the redeemed thing, and when we come to Rev. v. we find

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the thing rehearsed in the praises of "every creature which is in the heaven and on the earth," etc.

Now I will close with one other thought. In the Gospels—say the Gospel by John—we see the *Purchaser* at His work. In the Apocalypse we get the *Redeemer* at His work. In John, we see the Lord doing the work of His *first* coming, and there He is set before us simply as the *Lamb of God.* John speaks of Him as "The Lamb of God which taketh away," etc. But when we see Him doing His work in the Apocalypse, we see Him not only as the *Lamb,* but as the *Lion.* The Lamb must be associated with the Lion, to redeem by power, so He is not only the "Lamb slain," but the "Lion of the tribe of Judah." "Do not weep," says the angel; "the Lion of the tribe of Judah has prevailed to open the book" of the inheritance. He is not acting *now* as the Lion of the tribe of Judah. He is the Lamb rejected. By-and-bye the hosts of Pharaoh will fall on the banks of the Red Sea, and we shall celebrate redemption by power, as now we enjoy redemption by blood.

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## FRAGMENT.

How little have I known the "I" which I really am! What shall I say of it—of this "I"—mine own old self? It were in vain for me to attempt to tell how the circumstances round about me in this world have proved to it as the ice upon the lake has proved to many a simpleton. Slips and slides and falls, out of all number, have been the result of my venturing out upon the plains before me; and more than that, this heavy self has not only got its bruises, and breaks, and broken limbs, and cuts upon the ice, finding it too hard and too slippery a material for it; but the said fields have found me too heavy for them, and let me in to the watery depths below. No fault in my circumstances, however—the fault was in *me.*

And what next? What the next step I am to take? What the next scene in which I may find myself?

Blessed be God, faith and not experience must give the answer.

Experience would say, "Few and evil have been the days of the years of my pilgrimage," and "As was yesterday so will be to-morrow." Faith says firmly, "I look right upward," and "I look for either heaven or the glory cloud."

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# No. XXXIV.

## 1st and 2nd THESSALONIANS.

We are entering now on the Epistles to the Thessalonians, and we will just review a little what we have been looking at. In Rom. ix. x. and xi. we saw what we called the dispensations of God. Then when we entered on Corinthians we found the stories of the body and of the spirit. When we got to Galatians, Ephesians, etc., we saw the purchase of the possession as the fruit of Christ's *first* advent, and the redemption of the possession as the fruit of His *second* advent. What blessed, beautiful mysteries these are! There is wonderful accuracy, fulness, and variety in these prophetic intimations. You and I can talk of heavenly and earthly secrets. We may be little capacitated to indulge in such high conversations, but we are not straitened in the oracles of God.

Now, the Epistles to the Thessalonians introduce our thoughts to two other things—the *coming* of the Lord and the *day* of the Lord. We have been prepared for such distinctions from the very beginning. In the early patriarchal times there was the difference between Enoch and Noah. Enoch was translated to heaven at some undefined moment, in a silent, secret manner. Noah's story was altogether different. Noah had to witness the judgment of the old world and pass through it. Till 120 years had spent themselves, he could not enter the new world. Are not these as distinct as possible? And if we had time we might trace the same thing in Abraham and Lot, and in Moses and Joshua. So I am prepared for the *coming* being different from the *day*. You will ask me what I mean by these two. The *coming* is the Lord's descent from heaven to the air, there to meet His transfigured glorified saints. The *day* of the Lord is His coming from heaven all the way to the earth, bringing

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His saints with Him, to judge it and set up His kingdom upon it. So the *coming* links itself with your rapture or translation. The *day* links itself with the judgment of the earth, and in Greek the word "day" and "judgment" is the same thing. "It is a very small thing that I should be judged of you or of *man's judgment*," or "*man's day*." And does not the morning judge the night? Does it not rise on the scene to turn out night and darkness? So the *day* brings *judgment*. There was that in Noah—not in Enoch—Enoch had nothing to say to judgment. Noah witnessed and passed through it. Now it is striking that in the divine argument of these two Epistles, the *first* keeps us in company with the *coming*—the *second* introduces us to the *day*. We will turn now to the 1st Epistle, and we shall find the *coming* at the close of each chapter. In chapter i., "Ye turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven." Now, beloved, that is your proper, personal attitude. You are to be turning your back on the idolatrous world, serving the true God, and waiting for His Son from heaven. This is proper Christianity. Now, in the close of chapter ii., we get the same "coming" connected with *service*. "Why are we so earnest to come to you—to spend ourselves upon you? Because ye are our hope and crown of rejoicing in the presence of the Lord *at His coming*." "We are willing now to serve you, because we are waiting for a day when you will be our glory and joy." How far do you and I draw our encouragement from the hope of the coming of the Lord? When we appear before the Lord, service will be recompensed.

In the end of chap. iii. he uses the coming for another object, but we *still get* the coming. It is given in a different phase. It will be a day when we shall be presented by the Lord to the Father with all the brethren, and on the way to it we should be cultivating brotherly love. Would not the children in a well-ordered family be ashamed if they were quarrelling, and suddenly their father opened the door? That is the thought here. The more human our impressions of God

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here. Was I told in the 1st Epistle that I must wait for a something before the Lord could come? *Here* I am told that I must wait till the man of sin be revealed. All the daring of the world must show itself in its Babylon front. The Herod of that day must be displayed in the full bloom of apostasy, "sitting in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God;" and *then* the day of the Lord will come, and, as we read in Luke, "wheresoever the carcase is, thither will the eagles be gathered together."

Is that the way the Church waits for her Lord—as the carcase waits for the pouncing of the eagle? Would that be a comely thought for the Church of God?

I pause here. May our thoughts be guided in the light of God; may we walk in the understanding of His ways and hope for the fulfilment of His promises. Amen.

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## FRAGMENT.

In nature, a simple mind may think of God, and see that it should love Him. But when it comes to find what God's standard of holiness is, and what is the inexorableness of justice, —a simple mind in a ruined creature will find that it does not and cannot, according to the light and the power of nature, love Him. The law curses all evil, and the doer of evil, and the neglecter of well doing. The law curses in nature; in grace God presents Christ,—a hiding-place, where the dead can be buried out of sight:—curse, and death, and all: and in Him in heaven too, there is a new, an eternal life. Some say, "Well, I dare not but still think of the law of sin and death as being alive in my members: surely, if I do not keep my eye upon it constantly,—being in me, it will go on sinning." To such I answer: "To be sure, to be sure, if you will not take God's estimate of things you must sin. He says that He reckons you to be dead, and that you are to reckon yourself dead too. Believe Him, and act on what He says, and you will not sin. Doubt what He says, and reckon yourself not to be dead, and you will sin and go on sinning. The hard thing is *not* for the results of faith to flow from faith, as most suppose, but for man to believe God and trust himself implicitly in His hand."

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## No. XXXV.

## THE RULE OF LIFE—WHAT IS IT?

THE rule of life—what is it? Of what life? Of mere man, or of man partaker of the divine nature? Of man subjectively responsible to meet a claim, or of man displaying the divine character? Are they the same? Was the conduct binding on Adam the same as that which was suitable to the place Christ held in the world? Which is our standard, if they are different? Such are some of the questions which arise when I enquire, "What is the rule of life?" It is evident that duties as such flow from the relationship in which I find myself. A child's are not a servant's nor a wife's. The duties of each, as of the parent or the husband, flow from—and if rightly accomplished are the fulfilment of—what belongs to the place each is in. It is not a duty if one is not in the place. It will be alleged, however, that there are certain immutable principles of right and wrong, an eternal law. But the question presents itself: Do not these duties flow from an ever-subsisting relationship? Is not the obligation to love God and our neighbour as ourselves the consequence of our relationship to God and our neighbour. There may be—creation being assumed—necessary and constant relationships, or at least such apprehended by reason of it, which are thus always the rule of our duty. The fact of the character of the relationship involves the duty, the name of the relationship is the name of the duty. Conjugal affection, conjugal submission, parental love, filial obedience, all express this great truth. But the relationship and the duty cease together; if the relationship has never existed the duty cannot. If it ceases for all the duty ceases in fact absolutely as to the persons. The idea of God, even of Adam, excludes the idea of a neighbour, and makes the duty of love to his neighbour an impossible one, if I think of God or even of Adam; of God absolutely be-

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goes up first of all to God in self-offering ; and in that is love to others, offering oneself for them. This is divine perfection as manifested in Christ. We as faithful to Him, loving Him, ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. Hereby know we love, that He laid down His life for us, and we shall shew His life and spirit in doing it. The rule of life, then, is not a legal claim on man as man, just and right as that was, but the manifestation of divine life and love in the place in which they, and the divine grace which has given us a part in them, have set us ; Christ Himself being the pattern and display of this in its own perfection. This will be the relationship in which we are to God in Christ, to a sinful world, and to the brethren, as it was in Him. "He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk as He walked." God makes us through His discipline partakers of *His* holiness. We are light in the Lord, and are to walk as children of light, and Christ gives it to us. Let our light (not our works) so shine before men that they may see our good works and glorify the true source of them all. It is a new nature, the divine nature, the life of Christ, the Holy Ghost dwelling in us as its power—in which, knowing we are in Him before God, and perfect love and acceptance resting upon us, we are set in this world the manifestation of the divine character in man and its ways in Christ, the epistle of Christ. Conflict exercises that our senses may discern good and evil according to this, always carrying about the dying of the Lord Jesus in our body, that nothing may hinder the manifestation of the life of Jesus,—death thus works in us as to self, and so only life in Christ in others with whom we have to do. All this there will or should be ; but the rule and measure of life is Christ, the display of His life, walking as He walked, following His steps in the joy in which the consciousness of being in Him before God places us, in the sorrow that filled His heart in passing through a world of evil. No doubt there has to be growth in us, but God is faithful not to suffer us to be tempted above that we are able to bear. And a young Christian, a babe in Christ, if devoted in heart and humble, has his place and beauty in Christ as well as the

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fathers. It is a wonderful place, but the place in which God has set us.

It has been said, Still Christ kept the law. Surely He did; He was "born under the law," of course was perfect in it, and in result so does he who walks in love; but He, besides this, manifested God in a man. And we are connected with Him, united to Him when He is no longer under law, having died to it in Him when He died and risen up from death wholly out of that place. It is this that Paul refers to (*i.e.*, this whole position of Christ in flesh) when he says that he knows Christ no more after the flesh. It is this, I doubt not, which is the true force of Eph. ii. 10. Good works which God hath afore prepared. The kind of work was prepared afore, as well as the place and blessing in Christ; works suited to this place were afore prepared too.

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## FRAGMENT.

I KNOW right well the deep abyss of gloom that, like an atmosphere, surrounds the human heart; and I know, too, how often even physical weakness lets one drop into it, and how hard it is to shake it off. Our strength is gone and oft we "wist it not,"—so that I always say to myself, "Take care! ward it off in the beginning." If one gives way, one drops deeper and deeper into it; into the thing, of all others, most fallen, most afar from God—a dark, brooding human heart. The Lord is very pitiful to such an one, very tender and gracious, but if (as has been said) I have *all* the grace of Christ, I have no business to give way as if it were not "sufficient." What oppresses me to-day will be gone to-morrow, but a glimpse of Christ—the felt answer of His heart in the moment of oppression, will last until to-morrow, and the next day, and for ever and for ever. Shame on the heart that can go down so low for the worry of the moment, and rise so little to the realities that are to last for ever!



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## No. XXXVI.

## GOD'S COUNSEL FOR THE TIME IS THE TRUTH MOST OPPOSED.

EVERY expression which God has given of Himself, and of His mind, placing man thereby in a special relation to Himself, is the object of Satan's attack. The evil spirit must, because of his nature, oppose every manifestation of good, and hinder in every way he can the reception of it by those to whom it is made.

Every revelation which God makes of His mind places man to whom it is given in relation to Himself according to it, and, therefore, in increased blessing because God is good; so that each new revelation improves the position of man (to whom it is committed) in his relation to God. Hence, the more God is revealed, the more is Satan provoked to hinder the effect of it, and to deprive man of it, because it is good and is of God. Hence, that which is the highest and fullest revelation at any given time, is necessarily the one which he most opposes, and against which he exerts his malice. I propose to trace from Scripture how Satan opposes every truth—every declaration which God gives of His mind—and the manner and way in which he (through man) opposes it.

Evil is roused to action by the manifestation of good; and it has recourse to malice in order to contravene its object and nullify its effects. Satan does not practise the same order of opposition against every truth; the nature of the opposition varies according to the nature of the revelation and the effects flowing from it. He has malicious skill in opposing each in the most effectual way; because he has in man a weak and an evil nature to work on; a nature which is, because of its qualities, supremely instrumental, when wielded against itself, to effect its own ruin. The mode of opposition he adopts

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to hinder or frustrate any given truth is the same, and the surest to succeed ; he need never exchange it for another; it is the wickedest and most relentless that can be found. Therefore, when any mode of opposition is in activity against any one, he may thereby know the special line of truth which is opposed, and of which Satan seeks to deprive him.

When Adam was set in the garden of Eden in the midst of a display of God's care and provision for him, Satan entered and represented to Eve, that in spite of the rich ample exhibition of God's thoughtfulness which surrounded her, yet that He withheld the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, because of His unwillingness to promote man's interest ; but that she could help herself to that which God thus, from want of true interest in her, denied her. Nay, more ; that God's word about it was untrue, and only a subterfuge to conceal the narrowness of His heart. In short, that He had no heart for man, for that what was within their power to possess and be enriched by, God had interdicted. Satan's object is to set aside and frustrate the word of God which He, in His wisdom and love, had given to man as the sole guide and authority for all his actions. Here the mode of opposition employed is setting before the mind the gain which will accrue from disobedience ; and this is the evil spirit working in the children of disobedience. Eve is beguiled. God's word is despised and disobeyed because of an expected advantage. God had given man counsel. All His works and ways towards Him pronounced His care and thought for him. Man ought to have believed that God's counsel or injunction was of the same order. This natural faith Satan undermines in the soul, and the force and influence by which he effects this is, as we have seen, by engrossing the heart with a gain which it seems can only be obtained by walking contrary to the counsel of God. This then is the force which Satan thinks the surest and most effectual in leading a soul into disobedience, and it is after this manner that the evil spirit works in the children of disobedience. It is of value to us to acquire the knowledge of the particular force which the enemy

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will use to inflict injury. To induce us to disbelieve God and despise His counsel, Satan always proposes some direct advantage, of which we should be deprived by obedience. True, in the end we shall find out that our misery is in proportion to our disobedience ; and that the only way by which we could have escaped it was by simply adhering to the truth of God. This force of Satan, this form of his opposition to any and every truth of God, we should be prepared for, when the temptation is simply to disbelieve and disobey it ; for disobedience is the practical proof of unbelief.

