

“WORDS OF TRUTH,”

Eecl. xii. 10.

“THE ENTRANCE OF THY WORDS GIVETH LIGHT; IT GIVETH UNDERSTANDING
UNTO THE SIMPLE.”—Ps. cxix.

NEW SERIES.

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WORDS OF TRUTH.

THE VAIL RENT, NOT REMOVED.

“THOU shalt make a vail of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen, of cunning work: with cherubims shall it be made; and thou shalt hang it upon four pillars of shittim wood overlaid with gold: their hooks shall be of gold upon the four sockets of silver. And thou shalt hang up the vail under the taches, that thou mayest bring in thither within the vail the ark of the testimony; and the vail shall divide unto you between the holy [place] and the most holy.” (Exodus xxvi. 31, 33.) Very precise are these directions about the vail; its substance, its colours, its place, and its use, all are described, leaving nothing to be supplied by the wit of Aholiab, the device of Bezaleel, or the wisdom of Moses. And as God instructed Moses, so Solomon, four hundred years afterwards, made a vail for the house which he built, of blue, and purple, and crimson, and fine linen, and wrought cherubims thereon. (2 Chron. iii. 14.) To divide between the holy place and the most holy was one great use of it, but also, whilst it hung there in its pristine completeness, it marked the limit of approach for the sons of Aaron to the presence chamber of the Lord God of Hosts. Before that vail in the sanctuary, and up to it, each priest, when in the holy place, could go, but behind it none could venture, except the High Priest, once every year on the day of atonement. Within it was that chamber, where, after the death of Moses, unbroken silence reigned, except when the High Priest passed behind the vail. Whilst Moses lived, at times, as we learn from Numbers vii., the silence which characterised that chamber was broken by the oral communications to the Mediator from the Lord Jehovah. When he died those communications ceased, and, though daily the holy place must have resounded with the footsteps of the officiating priests accomplishing the service appointed them, no sound from within that curtain broke on their ears who were without. Yet God’s throne upon earth was within that vail. He dwelt between the cherubims, and the bright

cloud of glory—the Shechinah betokened His presence in the Sanctuary. (Levit. xvi. 2.) How solemn must that stillness have been to the priests as they went about in the holy place. They knew the character of the chamber within, but heard no sound of life proceeding from it, though the living Lord Himself made His earthly throne the mercy-seat. In thick darkness He dwelt, and in an atmosphere which was not to be disturbed by the presence of those who caused din and discord without; for when Aaron entered, he entered only as the type of the High Priest of the Heavenly Sanctuary, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Very jealously did God guard the entrance into the holiest. Redeemed by blood, as the children of Israel were, they never could get beyond the brazen altar in the court of the tabernacle. Consecrated though the sons of Aaron had been, in accordance with a ritual of Divine appointment, they could never get behind the vail, within the holiest of all; and Aaron, though privileged by virtue of his office to enter that innermost sanctuary, could only pass within by blood, having first taken in a censer filled with sweet incense, but lighted with live coals from off the altar that was before the Lord (Levit. xvi. 12), that the cloud of incense might cover the mercy-seat, from which shone out in brightness the only light of the holiest.

For hundreds of years did this condition of things continue—viz, a nation in relationship with God, owned by Him as His people, yet never allowed access into His immediate presence; for the vail, stretched across the full width of the sanctuary, proclaimed that there was a spot on earth on which even the feet of God's priests could not tread. Very clear and very marked was the message conveyed thereby from God to man—that as yet the way of the holiest had not been made manifest, though the typical meaning of the vail itself, and the typical teaching as to its colours, were subjects all that time unrevealed. That a way would one day be opened, could be learnt from Aaron's periodical entrance on the great day of atonement; but how that way would be opened out, and when, remained for all those centuries a close, an insoluble mystery.

At length the day and the hour arrived when that mystery was to receive its solution; and as, by Divine teaching, Israel had understood that no child of Adam could remain in God's immediate presence, so, by a Divine act on the part of Him

who directed the erection of the vail, the way and the ground of access to Him were disclosed in a moment of time.

But God's thoughts are not like our thoughts, nor His ways like our ways; for that which, in accordance with all human thought, would have sealed man's doom for ever, and taken away irrecoverably all hope of being before God without the fire of His judgment descending on him—viz., the death of God's Son on the cross—was the efficacious ground on which He could righteously act in the fullest grace to sinners, and permit, what never had been known before, the soul to enter with boldness into His very presence, and to be at rest before the throne. All that men could do to express their hatred of God, and of all that savoured of God, that they had done. Jesus hanging on the cross, and there at that moment dead, betokened what men must be, whose hands were stained with the blood, not merely of a righteous man (for that was nothing new in this world's history), but of the Holy One, the first and the only, in the fullest sense, faithful and true witness for God upon earth. "Jesus, when He had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost, and behold, the vail of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom." (Matt. xxvii. 50, 51.) Never before had men such an opportunity for showing themselves to be unworthy of favour from God, and they did not miss it. For Him, who went about doing good (Acts x. 38), they had thus openly rejected; and though no charge worthy of death could be substantiated against Him, they had not paused for one hour in their restless activity till their wish had been gratified, and the plans of Satan carried out in the ignominious and agonising death of the Lord Jesus Christ on the Cross.

Beyond that they could not go. All that they could do against Him personally, that they had done; but death, to which they had delivered Him, barred all further pursuit of the object of their hatred, and demonstrated that the outward actors in that scene were but creatures, and creatures of very limited capacity. They could judge Him to be worthy of death; they could urge the governor, as permitted by God, to wield the sword of judgment against the Lord; but death, to which they delivered Him, shut them out from further ill-treatment of Him. Their power as men was limited, though they might, as they did, put forth all their strength.

But when they had done all that they could, having put out of the world by death the Prince of Life Himself, God began to work, to manifest what He is, and what He could do. He rent the vail—a fact narrated in a very few words—an act done in a moment of time, but a fact and an act of great and abiding importance, and, as such, three times over stated in the Word. Matthew, Mark, and Luke narrate it—the two first in its historic order in relation to the other events of that day; the last in a moral order, in accordance with the plan often to be traced in the Gospel which bears his name, bracketing, as it were, together the supernatural events of the crucifixion, the great darkness over the land, and the rending of the vail in its midst. At the ninth hour, the hour for prayer, the Lord died, and, at the same time, the vail was rent in twain from the top to the bottom. God, in accordance with whose command the vail, through all the changes and vicissitudes of the tabernacle and the temple, had divided the holy place from the most holy, and screened from the gaze of the priests, as morning and evening they burnt incense on the golden altar before it, the ark and the mercy-seat; by His own act, without the intervention of a single human creature, rent the vail—a testimony, as was afterwards explained, to the opening up of a new and living way into His presence. And this divine act was one of immense significance. It spoke of an evening sacrifice at length offered, which was perfectly acceptable to God. It told of the character and purpose of the death of God's Son on the cross, who gave Himself to die as the sin-offering, and to make atonement for sinners. It bore witness, likewise, that God could now allow men to enter into His presence, whilst He maintained at its full height, by the way of approach, the standard of His holiness.

God rent the vail. We should mark the word. God did not remove it Himself, nor did He authorise its removal by others. He did not withdraw it, nor did He roll it up from the bottom, nor lower it from the top like a curtain. He rent it in the midst. And, perhaps, the priest who ministered that afternoon at the golden altar of incense, or, certainly, those who entered the sanctuary shortly after its occurrence, must have seen the vail still hanging up on some of the pillars or hooks to which it was attached, but with a way into the holiest at the same time displayed by the rent made in its midst. "A new way, and a living way." A new way it

was, for no high priest had, in such a manner, entered the holiest before. Year by year, as often as they observed the ritual appointed for the day of atonement, they must have passed behind the veil, but, now that it was rent, such a way into the holiest was unneeded. A living way it was, and is. For, whereas none of the sons of Aaron could penetrate within the veil, save the High Priest, and then in the prescribed manner, else death would have awaited them and him; now that the veil has been rent by God, there exists no barrier on His part against the entrance of His people, who are a holy priesthood unto Him, into the place where He is on His throne. But, let it ever be remembered, they can enter only through the veil. The way opened, but opened in this manner; and the veil, as we learn in Heb. x. 20, being a type of the Lord's flesh, the typical meaning of its colours can be discerned as well as the teaching about the veil itself. Christ died, then the veil was rent, and that of which there had been no type was immediately disclosed. Types there were of the Lord's death as the voluntary offering on His part, as well as the sinner's Substitute. Types too there were of Him as a man upon earth, nor were there wanting in the ceremonial law those which had respect to His resurrection (Levit. xiv. 6, 7; xxiii. 11); but no type could there be to illustrate the way into the holiest, to be opened up by His death. Of this the rending of the veil is the only illustration, and that, once rent, was an operation which could never be repeated. The ground, on which the entrance would be based, was typified as often as the high priest went within the veil with the blood of others; but, as the way was to be through the veil—the flesh of Christ—the same veil could only be rent once, if the truth as to the death of Christ once for all was to be taught to, and maintained by, His people. He died, and God's immediate response to the voluntary surrender of His Son to do His will on the cross, and to be the sinner's Substitute, was the significant rending of the veil. Till He died, none, born in sin, could go with boldness to the mercy-seat; but, when He died, before ever He was taken down from the cross, men, we learn, were no longer to be kept out of the innermost sanctuary, if only they would approach through the veil—that is to say, Christ's flesh.

And now the typical meaning of its various colours can be discerned. There was but the one veil, into the fabric of

which different colours were introduced. And, since that veil was the type of the flesh of Christ, the different colours of blue, purple, and scarlet, with the fine twined linen, and cherubim of cunning work, typify certain things, which in combination are to be met with alone in the Virgin's Son, conceived by the Holy Ghost. The heavenly man He was; so blue is the first colour mentioned. Christ He is, and as such all the glory of the world will be centred in Him (Ps. ii.); so scarlet, the emblem of worldly glory, was to figure in that then mysterious curtain. But, though the heavenly Man, and the Heir of all things, suffering lay in His path, the cross before the throne, so purple beside blue and scarlet was to be introduced into the veil, with fine twined linen, declarative of His spotless holiness, whilst cherubim of cunning work were to be wrought on the fabric, indicating that the man, of whom that curtain was a type, was to wield the power of the throne of God. But where, it may be asked, do we learn what those colours represented? Are they mere guesses, or arbitrary conjectures, or does the Word of God sanction such an interpretation? Num iv. 5-14 furnishes us with the key, as it tells us of the different coloured cloths, in which the ark, the table of shew-bread, and the brazen altar were enwrapped. A cloth of blue was the external covering of the ark. A cloth of scarlet was underneath the covering of badgers' skins which enveloped the table of shew-bread, its dishes, its spoons, and the twelve loaves, typical themselves of perfection in administrative government upon earth. A cloth of purple was the only covering of the brazen altar besides the external wrap of badgers' skins. The meaning, then, of these colours all found in the veil, seems clear, and the order in which the purple and scarlet were arranged is suggestive, and since the cherubims are mentioned in Scripture in connection with the judicial action of the throne (Gen. iii.; Ps. xviii.; Rev. iv., v.), their presence on the veil may well intimate, that to Him, of whose flesh the veil was a type, all judicial action of the throne of God has been committed. (John v. 22.)

But not alone do we read of the veil being erected, and subsequently of its being rent. These are historical facts of which the Word informs us, but facts, too, with the practical bearing of which all Christians should be acquainted. Hence we read in Hebrews x. the exhortation to make use of the

road, so graciously made for us into God's presence. We approach on the ground that Christ's blood has been shed, but through the veil—His flesh. Thus, whilst God has opened up for us one way in His grace, He would impress surely on all hearts, that no other road can lead us into His presence, if divine judgment is not to overtake us. And as we are indebted to His grace for opening up the way, we are indebted likewise to His goodness for acquainting us with it. Those, to whom the sacred writer wrote about it, were those best acquainted with the meaning of the veil when unrent; and he would have them, and have us who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, to make a free use of the way which Christ hath consecrated, or dedicated, for us through the veil—that is to say, His flesh.

Believers, then, may now with boldness enter the holiest of all, for it is to believers that the exhortation is addressed. For, as of old, none but the priests could enter the sanctuary, so none now but those who believe in the Lord, and as such are members of the holy priesthood (1 Pet. ii. 5) can enter the holiest of all, and then only through the rent veil—that which, as rent, reminds us of Divine judgment poured out on the Son of God's love.

Truth this is suited for Christians at all times, and most needful in this day when lax views are abroad concerning God and His grace. Grace is free to all who will accept it, and a man's former state and ways are no hindrance, if a believer on the Lord, to his entering the holiest now. But when he enters, and by the way he enters, he bears witness to the holiness of God, whilst sharing in the riches of His grace. He enters by a road which speaks of judgment borne for him by God's own Son. He enters on the ground of the value of Christ's precious blood. He enters, by means of His death, through the veil—His flesh. Merciful and gracious God is, but never at the expense of His holiness. One road, and one only, has there ever been made by which we could enter into His presence. God rent the veil, and by it teaches us the need there was for His Son to become incarnate, but the imperative necessity, too, of His death. As incarnate, the veil unrent was a type of Christ, but, as such, showed that then no way to enter the holiest had been made manifest. It was the rending of the veil which disclosed the living way into it. Incarnation and crucifixion were both necessary before that way could be made known.

How a simple fact like this, and the Divine teaching about it, preserves the soul from being led away by human thoughts, and men's erroneous conclusions! To be brought into God's presence in a way in accordance with His mind, whilst refusing to believe in the mystery of the incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ, is thus shown to be impossible. To believe in His incarnation without bowing to the truth of His atoning death, will shut out a soul from God's presence, as completely as the sons of Aaron, the priests, were excluded from all entrance into the holiest. The thought that God is too merciful to punish sinners is refuted by the fact, that the Holy One of God had to die before the way into the holiest could be made manifest. Divine judgment has been executed on Him. God has shown at the cross what His holiness demands, whilst displaying there also what His love could give. And, though believers on the Lord Jesus, and they only, have permission to enter the holiest because of the efficiency of His atoning blood, the very road upon which they must travel to reach the mercy-seat and the throne, attests both the necessity and the validity of His death. The need of the incarnation and the death of Christ believers bear witness to when they enter the holiest; and, entering through the rent veil—the flesh of Christ—they own, that every other avenue, by which men would seek to make a way into God's presence, is barred as effectually as ever; for one way, and only one, has ever been opened, and that by God Himself—that true and living way, which declares in clear, solemn language, that only, because His Son had died to make atonement, could He rend the veil. For gracious and merciful though He is, He never can be gracious, He never will be merciful, at the expense of His holiness.

THE SEALING AND INDWELLING OF THE SPIRIT.

I WAS asked to say a few words on the difference between the *sealing* of the Holy Ghost, and the *indwelling* of the Spirit. Just turn to the first chapter of the 2nd Corinthians. In the twenty-first verse you read: "Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts."

The fact that is stated here is that we *are* anointed. He *has* given us the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts. Of course the Christian must have life through Christ, but what characterises the Christian state as such is the presence of the Holy Ghost in consequence of the work of Christ. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." The Christian stands between the first coming of Christ and His coming again to receive those that are His to be with Him for ever. We get the work of Christ accomplished, and then the Holy Ghost comes down and teaches them to wait for His coming again, that where He is there they may be also. If you look at the end of the 2nd of Titus—"The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us, that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world, looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." Here we find—the *grace* of God that has appeared to us, and the looking for the blessed hope, waiting for the appearing of the *glory* of the great God and our Saviour.

But I speak now of the presence of the Holy Ghost, and I am sure it is of all importance that our hearts should be thoroughly clear that the power is of God and not of man; that we should distinctly understand how this salvation is settled, that gives power to the heart against unbelief; the character of all around is but imperfect truth, even when it is not thorough unbelief.

If you come to discipline, of course it depends on our walk, for we are under the claims of God, as to walk, only by being saved; for it is not now a question at all of a man by a certain course of living fitting himself for God. Christianity begins with the revelation that man cannot by a life under probation arrive at a standing before God. He had failed in every place in which God had set him; whether in the garden before the flood, after the flood, without law, or under law; and when Christ came it was another probation. But all that the revelation of God in Christ did was to bring out the evil of man's heart; at the Cross man's state and condition were settled. "They are all gone out of the way, there is none that doeth good;" every mouth is stopped, and all the world brought in guilty before God.

Now *guilt* refers to the day of judgment, but I am not *only* guilty, but, as to my present state, I am *lost*. I am

guilty and lost. But at that moment in which the sinfulness of man was proved, God's counsels were brought out; in the very thing that proved the enmity of man's heart, God's grace was brought out. Perfect evil in man, and perfect good in God, both came out in the Cross. God's glory and our salvation were both perfectly accomplished; and what was the effect of the work? That a man goes into heaven! The Lord Jesus Christ, a Man, goes into heaven after having shown the perfect obedience of love, in the place where sin came out absolutely before God. Sin stood out before God to be dealt with as sin; there it was that He glorified Him; that is the Cross. "If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him." The Son of man goes up to the glory of God, and so there begins an entirely new thing; we are put upon a new platform.

I am upon this ground now. I find there is this Man gone into heaven, so that I learn God in the perfectness of love, and in the perfectness of righteousness. God has come out in perfect love; man has gone in in perfect righteousness. Man never went in before; there was a veil to keep him out, but now everything is put entirely on a new footing. God has glorified Himself.

Well, then, beloved friends, God having "made him to be sin for us who knew no sin," and then having set Him at His own right hand, sends down the Holy Ghost as the consequence of a Man being in the glory.

From the beginning everything that was done was by the Spirit; all through, whatever the action, it was done by the Spirit of God. But He was not dwelling here. He did not even come at the incarnation. Christ was here on this earth, passing through it, and as soon as He had accomplished the work He came to do, He says, If I go I will send Him unto you. The Holy Ghost dwelling individually in the believer, or dwelling in the house of God, characterises Christianity.

If you look in the first of 1st Peter, he says: "Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glories that should follow." It was not *their* time; it is "unto *us*." But did Christianity bring it? No! It brought the sufferings, *not*

the glories. "Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us, they did minister the things which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into. Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

I find the three steps. The prophets had prophesied, but when they searched their own prophecies they found they were not for themselves, but for me, and I am therefore to gird up the loins of my mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought to me at the revelation of Jesus Christ. It does not speak of my being caught up to meet Him. I have the report of the prophets, and I am to be sober, and wait for the accomplishment of it. This evidently, then, gives me not the accomplished work. We stand *between* the two points—Christ entered into the glory and His revelation. And meanwhile the Holy Ghost identifies us with Christ: "He that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit." Power has come in, so that "we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen," for He that has *wrought* us is God. There is where the Christian stands—associated with Christ for heavenly glory; where we are now associated with Christ is not for the world at all.

In the fourteenth chapter of John I read, "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." We ought to be as a city set on a hill, for the Holy Ghost dwells in us. But it is the *gospel* that is for the world, not the *Holy Ghost*. The Holy Ghost is not a public witness. He is the One whom the world cannot receive.

Do you say, How can I know I have the Holy Ghost? Why, do you think that God can dwell in you, and you not know it? I may not be able to explain it, but there must be in me the consciousness of my being on an entirely new footing with God.

Christ did not stay with them; He did not abide with them; but He says the Holy Ghost "shall abide with you

for ever." The world may see the *fruits* of the Spirit, but they do not know the Spirit Himself. It is properly that which distinguishes the believer. He dwells in us, and therefore the apostle John says, "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God"—of course unless he is a hypocrite. We have this in Christian position; that, being born of God, the Holy Ghost has come down to associate me with the Man who is in heaven. God remembers my sins and my iniquities no more. He has preached the gospel to me with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, and I wait for the revelation of Jesus Christ. But even if we wait for this, as I have no doubt we do, our portion is not that; it is "the morning star"—a *heavenly* Christ for us.

Well, I know I am Christ's, and He is mine, and if He is in me, I am to show it out. As the apostle says, "Death works in us;"—"we which live are always delivered unto death." He held himself perfectly dead, that the life of Jesus might be made manifest in his mortal flesh.

The disciples, not having the Holy Ghost, were so dull; but as soon as the cross was accomplished, He was sent; and now I know that I am in Christ; I know that I am a Son of God—I *know* it. "We have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but we have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." He has given it to us—when the world gives, it gives away from itself; it has no longer the thing that it has given. But the way that Christ gives is to bring us into the enjoyment of everything that He has got Himself: "Not as the world giveth, give I unto you."

And fruit is expected because we are Christ's. He does look for progress and growth. It is those whom God has "*wrought*" for the glory that He seals, because they belong to the glory. He does not seal sinners; He seals saints.

In John xx. "He breathed on them and said, Receive ye the Holy Ghost." This was analogous to the first creation, when God breathed into Adam's nostrils the breath of life. He breathes into them to connect their life with His. It is "the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus." He did not send the Holy Ghost when He breathed on them; it was a communication out of Himself to them. The Holy Ghost comes from the Father to give the consciousness of sonship; and from the Son to reveal His glory.

FULL ASSURANCE OF FAITH, HOPE, AND UNDERSTANDING.

FULL assurance of my salvation in Christ, and in the things freely given of God, is the longing desire of many. It is sad to meet many children of God groaning under a sense of uncertainty as to whether they are accepted of God or not; and yet the evidence—the proof that they *are* blessed with *all* spiritual blessings, *are* reconciled to God, *are* accepted in the Beloved, *have* redemption, *have* forgiveness of sins, *have* been made meet to partake of the inheritance of saints in the light, *have* been translated from the kingdom of darkness into that of the Son of God's love (Eph. i., and Col. i.)—I say, the ground of the evidence of all this, true of the weakest believer, is in their hands daily—the Word of God which testifies of Christ the Living Word.

We cannot be too distinct and simple in our thoughts as to the ground of assurance. It is not feelings, which ever change as circumstances alter; or experiences, which constantly fluctuate; nor is it a measure of faith. None of these can possibly be a sure ground on which the blessed truth of *full assurance* reposes. I desire that those who may seek to rest on such may turn away from all in themselves, to the ever-abiding and changeless Word of God. By it you have been "born again" (1 Peter i. 23); it is the "seed" of God in you (1 John iii. 9); and its statements alone form the divine and settled ground of peace and assurance.

What saints need is to receive Scripture as God has written it. What I may think, feel, experience, or realise, is very well in its place; but the troubled soul needs to know what God has *said*; it is assurance in *His* presence—confidence that all is settled were "the day of judgment" to set in. It is settled peace—divine certainty—for which many troubled souls are longing. How blessed for such to possess it *now!* God has established His word *in heaven*—in a scene far beyond the mists and clouds which are ever darkening *our* horizon. There faith has a resting-place; the ground of which is *divine*—the Word of God; *settled*—it is so in heaven; and *eternal*—the Word lives and abides for *ever*. The truth of assurance thus rests on ground outside, and altogether independent of our thoughts. The soul which does not possess this assurance may well judge his thoughts in light of the Lord's gracious rebuke to His disciples after

His resurrection: "Why are ye troubled? and why do *thoughts* arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself" (Luke xxiv. 38, 39). Thus the Lord Himself puts the evidences of assurance outside the disciples, and gives them to see them in His own blessed person. "I hate vain thoughts," says the Psalmist (cxix. 113). In the simplicity and confidence of faith, then, let each rest without questioning on the sure testimony of God.

The word translated "full assurance" occurs but four times in Scripture. The truth is thus given us briefly and comprehensively.

1. *Full assurance of faith* (Hebrews x. 22). This is "full assurance" entitling the believer to take his place as a worshipper within the veil; but as he cannot be there in his sins, this Epistle makes known to me the wondrous efficacy of the blood of Jesus in so perfectly cleansing the conscience that he can stand in the light without a *spot*—the conscience purged, the sins forgiven, and the heart at *rest* in God's presence. Has my beloved reader tasted the joy of knowing on divine, and therefore sure, testimony, that he is before God in the enjoyment of full deliverance wrought by Christ? Has he known what it is to pass through the opened heavens—opened in the power of *His* blood—and worship the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, not a sin upon the conscience, and the heart set free from *itself* to ascend in spirit, and worship the Lamb slain? . . .

But, further, the Epistle unfolds some of the glories and dignities of the ONE, who, by the sacrifice of Himself, purged our sins and guilt. He is the "Great High Priest." Aaron, clad in his robes of glory and beauty, only prefigured the Christ of God. Aaron is styled "High Priest;" but the Holy Ghost, in writing of Jesus, terms Him "*Great High Priest*." On earth He was the "Apostle" come down from the Father and the throne of God, to make God known. "God is *love*," and "God is *light*" (1 John i. 5; iv. 8). On the *Cross* He was the sacrifice for our sins.

What glories are these? The Apostle of God, and Revealer of the Father, come down from heaven; the perfect sacrifice on the Cross for our sins; and as having ascended—"The Great High Priest" of our profession.

It is blessed to observe that the "blood" gives me title to stand before the *Judge*—as in Romans; hence justification is the grand theme in that Epistle. In the Hebrews the

believer can stand before Him as *The Holy One* in the power of the "blood;" hence purification of sins is the great truth treated of.

Are you, then, my reader, a happy worshipper *within* the veil? or is your place amongst the worshippers *without*? Have you no return of praise for the One who put away your sins, and brought you in peace to God? Is it always prayer with you? Is there no praise? "Blessed are they that dwell in thy house; they will be still praising thee" (Psalm lxxxiv. 4). Yes, but first you must know you have a title to be there.

God has completely put away your sins; you are clean in His sight, and have all *moral* fitness to worship God, so that you have boldness to enter "in," in "full assurance of faith."

2. *Full assurance of hope* (Hebrews vi. 11). "We are saved in hope," says the Apostle in Romans viii. 24, thus connecting us with God's glorious future. Let not my reader suppose that there is the slightest uncertainty inferred in these words. Just the opposite. We can anticipate the resurrection, when the poor body will share in the eternal redemption obtained by Christ, even as *now* we have that redemption made good in the soul. It may be well to notice that Scripture uses the word "salvation" in three ways:—(1.) As in Ephesians ii. 8, "For by grace are ye saved through faith"—that is, complete deliverance from guilt and from the *dominion* or reign of sin; (2.) "Work out your own salvation," as in Philippians ii. 12—that is, work out your own deliverance, in the power of God's *willing and doing* (verse 13), from the numerous difficulties that beset the path of the saint. Work it out into practical result. (3.) "Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed" (Rom. xiii. 11); then the poor body will be fully delivered from the effects of the curse, and, ransomed from the grave, will be fashioned like unto the body of His glory (Philippians iii. 21).

It is in this latter view of salvation that we are said to be "saved in hope;" it is not a peradventure, but "we are saved," even as to the future. So certain is the truth of a present and future salvation that in this very chapter (Rom. viii.) the apostle says, "But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by (or, rather, 'on account of') his Spirit that dwelleth in you" (verse 11). The hopes which God presents are all certain-

ties, simply because *He* is the Promiser; man's hopes are all uncertainties, because *he* is the promiser.

Those Hebrews who had disowned and broken with Judaism, and embraced the Christian profession, are looked at in the Epistle specially addressed to them, as on their way to heaven (chap. iii. 1), to God's rest (chap. iv. 1), and to Christ glorified (chap. iii. 14); but they are traversing the wilderness, battling with its difficulties, while sustained by priesthood, and corrected and disciplined by the Word of God (see chap. iv. 12-16). The world is the place where the activities of faith are displayed. Thus "we desire that every one of you do shew the same *diligence* to the full assurance of hope unto the end." Diligence is urged upon the saints in view of their blessed future, and this is to be maintained till "the end" of the pilgrim-path. On the other hand, I am fully assured of the "blessed hope." Rest and glory—the fruition of righteousness (Gal. v. 5)—will be entered upon and enjoyed when *He* comes. His love we have *now*; His glory and inheritance we shall share at His coming.

Have you, my reader, full assurance of this "hope"? If you have failed in apprehending the object of His *first* coming, namely, to "put away sin by the sacrifice of himself—if you do not know that He has perfectly and for ever put away your sins, you cannot anticipate with joy His *second* coming. If I am uncertain as to the settlement of the question of sin, I shall, in consequence, dread His coming. His glory will repel rather than attract me. I have "*full assurance of hope.*" How? Because the One who is coming is loved, and known as the "purger of my sins."

One cannot suppose that the truth of the coming of the Lord will be welcome to persons who have not broken with the world. Alas! that so many are attempting to do what Jesus says cannot be done: "Ye *cannot* serve God and mammon (Matt. vi. 24). If I am not giving *all* diligence to add to my faith, virtue, knowledge, &c. (2nd Peter i. 5-10), I am "blind, and cannot see afar off," and have "forgotten" that I "was purged from my old sins;" that is, my condition is practically judged by the *glory* before me, and the *grace* which purged away my sins. These are the two grand tests of all spiritual condition—the *cross* and the *glory*. (See their application in the addresses to the Seven Churches of Asia, Rev. ii. and iii.)

(To be continued.)

NOTES OF READINGS.

2 Cor. viii. ix. Instead of the sufferings of Christ, we find His poverty (*v.* 9), to which the ministry now conforms us, our place in the world. It is not a question of what a man possessed, but what he was himself (*v.* 2). It is an extraordinary thing to give beyond one's power. "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ"—that is the ground of all appeal.

There is always something in the soul of the Christian that answers to Christ, which we need to get hold of. His poverty was needed to make good the righteous government of God; it was the only place in accord with it. He entered into the place of man upon earth, but if man, in the place in which righteous government had put man—outside Eden and riches—He had not where to lay His head. He vindicates the government that had driven men there, but He only could do it who had no business to be there Himself. He has a title to sit upon the throne, because He had vindicated the throne.

"Out of Egypt have I called my Son;" it is not for our salvation, but again in connection with government. He accepts the place as man of man under God's government, and founds on His own perfectness the title to the way out of it, and lays the ground for God coming back again in righteous government to bless. He traverses the whole path where man and Israel had failed—Egypt, the wilderness, Jordan, the Mount of Transfiguration. Compare the Jordan of Joshua with that of Matt. iii. *Then* it was triumphant progress; *now* after the defeat and collapse of everything.

Fulfilling righteousness, He identifies Himself with a repentant, confessing, and expectant remnant. Heaven opens over the scene, expressing God's perfect delight in it. The voice rouses Satan, who comes out to challenge this new Man. So he may! He goes into all the circumstances of man with God, and stands where man fell.

The Mount of Transfiguration prefigures the kingdom of glory. There was nothing in the history of Israel beyond it. It was with Israel *forfeiture* all the way up to Solomon. Now He *receives* from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory. This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. He gets many things meanwhile—a bride, &c.

But He must not only be the perfect Man—proved in all the circumstances in which the first man's imperfection came out, but He must go down into the imperfection in which man was sunk under judgment, to extricate man as man out of it.