Now, in the case of Cain, who was of the wicked one, and slew his brother, I find another force working. God's counsel to him was despised and disregarded. But more than this ; Satan urges and empowers Cain to kill his brother, who was accepted of God ; to get rid of the one who had supplanted and surpassed him ; so greedy of gain, that he taketh away the life of the owners of it. The force, the mode, by which Satan leads Cain to reject the counsel of God, is by provoking him to get rid of the owner of that which he desired to possess ; not to seek for the desired possession in the legitimate way, the way given of God ; but, on the contrary, to destroy his brother who had rightly obtained it. Satan's object is to set aside the counsel of God, and to use the one to whom God commits it, to reject it, and act contrary to it ; and in order to effect this he urges Cain on to a dreadful expedient. Instead of hearkening to God's word, and offering suitably for himself, he must needs relieve himself by slaying his brother. Satan's way is preferred to God's way. Cain not only practically denies the truth of God's word for himself, but he will not allow that there should be any living witness of it. Here is brought in the evil principle of seeking to get rid of every one who surpasses me. It is not merely seeking to acquire more, as in Eve's case;* but in the most deter-

* NOTE.—In this first temptation, which led to the fall of man, the enemy aimed at inducing Eve to give up God as her spring, motive, and end ; by substituting self she yielded and lost all. The Son of God as Son of man (see Phil. c. 2) won by obedience unto death, the death of the cross, more than the all which she had lost by her disobedience.—ED.

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mined and violent way, it seeks to get rid of the one who possesses what I do not. With Eve it is to grasp what is interdicted ; with Cain, to get rid of the approved one. God makes good His own truth before there is departure from it, and the one who believes and maintains it is the one opposed, and, if possible, overwhelmed by Satan.

Fearful wickedness and departure from God followed on Cain's crime ; but I pass on from it to Noah on the purged earth (Gen. ix.), first noticing the terms on which God now sets him on the earth ; and then showing the nature of the influence and lusts which led man entirely aside from the word and covenant of God. The terms are, that man is to rule over everything, and that he is to observe the bow in the cloud as the sign of God's covenant with him on the earth. To frustrate and nullify these terms and covenant, is the sole aim and purpose of Satan. Truth triumphed for a while ; but now a new force is urged against Noah, in order that in him the testimony to the mind and purpose of God may be marred. He is enticed to indulge himself to excess ; to lose all sense of his own position and dignity by intoxication ; so that instead of ruling over everything, he is subdued by his own self-gratification, and his younger son exhibits a want of respect, indicative of the utter break up of all rule and government ; which eventually comes to openly declared independence of God. Babel is substituted for the sign of the covenant, and finally devils are worshipped and not God. How sad and striking it is to see the gracious truth and counsel of God, which for one short moment conferred such blessing so long as it was adhered to, so effectually contravened, that everything the very opposite to the condition to which it would have raised man, is now the infliction on him. We see, and it is deeply important, how Satan varies his mode of opposition according to the nature of the truth committed to man ; bringing in a new order of wickedness, in order to frustrate each new truth, and deprive man of the knowledge of God. How wicked the subtlety which entices a man to disqualify himself for rule, by leading him to indulge himself to excess !

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One who allows his own self to get beyond his control, cannot expect to control others to do well. The Lord help us thereto, and keep before our souls the devices of Satan, by which he would turn us aside from the truth and leave us without its help and counsel. Are we sufficiently aware of the various activities of the prince of the power of the air, each of which is suited to accomplish its end ?

We pass on to Abram. A new truth; a further disclosure of the mind of God is communicated to him. To set aside and render it ineffective is the simple and constant effort of Satan. It is not with truths already revealed—past revelations—that the enemy is occupied with to frustrate them; it is the truth which especially testifies of God at *the time given*, which chiefly calls forth his malice and opposition; and against it, he mainly directs his power in order to subvert it. The word of God to Abram is, "Get thee out of thy country and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house into a land that I will shew thee." To hinder and render abortive this promise and purpose of God, is the unceasing effort of Satan. What Abram might know of other truths, he may enjoy to a certain extent, if he will but renounce and act contrary to this new counsel and promise of God. Thus, he is first balked and checked by his father taking the lead. The very relationship which Satan led the son of Noah to despise, is the one which he makes now an occasion of stumbling to Abram. Faith in God's word was now the call of God: and to divert and distract Abram from this by any means, was Satan's object. No way seemed more effectual to his evil mind than to put the respect due to a father against the word of God. When bewildered as to which path we ought to observe, how easily we can be persuaded to follow that of nature, and thus to neglect and disregard God's path. This hindrance being after some delay overcome (for God causes His truth to triumph), Abram is no sooner in the land, than seeing a famine, which was a test for his faith, he yields to nature again and its suggestions, and goes down into Egypt. True, *he* returns from Egypt, but Lot is entirely carried away from the path of faith; the green fields of Sodom

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allure him from it. Satan succeeds in warping and smothering the truth and word of God in his soul.

But I need not pursue this through all the history of Abram and his descendants, while holding the land by faith. It will suffice for all practical purposes to note that every difficulty to which Abram was exposed, was a trial of faith, and every case of failure in his life and in the lives of his descendants, until Jacob finally left the land, was simply a departure from the path of faith to which they were called. If Abram has an Ishmael, it is because of failure in faith. If Isaac prefers Esau to Jacob, it is simply that he is *off* faith. If Jacob deceives to get the blessing, it is because he has not faith. If Joseph is sold and got rid of, it is because his brethren have entirely departed from faith in God; and they drop into the wickedness of the most ignorant, as the better instructed when they fall always do. When the whole family finally left the land, Satan had succeeded in his opposition; but we should thankfully bear in mind the heights and fulness of blessing, which any of those who walked in faith, and while they did so, were led into. Misery and sorrow were unknown until they wandered away from the path of truth; the only path which could preserve them, and the only one in which they could find restoration.

In the day of Moses, the mind and purpose of God was to deliver His people out of the land of Egypt, and lead them into Canaan. The power and stratagem by which Satan opposed and circumvented this purpose is terrible, and humbling lest in any way we should fall under it. I cannot notice all the varied forces which he practised for this end. The first was to harass and overwhelm the people of God by the exactions of Pharaoh, so oppressing them with care and anguish of heart, that they loathed both the idea and the object of Moses' mission, and denied the truth of God which they had believed and rejoiced in. See all the efforts of Pharaoh; mark the undying nature of the opposition; take into account the people's unbelief, saying to Moses, before they had crossed the Red Sea, "Is not this the word we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone that we may serve the Egyptians." Again at Marah, even though

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Satan's hosts had been overthrown; so that we see how man in his nature subsidises Satan, and follows up his will as now his own, even after Satan has ceased actively to work. After they had accepted the law, the first thing they did was most glaringly and openly to break it, by setting up a golden calf; and eventually in the face of all the remonstrance and exhortation of Caleb, they almost with one voice declared against the counsel of God, because they were afraid of the children of Anak, whom Caleb afterwards slew (Josh. xv., Judg. i.). Satan had at this juncture brought into play the force which would effectually tell on their unbelieving hearts, by filling them with fear of the giants and walled cities. The force and order of opposition brought against God's people, to divert them from accepting and obeying the counsel of God, as to entering and possessing the land, differs from that employed to detain them in Egypt. Each special truth has its own special opposition. Here it is fear of man, and consequent distrust of God. Coming out of Egypt, it was the pressure of the power by which they were surrounded.

Now when they have entered the land, under Joshua, when the counsel of God is triumphant, Satan introduces a new order of opposition. Here it is by Achan's taking of the accursed thing (Josh. vii.). The people being in possession, and God in their midst in full power, it was the aim of Satan to introduce an element which must lead either to God's withdrawing from his people, or His going on with them in unholiness. This is the worst form of evil; so secret and so damaging is it, that though only perpetrated by an individual, the damage is universal. There is practical unholiness, unequivocal departure from the terms on which God succours and is present with His people.

In principle it is the same as the intention and effort to obtain place and distinction for oneself in Divine things, appropriating what should be devoted to God (see Joshua vi. 19) to our own selfish ends, in order to obtain distinction for ourselves. It is the unholiness of self intruding into the sanctuary of God, and intrinsically losing sight of the place we are set in by God. It is

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the introduction of unholiness where God is acting, in order to defeat the purpose of God, and mar all the success. Where unholiness has come in, God must withdraw from His people. What an apparently small act to be the parent of such disastrous consequences! And how terrible is the malice of Satan thus to devise and employ that force which will most effectually deprive us of the best of our privileges; for the very best we have is what he first aims at, and what we in our wretched nature first lose. It is of all importance that we should see what is God's great and distinct line of purpose at any given time, and having ascertained that, to be prepared to resist Satan's attempts to divert and hinder us from it. At this juncture God was with His people, leading them on in victory; and hence Satan secretly works that element which must disturb His presence, and cause Him to withdraw; and the element must be discovered, and the particular force encountered, ere God can again make known His presence, and the faithful find the blessing of it.

The next question is (the land having been divided by lot to the children of Israel), will they maintain themselves there as God's people. The simple counsel with which they are charged is, "That ye come not among these nations that remain among you, neither make mention of the name of their gods," etc., etc. (Josh. xxiii. 7; also Deut. vii.) "Thou shalt smite them and utterly destroy them, thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor show mercy unto them." Yet in a little time we find that they not only had made league with the inhabitants of the land, but that they "forsook the Lord God of their fathers which brought them out of Egypt, and followed other gods—the gods of the people that were round about them, and bowed themselves unto them and provoked the Lord to anger." (Judg. ii. 2, 12). One could hardly suppose that they could have acted so diametrically opposite to the counsel of God. This was Satan's aim, and no doubt effected by representing how much more useful the nations would be to them as tributaries. The snare he laid here was association with the people of the land. To confess weakness as to expelling



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their enemies was one thing; to agree to dwell with them quite another. Be it fear or advantage, it is plain they were thinking of themselves, and refusing the counsel of God. The result is, that they sink into idolatry and fearful immorality, as recorded in the closing chapters of Judges; a sad, appalling picture of what man descends to, when he despises the counsel of God. Surely no thoughtful soul can follow the history of God's people and their departure from Him, without being impressed with the fearful and effective nature of Satan's opposition to the will of God. I do not attempt to pursue their history further, and shall only call attention to the fact, that the captivity of Judah in Babylon was the retributive consequence of their neglecting for 490 years to keep the seventh or Sabbath year, according as the Lord commanded. That which would have been to the truly grateful, a wondrous and blessed celebration of Divine favour, they deliberately neglected, urged to do so by the hope of gain. God's year is appropriated to their own purposes; and the end is, the sin of modifying the truth of God to suit their own state, spreads over 490 years.

Having partially examined the way and manner of Satan's opposition to the mind of God, as recorded in the Old Testament, I now propose to trace and note the way in which the greater and fuller truth set forth in the New has been opposed. We see, from all we have glanced at, how entirely the will of man is opposed to the mind of God. We can hardly truly estimate the positive antagonism there is in our minds to God's mind. The more it is pressed on it, the more repugnance to it is betrayed. Satan, of course, takes advantage of this evil disposition, and thus we, as the worst enemies to ourselves, surrender the citadel to our direst foe.

If we glance through the gospel of Matthew, we shall see how varied and desperate are the efforts of Satan, acting on the evil and will of man, to set aside and frustrate the testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the truth, the living expression of all truth, and who came into the world to bear witness to the truth; setting forth what God is in Himself, and thus distinctly exhibiting how contrary everything here is to Him. It

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may not appear of importance to notice all the varieties of opposition recorded in this gospel, but a brief summary of them may have a most salutary effect on us, as it must impress us with the sense of the incessant and apparently inexhaustible modes of attack made on Christ in order to set aside the truth as in Him; and therefore consequently resorted to in this day in like manner, whenever He is simply the object of attack.

At the very outset then (Matt. ii.), we find Herod acting as the tool of Satan in the direst enmity against that which is the fullest expression of God, as He is in His own blessed self. He first attempts by hypocrisy to gain over the wise men of the East who came to do homage to the new-born king; and failing in that, the opposition breaks out more openly into violence, and he sends forth to slay all the young children in Bethlehem.

The next scene in which we find Satan in direct opposition to Christ is in the wilderness (chap. iv.); and this was immediately consequent on His being announced from heaven as "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Now as God's Son in fashion as a man He is not only prepared to meet the fiercest antagonism, but He is led by the Spirit into the wilderness to encounter the enemy: He assumes or seeks no human advantage; on the contrary, He is an hungred, sensible of need, and where nothing is provided for Him, and thus it is that He receives the assault of Satan;—First, to take thought for Himself in the circumstances in which He is; to use His own power for His own benefit. Satan cared not that He should be provided for, but he *did* care that the Blessed One should, if possible, be diverted from walking here as God's man on earth, in simple dependence on His Father. This assault the Lord combats by the word, "*Man* shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Secondly, to cast Himself down from the pinnacle of the temple in order that he may be assured of God's protecting care, and the truth of the promises, which would have been as much as to say that He did not believe them, without putting Himself in circumstances in which He could test the truth of them.

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Thirdly, to accept what he was justly entitled to, but at the hands of Satan. The art and malice of all this it is needless to say is unsurpassed, as indicating the wiles and working of the devil. All his assault can be classified under these three heads. As a man here for God and acceptable to God, Satan assaulted Him; and as such a man ought to have acted, so the Lord replied to him, and in the power of divine counsel overcame him. What a scene! Satan arraying himself in undisguised conflict against God manifest in the flesh, and getting completely baffled at every point.

We next read (chap. iv. 12), that "*Now* (*i.e.* in the beginning of His ministry) when Jesus heard that John was cast into prison, He departed into Galilee," for the rejection of John foreshadowed His own rejection. And passing on to chap. viii. 20, we get from His own lips a description of His position on earth: "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head; while in ver. 24-26, we find the winds and waves blow and rage as if He were not there at all. He heeds not, He sleeps though the ship be covered with waves, but on the exposure of unbelief He rebukes the waves; and on coming to land expels the devils from the possessed ones. But this calls forth the opposition of the "*people*" (ver. 34), for the whole city beseech Him to depart out of their coasts.

Next (in chap. ix. 3), the opposition is from the "*Scribes*," who accuse Him of blasphemy, because He had announced forgiveness of sins to the palsied man.