The heart was only to be linked with Christ, to make these people willing beyond their power. Grace draws us within its own circle, out of our own selfishness. He goes in for the grace, and brings it out in glory.

SOME THOUGHTS ON JOHN'S GOSPEL.

JOHN, Chap. v.—(Continued.)

The twenty-fourth verse is very important. He who through faith in the Word believes in Him that sent Him has three things; 1st, he has eternal life; 2nd, he shall not come unto judgment; 3rd, he is passed from death unto life.

Life and judgment, as we have said, are the two means by which Jesus is honoured, and these two means are distinct. The believer has life, therefore he has nothing to do with judgment, and he honours Him in life. When one believes on Him who sent Him, he believes in the love of God. It is by means of Christ that one believes in God. (1 Peter i. 21.) To hear the word of Christ means to say, that one has to do directly with Him. I ought to be convinced that it is Christ Himself whom I believe—that it is His word. This word I can indeed hear from a man, but I ought to receive it immediately from Christ. God has direct authority over our souls. If I believe the word of Christ only because men tell me it is His word, I have not true faith. It is of the utmost importance that between me and God there should be neither church, nor doctors, nor anything.

At verse 25 it is said of those who are spiritually dead in trespasses and sins they live in receiving into the heart the word of the Lord. And in verse 29 it is the dead, separated from their bodies, who will be raised from the graves at the fitting time. Those who have done well are those who have divine life, by which alone one can do well. In this verse 29 we have two resurrections, which, though they are here brought together, are still quite distinct, both in regard to the time, because there will be at least a thousand years between the first of the good, and the second

of the bad (Rev. xx.); and especially in regard to the quality and character of the resurrection.

The idea of a general resurrection of good and bad together is quite false. The saints rise because they have the life of Christ, and because they are accepted of God, as Christ is raised by the glory of the Father; and this resurrection has nothing in common with the other. Our resurrection takes place because we are one plant with Christ. "He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one." (Heb. ii. 11.)

At verse 30 the Lord says that He does not do His own will, because He had taken the place of a servant; and though this gospel presents Him as God, and as equal with the Father, still here He is always the Servant who does the will of God.

Now we have come to the second part of the chapter, viz., to the responsibility of man, who was bound to receive these testimonies.

They are four; the *first* is that of John. The Jews rejoiced for a season in him, because it was a glory for Israel to have such a prophet; but as soon as their conscience was touched they would not obey him.

The *second* is the testimony of the works that Jesus had done.

The *third*, that of the Father, who had rendered a testimony to Jesus when they went to the baptism of John; to which baptism the Jews not having wished to go, they did not hear the voice of the Father, who bore witness to His Son. "This is my well-beloved Son."

Lastly, the *fourth* are the Holy Scriptures, which were spoken (or written) of Him. Notwithstanding all these testimonies, Jesus is obliged to say, "Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life." Consequently, not having wished to receive Jesus, who came in the Father's name, they will be so blinded that they will receive the Antichrist, who will come in his own name. Fortunately for us, we shall be in heaven when they will receive the Antichrist.

It is precious for us to see that the Lord puts the written Word of God on the highest level. The Scriptures speak of Him, and they who will not receive in simplicity the Holy Scriptures despise God. Jesus always gives the greatest importance to the Scriptures, as is especially seen after His resurrection. He rebuked His disciples for not believing the

Scriptures with simplicity, and opened their understandings that they might understand them. Scripture is not as all human books, for the understanding of which the Holy Spirit has no need to open our understanding, nor need He breathe into us for this purpose; but He does it for the Holy Scriptures, because without Him we could not understand them. One of the great hindrances to receiving Jesus we find in verse 44, "How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another?" Jesus never sought either His own glory, or that of men, but only that of His Father. And so it should be with us. We ought to be content with the approval of God—satisfied with this in communion, that men do not know the good that we do.

 HYMN.

O GOD! through Christ we sing
 Glory to Thee;
 In His blest Name we bring
 Glory to Thee.
 His heavenly face displays
 All Thy refulgent rays,
 And wakes the hymn of praise,
 "Glory to Thee!"

He gave, when here on earth,
 Glory to Thee;
 The song that hail'd His birth,
 "Glory to Thee!"

The wondrous works He wrought,
 The precious truths He taught,
 His holy footsteps brought
 Glory to Thee.

On Calv'ry's cross He gave
 Glory to Thee;
 Won, from the vanquish'd grave,
 Glory to Thee.
 Exalted now, and crown'd,
 Him countless hosts surround,
 And swell the lofty sound,
 Glory to Thee.

With joy we strike the chord,
 Glory to Thee;
 Ascribe, through Christ, the Lord,
 Glory to Thee.
 To Jesus' Name, shalt Thou
 Constrain all knees to bow,
 The Name we worship now,
 Glory to Thee!

RELATIONSHIP.

WE can trace this subject from the beginning to the end of Scripture.

We can see that the desire to be in the relation of a Father to us was among the secrets of the Divine bosom—and that is a truth most precious to us.

It is disclosed to us in Abraham desiring to have a child ; not satisfied that his house should be established in a servant, “this Eliezer of Damascus,” as he says (Gen. xv). The Patriarch, in that uneasiness and desire, represented I surely judge, the Divine affection.

Only let us think of the joy of such a fact—that our God had us, in purpose and in desire, before Him, as children ! He would not be content to make us servants, but must have us as His family ! It is a fact that gives us an interest in His *heart*, as other truths or facts give us an interest in His *work*, or in His *counsels*. As the Lord Jesus says of us, “I call you not servants, but friends.” So our God can say to us, I call you not servants, but children. “As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the *sons of God*.” His Spirit leads us not in bondage, but in adoption to liberty. (Rom. viii. 14.)

Afterwards, in the history of Abraham, when Isaac was weaned—that is, when he began to feed upon meat and not on milk, as one that was of sufficient age to cry “Father”—Abraham made a feast. He rejoiced in the voice of a child which now began to fill his house, in hearing that language that told him he was a father, and that his child knew himself to be a child ; that the relationship was now established in its proper virtue and power between him and the child that had been given him.

What a further happy fact is this, when we can read this feast of Abraham over his weaned Isaac, as a further expression of the secrets of the Divine bosom ! To think that our God and Father delights in our being before Him in the knowledge of our sonship, and in the enjoyment of that freshness and spirit of adoption, that naturally and duly belong to such a condition.

It was *Abraham* made the feast. He was setting forth or celebrating *his own joy*. It was because he was a father that his household were called to make merry—as in Luke xv. Abraham little thought of Isaac’s interest in that moment ;

it was the interest his own heart had in it, that his feast was made to express. (Gen. xxi.)

Happy, again, I say, had we but bowels to value it, beyond all measure, when we recollect that this is a disclosure of the secrets of the heart of the Lord God towards us!

Again, in patriarchal times, in the course of Jacob's history, we find a very significant action connected with this subject. I mean in Jacob's adoption of the children of Joseph. Here in mystery we see the heavenly Father again. For as we have already learned His desire for children, and His joy over them when walking before Him in the knowledge of their relationship, so now, in this action, we see Him receiving them unto the family, though in their own persons they had no title to be there. All hung on His own good pleasure or sovereign grace; but that grace and good pleasure reached them and adopted them, giving them the rights and privileges of the first-born. (Gen. xlviii.)

These scenes are made most significantly and beautifully to set forth, in these manners, the desires and purposes of our God and Father towards us, that He will stand to us in this near and dear relationship, though in ourselves we have no title to it. When we have these family days and family scenes among the patriarchs, we have the subject we are now upon for a season; because, during the age of the law, the elect are at school, as it were, sent away from the family house, and put under tutors and governors. So that we will not look for that which we have been finding in the Book of Genesis, or the Book of the Fathers. But let us come to the Gospel by John, and there we find the subject revived, as afresh presented to us at the very outset. And it is in John that we might expect again to find it.

John at once shows God acting *as from Himself*, the world and Israel being left behind—the world because it had not known Him, and Israel because they had not received Him. All was loss and ruin, as under man's hand, however privileged, and God must act, and He does act as from Himself (see John i. 10-12); and then we are at once told what follows—"As many as received him, to them gave he power to become *the sons of God*."

This speaks for itself. It was needful that the world should be tested, and Israel likewise; but when the apostasy of both was exposed, God, all gracious as He is, had the way cleared for acting from Himself. Then it is at once and

immediately declared that He sets Himself to the work of filling His house with children, adopting into His own family, making sons and not servants of every poor self-ruined sinner who will but receive Him and be willing to be debtor to Him for life and salvation.

Is not this consistent? Does not the grace that shone in the days that were before the law, revive in the days that come after the law?

And what is the education which the Lord Jesus is giving us all through John's Gospel? It is, I will answer, the training of our hearts *as children to know the Father*. This is the education we are receiving there. The Son, and not the schoolmaster, is training us. Every chapter, I may say, bears its own witness to this most blessed truth. We are not disciples of the Christ that teaches us in *John*, if we are not learning the liberty and the affections of children.

And then, in the progress of Scripture, what have we next, as in connection with this subject? We may read the Epistle to the Galatians as an answer; for Satan had been bewitching the saints in Galatia to return to the law, and the apostle is there urgently and fervently bringing them back to the Gospel, to the grace and power of the relationship in which faith had put them. They were bringing back Hagar to the house.

He tells them that we are all "the *children* of God by faith in Christ Jesus." He travails in birth again with them till Christ be formed in them—Christ *the Son*. He tells them that because they were sons, God had sent forth the Spirit of His Son into their hearts; and He proclaims afresh that grace, which of old had cast the bondwoman out of Abraham's house.

Here is a link between the earliest and the latest Scripture on this subject. Here shines divine consistency, and the faithful delight of God in the counsels and riches of His own grace from beginning to end.

Still further, when we reach, as I may say, the close of the volume, and read John's Epistle, as we have already read his Gospel, we find a further training of our hearts for family communion, by the Spirit of the Son. "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye might have fellowship with us, and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ; and these things write we unto you that your joy may be full."

RELATIONSHIP.

To *establish* us in the *joy* of relationship is the business of the Spirit, in the Epistle; as to *introduce* us to it was the business of the Son, in the Gospel by John.

Thus it is on this great subject from beginning to end. And we may be sure that we chiefly answer the end of the grace of God towards us, when we walk on in unquestioning assurance of our adoption. We know the mind of the Spirit in Genesis, John, and Galatians—so far as we breathe the spirit of adoption, as in the home of a heavenly Father, and in the sense of our relationship to Him.

This may rebuke us, but it is a deeply happy truth.

If we be strong in faith, and in full joy of heart walk as children before Him, we are exhibiting the walk of the Spirit; if we be slow-hearted, like Nicodemus and thousands besides, we shall only prove the perfection of the patience and grace of Jesus, which goes on with us notwithstanding, as it did with that Master in Israel.

And another word still I would consider in connection with all this. It is in the second chapter of Hosea. The Lord, anticipating Israel in the day of the coming kingdom, says, "And it shall be at that day, saith the Lord, that thou shalt call me Ishi, and shalt call me no more Baali."

This Scripture teaches us, that like ourselves now, so Israel in their day of repentance and acceptance, shall be in *relationship*, and not in *bondage or service*; that their communion with God shall be, not as with a Judge, or with a Lawgiver, or even as with a Lord, with any character that puts under responsibility merely, but in the grace and freedom of conscious relationship.

But what a truth this is! It tells us, as I noticed before, that we have an interest in the Divine affection in the *heart* of the Lord, answering our interest in His work and in His counsels, and securing, as we are told, our "fulness of joy." (See John xv. 11, xvii. 13, 1 John i. 4.)

Blessed it is thus to trace this subject from its beginning to its end, and to its consequences—to see that the relationship in which we stand has its source in God's affection—in the desires and yearnings of the Divine bosom—and issues in the fulness of joy in our bosom. And let me add, this relationship is *essentially eternal*.

God has formed a link between Himself and us which nothing can break. We stand in a relationship to Him that is necessarily and essentially eternal. The law never

could have done this. It never proposed to do it. It could at best only make us servants; and "the servant abideth not in the house for ever." Ishmael had to leave the house. He was the son of a bondwoman, and had therefore no personal title to the house. But "the son abideth ever." The son carries in his own person a link with the house. He has entered it by *birth*, and not, like a servant, by *contract*. He has an indefeasible, unchangeable title. He has a right to be *where* he is, simply because he is *who* he is; and we ought to carry in ourselves the sense and experience of this. We ought to know that there is that between us and God that nothing can break, formed by "the word," the seed of the life we breathe, and therefore of the relationship in which we stand (1 Pet. i.); and we may ask our souls, Have we got it, and Are we in the joy of such experience? We may have to pass through discipline and to suffer rebuke. Our weakness may have to be exposed and we put to shame, as saints of God. We may know too well how coldly we enjoy our privilege. But, Do we still carry within us the sense and experience of this link? Do we know that we are in no occasional, or temporary, or conditional circumstances, but that we stand in a relationship that is necessarily, essentially eternal?

This is the glory of the grace of the gospel, and this the experience that waits on the acceptance of Christ, or on faith in the gospel.

To be *under the law* would be to be servants, and thus to disentitle ourselves to this abiding, eternal link with the Blessed One and His house. But to this truth the Lord adds another, "Whosoever committeth sin, is the servant of sin, and the servant abideth not in the house for ever."

This is solemn. Not only by taking my place under the law, or being an Ishmael, a child of the bondwoman, do I deprive myself of a place in the house, but continuing in sin would work for me the same judgment. For I should still be a servant, a servant of sin, if not a servant under the law; and it is a general truth, take what form it may, or let it make what application it may, that "a servant abideth not in the house for ever." See John viii. 30-36, which may remind us of Rom. vi.; for the same moral character appears in both. If I commit sin, I am the servant of sin; and being a servant, must leave the house. If I sin, I am the servant of sin, and must go to sin for my wages, which is death.

And there is no personal condition beyond this. All that can come after it is glory. Being "in the kingdom of God's dear Son," we are meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. (Col. i. 12, 13.) And I may add, when our relationship with God becomes the subject of our souls, how commanding it is! Look at Peter in the hour of his conviction, how careless he was whether the boat sank or swam! And Zaccheus, interested in inquiring after Jesus, how heedless of the crowd and the Jew! The Eunuch, too, was unmoved by the strange and sudden appearance of Philip in that desert place, and by his still more sudden and strange disappearing, because his soul was first inquiring after and then enjoying the Lord! And when the Galatians first apprehended Jesus, they would have given their eyes to the apostle; and the Hebrews, when illuminated, took joyfully the spoiling of their goods. Do we wonder at such things? Let our knowledge of the Lord and our relationship to Him be more valued, and we shall cease to wonder.

FULL ASSURANCE OF FAITH, OF HOPE, AND OF UNDERSTANDING.

(Concluded from page 16.)

How safe and calm one may be amidst the rough tossing of this world! How blessedly one can ride over its angry billows, sustained through every storm by the anchor which has been cast "within the veil," and "Hope" which has entered there. Do storms or tempests ever sweep over that scene—the unclouded presence of God? NEVER! And our hope—the sure and stedfast anchor of the soul—has entered *there*.

Reader, have you fled for refuge to that hope set before you? Mark, this is not the fleeing of the *sinner* to Christ, but of the *saint*. He it is who has fled from his corrupt nature, from self, from the world, and "laid hold upon the hope set before him." Are you seeking to better your condition in the world—to establish your name and family in the scene of the Saviour's dishonour? Do not His position and aspect towards the world determine yours? Accept, then, "His Cross" as your portion *here*. All your blessings are spiritual, and are in Christ in heavenly places (Eph. i. 3).

To "lay *hold* upon the hope" supposes energy of faith. The joy *set* before the Lord sustained Him; for it He endured the cross, and is now *set* down at the right hand of the throne of God (Heb. xii. 1, 2). If His path is *set* before us; so also His joy—the hope of glory—the being with Him and like Him is *set* before us.

But as if it were not enough for God to come into the midst of our sorrows and trials, and sustain our hearts with promises of rest and glory and blessing, He would *establish* our souls in divine certainty by His *promise* and *oath*. His unchangeable purpose to bless us with Christ has been confirmed by His *oath*.

The worldly Lot knew nothing of all this. If we would enjoy the blessed communings of His heart—if we would have the knowledge of His eternal counsels establishing our souls, we *must* be found in the path of practical discipleship.

Thus, then, the ground of "full assurance of hope" is the word and oath of God. In other words, it is not the poor, tried, perplexed heart casting his eye within or around to discover if *he* has this assurance; but God has written it down plainly, so that faith may take it up, and the man go on his way a rejoicing saint.

3. *Full assurance of understanding* (Col. ii. 2). Our only safeguard against *Ritualism* and *Rationalism* is *realised* union with Christ. I do not mean the *doctrine* of union to Christ by the Holy Ghost. I do not believe that the Colossians "gave up" the truth that they had been united to Christ by the Holy Ghost; but practically they were not in the power of it; they had allowed Jewish ordinances which the Apostle styles "*elements of the world*," better known by us as *Ritualism*; and the philosophical theories of the Gentile mind, known to us as *Rationalism*, to come between them and Christ. The *sense* of their union with Christ was thus enfeebled in the soul. This condition is met by a display of the glories of Christ. There is not a more magnificent unfolding or elevated character of truth throughout the range of Scripture than is found in the first chapter. WHO IS HE with whom the saints are associated? He is the image of the invisible God; First-born of creation as to rank and dignity; Creator of the visible and invisible; all created for Him for His glory; before all things as Creator and Son—not Son *from* eternity, but *in* eternity. Created "by him" displays *His power*; created "*for him*" displays *His glory*.

“By him all things consist.” What we term “Providence” is simply Christ’s power in sustaining the universe ; creation in its vast extent subsists through Him. Thus He heads *creation, glory, and providence*. But this is not all ; not only have we His *personal* glories, but we have His *relative* dignities also. His death has opened up other fields, that “in all things he might have the pre-eminence.” “He is the head of the body,” as also head of creation ; and “first-born from the dead.” Now in faith I can look up to the right hand of God, and *see* there, by faith, what none ever saw before Stephen—a *Man* glorified in the place of highest exaltation.

In this wondrous catalogue of the Blessed One’s glories we have, as has been taught elsewhere, two headships—“creation” and “the body ;” two reconciliations—things and persons, the former to come, the latter accomplished ; two ministries—the gospel and the church.

The substantial truth of Christianity is the presence of the Holy Ghost on earth. He is here in a way altogether *new* from anything which has gone before. He always quickened ; was the spirit of testimony and prophecy ; but as soon as redemption was an accomplished *fact*, and Christ glorified on high, the Holy Ghost came down, the day of Pentecost was fully come, long since prefigured by the “feast of first-fruits” (Lev. xxiii. 15-17). His action was a twofold one, uniting the saints to Christ exalted as Man, thus forming them “His body” and “one body,” and dwelling with them *for ever*. The Spirit thus gives us the consciousness that we are in Christ up *there*, as also that He is in us down *here*—“the hope of glory.” A more exalted privilege could not be ours ; but be it remembered that it involves serious and weighty responsibility.

Now the Apostle is in an agony before God that the saints unknown to him might have full understanding of the mystery of God, in order to its practical acknowledgment. But how acknowledge the mystery if I do not know it? Are you indifferent to God’s counsels and thoughts about Christ? Do you say, It is enough for one to know I am saved? Consummate selfishness! What are you saved for? Is it not to reflect the glory of Christ, and shine in His likeness for *ever*? You cannot walk as a “member of the body of Christ” if you know not what that body is. You cannot answer to the responsibilities of your position if you

know not what that position is. No wonder that Ritualism, which feeds the imagination with empty shadows and takes away my Lord; and Rationalism, the spinning of the human brain, lands the soul in the dark regions of practical scepticism. But if philosophy and traditional religion are thrown aside as worthless, the Holy Ghost would have you use the *treasures* of wisdom and knowledge hid in the mystery of God. Full assurance of understanding in the mystery of God is the sure antidote to the speculative mind of the Greek, and the pious flesh of the Jew or so-called Christian.

4. *Full assurance of the Gospel* (1 Thess. i. 5). The word here is the same as in the cases we have been looking at.

The responsibility of the Evangelist in making known the full-orbed gospel of the grace of God is very great. It is a solemn consideration that the state of soul, the walk, and place in the glory are very much determined by the Gospel and the manner of its presentation, and the life of the Evangelist: "For our Gospel," says the Apostle, "came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance (*lit.* 'much full assurance'), *as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sakes.*" Paul, in addressing his son Timothy, said: "Take heed unto *thyself* and unto the doctrine; continue in *them*: for in doing this thou shalt both save *thyself* and them that hear thee" (1 Tim. iv. 16).

If we would produce conviction of the truth in the minds of our readers or hearers, our testimony must be clothed in the power of the Holy Ghost. We cannot lead on souls further than we are ourselves, and if we are not filled ourselves with the unspeakable importance of the divine truths we are communicating—if these truths have not formed our lives so that we are *living witnesses* of the testimony we proclaim, we shall only damage souls and produce weakness and uncertainty in the minds of others, instead of "full assurance." We have a fine instance of the spirit in which we ought to preach in the case of the little captive maid in the land of Syria: "*Would God* my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy" (2 Kings v. 3). "*Would God!*" She was in earnest, and so she communicated her "full assurance" to her mistress and household, and to the king and court of Syria.

The power of God, communion in the Holy Ghost, and full assurance should *always* be the certain accompaniments of the Gospel. It was so with those to whom Paul wrote. They received the Gospel, in which is revealed the "righteousness of God," freely owning the judgment of God upon the flesh. Accepting that judgment upon their state and Adam-standing, they could rejoice in the perfect deliverance wrought for them by Christ. They had full assurance of all this, in that they had a dead, risen, and glorified Christ preached to them. Let the reader distinctly understand that *life* is not *peace*; and that until the full work of Christ in condemning sin, *root* and *branch*, be known, there cannot be assurance or peace in the soul. The learning of this is the useful lesson of Romans vii.

We have thus presented to us the truth of "full assurance" of *faith*, Heb. x. 22; of *hope*, Heb. vi. 11; of "understanding in the mystery of God," Col. ii. 2; and of heart and mind in the Gospel, 1 Thess. i. 5. May the Lord bless these thoughts for His name's sake!

"WE KNOW"—"WE KNOW NOT."

ONE is deeply struck with the divine certainty with which God has certified to us, and revealed what is beyond this life. While at the same time He has hidden all that is of the path that is before us here, He has given us to say in words of His own providing—"We know" as to all beyond: while He has also said for us (though it is only individual faith that accepts it and knows it; one cannot know it for another), "*We know not* what shall be on the morrow." The next half-hour is *not* sure to any of us—nor anything here below. The next world (as men say) *is* as sure as His love can and has made it. Our place with Christ, to see Him and behold His glory, and all that shall be our portion for ever is sure. He has graciously drawn a veil over the future of this scene—only folding it back as each step requires, and as each moment passes—while He has unvailed all that is beyond, making it a present reality, whether to faith in His people; or alas, to the sinner who only lives for the present, while that solemn future exists for him.

NOTES OF READINGS.

2 COR. x., xi.

IN the last chapters, the Apostle sought to produce liberality by the grace known in Christ. Here (ch. x.) he puts down everything high by the *meekness and gentleness of Christ*. It is another instance of the immense power the Holy Ghost gains by presenting Christ, counting on something in the heart of a saint to answer to Him. It is Christ for everything—be it encouraging, producing, or suppressing, *v. 2*; when flesh comes in, and people walk in it, they suppose others do. The flesh is in each—both are in the flesh in one sense—the difference is that Paul was not walking according to it, making it a rule. Instead of warring after the flesh, he brings in weapons to the pulling of it all down.

Am I conscious of having pulled down some stronghold in myself? It is no use accepting what others see to be characteristic of us. Either my thoughts are unbridled and carry *me* into captivity, or else I must be near Christ and carry my thoughts into captivity. It is a wonderfully fine pursuit, to go after one's thoughts thus in the power of the Holy Ghost, knowing what would bring them into captivity *to*, as well as *how*. By the Holy Ghost we gain the mastery over ourselves.

It is not the sufferings of Christ now, but the example of what the believer's heart has known in Him. It is, do this; or, do not do that; but *grace* that would conform to what we see in Him, so as not to have a thought contrary to Him. And this before he brings in Apostolic authority. He will not produce the rod unless forced to it.

Verse 7 contains a wonderful principle. Grace puts on the same level, or rather the same height, for it takes us off the low level. "He is Christ's"—that is a wonderful elevation. Judging of things by the outward appearance is the ruin of us. God chooses a vessel whose bodily presence was weak, that the excellency of the power might be of God.

Verse 12.—If God has distributed a measure, our happiness is to be within that measure, and not stretch ourselves beyond it, comparing ourselves with others. He opens the heart by Christ, as at the beginning of the chapter, "I beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ"—and stops it by the authority of the Lord, blocking up all

rebelliousness at the end by, "not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth."

Chapter xi. proves it is folly to turn to self even in the highest character of service. Paul will surpass all others, and yet not shine himself. It is "the simplicity that is in Christ," not what man elevates himself by. Corinth was a wonderfully dangerous place—full of fleshly wisdom. The chaste virgin was in danger of losing her simplicity in such a scene. If Christ is God's wisdom, by their refusing Christ, God is obliged to make foolish their wisdom. The Cross is the very point where God has taken the wise in their own craftiness, and where He makes foolish the wisdom of this world. Many accept Christ as their righteousness who do not accept Him as their wisdom.

The positive things are always put first. We reach the spring-head of everything good and bad. The first remove is losing the simplicity that is in Christ. The "epistle" of chap. iii. was for all men; the "chaste virgin" is for the delight of Christ. The Apostle has a godly jealousy over her. He has the whole Church in view, only it was true for them. He had a wonderful love for these Corinthians, I think, because they did not deserve it; looking out for something it could shelter and cover. That is the character of Christ's love.

Satan is sure to come out in some new way, to answer to the new way that God presents Himself to us. Satan was against man in Eden, seeking to enrich himself in the spoils of the ruined one. So with Jerusalem (Ezek. xvi, xxv. 3, xxvi. 2). He is powerless until what God has enriched proves faithless to Him. It is so with the Church here. Satan was seeking to corrupt it, and to provoke the Lord to spue it out of His mouth, in order to replenish himself out of its apostacy. Thus what will not do for God, will just do for Satan. This makes this chapter very solemn. Satan comes in as an "angel of light," and Paul "fears," is "jealous," etc. It is a terrible chapter for the present day—the activity of ministers, etc. We had the true ministry, now we have the false (*vv.* 13-15), the coloured artifice of the devil. It is the subtlety of Satan, if it is not the simplicity of Christ. "He preserveth the simple." Then he shews what a fool the brightest man upon earth makes of himself, if he glories in aught but the Lord.

CONTENTMENT.

PHIL. iv. 11.

“I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content,” is experience of the deepest order. I am sure Paul could not have said this at any other time of his life than when in his prison in Rome he was taught the wondrously blessed lesson that Christ could do without him—great vessel and all that he was. When we contemplate the pathway of this man, as summed up in the few verses which the folly of the Corinthians forced from him, in 2 Cor. xi. 23–32, we see in some measure what the vessel has to pass through before it could write such a Scripture as Phil. iv. How often is such a Scripture as this taken up and read, as if it could be understood without the vessel being prepared to learn it by the lessons which preceded its utterance.

I have been deeply struck by the remark of an old Roman Catholic woman to another. When it was repeated, it at once connected itself in my mind with some of the experience of this chapter. But, like it, it could not be uttered by a mere tyro in the path of a Christian, or indeed by any who had not been taught it through those sort of trials that lead the heart to know God. Her remark amounted to this—“*My experience of Him is, that He either gives me what I want, or makes what I have do!*”

Speaking of Paul in this Epistle, I may also name another striking feature, as to his being cut off from that twofold ministry (of “the Gospel to every creature under heaven,” and “of the assembly to complete the Word of God”), and of which he was the chosen vessel—separated from his mother’s womb, and called by grace to it. He found that both these lines of God’s testimony were going on better without him!—him, the very vessel to whom they were entrusted. “The things that happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the *gospel*,” marks the one. While, if the *Church* was obedient when the Apostle was there, and while she had such a great gift as he, now she was much more so, when hearts were true. “Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now *much more* in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God which worketh in you, to will and to do according to his good pleasure.”

SOME THOUGHTS ON JOHN'S GOSPEL.

Chapter vi.

THE miracle of the increase of the bread shows, according to Ps. cxxxii. 15, that Jesus was truly Jehovah. The multitude seeing such a miracle, recognise Him as the Prophet, and further, they wish to make Him a King; but He refuses, and goes into a mountain in the character of a Priest to pray.

While He is there in the mountain, the boat in which His disciples were was tossed by the wind and the waves of the sea; but when Jesus comes to the disciples, all is quieted, and the little ship arrives quickly at a safe port.

All this is a beautiful figure of the history of Jesus and His own from the beginning to the end. He is first Prophet and then King, which therefore He refuses, because it was in a carnal way they wished to make Him such. He will really take His place when God wishes it. Meantime He has gone to heaven, where He intercedes for those who are down here—His own people, tossed about with the difficulties of the world; but all the tempest will cease when Jesus returns to us.

In Matthew we have Peter leaving the boat to go to Jesus on the water, which represents the faith of the faithful who are travelling in the present state of things, separated from Judaism and from every human system.

The rest of the chapter presents to us the *food* that Jesus gives us to eat while He is in heaven; with Himself He nourishes His disciples, and unfolds what this food is. The Passover, in this chapter, is only mentioned to be put on one side, that He may put in its place something else—that is, the heavenly bread, which is Jesus incarnate on earth; that is to say, what He was, His tenderness, His love, His works, &c., in order that when I think of what He was, I may exclaim: O what a Saviour is Jesus! He is what the true Passover is;—the flesh, then, and the blood are still Jesus, but dead; because by faith we are nourished by His death.

The 35th verse tells us that when the heart has found Christ for its object, one has neither hunger nor thirst, as has the world, which is never satisfied. In fact our hearts cannot find anything to satisfy them in the things of this

world. God has given us nothing less than His own Son as an object for our hearts—the very object that God has Himself. Behold, in what manner we have fellowship with the Father and with the Son, because we have the very thoughts of the Father and their very object, since Christ is our object. To love Jesus and to behold Him is our source of joy, since we know the Father loves Jesus. Ah! the world has become very little in our eyes; we want Christ and Heaven. Many Christians, however, are not content in this world with having only Christ; hence the cause of their spiritual wretchedness.