Then the "*Pharisees*" come forward (ver. 11). Amid the multiplicity of their attacks on Him, we may only note a few as we pass on. *Here* they accuse Him of associating with publicans and sinners; in ver. 34, of casting out devils through the prince of the devils; in chap. xii. 2, of profaning the sabbath; in ver. 14, they held a "council" how they may destroy Him because He healed the withered hand, symbolical of the utter incapacity of Israel at that time; in ver. 38, they seek a sign, which was as much as to say that there was nothing moral or personal in our blessed Lord which would carry weight

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without a sign from heaven; and therefore calling on Him to do something to meet the corrupt tastes of an evil and adulterous generation. In chap. xiv. John the Baptist is beheaded; in chap. xv. 1, they accuse Him of transgressing the tradition of the elders. In chap. xvi. 1, "the *Sadducees*" act in confederacy with their opponents the Pharisees, and oppose God's faithful and true witness on earth, by tempting Him to ignore all His life and ways which He had observed here according to God; and by showing them a sign from heaven, to assert virtually that He had not hitherto displayed to faith what would assure the heart that He was the Son of God. In ver. 22, the opposition to this Blessed One in carrying out the counsel of God, comes from a *friend.* Satan instigates Peter, by acting on his natural affections, to turn Him from the cross, but the Lord immediately discovers the adversary and rebukes him. In chap. xix. we find fresh instances and varieties of this ever-increasing opposition. It becomes more direct and more open as He moves onward in His course; its virulence increases among His enemies; while even the amiability of nature retires from Him "*sorrowful,*" as we see in the young man of chap. xix. 16; and His own disciples openly express their dissent.

In chap. xxi. 16, "the *chief priests*" bear their part in the opposition, and in chap. xxii. the combined efforts of the Pharisees, Herodians, and Sadducees is to find a cause against Him. Thus the wave of opposition goes on swelling and gaining strength until (in chap. xxvi.) all combine, the chief priests, scribes, and elders of the people, to kill and extirpate Him. Whence comes all this relentless fury? Because the nature of God Himself was displayed here in all its grace and beauty in a man on earth. What a determination is evinced to exterminate the true witness of God from the earth! All force, art and influence are used for this end. All power on earth will now conspire to crucify the Son of God. What a scene! What a disclosure of the wickedness which here works against God! Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing; even the disciples can have indignation when the alabaster

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box of precious ointment was broken and poured on His head, and say, "To what purpose was this waste?"

And now the Lord's hour has come. All moral resistance to the opposition is removed, and Satan knows his opportunity, even as the Lord had foretold,—"the prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in me." Satan puts it into the heart of Judas to betray Him, and at the feast Jesus announces that one of that select company who had accompanied Him in His walk here, should become the tool of Satan for this purpose. He further tells His disciples, "All ye shall be offended because of me this night, for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad;" and further on He tells Peter that that night He should deny Him thrice. How Satan seems to be carrying, as one may say, all before him! how he presses every one on every side into the great struggle for the suppression and annihilation of all truth on earth! Here we find, on the one hand, the summoning of all the resources within the compass of Satan's evil influence, to perpetrate the extermination of the Lord of life and power from the earth; and on the other (ver. 37-39), the deep exercises of soul to which He was subjected Himself, no doubt now in the presence of the prince of this world, because as His hour was come, Satan concentrated all his power and arrayed it against Him. Thus "He is led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth." When brought before Caiaphas, the high priest, the malignant opposition takes the garb of righteous indignation, while they falsely accuse him. Accuse as they may, He will not answer them or vindicate Himself, until He is called to bear witness to the truth by the question, "Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" *Then* as the One who came to bear witness to the truth, He replies, "Thou hast said; hereafter ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven." This "*good* confession" calls forth all their latent wrath. "And the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses. What think ye?"

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They answered, "He is guilty of death. Then did they spit in His face and buffet Him," etc., etc.

After this He is led to Pilate; and a new phase of the relentless nature of the opposition is exposed. The governor proposes to release Jesus, for he knew that for envy they had delivered Him; but in order to gratify their envy, he swerves from his own sense of what is right; and in spite of direct warnings from his wife, who sent unto him, saying, "Have thou nothing to do with that just man, for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of Him," he delivers Him up to be crucified, though, at the same time, he took water and washed his hands, saying, "I am innocent of the blood of this just person." Oh! how the heart is shocked at the thorough weakness; the imbecility of any right motive when in the presence of the combined purpose of man and Satan to extirpate from the earth the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of His person; to expel ignominiously from His own earth the Creator, who had come as its Saviour!

Christ being crucified, the spirit of evil is still unsatisfied. The chief priests and Pharisees seal the sepulchre and set a watch; and when they are baffled by the Lord's resurrection, they give large money to the soldiers in order to bribe them to say that He was stolen by His disciples, while the watch slept. Sad and terrible is the obduracy of heart against conviction when it becomes a tool of Satan in opposition to the truth!

The Lord being now risen, the truth to be maintained is, that He IS *risen, and that He will come again.* Against this truth, and against those who maintain it, the opposition, as we shall see, is now directed. As soon as the apostles are endued with power from on high as soon as the Holy Ghost has descended, they witness and declare the resurrection of Christ (Acts ii. 32). "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses." The opposition to this testimony begins with the populace, like the heavy sighing of the wind before a hurricane (see Acts ii. 12, 13.) But soon it rises to its height (chap. iv. 1, 2, 3); and Peter and John are laid hands on for preaching "through Jesus, the resurrection from

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the dead." Opposition, when once allowed a place, grows in daring violence (see chap. v. 4, 9). In chap. v., in the case of Ananias, it is from *within*. As Satan worked in the days of Jericho, so did he now work in the Church to drive away the presence of God from His people.

In chaps. vi. and vii. it is directed against Stephen; the opposition to the truth for that day is now at its height. Stephen is brought before the council (chap. vi. 12), and the result is, after hearing his testimony to the resurrection and glory of Christ, "They (chap. vii. 57—59) cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran on him with one accord and cast him out of the city and stoned him," and this is followed up by persecution against the whole Church at Jerusalem (chap. viii. 1). Again, in this same chapter, (ver. 18,) we get another variety of opposition evincing the *subtlety* of Satan, as in other cases his violence. Simon Magus in one form from within, and Ananias in another, both show the wiles of Satan to hinder and corrupt the truth.

In chap. ix. Saul, the persecutor of the Church, is "called to be a chosen vessel to bear my name before the Gentiles and kings, and the children of Israel." *Jesus in the glory* is *now* the testimony; and against this and those who testify of it, the opposition will be directed. It soon breaks forth. The Jews lie in wait and the Grecians go about to slay the witness of it (ver. 23, 29). In chap. xii. the temporal power, in the person of Herod, stretches forth his hands to vex the Church; but from henceforth, Paul, as the chosen vessel of the testimony, is peculiarly before us as an object of Satan's malice. The opposition to him is principally from the Jews, because Christ in glory is now offered as *above everything here*, and apart from all that is Jewish, to every one who calls on Him. Thus as soon almost as he enters on his course, he is opposed by a false prophet, a Jew, Elymas the Sorcerer (chap. xii. 6).

We shall not obtain a view of the opposition to the testimony committed to Paul in any degree commensurate with its magnitude if we do not see how widespread it is, and how it springs up from every quarter;

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—from within and from without,—from Jew and from Gentile; from the human mind, and from the flesh in all its varied activities energised in by Satan to withstand or corrupt the testimony of Christ in glory. In looking through the Acts of the Apostles we cannot fail to observe this; and also, that while there is distinct moral gain and a brighter testimony as each opposition is surmounted, the very defeat sustained by the latter only exasperates it the more. Thus at Antioch and Iconium, Thessalonica and Berea, etc., open assault is made on Paul and his yoke-fellows by the Jews, who were moved with envy, while at Athens (chap. xvii. 16) it is the human intellect,—the cultivated mind,—which withstands the truth of God. In chap. xv. the opposition is from *within*. Judaizing teachers are sent forth by Satan to leaven the truth of the gospel; and though they are withstood, one painful consequence of the controversy appears from Gal. ii., even that Barnabas was carried away by Peter's dissimulation and separated from Paul. At Philippi the evil spirit takes the subtle form of flattery. A woman possessed by the spirit of divination, gives verbal support to the testimony, which Paul would not accept because the source was corrupt; he would not accept countenance from Satan; and as this occurred on his first visit to Europe, it is important to note how the adversary proposed to gain him over. But this being refused by God's faithful servant, the hostility becomes open and violent. All that follows, and the bitter opposition evoked against him at Corinth, Ephesus, etc., I need not here enter into. I would refer my readers to the chapters themselves. Chap xxi., to the end of the book, details the opposition to Paul from the Jews; how he is rescued out of their hands by the Roman governor, but is there detained a prisoner from the most corrupt motives; how, after being most unrighteously dealt with, he appeals unto Cæsar, and eventually, after perils by land and sea, we find him a close prisoner in Rome, the fourth gentile power! Opposition to the truth of God has so far succeeded that the chosen witness of it is in the hands of the great head of earthly power; but as God *will* cause His truth to triumph, it is from *thence*, from his

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prison at Rome, that Paul writes his Epistles to the Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians, as well as his 2nd Epistle to Timothy, which being his last, especially and particularly sets before the servant of Christ the difficulties then current and those of the last days. The effort and success of the opposition to bar and choke up the testimony is noticed in this Epistle, while its consummation is foreshown by John in the Apocalypse.

I would now briefly refer to 2 Timothy, because in it the apostle, as a father to a son, presents the varied opposing elements which the servant of Christ has to encounter, and this, not merely by enumerating them or exposing them, but by Divine counsel instructing and furnishing him with strength to encounter and resist them successfully. In the former part of this paper I have endeavoured to trace the opposition to the truth, *not* the way in which it has been divinely encountered. My desire in referring to this Epistle is rather to examine and set forth *how* the apostle prepares and furnishes Timothy with respect to the things and characters which would oppose and hinder him.

First, it must be noted that all the opposition for which he prepares him is from *within ;* there is none of it properly from without ; except, indeed, as far as Paul's imprisonment might affect himself. Hence, he says, "God has not given us the spirit of fear (cowardice)." "Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, or of me His prisoner." The first opposition then to be prepared for is the power and hostility of the world. But this is nothing if the servant be not a coward, *i.e.*, a foe to himself. Hence, the *real* danger is from within ; for if he can calmly face the world's power there is no danger. But while Timothy is to be brave he must also keep his mind well disciplined in truth. "Hold fast the form of sound words which thou hast heard of me." Again, "keep by the Holy Ghost which dwells in us, the good deposit entrusted unto thee." All this was necessary to preserve him from the tide of opposition which was running against him. And then the apostle mentions the defection of all that are in Asia, of whom is Phygellus and Hermo-

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genes. Who would have expected it? Fear and shame because of Paul's imprisonment had caused this wide-spread defection. It is well known how a panic works in a once brave and well disciplined army; and the inexpressible disorder that ensues, because perhaps only *one or two* trusted ones have faltered or turned aside. Paul not only prepares Timothy against this evil influence by pressing on him the spirit which God had given; but he says, "Be strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus; and if he would be Christ's servant in this emergency, he must beware of entanglement with the affairs of this life. In a word, Timothy must see that he is master of his own circumstances, and be, through the grace of Christ, prepared to enter into conflict with the opposing forces.

Cowardice, and the defection of the trusted ones, are the two forms of opposition already noticed; the next for which the apostle prepares him, is "profane and vain babbling." False teachers in the assembly, "of whom is Hymenæus and Philetus, who as to the truth have gone astray, saying that the resurrection has taken place already, and overthrow the faith of some." For this the apostle first, by the truth, fortifies Timothy in his *own soul;* bidding him "remember how Jesus Christ was raised out of the dead." And next he tells him how to act when these babblings occur, even by purging himself from the vessel to dishonour; and uniting with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart." Not that he escapes opposition by separation, but, on the contrary, he is directed how to treat those who oppose themselves; in meekness instructing them, if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth, though they are in the snare of the devil, and led captive by him.

In chap. iii. Timothy is instructed and prepared for other forms of opposition, even those developed in the "last days." These are two-fold. One from the professing mass and their teachers; the other, from the saints themselves. In the first, it is after the manner of Jannes and Jambres. As they resisted Moses, so do these withstand the truth. Men corrupted in mind and re-

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probate as to faith. Wicked men will wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived." This is the nature of the opposition for which Timothy is here prepared and forewarned. Secondly, the time will come when they will not endure sound teaching, but, according to their lusts, shall heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears, and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and be turned to fables." Paul had warned the Ephesian elders (Acts xx.) how of their "own selves men should arise speaking perverse things, seeking to draw away disciples after them." We have seen how, in every case, the opposition was directed against the truth which the Spirit of God was insisting on, and maintaining, so that from the opposition itself, we may form an ideà of the truth which is opposed. It was after open persecution and the force of the world's power were found ineffectual to exterminate the truth of God, that another form of opposition was resorted to; even that from within. And this it is that has had the most damaging effect. The object is to set aside and baffle everything purely divine by the imitation of it, and the substitution of the human; and to reduce what cannot be annihilated, to a mere human system, built and supported by human means, ability, and resources; and surely this is what historically the Church comes to in the end. If man is acknowledged in the place of God, the mischief is complete, and this decidedly is the aim. While the Spirit of God was still honoured, the Church bore up against all the opposition of the world; but as the saints grew careless, the enemy was able to effect his purposes in a surer way from within; from their own selves. While men slept the tares were sown. "As there were false prophets among the people, even so there shall be false teachers among you, who privily bring in damnable heresies." "Spots they are, blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceivings while they feast with you." And as Jude says, "Spots in your feasts of charity;"—"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 simple unmistakable clue to their state and ways is that they are "sensual, having not the Spirit."

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Do we not well to ask ourselves here what is the object of all this varied relentless opposition? It is simply directed against the truth revealed by God. From Paul's time onward, the effort of the opposing power was, as we have seen, *first,* to intimidate; then to weaken by defection; and thirdly, to raise up amongst us teachers of false doctrine, from whom we must separate, and by whom we are opposed; and finally, the closing order of opposition is detailed in chaps. iii., iv., where we find associated and mixed up with the profession of godliness, the boldest forms of selfishness; until the saints come to such a pass that they will not endure sound teaching, but according to their lusts heap up for themselves teachers, having itching ears; the congregations choose their teachers instead of submitting to be taught. *One* form of opposition is the imitation of the real thing by a false spirit, of which John, Peter, and Jude speak. John speaks of them as being "of the world, and, therefore, the world heareth them;" Peter, as "false teachers privily bringing in damnable heresies;" Jude, as "sensual, having not the Spirit." The *other* form is still more grievous; it is the saints turning away their ears from the truth, and turning after fables. It is a painful thing to be opposed by an evil spirit imitating the ways and thoughts of Christ; but then nothing better could be expected from the quarter whence it comes (when the elements of it are taken into account). But when I find that the saints, from whom I expected help and countenance, are turning from the truth unto fables, I am reduced to the position in which the apostle speaks of himself, when he said "all men forsook me."

And what I repeat is the aim of all this opposition? It is to set aside that *Christ, risen and Head over all things to the Church, His body, maintains it by the Holy Ghost down here, in His own life and power as a heavenly witness of Himself.* That the saints should not set forth and maintain this testimony is the one entire aim and effort of Satan; an aim which he uses every art and power to accomplish. For this end he empowers some to imitate divine sentiments and corrupt the minds of the saints

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with fables (myths) instead of truth, all to effect and bring about a state of things which is detailed in the history of the seven churches (Rev. ii., iii.). So that in the end, in Laodicea, everything is quite prosperous and satisfactory *without Christ.* Christ is *outside*, and the Church is pluming itself on its prosperous condition ; a sort of lighting up before death ; a certain vividness of appearance only indicative of its impending dissolution. Satan's aim has succeeded ; Christ is lost as Head; and the heavenly testimony is entirely ignored and overlooked.

I may now close the review, though we have not by any means reached the finale of Satan's opposition to the truth. On the same principles, though against a different order of testimony, he will carry it on when the Church is removed from the scene, and the earthly people are God's witnesses ; as we see in the Revelation. But my object is to direct the minds of saints to the aim and intention of the adversary *up* to and *in* our *own days ;* and especially with regard to the faith for which we are now called "earnestly to contend ;" that they may not be ignorant of his devices ; but, on the contrary, be prepared to encounter and rise above them. In order to do this, we must be sensible of two things ; first, that we expose ourselves to the direful hate of the enemy the more faithful we are ; and secondly, the more we do, the more distinctly do we know our resources in Christ. The supply is not merely *equal* to the demand, but *much more* than equal ; and of a measure that we shall only know as we draw upon it. If in the strength of Christ we are greater than the opposition, and if our ability to encounter it increases at a greater ratio than it increases, we need not fear it. And this we *shall* be (and have been) according as we are "strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." God has always maintained a testimony to the power and reality of His truth ; but whether it be verbally communicated, or personally manifested, as in our blessed Lord, the opposition is untiring to baffle it and set it aside. S.

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# N°. XXXVII.

## TIMOTHY AND TITUS.

In going through the detached prophetic passages in the New Testament, we have reached the Epistles of Timothy and Titus. Now we will read a few verses in these Epistles, viz., 1 Tim. iv. 1—5; vi. 13—16; 2 Tim. i. 8—10; iii. 1—5; iv. 1; and Titus ii. 11—13.

We are now to introduce ourselves to the two appearings, or advents, as we speak, of the Lord Jesus in this world. But I want first to direct your thoughts for a moment to two anticipations of the age through which we are passing, in 1 Timothy chapter iv. and 2 Timothy chapter iii. There we find the Spirit anticipating what we see with our eyes, hear with our ears, and handle with our hands. In 1 Tim. iv, we see the Christendom corruption of the middle ages—all the dark superstitious pravity that we get before the Reformation; a system of abstinences, yet deep hypocrisy. Then, in 2 Tim. iii, we get an anticipation of what he calls "the last days." Now "the latter times" are anterior to "the last days," and so, Protestant pravity comes after Romish pravity; the free-thinking age has set in after Romish times. Here we get a fearful picture of moral iniquity practised and sanctioned in the bosom of that scene which calls itself by the name of Christ; an awful, solemn picture of what you and I see around us. Thus the Spirit accurately distinguishes the two corrupt eras in the history of Christendom, and delineates for you the characteristic pravity of the one, and the characteristic pravity of the other. I do not say that the characteristic pravity of the "latter times" is gone when we reach the "last days"; but each has its own form of pravity; and they occupy Christendom. If you get godliness it is a hidden thing, according to Matt. xiii. You see a blessed remnant of godliness, but the tares

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characterise the field. So the Spirit here gives you the grand characteristic that occupies the scene before you.

Now, having said this, we will turn to the two appearings. We get that word "appearing" in the 14th verse of 1 Timothy vi., and in the 10th verse of 2 Timothy i. These are the two advents, as we speak. One of these has been accomplished, the other is still in prospect, and we cannot let the one do the business of the other. We cannot combine the two; just as in Thessalonians we saw the business of the *coming* and of the *day*. Can you confound those two things? So, exactly as to the two appearings. The first did its work, and the second will do its work.

Now the business of His *first* was this—to abolish death, and bring life and incorruptibility to light through the gospel, and to leave His people behind Him prisoners; as Paul says, "Me His prisoner." He abolished death by dying, and saved you with a certain salvation. No *probability*, no *question* about it. That was the business of the first appearing, and at the same time to leave you, it may be, the sport of a persecuting world; or "partaker of the afflictions of the gospel," as Timothy was.

Now turn to 1 Tim. vi. and you will see the business of the second appearing, and I ask you can you put them together? That word "before," in the 13th verse, I would rather leave out, as in the original. It seems to depreciate the personal glory of the Lord Jesus. "That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukable, *until* the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ." Now here is an appearing still in prospect, and what will be its business? "Which in His times He shall show, who is the blessed and only Potentate, King of kings and Lord of lords." This is an appearing brilliant with glory; but can I part with the thing that is precious for the thing that is magnificent? I travel on from the exquisite wondrous grace of the first appearing to the glorious magnificence of the second. The first teams with the riches of precious grace; in the second I am lost in a world of glories. The angels performed the business of Sinai; but to hurl the thunders of Sinai, would *that* have been the proper business of the Son of

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the bosom? The Son comes forth when the boundless riches of grace are to be announced. And at His second appearing He is to be the reflection of the effulgence of the blessed and only Potentate. He is not merely a Potentate but a *blessed* Potentate. Has there ever been a blessed Potentate in this world? Solomon was that for a time, but he soon lost his happiness. None can retain happiness without purity.

So the first appearing had its work, and the second will have its work. When He comes the second time will He be a houseless, homeless man in His own creation? When He was here the first time, He said "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." When He comes the second time, He will be able to say "He that hath seen Me, hath seen the King of kings and Lord of lords."

Now just turn to Titus ii. 11, and you will find these two appearings kept in the same connection. "The grace of God which bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men: teaching us," etc., * * * "looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." Grace *has* appeared, glory *will* appear by-and-bye. Did any glory accompany the *first* advent of Christ? There is no glory equal to moral glory, to the eye of faith, but there was no palpable, outward glory. The first coming brought not power, not the kingdom, but salvation. But it did more—it taught us to believe. It saved us, and called us with a holy calling, as we read in Timothy. And more than that; it has put us in the expectation and prospect of the second. The salvation-bringing appearing has put us into a condition to look for the glory-bringing appearing of the great God. Was there ever such beauty? How thoroughly lovely it is to see God at His work, telling out by one mystery after another the secrets of His own bosom! He has linked my soul with the grace of the first appearing, and fitted me for the glory of the second. In that short passage in Titus we get the two appearings of Timothy put close together and showing how beautifully they suit each other,—that



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the grace perfected by the first, has entitled me to wait without apprehension for the glory of the second.

But there are one or two more things that we must not let go. We read in 2 Tim. iv. 1, "I charge thee, therefore, before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom." Has that verse been a little obscure to you? If we read it carelessly it will be so. If you have in recollection Rev. xix. you will find there the judgment of the quick, and in Rev. xx. the judgment of the dead. The judgment of the quick takes place when the Lord appears; when the armies of Satan, and the beast and the false prophet confront Him, and perish in the light of His presence. But when we go on to chap. xx. and stand, not before the Rider on the white horse, but the Sitter on the white throne, we get the judgment of the dead, whose names are not written in the Lamb's book of life. Now when we come to this verse in Timothy, there might seem to be a little collision, How are we to combine it with Rev. xix. and xx.? A little thought will show you that they combine beautifully. The appearing judges the *quick*—the kingdom judges the *dead.* It is mere *style* that would awaken any confusion there. The more one stands before these divine communications, the more one is lost in the fulness, accuracy and variety of these things. There is no confusion in the counsels themselves, or in the communication of those counsels to you and me.

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## FRAGMENT.

*Joy in God*—revealing Himself as the God of mercy, or taking a stand-point whence mercy flows; *humility in ourselves*—for the presumptuous self-complacency which God's "I will" discovers to us to have been in ourselves; *self-loathing*—for the moral evil which our contrast to Him by whom mercy is secured to us in our need; *self-searching*—lest we be deceived and merely take a place near the stand-point of mercy and be not channels of it; *and self-judgment, fear*—from perceiving the difference of man's use of mercy in time and God's blessing it to us for eternity: *joy in God, humility in ourselves, self-loathing, self-searching, fear and self-judgment,* all coalesce in the life divine in a human soul which is in God's presence. How unlike the one-sided view of the mind of the mere professor.

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# N°. XXXVIII.

## HEBREWS II., IV.

In pursuing the prophetic fragments, as we have called them, in the New Testament, (for prophecy breaks out incidentally in the Gospels and Epistles) we find they very much abound in the Hebrews, so we must linger for several meditations on this Epistle. We will meditate to-day on the first four chapters, and we shall find them very full of prophetic intimations. I will read a few passages in them, in which we shall find Adam and Joshua put together. There is a great kindredness between the places they hold in the book of God. We will read now, in chap. ii., from the 5th to the 10th verse, and in chap. iv. from the 4th verse to the end.

The leading characteristic business of the Epistle to the Hebrews is to present the Lord Jesus as He now is, in heaven. It distinctly looks at Him as ascended. He is ascended, but it is in the character of the Lamb of God. He is glorified in the highest heavens, but it is as the purger of our sins, and the Spirit is summoning one glory after another, to pass under the review of our souls. It is not the business of the Spirit in this Epistle to conduct us to His *future* glories. Several classes of glories belong to the Lord Jesus. His *personal* glory is that in which we find Him to be perfect God, as well as perfect man. His moral glory is seen when He walked as an obedient Jew in all the paths of human activity. His official glories in heaven are now revealed to faith, and by-and-bye His millennial glories will find their exhibition on the earth. In looking at the glories of Christ you span, or bridge the two eternities. If you look at the eternity that is past, you see His personal glory as co-ordinate with the Father and the Holy Ghost. When He was down here on the earth, you see His moral glories. Now, in heaven, you see His official

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glories; and by-and-bye, be it the glory of a king, a judge, or the head of His body,—the *form* of glory may change, but you are only travelling from glory to glory with Christ. Now the business of the Hebrews is to present Him in His official glories, as the purger of our sins; the high priest of our profession; the executor of the new covenant; the one who sits there as having perfectly done the will of God. There He is, and He has a title to display Himself there in this galaxy or constellation of glories. Among these glories is this, He is the Lord, or expectant heir of the world to come. You will ask, Is He not now the heir? No; He is the heir-expectant, expecting till His enemies are made His footstool. You could not properly say a person was the heir till he had stepped into the inheritance. If it was uncertain that another might not step in instead of him, he would be the heir-presumptive. If he was *sure* of it in due time, he would be the heir-expectant; that is the Lord Jesus. And the business of Psalm viii. is to present Him in this character. We cannot occupy ourselves too much with the Lord Jesus. Descriptions are better than definitions. Take for instance the millennium. When the Spirit comes to speak of it He *describes* it as the "times of refreshing," the "kingdom of the Father," "the restitution of all things;" and our Lord speaks of it as the "regeneration." Now I ask your sensibilities, are not descriptions much better than names? The Spirit does not merely talk to me of the millennium in *name*, but describes the thing to me. I welcome such a style as that. Now here, the beautiful thing that Christ is expecting is called "the world to come." It is a world to come, not merely because it is *future*, but because there has never been anything like it seen yet. It will be a kind of second Genesis. Genesis is the old creation. The world to come will be the new creation. It is the regeneration, which the Lord speaks of, "When the Son of man shall sit in the throne of His glory."

When we come to look a little further, in Hebrews ii., we find the path which led the Lord to the world to come. It is a totally different path from that

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which led Adam to the garden of Eden. Adam entered the garden simply by creation. The Lord God breathed into him the breath of life, and put him into the lordship of everything. It was a great coronation day to Adam. The day of his espousals followed, and he was installed in the garden in full delight. But Adam got there simply by this act of grace in the Creator. The Lord Jesus got into the very same thing in the world to come, but by an entirely different path. He was "made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death. —that He, by the grace of God, should taste death for every man." That was the path by which He found His way into the world to come. Before He could survey His monarchy He must bow Himself to death, He must "lie a prisoner in the grave" and then be lifted up to His coronation. The apostle takes up the oracle of the psalmist, and does not add to it, but unfolds and interprets it to our thoughts. The apostle is God's *second* letter to us. I might write you a letter, and if there was anything difficult in it I might write you another. Now the apostle's letter is God's interpretation of the psalmist's description of Christ's brilliant occupation of the world to come. The Spirit in the apostle engrafts our Jesus on Psalm viii. He introduces into it our dead and risen and glorified Christ. The one humbled a while is set over the works of God's hands. And then I ask you, Is He to go *alone* into that world to come? Why then did He die? Must He have died to go there Himself? Every *thought* resents it! Why then did He die but that He might bring the sons of glory into this beautiful world to come. What do I want now, as a poor sinner, but to deposit myself in the hands of Christ, as an old writer says, "Let Christ see to it." I commit myself to Christ and it becomes His business not mine, and He conducts me to the world of glory. When we meditate on this what a blessed thing is before us! Marking the path of the Son of man, through death and resurrection, into His dominions. There is material in the book of God to keep our souls in an eternal rapture. But then we want

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souls to *be* enraptured. We are not straightened in Him but in ourselves.

If I were to linger a little on John i., I should find it connected with all this. John i. illustrates this simple truth, that the Lamb of God is the Creator anew. This chapter just shows me the same thing. The Creator anew enters on the world to come as the Lamb of God. Not merely as the Omnipotent One, who could call light out of darkness; that was creative power. But everything now stands in the blood of Christ, and is therefore infallible. It is a *purchased* thing. If I look at Adam in Eden, I see God laying out His power, but not *Himself.* But the God-man has laid down His life for the world to come, and will any one tell me that the thing which Christ has purchased with His own blood is a forfeitable thing? Christ has laid Himself out on it,—spent Himself upon it, and the power of the serpent can never reach it. It is impregnable, unassailable, invulnerable. And this introduces that word *must.* "Some *must* enter therein" (chap. iv. 6). God has appointed that others shall be there with Him. And now we come to Joshua, and we find that he did no more for Israel than God did for Adam. He put them into Canaan and everything depended on their fidelity,—the same title of legal fidelity as Adam's—and they lost it. If God had given Adam an infallible creation, He would never have spoken of the world to come. So, the land of Israel was a forfeitable thing, and "there remaineth therefore a rest;" that rest is "the world to come." Christ has not got there yet. Acts iii. tells me the heavens must retain Him till the times of restitution. So, here I get Christ retained in the heavens. That which Adam lost, and Joshua lost, in the hands of Christ is infallibly secure. *All* the promises of God in Him are Yea and Amen. The moment a promise gets into Christ's hands, to be ministered from Him to me, that moment that promise is sure. There is a Sabbatism that remains for the people of God, and some *must* enter therein. In Adam and Joshua all was lost. There is not a hand capable of

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holding a single blessing, but the once bleeding, infallible hand of the Lamb of God. Let any promise get there, and it is sure and infallible. Let any glory get there and it is unclouded for ever.