In chap. v. we have the power that quickens, and in this chap. vi. we have Christ the food of the soul. In *v.* 37 we have election, and in *vv.* 39 and 40 we have presented to us two aspects of the work. In the first, all who come to Jesus are those whom the Father has given Him, on account of which we cannot be lost; and in the other verse the Son is offered to all, to whosoever believes. Precious are these words, "I will raise him up at the last day." That is to say, the Lord will not leave us half-way, but will finish the work He has begun in us. He will persevere in His work even to the end.

In this chapter we find these words four times, *vv.* 39, 40, 44, 54.

This idea of the last day was new to the Jews; it judged and set aside the Jewish system as a system, and carried the blessings of His own from this world to another.

In *v.* 44 we have the need of grace. He that believes has life, but this life is Christ, and we have life because we have Christ; the life cannot be separated from Christ. He is the fountain, and the water comes to us. Thus it was said that the Holy Spirit was given to Him without measure. And in a sense, also, we have the Holy Spirit without measure, because we have Himself—the very person; but as to the operations, they are wrought measurably, according to the hindrances (greater or less) which He finds in us. When one has the life, one is not left uncertain of eternal salvation. One might have agonies of soul, since there are many different conflicts that a soul has before conversion, from those it will have afterwards. The soul feeds on the death of Christ when it believes so as to have eternal life, and likewise continues to feed thereon when it has life, and that to nourish and strengthen this life in us. And further, we

will eat eternally the flesh and blood of Christ, because we will remember always the death of the Lamb.

Before feeding on Christ as the living bread, we feed on Him as flesh and blood; because the sinner needs first the death of Christ to have life, then He feeds on Him as bread, that is, on His life. In this chapter we see that Jesus has first descended from heaven to become our bread; then He dies, and we feed on His death; and then, finally, at v. 62, He speaks of ascending into heaven.

We cannot apply what is said in this chapter to the Supper. It is very true that the Supper speaks of the truth contained here, but the chapter does not speak of the Supper, because it is said that those who will not eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of man have not life. And we know that one has life before they take the supper really. Similarly it is also said that he who eats has eternal life (v. 54); and we know that many take the Supper and nevertheless have not life. It is not the Supper that gives life, but one takes the Supper because one has life. This observation applies also to chap. iii. of this Gospel, which chapter does not speak of baptism, but baptism speaks of the truth contained in that chapter.

The expression "to drink the blood" means to be nourished by the life, since death now belongs to the Christian. The blood separated from the body signifies death, because if they are not separated, it is a sign that life is still there. At v. 68 we see that when one has really known Christ, the desire is no more to leave Him. "To whom shall we go?" Peter, certainly, had a very weak faith, but on no account would he have wished to be separated from the Lord. The Lord says "Will ye also go away?" because not only was He disposed to be alone, but also to elicit this beautiful reply which Peter makes in the name of them all, which was the expression of true faith. How beautiful is the root of faith! It was grace and the work of the Holy Spirit that produced it. Let us remember that knowledge is not enough; we must watch that the flesh does not work, and that it does not happen to us as to Peter, who, after having had so blessed a revelation, is obliged to hear the Lord say to him, "Get thee behind me, Satan." His flesh was not held constantly dead.

When we have studied the Epistles which give the doctrine of the value of the cross, we come then with more pleasure

to meditate on the history of Christ, first by feeding on His death, and then on Himself, as bread, in His life.

The disciples who drew back, and who ceased to go with Jesus, are those of whom the Lord speaks in chap. xv., who did not bring forth fruit, and who therefore were cut off, because they had not life in them; they had nothing but outward profession. They might have been sincere, but that is not enough; they had not counted the cost of being disciples of a rejected Saviour. They had come, they were not drawn by the Father, but of their own will: they could not persevere.

When one wants to walk with the Lord, he feels all the difficulties there are; but if he does not want to follow Him, he feels none of them. It happens as to a person seated and bound by a chain to a wall; if he does not move, he does not feel the difficulty of moving; but the moment he attempts to go away he feels it. But if the heart is full of Christ one does not see the amount of the difficulty. Paul did not consult with flesh and blood; and had he done so, he would not have been able to walk with the consecration with which he did walk. The walk of a Christian is like that of a man who sees a light at night, at a distance; he sees no other object but the light; so it should be with us, if we would be faithful, we must have our hearts full of Christ.

“MY LORD DELAYETH HIS COMING.”

LUKE xii. 31-48.

NOTHING can be more solemn, beloved friends, than the Lord's testimony here to His disciples (and it applies to us). If I look for the will of God being carried out anywhere, I must go, of course, where Christianity is. They are those who will be “beaten with many stripes;” that is, the professing church of God—Christendom, if you will.

The warning is not against saying that Christ will *not* come; every one says that He will but the infidel; but against saying, the Lord *delays* His coming. Now I desire to speak a little of the condition of soul of one who is manifestly waiting for Him, as to whether it characterizes those who read this; whether, if He come at midnight, or in the cock-crowing, or in the morning, He would find us watching; and I would speak of it, not as an interesting topic, which those who have studied much perhaps may receive some light about, but as a subject for our hearts.

Christ is waiting, and, so far as His people are right here, *they* are waiting. He is not sitting on *His* throne yet. The blessed work of Jesus on the cross being done, He sits at the right hand of God, on His Father's throne, until His enemies are made His footstool. From thence He sent the Holy Ghost down to fill our hearts, and make us abound in hope whilst waiting for Him. He is sitting down; He has no more to do as to His atoning work; and He has sent the Holy Ghost to gather out His joint-heirs to wait here, or to wait there,—which is better, of course.

Christ has appeared and brought salvation; but, beloved friends, we cannot have too fast hold of the fact that the heart and intention of Christ is not merely to clear us from *judgment*, but to have us *with Himself*, and that is what He is waiting for. I speak of this hope now, not as a little Christian knowlege, but as the only and proper hope of the Church.

Now, for instance, when the Lord was comforting His disciples when He was going away, What did He say to them?—"I will come again, and receive you unto myself." And He shews what will be their hope meanwhile; not the knowledge of the Father, nor the coming of the Holy Ghost, but the coming of *Himself*. What is it that the angels say in the first chapter of Acts?—"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." And so we should find in every respect that what God has set before us in His Word all sinks down when this hope is lost. It is this hope which characterizes the Church, in the mind of Christ and in Scripture, and the Lord is now awaking and calling us back to this expectation. Paul tells us, in the third chapter of Philippians, that "our citizenship is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ." I find that as characteristic of the Christian. It is not to doubt the fact of our dying and departing to be with Christ, precious as it is and useful as it is for us to think of it, but this is His coming to take us to Himself.

There are nothing but troubles here for us in the world. We belong to it until we are converted, and then it belongs to us. "Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are yours"—even the trials through which we pass. The poor thief says, "Lord, remember me when thou comest

in thy kingdom.” How little they thought, when they sent the soldiers to break his knees, that they were sending him off to heaven!

Another point—if the saint dies, he is just absent from the body and present with the Lord. But we are to be “conformed to the *image of his Son*.” Now I do not want to be conformed to Christ in the *grave*. The poor thief was, of course; *he* saw corruption. Of course Christ did not “see corruption.” But we are not to be conformed to Him in the *grave*, but in the *glory*. That is the full, blessed result of the hope that is before us—to be *with* Christ and *like* Christ. The reason why I have found the Lord’s coming so precious is that it brings so definitely the Lord *Himself* before me. *He* is coming to take me; it is not that I am going to be happy in heaven, but that Christ Himself is coming to fetch me.

Now it is delaying the Lord’s coming that brings such deadness into the Church. Take the first chapter of Thess.; you will see it is the Lord’s coming which gives the character to the people. What were they converted for? “To serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven.” Here were a number of people who had turned away from all their idols to serve the only true God, instead of all the gods they had before; and Paul says to them, ‘I am looking for the Lord to come, and then you will be my joy and crown.’ Then, if you look at holiness, it is “That he may establish your hearts unblamable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Then in the fourth chapter he gives full expression to it, and in the Second Epistle you find the coming of the Lord with respect to judgment. It was the object that was perpetually before them, as that which formed and fixed their character.

If you take the virgins (Matt. xxv.):—They went forth to meet the Bridegroom. Well, the Bridegroom tarried; He delayed His coming (we know He *has* tarried); and they all slumbered and slept. People say, “Why did not all these good and holy people find it out long since?” Why, because they all slept! They had all gone out to meet the Bridegroom, but, as people say, it is not very comfortable to bivouac out, and so they all turned in somewhere—turned into the world, in fact; and there they all slumbered together, for people can very well *sleep* together. But at

midnight the cry was made, and then, when they began to awake, they found they had not all got oil; and the effect of the cry was to separate the professors from the true ones. The professors go to buy, and whilst they are gone the Bridegroom comes, and those that are ready go in with Him to the wedding.

You will see that you never find the Lord's coming delayed beyond the life of the people to whom it was being written of, and you find the same thought in the Lord's teachings on the subject. What I mean is this—we know the servants who received the talents are the same ones who are judged for their use of them; and it is the same virgins who went to sleep that awake up again. We find in Revelation the history of the whole time of Christendom. Is He going to make a long tale of it? No. He takes seven churches then existing to tell it all out. So there is no excuse for a single soul to say, 'He delays His coming.' It is a present thing. As James says, "The Judge stands before the door."

But the hope of the coming of the Lord has been lost, and the church has gone quite into the world. Do not you think that, if it were believed in R—— that the Lord was coming, it would not alter every detail of people's lives? Paul says, that after his decease there should be a complete turning aside; men speaking perverse things, and drawing disciples after them. And then in the midst of this darkness there is to be the cry at midnight. How can I resist such a testimony?

People say, Well, though I am occupied with what is here, my heart is not in it, so it is not my treasure. They always say, Where my heart is, there is my treasure. Now, that is not at all what the Lord says. He says, "Where your treasure is, *there will* your heart be." If you have a great treasure in heaven, you may be sure your heart will be there. It is no use talking; an unconverted man knows very well that if he were looking for Christ it would alter all his life—converted people too. Do not you believe that it would separate professors off in five minutes, if we were all walking like men who are waiting for their Lord? It is the delay between the cry and the coming that separates them off. And they were to have the character, and tone, and ways of men that were waiting; and these were to be "blessed"—*blessed.*

(To be continued.)

GOD IN HIS ESSENCE AND ATTRIBUTES.

WHAT is fundamental in speaking of attributes, is inherent in the very term itself. It is not the being in its essential nature, even though always found there, but what is rightly attributed to the being as such; and in speaking of God this is not without importance; and the difference will be found very simple. Attributes are relative; hence God, who is absolute, cannot be spoken of as being the attribute itself. It is only a character which belongs to Him. God is something in Himself. But He is also something in relationship to other things, when they exist or are supposed to exist. The attributes may be a necessary consequence of what He is, and I suppose in God always is, but it is not what He is Himself.

Further, no attribute can be rightly appropriated to God, which removes Him from His place as God, in necessary and absolute supremacy. The Being to whom I attribute it is gone if I do so. God cannot be the object of judgment, or He has wholly lost His place as God; yea, he who judges sets himself up in His place, and puts God in subjection to him. Evidently He is thus no longer God. Cicero says in the *de Officiis*, "Quasi materia . . . subjecta est veritas." Now this evidently God can never be, for my mind is here supreme, and God subject to it. This is at once the pride and the folly of man. This is what modern Rationalism (and I suppose the mind of man has always so acted) calls the supremacy of conscience, by which revelation and everything else is judged of. But if conscience, as my action and judgment, is supreme, there is no God at all. A God who is not alone supreme, is a —no God.

Has man, then, no thought of God at all? Not so. He cannot judge by his mind, but he has the knowledge of good and evil—conscience. It may be corrupted, perverted, hardened, but he makes the difference of right and wrong. Scripture shows us he got this by the fall, and so as under sin. Still it brings in God, saying, "The man is become as one of us, knowing good and evil." It is not a law, a rule from without, imposed, but what is intrinsic (in man), he says, That is a good thing, that a bad one; and he concludes at once, God cannot approve a wrong thing, nor condemn a good thing. A man may, from passions, education, habit,

have a very wrong measure of right and wrong ; and dæmon-gods may make him put evil for good, and good for evil ; but he makes the difference, and the sense of right or wrong in itself leads him to attribute right to God, and not wrong. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

But this right and wrong is connected with obligation, and is measured by relationships. I owe to a father, a husband, my neighbour, what belongs to that relationship ; so to God. That is, the unperverted sense of right and wrong puts God in His place, does not judge Him. It is not an idea formed, but a relationship recognised, and hence subjection. Thus Adam lived in peace before the fall. Divine supremacy and authority was there, and owned, and then with knowledge the relationship transgressed.

But supposing this sense of right and wrong in man, and that it is connected with the relationships in which we stand, I do hold that God loves righteousness and hates iniquity, because I intrinsically know right and wrong ; but right and wrong being apprehended in the relationship, God is supreme to my mind ; that is the first of rights. He is God, as much as my father is my father, and I own subjection to Him as God. I do say, He must be righteous, for that is the expression of acting on what is right and good in the relationships in which He has placed others, as far as consistent with supremacy and righteousness. But this is not supremacy of conscience, as if I were judge, and my *measure* of right and wrong, or my discernment of it perfect ; but that I do conclude from right and wrong abstractedly to right in God, but at the same time to supremacy and perfection as the point I start from. One must not confound the *measure of right and wrong with the sense of it*. To speak of the supremacy of conscience, is to assume that its measure is perfect and adequate, not obligation under it. When I judge God or any one, I take a measure to judge by, and may misjudge from the state of my own mind. That is not conscience. Conscience with God recognises authority also over it, and supreme authority, or God is not recognised at all, and that is simply Atheism. What these modern infidels claim—is to make their consciences the measure of right and wrong. This is false and grossly pretentious, and destroys the nature of God, and right as regards Him.

But we have already got into the discussion of relative qualities in God. That is what supposes other things besides

the absolute being. If God is righteous, though *He* be so, He must be so towards others; it is relative. There are two words applied to God, which reveal His nature—*Love* and *Light*—and only these two. They affirm what He is in nature—not any attribute. Love is goodness, but in supremacy; for, in its abstract nature goodness is identified with supremacy, for it must be free. It is in this it is different from desire, even when it is a holy desire.

Love is used, I know, in human language for desire, in the best and most amiable sense. But though the same word be used in the sense of an inferior to a superior, or even an equal, this is in connection with a motive—is moved.

But love, as goodness itself, is blessed in itself and free in its actings, unless want or misery draw it out; but it has not a motive which characterises it by its object. This is always the case in desire, even when it is in no way evil, but has the character of affection. In ordinary desires it forms so far the character; money, power, pleasure, give their character to the man who seeks them; but though love be used as to them, it is evidently in a lower sense, and, where desires are, the desired object so far rules over us. Where love exists in a divinely-formed relationship, it is, or may be a just affection. I say, "may be," because it may run into a mere desire and be idolatry, and the relationship falsified. But when rightly in exercise, save as man in certain aspects represents God, it looks up, and characterises the person in the affection. It is conjugal, filial, and the like. A husband and a father in certain respects represent God in those relationships, and so far it partakes of what He is. But in the closest relationship, where it is not this, it has the character I speak of: "Thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee."

But God suffices to Himself, and goodness makes Him infinitely happy in Himself. For goodness is happy if it has no object, though happy in goodness when it is exercised towards one. Hence it is free, because it suffices for itself. Hence though, in certain relationships, man may be the image of God, yet as he cannot suffice to himself, and so be free and sovereign, he is not said to be *love*, though he is to walk in it. He is as to any right state subject and recipient. The divine nature is in the Christian, and he loves; still "we love because!"

But we *are light* in the Lord. The purity of nature which

belongs essentially to God is made ours in the new man ; as far as it acts in us it manifests everything around us in its true character. Christ was love in the world, and the light of the world. He is the measure of both for us. It is a blessed thing that the two essential names of God should be the expression of the new man in us ; only, as we have seen, we are not said to be love. But that which is the nature of God characterises us, and makes us to enjoy Him, and to act according to that character here through grace.

These, as I have said, are not attributes. Attributes are ideas which we attach to God in connection with what is outside Himself, though belonging necessarily to Him as God. He is omnipotent, omniscient, supreme ; even righteous, holy ; these, though more connected with His nature, are relative terms. I must think of God's dealings and claims to call Him righteous. He judges of something when He is righteous, only it affirms He always judges right. To call Him holy, I must think of evil, which He rejects. Hence He is not called righteousness and holiness, but righteous and holy. What He says is truth, but He is not truth. Truth is what is rightly affirmed of something else. But God is not affirmed of something else. We can say Christ is the Truth, because He does tell exactly what everything is—what God is, perfect man is, and by contrast what evil man is, what the world is, who is its prince. Through Him all is exactly brought out in its true character. Hence we say, God in Himself is absolutely Love and Light—the last expressing perfect purity (invisible in itself), and manifesting everything as it is before God, and showing the way before us : and God is righteous, holy, omniscient, omnipotent, supreme, and the like—all of which are relative terms—the former moral, the latter natural attributes.

Righteousness is perfectness in, or consistency with the relationship in which any one stands ; evil and good being known. Holiness, the aspect of heart, which intrinsic purity of nature bears towards other things, according to their character. We may speak of things as holy when entirely set apart to God, and separated from all profane use ; but properly it applies to persons expressing their abhorrence of evil and delight in that which is pure and good. God is holy in Himself, abhorring evil and delighting in what answers to His perfect nature. The creature can only be holy as separated to God in what He is in His perfectness, because

its nature can have no true and perfect object but Him, and its object gives its character to a nature in a creature, and holiness is the expression of a nature, not the obligation of a relationship. We are holy as far as every movement of thought answers to the impress and character of God, having Him for its object. Anything taken up in itself, apart from Him, is necessarily independency and sin. So far God is set aside. We have no object which makes the heart right but Him. Although we cannot leave God out as the author of, and as giving authority to, the relations in which we stand; yet, as we are placed in certain relationships, righteousness has somewhat more extensive range, though as a sanction God must be brought in. But whenever a relationship owned of God exists, it is unrighteous not to act up to it; not to be faithful to obligation in it.

Now God, as righteous, maintains judicially every obligation which any relationship imposes on us. But first and above all, relationship to Himself according to His supremacy and moral nature; this is the basis and stay of every other. Only Christianity has brought out a second and more perfect measure of this. It recognises what is due from man according to the measure of man, his obligations in the place he is in towards God and his neighbour. Of this the Law is the perfect measure, God making allowance for ignorance of the measure.

But besides this, God Himself has been perfectly glorified by the blessed Lord. All that He is, where sin gave occasion to the full revelation of all that He is, has been glorified in Christ, and a new ground of relationship formed according to what He is, based on what Christ has wrought. Hence man is in the glory of God, and God's righteousness is displayed in that.

Judgment is based on the actual obligations founded on the relationship in which man is. Acceptance goes much farther, and is according to the worth of the Lord's work; we are made the righteousness of God in Him. But God in righteousness maintains all the relationships in which man stands according to His will.

It is well also to distinguish between the righteousness of God in government, and the immutable character of God, according to which we must stand before Him, if in His revealed presence. His revealed requirement of righteousness forms, with long patience exercised on His part, through

goodness, the basis of His righteous government, never to be fully revealed until Christ comes; partially displayed in Israel, where needed to maintain the recollection of it everywhere; and in a signal way in the flood which closed the old world.

But standing before God fully revealed, supposes not our obligations to Him in government exercised to maintain His authority, and the natural sense, or revealed rule of right or wrong, but fitness for His own presence. This is in Christ only. This is fully revealed in Christianity alone, and wrath from heaven in connection with it (Rom. i. 1-20).

When I speak of what is holy, it is not judicial authority, as in the case of righteousness, but what purity of nature abhors and rejects, or delights in. Righteous and holy are the attributes which attach themselves to the moral nature of God and His supreme authority.

But there is that in God, the sense of which is with difficulty lost in man, though he be without God in the world. This has turned the sense of a being above himself, perfect in knowledge and power, a Supreme Being, into what is the fruit of imagination or servile dread—Mythology and Fetichism. The visible powers of nature were deified, because a God was wanting for the heart. The legends of ancient days were turned into myths of the gods. Terror told of a revengeful power, and a world of retribution loomed to an unsatisfied conscience. Man would animate planets, because they moved without him; he would have poetical lusts in superficial and self-satisfied Greece; more calculated sobriety in Egypt, a sunny south of gods, and northern immensity of giants, and storms, and mountains in Scandinavia; or seek to solve the mystery of good and evil in Ahriman and Aburmazdha in Arva, or revel in monstrous reveries in India. Cruelty and poetry might divide the world under the name of gods, but behind all there was everywhere Tertullian's "*Testimonium animæ naturaliter christianæ*," an "unknown God"—a Brahm, the origin of all things, a primeval source or power.

In Fetichism—degraded into a dread of some terrible unknown power, which priests used for their own purposes; in more cultivated religions, kept as the secret mysterious knowledge belonging to them, or to the initiated only, while the vulgar were kept in play with the more convenient everyday materials of popular mythology—the gods and

goddesses of nature and imagination; yet still, though inconsistently, clothing them with attributes and powers which, if true, could only belong to one supreme God.* And this was so true, that each local mythology had this twofold character, and that, even to particular cities.

In India, in the sects of Vaishnavas and Saivas, and one supreme God above the rest, the idea of God, and attributes of supremacy, omniscience and omnipotence, ran through all, however confused and inconsistent. These attributes were symbolised, too, as in the winged bulls, and lions, and men of Assyria—symbols recognised in Scripture; with this immense difference, that in heathen symbols, save in the vague idea of divinity, God was thought of no further than the attributes or symbols.

In Judaism, these formed but the throne of a known God who sat above them. The clearest expression, on the one hand, of the mind of man losing itself without God in knowledge it could not retain or carry, and on the other, of the clearness of the revelation which made one true God known.† Supremacy, omniscience, omnipotence, attach themselves necessarily to our idea of one God the moment the thought takes a definite form, and the attributes involved in them are not lost in mythological associations.

In heathenism, where these activities are attributed to subordinate energies, the one original God was mere abstract, inert godhead—abstract existence.

In India, sole existence, sometimes springing into activity of thought and desire, all which became creation, including the gods, and was Maia, or illusion, and returning into abstract godhead again, when Brabm's occasional activity ceased.

* So in a sentence which happens to come across me—one of a thousand (Virgil, *Æn.* i. 261-282)—Jupiter says to Venus:—

. "Manent immota tuorum
Fata tibi
. neque me sententia vertit.
His ego nec metas rerum nec tempora pono
Imperium sine fine dedi."

† See the beginning of Ezekiel: God was seated above these figures. The extreme perverseness, and I must add, superficiality of man's mind and infidelity is shown in Max Müller's "Science of Religion," and such-like works, licensing and promoting mythology, because it had the thought of God behind it all, as if it was the expression of it; whereas it was the gross departure of man's mind, when he had it, to degrade the idea of God when he had departed from Him; and that in connection with the basest defilement and cruelty, so that God in His true nature and conscience were alike lost—morally gone—though neither could be destroyed.

Modern Materialism does little more than substitute scientific activities of nature for poetical activities, and is worth about as much ; for, after all, we must want a cause. Phosphorus may put activity into the brain, not moral thought ; but what puts activity into phosphorus, or gives it this mental character ? Indeed, wherever I find a regular difference in a like agency, I find a difference-maker ! The tubers of a plant, which convert the elements of the same soil into a geranium or an oak, force on me the conviction of design and mind.

I do not connect omnipresence and eternity as attributes with God, not because they may not, in an ordinary sense, be said to be so ; and Scripture itself so speaks practically, and it always speaks practically, because truly ; but that in our minds they are connected with time and space, which do not apply to God. There is no time when God is not ; no place where His eye and hand, to use human language, are not. "I AM," is the proper expression of His existence. While time rolls on "*I am*" remains unchanged, and when time has rolled away "*I am*" subsists the same. It can hardly be called an attribute. This being understood, we may speak of eternal as a natural attribute of God.

As to omnipresence, God has no more to do with space than with time. He has created all things in a way apprehensible thus to us. In this creation nothing escapes Him. He is, morally speaking, omnipresent. He is not of, or in it, but pervades it. He is "through all !" He upholds everything, as He creates everything. He is not morally concerned in any motive (save as working in man in grace), but not a sparrow falls to the ground without Him.

Omnipotence is involved in this—the power to do whatever it is His will to do. Omniscience is involved in it also. Did not God know all things, He could neither know what to do rightly, nor judge morally. Supremacy is involved in our very idea of God as one, and active in power. They are inherent in our idea of God, and (when once the heathenish additions of what are confessedly imaginations are removed) cannot be separated from the idea of God. That which it is important to get fast hold of is, that there is a will in God. No moral being can be without it ; a will guided by righteousness and holiness, and to which omnipotence and omniscience are subservient, but which is the source and origin of all that exists outside Himself, not of its state, for moral beings have a will, but of its existence.

He is a Creator. I do not say that simple existence can be proved to be a matter of creation by logical deduction. But simple existence is an abstraction. Man sees trees, planets moving ; in a word, evidence of design, and that, which has been so often argued, involves a designer. The distinct knowledge of a Creator is a matter of faith. Yet if man does suppose the abstract existence of matter without a cause, he violates the first principles of necessary thought. He is accustomed to see man form many things out of comparatively formless matter, so he has an idea of this latter. But if he begins to think of why anything existed, he cannot avoid the thought of a cause. Why, implies it? and I can say Why? and it is my nature to say Why? I am so constituted as to look for a cause. I may not be able to define cause,* nor can I conceive creation ; but I cannot conceive, on the other hand, a thing existing without it. My mind may be inert, and so far take what exists as I find it ; but as soon as it is in activity, it looks for why a thing exists. The same thing proves I cannot know a first cause, but only that there must be one. I cannot conceive a thing existing without a cause, therefore I say there must be one. But a first cause means what exists without one. That is, I cannot conceive it. Hence, too, I cannot conceive creation, though I know there must be a Creator. It is merely saying, I am a creature, and must think in the order of my being.

Goodness or love, omniscience and omnipotence, involve in them perfect wisdom ; only all this supposes a God, with a free will to exist, before any attribute can be assigned to Him. If not free to act, omniscience and omnipotence are simply null.

One class of philosophers—unable as we are, in the nature of things as creatures, to conceive a creation (for the creature must think in his own order, *i.e.* creature order ; he can no more have an idea of creation than create—power is not in him), judges “*Ex nihilo nihil fit.*” For him it is true ; but it is only the great fallacy, common to philosophy, of taking our capacity of thought and action as the measure of what may be, which is simply absurd. It is *our* measure as to power, be it of thought or action ; we must think or act according to our nature, and can think no more as to forming ideas. But it is wholly false if it deny the consciousness of what is above

* A cause, I apprehend, is power producing from a will working somewhere. I say “*somewhere,*” as school-men speak, there is a “*causa causata, and causa causans.*”

us and applicable to us receptively. We may be acted on mentally and physically by that which is no possessed power in us. Active power or capacity for it is not the measure of receptivity.

Further, I may negatively be conscious of the necessity of a thing of which I can form no idea, because it is beyond my order of being. Thus I naturally ascribe an effect to a cause, a power producing it. I see a thing becomes, begins to exist, as it is before me; I at once ascribe it to some cause. I am so formed as to suppose a why? It cannot be without some cause. It is not a formed idea of what the cause is, but the conviction that there must be one. It appears to me as an effect, and effect contains the idea of a cause in it. Hence I believe in creation. Not that I form an idea of it, but that negatively it cannot but be.

I have already said, the nature of the proof demonstrates that I cannot form an idea of the thing proved in itself. But there is clearly seen eternal power and godhead. And here note that creative power involves eternal power, for all begins by creation, and all creation begins. But what creatures must be, *i.e.* exist absolutely without a beginning. "I am," therefore, or absolute existence, is the one just revelation of God as such.

We have thus one personal God—"I am," supreme, absolutely free, omniscient, omnipotent, wise, the Creator. These are, so to speak, natural attributes; moral ones are righteous, holy, good; known to man not by ideas or thinking, which is impossible, for then man's mind would be at least the equal of God, that is, He would not be God at all; but by conscience, or the knowledge of good and evil, the proofs in the Creation around us of creative power and wisdom, and in spite of the undeniable, utter degradation of man, in corruption and violence, and the monstrous deities into which he had merged it, the idea of God, the abiding sense of unity, supremacy, absolute godhead, everywhere found.

If Jupiter be suckled by a goat in Crete, the idea of supremacy remains. If Krishna lives with the milkmaids, in time he is an incarnation of Vishnu, and Vishnu is Brahm, the rest Maia or Illusion. The gods are mortal; God is not. It may be Bathos, or Silence, or as unknown as you please, when the feeble mind of man tries to have a formed idea; but before it acts, behind the gods of imagination

or lusts or fears, there is not only godhead, but one God. The Manitou of the Indian, the eternal being before Ahuramazdha, was active for good, or Ahriman, to spoil his work.

And remark here, that where ideas flow from a relationship in which we *exist*, which belongs to our nature in its original constitution, it may be, by thinking and imagination, education, habit in religious things, priestcraft, be perverted, falsified, degraded (and the mind with it), or reasoned against from the inadequacy of the mind to master it as an idea; but the roots of it are in the nature. To have it falsified, there must be something to falsify. “*Naturam expellas furca, tamen usque recurret.*” Hence, prone as the human mind is to indulge its imagination, stop short of God whom it fears, and have gods and idols which it can manage after its own lusts and thoughts, yet, when the truth of the relationship is brought out, the soul recognises it.

The unity, supremacy, omniscience, omnipotence of God, and our responsibility to Him, is owned, when divine revelation has brought it out, as the only truth, by all. I do not mean by that, that the mind of man cannot or does not seek to disprove it, and have no God at all, because it does not like one, does not like responsibility, and likes to be supreme—at least to have no one above it. But this is an effort, and an effort whose effects never last with the masses; that is, with man according to nature—an effort, too, always connected with oppression or violence and profligacy, as in the fall of the Roman Empire and the French Revolution. Morality must disappear; for there can be no morality without responsibility, and responsibility without God is impossible. For to whom am I responsible if there be not one above me? Responsibility refers to relationship, and all relationship, even human, is founded on relationship to Him. Without Him self-will acts; each one will have his own, and man becomes a mixture of the devil and the brute, or is kept down by power because it must be, or worse; while power in result will cultivate superstition, because of its sway over men’s minds. And, indeed, where faith or revelation does not give a true sphere outside self, man cannot rest in self, and he will make a false one. Hence, under Satan’s power, the religions of the world.

Revelation, in making known the true God, meets—not the knowledge, but the wants of the human mind. It is the witness of its own truth, because it meets and clears out these springs in the soul which were the subjective adaptation

to the relationship in which it stood in truth with God; and the objective revelation perfectly meets them, fits in, and so far God is known.*

If we take Scripture, we find there the attributes of God—the one true and only God—shine out, and in every page, with unclouded lustre. He is one, supreme, the Creator of heaven and earth, of all things; knows all things. If we go to heaven He is there; to Hades He is there (Jer. xxiii. 24); can do all things. His eye and presence are everywhere; He is the eternal God; He is righteous and holy; His goodness is over all His works. The cravings of the heart of man are met with the clearest and fullest revelation of God. I refer to the Old Testament, because there God, as such—the one true God—is fully and specially revealed in contrast with idols and man's imaginations. It is its special, direct revelation, with the law of His mouth—though promises and prophecies accompany it.

The New fully confirms it, I need not say; but there is a much fuller revelation in the Father sending the Son for the accomplishment of His ways in grace, and this characterises it. He does not *give* a revelation; He is revealed. Hence, though of course the attributes remain true, it is not attributes which characterise it, but what He is—light and love; righteousness and holiness necessarily coming in—but His own. Not the requirements of man's for Him, which quite alters the character of them as revealed. In the Old we could say, "The righteous Lord loveth righteousness." "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Now, He—Christ—is our righteousness; we are made the righteousness of God in *Him*. It is in the New Testament we find God revealed in Christ as light and love, and we, "light in the Lord," and partakers of the divine nature, have to walk in the light, and know, through the redemption that is in Christ, that perfect love that casts out fear.

This is more than attributes, as we have said, though it confirms, is in a certain sense the source of, and makes us to know them all, and give each its own and full place.

J. N. D.

* Hence, where revelation exists, God is owned where there is no true conversion. Hence the superiority morally of Protestantism (which owns the true revelation, and uses it personally) to Popery, which has set up a mythological system of saints, &c., and established a priesthood, which is always, and must be, if God be not known directly and immediately. In Protestantism the conscience has to say to God immediately as revealed; in Romanism not—the priest is a director,

THE HARVEST SHEAF.

A HYMN.

Leviticus xxiii. 9-14 ; John xx, 17.

THOU First-fruits from among the dead,
 We hail Thee, Jesus, Lord !
 Of God's creation, Life and Head,
 In Whom all grace is stor'd.

Before Thy God, who Thee had sent,
 Thou, risen from the grave,
 Ascending, did'st Thyself present,
 The Harvest Sheaf to wave.

To Him Thyself Thou then did'st shew,
 Once dead—alive again ;
 Triumphant o'er the mighty foe,
 Led captive in Thy chain.

Thou, blessedly, the work and will
 Of God had'st fully done,
 And did'st His holy bosom fill
 With joy in Thee, His Son.

The love which e'er in Him had glow'd,
 But which by sin was pent,
 On Thine ascension freely flow'd,
 And found, through Thee, its vent.

Thy bearing all our sin and shame,
 Thou, Lamb, who did'st atone,
 Brought glory to Thy Father's name,
 And brightness to His throne.

With Thee, now risen Lord, on high,
 In Thee for ever blest ;
 We'll shout Thy praises through the sky,
 E'en now Thy worth attest.

O, worthy Thou of all the praise
 That heaven and earth can give ;
 The Light where God Himself displays,
 The Life in Whom we live.

NOTES OF READINGS.

2 COR. XII.

IT is weakness that brings out the perfection of the position reached by this Epistle, and what it closes with. Weakness is really our blessing. We find it in Christ, who was perfect because He reached absolute weakness. There was no will with Him—not merely poverty. Power connects itself with weakness; and Paul, who knew it to be true in Christ, says I must not miss it. It is life that, in its own energy and power, brings the flesh down to weakness—like the sinew in Jacob that shrank. It not only *takes* weakness when it comes, but it seeks it out (ch. xi. 29).

When the Holy Ghost came down we find men filled with the Holy Ghost. Here it is “a man in Christ,”—an advance upon a believer. You cannot find the character of Christ without what produces it, otherwise, it will only be improved men. Are we clear that we do not come before God upon the ground of conduct or character? If I have done with myself, I learn Christ’s work and character. God says, I am good, even if you are ever so evil—that is grace. Man’s wickedness cannot weary or put God where He has no resources to show Himself. The conduct and character of a *Christian* must be *Christ*, from whom he receives his life; and Christ is the source, measure, and pattern of it. God has not *two* men before Him, though we often have. He speaks to me as a man in Christ. What are we at His coming? “Like Him.” If God has not given me now what will produce that likeness, I have no standard. We are taken out of the flesh at the cross—out of the world, John xvii.—out of time as sitting in the heavenlies, in Ephesians.

Christ came to earth to reveal the Father and about my sins. He is gone to heaven to occupy Himself about my weakness (infirmities). What produces the sympathy of Christ is the infirmity of one of His members down here, and the feeling and sympathy in Him gives me the succour I need. Ver. 9 gives us two things to put ourselves in connection with—the sources of our supply—“my grace” and “my power.” I am either proving my infirmity too great, or else His grace sufficient. To be occupied with weakness is to become weaker; let me measure my weakness by His strength. Flesh never had such an opportunity of getting hold of great things as now that grace has brought them to

us in Christ; hence the need of weakness. Faith lives upon a difficulty; difficulties are either bread for faith, or else they eat us up. If you can connect yourself with the ability of God to bring you in, you will find a giant only food for you. For instance, Caleb, "Are they not bread for us?" he says, and he got the upper springs and the nether springs. If we take counsel with our own hearts, we shall never do anything but go back into Egypt. But if I see what the heart of God is, and what He is leading to, we would not be anywhere else than with Him. Most of us are so cowardly, there is no fear of exaltation. In the very place where Christ was making Himself nothing, the disciples were disputing who should be greatest. If Christ is not first, then self will be. The flesh never goes along with Christ; it is *fallen* flesh, and cannot. It is nature at its best in Gethsemane, and love at its highest desiring to connect the disciples with Him in watching. We do not see the end of amiable flesh, because we do not see where it broke down.

Satan (*v.* 7) is made tributary to this life of Christ. A man in Christ receives a thorn from Satan, so that the flesh should not be puffed up. There is the sentence of death at the outset of the Epistle, and at the end we reach weakness, living by the power of God. It is death to life here. Letting God do all His will with you, to show His power and the grace of Christ. The weaker the vessel, there is non-resistance, and then God can show His power. Power, as with Jonah, can sink a man where will is at work; but here it is a man laying hold of power to sink himself.

It is weakness here become a new source of pleasure and profit, because found to be the occasion for the power of God and the grace of Christ. It is remarkable that an Epistle that begun with "tribulation" should conclude with "pleasure" (*v.* 10, ch. xiii. 9)—two extremes—and yet the first step was but the way to the last; because, after all, it was to be associated with Christ. God has done all on His part, and then you find in the Epistle links with Christ, with whom it begins and ends, in what He is, in a love that finds its delight in spending itself "the more abundantly." It is a new way of reaching joyfulness—a man worn out by nothing, but wearing out everything—his body, all, down to death. There was no such thing as loss; it was all gain, even the messenger of Satan.

If he had been bent on displaying apostolic power, it would have been to their destruction; but what He aimed at was their edification (*v.* 19, ch. xiii. 10). This must be in self-sacrifice. That is where we all lose power in ministry to others. They do not see in us self-sacrificing love. But we see it in Christ; that is, where we can even take shelter; still, we have a sight to look for in ourselves. What was dear to the Apostle? It was the self-sacrificing love of Christ, which would not accept refusal or disappointment, but was bent on its object. The less He was loved the more He loved. "They all forsook him and fled," was the close of the Lord's ministry on earth; and He reveals Himself to them again more fully, in resurrection, as if nothing had happened: Go and tell that very Peter!

If things are wrong, the effect will be in the case of the servant whom the Lord uses—he will not be as they (*v.* 20). If the evil continues, there is *one* that will be humbled (*v.* 21)—there was not the least self in him. He could not connect Christ with "whisperings," etc. If I am lower than another, I shall not differ; and if I find it difficult to be lower than another, it is because I do not look at Christ. If we look at Christ, we drop into our place at once. How low we should be if we always looked at Him!

"Whisperings," etc., *separate hearts*: the flesh allowed to act in this way goes on to worse. Still the Apostle does all he can to carry them on with him, wishing their perfection (chap. xiii. 9). It is the flesh and the world that will damage us. The flesh alone will not do it: it must have the world to feed it. It was this drew forth the Apostle's tears in Phil. iii. If we are to be preserved, it must be this power of life associating us with Christ.

"MY LORD DELAYETH HIS COMING."

(Concluded from p. 40).

You find two parables (Matt. xxv.) that treat this quite in a different way—the Virgins and the Talents; one, the state of affections; the other, the activities of service. Anyone can understand this. The Lord gives us Himself the character that He looks for and likes. We are to be watching. He says, you must be all alive! you must have your loins girded! you must be watching while I am away, and

when I *do* come, then I will have things my own way. I will make those watching servants sit down to meat, and I will serve them. The Lord has made Himself a servant for ever. When a mother is nursing her sick son, her delight will be to do all sorts of unpleasant, disagreeable things for him sooner than let anyone else do them, because it is *love* that makes her.

When He made Himself a servant, He came down to do it. Well, His coming down was *glory*. But we should have all said—*naturally*, when He was going away, Well, there is an end of service now; He is going to glory. No! when He is going out of the world He says, as it were, Do you think I am going to leave off serving you? Not at all! I am not going to give you up, if I cannot stay down here to have a part with you. You must have a part with me where I am going, and so I must wash your feet.

This was not blood; this was water. A soul, though really regenerate, wants to be kept clean by the way. When He goes away into glory He becomes the Advocate, as it is expressed. A soul sins, and He sets about to restore it. We do want our feet washed with water. “Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I *have prayed for thee*, that thy faith fail not.” Peter has learned his own weakness, and the Lord has prayed for him. That is what he was going to do in heaven.

He says, when I have things in *my* way I shall not expect you to serve me any longer; I shall come out and serve you then. And that is what was meant figuratively, when in Ex. xx. He said, “I love my wife and I love my children; I will not go out free.” He had served perfectly down here, and then He says, I love them right on to the end; He girds Himself and becomes a servant for ever. It is His glory really, but it is put as a figure in that way. He is Himself the loving, blessed minister of all the happiness that is in heaven. What hearts we have, compared to the love that Christ has to us! The consciousness of our wretchedness makes it hard for us to believe that it can be Christ’s delight to serve us for ever! But, as I have often said, love delights to serve, selfishness to be served. Christ delights to show us that God is *love*. If I want to know what the Father is, the answer is, “Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.” It is the Son coming

and bringing perfect, blessed, divine love to our hearts, that we may be done with ourselves and know *God!* It is a great thing when the heart can say, "We have known God, or, rather, are *known of him.*" As I have often said to infidels, Though I am a poor creature, yet I *know God.* I have met Him, and have found Him all love, and I know Him a great deal better than I know myself. I am never sure of myself, such a poor creature as this. Though I love your souls to-day, to-morrow I may not care a bit about them. Who put it into God's heart to love the world? There are two kinds of affection in the world, love *up*, and love *down.* Of course God's love is love *down.* If I love a noble thing it is a noble affection; if I love God, so far as it goes, it is a *perfect* affection. I learn what is good in loving Him.

It is His delight and joy to minister to your necessities. I will take a very common illustration known to you all, in Luke xv. Who was happy in finding the sheep? Was it the sheep or the shepherd? Of course it was a good thing for the sheep. And who was happy that the piece of money was found? Was it the piece of money or the woman who found it? And when the prodigal son came back to his father, who was the happy one—the Father or the prodigal? Of course it was a good thing for the prodigal to have the calf instead of the husks, but the happiness is described as being the Father's.

Peter says to Him, "Lord, speakest thou this parable unto us, or even to all?" I have had a man watching, and now I find a man serving, giving a portion of meat in due season. The one has the affections going out to Him; the other is serving; it may be the apostle, or it may be the smallest work of any Christian now; it may be even the giving of a cup of cold water. It is to be "holy, without blame before him in love," always *before God*; that is what Christ was. Oh! you say, *He was God!* Well, and you? You are in Him. Now I am an heir—I am a child in the house, and *if* I am a son, I am an heir. Of course the greatest blessing is to be an heir, and in heaven it will be all positive enjoyment. If I have a *right* Christian heart, what will be my next joy to seeing Himself? It will be to see you all like Him. My next joy to seeing Christ Himself will be the seeing that He has the travail of His soul and is satisfied; not His own personal glory that He had before the foundation of the

world, but the seeing every one of us—what a thing!—*not one single saint but will satisfy the heart of Christ!*

Now, beloved friends, let me ask, does all this awaken desires in your hearts? or are you still under the power of the world, and saying, My Lord delays His coming? I do not doubt a moment that that coming is hastening on. What a comfort it is to have one single object before you; to have your eyes looking right on, and your eyelids straight before you! There is this kingdom that cannot be moved, and there is the promise that everything shall be shaken. I find that word, “Yet once more,” because the things that are shaken are what cannot stand God’s presence. Now, have you what cannot be moved? Has Christ such hold on your heart that you can say, Let everything else go, I have got Christ? Have you first, simple, full, distinct, clear persuasion by faith that the first coming of Christ has wrought perfect, full salvation for you? and when that is settled I must know if I care enough for Him to wish for His coming again? If I were to hear that a great Russian prince was coming to R——, do you think I would trouble myself about it? But supposing I knew that my mother was coming—why, I would go down to the pier at once to meet her.

The heart must be set upon *Christ Himself*, and then the longing of the Spirit and of the Bride says, Come. What kind of a bride would that be who did not look for the Bridegroom’s coming? If your heart is not properly fixed, looking for the Bridegroom, your heart is not right with Christ. It is not merely a *feeling*: it is the Spirit who is down here; it is “the Spirit and the Bride say, Come; and let him that heareth say, Come; and let him that is athirst come: and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” Christ is the first object; then the saints who have the desire awakened; and then it goes out to all the world.

Now, can your hearts say, Come? Of course there are true reasons for delay; but may our hearts be so set upon Him, that we may be amongst those to whom the Lord, when He comes, will bring the blessing, promised to those who are found “watching.”

"NO CROSS, NO CROWN."

I HAVE been looking at the conquerors in the Apocalypse. *All* are conquerors there, and their victories lead to the kingdom. As on the journey they were *overcoming*, so at the end they sit on *thrones*. In all the churches you see the saints as conquerors (chaps. ii. iii.). Another company are looked at in the same character in ch. xii. 11, and again another company in chap. xv. 2. Jesus Himself recognises His own conqueror character, ch. iii. 21. And so, the inheritors of all things for ever, the same, ch. xxi. 7. "No cross, no crown," as the word is, no victory, no throne, is the impression left on the soul by the apprehension of the Book of the Apocalypse.

But then the path we travel to the Father's house is not the same. We believe; and as trusting in Jesus, as receiving the Son, as believing the message which He has brought from the Father's bosom to us, we reach the Father's house. John's Gospel shows us this. As *believers*, we reach the house; as *conquerors*, we reach the throne. All is beautiful in its place and in its season, and the Spirit of God in Scripture distinguishes these things for us, that we may be both *comforted* and yet kept watchful and *vigorous*.

Look at Ps. xxiii., and then at Ps. xxiv. The one conducts the soul, by a sweet gracious path, to "the house of the Lord;" the other, by a stronger, more vigorous journey, as it were, to "the *hill* of the Lord," or place of government. But I can only point out such things. How unfeignedly would I own I know little of the vigour of conflict or the blessedness of conquest!

"IN THE FACE OF JESUS BEAMING."

Still a Man, though now in glory,
 Saints who love Him seek His face—
 See Him shine in radiant beauty,
 Bright with glory and with grace.
 Know the Father's thoughts toward Him—
 Gaze in rapture and adore
 Christ, in His resplendent shining—
 Brought to heaven's opened door.
 In the face of Jesus, beaming
 On God's glory, we can gaze;
 Humbled once and now exalted
 High in heaven's highest place.
 Then in heartfelt adoration,
 Owning thus the glory's claim,
 Bow in silent admiration
 Of His blessed, matchless name.

THE PRESENT SERVICE OF THE LORD JESUS.

I.—FOR HIS SAINTS.

To MINISTER, not to be ministered to, did the Son of Man come; and, though He accepted the ministrations of women (Luke viii. 3), and learnt what it was as a man to be waited on in the wilderness (Mark i. 13), and strengthened in the garden by angelic agency (Luke xxii. 43), yet, as God's servant upon earth, He came to minister to man. How simply can such a fact be stated, but what a fact it is! The Son of Man under whom all things in heaven and earth will one day be openly placed, He it is who has been upon earth in humiliation, who came not to be ministered unto, but to minister. He came to minister! To the disciples of John He gave a slight sketch of some of the marked features of His ministry in Israel, by which their master might be assured that He was the Christ. The blind, the lame, the leper, the dead, the deaf, and the poor, these were the classes benefited by His services as He walked about amongst men. A new era had dawned upon earth, when the First-born of all Creation could be found occupied with such. To all in Israel, who had wants or desires, was He thus willing to minister. The impotent man at the pool of Bethesda, friendless and helpless as he was, could witness of His readiness to heal him; and the poor woman, who for eighteen years had been afflicted by a spirit of infirmity, could tell with gratitude of His words addressed to her, and His hand laid on her in the synagogue on the Sabbath day (Luke xiii. 12, 13). Was His presence desired anywhere, He would graciously hearken to the request, as Peter's wife's mother knew well, and Jairus the ruler of the synagogue, as well as the Gentile Centurion could attest. No time nor place was out of season. When he had not time so much as to eat bread (Mark iii. 20), and His friends hearing of it, went out to lay hold of Him, thinking He was beside Himself, He did not check the importunate crowd which surrounded Him; nor, when at a later date His privacy with the twelve was invaded by much people, who ran afoot out of all cities, and outwent them, did the Lord resent the seeming intrusion; but moved with compassion for them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd, He began to teach them many things (Mark vi. 31, 34). Again, on his last journey to Jerusalem, He stopped the whole procession by Jericho at the sound of the blind beggar's voice; and, on the morrow

after His transfiguration on the mount, He attended most patiently to that poor distracted father's account of his afflicted son, and manifested that, though he could be in the cloud of glory, and was the Father's well-beloved Son, His presence on earth was indispensable to fallen men when under the dominion of the enemy.

To all classes was He accessible. As Messiah He met the need of the children of Israel, and healed, as we read, all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease among the people (Matt. iv. 23). The Samaritans of Sychar tasted of His graciousness and of His grace; for, though a Jew by birth, He could give even to the Samaritans living water springing up unto everlasting life. The Samaritan leper, a stranger according to the law of Moses, was healed in common with the other nine, and, from his turning back in the fulness of his heart to thank the Lord for having compassion on him, we learn that Christ had made no difference in His dealings between the rest and him. All alike were healed, though one only, that stranger, gave glory to God by confessing it to the Lord. And the Syrophenician woman was a witness that, even a dog, a Gentile, when she took her true place dispensationally before Him, got all the request of her heart fulfilled without delay and without reserve: "O woman great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour" (Matt. xv. 28).

But not only in ministering to the wants of the body do we read about Him, for He taught, He sympathised, He comforted. On the shores of the lake of Galilee (Luke v.), in the wilderness (Mark vi. 34), in synagogues, in the temple, and in private houses (Mark ii. 1, 15., Luke vii.), He taught. The widow of Nain could tell how, from His compassion towards her, He had healed her broken heart, by restoring the dead son to his mother; and those at the side of Lazarus' grave could bear witness to the tenderness of His love to the sisters in their sorrow. Nor was this all. As the Shepherd He had got access to the sheep in the fold, ministered the suited truth to them, and got hold of their hearts preparatory to leading them out.

But He died, and that active ministry, carried on by Him during life, stopped when He was taken down from the cross, and was laid in the grave. Did His ministry cease then, never to be resumed? His general ministry amongst men,

as carried on when upon earth, did then cease, and has not since been resumed; but, as miracles are the powers of the age to come, we learn from the character of His works before His death what the blessings are men will owe to Him when He reigns, when prayer shall be made for Him continually, and daily shall He be praised (Ps. lxxii. 15). Before, however, that time arrives for earth, the heavenly people will learn on high what His ministry will do for them there. Their work for Him on earth ended, and having watched for His return, "He will gird himself, and make them sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them" (Luke xii. 37). The servants will then sit, and He Himself will attend on them, thus maintaining that character He declared was His, when He ate the last supper with the apostles. "I am among you as *ὁ δίακονῶν*—the one who serves" (Luke xxii. 27). But this character of service will be exercised only on behalf of His people, those who belong to heaven, and whose life on earth has ended.

Before the cross He could minister to Jew and Gentile, by and by all nations on earth shall rejoice in what He will provide for them, but on high His own will behold Him in that character, outwardly assumed for the moment at the last supper, of the girded Servant, serving, not one above Him, but those whose privilege it had been to be reckoned amongst His servants and followers when on earth. This, however, is a heavenly scene to be witnessed when both He and they are together on high, as the powers of the age to come will be enjoyed by men on earth, when He returns to reign over them. But what a time that will be—what a scene will then be witnessed, when the Master will wait on those who have served, and waited for Him!

Thus in time past, and in the future, will the Lord manifest Himself as the One who serves. But a new thing was inaugurated when He went on high—a Man, crowned with glory and honour, serving God's saints on earth. That heavenly beings should minister to men in their mortal state was nothing new, for as soon as Adam and Eve fell, and expulsion from the garden was found to be part of the consequences of their sin, the cherubim, placed eastward in the garden, guarded with the flaming sword every way to the tree of life. A ministry this was of goodness and mercy to the fallen pair. From that day till the time of the patriarch Abraham we read nothing about angelic ministry to men, but from

his days and onward to the close of the canon of Scripture, we meet with statements of their service and intervention, providentially and judicially, or otherwise, in the affairs of men. By the visit of two to Sodom Lot was rescued, and by one Peter was brought out of prison. By the destroying angel the first-born of the Egyptians were smitten, and by an angel was Israel chastised in the reign of David. An angel ministered to Elijah in the desert, and appeared to Paul on board ship in the storm. The angels of God met Jacob at Mahanaim, and surrounded Elisha and his young man on the mount. An angel was sent to Daniel to tell him about the future, and the revelation of Jesus Christ was signified to John by one of those heavenly messengers. To men in general, without distinction of race or spiritual condition do they attend, it would appear; for the Lord acquaints us with the fact about little children, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of His Father in heaven. But to God's people in particular do they minister. Thus Messiah was to be the object of their providential care, as the Psalmist declared (Ps. xci. 11), and the nation of Israel, as God's earthly people, is specially cared for by Michael their prince (Dan. x. 21, xii. 1). And now, that Israel and God's people are not one and the same class, we learn from Hebrew i. 14, that the angels are all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation. Thus, men, Israel, and God's saints, though inferior to angels in rank, intelligence, and power, are cared for by them. But since the Lord Jesus went on high, a new thing has been instituted—His service, whilst in heaven, to souls upon earth, not superseding in the least angelic ministry to men, as the Acts of the Apostles abundantly evidence, nor carrying on exactly the same service in which He engaged when on earth. Personal service it was then, personal service it is now. He as much concerns Himself with individuals as ever He did, we have to say with reverence and with thankfulness; but He does not now do what He did then. To heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people is not the special feature in His ministry now; to restore the dead to desolated homes and hearts is not His present service. He may, He does answer prayer for bodily wants; but, since to depart, and be with Christ, is the better thing for God's saints, we look not for Him to restore the dead to life, unless, as in the case of

Dorcas, for a testimony to the reality of His power and exaltation to God's right hand, whom men nailed to the cross. In the early days of Christianity, when the disciples went forth preaching everywhere, the Lord worked with them, confirming the word by the signs following (Mark xvi. 20). This manifestation of His continued interest in His people and in God's work on earth we see not now, yet the Lord's ministry is as real and as constant now as ever it was, though only on behalf of His own; for, though on earth He ministered to men irrespective of their soul's condition, since He was rejected by the world He carries on His service, whilst on high, only on behalf of His saints.

Of this feature in His present ministration we have intimation in His discourse with His disciples in the upper room on the night before His crucifixion. Sorrow filling their hearts at the prospect of losing their Master and Friend, He comforted them with the assurance that He was going to His Father's house to make ready a place for them within it. He was leaving earth; the world would see Him no more, but His own left upon earth would have a place in His heart. He would, when absent, prepare a place for them. When any child of God dies, their service for those on earth ceases, and we read not of anything such can do in the unclothed state; nor is it till we meet with the elders clothed upon with their house from heaven, and having golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints (Rev. v. 8), that we learn how saints in heaven can be occupied on behalf of saints upon earth. With the Lord, however, it was different. To prepare a place for us in His Father's house was one thing He was to do; to answer the prayer of His disciples, offered up in His name, was another. "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask anything in my name I will do it." Never, then, would they be forgotten by Him; constantly would they be cared for, and their desires granted, when expressed in His name. "I will do it," are His words, expressive of His active interference on their behalf. Remembering who spake those words—the Son of the Father, who has gone to prepare a place for His people in His—not merely the Father's house—how favoured, how blessed, must those be who are the objects of His solicitude now, part of that company for whom He will come to receive them unto Himself. Gone

to prepare a place for them, fulfilling their desires, and waiting to come for them to have them with Himself, such was the brief outline He gave His disciples on the night of His apprehension, of what would be His care and thought, when separated from them in person for a season.

But this little outline, wonderful as it is, does not unfold to us the varied nature of His present service on our behalf. It assures us of His unabated interest in those who, bearing His name, and really believing on Him, yet understood so little about Him ; it shows us that that interest, which will not be satisfied till His people are with Him in His Father's house, was quite independent of their intelligence about His person, His origin, and whether He was going ; yet must we turn to other Scriptures, if we would learn the different characters He sustains in relation to His people, who came to earth, not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and who, though seated on the right hand of the Majesty on high, still stoops to serve. John xiv. assures us that His interest in His saints on earth will never flag ; other Scriptures particularise His ministry whilst in heaven.

H Y M N .

CORINTHIANS, chap. i., verses 30, 31.

THOU, Fulness of the Light Divine,
 God's Wisdom, in its depths and powers,
 His glories all in Thee combine,
 And Thou, in all His grace, art ours.
 O, Gift of God ! in love hath He
 Made perfect Wisdom ours in Thee.

In Thee we have His Righteousness,
 Thou risen One, at His right hand ;
 And, cloth'd in this all-beauteous dress,
 We faultless e'er before Him stand.
 O, Gift of God ! in love hath He
 His Righteousness made ours in Thee.

We've Holiness, O Lord, in Thee,
 And in the sight of God are pure ;
 For He no spot or stain can see,
 As we in Thee His gaze endure.
 O, Gift of God ! in love hath He
 True Holiness made ours in Thee.

The centre and the fulness, Lord,
 Of His Redemption, too, art Thou ;
 And soon to Thee, in full accord,
 The hosts of the redeem'd shall bow.
 O, Gift of God ! in love hath He
 Made full Redemption ours in Thee.

SOME THOUGHTS ON FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN.

IN commencing this Epistle we must be prepared to meet with personal truth—no secrets about heavenly and earthly things, Jews or Gentiles. We do not find these things in John (of course I mean as the Holy Ghost speaks by John). But we have more primary matter; the most intense personality; and this is equally observable in the Gospel of John as in the Epistle.

In the Gospel we find the Son of God, the Saviour, in close contact with the sinner—not the twelve apostles, as such, but Jesus Himself in close intimacy with each sinner. There can be no matter of deeper interest than this. We must have the personal question settled, as a primary thing, before we can look abroad. We must settle our conscience, our own questions, *first*, and this is the beautiful work that characterises John's Gospel. In it we see Jesus with the sinner: in the Epistle, Jesus with the saint, *i.e.*, sinner saved by grace. The woman of Samaria, Nicodemus, the impotent man, the blind man, and other cases in the Gospel, show us this deep personal communication. So, in the Epistles, the Holy Ghost is personal in addressing saints; it is not the Church, but fathers, young men, children, the elect lady, and Gaius; and this personality is beautiful. Suppose the dispensation to be in ruins (as it is), it never puts a cloud on the atmosphere which John breathes, it never can disturb it. It is *Christ* and *you*, Christ and the sinner, Christ and the saint.

This same character may be seen in the early chapters of Genesis. We have personal matter until we come to Enoch and Noah; then we have heaven peopled with Enochs, and earth with Noahs. This is dispensational truth, but it is not opened in the first chapters. We must be deeply personal before we can enter on these things. The character of John's writing is blessedly welcome; it enables saints, though walking apart, to greet one another. There is much difficulty and trouble, and many strange elements abroad, but, when we get into this atmosphere, it is calm as the depths of the sea. *Myself and God!*

Is there any such consolation? "If the foundations be destroyed" (and Do not you believe they are? I do truly), "What shall the righteous do?" "The Lord's throne is in heaven!" "The Lord is in His Holy temple." There I can

meet Him. The Lord is not destroyed, "He sitteth *above* the water-floods," and there I rest *with Him*. Not that I am not to recognise the confusion here, and to know where I am, and how I am to behave myself. The Lord Jesus did this in His time. Am I entitled to say this? Yes, by all His life, and especially by Matthew xxii. Here the Lord was brought into collision with confusion. Cæsar's coin circulating in Emmanuel's land was a type of confusion; and how should a Jew behave himself? So they tried to puzzle the Lord. Here is the question; Cæsar's coin is in the land, yet God is the God of Israel! What to do? And this confusion Jesus recognised and met it, as you are to do now. If you say you do not know how, more shame for you. You say you cannot do it like Him. True. But you are told to have His mind: "Let this mind be in you," &c. He knew how to recognise the claims of Cæsar. Many retire from the view, but the duty of the soul is to be *with Christ*, and to return *with Him* into confusion, with knowledge, as Gambolt has it—

"Go forth and *serve Him*, while 'tis day,
Yet never leave that sweet retreat."

I must possess the calmness of Him who sits above the water-floods, but while keeping that, I come down and recognise the confusion around, and I know how to behave myself. If I fail in either of these things, I fail in reflecting Christ Jesus. I do not say it is a question of *life*, but it is of *conduct*. With these remarks we commence meditating on John's Epistles.

Here (1 John i. 1-4) we are in company with the first chapters of Genesis. God had not shown the heavenlies, but Himself and Adam—the devil and Adam—personal things, and so true.

The Lord was manifested; and mark the august character in which the truth breaks forth, intimating the eternal Sonship. It could never have been written—"That eternal life which was with THE FATHER," had Jesus been other than the eternal Son. Blessed thought! Could omniscience or omnipotence satisfy my soul? Could glory, even divine glory? I see them all; but what would they be to me without relationship? And oh! how blessed, to see it as in heaven, between the Father and the Son! What would even natural life be, if it did not introduce us to relationship? The moment life comes, relationship comes with

otherwise it would not be worth having. How blessed—yea, how affectionate a thought! And such a thought is brought to you. Could you do without it? Would it suit you to be restored without being related, or can you say you are connected, not related? I will answer for it. You cannot. Divine mystery! Yes, you may say it is a mystery, and that mystery a witness that I am dealing with the unapproachable, the living God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. I welcome the mystery; I gaze upon it, but not at a distance; it is brought to be *mine*—"Our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ." It is brought down amongst us, and without the relationship there can be no fulness of joy.