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## FRAGMENTS.

WHAT am I committed to do to-day? But one thing can I remember, and one thing only, viz., to live so as to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ. My power to do this is in His Spirit, who has taken up His abode in me, making me a temple of the Holy Ghost. For I am one of those who know that He (Jesus) is now in the Father and we (believers) in Him there, and He in us down here. In us, both by faith and in the Spirit. Yes! I have been and am one that was crucified together with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I live in the flesh (or body) I do live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me. Christ liveth in me! What wondrous blessedness is this, and how does it connect us (and me, too, individually—me) with the whole circuit of the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. Crucified together with Him, dead together with Him, buried together with Him: quickened together with Him, raised up together with Him, and made sit together with Him in heavenly places; blessed there with all spiritual blessings in Him.

If I *confide* in God, I can wait His time. If I only see that He can help me, and that He has promised to do so; I may, according to the amount of pressure, be in haste that He should act for me; but if I confide in Him, I can wait, for I know that He will do it in the very best time, and in the very best way.

God states to me what He will do before I experience it Experience only confirms to me what He has told me. I do not wait for experience to find it out. He commits Himself to me, and invites me to prove Him.

The one who serves without sitting at the feet of Christ does what he thinks *right*, but that may not be what Christ likes *best*. If I sit at His feet first, I *know* what He likes best; my service is according to His mind, and is not merely measured by my own conscience.

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# No. XXXIX.

## "MY DAY."

JOHN VIII. 56.

"Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it and was glad."

THERE are three things here stated. 1st. "Abram rejoiced to see my day;" *i.e.*, as I take it, anticipatively by faith. Whatever that day was, it had been the subject of revelation or promise to the patriarch, and became the object of his desire.

2ndly. "He saw it." What he had before looked forward to, he at some time subsequently realised: not by faith, anticipatively, for if so the Lord's words "and he saw it," are only a repetition of what he had just said.

3rdly. The seeing the day referred to made Abraham glad.

To regard "my day," as signifying the day of the Lord's glory as King of Israel, the head and centre of millennial blessedness, is to fall short of the truth that is in the Lord's mind. Because, 1st, that is the day of the *Son of man*, and it is not in that character that the Lord is presenting Himself in the chapter in which the passage before us occurs. He is the Son of man it is true, and so speaks of Himself in ver. 28, and in chap. vi., etc., etc., but not as propounding or enforcing that truth, but rather that He, the Son of man, was indeed and in truth the Son of God. Moreover Abraham *did not* see *that* day except by faith anticipatively; so that if that be still insisted on as the meaning of the blessed Lord, the passage would, in other words, run thus:—"Your father Abraham rejoiced to anticipate my day, and he anticipated it and was glad." This would be tautology which the Lord's words exclude, since to *see* may be either by faith or in fact.

In John's Gospel the Lord presents Himself in His

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divine person and claims as the Son of the Father: the sent and the subject one indeed, who, although His mind and will were necessarily in absolute and essential unison with the Father's, nevertheless exercised them down here, not in independency, but only as from moment to moment He waited upon and received the communications of the Father: the Son can do nothing of Himself (John v. 19, etc., etc.)

As Son of God He is the source and embodiment of all that is perfect in blessedness abstractedly, and the knowledge of Him thus by faith, links the soul with Him, and introduces it into the fellowship of the life, the light, and the liberty that pertain to Himself, as before, above, independently of, and beyond all dispensations in which angels or men could sin or Himself could suffer.

It is, I believe, to this blessedness in special contrast with any thing that their boasted adherence to Moses could in their own thoughts confer upon the Jews, that the Lord referred when He said to those Jews that believed on Him, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed, and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free," ver. 31; and again, in ver. 36, "If therefore *the Son* shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." Moses was faithful in God's house, but as a servant, and the law, of which he was minister, could gender only to bondage. But they were ignorant of this. Moreover they resented the Lord's gracious words by claiming to be descended from Abraham. "We be Abraham's seed and were never in bondage to any; how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?" This reference to Abraham called forth from the Lord's lips a statement well calculated to convict them of bondage; a statement too which included Abraham, and made even him but a poor impersonation of freedom; "Whosoever committeth sin is the bondsman of sin." But Abraham had also in a very special manner abandoned the ground of faith and of grace, and brought upon himself and his house the yoke of a bitter bondage; "This Agar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is and is in bondage with her children," Gal. iv. 25.



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She expressed the Mosaic covenant which gendereth to bondage. So that being Abraham's seed did not necessarily involve freedom; Ishmael was as much his seed as Isaac. The Lord's words, in ver. 35, "and the servant abideth not in the house for ever, but the Son," etc., seem plainly to indicate that Ishmael and Isaac were in His mind. But if these Jews were ignorant of all this, and neither understood their own condition, nor cared for the deliverance and blessing into which *the Son* alone could bring them, it had not been so with Abraham. He groaned, doubtless, as Sarah did, under the consequences of his folly in distrust of God and the confidence of flesh, so that, at Sarah's instigation, he was willing to get rid of the burden, but God suffered him not till Isaac, the true son, the child of promise being come, sonship with all its privileges and blessings, should be introduced, and the bond-woman and her son could no longer continue; "Cast out the bond-woman and her son, for the son of the bond-woman shall not be heir with the son of the free woman" Gal. iv. 30. Compare Gen. xvi. 5—9; and xxi. 1—12. This day of *the Son* was the object of the faith and the desire of Abraham even from the beginning, "What wilt thou give me seeing I go childless," etc. Gen. xv.; but how much more in connection with Agar and Ishmael; and in due time he saw it and was glad. What a contrast Abraham thus presents to those who, in the chapter before us, were claiming to be his seed, who were indeed, in one sense, his *seed* but not his *children* (see verses 37 and 39). They were under the bondage of sin and of the law, of this the sojourn of Agar and Ishmael in the house of Abraham was but a type; and there in their midst and speaking to them was the true Isaac, the everlasting Son of the everlasting Father, seeking to lead them into the liberty and blessing of sonship; but they would not, they sought to kill him, this did not Abraham. That *Son* and that *day* which they were despising in the blessed Lord's person and at His hand, Abraham in type rejoiced to see, and he saw it and was glad.

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## No. XL.

## THE GRACE OF GOD.

Titus ii. 11.

In order to apprehend with any degree of fulness the grace of God which has appeared, and which carries with it salvation for all men, we must review the whole history of man, and God's ways with him as unfolded to us in the Scriptures.

We start with the assurance that God has given man a revelation of Himself; and this, because *of* God, must be perfect. If God had not given me a revelation of Himself, who by searching could find out God? Even as regards ordinary beings, beings either equal to, or lower than ourselves, we know their mind or purposes at times but very imperfectly, and often more by supposition than of certainty. If, then, of inferior beings we are at best uncertain, how much more so should we have been of God who is so infinitely above us! But God *has* given us a revelation of Himself. Let us, then, examine the Scriptures in order that we may have some clearness of idea of His grace which has appeared.

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." It is important to see the connexion and links between all the works of God. All things were made by the Son, and "without Him was not anything made that was made" (John i. 3). "All things were created by Him, and for Him" (Col. i. 16). He finished up the first creation, graduating from the earth without form and void, until He made man, and in the likeness of God made He man. Man was the last made. All was fit and beautiful from His hand, indicative in its very execution of the hand which had formed it. God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good. His eye rested with satisfaction on the first creation; and man, made in His likeness and image, was

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set in the garden of Eden surrounded with everything to suit and satisfy his heart, as an innocent being on earth. Every arrangement there indicated the love and tender care of God for man on earth.

But man was but a creature; called, of course, to walk in dependence on his Creator. He does so until he is assailed by Satan. It was not from inherent evil that man disobeyed, but from want of guardedness to watch against temptation which an evil spirit, both skilful and powerful in agency, addressed to him. Eve is deceived; and Adam hearkens to his wife in distrusting God, on the supposition that they can take better care of themselves than God will. That is, they trust themselves more than they trust God. God's power is not denied by Satan. The aim and wickedness of his lie is to wrest from man's mind all confidence in God, and to embolden him, according to his ability, to trust himself more than God's care; or the use of His power on his behalf. It is important clearly to apprehend the nature of the fall; how it came about, and how it is traceable now. It is simply a distrusting of God. There is not in it, necessarily, a denial of His power, but a conviction which leads to action which assumes that He will not use His power on my behalf; in short, that love is not the nature of God, and hence that man should trust and use his own resources independently of God. We may easily discover this, the fruit of the fall in ourselves. It is the secret of the satisfaction which a man attaches to the possession of unlimited resources; and the dissatisfaction which he feels when deprived of any, whereas, if the heart were truly assured of the love of God, as immensely greater than any love we could have for ourselves, there could be neither the one nor the other.

Man is now fallen! And here let us contemplate the state to which he has fallen! In mind embittered against God, his present position is that of an exile from Paradise! Distrust of God and trust in his own resources are now parts of his nature, therefore the place of an exile suits him, for such a place is alone suited to an unbeliever in God; for we must remember that it is God's *nature* that has been denied, and that man, at the instigation of

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Satan, called in question the love of God, and acted independently of Him and of His word. Surely we see everywhere this nature in man to this hour. Come how it may, and whence it may, here it is before our eyes—everywhere, and in every man. Man *will not* trust God; he has no confidence in Him. He seeks to acquire as much power as he can, to provide for himself, and is in enmity with God because he fears and envies the power which he cannot grasp. The mind of man is thus alienated from God: and not only this; he is under judgment,—the judgment of death, because of his sin; he walks about under the sense of an impending doom; and he is not strong enough to resist the power of Satan to do evil, nor capable in himself to escape from the condition into which the fall has plunged him. Man's real state must be seen or we shall form inadequate ideas of God's grace to him. He is at a distance from God; on his *own* side because of his enmity; on *God's* side because of his sin; and, in proportion as he is thoughtful and intelligent, he lingers on a miserable course here; more miserable than that of any other creature because of the fear of an impending judgment; and to aggravate all he is powerless to resist Satan, or to recover lost ground before God. There are these *three* marks of man's fall and degradation. First, he is at a distance from God; and that in a double way. What more anomalous than to see and know that man as a creature so largely endowed, should now be at a distance and of such a character; enmity on the creature's side; and on God's, holiness which finds sin an impassable barrier! Surely such a position is fearful and melancholy to a degree. But, secondly; in this state of distance, man is sensible that he is under judgment (unless he blinds his mind to the fact), for he alone, of all other creatures, lives in fearful suspense of death, of which, in proportion as he is thoughtful, he is in continual dread. And, thirdly, he is liable to be made the tool of Satan at any moment. What a state! At a distance from God,—under the judgment of death, and liable to be made still worse in moral degradation, without any power to recover himself. This is man as he now is by nature and state.

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Man thus estranged is not without natural religion; but his religion, whether it bears the name of Christian or Pagan, never goes beyond the idea of propitiation. His thought never rises higher than to propitiate the Divine Being. The sense, the well known sense, that He is at a distance from us, and we from Him, is fully acknowledged. This was Cain's religion: he would have propitiated God by the fruits of the earth. Man in his religion never rises higher than propitiation, and this is limited to what would suit himself were he in God's place; he measures God by himself. I need not dwell on this point, but it is well to bear in mind the idea and scope of natural religion. It acts on the presumption that God is arrayed against me in judicial wrath; and the aim is to propitiate Him by presenting to Him such things as would propitiate ourselves, if we were swayed by a like kind of judicial wrath. Abel, on the contrary, led of God, declares what was required of God, in order that He might be on terms with man,—simply and distinctly this is set forth at the very first. God required righteousness. And when I begin truly with God, it is righteousness which first engages my soul, for I am a sinner. Hence God requires a victim, not rightly chargeable with my guilt, to bear the penalty of my guilt; and which, while bearing it, presents a personal excellency. This requirement Abel in faith set forth in offering the firstling of the flock, and the fat thereof. Until the sacrifice which is here prefigured at the outset of man's history is accomplished, righteousness cannot be established, and the distance between God and the sinner, cannot be removed. That God had provided for Himself a Lamb we know; and that many a soul resting in faith in what His righteousness demanded was accepted like righteous Abel, we are also assured. But what we have previously to take into our consideration, is the varied mode and manner in which God made trial of man on the earth. Before the flood, without positive intervention; after the flood, setting man on renewed terms on the earth; separating Abraham and his posterity to walk on the earth in dependence on Himself in promise, and finally placing Israel in the land under law.

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In each and all, man failed, and only disclosed, the more God dealt with him, how entirely incompetent he is to act for God, or according to His mind. Who could read the history of man as to his relations with God from Abel down, and not own man's incurable perversity and the utter hopelessness of the creature, as he is in himself, to answer to the mind of God. It may be said that man was then not so cultivated and developed as now. This may be true of him respecting his relations with his human fellows, but surely not as regards God, for never was man brought, as to his senses and understanding into such consciousness of God's nearness as He was in the temple services given to Israel. In a word, every trial made of man—as man was, and every manifestation of God which could have had influence on him, was made by God but without effect. They despised, and would none of my counsel, and now the word is, "there is none righteous, no not one, there is none that understandeth, none that seeketh after God" (Rom. iii. 11 to 18). All are brought in guilty before God, and there is no ability or means in any wise on man's side, to repair the distance between himself and God. All is involved before the eye, as far as man is concerned in one mass of unmingled ruin and shame, a funeral pall enshrouds the whole world, the ruin is complete and fully established; and there can be no means or hope from the side of the offender to repair the terrible ruin.

Then, a new and wondrous thing is disclosed! When God "saw that there was no man and wondered that there was no intercessor, therefore His arm brought salvation unto Him." Now the Son says to the Father "I come to do thy will," "a body hast thou prepared me." The offender ought to have made amends for his offence; the reparation ought to have come from man s side; but man is proved incompetent and unable in any way to repair it. With every trial God made of him, he only grew worse, and with every dealing he only manifested greater perversity of heart, and incapacity to do right. Man is not at all the source of this new and wondrous action. The Son comes to do the Father's will, as He says, "My meat is to do the will of Him

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that sent me." A body is prepared Him. As man had offended, and was under judgment, so the only begotten Son is manifested in the flesh. "Inasmuch as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, he likewise took part of the same." Man could do nothing from his side; the Son from God's side comes to man's side, to do the will of God. He who dwells in the Father's bosom, who only knew the depth and greatness of the heart of God, is the one to whom alone this work of declaring it could be entrusted. It is the mission of this Blessed One—to declare the Father—to do His will. On the Son, who at first had made all things, who had presented everything from His hands in perfect beauty and excellence—on Him it devolves, now, to repair all; to make all things new; to form and set up an entirely new creation. It is an important link in this review, that the Son does not now begin with the heavens and the earth as in the first creation. He begins with man, by whom the ruin and the judgment was brought in upon all. He is the Son of God, and comes from God; the Creator, and He takes the weakest place among men. He is a babe, wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. He comes to repair,—to re-establish all according to the will of God. It is the will of God which is the guide and measure of His action; not, primarily, the need or circumstance of man. His mission is *to do His will*, and to finish His work, and He enters on it at the weakest point of humanity. The Creator, the Son from heaven, links Himself with man. The hosts of heaven testify of this wondrous sight (Luke ii.) and proclaim "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will toward man." It is not that man has achieved deliverance from judgment by any stupendous action on his part; but the Son who dwells in the Father's bosom, sharing in His love, has come to do His will. He is sent of the Father, and the angels herald and celebrate this wondrous action. Man, in order to escape judgment, must find a victim not rightfully chargeable with his guilt to bear the judgment of it, and at the time of bearing it having a personal excellency. But he could find none such. On the contrary, the more God's righteous

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demands were pressed on him, the more wicked and perverse he was shewn to be. Then it is, that from God's side, His own Son is born of a woman;—enters the world as a babe. The weakest stage of human life is not unknown to Him, blessed be His name. The mission with which He is charged, He only could comprehend, and He only could execute. He is to declare the Father, and finish His work.

Now His life here is properly divided into three parts; one, before His baptism, of which I need not speak, save that it was one wholly perfect as a man in the ordinary details of life. Secondly, after His baptism, when He was the witness of God on earth, and declared what God was in His nature, where it was unknown and denied. And during this period in the face of every opposition and accumulating force, He preserved the space around Him, and in a holy circle set forth the heart of God; in the midst of those who denied it, and were still incredulous, He manifested the nature of God so fully that the needy and wretched felt they could turn to Him in their distress. One could say, "If I but touch the hem of His garment, I shall be made whole." And another could cry, out of the jaws of an ignominious death, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." He taught His disciples to say "Our Father," because the grace, and tenderness, and way of the heart of God was *exhibited* before them. And He could say, "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father." God was fully owned by a man on earth; and not only fully owned, but fully declared in spite of all opposition, in all the mighty and tender lines of His love and care for man.

Now, in the third and final period of His life on earth, He is before us in quite another position. He now surrenders Himself to judgment. He offers Himself to bear the judgment due to man; He is now the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world. He is "led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth." He is defenceless altogether. His hour is come; the multitude with swords and staves take Him and lead

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Him away. The prince of this world had come, and had carried away Judas, and sifted Peter, but finds nothing in *Him* who was manifested to take away our sin; for in Him was no sin, and He came to destroy the works of the devil. In this final period, we see our blessed Lord as the victim; we see every form of evil let loose upon Him. The prince of this world, who had been kept at bay during the second period, because silenced and curbed at the beginning of His ministry, comes forth again. The Lord tells His disciples that they must no longer look to Him for succour; that they must return to their own resources (Luke xxii. 35—37). He will submit to every form of degradation and force from man, and every exercise of soul required of God. Here He especially humbled Himself. He allowed everything to bear down on Him, He screened Himself from none; the utmost which man and Satan could do is unrebuked and unavoided: He meets all without resistance or evasion; and eventually takes the cup which the Father had given, and bears the judgment of sin on the cross. *There* He enters into the terrible distance of a sinner under judgment from God. He bears everything, shrinks from nothing; is obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Supported by trust in God, He passes through every form and character of suffering, and bearing the judgment of sin, forsaken of God, as it is said, "all thy waves and thy billows have gone over me."

Sin is condemned in the flesh. God's Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh, had now condemned sin in the flesh. All bore down on the Blessed One, and He is righteous in it all. He has glorified God on earth. He establishes righteousness for God. Now the veil is rent, that is to say, there is nothing now to restrain or hinder the expression of God's love to man. The love of His heart which had been already exhibited by the Son on earth, He can now make good in the soul of the prodigal child who turns to Him. Sin is now removed from the presence of God on God's side: righteousness is established; there was none on man's side. The Son manifested in the flesh here established righteousness, by

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rising out of the divine judgment on man. God can now be just and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus. It is not that man has any right to draw near; but God, on the warrant of righteousness, can deal with the sinner. This is grace! Christ has put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. He has brought in righteousness. Every barrier to the full expression of God in His heart and nature is now removed. He had required righteousness. That He had now found in His Son, and God being glorified He is free to act. Having found in His Son all that was required, He is the justifier of every one who believes in Christ, and He *gives* eternal life and this life is in His Son. What God in His righteousness required is now effectuated, and the consequence of it is, that He gives eternal life. The deep purpose of His heart is now divulged; sin having been condemned in the flesh; judged in the cross of Christ.

And not only so. Christ is risen, and life and incorruptibility have come to light through the gospel. Christ bore the judgment due to the first man, and having risen out of it, is in resurrection the fountain of life to every one believing in Him. He is their life. As in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive. Death was in the one race; the eternal life that was with the Father, in the other. The first man is judged before God in the death of Christ; he is no longer an existence *dealt* with by God. When God deals with man from henceforth, it is on the ground that the first man has been judged in the death of Christ; and that He can give according to His heart in righteousness, and receive to Himself the lost, in newness of the life that is in Christ Jesus, and in His likeness. So that as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. There is an entirely new man now before God, suited for Him; as the former sprang from the first Adam, so the new springs from the last Adam; risen from the dead, Lord in heaven. God will have man in an entirely new order and construction. The Son, who knows the scope and purpose of His heart has done all His will and finished His work. He is the beginning of the creation of God, and "he that cometh

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to Him shall never hunger, and he that believeth on Him shall never thirst." God can do His utmost for all who turn to Him. Thus the grace of God which carries with it salvation to all men has appeared. The first great thing which is established by the Gospel is the relation in which God can now place Himself to his repentant creature-man. He has laid help on one that is mighty, and He can now, without let or hindrance, disclose the deep purpose of His love. He has by Himself secured for Himself this. He has made known His heart. God's grace is that He can now unfold all His love to those who once were lost. He can work faith in the alienated heart of man. Every hindrance has been removed by the Son of His love. His will is the measure of everything; and all His heart is open to the returning prodigal whom He had drawn to Himself. But the sphere from which this grace shines forth imparts eternal depth and greatness to it. It shines from the glory. It is communicated by light from the glory. Before righteousness was brought in, God required righteousness, as the law and the fiery mount declared. And therefore the law was the ministry of condemnation. It never repaired the distance, and was the ministration of death, but now righteousness being established, and there being full warrant for God to act according to His love, there is from the glory now a ministration of the Spirit, which is the ministration of righteousness. Righteousness being established, Christ risen, has become according to the grace of God, the founder of a new man who lives by Him. As in the first Adam men die; so in Him all who are of Him live.

But being rejected by Israel to whom He offered Himself even after His ascension (Acts vii.), He is set down at God's right hand. And it is thence that the light of the glory surrounds Paul. In that light, Jesus is revealed to Him. As Jesus was announced from the glory at His first coming to restore all things, so now is He shown forth by the light of the glory, as the One who has so established righteousness, that the glory which before would have consumed the sinner, is where He now finds a Saviour and a home. The grace of God

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in its simple greatness cannot be seen or known, unless we see that it is from the glory, the sphere of God's presence, where His satisfaction as to sin is fully declared, that the light of His grace reaches the sinner. The sinner may not trace to the glory the ray of light that reaches his own soul; and he loses in proportion as he does not. But the moment he knows that the ray of light concerning God's grace which has shone in on His soul, comes from the glory, then He acquires a true estimation of the riches of God's grace which the Church will throughout all ages bear testimony to (Eph. ii. 7). Paul is a pattern, or an outline to all here who hereafter should believe on Him to life everlasting (1 Tim. i. 16). God communicates to the soul the satisfaction of His own heart in Christ. This is the light which testifies of His grace, and this is the consummation of it; to make known to the soul the acceptance and communion in which He now places me through and in Christ. And therefore with Paul, though made known at his conversion, it was the "mark." to which he was turning his eyes and wending his way all the days of his pilgrimage here. In whatever darkness and shame this light falls in on a soul, it rebukes and annuls the distance and enmity on man's side while assuring of the removal of the distance on God's side; it comes from the glory, and has in it the expression and assurance of God's deepest, fullest love. The kiss to the prodigal was not the fatted calf, but it assured his heart to be nothing surprised at anything the father who so greeted him could confer on him.

The light from the glory announces and pronounces that all God's heart is open to me. I am introduced into a new order of existence in Christ Jesus; I find my life and home where God puts me, suited to Himself, according to the delight and satisfaction of his heart, and this is the grace of God which has appeared to all men carrying with it salvation. S.

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FRAGMENT.

Muck and mire are not fit for vessels formed by God to show forth His praises (virtues—*see margin.*)

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# No. XLI.

## PREFACE TO THE GERMAN TESTAMENT.[a]

In order to enable the reader to use this new translation with full profit, it is necessary to notice the end we have proposed in it, the means employed in reaching that end, and some other particulars.

To publish a new translation is to declare oneself dissatisfied with existing ones. We are far from wishing to seek out, and uncharitably to judge the defects of the work of others, but the repeated citations from the pulpit of the original of various passages, the improvements on the Lutheran translation, and, finally, the various new versions which have appeared of late years, prove most clearly the need of our times.

When God, at the beginning of the sixteenth century, caused His light to break forth on a world deeply sunk in darkness, Martin Luther was the instrument specially chosen by Him to spread the truth in Germany. This labourer, full of faith, occupied himself principally with the work with which God had entrusted him. To gain this object he used the Bible, which himself translated for this end. Others followed him in this, in various lands, some of whom were even compelled to forfeit their lives in attaining the object of their holy zeal. Far be it from us to despise the toil and labour of love of these blessed instruments in the Lord's hand; surely God Himself has not despised them, and many lands have enjoyed for these three centuries the fruit of their labours. But the requirements of our day are new. While the energy of the Holy Ghost, three centuries ago, was directed to laying bare the foundations of truth, hitherto buried under a countless multitude of human institutions and traditions, and Luther's translation was blessed as a valuable instrument in this work, the Spirit is active at the present time in meeting other wants. In our days men go further than formerly. Everything is sought into; the Scriptures are searched, and, who will blame this? Men desire to understand (not only some truths such as are indispensably necessary for salvation, but) the whole truth, and therefore the mind and will of God in so far as His counsels and revelations with regard to the world, and with regard to the Church, are concerned.

The Holy Ghost Himself calls our attention to the necessity of understanding the divine will as a means of safety in the last

[a] A translation of this having been asked for, I have done my best, with the aid of friends, to present it in the form most usable to the mere English reader.—Editor.

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days; and regard for the holy Scriptures is in these days a proof that God is honoured. The efforts of the enemy also are chiefly directed against His word. Now, whilst the learned can examine the original text, this privilege is out of the reach of the unlearned, and of those unacquainted with that text. It has therefore been our endeavour and object to give a helping hand to the latter class, and to furnish them at a small cost, with as faithful and exact a representation as possible of the divine word in their own language. Undoubtedly every translation must be more or less defective, and we by no means value our work so highly as that we would set aside one more perfectly executed by another hand. How great the difficulties are of conveying the expressions of one language, especially of the rich Greek, in another, those alone can tell who have tried to make a translation. We can, nevertheless, maintain with good conscience, that we have devoted the utmost care to the work of presenting the word of God as faithfully as possible, and we therefore cherish the hope that even the most unpractised reader will find our translation simple and comprehensible. We might indeed have clothed many passages in more elegant German, but, without being in bondage to words, we have been governed throughout by the thought, that the faithful rendering of the original text outweighs every other consideration; and the more so, because we believe, with the very fullest conviction, the divine inspiration of the holy Scriptures, as the revelation of the infinite wisdom of God, and the expression of His gracious character in Jesus Christ. But since no one is able to grasp the whole expanse of this revelation, and often a meaning beyond the comprehension of the translator, lies hidden in a sentence which would be lost in a free translation, but may be found in a more literal one, through deeper teaching of the Holy Spirit,—it is evidently necessary to reproduce the original text as in a mirror. Yet, of course, the limits of this literalness or exactitude must not be drawn so close as to render the sentence translated into another language altogether incomprehensible, and to remain consequently destitute of meaning.

Another ground for making the translation as literal as possible, was the conviction that it would not be without profit to a reader, unacquainted with the original, to learn something of the style, the customs, the thoughts and the manners of the writers of the Gospels. For since the heart, as well as the mind, finds food in the word of God, the forms of expression chosen by the writers are not without importance; and by changing them, even if the meaning of the sentence remains unchanged, the sensibilities of the heart's feelings may often be lost. Above all, we have been throughout influenced by the deep sense that it was the word of God which occupied us, and we have therefore striven to accomplish our work as intelligibly, and, at the same time, as literally as was at all possible, submitting it to the judgment of thoughtful critics.

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this word there are two others, *doulos* and *diakonos*, which are translated in the same way. *Doulos* is a *slave; diakonos* an ordinary servant, at table, etc.; but *hupeeretees* is more official. The first meaning of the word is a "*rower*," and it therefore in general denotes some one who has a distinct service. As we could only translate this word by "*servant*," we give the passages in which it occurs: Matt. v. 25; Mark xiv. 54; Luke i. 2; iv. 20; John vii. 32, 45, 46; xviii. 3, 12, 18, 22, 36; xix. 6; Acts v. 22, 26; xiii. 5; xxvi. 16; 1 Cor. iv. 1.

Finally one more short observation on the little word "*so*," *houto*, in John iii. 16. It is possible that this word relates to the preceding, "*have eternal life*," and then the following clause expresses a consequence, and the "*so*" denotes more the object, the kind of love, than its strength, so that we might say, "for God has loved the word in such a manner," etc.

Heartily thanking the Lord that He has caused His blessing to rest on our work, it having been received by many Christians, and read, as we hope, with profit, we now place this second edition in His hand, and entreat Him to crown with His rich blessing our effort to place His word before souls as exactly as possible.