Does it give fulness of joy to be brought back and left outside the door? Will that satisfy you? Do you not yearn after the pulses of a child and the spirit of adoption? No fulness of joy without relationship? To know the Father and the Son is fulness of joy. Where can there be anything more blessed?

In Hebrews and Ephesians we have the conscience perfected, and the heavens opened; but, as one has remarked, there is the difference between Paul and John—that Paul is heavenly, John is divine. Paul speaks of heavenly mysteries, John of divine mysteries.

Verse 5—"This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all."

Here we find our proper place in light (still it is personal truth). This message was a direct contradiction of Satan to Eve. Satan's lie was—There is nothing but darkness in God. You shall not eat of the tree because you would be like Himself. This was the lie that robbed of life, because it robbed of God. By this lie all was lost to Adam—God, life, Eden. Everything was lost as soon as the lie was listened to. The Lord Jesus appeared as the Repairer of this breach; this and all others. The devil's lie said, 'No love or light in God.' This message says, "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." The belief of this message is evangelic faith. If I do not walk in the certainty that I have been extricated from the lie of Satan, I do not know God in the light. I allow it is in the nature of the flesh to suspect the truth of God; but are you conscious of the lie and truth, by which you are extricated from Satan's lie?

In that light you have fellowship with the Father and with the Son ?

What was Adam's fellowship? Was it on the ground of bloodshedding? No, but of innocence. There is none saved but by the blood that cleanses from all sin. Adam's fellowship (as a creature) continued as long as his innocence. We know not the time, nor does it matter. Now, if we have such a thought as returning to communion by innocence, there is not a fragment of truth in us, not a ray of light. We must take our title from this substratum—'poor sinners'—if we would walk in light and life.

Nothing can be grander, but the blood of Christ is the foundation—grand consideration, magnificent prerogative, to walk in the light as He is in the light. And now, how to conduct ourselves—how in confusion—how in communion? On the *calm* and *settled* foundation of the blood of Christ. Do you call it a severe task? A blessed task! Shame if it is not! There is relief and there is a remedy for mistakes, but we should know how to behave ourselves.

Some speak of "sinless perfection." If I do so, I know not what I am. Sinlessness is for heaven, not for faith. Sinlessness for heaven; struggles now. The third of Philippians gives us that. Paul has Christ as his perfection, and he himself is struggling up-hill. We shall have sinlessness in resurrection, till then conflict. I do not charge this doctrine, in its consequences, on the proposers of it; but, if proposed to me, I detest the very thought of it. What am I to do with sin? To confess it. "He is faithful and just," that is faithful and just to the blood and intercession of Christ "to forgive us our sin." I am left judicially without a speck. Is there a return to innocency? No, I deny it. Innocency is not the ground of my communion, nor is sinlessness the power of it.

Can we, then, say the blood gives license to the lusts? Could a saint say so? When Adam sinned he lost everything. If the saint sins he has an Advocate; and is God afraid to commit you to such principles? dare you take advantage of them? The Lord resents such a thought—"Use not liberty as an occasion to the flesh." It is a wonderful calling. If I sin I am not turned out; I have an Advocate. It is a "high calling"—not alone in *Christ* & *Jesus*, but in the *Son of the Father*. We do not find this "Messiah" in John, but the "Son," whose commission

from the Father's bosom. Matthew gives us the Messiah whose mission was from the throne to Israel. The Father can place the child in full communion, varied light, whose rays sparkle every way.

Chapter ii, 1, 2—"My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for our's only, but also for the whole world." Here we have the Lamb of God for the sin of the world; and the advocate for the sin of saints, in Jesus Christ the righteous. No pardon but on such grounds. God cannot give up His righteousness for your salvation. Never! It all rests on the Righteous One. In that great propitiation is contained the righteousness of the throne of God; and this is a matter between my Father and *myself*. Not learning secrets of dispensations, but alone in company with Him, with whom every question is settled for ever. When He is satisfied, it is high time you should be so. When God has taken it into His hands to reconcile sinners to *Himself*, it is high time for sinners to be satisfied. God has done it, let Christ look to it. Blessed to be able to say, Lord, Thou shalt answer for me!

WAS JUDAS ISCARIOT AT THE LAST SUPPER?

Few will deny that the descent of the Holy Ghost (Acts ii.) was the commencement of the Church of God, builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit. Most will admit that 1 Cor. xi. 23-34 contains an entirely new revelation as to the Lord's Supper for the Church of God, given to the Apostle Paul, because the truth of the Church was first revealed to him. None can refuse the truth that 1 Cor. x. 17, and ch. v. 11, effectually exclude such as Judas from the Lord's Table; seeing, that on the one hand to members of the body *only* (those whose bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost) belongs the one loaf; and on the other, communion with a "covetous" man, if "called a brother," is carefully guarded against and forbidden.

But even to those who assent to these facts it will not be without interest to enquire whether the traitor was really at the table when the Lord gave the bread and the cup to His disciples in remembrance of Him.

Matthew xxvi. 17-25 gives us the account of the celebration of the *Paschal Feast*, the announcement of the fact that the traitor was there, and the Lord's assent to the question of Judas, indicating that he was the guilty one. Mark xiv. 12-21 substantiates this, omitting the latter clause. John xiii. 1-30 confirms it, adding the fact, which the others omit, that Judas goes out *immediately on receiving the sop*, and omitting (in character with his gospel) what Matthew and Mark mention, the new supper in remembrance of Him. In their gospels it clearly comes in after the departure of Judas (Matt. xxvi. 26-30; Mark xiv. 22-26).

Now let us turn to Luke xxii., and here v. 21 presents an apparent, but not an insuperable difficulty.

It is now generally admitted that Mark and John alone preserve the historic order, the order of time—Matthew grouping events together to present a dispensational, while Luke does so to give a moral picture. Let us read *vv.* 19, 20, parenthetically (and in this those who have arranged the paragraphs have assisted us), and the difficulty vanishes; *v.* 21 connects itself with *v.* 18, the order of time becomes the same as that of the other Evangelists, and Judas is found to have no place at the last supper, though his "hand" was "on the table" when the *Passover* was being celebrated.

THE LATE D.T.G.

[These remarks of one who has "gone before" will be read with interest by many, as an enquiry in measure into the question at head of paper, and often proposed. They are not dogmatic, nor are they put forth as such.—*Ed. W. of T.*]

EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS OF INTEREST.

I.

"OH what joy to know oneself united to Christ! It adds a joy untold to every sweetness. It is the source of it, too, surely. He is all to me, and for me. I work on till He call me; and though it would seem strange to me without you, yet I go on my way, serve others, say little, and pass on; not that I truly do not love others, all that will come out deeply in heaven. I have committed all my ways unto Him till that day.

"Peace be with you. May you find the Blessed One ever near you—that is everything. Faithful is He withal,

and true. In His eternal presence how shall we feel that all our little sorrows and separations were but drops by the way, to make us feel that we are not with Himself, and when with Him what it is to be there.

“I never longed more to be with Him in heaven before the Father, though I desire to finish whatever He has for me to do; and if a while He keeps me out, He keeps me out for Him, and then it is worth the while.

“I reproach myself with want of love to souls, and grace, and courage; but love would give that—it always does. I leave all at the cross. He does, after all, what He pleases with us; and if He is glorified, I am heartily contented with everything, save not to lose Him.”

II.

“I hope I feel ready to take dear ——’s hint that a letter would be acceptable to you and a few others. * * *
And surely we ought to help each other’s joys and furtherance of faith, if we can, in these days, when many deceits and dangers are abroad. And there are few lessons, dear brother, more precious or more needful than this, that it is the purpose of our God to bring us to Himself, out of all other conditions and confidences. The doctrine of *faith* is the religion of immediate personal confidence in God. It is grounded on *promise* in contrast with law, or on what God *has done for us*, and not on what we *may do or can do for Him*. In the Epistle to the Galatians the Apostle sought to bring the disciples back to this doctrine of faith, or to this religion of confidence in God. They had been beguiled from it, and were following again, as so many are doing now-a-days, the religion of ordinances. In the Epistle to the Hebrews he warns them against the same dangers, though they had not been so far betrayed into it as the Galatians. And in John’s Gospel you will find that all those who are brought to Christ—Andrew and Nathanael in 1st chapter, the Samaritan in the 4th, the woman in the 8th, and the beggar in the 9th—experience *this*, that having got Him and reached Him, they need look no further and want nothing besides.

“How blessed this is, dear brother, in a day of revived ordinances like the present, and in a time of great confusion like the present! How we learn, in the mouth of these witnesses, that, as we sing—

‘Possessing Christ, I all possess.’

The day was when the moral power of the religion of faith, or of immediate personal confidence in God, was blessedly felt in Galatia. They would have plucked out their eyes for the apostle then. But, now that they had departed from it, they were in danger of being 'consumed one of another.' This was a great *moral* change accompanying their giving up of the truth. (See chap. iv. 15, and chap. v. 15.)

"But if this be so, if, as a poor sinner, I may put my full confidence in Him alone, I ask myself, ought I not to walk before Him alone as my Lord and Master? Surely. And this would purify *service*, as confidence purifies the *conscience*. When I trust the Lord Jesus for salvation, without any help from others, or from ordinances, I indeed trust Him. When I serve the Lord Jesus without looking for the eye or the countenance of others, I indeed serve Him. And so, dear brother, as to *enjoyment*. Our delight in Him should be personal and immediate, as well as our confidence in Him. We should be able to say to Him, 'All my fresh springs are in Thee.' But if one may speak for others, it is but poorly so with our hearts. The day of perfection, however, is at hand. The Lord be with your spirit, and keep the few sheep in the pastures or mountains of ——— safe to the end. Assure yourselves of His love. Know the liberty of His grace; wait in hope of His appearing; say to temptation, 'How can I do this wickedness and sin against such an One.'"

III.

"There cannot be a more important subject in every aspect than that you refer to. The simpler we put Christ's dying for our sins the better. All these great truths are facts, in which I admire the wisdom of God, as the simplest can thus understand them (through grace), and the strongest intellects must bow and take them as such. When we inquire (and people inquire about everything now), there are depths in it which none of us can fathom.

"The full claim of God against sinners is that they should serve Him according to the relationship they stand in towards Him of creatures, with the knowledge of good and evil. 'The man is become as one of us, knowing good and evil.' He was bound to own God and his neighbour in everything due to them, and that as far as covetous lusts in his heart. Of this (even when men were not under it) the law was the perfect measure.

“But then, in fact, things went a great deal further, because there were dealings of men, and dealings of God, both of which brought out what man was, and imposed new obligations. Man did not like to retain God in his knowledge, and does not; when he knew Him as God as he did in Noah, he set up devils to worship, and degraded himself below the nature of man. Now judgment is according to works, God taking account of the degree of light in pronouncing the judgment. (See Luke xii.) But judgment is according to works, and that is eternal exclusion from God’s presence, whatever degree there may be in actual infliction of punishment.

“But there is a great deal more behind. The mind of the flesh is enmity against God, wholly and always, besides breaking through obligations, and leads to our doing this. Man was driven out of God’s presence at the beginning, and besides future judgment for works, finds, when his eye is open, that he is lost now, though this be concealed from those walking by sight. When the veil of sense and the show of this world is gone, he finds it is for ever.

“Now, though the law proved this to the divinely-taught mind, its grand proof was in the rejection of Christ. He shall convince the world of sin, (not ‘of sins’—also true,) because they believe not on me. Up to the flood, the first world it was—but with testimony from God—man left to himself, and God was obliged to bring in the flood. Then after it government came in in Noah; promise to Abraham; law by Moses, then prophets, then Christ. That is, dealings of God with men, a complete system of probation, which ended in the proof that he not only would not obey, but had no cloak for his sin, and had seen and hated God in *grace*. ‘Have seen and hated both me and my Father.’ Hence it is said, ‘Now once in the *end* of the world,’ and the Lord, ‘Now is the judgment of this world,’ and Stephen, after reciting the call of promise in Abraham, declares, You have not kept the law, have repelled and persecuted the prophets, killed the Just One, do always resist the Holy Ghost. Then man’s history ended; he was not only guilty and subject to judgment, but his mind was proved to be enmity with God. This is not *sins*, but *sin*—man not judged, but lost already, while judgment, which is not yet come, is according to works.

“Now Christ was just personally exactly the opposite of this. He loved the Father, and was obedient, but this was

Himself and always. But He had a work to do according to the ever-abounding love of God. He died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and if a man believe in Him, his sins are forgiven and blotted out, the guilt and responsibility met. But when we look into the work of the cross, we see more than this. He glorified God there, and when made sin. This was a wonderful mystery, a perfect victim spotless before God, perfect in obedience, perfect in absolute self-surrender, perfect in love to His Father, perfect in His love to us, able as a divine person to sustain the weight of God's glory in the place of sin *i.e.*, as made sin for us, not only in the likeness of sinful flesh, but for sin. Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God be glorified in him, God shall glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him, and Christ, as Man, is in the glory at the right hand of God.

“As the meat-offering, He was fully tested by the fire of God's judgment in death, and was only a sweet savour. In the burnt-offering He was a sweet savour to God, but it was positive propitiation or atonement, as glorifying God in righteousness, love, majesty, and everything. He was, in the place of sin, as for sin. As the sin-offering, he bore our sins, but that was not a sweet savour, though the fat was burned on the altar. Christ was thus the Lord's lot as well as the people's lot. The bearing of our sins cleared the responsibility incurred—the guilt. This is true of His people, and the blood upon the mercy-seat has perfectly glorified God in all that He is, and laid the foundation for accomplishing the counsels of God, which were before the responsibility ever existed. God's love provided the Lamb; but God's righteousness required the propitiation, and by the cross alone the righteousness, and love, and majesty of God are secured, and what He is is made known. The Son of Man must be lifted up, and the Son of God is given.

“As regards the epoch of completing the work, it is clear that, as the wages of sin is death, He must die to complete that; but there was a far deeper truth in what that involved, and it was equally important that the drinking of the cup of God's forsaking should be over, because He was to give up His own spirit in peacefulness to God, as He did, laying it down of Himself when all was finished. The forsaking of God was of its own, and the deepest character of these sufferings of the blessed Lord. This He felt anticipatively

in Gethsemane when He was not actually suffering, but it cannot be separated from death, because death bore the character of divine judgment against sin, and not an accident, so to speak, of mortality.

“But it is not in itself judgment, *i.e.*, the judgment to come. ‘It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the judgment;’ but all possible suffering combined against Christ; betrayal, abandonment, and denial. The bulls of Bashan and dogs came against Him, and the power of Satan in death, the power of darkness, and His beloved people assisting. This led up on the appeal in it to God (Psalm xxii.) to the sense of being in it forsaken of God. He was heard from the horn of the unicorns, when all was finished. He gave up His own spirit, commending it to His Father, crying with a loud voice, and actually died.

“I could only rapidly trace, in a few words, what presents itself to my mind in this. There is nothing like it in the history of heaven and earth, that in which Christ could present a motive to His Father to love Him. ‘Therefore doth my Father love me.’ All is looked at as a whole, for the blood and water came from a Christ already dead, and must have been so to be of avail to us. (Compare I John v.)

“But I repeat the more simply, in our work with souls we put the blessed Lord’s dying for our sins the better. But to have a solid and deep work we must know ourselves, and sin, as well as sins,—what we are in the flesh, as well as what we have done. (See Romans from ch. v. 12.) But this goes on to our being crucified *with Him*, which is another truth.”

SOME THOUGHTS ON JOHN'S GOSPEL.

CHAPTER VII.

IN this chapter the important subject is the gift of the Holy Spirit, because the Lord, not being able to manifest Himself to the world, since He knew He was to be rejected and put to death, sends the Spirit (after He has been glorified), not, indeed, to the world, but to His own.

There were three principal feasts of the Jews: the Passover, figure of Christ sacrificed for us; Pentecost, figure of the descent of the Holy Spirit; and the feast of Tabernacles, which was the greatest of all. But this feast could be celebrated only in Palestine; it was a type of the fulfilment and enjoyment of all the blessings promised to Israel. It was,

in fine, a testimony that all was fulfilled. This feast came after the harvest, and after the vintage—that is, after the separation of the good and the bad, and after the execution of judgment on the earth—as we see in Isaiah lxiii., for the vintage, and for the harvest and the vintage Rev. xiv. 14—21.

Jesus then is in Galilee among the poor of the flock, and does not seek to manifest Himself, because before manifesting Himself to the world in power and glory, He must have us with Himself, His companions and co-heirs : “ When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.”

We would remark here that, at the entrance of Jesus into Jerusalem on the ass (in Luke xix. 38), the crowd say, “ Peace in heaven !” Why peace in heaven ? Many believe that the devil is in hell, but it is evident he is not there yet, he is also in heavenly places, and it is only when he will be bound below that peace will be in heaven. This place is not, therefore, where God dwells ; that is, in light inaccessible, but where Christ will reign with His own over the earth.

Our position is the same as that of the Lord Jesus, as well when we shall be in the glory as now, and therefore we need not look to be thought of in this world, because the world is at enmity against God. The object of Jesus in coming down here was that He might have us with Himself in the glory. And such is the difference between God and man in giving : man, when he gives a thing, has it no longer himself, it becomes the property of the person to whom it was given ; but it is not so with God, when He gives something He loses nothing, but introduces man with Himself into the enjoyment of the things He gives—that is, into the enjoyment of Himself. This is God's way of giving. Perfect love gives everything, and it is for this reason expressly that He became Man. Had He kept something by Himself, it would not have been perfect love. He has given us everything to enjoy along with Himself.

There is a difference between the Jews and the multitude ; the first are those of Jerusalem, and the others those of Galilee who had followed Jesus. The Jews had a different spirit from that of the multitude ; for example, at verse 20 they do not know who it was that wanted to kill Jesus, and in verse 25 we see that they of Jerusalem knew it.

Verse 17 is very important. It contains the promise that if any one would do the will of God he should know of the

doctrine whether it were of God. A man must have the desire to do God's will if he wants God to give him the knowledge of divine things. Some may say, "But there are so few who have the truth that one is forced to ask oneself if it is possible that so small a number can know it and so vast a number be ignorant of it?" Let us remember that it was always so. Even in the time of Christ there were few who knew Him.

Jesus afterwards went to the feast, but not to keep it. He went to the outside of it, and that secretly. Men had an instinctive feeling that God was there in the person of Christ (see verses 31 and 46). At verse 33 it is as though he said to them, 'Ye have no need to be in a hurry to kill me, because I have but a little time to stay with you.' The Greeks of verse 35 are Gentiles. At verse 37 He cries out on the eighth day. This eighth day is a figure of the heavenly part, it was the beginning of a new creation. On this day the Holy Spirit has been given for the realisation of heavenly things, and to put us in relationship with these heavenly things, this day being a figure of our Christian dispensation. However, in one sense we are not in, or of a dispensation, because we are of heaven. The first dispensation was that of the law, and the second, the new, that of the Messiah—that is, the millennium—and we are between the two. The new covenant is then made with the Jews; by it they will have the pardon of their sins, and each one will know God. (Heb. viii. 8—13.) The church anticipates these blessings, and it has, besides, greater ones, and more precious.

The Spirit has come down to unite us to Christ in heaven. If one hurts my foot, I say, "You have hurt me," because my foot is part of myself. This is the very language that Christ uses in heaven of us, because we are members of His body by the power of the Holy Ghost. The Holy Spirit makes us walk in the footsteps of Christ. Because of our weaknesses, we have experiences accordingly, but we are now united to Christ. (See chapter xiv. 16—20.) The Holy Spirit could not be given before Christ was glorified, because Christ must first take His place in glory, and then the Holy Spirit says to us, "See, the place where Jesus is is now yours. I am the pledge of this glory." When the blood of Christ is before God, and Christ is our righteousness, seated at the right hand of God, the Holy Spirit can come to dwell in us; and if there are good fruits in the Christian they are the fruits of

the Holy Spirit. It is then, the worth of the work of Christ which has been the ground of God's having sent the Holy Spirit to us. We are cleansed by the blood of Christ, and at the same time we are sealed by the Holy Spirit for the glory.

(To be continued.)

"THE GLORY OF HIS GRACE."

OH the brightness of the glory
 Shining in the Saviour's face !
 Telling all the blessed story
 Of the ways of God in grace.
 Lowly, hated, and rejected
 In the world He came to save—
 By the glory of the Father
 Raised triumphant from the grave.

Centre of the Father's counsels,
 He for whom all things were made,
 Object of the Father's pleasure,
 Who the Father's name displayed.
 All the Father's will accomplished,
 Unto death obedient trod,
 Now in highest glory seated
 By the goodwill of His God.

I behold Him crowned with glory—
 Glory in His unveiled face,
 And in peace and rest before Him
 In that glory learn of grace.
 For it shineth in the visage
 Of the One who died for me—
 Bore my sins and all their judgment—
 Suffered for me on the tree.

Called to share the Father's pleasure
 In His well-beloved Son,
 Seated on His throne in heaven
 For the work on earth well done.
 I adore Him, and am waiting
 To behold Him face to face—
 In His presence praise the glory—
 Learn the riches of His grace.

THE PRESENT SERVICE OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.

II.—THE SHEPHERD OF THE SHEEP.

AMONG the different titles descriptive of the Lord when on earth, there is one most attractive to the heart, suggestive as it is of care, labour, and watchfulness, undertaken on behalf of dependant creatures. The Prophet He was, and the Christ, the First-born of all creation too, as well as the Son of Man, reminding us by these titles of relations in which, as man, He stood to God, to Israel, to creation in general, and to this world in particular. Besides these, however, He spoke of Himself as a Shepherd, and that in a twofold way.

Born into this world, the heir to David's throne, which had been vacant for centuries, awaiting the arrival of its rightful and expected occupant, He was by birth the Shepherd of Israel (Matt. ii. 6, *Greek*); for by such a term, indicative of their relation to their subjects, are kings spoken of in the Old Testament Scriptures (1 Kings xxii. 17; Isaiah xlv. 28; Ezek. xxxiv. xxxvii.; Zech. xi. 17). As such, all Israel were the sheep, whose interests and whose welfare the Son of David would be expected to promote. So, when addressed by the blind Jews as Son of David, and His gracious intervention on their behalf solicited, the Lord at once gave ear to their request (Matt. ix. 27, xx. 30-34); whereas, to the petition of the Syrophenician woman, based on the same ground, and pressed with all the urgency of a mother's heart, He resolutely turned a deaf ear. The blind men, because of the seed of Israel, could get immediate relief when they turned to the Son of David; the Gentile could get nothing, as long as she preferred her request on grounds which were valid only for the descendants of Jacob. For His words, "I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel," showed that He recognised, as established by God, a marked dispensational distance between Israel and the Gentiles.

Had this been the only character of Shepherd in which He appeared, we, who are not children of Abraham after the flesh, might have admired His care and labour as a Shepherd for Israel, but would have known, that the proverbial tenderness and vigilance of pastoral care, as exhibited by Him,

we could never hope to experience at His hands. But in John x. the Lord introduces Himself as Shepherd in a different manner—not of Israel, as such, but of God's saints, and tells us that His work as the Shepherd was to feed, to shelter, to tend those whom He there calls "His sheep" (*v.* 27).

Here, then, the Lord presents Himself to us on different ground from that on which the blind men claimed His help. For, as the Shepherd of God's saints, natural descent from Abraham, however faultless the genealogy might be, could give its possessor no title to share in His pastoral supervision. For none but those who are God's saints, whether from amongst Jews or Gentiles, belong to that one flock, the mention of which, as about to be formed by the Lord, we first meet with in that chapter of the Gospel by John, though the thought of God's saints, as such, being Jehovah's sheep, we are all familiar with from the language of the Twenty-third Psalm. Whilst, however, an analogy may be traced between the thoughts of that Psalm and those of the Gospel, there are also great differences. In both, God's saints are the sheep; but in the Psalm God's saints are so viewed, when Israel are owned as the earthly people; in the Gospel, God's saints are so regarded during the time of that people's rejection. In the Psalm, too, Jehovah is the Shepherd, who provides for, refreshes, and preserves the saints in life upon earth. In the Gospel it is the Lord Jesus, who was to die, who is the Shepherd, and who proves His claim to that office and title by (1) entrance through the door into the fold, (2) by giving His life for the sheep, (3) by His intimate acquaintance with them, and (4) by giving to them eternal life.

And to Him, as the true Shepherd, the godly remnant of the Jews were drawn, and even publicans and sinners were attracted. And, as knowing His voice, as He said His sheep would, the beggar, once blind, confessed Him at the risk of excommunication; and many resorted to Him and believed on Him, when He went shortly afterwards beyond Jordan, to the place where John at the first baptized, and there abode, affording souls, by His temporary retirement from Judea, the opportunity of practically illustrating His words, "My sheep hear my voice, and they follow me." Not long after this He died, the Shepherd of Israel was smitten, and the sheep of the flock (the nation) were thereby scattered abroad, in fulfilment of Zechariah's prediction, which the Lord applied to Himself (Zech. xiii. 7, Matt. xxvi. 31).

By His death, also, His claim to be the Good Shepherd was permanently established (John x. 11, 14, 15). All who had preceded Him, who had attempted to lead the sheep out of the fold, were thieves and robbers, desiring only, as He tells us, the furtherance of their own ends. But He, the Good Shepherd, thought of the sheep, and surrendered all for them, acting in a manner the exact opposite of the thief, and undergoing that from which the hireling, to spare himself, would run away. Did the Lord, then, by death cease to be a Shepherd? With men this would be the case. Not so, however, with Him. For though Messiah, as Daniel predicted, was cut off, and the national hopes for a time dashed to the ground, we learn that the Lord will yet reign over all Israel as God's servant David, and as their Prince and Shepherd (Ezekel xxxiv. 23-24, xxxvii. 24). But, besides the fulfilment of this hope, which concerns the seed of Jacob, God's saints at the present time are taught from Heb. xiii. 20, that He brought again from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep, the Lord Jesus Christ. He, then, who died as Shepherd, was raised as Shepherd, the Old and the New Testament together bearing witness that death could not despoil Him of that office, whether looked at as the Messiah of Israel, or as the great Pastor of God's people. Israel look to see the Messiah, their Shepherd. In this they will not be disappointed, and the godly Jewish remnant will welcome Him with gladness, when they shall have reaped the bitter fruits of their forefathers' sin in rejecting the Shepherd, the stone of Israel (Gen. xlix. 24), after being subject to the ravages and will of the idol shepherd, the Antichrist, who will reign over them by the will and power of the Beast (Zec. xi. 16-17). But not Israel is it only who expect to see the Shepherd. His saints have been taught that they shall see Him in that character, which He sustained on earth in His life and death, and in which he was brought again from the dead. For Peter, exhorting the elders, told them, that, when the Chief Shepherd should appear, they should receive an amaranthine crown of glory (1 Peter, v. 4).

But this is still future. Another question arises—Does the Lord, while absent in person from the earth, bear, not the name only, but sustain also the character of the Shepherd of the sheep? By His death His Shepherd character as Messiah fell into, and remains in abeyance. Not so, how-

ever, that of which we have mention in John x; for Peter, writing to the strangers of the dispersion, tells them, that they were as sheep going astray, but, as believers on the Lord Jesus Christ, had returned to the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls (1 Peter, ii. 25). In this character, then, the Lord still acts, as Peter teaches, and Paul also, addressing the Hebrews, clearly intimates. For it is in those portions of the New Testament, which are especially addressed to the faithful from amongst God's ancient people, that we meet with the term Shepherd, as applied to the Lord Jesus, to remind them, it would seem, that though, as Messiah, He does not now do the Shepherd's part, they can count on the Shepherd's heart as much as ever, and look to Him to care and provide for those, whom He now acknowledges as His sheep, and for whose blessing He was concerned, when He publicly reinstated Peter in a place of confidence and service after His resurrection (John xxi. 15-17).

And what He will do we learn from Himself:—"I am the door. By me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture" (John x. 9). Such is the Lord's own description of Himself, as the one absolutely needed by all. Through Him, and Him alone, is there entrance into blessing, but, through Him, into all blessing which the sheep are capable of enjoying. He came that we might have life, and might have it abundantly (*περισσόν*)—life through His death, life in Him, life in its fulness, so that its possessor should have no need to turn elsewhere to have, what the Lord can give, supplemented by something He cannot supply. Freedom, too, without the burdensome restraint under which Israel was placed, and pasture suitable and sufficient, would be found, and that for any one who would enter in by Him. All, then, that the sheep want would He supply, for that is the work of the Shepherd, which He so graciously took up, and which, though He has died, He still carries on, and thereby manifests the significance of His three titles, the Good, the Great, and the Chief Shepherd. By His death for the sheep He manifested Himself to be indeed the Good Shepherd. Raised up as the Great Shepherd of the sheep, we learn that his relations with them now continue unbroken; and, as He is the Chief Shepherd, we understand, that there are those under Him, who tend the flock in person during His absence from earth.

When on earth He was Shepherd, and there were none beside Him. But from the glory He has provided those who shall minister to, and care for His sheep—a token of His affection and abiding interest in their welfare, till they see Him, and are with Him where He is. For besides giving apostles, prophets, and evangelists, He gave also some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting (along with the other gifts) of the saints, unto a work of ministry, unto the edifying of the body of Christ. In what close relation to Him are we here reminded His saints stand! But care for the sheep in shepherding them is not confined to pastors, those gifts bestowed on men by the ascended Christ, for Peter tells the elders in Asia Minor of pastoral work to be carried on, and Paul, when exhorting the elders of Ephesus at Miletus, speaks in the same strain:—“Shepherd the flock of God which is among you,” wrote Peter (1 Peter v. 2). “Shepherd the Church of God,” said Paul (Acts xx. 28). The former, by his language, reminds them that God owns now but one flock, as the Lord had taught in John. The latter, in his address, affirms that the flock and the assembly, or church, are the same company of souls. And were not these apostles, in the exhortations they gave—entering, as they did, so fully into the circumstances and necessities of the saints—living examples themselves of the pastoral care of the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by their ministry and active service, and not by theirs alone, would have His sheep tended and fed? By and by the Chief Shepherd Himself will appear, then the service of shepherding the sheep, committed to some of His people, will end; but, till all are safely housed, the Lord Jesus will continue to manifest His watchfulness over and His interest in them.

And not only while absent in person has He provided gifts by which souls may be fed, and their spiritual interests fostered and furthered, but He concerns Himself directly with His own, as the history of the Acts abundantly confirms. “I know my sheep,” He says, “and am known of mine, as the Father knoweth me, and I know the Father.” A knowledge on His part, at once intimate and perfect; a knowledge on theirs, both intimate and fitted to engender confidence. Philip, the evangelist, learnt how the Lord knows His sheep, when, in the midst of His usefulness in cities and the haunts of men, he was ordered to go toward the south, to the way that goeth down from Jerusalem to

Gaza, which is desert, to meet one man, the Ethiopian eunuch—a sheep unknown as such to any on earth, but whom the Lord would have instructed in the truth ere he returned to his own land. He had gone to Jerusalem to worship, and was returning; the Scriptures which spoke of the Lord Jesus being still as a sealed book to him, when, lo! in the desert, a stranger accosted him, and preached to him the glad tidings of Jesus. It was what he wanted, though doubtless unknown to himself. The Shepherd's eye had been on this sheep, and had brought the evangelist a long distance on purpose to meet with him and teach him. That done, and the eunuch baptized, they parted—the eunuch to continue his journey homewards, Philip to be found at the sea-coast. Cornelius, too, had experience of the Shepherd's intimate knowledge of His sheep, and Peter likewise—the former, when commissioned to send for the apostle, from whom he should hear words by which he should be saved; the latter, since his name, place of sojourn, position of the house, with the owner's name and occupation, were all told to Cornelius by the angel. The Gentile centurion proved how fully the Lord knew his soul's condition, his desires, and his ways. Peter had an illustration of his Master's acquaintance with his movements. So Paul, when needing some one to minister to him after those three days of fasting and blindness, was visited by Ananias, sent by Christ to the former disciple of Gamaliel. Ananias knew not till the Lord told him of the change that had taken place in Saul, and Saul probably knew *nothing* of Ananias till after he had entered Damascus. But the Lord directed the latter to the street and the house in which he would find this vessel of God's choice, and at the same time prepared the neophyte, by a vision, for the visit of Ananias, one of the so called sect of the Nazarenes. In each of these instances the servants of Christ had no previous personal acquaintance with those to whom they were to minister, and knew not that their services were needed by these souls, till commissioned directly to speak to them. Again, when Paul was at Corinth, and open opposition was aroused, who encouraged him to stay there to labour but the Great Shepherd Himself, who told him that He had much people in that city? (Acts xviii. 10). He knew who they were, and where they would be found—whether at the river-side, like Lydia, or in the gaol at Philippi, or among the Areopagites, as Dionysius,

or among the crowds of the metropolis of the Roman province of Achaia. And when the word by His servants reached these Gentiles, they became, as gathered in, the illustration of the Lord's gracious declaration, "Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice, and there shall be one flock, one Shepherd" (John x. 16).

But not only have we examples of the sheep being sought out and fed, but we learn also how the Shepherd was fully acquainted with their circumstances, and met them in their need. Of this Peter and Paul are proofs—the one in his prison at Jerusalem, the other when standing before the Roman Emperor, Nero, at Rome (Acts xii., 2 Tim. iv. 17). The former was brought out from his prison at night, the latter was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. And when death, for Christ's sake, was imminent to Stephen, the protomartyr, looking up to the heavens, laid open that day for him alone, saw what was just suited to sustain him in the hour of suffering—the Son of Man, for whose sake he was about to die, standing at the right hand of God. How timely was this sight! what strength must it have given him, Heaven's seal appended to the dying martyr's ministry! And must not those words of the Lord, addressed to John in his banishment at Patmos, have come as balm to his soul, "I am he that liveth and was dead, and, behold, I am alive for evermore, and have the keys of hell and of death" (Rev. i. 18). A communication this was fitted to sustain him and others in their testimony for Christ, by the assurance that, if death for Christ's sake should be in their way, He for whom they would die had the keys of Hades, where the soul would be, and of death, into which the body would enter. Placed beyond the reach of man's help and power by death, they never could be where the Lord would not have absolute control over, and full possession of them.

But not only to His people in their circumstances did the Lord from the glory minister. He could, He did stand by His failing servant, Paul, in his prison-cell at Jerusalem. Cut off, as he was at that time, from the expression of human sympathy, without any companion, as at Philippi, with whom he could have communion, the Shepherd knew where the sheep was, and when all the world were asleep, He stood by him, and encouraged him, both by His presence in the cell, and also by the assurance that, though he had not

attended to the direct utterance of the Spirit (Acts xxi. 4.), he should still be allowed the privilege of bearing witness for his Master in Rome. How gracious of the Lord was this, thus at midnight to visit His servant, testifying by it, that the relation formed between the Shepherd and the sheep could never be broken, even when failure had come in!

He knows His sheep, and they know Him. Of this, too, we have examples in the conversation between Ananias and the Lord in the vision at Damascus, and in Paul's answer to Christ, when in the trance at Jerusalem (Acts ix. 10-16 ; xxii. 17-21). What freedom of intercourse was there between them and Him!

But are these examples of the personal care of the Shepherd indications of what went on only in early days? Surely not. Surely we are to view them as samples of the thoughtfulness, the watchfulness, the tenderness of the Great Shepherd of the sheep. Cannot the experience of saints in subsequent ages supplement what the history of the Acts has furnished? Without that history some, when specially cared for, or directed by the Shepherd, might have feared that they were the victims of delusion. With it they learn the reality of His presence and pastoral supervision. How comforting is the assurance that He knows His sheep! How comforting, too, is the declaration of their everlasting security, held firmly in the grasp of His hand! No seed of decay from within them can induce destruction, no power from without can pluck them from His hand, for His Father who gave them to Him is greater than all, and none can pluck them out of the Father's hand (John x. 28, 29).

Truly no simile but that of a shepherd could teach what the Lord Jesus does for His own. Yet this, as a simile, falls short of the reality. For, what no shepherd could do, that He has done, and what none could say of themselves, He can, and will make good of Himself. He died that the sheep might live. He lives that they might be saved. He holds them fast in His hand, and none can pluck them out of it.

GOD'S PRECIOUS THINGS.

OUR common moral sense of God will tell us that *holiness* and *righteousness* must be precious with Him. "Holiness becomes his house for ever." Purity and truth, and the maintenance of all the cares of order and integrity, must be infinitely according to Him. The conscience will bear this witness.

Faith knows that *His grace* is precious with Him. Faith knows that well. He delighteth in mercy. The Gospel provides joy for the Divine mind. Faith understands this about God beyond the thoughts of the conscience or the moral sense that is in us.

The Gospel is the Gospel of the blessed, or happy God (1 Tim. i. 2). In the eyes of the Lord the feet of the preachers of it on the mountains are beautiful; and in the eyes of the Lord the garments, the mystic garments of the priests, the ministers of it, in the Temple are beautiful—"Glory and beauty" (Rom. x. 15.; Ex. xxviii. 2.; Heb. ii. 7).

The Divine mind is thus disclosed to us. We apprehend it, thus far, with certainty. A meek and quiet spirit is, with the Lord, of great price: and there is richest joy before Him in heaven in the grace that welcomes a lost and returned sinner.

But, I ask, are not His *counsels* dear to Him? Are not the events of His bosom dear to Him? The maintenance of righteousness and of godly order is of price to Him. The exercise of grace is joy to Him. Is not the purpose of His wisdom and the secret of His bosom alike dear to Him? Must it not be so? It cannot but be so. In the zeal of enforcing what is right, and in the publishing what is gracious, we may overlook this. Is it so that the Church was the peculiar bosom secret of God before the world was—a mystery kept secret from ages and generations but "hid in God"? And can we not give such a thing a place among the things that are precious with Him?

Let us ask the Spirit that so fervently moves the apostle in such a chapter as Eph. i., whether the "hope" and the "calling," which he there prays that the saints may discover and know, be of great price with God. Would He have the knowledge of it, so important with the saints, were it not high and dear in the thoughts of the mind of Christ?

The Church, as one has observed, opens and clears the volume. We have it shadowed in the man and the woman of the Garden of Eden. We have it signalised in the Holy Jerusalem at the very close of the Apocalypse.

It is when the Spirit of Christ in David had for a moment rapidly touched or awakened the mystery, that the worshipper exclaims, "How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God!" (See Ps. cxxxix.)

It cannot but be so, though our moral judgment or our conscience, and again our common evangelic faith, does not so quickly reach it. We know, as we have said, that godliness is precious with Him. But again, I ask, are not His own eternal counsels, the secrets of His bosom, precious with Him?

Known unto Him are all His works from the foundation of the world. Redemption was no after-thought with Him. He planned it all. All passed in bright review before Him when as yet there was none of them. And all was precious. And the mystery of the Church that has given a body to Christ, and a partner in glory to the Son of His love, lay there the deepest, because the dearest, in the bosom of sovereign and eternal counsels.

SOME THOUGHTS ON JOHN'S GOSPEL.

CHAP. VII. *Continued.*

FROM verse 39 it is evident that one can be a believer and yet not have the Holy Spirit. Such was the case with all the saints of the Old Testament. Although true faith be distinct from the gift and indwelling of the Spirit, and that the first may exist in a person without his having the other, still, now that the Spirit is on earth, there is no reason why He should defer coming to dwell in the believer. But it is possible that a soul really converted, still be not sealed with the Holy Spirit. It would seem, judging from the case of Cornelius and Acts ii., that this seal is given when one believes on the work of Christ for the pardon of sins. When, therefore, the Gospel is clearly preached, so that the work of Christ as well as His person be fully presented to the soul, there is no reason for believing that the Holy Spirit delays; and if a soul has not fully apprehended these truths, it is possible that he be converted without being sealed by the Spirit. In this respect the passage cited above (Acts x. 43-44) is remarkable; when Peter comes to the pardon of

sins, the Holy Spirit descended upon those who heard him and believed.

Verse 38. He that believeth on Jesus, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water; but first he must have drunk himself from the fountain. "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." One drinks first, because one is thirsty for oneself; and if this be not the case, one may be busily occupied with the Holy Spirit as to his works—as in the case of Balaam and of Judas—but one soon sees that such a soul is a pipe for water which he has never drank for himself.

The apostles and all Christians differ from the prophets of the Old Testament in this, that they are witnesses of things which they have received for themselves, and not for others; and it is therefore that it is said that the water flows from *their* belly (as a figure, of course), because the most intimate feelings of their heart rejoice in the things of which they speak. Now that everything belongs to the Christian, it is not possible that He should receive any revelation that is not primarily his own, although it is possible that he may not realise it. I do not speak of profession for time to come.

We have already found in this Gospel that the Holy Spirit is spoken of in three ways. In chapter iii. the new birth is wrought by the Spirit. In chapter iv. the power of the Holy Spirit, which is as a well springing up unto life eternal: the spring is in us because we have Christ, and the eternal life in the believer that mounts up to heaven because it has come from heaven, and at the last will be definitely in heaven. And in chap. vii. it flows as a river for others.

In verses 40, 41 we have the opinions of men in respect of Jesus. How different these opinions a reformer faith! Here we find Nicodemus, who seeks to bear witness for Christ, but his position is false—he wished to preserve a position in the world. The Pharisees say, "Have any of the rulers or the Pharisees believed on him?" For them it was not a question of truth or not truth. Their conscience was hardened, and their fixed purpose was not to desire Jesus. In verse 53 that each went to his own house, but Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." The Creator of the world had not a home. He was born in a manger and died on a cross, while the world had all its own amusements.

CHAP. VIII.

The Pharisees and the Scribes wanted to find out the Lord in error, and sought to make Him contradict either law or grace; and seeing that Jesus did not answer their question, they urge Him to pronounce a judgment. But Jesus takes their very law, which they wished to use against the woman, and applies it to them all, so as to condemn them all; and then, when all are condemned and convicted in their own conscience, He exercises grace towards the sinner. Thus God always does with all who cite the law. You want a little of the law, but I will apply it all; and the result is that every mouth is stopped, and all are by the law placed under condemnation. These leaders of the people were not sincere, they were worse than the woman herself, because they wished to entrap, had it been possible, the Lord Himself in a fault. Their conscience convicted, they go out one by one, beginning with those who had most need to sustain their reputation in this world. People condemn gross sinners, but their state was worse than that of the woman. When man applies the law, out of the presence of God, he can be satisfied with himself if he has not committed gross sins; but when he applies it in the presence of God, in the light, then it is another thing—it exposes a quantity of evil things which before he did not believe. So Paul thought himself blameless when he looked at the law in the face of men externally; but we see in Rom. vii. that when he applied all the law to his own state internally, he saw his case was desperate.

At verse 12 Jesus is presented as the "Light of life." Life alone is not sufficient down here; we need the light to guide us in this world in our new life. The light with the law can but condemn, but the light with the life directs the Christian in his holy walk. When we have Christ, we have light to walk. From verse 13 Christ's word is rejected. At verse 23 it is said, "Ye are from beneath," that is from the power of Satan and this world; Jesus was from heaven. At verse 32 the truth sets man free. Those who are under law are under sin; the law cannot deliver, rather it is the strength of sin (1 Cor. xv. 56); and if I have Christ, I have strength for good. The Jews were in the house of God, but they were there as slaves, because they were under law, and consequently they were driven out as slaves from His house. It is difficult for man to believe that to be under law is to be under sin, because the law is good, but man does not know

himself. But if he seeks to be freed from sin, it is then he finds out the impossibility of it. It is only in Christ we are freed from sin.

At verse 55 the Lord accuses the Jews of being liars, children of the devil, because they said they knew God. How many men are in this state, saying, 'Our God, our Father,' while yet they know Him not? Christ's day spoken of, verse 56, is the day of His glory, when He will be manifested to men. At verse 58 He takes the name of "I Am;" that is the name of God Himself; wherefore the Jews take up stones to stone Him, but as His hour was not yet come, He saved Himself from them.

In this chapter, then, we see that men have rejected His word; in the next chapter they reject His work. What immense goodness in God to bring before them still the works after they had rejected His word! So also in Heb. ii. we see the same thing for Christendom, the word of God conferred by the apostles, and then the miracles of the apostles that accompanied the word (ii. 3, 4). Great is the responsibility of those who reject the Word of God, since if those who disobeyed the law received a just retribution, how much more will they be punished that reject the Gospel?

ROMANS V., VII.

THE subjects treated in this part of the Romans are entirely distinct. The apostle here takes up the condition of man before God. You get his responsibility; first the guilt, and then the state, and after that comes another question—being delivered out of the state, not merely out of the guilt. Both are in every Christian, but one is not the other.

Suppose any one of us owed a thousand pounds, if some one comes forward and pays it all, well he is cleared, but then he is ruined, he has not got a thing; he cannot set up for anything. We see God for us, carrying the person on until he joys in God; God is for us all through as sinners. Until I get that, I have that same grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. I am rejoicing in hope all the past, present, and future. In the grace of God for us we are able to rejoice in tribulation; and then he continues, "And not only so, but

we also joy in God." Persons who were sinners are reconciled to God.

Then comes another question, that is, not what we have done, but our *state*. "By one man's disobedience many were made sinners." That is not what *I* have done; that is *Adam's* guilt. If men had not the law, they were lawless and wicked; if they had the law, they had broken it. He gives the law its place, but He goes farther back—up to the first Adam—and puts all in the same place; not guilty, but *lost*. Guilty refers to the day of judgment, but *lost* is what I am now. I look back to the first man, and see where we all are; and then I look up and find a new man, and see that I have died in Christ; and this brings me to my state. The moment I see that one man's obedience has made me righteous, how can I live on, if I am dead, in the very thing I have through death been brought out of? I cannot live on in it.

Well, what is the law to do here? By it I have knowledge of *sin*, not *sins*—quite another thing. I am in such a state that, even if I have the will to do good, I cannot do it, for I have in me another will which I cannot succeed in mastering. He learns first that "In me—that is, in my flesh—dwelleth no good thing;" the *tree* is bad, not the *fruit* merely—that is what he has been treating of all along; he cannot get any better, so he is cast upon this, "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" It is a much more difficult thing to believe, and much more difficult to see deliverance from.

You do not find *forgiveness* in the eighth chapter; it has nothing to do with forgiveness; it is, you are *free*. Now there are two ways of using the word "free." I say, "That horse is free from vice;" that means he has not any. But we also say of a slave in the West Indies, "That man is free." Now it is in the last sense that the word is used here. We were captives, now we are free. He kills the flesh and gives you a new life; or, rather, He gives you a new life and kills the flesh.

I am both guilty and lost. After a man finds forgiveness when he does not know himself, and then afterwards, when he finds sin in himself, he begins to think, Oh, I must have deceived myself, whereas he is really just finding it his state; before he only knew his guilt. If, to begin with, you get, by a full, free Gospel the forgiveness of your sins, then you will just have to learn yourself after it. You may go

through it before you find forgiveness ; but you must go through it some time ; and what is more, if you do not learn yourself what you are, you will make other people learn it ! If I have got a rogue in my house, and I trust him, he will pilfer me with pleasure ; but if I do not trust him, I just lock up all my things. It may be very uncomfortable, but still I am safe.

As to the Holy Ghost, you may lose the *gifts* of the Holy Ghost, but not the *gift*. As we read this morning, He abides for ever. The Holy Ghost "distributes gifts to every man severally as He will." A man may not have the *gifts* of the Holy Ghost, but he must have the *gift*, for he has *the Holy Ghost*. As to gifts, the Holy Ghost gave tongues to one, healing to another, and so on.

What I find in the 4th of Ephesians is Christ caring for the Church, and there you have no miraculous gifts, but those which are continued "*till* he comes," for He must cherish His Church. So I find them in Ephesians continuing till He comes, whilst in Corinthians I find, as of tongues, &c., "they shall cease ;" it does not say when, but so it is.

ON THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN.

CHAP. II.

As John proceeds in his Epistle, you can clearly perceive the spirit of personal application which characterises it. He addresses not churches but individuals. Nor is his address ecclesiastical, but moral. This is great comfort: no discouragement around can touch the personal question. If the whole economy be gone to ruins, the individual thing remains untouched. Just as in Israel, when Jezebel was practising sin, what had that to do with the personal thing? Were there not 7000 in Israel who had not bowed the knee to Baal? They were not implicated in the ruin around. Again, in the days of Omri, what could be worse? Yet the Spirit was not straitened, as the apostle speaks.

In such a place John sets us in the very innermost circle, narrow and intimate. This is uniform with the spirit of John's writings. Do we not see it in the Gospel? The outer circle is drawn, "He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not." Was He

straitened! No; but the circle narrows. "He came unto his own (the Jews), and his own received him not." That would not do; but the inner circle remains. "But to as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God." If the world, with its atheist heart, denies its Creator, if the Jew denies his Messiah, is grace to be reduced to inactivity? Never! If earth deny Him room to work, God shall retire to heavenly activities (and this is the secret of Church calling). Can God remain passive because man is unbelieving? No, never! Pregnant truth that tells, "Love never faileth"! If God were to give up, what would it be but the failure of love. "Love never faileth." So, then, if the *world* and the *Jew* give up God, He will act with *individuals*—with as many as believe. This is the atmosphere of John—the Spirit looking upon ruins, separating and educating individuals. Is there not confusion abroad? If you say there is not, you cannot have your eye open. Saints here, and saints there, but they cannot walk together. God's grace is undisturbed; it is His work to conduct you; and this is the activity of grace in the innermost circle. When the Spirit is disappointed in one place, He turns to another. John, dealing with personalities, unfolds the secrets and wonders of God's mind, and in hearing Him you may listen as though you yourself were the only saint on the face of the earth. I may read it as though God were speaking to my own self.

John now speaks of true *knowledge*. We have all heard of the Gnostics of olden times, and their proud boast of knowledge. We are in danger, from these things, many of us, and some in particular, who certainly have much knowledge. Ah, but the true knowledge is always linked with *obedience*. It is not poetic thoughts or high imaginations, but obedience. Now, do you not approve of the third verse, "Hereby do we know that we know him if we keep his commandments"? Do you not reject all speculations, all ideality? True knowledge is clothed with obedience. Anything else is rebellion. As another has said, "If we can sport, even while we speak the name of God, we have the name without the substance." And so it is, if we speak of knowledge without cultivating obedience.

The fourth verse shows that if we do not keep God's commandments, we are liars, to speak of knowledge, and thus serve the old liar.

Verse 5.—It is thus “the love of God is perfected,” *i.e.*, matured, brought to issue, exhibited. Again, the sixth verse brings another individual thing. If we boast of knowledge, let us show obedience! As James says, “Shew my thy faith by thy works.” Do not you be talking after the fashion of the Gnostics. Shew me your faith! This is a time when knowledge is increased, but if you turn to boasting, John says to you, ‘Shew your knowledge by obedience.’ And this precept I would desire to retain; it is very healthful.

Verse 7.—“From the beginning” is a common expression in these writings, and it may mean from all eternity, as in the early part of Genesis, which is closely connected with this Epistle, or it may be taken to mean, from the beginning of Gospel times. “I write no new commandment;” and yet a new commandment, for since the resurrection of Jesus love has taken a new form. Love is now dispensed in power. The old commandment, as in the Gospel, “That ye love one another,” is new since Jesus rose from the dead. Since then love has reached its meridian brightness, its noonday strength! And how can I say that? “Because as he is, so are we in this world!” *i.e.*, since He rose.

Love has always been at work. Love planted Adam in the garden of Eden; love set Israel in Canaan; love sent forth the prophets; love sent Jesus into the world; but to take Jesus into the presence of God, and me with Him, is a new and bright phase of love. “Darkness is past, and the true light now shineth!” As we read in Canticles, “So the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth, the time of singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in the land.”

Verse 8.—“A *new* commandment,” “which thing is true in *him* and in you.” Here we fail, we do not give God credit for His grace; yet there is nothing beyond or greater than the place He has put us in. Love is made perfect. Was Adam in Eden equal to *you* in *heaven*? Where does love shine brightest? Putting you in Christ, or Israel in Canaan? Love is an old commandment, but it has got a new character. With what title? “The precious blood of Christ!” and this is the point, (Do you believe it?) that *where He is you are*.

Verses 9, 10, and 11.—Shall I then talk of light when I hate my brother? Can I hate him in the light? Impossible! If I talk of light, and yet hate my brother, I *lie*.

Verse 12.—Here “little children,” is a generic term. It might have been “begotten ones,” or “born ones.” Whether fathers, young men, or little children in the family, our sins are forgiven. Forgiveness is a common thing—not distant and difficult of access, but common property. It was said to me once, Scripture makes far less ado about the forgiveness of sins than conscience does! The Epistle to the Hebrews takes for granted the forgiveness of sins. As begotten ones, your sins are forgiven.

Three generations in the family are mentioned; and here we may pause to ask what are “fathers,” “young men,” and “children” in the Church? The “children” are those who are in the happy knowledge of the Father. Oh! to be a child! Oh, to enjoy our relationship as “little children”! There is nothing sweeter, no finer attainment. And do we not naturally look back to childhood? The Spirit gives that impression of the joy of tasted relationship. “Young men” are girded with strength—no longer children, they go forth to battle. They go forth to war; yes, and with him in whom the world lieth. He beguiled Eve; the world has been in him ever since, and they go forth to war with him. Fathers are those who “have known him, that is from the beginning”; no longer little children—theirs is a meditative joy! They are able to gaze, meditate, and wonder as they decipher the ways of God. Theirs is a reflective, meditative worship. These are fine distinctions.

And now, what need the sinner care for what is around? What was it to the woman of Samaria that Israel was in confusion? She found herself alone with Christ, and got her own heart's questions answered! What care I how things are if I have this gravity of old age—a wondering gravity, is it not? exquisite, perfect, and simple—able to look on, able to gaze and wonder!—no speculation, but meditation in the light of the Holy Ghost!

Verses 15, 16, 17.—Here we have a larger word, putting the young men at the business of their calling. How the Epistle teems with moral glories! Here is the world to fight, and him also in whom the world lies. Framed by Satan's lie, the world lies in him, and is nourished by him. On the forbidden tree grew “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life.” Eve took it, and these lusts have impregnated her race! By that fruit the world to this day is animated. It “lieth in the wicked one.” *It*

is the warmth of the wicked one that nourishes the world. "The world passeth away." To be sure it does! "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." Death, decay, and misery all lie in the track of sin.

Why will the kingdom be everlasting when Jesus takes it? Because of righteousness. "Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity, therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee," &c. "A sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom," because righteousness and abiding are linked together: wasting and sin! Nothing that is essentially righteous is ever lost; it is in its very nature enduring. Suppose that the Spirit enlightens your soul with a ray of Christ's glory, though you lose it for a time, it is eternal. No fragment of the mind of Christ is ever lost. You may be happier to-day than to-morrow; but though the joy may pass away from you, it is not annihilated. And oh! what a place will heaven be, where all the fragments shall be added together!

"Little children, it is the last time." Paul, Peter, and John all speak of the "last time" as an *evil* time. Cast down the imagination that this world will become better. Whenever the Spirit looks at "the last time," He marks it with iniquity, awful iniquity. Peter marks it with scorning; John as the age of Antichrists. *Now, do not let that go.* They promise you improvement here, but no such thing is coming; judgment must close the scene; there is no grace in the Apocalypse! It is a scene of judgment, clearing the kingdom of all who offend and work iniquity. And whereas at present the world makes an "Exhibition" of itself (A well-chosen word!) shall I go see it? Could I look on a man decking himself to go forth to execution? The world makes its "International" Exhibitions of what it can do, on its road to judgment! Am I to make my boast in a world lying under sentence of judgment? Now, supposing we were living in the days of Cain and Seth; if I were of the family of Seth, I could go to the town of Enoch and buy a spade to till my little fields, but could I go and enrol myself among the citizens? I can make use of things in this world, and thank God, too, for them; but while I am *in* this world, I am not *of* it. Many very dear people do not see this; but if one has once got into the light, how can one act in concert with these things! *I cannot do it!* The world is on the road to ruin, decking itself for the execution. It is a suited

warning in this last time, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world."

Verse 19.—"They went out from us, but they were not of us." It is a poor thing to have resort to ecclesiastical excommunication! Shall I say "a poor thing" in the face of the fifth of first Corinthians? Yes, assuredly it is a poor thing. The railer was to be put away from amongst them, no doubt, but when I see the Blessed Lord Jesus at such things, I do not see Him using discipline; but so deepening the atmosphere about Him that the spirit of a Judas *could not stand it!* He is not excommunicated, he is forced out!

John looks on the Church of God as so conducted that the railer has not to be excommunicated, but is forced out by the atmosphere around. Those who would touch the person of Christ cannot stand it—the complex person of Christ, as He came, God and Man. I confess that He came *in the flesh*; otherwise I have no Redeemer. I am equally certain that He is the "Son of the living God." You and I should retain that so strongly that those who are of a contrary part should be ashamed, forced out. Do you do this? Did you ever know an instance of a sinner sporting his sin in the presence of Christ? Sorrows may be brought to Jesus. What atmosphere so suitable, so soothing to sorrow? None so reproving to *Sin!* Yes, Lord Jesus, thy presence invited a Magdalene, but repelled her sin! The consequences of our sins we bring to Jesus, but can our sins disport themselves under His eye? Never!

When Judas sold his Master, no ecclesiastical censure was necessary; it was *moral* censure, moral excommunication! Jesus so deepened the atmosphere around Him that Judas was forced out. And here, in John, the Spirit does the same. Nothing so touches the border of heaven, beloved, nothing so near heaven, as that you so behave yourself that contrary minds cannot stand it. How we should bless the Lord that He ever wrote such things for our learning! These personal addresses! My soul blesses Him for them; and may he apply them, and give us such confidence in each other that we may join together in celebrating His glories in such a manner that the contrary part may be ashamed!—
Amen.

THE PRESENT SERVICE OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.

III.—BISHOP OF OUR SOULS.

“YE were as sheep going astray, but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls” (1 Peter ii. 25). In two characters does the Apostle here present to us the Lord Jesus Christ, which, though closely connected, are yet to be distinguished. Having looked in a former article a little at the one, let us now examine the other.

Bishops, or overseers, *ἐπισκοποι*, is a term with which all readers of the New Testament are familiar, and one with which the students of the Greek Septuagint translation of the Old Testament were not unacquainted. For in matters as well civil (Isaiah lx. 17, Neh. xi. 9, 14, 22) as military (Num. xxxi. 14; 2 Kings [iv. Kings LXX.] xi. 15), and in such as concerned the oversight of priestly service (Num. iv. 16), we meet in that translation with those called overseers or bishops. But whilst in the Septuagint the term is applied to overseers of various services, in the New Testament it is, with one exception, used only of those men who had the oversight of such as professedly belonged to the assembly of God's saints. That one exception we meet with in 1 Peter, who applies the word bishop in a manner not elsewhere met with in the sacred volume, when he writes of the Lord Jesus Christ in glory as the Bishop of our souls. Bishops there were upon earth, witness those at Philippi in Europe, and at Ephesus in Asia (Phil. i. 1; Acts xx. 28); for the Greek word, translated “overseers” in the latter passage, is that elsewhere translated bishop. Provision, too, was made for their appointment by Titus in the different cities in Crete (Titus i. 5-7). Peter, however, writes of one different from all these; inasmuch as He received not His appointment from men, and can have no successor in His office, and who therefore stands out as alone in His work, when described in the Word as the Bishop of our souls.

But what are we to understand by this term? and wherein does it differ from that of shepherd? All bishops shepherded the flock, but every pastor or shepherd was not a bishop. For a shepherd or pastor proper is a term of wider import than that of a bishop. The latter was concerned with God's saints in the local assemblies, with which in God's provi-

dence he was connected. The former found his work wherever he met with a single sheep of the flock of God. A shepherd intimates very close relations between the sheep and himself. With all their interests he is concerned; he feeds them, he leads them, he tends them. They confide in him, and receive from him. A bishop, on the other hand, found his special sphere of service in taking care of the assembly of God, and in preventing, by vigilance and timely counsel, being taught in the word, the introduction of disorder or false teaching into the flock. A shepherd suggests to the mind one who has a heart for those entrusted to his care. A bishop brings before us the thought of one able to rule in the assembly.

Bishops, then, in the New Testament, had confided to them the care of the local assembly (1 Tim. iii. 5). To take the lead therein was their special duty, though some of them laboured in the word and doctrine as well (1 Tim. v. 17). All elders or bishops, for though the words are different the office was the same (Titus i. 5-7), were to take the lead *προιστάειν*, though all did not labour in the word and doctrine; for teachers are gifts from the ascended Christ (Ephes. iv. 8-11), whereas bishops were set in their places by the Holy Ghost (Acts xx. 28), through the instrumentality of apostles (Acts xiv. 23) or their delegates (Titus i. 5). Sound in the faith such officers were to be, able, as St. Paul wrote to Titus (i. 9), to exhort with sound doctrine, as well as to convince, or confute, the gainsayers. Conversant, then, they must have been with the truth, possessing, among other qualities enumerated, that of aptness to teach (1 Tim. iii. ; Titus i.), the opportunity for which, in the faithful discharge of their duties, would surely arise, if encouragement was needed, or gainsayers had to be refuted.