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Notes of the translators into English.

1. Was not Mill's edition in 1707; Bengel's in 1734?
2. The notes are at the foot of the page in the first edition; at the end in the second edition.
3. The paragraph on Baptism cannot be presented in English; the German and English prepositions not corresponding.
4. The word Demon does not exist in German.

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## THE LORD'S SUPPER.

"EUCHARISTIC it is indeed; for *He* gave thanks, and the very echoes of the thanks of Christ arise from our hearts; it is the soundings and repeatings of His thanks that are making melody in our hearts to the Lord."

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However destitute of internal joy the soul [of a believer] may be, it has an eternal inexhaustible source of joy outside itself, in Christ and the joy which God the Father has in Him.

God's word was given to Adam in Eden, to guide him how to guard and keep the life which he had (Gen. ii. 17); to us God's word is given to originate in us a new eternal life; born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever . . . . . And this is the word which by the Gospel is preached unto you (1 Peter i. 23, 25).

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## N°. XLII.

## THE FIRST MAN AND THE SECOND MAN.

**Genesis i.—v. John i.—v.**

As we read the opening verses of the Gospel by John, the mind instinctively recurs to the commencement of the Book of Genesis. Both speak of the beginning, the former of Him who already existed, the latter of what was then first called into being. "In the beginning was the Word." "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." But the similarity between these two books does not end there. With different themes for their subjects—Genesis treating of the first Adam and his descendants, John of the last Adam, His words and works—there is, nevertheless, as is attempted in the following paper to be pointed out, so marked an agreement in the subjects of the first few chapters, and the order in which they are narrated, as to lead the reader to the conclusion that He, who sees the end from the beginning, was so directing what should take place from the commencement of this world's history, that, when the events of Genesis and John should be recorded and compared, the master mind, the guiding hand, should be discerned. Nor this only, but that all that is related of the first Adam when compared, or contrasted, with what is told us of the last Adam, should bring out the surpassing glory and excellence of the latter, and the rich grace of God in sending Him into the world.

The earth prepared for man, all the animals over which he was to rule having been created, the first chapter of Genesis tells us of his appearance fresh from the creative hand of his God. "God said, Let us make man in our image after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the

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earth. So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them." A creature representing God on earth, and like Him, pure, free from spot and sin—such was the one placed as head over this then new creation. And God expressed His approval of this His latest work. He had on the previous day blest the work of His hands, the fowls and all that moved in the seas; now He blesses man that he may fill the earth and subdue it. It was man's place to rule over it.

Turning to the first chapter of John, we have mention of the appearance of another man on this earth, a head like Adam, but a head of a new race—the Word made flesh. And as of Adam and all His works God had expressed His emphatic approval, so we get a no less decisive mark of His delight in the Word made flesh, when the Spirit of God descended like a dove and rested on Him. The first-born of every creature, His only begotten Son, when He appears must be signalled out by the special favor of heaven. On Him the heavens opened.

But what comparison with any of the sons of men can bring out His excellency or delineate His glory. There must be contrasts to show what they had not, and what He has. Adam was made after the likeness of God; He was God. Adam was made in the image of God. Of Him it could be said, He was the image of the invisible God. All creation could see in the first Adam one representing God on earth. All who had opened eyes and prepared hearts could discern in the Lord Jesus "a glory as of the only begotten of the Father": moreover He declared the Father (i. 18), which Adam, though made in the image of God, could never do. Again, Adam was created. The Word was made flesh. Both had a beginning in flesh on earth. The first had none before he lived here. By the second, the first was created. Adam appeared on a scene prepared to receive him; He entered a world ready to reject Him. Adam walked about surrounded by the works of God's hands. He came to His own things *εἰς τὰ ἴδια*, and whilst He came to *give* grace upon grace, and to *give* authority to

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become children of God, Adam was to *receive* the unqualified submission of God's creatures on earth. He was to be lord of all here. This is next brought out. It was God's expressed will when He created him. It was carried into execution by God Himself when He brought all creatures to be named by him. "And whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof."

Placed in the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it, all acknowledged his sway. To own Adam was to submit to God. To receive a name from him was as if it had been pronounced by the Lord God Himself. Beautiful picture of order and subjection to the one set over the works of God's hands! But he was only the type of Him who was to come (Rom. v. 14). So when He came He could not do less than give names likewise; to Simon He gave the name of Cephas, signifying, as head of the new creation, the use to which He would put him. Afterwards the sons of Zebedee He surnamed Boanerges (Mark iii. 17). By-and-by He will give to His saints each a new name, which no man knoweth but he who receiveth it (Rev. ii. 17). And just as we have Adam in the garden surrounded by all the living creatures, and owned by them as head of that creation, so we have the Lord Jesus presented to us as King in His kingdom, enforcing the subjection of all to His authority and will. The second chapter of Genesis gives us the one, the second of John the other. Alike in this, each one the centre appointed by God, how great is the difference. The glory of Adam seen that day in Eden passed away never to be restored. The glory of the Lord displayed on earth in a brief passing way can never pall, never decay, "He shall be great to the ends of the earth," "Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end" (Micah v. 4; Isaiah ix. 7).

And, differing as Adam did from the Lord in the transient character of his glory, we may trace a difference in the circumstances connected with it. The former had to subdue the earth, but had no rival to dispute his sway, and no unruly spirit to reduce to subjection. The latter came on this earth on which His glory is one

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day to be revealed and His kingdom established over all, with every opposition to encounter and the ruling spirit of evil to overcome. In Eden there was real subjection to God; in Jerusalem it was professed subjection to Him, coupled with the strongest manifestation of personal hostility to the One He had appointed, and the most determined opposition to the authority of God's King. Yet as God's anointed He must exercise the rights of sovereignty over the world. The *second* chapter of John gives a glimpse of what it will be. The happiness of Eden gone, and gone for ever, we learn how happiness can yet be enjoyed on this earth. The Lord provides the wine for His disciples and those who called Him to the feast. But it is when their provision is exhausted that He comes in and gives sufficient to last throughout the feast; for what He provides can never end, depending as it will for its origin and continuance on the work and everlasting acceptance of Him who provides it. The happiness of Eden, brought to its climax when Adam received his bride, was soon alloyed with trouble, the fruit of sin. In the happiness of the kingdom His people will know no admixture of bitterness, for "the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces, and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth, for the Lord hath spoken it." (Is. xxv. 8; Rev. vii. 16, 17).

Passing from Galilee to Jerusalem another work presents itself to be accomplished. He must vindicate God's authority where it has been denied. He purges, therefore, His Father's house. Oxen, sheep, doves, their vendors, the money-changers, all must depart at His bidding. He drives them out with a scourge, acts as none had acted before Him, and as none did after Him. For to Him, and Him alone, this place of pre-eminence belongs. Such is a brief glimpse of the double work of the second Adam in His kingdom. To both the first was a stranger. He sat in Eden to receive the homage of God's creatures. The Lord will give of His bounty to make glad the hearts of His saints, a more blessed position surely than Adam ever occupied (Acts xx. 35), and will act in judicial power to assert the just claims of

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God. At Cana inanimate creation owns His power. At Jerusalem, living creatures, men, beasts, birds, obey His will; a foreshadowing of what the Psalmist predicts, "Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet" (Ps. viii. 6).

This display of power, as of blessing, leads to the consideration of the need of such a work. Genesis iii. tells us of the entrance of sin, which caused it, and the sad consequences of disobedience. John iii. speaks of the remedy and its blessed results. In both chapters we get God and man brought face to face. In the former is the last meeting before they parted never to meet as they had done on earth again. In the latter we learn how they can meet so as never again to part, if man will only hearken to God. At that meeting in Eden God passed sentence of death as the penalty of disobedience. At this interview between the Lord and Nicodemus He spake of everlasting life as the gift of God. And here another parallel in these histories comes out. In both cases we have the mention of a third party. But again we have a marked contrast. For in the one, the third party is the serpent, the seducer of Eve and destroyer of Adam and his race: in the other, the third party is the woman's seed, the Son of man, the Saviour of the lost; and what formed the chief topic of the serpent's conversation with Eve, and the snare by which he entrapped her, is the subject the Lord takes up and deals with when Nicodemus comes to Him. The serpent persuaded Eve that God had withheld something from them they ought to enjoy. He made her doubt the reality of God's love. The Lord, when teaching the master in Israel, tells out the exceeding greatness of that love, which stopped not at the giving up of His only Son for a ruined, sinful, world. Adam and Eve ought to have resented any doubt thrown over the reality and fulness of God's love. What they failed to do, that the Son of man takes up and carries through. They had proofs abundant of His love to them, and the very presence of Eve was enough to show that what was good for Adam to have, God would provide. "It is not good," God said, "that the

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man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him." He saw his need and let none but Himself supply it. Would He act differently about that tree, concerning which He had given such a particular injunction? Should any one of His creatures be allowed to supply the lack which God, conscious of it, had left unfilled? They failed to repudiate the insidious attack on their Creator. It remained therefore for the Son of man to show how entirely contrary to truth it was. And how does He do this? By pointing to what Adam and Eve had received and the place they had occupied as sinless creatures? No: but by showing God could love a sinful world. Adam had evidences of God's love in plenty to adduce; the Lord gives a new proof in coming to die for him and his descendants. And so after four thousand years had rolled by, the lie of the serpent is contradicted. God could so love the world, as to give His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. As far as the misery and ruin of Adam's sin had reached, so far could the remedy now announced go forth. Wherever there was a child of Adam, there was one for whom God in His love had provided a Saviour. Now God and man could again meet on terms which could never be altered. No longer on the ground of man's innocence, nor on the ground of man's responsibility, for that had signally failed; but on the ground of a gift which God had given, and a work which the Son of man would accomplish.

Another point in these two narratives must be noticed. Gen. iii. tells us of a voluntary act on the part of Adam, and an act of necessity on the part of God—the driving him out of paradise, lest he should take of the tree of life and live for ever. John iii. tells us also of a spontaneous act, and an act of necessity. The spontaneous act was on the part of God, and the act of necessity on the part of the Son of Man—the being lifted up on the cross. Adam's act was a gratuitous assumption that he knew better than God. God's act in driving him out of Eden was one of mercy to His rebellious creatures. In John iii. we get something more than mercy—we get

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grace, God shewing favour to sinners in giving them what none would have dreamt of, and no child of Adam have dared to ask. Adam, in Gen. iii., stands forth as the author of the ruin of his race. The Son of Man appears in John iii. as "the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him." It was needful to banish Adam from Eden, lest he should perpetuate his sinful condition for ever. It was needful for the Son of Man to be lifted up, that souls might live for ever. And the same God, so grossly misrepresented by the devil, and who appeared to pronounce sentence in Eden, is brought before us by His Son in a different character, as a gracious God, able and desirous to save the world.

The next subject the historian of Genesis takes up is the family of Adam, and the respective sacrifices of Cain and Abel. How to approach God with acceptance is a question of immense importance to fallen creatures, and of necessity follows closely on the fall. How to worship God aright is a question which must follow closely on the unfolding of God's grace. These questions are respectively taken up in Genesis and John, and the first fully answered in the sacrifice of Abel, and God's acceptance of it. He brought of the flock. He owned thereby his condition and his desert—death, and that life for the dead sinner could only be procured at the expense of the life of a substitute. Did the consequences of the fall stop here—the solution of the question how to approach God with acceptance—how many a dark and blood-stained page of history had never been written. But sin being in the world, its fruits are quickly made apparent, not only in entailing death on Adam and his children, but in inciting Cain to stain the earth with the blood of his brother Abel. Worship and death are the prominent subjects of Gen. iv. Worship and life are brought before us in John iv. And here we get more than the acceptance of an offering. It is the Father seeking worshippers. "The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him." Whether or not the head of the fallen race told Abel how to approach God, we know not; but it is revealed, and we

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read of it, how the head of the new creation communicated to a poor abandoned woman, by the side of Jacob's well, the true principles on which worship to God must now be founded. And further, He unfolds to her, the last person in the world we, in our ignorance, would have thought of, the relationship in which God will now stand to all who believe on His Son. And as we read in Gen. iv. 8, 23, of man taking the life of his fellow-creature, the contrast would not be complete unless we had set before us the Lord restoring to life one who was nigh unto death, and in the next chapter, re-invigorating the limbs of one who had an infirmity for thirty and eight years. How great is the difference here between the offspring of Adam, begotten in his own likeness after his image, and the Virgin's Child, begotten of the Holy Ghost.

This leads us on to the following chapter in Genesis, where the sentence pronounced in Eden is seen carried out on Adam and all his descendants till the days of Noah. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Rom. v. 12.) Cain could shorten the life of his brother Abel, but sooner or later death must overtake him, "It is appointed unto men once to die." This is the solemn record of Gen. v. "He died," is the simple statement of the inspired historian appended to the lives of all but one herein named. "There is no man that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit; neither hath he power in the day of death; and there is no discharge in that war," is the word of the preacher (Eccles. viii. 8.) And the one exception to the common lot of man forms no exception to the rule, that none can deliver himself from death; for we read "he was not, for God took him." It was God's act, not Enoch's effort, which kept his body from the grave.

Turning to John v. we find death and the grave brought before us again; but how different is the way in which they are presented. It is not the common inevitable lot of man that we are called to meditate on, but the power of the Son of Man over "the King of terrors." The grave closed on Adam and his descendants, and hid

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them one by one from the gaze of their families and friends. The grave shall one day open at the voice of the Son of Man. None could escape the consequences of Adam's transgression. None can remain in captivity to death, when the Second Man shall speak. "For the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment." Death by Adam's fall obtained the mastery over all his offspring. By Jesus it shall be swallowed up in victory, and finally be destroyed. "For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For he hath put all things under his feet" (1 Cor. xv. 21, 22, 26, 27.) How cheering that the enemy which entered the world by one man has been overcome by another. Yet what profit would that be to us if we had not the hope of sharing in the victory. This too is presented to us. And here again comes out the difference between these two heads in a bright and glorious contrast. Adam involved all in death, not merely of the body, but also of the soul. The Lord can give life in resurrection to the body, He can also quicken dead souls. "The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit." How this work is carried on is unfolded in vers. 24, 25, of the chapter: "For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself."

With Gen. v. the history of Adam closes. Of his career after the fall Scripture says nothing. We read in Heb. xi. of a catalogue of worthies; but his name is not in the list. His future position is shrouded in mystery. Before the Second Man, whose genealogy in Luke is traced up to him, he will one day stand. His voice he will one day hear and obey. But of Him, before whom he will stand, there is no uncertainty now. He like Adam passed out of this world by death. But we know He lives, and lives for evermore. He has life in Himself, and He gives of it to others. And this John v.