As their sphere was the local assembly (Titus i. 5; Acts xiv. 23), the flock of God, which was among them (1 Peter, v. 2), we understand why the apostles, Paul and Barnabas, did not choose elders on their first missionary journey, till assemblies had been formed. An assembly must be in existence before bishops would be requisite. Gifts from the ascended Christ, evangelists, etc., must have laboured in the locality before an assembly could be formed, and, till it had been, episcopal service with reference to it could clearly have had no place; but, when formed, that class of service, whether done by those officially appointed, or taken up by such as were qualified

and willing for the work (1 Cor. xvi. 15, 16 ; 1 Thess. v. 12), was much needed, and to be highly prized. We see, too, as we understand their special line of service, why Paul summoned the elders of Ephesus to meet him at Miletus, instead of convoking a conference of the teachers and pastors from that city, for he wished to warn them, as those to whom had been entrusted by the Holy Ghost the care of that assembly, of the dangers that would beset them from the incursion of grievous wolves, not sparing the flock, as well as from the rising up from amongst themselves of men speaking perverse (or rather perverted) things. On account of this they were to watch. Teachers might show what was wrong, and instruct the faithful in what was right, but the elders could act with authority in the discharge of their duty of watching over the assembly, and in this manner shepherding the flock, as both Paul and Peter enjoined on them (Acts xx. 28 ; 1 Peter v. 2, *Greek*.)

Tracing out from the word what the work and sphere of a bishop was, we can understand the class of service to which Peter refers when he writes of the Lord as Bishop of our souls. Bishop, he calls Him. For though the terms, elders and bishops, designate the same people in the church of God, elder was the title of respect borne by the individual, whilst bishop was descriptive of his work. Elders of the assembly, or church, such people were called ; never bishops of the assembly, though, as elders, such officials took the oversight of, or, to coin a word, *bishoped* the flock. In accordance with this, Paul, writing to Titus, reminds him that he was left in Crete to establish elders in every city, but, as soon as he touches on the qualifications needed by the individuals, and the duties of their office, he gives them the title of bishops. Again, when writing to Timothy about the proper treatment of such labourers, he makes mention of them by the name of elders—their title of respect (1 Tim. v. 17-19) ; but when describing the class of people fitted for the work, he styles them bishops, and their work episcopal service (1 Tim. iii. 1, 2). The same difference of terms are met with in that chapter of the Acts already referred to. Paul summoned the elders of Ephesus, but reminds them that they were bishops in, not over, the flock. The terms are not convertible, though both can be used of one and the same individual. As an elder, we think of the man ; as bishop, we are reminded of his work.

The character of service, then, carried on by the Lord, to which the apostle makes reference, we can understand, as we observe the use of the term bishop. And may not the order in which the Shepherd and Bishop are mentioned by the inspired writer be worthy of notice? For, as a pastor would find opportunities for the exercise of his gift before a bishop would have a sphere in which to work, so the Lord, as the Shepherd, has to do with the sheep before His episcopal care could be called into exercise. The sound doctrine must first be known, before it can be applied to encourage or confute. But, besides noticing the order, we should mark likewise the phraseology employed. Bishop of our souls, he calls the Lord. Not merely bishop, not bishop in the flock, for such there were upon earth, appointed by the Holy Ghost, but he calls Him, Bishop of our souls, as the One who, in His grace, manifests episcopal care for each of His people individually. And, what it must be to Him to see His people walking in an orderly manner, we can in some feeble measure understand from the sentiments expressed by Paul to the Colossians (ii. 5), and by John to the elect lady (2 John 4), and to his well-beloved Gaius (3 John 3, 4). For both apostles had drunk deep of the Spirit of Christ.

Bishop of our souls the Lord is, and as such takes the oversight of His people individually. For though He has sat down on high, having accomplished the work given Him to do in making atonement on the cross, He is occupied with His own in their orderly walk whilst on earth. The words of Peter make this clear, the term Bishop used by him being explicit, and those to whom the apostle thus wrote must have understood it. He is the Bishop of our souls, whatever believers may think about it, or are conscious, or not, of His personal service to them in that capacity.

But have we, it may be asked, any illustration in the New Testament of such care for His people? Was it not acting somewhat in that capacity that the Lord presented Himself to the angels of the Seven Churches in Asia? As Son of Man, John saw Him in the vision about to deal judicially with the Churches, as by and by He will with the world. But does He not also appear in these seven addresses in the character of One, who, fully cognisant of the state of each assembly, desires the real welfare of every individual that would hearken to what the Spirit saith unto the Churches? Evangelistic labours had professedly gathered

out these souls from the midst of the abominations of heathendom, as well as from that moral condition of things called in Scripture the world (1 John ii. 15, 16). Pastors, too, doubtless, they had possessed, and teachers likewise, who had ministered to their spiritual wants, and had instructed them in the truth. The assemblies having been first formed, then it was the Lord came forward, and manifested by these epistles, that though, as Son of Man, He must deal with what is wrong, if not corrected, yet He was in their midst, as one who not only surveyed all, but sought by His admonitions to get the wrong put right, and by His encouraging words to sustain the faithful in their path. No new truth is brought out, no fresh revelations are vouchsafed beyond the announcement, by promises of what He would give to the faithful, and by warnings as to the way He must deal with the impenitent. Of all the truth that they wanted, to deal with anything that was wrong, the assemblies were already in possession, as we learn from the Lord's exhortation to the angel of the Church in Sardis, to remember how he had received and heard, and to hold fast and repent. To feed the flock, then, was not the character of His ministry amongst them at this juncture; nor did He at this time intervene in answer to entreaties from His people. He came on the ground of authority to address them, having the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars, as He told the angel of the Church in Sardis.

Comparing the tenor of these epistles with the rest which we have in the New Testament, we must be conscious of the difference between the sheep being ministered to of the things of Christ, and souls being admonished as to their ways, or cheered by the Lord's approbation of their faithfulness to Him. Much that was wrong in the different assemblies to which he wrote Paul had to correct, but he did it, by ministering to them truth in that aspect of it which would especially meet their condition, and at times (1 Cor. xv. 51; 1 Thess. iv. 15) by revealing things previously unknown to them. What was wanted at Corinth would not have suited the assembly at Thessalonica. What he wrote to the Galatians would have been out of place had it been sent to the saints at Philippi; and the line of teaching needed by the Colossians would not have met the Hebrew saints in their difficulties from old associations, and the determined opposition of their countrymen. Yet, differing as these epistles

do one from another in the line of truth dwelt on, they all minister Christ to the soul, and thus act as the suited corrective to whatever required it in the assemblies to which they were addressed. Now it is just this class of teaching which is absent in the Lord's communications to the seven assemblies in Asia. Yet He is as much concerned with His people in these addresses, as He was, when Paul, Peter, James, John, and Jude wrote the different epistles ascribed to them. There the saints were taught truth; here they are admonished, and the faithful encouraged—just the work of a bishop, as Paul, writing to Titus, sets forth (i. 9).

But, as Bishop of our souls, the Lord takes the oversight of individuals. So, in these epistles, which are illustrations of episcopal supervision, the Lord's care of individuals is also exhibited. Addressed always to the angel, the closing exhortation takes notice of individuals. Besides this, "the rest" are especially addressed in Thyatira (Rev. ii. 24), and the Lord speaks with special commendation of the walk of the undefiled in Sardis (iii. 4); and, if He condemns in most unsparing terms the wicked conduct of Jezebel at Thyatira (ii. 24), He mentions with marked approval the name of His faithful witness, Antipas, at Pergamos (ii. 13). Again, whilst He states what is in store for Jezebel's children, He opens a door for those to repent, if they would, who had committed adultery with her, seeking to arrest in their downward course those who were hastening on to everlasting ruin, as well as to uphold to the end those who were mindful of Him. Hence we may turn to these epistles to learn in some measure how the Lord exercises oversight over saints individually, and what He desires for them.

"Admonishing the saints" characterised those who were set over them at Thessalonica (1 Thess. v. 12). "Addicting themselves to the ministry of saints" is the description we have of some who laboured at Corinth (1 Cor. xvi. 15). A similar service does the Lord carry on for all who are His own. Time, circumstances, or locality make no change in His service for us. Death could not sever the Shepherd from His sheep, and now, as risen from the dead, we read of Him, not only as the Shepherd, but also as the Bishop of our souls.

TRUTH, AND THE STATE OF SOUL FOR RECEIVING IT.

READ MATT. XVI.

THERE are two points, beloved friends, which I have a little on my mind to speak of; one we have directly in this chapter, and the other more in connection with the settling of the soul in the consciousness of the place into which grace brings us, and which enables us to stand before God according to that place now. All this is founded on the rejection of the Son of God in this world. Here He charges them, for instance (*v.* 20), not to say He was the Christ; the time for that testimony was all over; the Christ had been rejected by His own; God Himself had been rejected in this world. The moment this came out, and that the disciples knew Him, who He was, He began to say that He “must go up to Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders, and be killed, and be raised again the third day;” then Peter began, unthinkingly, to rebuke Him.

God will take account of His Son having been rejected. “If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; . . . but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father” (*John xv.* 22-24). Then God accomplishes His work in the gift and death of His Son, man being the outward instrument; still it was God’s work. When Christ speaks of being rejected here, Peter began to rebuke Him; but what did the Lord immediately answer? “Get thee behind me, Satan; thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.” What a warning to us not to hinder, on supposing that because we really believe certain truths by divine teaching, that our hearts are in a condition to walk and take the place of the truth we have learned; that is quite another thing. This will lead me to the second point, and that is, the Lord says here, “Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.” There is no mistake where he had learnt who Jesus was, and yet in almost the same sentence, the Lord calls him “Satan.” The flesh in Peter was not judged, and therefore he “savoured not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men.” God had revealed to him that Christ was His own blessed

Son, but Peter was doing the work of Satan, in seeking to turn Him from suffering.

A person may have mere head knowledge, but it is more than that in Simon Barjona; yet, for all that, the state of Peter's soul was not on a level with the truth; the whole was founded as to salvation, upon Christ having been crucified and raised again, that is, God was beginning upon a new footing altogether. It is now the second Man, raised and glorified, as the starting point of blessing; you must have the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ whether for redemption, or laying the foundation of the Church, and then you have all the blessing on the other side of the cross when Christ is risen again—that was all foreseen through the Gospel.

As soon as the disciples were able to bear it, He takes them aside and tells them, "The Son of man must suffer many things, and be killed, and be raised again the third day." It is resurrection that we find is the foundation of all blessing, "If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins." It involves these two things, first the solemn, terrible truth, "The world seeth me no more;" looked at in that character in which He came in grace. The world as such will never see Christ again; but, on the other hand, there is God's work in which He has laid the blessed, perfect foundation of acceptance. If Christ be raised, ye are *not* in your sins; thus it is a new starting point altogether. That is the reason He has this special character here. It does not say merely that He is the Christ, but the moment Peter says, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God;" then follows, "Upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." I learn this immense truth, that where death had come in through sin, and sin had reigned by death, He who was life in Himself came into this scene in love, and, blessed be His name, met the whole of it. Sin was there; He was made sin; death was there, and He goes and dies; judgment and condemnation were outstanding against man, and He drinks the dreadful cup. "He was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death." He goes and stands in that place and perfectly glorified God in it. "Now is the Son of man glorified (speaking of the cross), and God is glorified in him."

The work was perfectly done, which God has accepted and proved He has accepted, by raising Him from the dead, and

setting Him at the right hand in glory. God has anticipated the day of judgment by giving His Son to meet the question of sin, and has completely settled that question for faith, before ever the day of judgment arises. "He appeared once in the end of the age to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." There I see the whole question of sin is met with, and by God Himself, according to God, in the cross—death, the curse, sin, as to Christ, all passed, and He has entered as Man into the glory of God, and sat down because the work was finished. There I find this great and blessed foundation for what is entirely new, and then there is a new creation altogether; the old thing is judged, entirely judged. The patience of God goes on bearing with it, and testifying of this work of Christ; but the whole thing is judged, and the second Man is He whom alone God acknowledges. Then as regards the saints, "You hath he reconciled;" *things* are not yet reconciled, but *we* are reconciled to God, in a world that is not reconciled.

I will now turn and look at the way of our entrance practically into this new state of things—what I rest upon for it all. Let me say, God has foreseen all these last days, and, after describing (2 Tim. iii. 2-4) the terrible things that would characterise them, He says there is a resource, and what is that? "From a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith, which is in Christ Jesus." That is, God has given His word, the Scriptures, as the security when there would be a form of godliness, but denying the power, if there was faith in Christ Jesus. But mark, whoever hinders the direct authority of the Word of God upon the heart of a believer is meddling with God's rights. If I were to send a message by a servant, and some one was to go and meddle with that message, it would not be meddling with the servant but with me.

I must have that which was "from the beginning"—nothing else will do, I must have it from the beginning; why? Because it came from God—"that which was from the beginning," that is what God taught. I have got what is from the beginning; and I must know from whom I learn it. The apostle had said, that "after my departure grievous wolves would enter, not sparing the flock." I am told that there would be a time of failure, and if you do not give me that which was from the beginning I know very well it is

worth nothing. I have, in the Word of God, that which is from the beginning distinctly. Take the last thing said to the Church of God in the seven churches (Rev. ii. 3). Is it a call to hear the church? On the contrary, it is to "hear what the Spirit says *to the Churches,*" I am called upon to listen to what the Holy Ghost says *to them.*

"Upon this rock I will build my church." I have thus what is certain, and who is doing this work? Christ. "Upon this rock *I* will build my church." You get Christ in heaven, the head, and the Holy Ghost came down forming this church. "By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body," thus connecting them with Christ, who is "head over all things to the Church." I find, then, not only salvation, but Christ raised from the dead and set above all principality and power as head over all things to "the Church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." That is not yet fully accomplished, because all the stones are not built in, but I have this testimony of the purpose of God having exalted Christ, and by the Holy Ghost uniting us to Christ. He baptizes all who believe into one body, and thus is formed the Body of Christ, a thing never revealed or spoken of before Christ had been glorified; for the existence of the Church, Christ must be rejected, as also accepted as the Son of man, in glory, at the right hand of God, and the Holy Ghost come down to unite souls to Him. It could not exist before. You must have the Head before you have the body. Then I have not only the individual here, but all Christians united by the Holy Ghost as members of "His body, of his flesh, and of his bones;" a figure, no doubt, alluding to Eve, that is what we are now in connection with Christ.

"Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." I have the power of death on one side, and on the other I have Christ building, after He had broken the bands of death, after He had met all the righteous judgment of God, after all was done He builds up one stone after another. Satan's power is already destroyed, even for the individual. "Resist the devil and he will flee from you." It does not say that you will overcome him, but he will flee from you.

Peter alludes to this in the second chapter of his first epistle—"To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ye

also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house." There is not a word about the building of that—there is no person meant as doing it; but what I find there is this, the Word of God declares that He will carry it on, a work of grace; that Peter says is going on, and Paul says that it "is growing unto an holy temple in the Lord." But in 1 Cor. iii. we find a very different thing—"As a wise master-builder, I have laid the foundation, and another man buildeth thereon." Now I have man's building, and I have man's responsibility—that alters the whole thing. If he builds with God, that is good work; if he builds with wood, hay, and stubble, that is another thing. Has no wood, hay, and stubble been built in? The mistake made is, to confuse Christ's building with that of the wood, hay, and stubble. You find three cases in this third of 1 Cor. You have a good Christian, who is a good builder; then a bad builder, though a good Christian; then a corrupt builder, and the man destroyed. Here I find another thing entirely: God has set up man as responsible; and what God set up good, in the responsibility of man, breaks down, as has ever been so; but whatever has been ruined in the first man has been gloriously established in the Second, and a thousand times more gloriously than what was lost—infinity more than was lost; but still every thing is re-established in Christ, and so with the Church. Christ will have a Bride. "He will be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe." But God does put it in man's responsibility, and man has always failed; then God calls me to hear what the Spirit says unto the Churches—taken on their responsibility. Christ is seen walking amongst the golden candlesticks, not as Head of the Body, but He walks amongst the profession of the Churches, judging their state, and I am told to listen to what He says, and He gives me God's divine authority to direct me what to do in such a state of things.

"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. Believest thou this?"—JOHN xi. 25, 26.

SOME THOUGHTS ON JOHN'S GOSPEL.

CHAPTER IX.

THE Jews believed that judgment overtook all on earth ; those who were good and obedient had every earthly blessing, and those who were wicked were punished here below for their sins. And therefore, the disciples thought that the blind man was punished either for his own sins or those of his parents. But on the contrary, this blindness was only an occasion for the grace of God to be manifested.

It was a false conclusion to believe that all misfortunes were punishments inflicted by God for sins. All the ills of humanity are surely the consequence of sin, because they would not have existed had not sin entered into the world, and on account of it God needs often to punish even His own children. Christians have many chastisements because of their sins, but if they are subject to the will of God, these chastisements produce the peaceable fruits of righteousness for those who are exercised thereby (Heb. xii. 11). God sends them to break the man's self-will, and means to make him feel His powerful hand. We never could have a really bad and rebellious will (but we might have lightness in the heart) without well knowing it, and then the Lord makes us know it by means painful to the flesh.

Jesus heals this man not only for his own good, but for the glory of God, that the works of God might be manifest. Man ever seeks but his own profit and good, seeks salvation as he seeks wellbeing, amusements ; he would make this world an earthly paradise, but God will not have that, but presents to us something better, a paradise in heaven ; and men are quite opposed to this, they seek to make this world something delightful to enjoy without God. We have in Cain the history of every man ; for the sinner has been cast out of the presence of God and made a vagabond on the earth ; but he seeks to adorn the world with the arts of industry, and he builds a city. The Hebrew word *Nod*, where Cain went forth to dwell, means *vagabond* ; and thus he establishes himself in this vagabond world ; he calls the city which he built after the name of his son, in order to have a great name in this world, and then he beautifies his city with riches, with industry, with arts, and with music. Behold the world ! the things in themselves are not bad, but man uses

them but to live pleasantly without God. He is the sinner who has given the same instructive impulse to all men.

At *v.* 4, Jesus says that while He was in the world He was the light of the world, then the darkness would come, that is, when He would be rejected; and we in this dark night have the light, because we have Christ in our hearts. When Jesus leaves the world, it is night morally. Christ in heaven is for us Christians, who have Him in our hearts, a still greater light; but this night is far advanced, and the day is at hand (*Rom.* *xiii.* 12).

The clay of which Jesus made the mud is a figure of the humanity of Christ, and the mud is a figure of the humanity and divinity of Christ together. This mud makes the blind man blinder so to speak; so the effect of the presence of Christ on men made them still more blind. The blind man does not see till after he has washed in the pool of Siloam, that means "sent;" that is to say, that when the Holy Spirit has revealed to a man the person of Christ, as sent of the Father, then only his eyes are opened, and he sees clearly. The presence only of Christ makes blind men blinder, but when Christ is revealed in the heart by the work of the Holy Spirit, then the word of God becomes sure, and the man is in himself the witness to, and certainty of the truth of the word gone forth from the mouth of Christ (*1 John v.* 10).

The Pharisees with all their wisdom must ask this man who had opened his eyes. It was evident that God had done this, but men prefer their own opinions, and with them there comes division amongst them (*v.* 16). In their hearts they were persuaded that it was God who had done it, but they would not allow it. The same thing often happens. Many men know the truth, but they do not want to follow it, nor to confess it, for fear of the things of this world. The hatred man bears to God, shows he knows He is God. So in *Acts vii.* the leaders gnash their teeth against Stephen because they saw he spoke the truth, but they did not like it. This is thorough conviction, but it is not faith; the world knows that God has a right to the possession of their hearts, but man will not submit, for he hates God.

The devil always gives good reasons for doing bad things, as in this case he suggests to them that it was the Sabbath, and that Jesus broke it, for the purpose of condemning Him. The miracle was so evident that the devil would not have

been so able to deceive the people by making them believe it was not a miracle : the proof was in the blind man himself. The father and mother have not courage to say much to the rulers, but they say enough for the truth. Now the blind man has not only received the consciousness of blessing received in himself, but he has also received the word of Christ as that of God, recognising Him as a prophet, and that is a great deal to say, for if He be a prophet, all He says would be the truth. To believe the fact of the miracle was not the most important thing, because the Pharisees also believed that ; but when the Holy Spirit works in the heart, one believes the word of God himself. The blind man has perfect confidence in Christ ; his heart is won. When the state of the heart is formed by the power of Christ, then there cannot be any doubt ; all the reasonings of man are vain.

The blind man, because of his testimony, is cast out ; and then Jesus gives us an example of how He receives His sheep cast out by men. First, the blind man had believed in His word, but he did not know Jesus as Son of God ; once that confidence is established in his heart, he quickly believes when Jesus tells him, I am the Son of God who speaks to thee, and then he worships Him. Once we have received the word of God, we are disposed to receive all that it contains. I may have much to learn, but the work in the heart is done when one has believed. All is simple when God works. How much blinder the Pharisees get than they were before, when they have rejected the words and works of Christ. And this is a natural condemnation. All is finished for them. Christ had not come to judge. Nevertheless, the effect is such ; therefore, I said, *natural* condemnation. To pretend to see, when one does not see, is a very serious thing. A man may be ignorant, but if he resists the truth he always becomes the blinder. When one receives Jesus only externally and not in the heart, then he becomes a stumbling stone ; one cannot persevere. But this blind man was truly of the Lord's sheep ; but he is found in the Jewish fold, and has followed Jesus. Jesus must have His own sheep : and the blind man has got Christ.

ON THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN.

CHAPTER ii. 20.

THE characteristics of John's Epistles, as we have before remarked, differ from those of Paul. In Paul's writings we have the subject of righteousness, in those of John we have moral deliverance—new life in Christ. We have not Churches addressed—as Galatia, Colosse, and Ephesians; but individuals in various circumstances, as the “Elect Lady,” “Gaius,” &c. And is it not a great comfort to enter into the thought that God has a personal interest and delight in us? We do not become lost in the “great congregation,” though we have our proper place in that also. But the joy is, that my God has delight in dealing personally with me, my own self, and this thought is established especially in John's writings.

You will remember our dwelling on the characteristics of John, when we reached verse 19. As in the Gospel, the Lord Jesus had not to excommunicate Judas, but he was forced out by the weight of His presence; so here the House of God is called to intensify her atmosphere in such a way, that those of contrary minds could not stand it, and this is a far higher kind of discipline. We must give heed and listen to both Paul and John, but there is a very marked difference between them. Could the sinner sport before Christ? He could come and welcome, with his sorrow for sin, but never with its defilements. So, beloved, if the House of God were in her true position, we should see this 19th verse in power amongst us. It may be, that we do not constitute the House of God, but still, when we do meet together, we should breathe an atmosphere, so filled with the glories of Christ, that an opposer could not endure it.

In verse 20, a new characteristic is displayed, and this shows us more of the varied glories of the Spirit. When Paul speaks of the Holy Ghost, he calls Him a seal—an earnest. John speaks of Him as an unction. Paul shows the Holy Ghost given me as a seal of my present faith and condition, and as an earnest of future glory. Most beautiful to find the Spirit come to verify what I am, and to ensure what I shall be! Yes, more than that, He comes to *make* me what I am. In John we have the Holy Ghost as the unction, which forms the soul anew; I am made a new

creature! John does not speak of the Holy Ghost as a pledge of the future, but as making me what I am, in His own energy and power forming me a new creature.

There are varied characteristics of the Spirit, just as we see in Christ, the varied glories of David, Solomon, and of the Son of the Father. In Christ we see a constellation of glories, and we must neither confound nor separate them. And when we see the Holy Ghost as earnest, seal, and unction, each one speaks of Him as Divine. John is much in company with the early part of Genesis, he does not look at the dispensations, but speaks of the truth, which the Holy Ghost uses; truth which forms you, as opposed to Satan's lie, the lie of the third of Genesis; truth which was brought to you by "That eternal life which was with the Father." We are begotten by the word of truth, in combination with the Spirit of truth. When God visits us by the Holy Ghost the seed of God is sown, making us new creatures. God has then a new object in the soul, and He does look at it. It is *not the flesh*, but *what is of the Spirit* which is His object, and He does look at it with delight, and deals with it, to cultivate and enlarge it here and to glorify it hereafter.

Verse 21.—Not that you do not know these things already; he speaks because you do know them, and because you know that there is no alliance between truth and lies.

Verse 22.—John then goes on to show that the spirit of Antichrist is here. Beloved, I would ask you, what it was which was done by the lie of the serpent? Did it not rob Adam of Eden, of Eve, of happiness, and of life? Did it *merely* rob him of these things? No. It separated him from God. Satan's lie could not have depraved Adam without separating him from God. It did indeed rob him of all these things, but it also robbed him of God! By *faith* God is restored to you! It is not only that you have a new nature, but faith sends you back all the way to God. You obtain what Adam never lost, you receive blessing far greater than his; you get Jesus as the Christ; the Father and the Son. Truth recovers you from the effects of the lie of the serpent, and gives you back your God. Adam lost the Lord God, in the garden, and in his creation glory; he ought to have walked uprightly, but he lost Him. Now you have regained Him; and that is deeper, richer glory than ever Adam had in Eden. You have found that the living

God can become Jesus of Nazareth. You have seen Divine glory displayed in the Father and Son, and you have an unction from the Holy One.

Well may we stand before such a Gospel and say (as one did), "It is the greatest wonder outside God Himself!" The hosts of angels who kept their first estate—the creation of the earth and heavens—take what you please, there is nothing like the cross of Christ. There is nothing to match with the incarnation leading to the crucifixion. Yes, beloved, in one blessed person He travelled along the road; in that same person He suffered, rose, ascended up to the right hand of God. Adam did not know this. What theatre was there whereon such grace might be displayed? It is your sin that has formed the platform for displaying the full glory of God. Dark background—do you say? Yes, well, you surely say it—a background of apostacy, but a brilliant foreground, bright with the full glory of God. In this light you stand, and he who denies it is Antichrist.

Verse 24—Now this is pressed upon you, that you should not take Adam's course, but let the word *abide in you*. Do not let it slip. "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die," was a simple word, but Adam let it slip; it did not abide in him. Do you abide in it? Go back to God, and abide in the mysterious glory of the Father and the Son! Oh! how He has undone the mischief! He has taken meat from the eater, and from the strong sweetness. How magnificently has *the truth* outdone the lie! The lie never deprived me of all I possess now; the truth has taken occasion by the lie, to bring meat out of the eater.

"Let that, therefore, abide with you which ye have heard from the beginning;" that is, from the beginning of the gospel. Had Adam ever such promises? No; he had not indeed. If Adam had walked uprightly, he would have lived a forfeitable, defilable life. The life you possess is neither the one nor the other, but a triumphant, victorious life! In returning you receive more than you had lost—a richer, better life altogether.

Just suppose Adam to have obeyed,—what would have been his term of life? As long as his obedience. He obeys to-day; well, he lives for to-day. He fails to-morrow, and he dies to-morrow! But you have got eternal life! As Jesus said, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might *have it more abundantly*."

Verse 25.—John is not an argumentative writer. He does not give long arguments on any given subject. You might take it up, every verse, and study it apart. Not but there is fine moral connection, but you might pause at every verse. In Romans, Paul gives you arguments on righteousness; and in Hebrews on the priesthood, and you have the means of seeing your title without a cloud; but here it is the thoughtful soul, pausing over every step.

Verse 26.—“These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you.” The serpent is as ready to seduce as ever. He would seduce you from Christ, and from the unction of the Holy One. You are as much in company with seducers now as in old days; but then, beloved, you have the anointing! (Adam had it not.) The seductions are very subtle, but you have full security.

Paul helped the Church at Corinth to look at its security. John goes to the *individual saint* and helps him to see his own security. Paul says, I betrothed you as a fair virgin to Christ; beware! *I would fain* present you chaste. This is ministerial guardianship. With John it is anointive guardianship. The Spirit brings out of the treasures “things new and old.” In all, we see the exquisite multiformity of the mind of Christ.

“And ye need not that any man teach you.” Are you conscious of this glorious personality? We should abide in our God, the living God, from whom Adam fell. We are not merely recovered from Adam’s depravity, but also from his alienation. Wonderful secrets these! And yet this is not a favourite writing. Ah! the plummet sinks too deep for our souls. We would rather have Romans, or to run through other books; but oh, *to cherish* those things that *shut us up to God!* There the anointing secures us, in the very face of all seducers. Paul warns as an ecclesiastic, but John tells you—*yourself* to let these secrets have their tale in your own souls.

We shall leave the 29th verse as an introduction to the 3rd chap.; and now look at the depravity of the old nature by the light of the *new*. It is *not* that the *bad Adam nature becomes better*; no, that is left to *perish*, but we make a perfect escape out of it, by receiving from Christ a *new* nature, which is *actually undefilable!* And these are the provisions that grace makes ours.

CHAPTER III.

We have before observed, that one leading blessed thought in the Epistle of John is this, that the breach made by Adam's fall is more than repaired in Christ. We have not here our judicial restoration, but our moral restoration. Paul gives us the judicial restoration, but John the moral.

In Paul's writings we have much about righteousness and a little about life; in John's we have life all through, and he shows our present condition to be far beyond that which Adam lost. Adam had God as creator—the framer of the world and of Eden—and that was a very blessed thing. It was a blessed condition to be able to stand naked in the presence of God. But you have your God as Redeemer, a far richer way than Adam knew Him! You have Him as Redeemer, and as Father, Son, and Spirit. You have the relationship of a child, far beyond that of Adam in innocence.

This third chapter opens with sonship. Your sonship far exceeds that of angels. They are sons in virtue of creation, having never lost their first estate. You have a sonship, by *adoption*; and now, even your very nature is superior to that of Adam. Adam's nature was innocence—yours is righteousness. God cannot put you higher. “Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.” Therefore the world does not know *you*, any more than it knows *Him*. It is an atheist world; yes, an atheist world that had its Maker in it, and yet knew Him not.

And here we might dwell a little on the fulness of Scripture. Matthew gives us the history of the unbelieving Jew rejecting his Messiah; John shows the atheist world, not knowing its Saviour. No; and it does not know you either. Oh wonderful place of sympathy and connection with Christ!

Verse 2.—“*Now* are ye the sons of God.” Tell me, can you ever be *more* accepted, more *pardoned*, more received, than now? Glory will yet have more to do, but grace has done its business. Both grace and glory have taken you up. If you were sick, you would like to see a skilful physician; if you wanted anything made, you would put your material into the hands of a good workman. Grace and glory are your workmen, and I ask you, Could you be better off?