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discloses at once what He has, and who He is. Son of God and Son of Man, He has full authority from God, and all shall honor Him as they honor the Father. He has full power too, "For what things soever the Father doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise." And the place of pre-eminence which Adam fell from is filled, and more than filled, by Him. He quickens whom He will. He will judge all. His voice when heard now gives life. His voice, as Son of Man, when heard, shall raise the dead. Another man is found to be set over the works of God's hand, worthy to be there, able to maintain His place. For He seeks not His own will, but the will of the Father which sent Him.

From Adam what have we received? Of what have we to boast? A nature wholly corrupt, flesh not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be; for an inheritance, a life of sorrow and vexation of spirit; for a prospect, death "and the house appointed for all living" (Job xxx. 23.) What did he give creation? By him the living creatures, indeed, were named. But by him the whole creation was made subject to vanity, and because of him the ground was cursed. Blessed be God this condition is not irremediable, because another man has been found who was obedient to death. From Him we receive, but how unlike that which our first parent entailed on us, a nature which cannot sin, an inheritance which cannot fade away, and a prospect of life beyond death, nay the assurance of everlasting life, which the grave cannot cheat us of, the great enemy cannot deprive us of. And this is unchangeable to those who possess it. And the universe, too, shall rejoice in Him. The curse shall be removed, and the groaning creation be brought into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. Ruin, misery, death, follow the track of the first man. Blessing, happiness, everlasting life, flow from the Second. He gives—gives to the unworthy, gives to the unclean, gives to sinners. This characterises Him. Of Adam we have to say, he entailed on his posterity the consequences of his sin; of the Lord we have to record, He gives everything the sinner needs, everything the saint throughout eternity can enjoy.

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## N°. XLIII.

## HEBREWS V.—VIII.

In taking up the prophetic passages in the Epistle to the Hebrews, we got as far as the fourth chapter. We will now pursue our way through the next four chapters, which introduce us to the two priesthoods and the two covenants. One of these priesthoods and one of these covenants is still a prophetic thing, and we are therefore entitled to look at them.

First, then, as to the two priesthoods,—the Aaronic and the Melchisedec priesthoods. The priesthood of the Aaronic character is a by-gone thing. The priesthood of the Melchisedec character is, in one great sense, still future. The three passages in the Book of God where Melchisedec is referred to, are Genesis xiv., Psalm cx., and the passage before us. The Epistle to the Hebrews refers to the two places in the Old Testament where he is looked at. In Genesis xiv. we find the battle of the four kings, and as they were returning with the spoils of victory, it was told to Abram that his brother Lot had been taken prisoner. While it was a mere fight between the potsherds of the earth, Abram took no part in it; but when he found Lot was involved, it became the duty of the kinsman to bestir himself. Such is the intelligence of faith. He knew when to be quiet and when to be active. So out to the fight he goes, and rescues Lot, and brings back the spoil. On his return he is met by an august personage of whom we have never heard till now; he is met by Melchisedec, coming forth from the sanctuary of Zion, where he dwelt, exercising the priesthood of the God of heaven and earth.

Now I am going to introduce you to the different way in which the Spirit is looking at Melchisedec in Genesis xiv. and in Ps. cx. In Gen. xiv. he is shown to you in his



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*actings*. In Ps. cx. you do not see him in his actings, but in his *consecration*. Now his actings are millennial actings; his consecration is resurrection consecration. While you are looking at Melchisedec's actings you are in the millennium. Because Abraham had finished his warfare and brought back the spoils of the victory when Melchisedec met him. And what did he get? Did he want the relief of the Aaronic sin-offering, or the cleansings of the sanctuary? No, he was a weary conqueror. He presented himself in the laurels of victory, and all Melchisedec had to do was to welcome him with the refreshments of the kingdom. In the same way the Lord Jesus will come forth from His hiding-place, but not till the warfare is accomplished, and He can greet His people who have gone through their conflict here, not till the due millennial hour. The blessing suited to the lips of Aaron we read in Numbers vi., "The Lord bless thee and keep thee," etc. Did Abraham want that blessing *now?* Did he want to be kept? Did he lack grace and peace? He was in the full bloom of his triumph and wanted the refreshments of the weary conqueror, not the cleansing of the defiled saint. The Lord Jesus is both Aaron and Melchisedec; and by-and-bye His saints will be greeted by a blessing, not from Him who has comforts for sorrows, but from Him who has kingly refreshments for conquerors. The moment you look at Melchisedec in his actings, you are in the future. But now, when we turn to Psalm cx., we see him in resurrection consecration, and there we get a *present* Christ. The Psalm cx. is very important, and is variously used by the Holy Ghost in the New Testament. Now we will read and analyse it a little. "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool." That is Jehovah's language to Christ when He ascended from the Mount of Olives and took His place at the right hand of God. I believe His response is found in Psalm xvi., "At Thy right hand are pleasures for evermore." Then when He has taken His seat, in verses 2, 3, and 4, the Spirit addresses Christ at the right hand and says, "Jehovah shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion; rule

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thou in the midst of thine enemies." He must wait there for a certain time, the heavens must retain Him, but in due time He will come forth to the day of Revelations xix. Then, "Thy people shall be willing." The moment His enemies are made His footstool, He will gather His people together, and the Spirit calls it here, "the dew of thy youth." This will be "in the day of thy power." *Your* dignity is, that you have been made willing in the day of His *weakness*. It will be a blessed thing for the Jew to own Him in His millennial power, but the dignity of the Church is to own Him in the day of His rejection and weakness. She has been allied to Him in the day of His humiliation. The Jew will never have companionship with Him in the day of His weakness. Then in verse 4, He is addressed in His own personal dignity, and it is with that that the argument of the Hebrews links itself. This is the *consecration* of Melchisedec; and it is what makes the Lord Jesus a priest, this moment, after the order of Melchisedec. He is not now *acting* after the manner of Melchisedec; He is acting after the manner of Aaron; but He is consecrated with the consecration of Melchisedec. It would have been unworthy of Him to be consecrated after the pattern of Aaron—a dying man who was to be succeeded by another; Christ is a *living* priest. Aaron went through his life and service, and died. Could God be satisfied with that? But the moment the Lord proves Himself the Conqueror of death, not only have I a living priest, but God is satisfied. Jesus in resurrection is life in victory, and that is His consecration. And, consequently, we find in Hebrews, that He was not a priest while He was here. He had not yet abolished death. He must first destroy death, and in resurrection display life in victory. Then God put Him into office after the manner of Melchisedec, who had "neither beginning of days nor end of life;" that is, there is no record of him. He was a shadow of the risen, living, priesthood of the Son of God. Again I say, when we come to look at Aaron, who sets forth the *present* actings of Christ, Aaron was to meet you in your present defilement. He had a sin offering, a trespass offering, a eucharistic

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offering in his hand for you. All that the Lord Jesus is doing now. Do you want your defilement cleansed? He washes your feet. Do you want your sacrifices of praise presented to God? They go up *by Christ* to Him. The Lord Jesus at present is acting in the varied grace of Aaron for you, and by-and-bye He will act as Melchisedec, in greeting His elect, after their journey and warfare are accomplished, with kingly refreshments.

Now our next subject we get in chap. viii. This treats of the two covenants. As to this subject of the covenants, you may look at them as the patriarchal, the legal, and the evangelic covenants. The patriarchal covenant was all on the ground of promise. There were not two parties to it. When we get under law, the very form and phase of the covenant is changed. The Israelites had to act their part in the covenant just as much as God. It is no longer a covenant of promise but of works. It is no longer *one* undertaking to *do* and the *other* bowing the head in the dependence of faith, but one undertaking to do *this*, and the other undertaking to do *that;* that is the *legal* covenant. Then in the prophets we get the *new* covenant, which falls back on the patriarchal covenant, and shews it to be simple promise. That is what the New Testament takes up, and calls "the new covenant." Heb. viii. shows you that the Lord found fault with the old covenant, and why? Because it made him a *receiver*. He rests in the new covenant, because it puts Him in the place of Giver, and the sinner in the place of receiver. He takes delight in it, because He has found it "more blessed to give than to receive." Of that *style* of thing, Paul declares himself the minister. It is not prophetically fulfilled yet, but it will be, with the house of Israel and Judah in the day of their repentance. Paul is the minister of that which makes God a Giver, and me a receiver. So there is an element in both these things that is prophetic. We must *wait* for His millennial actings, and *wait* for the accomplishment of the new covenant in the day of Israel's repentance.

May the blessed Lord shut up our thoughts and affections with Christ in the Scriptures, and make us wise with God and in God, in this day of human wisdom. Amen.

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## N°. XLIV.

## HEBREWS XII.

WE will read to-day a part of the twelfth chapter, and meditate on the two mounts and the two shakings. Now in this very weighty scripture there are several contrasts. There are two mounts, and two voices; and there are two shakings, and the shakable things and the immovable things. The first thing we come to is the two mounts; one of which is a symbol of the dispensation of law, and the other of the dispensation of the grace of God, which bringeth salvation. When you look at the first of these, you see that there is not a feature that gives it character that is not *against* you. We know that it was so in Exodus xix.; but the Spirit rehearses it here in a very striking form. There is great propriety in God coming down *to earth* to speak of law, and speaking from *heaven* when He speaks of grace. Because when He speaks of law He speaks of ourselves, and He comes down to our level to do it; but *heaven* is the birthplace of grace, where was conceived the salvation of God. So when He speaks of this, He speaks of Himself, and therefore He speaks from heaven.

To return to the first mount, all was against man. Darkness and thunder and earthquake are things that strike terror to the heart of man. If so much as a beast touched the mountain it was to be stoned or thrust through with a dart; because all creation was in the condemnation with man, its head and representative. Now your title and mine is to turn our back totally to that hill, and our face to the other hill, and faith does not know how to take up any other attitude. I do not say the quickened soul is not often glancing back, but *faith* turns its back to Sinai, and greedily drinks in the light of Mount Zion, whence was the voice that tells us about God and not about ourselves.

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Now when you turn to the second mount, everything is *for* you. There is not a rumble of the thunder, or a fork of the lightning. From the top of the hill to the foot, there is not one single thing that is not *for* you. Now we will inspect the material of the second hill, and we shall discover that we travel from the top of it to the foot. "Ye are come," etc. Now I read this beautiful and wonderful description of our calling, as though the Spirit were conducting us first to the top of the hill and then down to the foot. Supposing we look at it in inverse order, which is often the Spirit's way. When we look to the hill, the first thing we see is the blood of the Lamb, speaking better things than that of Abel. That is the foundation of our calling, and of all that is immovable; all depends on the blood of Christ, which achieved the victory that the resurrection published. Whatever the risen Lord touches He imparts infallibility, immovableness to it — the priesthood, the covenant, the kingdom, the throne. He imparts the virtue of His own eternity to them. So when we look at the mount, we begin with the blood. The Lamb must speak good and comforting things to me, a sinner, before I can take a step in company with God. Then we are introduced to "Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant." The moment by blood I get relief from my sins, I am introduced to Jesus in another character, as having undertaken the cause of the one who has trusted in the blood. Christ my sacrifice introduces me to Christ my mediator in heaven. The third object is "The spirits of just men made perfect," or, perfectly just men. When you got the question of sin settled with God, and began to look round about at the saints, how were you introduced to them? Was it to their circumstances in the flesh? I do not want Christ to introduce me to a man's beautiful house, but to his *spirit*. He introduces me to my brethren, and whether those spirits be embodied or not, it is the same thing. Then the next thing is "God the judge of all." There is a *future* thing, and is it *for* you as well as everything else? It is. Have you an interest in the day of the manifestation of all things? If you are hiding any naughtiness

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that day will be against you, but if you are passing by slights and neglects, and saying Christ will settle it all, that is having an interest in that day. Are we conscious that we are carrying ourselves in such a way that we can welcome the day of manifestation? Then God, the judge of all, is just as much for you as the blood of Christ.

Then, still going upward, we reach "The Church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven." This is the Church glorified. We are introduced to one another now in *spirit*. *Then* it will be in *glory*. Then the general assembly,—the innumerable company of angels lies next door to you, as we find in Revelation. The exultation of the angels followed in the track of the harpings of the Church. There they are—their ministering service is over, and they constellate themselves into the general assembly. When we get there, we are in the presence of "the city of the living God." There you see is a graphic, vivid picture of our calling in grace and in glory. . . . . We only want a spiritual eye to gaze upon it, and as we gaze to bless Him who has given such a calling to the poor sinner who will but lay his sins on Jesus.

We are introduced now to the two shakings, and they are connected with the two voices. The first mountain itself is a symbol of the dispensation of law. The voice of shaking symbolises the *result* of the dispensation; which is judgment on the breach of law. God knew from the beginning what the result of the testing would be, therefore shaking accompanied the delivery of the law.

The other mount is accompanied by a voice which speaks from heaven. That voice says, Take care: everything on the mount is *for* you, but take care that you do not refuse it, for the result of such a refusal will be more terrible than the result of the breach of the law.

The voice of the second mount is this: If you refuse the dispensation of grace, there will be a more terrible shaking than that which waited on the breaking of the law. All scripture bears witness to this second shaking. It will affect everything that is *made*. It will shake the

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whole creation out of the creation of God, and leave nothing but that which has connection with Christ. Isaiah ii. gives you a terrible account of it; Isaiah xiii. gives a similar account; Joel ii. and Haggai ii. give it to you; the Lord tells you of it in Matt. xxiv.; here it is commented on; and the Apocalypse, in one part of it, is the story of God arising to shake terribly the earth. And this terrible process will be just at the close of the present earth's history, the close of man's world and the introduction of Christ's world. We can easily see why it is more terrible than Mount Sinai. That said, If you do not fulfil the demands of God you are treated as a leper and put out of His presence. But if the Lord has come down to give salvation for the mere receiving of it, and I refuse it, God will arise to shake far more terribly the earth. The judgment that rests on Christendom will be a consuming fire. The God of this dispensation, the God who has arisen in the riches of His grace to bring home His banished one, that very God will be a consuming fire. But, in contrast with all this, we get an immovable kingdom, and on the title of that immovable kingdom the blessed Lord Jesus will take His way into the world to come. The Lord keep us in the thoughts of these things, and let us ask ourselves, with what is our heart forming its daily associations? The things to be shaken, or the things to remain? The things in man's world, or the promises and expectations of Christ's world? The Lord give us to trust in the simplicity of His grace, and to walk in the power of the calling. Amen.

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## FRAGMENT.

So far as we know there was no opportunity in eternity, before Creation, for God's mercy to express itself in: but as God does not change, mercy must have been in Him, though not revealed. Because He was the God of mercy, we can speak of the mercy of God.

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