You are here told of these two wonderful workers. Grace has done her utmost; glory shall work by and by. We know that when Jesus shall appear, we shall be like Him; you will reflect Him. As surely as the moon reflects the sun, so the Church will reflect Christ.

(To be continued.)

H Y M N .

O God! how precious unto Thee
Is Thy beloved Son,
In whom Thou dost perfection see,
Thy holy, blessed One!

When He, in flesh, the desert trod,
He lov'd to do Thy will;
His bosom glow'd, His feet were shod,
Thy pleasure to fulfil.

The sole-begotten, He reveal'd
Thyself, unto Thy praise;
"The Father," until then conceal'd,
Was seen in all His ways.

As in His life, so in His death,
He was devoted still—
For us, in love, resigned His breath,
Obedient to Thy will.

He glorified Thee on the earth,
Thy work by Him was done;
And Thou, who knewest all His worth,
Did'st glorify Thy Son.

Now crown'd and seated on Thy Throne,
He is Thy joy and rest;
And we who are, through grace, Thine own,
In Him are fully bless'd.

He's preciousness itself to Thee,
To us He's precious, too,
Who in Him every beauty see,
And Thine own glory view.

THE PRESENT SERVICE OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.

IV.—WASHING OUR FEET.

ON the fourteenth day of the month Abib, 1491 B.C., according to Ussher's chronology, the children of Israel kept their first passover, and commenced their march out of Egypt. They had cried by reason of their bondage, and God had heard (Exodus ii. 23), and the arm of Jehovah was now made bare on their behalf; and, whilst the Egyptians were engaged with the burial of their dead (Numbers xxxiii. 4), the persecuted, downtrodden nation of slaves was waking up to the reality of being Jehovah's first-born, redeemed by Him out of the house of bondage.

On the fourteenth day of that same month, more than fifteen centuries afterwards, the disciples were assembled in the upper room at Jerusalem in company with the Arm of Jehovah (Isaiah liii. 1), a Man amongst men, to commemorate the nation's redemption out of Egypt by partaking of the paschal supper,—for redemption is a blessing never to be forgotten, and the results of it can never be effaced. Often had the children of Israel kept the passover—at times under adverse, at times under propitious circumstances; but the twelve were about to commemorate the exemption of their forefathers in Egypt from the visit of the messenger of destruction, under special and peculiar circumstances. Under special circumstances, for the Arm of Jehovah, who had cut Rahab in pieces, and wounded the dragon (Isaiah li. 9), was sitting at the table with them. Under peculiar circumstances, too, had they this time met; for it was the Lord's last passover before His death, and the last before that of which it was a type—redemption by the blood of the Lamb—should be an accomplished fact. Israel in Egypt had proved God's power and faithfulness. The disciples during the supper had an illustration of the enduring nature of divine love, and of the lowly service to which the Lord would stoop on behalf of His own. "Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end."

For it was not simply to inculcate a lesson of humility that the Lord Jesus Christ washed the feet of the apostles that evening. It is true, for the Lord told them, that they were to learn from it a lesson of humility, as resuming His place at the table, He said, "If I then, your Lord and

master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do, as I have done to you" (John xiii. 14, 15). All must understand that He here sets us an example to stoop to lowly service on behalf of other Christians. Peter's exclamation, "Lord, dost thou wash my feet?" tells us what he thought of the act, and his unhesitating assertion, "Thou shalt never wash my feet," shows clearly the light in which he viewed the matter. The Lord's humility is apparent, and His reasoning about it cogent. He has stooped in a way and measure impossible to us. He, our Lord and Master, has stooped to serve His disciples. They may well stoop to serve one another. For if they thus minister to one another, who may often need a similar service to be rendered to them, they can only do it as first taught by Him, who, never requiring such ministry Himself, set them the example on the night of His betrayal.

From Peter and the rest the deep, the symbolical meaning of the Lord's act was then concealed; but, the Lord told him, that afterwards he would understand about it. "What I do, thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter." There was more intended in the act than what met the outward eye. But since the Holy Ghost has come to guide into all the truth, the time to which the Lord referred has arrived, so we shall not be prying into mysteries beyond the Christian's spiritual comprehension, if we endeavour to understand what the Lord meant by this new and, to the disciples, startling illustration of the service, which He, whilst in glory, would render to them.

And first, as to the terms He made use of in answer to Peter's request to be thoroughly washed. "He that is washed, needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit" (10).

Washing with water was an action with which all Jews were familiar. There was (a) the washing of the garments or nets, expressed in the New Testament by the verb *πλύνειν* (Rev. vii. 14, xxii. 14; Luke v. 2); (b) the washing (*βρέχειν*) by the woman in Luke vii. 38, 44, of the Lord's feet with her tears; (c) the ceremonial washing of the person, or parts of the person, and of utensils, expressed in New Testament by the noun *βαπτισμός* (Mark vii. 4, 8; Heb. vi. 2, ix. 10); and the verb *βαπτίζειν* (Mark vii. 4; Luke xi. 38); (d) the act of washing the whole body, for which *λούειν* is used (John xiii.

10; Acts ix. 37, xvi. 33; Heb. x. 22), to which, if we follow the common reading, we must add Rev. i. 5; and its compound ἀπολούειν (Acts xxii. 16; 1 Cor. vi. 11; and (e) the washing of the parts of the body, whether the face (Matt. vi. 17), the eyes (John ix. 7, 11, 15), the hands (Matt. xv. 2; Mark vii. 3), or the feet (John xiii. 5, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14; 1 Tim. v. 10), for which *νίπτειν* was employed. A glance at the references given above shows, that the verbs *λούειν* and *νίπτειν* are the only ones made use of by the Lord in His discourse with the disciples on the night before He suffered. So, dismissing all further reference to (a) (b) (c), let us turn to mark the distinction noticed by the Lord between (d) and (e) as He said, in answer to Peter—"He that is washed (*λελουμένος*) needed not save to wash (*νίψασθαι*) his feet, but is clean every whit"—a distinction which His hearers doubtless comprehended, and with which the readers of the LXX. must have been acquainted; for we read in that version that, when Aaron and his sons were to be consecrated, they were washed all over with water once for all—an act expressed by the verb *λούειν* (Exod. xxix. 4, xl. 12; Levit. viii. 6). But, as often as they or Moses entered the holy place, or ministered at the brazen altar, they washed their hands and feet in the laver of the tabernacle, or molten sea of the temple, to express which act the verb *νίπτειν* is used (Exod. xxx. 19, 21, xl. 30-32; 2 Chron. iv. 6). With these two washings, then, for those who approached God in the tabernacle or temple, all are familiar. So it was no unmeaning distinction, nor one of which the disciples were ignorant, which the Lord drew between the being washed all over and the washing of the feet. First washed all over—a washing which was never repeated—the priests, as often as they entered the tabernacle, or ministered at the altar, had to wash both hands and feet in the place and vessel appointed by God. Washing with water for them was a requisite never to be dispensed with, and the washing in these two ways was absolutely necessary. The having been once washed all over could never be a substitute for the frequent ablutions enjoined them; nor could the washing of one day, however often repeated, if they had afterwards left the sanctuary or altar, be pleaded as availing for the next day. They had to wash in the laver as often as they required it. Of this rule there could be no relaxation; but, unless the washing all over once for all had first been effected, the other ablutions could never have taken place.

As with the priests of old, so with believers now. Two kinds of washing the former required; of two kinds must those, who are to be with Christ partake; and, as the priests were reminded of the positive need of frequent ablution in the brazen laver, if they would not be cut off by death for non-compliance with the divine command (Exodus xxx. 21), so believers are taught how indispensable for them is that frequent washing, without which, as the Lord declares, they could have no part with him. Washed once for all, of which we read in 1 Cor. vi. 11., Titus iii. 5, speaking of us as individuals, and in Ephes. v. 26, where the Church is treated of, we need the frequent washing of the feet, of which the Lord assures us in John xiii. But here the difference between being dealt with on the ground of law and on that of grace is apparent. For whereas, neither the frequent washing by the priests of their hands and feet, nor the washing of our feet could be dispensed with, the responsibilities of the former rested on the priests—they had to do it—the latter is provided for by the Lord Himself. He does it. So this washing will never be omitted, for, how often soever we may need it, He will do it. Contact with defilement defiles. Saints may often need to have their feet washed. What is man! But as often as they need it He will do it. Such is the Lord Jesus Christ, who has sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.

But when, and how, is this effected? The service to be done tells us something about the *when*, and the symbolical meaning of water instructs us as to the *how*. As often as our feet are soiled they need washing. If we sin, we need the offices of the Advocate to restore the soul to communion (1 John ii. 1). If tried by the difficulties of the way, we can count on the intercession of the High Priest, and so approach the throne of grace to receive mercy and find grace for seasonable help (Heb. iv. 16). The washing of the feet, however, is needed, in order to have part with Christ, if defilement in any way has been contracted. Sin, of course, defiles, but not actual sin only.

The priests had not sinned each time that they washed in the laver. Yet, they needed that ceremonial cleansing ere they could re-enter the tent of the tabernacle, or minister afresh at the altar. So believers now may often need the washing of their feet with water, apart from all questions of actual sin. And though we may not be always conscious of

our want of it, the Lord by His lowly service will recall it to our mind. That we may have part with Him, He thus washes us with water, the symbol here, as elsewhere, of the Word of God. For, as water effects a separation between our flesh and that which has defiled it, so, in a similar way, does the Word act on our soul (Ps. cxix. 9; John iii. 5, xv. 3; Ephes. v. 26).

That we may have part with Christ, He washes us. We read (Ps. xvii. 14, Luke xvi. 25) of some who have their portion in this life, and of those who will have their part or portion in the lake of fire, which is the second death (Rev. xxi. 8). The Lord's people are to have theirs with Him, and therefore He stoops to wash their feet now. Amazing grace! He applies the Word as it may be needed, the right word in the right way, and at the right moment. Nothing that is wanted, will He leave undone, for us to share with him in the blessings in store for God's saints. The tenderness of the Shepherd, and the vigilance of the Bishop, are in constant exercise on our behalf. Here we learn of this personal service, the application of the Word by the Spirit, as often as each may require it. "If I wash thee not," He said to Peter, indicating, that though the service might be a frequent one, He would not fail to perform it. Hannah, in the joy of her heart, could say of Jehovah, "He will keep the feet of his saints" (1 Sam. ii. 9). We can say, the Lord Jesus now in glory washes them. Clean His disciples were (Judas excepted) by the word which He had spoken to them (John xv. 3, xiii. 10, 11), yet they would need this washing; for, though they were to act to others as the Lord had to them, their washing of each other's feet could not supersede the necessity of His acting in this manner to each of them. "If I wash thee not," He said to Peter, "thou hast no part with me." Not that this washing of the feet gives life, for Judas was washed on this occasion with the rest; but, those who have life require this personal service of the Lord Jesus Christ, in order to have a portion with Him. Thus does He maintain, and would have us remember, the holy character of that place into which we are introduced by His atoning work, and at the same time He makes provision by this act which proclaims it for us to have part with Him, who are prone to contract defilement by the way. For it is the feet He washes, not the hands or the head; just that which is suggestive of walk, and which

therefore tells us of the character of the road along which we travel.

But on what occasion did the Lord first present Himself to His disciples in this capacity? It was on the last evening of His life on earth, when His disciples, assembled with Him to eat the passover, partook for the first time of bread and wine in remembrance of Him (Luke xxii. 15-20). Then it was that they learnt, that something else was needed to have part with Him besides redemption by His blood. That they were ever to remember, but on the same night, and whilst they were seated at the table at which they first partook of the Lord's Supper, their feet were washed by Him. Washed all over as they once had been, they would nevertheless need this washing. Had, then, the first washing failed in its efficacy? By no means. Once done, it was never to be repeated, and the Lord on this very occasion affirmed its abiding validity, as he said to Peter, "He that is washed, needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit." The washing of regeneration can never be repeated (Titus iii. 5, 1 Cor. vi. 11). Yet we cannot dispense with this gracious service of Christ; nothing can be substituted for it, nor do we read that any one can take part with Him in the administration of it. For John tells us that, "rising from supper, he laid aside his garments, and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded." None helped Him, or attended on Him, in this lowly service. He prepared Himself for the work. He provided all that was requisite. He washed and He wiped their feet, and did not resume His place at the table, till He had waited upon each of them in turn. "Knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God, he riseth from supper." For what? To ascend His throne? No. But to stoop in a way He had never done before, to wash the feet of His disciples. And that, not as an isolated act to stand out in all time to come as a token of the humility that was in Him, but as an illustration of the real and personal service in which He would engage, when on high, for each of those who should believe on Him; the inauguration of a ministry which will not cease, till their course on earth has ended.

He passed over none of them. Nor could the treachery

of Judas, or the ignorance of Peter, divert Him from His purpose. The treachery and malice of Judas (John xiii. 2) brought out into full relief the divine affection in the heart of Christ towards His own, like a rainbow, the brightness of whose colours stand out in marked contrast to the thick dark mass of stormy clouds behind it. The ignorance of Peter, on the other hand, gave occasion for the calm yet decided answer of the Lord, which tells us of the need we have to be thus ministered to by Him. Judas might sit unmoved throughout this scene. What a contrast between the thoughts of his heart and those of Christ's! How different was Peter! When his ignorance was graciously exposed, the ready answer of his lips told of the trueness of his heart to Christ. If to have part with Him that washing was needed, all His desire was to have it fully done. Judas was ready to enrich himself at the expense of Christ. Peter desired to share with his Lord and Master. "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands, and my head." Peter's words testify how he valued a portion with Christ, the Lord's service to ensure it, shows us in what light He must view it.

EXTRACT OF A LETTER.

FOR several weeks I was much enjoying Romans the 7th and 8th. I never before saw so clearly the divine glory and blessedness of the place in which God puts us in Christ Jesus. There is nothing but sorrow until the soul knows this. And into groaning and wretchedness it slips back, when it ceases to abide in the power of being in Christ Jesus. Clean taken out of Adam and all the responsibilities of Adam's life and nature, and planted in Christ, into whose comeliness God now wraps us round and round, and in whom He never ceases to regard us, however we may fail or forget it. And not only that, but Christ is our *life* as well as our *standing*. We are one with Him in life—one spirit with the Lord—so as to live of, and by Him, just as the hand lives of the body. The life is not in the hand, yet it lives; no more is the life in me but in Christ, but I live as in Him. This is a very different thing from cold, dry doctrine. It makes fellowship with Christ a reality. The Holy Ghost making present and seasonable the thoughts of His love towards us, and sending our thoughts and hearts up after Him.

MY GOD MY SALVATION.

God hath, as it were, made Himself over to believers. Job doth not say, God will give or bestow salvation upon me, but he saith, "He shall be my salvation."

It is God Himself who is the salvation and the portion of His people. They would not care much for salvation if God were not their salvation. It more pleaseth the saints that they enjoy God than that they enjoy salvation. False and carnal spirits will express a great deal of desire after salvation. O, they like salvation, heaven, and glory very well, but they never express any longing desire after God and Jesus Christ. They love salvation, but they care not for a Saviour. Now that which faith pitcheth most upon is God Himself. He shall be my salvation: let me have Him, and there is salvation enough. *He is my life*, He is my comfort, He is my riches, He is my honour, and He is my all.

Thus David's heart acted immediately upon God (Ps. xviii. 1, 2). It pleaseth holy David more that God was his strength than that God gave him strength—that God was his Deliverer than that he was delivered—that God was his fortress, his buckler, his horn, his high tower, than that He gave him the effect of all these. It pleased David, and it pleases all the saints more that God is their salvation (whether temporal or eternal) than that He saves them. The saints look more at God than at all that is God's.

They say, We desire not Thine but Thee; or, Nothing of Thine like Thee. "Whom have I in heaven but thee?" saith David again (Ps. lxxiii. 25). What are saints, what are angels, to a soul without God? 'Tis true of things as well as of persons. What have we in heaven but God? What is joy without God; what is glory without God; what is all the furniture and riches, all *delicates*, yea, and all the diadems of heaven, without the God of heaven?

If God should say to the saints, "Here is heaven, take it amongst you, but I will withdraw myself," how would they weep over heaven itself, and make it a Baca—a valley of tears indeed! Heaven is not heaven unless we enjoy God. 'Tis the presence of God which makes heaven. Glory is but our nearest being unto God (our being nearest to God). As Mephibosheth replied when David told him, "I have said, thou and Ziba divide the land;" "Let him take all, forasmuch as my lord the king is come again in peace to his own house," where I may enjoy him. So if God should say

to the saints, "Take heaven amongst you," and withdraw Himself, they would soon say, "Nay; let the world take heaven if they will, let them take glory if they will; if we may not have Thee in heaven, heaven would be but an earth, or rather but a hell to us." That which saints rejoice in is that they may be in the presence of God—that they may sit at His table and eat bread with Him—that is, that they may be near Him constantly, which was Mephibosheth's privilege with David. That's the thing, say they, which they desire, and which their souls thirst after—that's the wine they would drink.

"My soul (saith David) thirsteth for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God?" He spake this in the greatness and heat of his zeal to enjoy God in the ordinances of His public worship. How much more was his soul on fire to enjoy God when he should be above ordinances! The usual saying of Christians is, "Come let us go to prayer," or "Let us go to church." We should rather say, "Come let us go to God."

We should prize duties no farther than as we obey and enjoy God in doing them. Nor should we prize heaven itself farther than as we shall have there a more full and perfect enjoyment of God. Salvation itself were no salvation without the God of salvation. "He also shall be my salvation."—*Extract from an Old Book. 1652.*

ON THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN.

CHAPTER III.

WAS not Adam a son of God? Yes, he is so called. He lost this; are we to receive it? Yes, with advantage! Creation sonship, or the *sonship of adoption*—which is best? If my bad nature be not cured by the Gospel, I have got a new nature. It is the eater bringing forth meat! And as to the lost sonship, I would not take it back now. I have got something better, a richer enjoyment, and a more prized sonship. It is wonderful to see the recovery rising above the mischief! Why? "It doth not yet appear what we shall be;" the tale is not—could not be half told! You shall soon be glorified by the Holy Ghost. The world knows us not, why not? Why did Cain hate Abel? God loved him, and Cain could not stand that. Now, John says, "The world hateth you." It is not that your manners

are peculiar, though they well might, but what the world cannot understand is *acceptance!* the saint's confidence as a child, as an heir; this is what irritates the world. You are the sons of God, the world does not know it. You ought to let it be known, it would stir up much enmity. Let the heart be occupied with its high prerogative; let the lips utter it, and Cain will be provoked. Your habits *ought* to be *peculiar*. A living soul, invested with its high prerogative, satisfied that God has done all a child can wish, *and the world knows him not!*

Verse 3.—The "*Him*" of this verse means Jesus. "And every one that hath this hope in *him* purifieth himself, even as he is pure." Nothing can be simpler. If you were expecting a friend, you would be busy getting the house ready to receive him. Both house and household must be made ready. This is common in human life, that your conditions should be answerable to your expectations. Can anything be simpler? I ask, then, both of you and of myself, Have we our house in order, in position to meet Jesus? And by this I mean, Have we our heart and affections waiting on Him? This third verse is just getting the heart into conditions answerable to its expectations. Does ambition? Does the love of gain? Does the gratification of lusts and vanities? Are these things answerable to the hope of Christ's appearing? Would you not be ashamed to have your house dirty if your friend arrived? Jesus Christ only asks us to do for Him what we always do for our equals. Oh, the intimacy of Christianity, it is not dogmatism! If you regard Christianity as dogmatism (let me say it), you have mistaken the *genus* of it! Jesus comes and puts Himself before you, and merely requires of you that you treat Him as you treat one another.

Verse 4.—The Apostle now speaks of the two fountains, which are the spring of all moral being. At first there was but one fountain, and that the lie of the serpent defiled; it became the one common parent (morally) of the whole human family. All are children of wrath, lying in the wicked one. *Now* the Son of God has come to take the spoils from the wicked one, and from the one or the other source every moral existence is derived. "Sin is lawlessness." "In him is no sin." You may say, "I know that without John telling it me." True; but there is deep meaning in John's giving this truth in this connection. It

means, that if you draw your life from Jesus, you draw from an undefilable source, a life which is undefilable! If you draw your life from Satan, you draw that which is *all* unclean. If you are the creature of the lie, morally born of the liar, you have a life that *cannot* be improved, it is *utterly* corrupt. If you are born of *the truth*, you have a life that *cannot be defiled*. These are the two fountains of moral being, and they *never* co-mingle! "Can a fountain yield both sweet water and bitter?" No; the one is undefilable, the other cannot be cleansed. You all know that no river ever can ascend higher than its source. So the creature of lies is under pollution, but he that is born of the Spirit cannot be defiled. And now, may we not truly say, that by the loss of innocence we are gainers. Christ is more than the "Repairer of the Breach!" We can stand before Satan and say, "Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came sweetness." Ah! it is a divine parable, and how beautifully this is exhibited here. If you have lost the life that was forfeitable, you have received the life that is eternal. You have lost a defilable nature, but you have got an undefilable nature. Would you go back to Adam's state? Would you wish for a life that, when tested, was lost? You have a better life, you have regained God in a wonderful way, you have regained sonship in a wonderfully better way. Again, I say, it is not here judicial restoration; if you want the putting away of sins, Paul treats of it in Romans and Hebrews.

John makes it his business to show moral restoration, and that all that had been lost is regained with advantage. Every thing is of a higher order than anything Adam enjoyed. Oh, beloved, there is a glory in Christianity that we have but slightly observed! Do we want anything besides this book? Do we want to be told that the sun is shining? No. And if the glories of this book do but dislodge themselves, we need no more ask for witness of its divine origin than for witness that the sun shines.

Verse 7.—We now have this new life in expression. If Christ is the head of our new life, it *is* and must be undefilable as far as it is active. It is impossible for it to sin. You can no more taint the new life than you can mend the old. But do you expect to mend the old life? and do you expect to taint the new? Let go such expectations; there is a middle wall of partition between these two lives, and they

never can co-mingle. You may say, "What am I to do with my complex person?" You have both natures in you—one is the fallen creature, the other, the divine nature. A person once said, "As the apostle has said, I pray God to sanctify you, spirit, soul, and body." Then I must be a perfectible creature, for what more is there in me than spirit, soul, and body? Yes; but there is more in you. There was a time when man was only that, but *now* you have the "*flesh*" besides. Is the flesh perfectible? It is quite right to pray that "spirit, soul, and body" may be kept for Christ; but that villain flesh, what can you do but keep it down, mortify, reduce, and humble it? Ah! we want to have Scripture thoughts on these things; we want to get out of our own thoughts. We have no greater enemy than fleshy religiousness—the flesh shall perish. Tell me; what is it that is to be glorified? Is it the flesh and the spirit? No. It is the new man in Christ. The complex person, is it to be glorified? No; the flesh shall perish, but the new man shall be clothed in glory. The new nature cannot sin, because it is born of God. If you say the new nature can sin, you say Christ can sin! What a horrible thought! Another has explained the seed of God to be the truth in the energy of the Holy Ghost. When the truth is inlaid in the soul by the energy of the Holy Ghost, it then becomes what is here called the seed of God. Of course it is easy to talk intellectually of truth and of God, but the less traffic about these things the better, if the intellect only be at work. But the more of the unctuous power of truth, the better for us.

Verse 10.—The living man is to manifest his life. How? Exactly in the opposite way to that in which Adam went. Adam was disobedient; you are to be obedient. Exactly opposite to the way of Cain. Cain hated his brother; you are to love your brother. It is to be righteousness and love in opposition to disobedience and hatred. These are manifestations of nature. The nature is first shown, and then the expression of it. The old nature expresses itself by sin and hatred, the new by righteousness and love. Is it difficult? Yet it is unfolded by patient thought.

We are here in company with the eleventh of Leviticus. This Epistle of John is the New Testament eleventh of Leviticus, and in this way the eleventh of Leviticus gives the marks of the clean animal—one, the inner energy, the other the outer walk. And here it is exactly so; the new

nature has two divine Levitical marks—the chewing of the cud, expressing the inner energy of love, and the cloven hoof, the outer walk. We need not obliterate these marks; may we justify God in these things. Having implanted a new nature in us, is it not fitting He should tell us how that nature expresses itself? You may remark here that we are kept in company with Adam and with Cain, because John is so personal. John takes us beyond the time of Enoch and of Noah—of the heavenly and the earthly man—back to the deep personalities of Eve and Adam. So all John's writings bring us back to primitive things.

Verse 11, &c.—The world is a Cain; yes, it is Cain, beaten out and spread abroad. Cain was an atheist; he hated his brother because of the love and sympathy there was between his brother and God. The world is an atheist, and its lords many and gods many do not redeem it one whit from that character. It may have lords many and gods many, and be an atheist still; and now, do not you be wondering if the world hate you. The world does not know you any more than it knows Christ. As He said, "*Because I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you!*" Marvel not.

We have got the principle that extricates us from the world—love,—and we love the brethren, else if we love not the brethren, we know not God. What profound thoughts we meet with, as calmly and dispassionately we pass along, very simple—very grand! *In Christ* we have more than in Adam; nature, life, and God all regained, and with advantage. Christ is more than Repairer of the breach. "Out of the eater has come forth meat, and out of the strong, sweetness." Nature, undefilable; life, unforfeitable, and by the expression of these, we know that we have escaped the pollutions of the world that lieth in the *wicked one*.

In the first chapter you have the message that "God is light." Now you have another message that "God is love," and we should love another.

"From the beginning" means that which is *essentially true*, that which could not be anything but true. The message to walk in light and love is essentially divine. John's writings thus takes you back to the early part of Genesis, because, as we have seen, he deals not in dispensational but in personal truth—no heavenly rapture; no

renewed earth, but something beautiful, even beyond these things. It is the Lord's close, personal dealing with the sinner in the Gospel of Jchn, and in the Epistles His dealings with the saint.

Long has this been the comfort of my soul. I do not care how things around may go on (as far as my state before God is concerned), you are disappointed everywhere! Well, what can that do but throw you more completely upon God? The sinner is outside the camp with Jesus, as in the fourth, eighth, and ninth chapters of the Gospel; and it neither matters as to the number of his sins or of his accusers. These would but press the individual more closely on Jesus. You find the state of things around confused, shameful, painful. It is all these; yet, it never can touch your connection and communion with God. You must know where you are yourself, of course. Do you take care of your place in the Church, and God will take care of your place in Christ.

Cain was the expression of hatred; Adam of disobedience. Now these two Levitical marks of love and righteousness are the exact contradictions of Cain and Adam. When the message says, "Love one another," it looks in the face of Cain. There is plenty of murder abroad now,—murder for revenge and robbery; but these are not Cain murders. Cain's was a martyr murder. It was religious persecution, hatred of one whom God loved, and it expresses the world's hatred of the Church. "I have chosen you *out of the world*, therefore the world hateth you."

Matthew may tell you of a rejected Messiah, John tells you of the atheist world; and this is religious malevolence. "They think they do God service." It is the way of Christendom to shed blood on religious principle; and that gives you the world in the company of Cain. Just look at the seventh of John, and do mark it. "Go ye up unto the feast: I go not yet up unto this feast." You may go, but the world hates me; and this is uttered in the face of the world's religion. The world is going to keep the feast, yet hates God's representative in the world. Exactly so, the world is full of the Cain principle. Marvel not if the world hate you. The world hates you with an atheist hatred, because it knows neither the Father nor the Son.

These are the deep truths we find in John's writings. And do you think the worship of deities, of lords many and gods many, redeems the character of this world from the

charge of atheism? No, it never can relieve man from the charge—"Ye know neither me nor my Father." To know God in the face of Jesus Christ is *true religion*; *all other is idolatry*. If you do not see God in the face of Jesus Christ, you are *without God*. Jesus was not only God in His person, as the second person of the Godhead, but was morally God; God manifest in the flesh. Not only is it that the second person of the Godhead has become incarnate, taking flesh and blood, but as such Jesus is the moral representative of God. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." But this is a form of manifestation of which we do not often think. *Every* action and look of Jesus was *perfection*, and presented the perfection of man to God, and of God to man. The world did not know this, nor does it know that while worshipping Jupiter and Juno, and rejecting God in the face of Jesus Christ, it is as much an atheist as ever. If I can deny God, who can raise the dead; if I have not an eye to discern God in the face of Jesus Christ, I know *nothing* about God.

It is this manifestation of God in the ways of Jesus that John is so full of! May our hearts hang over it! Has God been here? Yes! He has come down in flesh, and dwelt in moral beauty amid the scenes of our daily life. We speak not as touching other truths, but of this, as the foundation of all. And what is the world doing this moment? The Protestant world has been making an exhibition of itself in one way, and the Roman Catholic world in another. A secular exhibition in one place, a religious exhibition in the other. Ah, beloved! God has exhibited *Himself*; He is exhibiting His unseen glory, and shall I gaze on *man's* exhibitions, whether secular or religious! The Lord helping me, I shall gaze at *Him*. I shall enter into the Holiest and worship God, as His glory shines in the face of Jesus Christ.

Now, what is the exhibition of God to us? Love to the brethren. If we love the brethren we have escaped the Cain condition, and the Spirit draws the contrast strongly in the fifteenth and sixteenth verses. In the fifteenth verse we have the taking away of life from another; in the sixteenth the laying down of life for another. *Hatred* takes away life; *love* lays down its own life. In the fourteenth the eye of the Spirit is set exclusively on Christian brethren; here it is more abstract—the principle of love and hatred. Love is exhibited in God, by the laying down of life; but

there is great beauty in the Spirit not having given the words "of God." It is "of God" surely; but there is a great delicacy in the way of the Holy Ghost in this passage. We have the truth that Christ indeed was God, and laid down His life for us. In Romans v. 8, "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." If Christ was not God, this would be a vain argument without effect. And again, "God so loved the world," &c., but there is a harshness in the reading given in the supplying of the words "of God."

Verse 17.—This is a necessary truth. What place has the love of God in my heart, such love as God has shown, if I refuse to sympathise with my brother? You had better confess it at once, that in so much as you act on narrow principles, you have not the love of God in you. Could narrow thoughts occupy that heart in which the love of God dwelleth? No, this is simple argument, and if I refuse to share my goods with my brother, God's love does not dwell in me. One has beautifully said, "If you love in *word*, it is idle; or in *tongue*, it is deceitful—not so to love in deed and in truth, so to love is the opposite of deceit and idleness—it is love in *reality*."

Verse 19.—There is great force in this passage. "Hereby we know that we are of the truth." Adam accepting the lie was morally ruined; but we were not of the lie, but of the truth: we have returned to God. To be of the truth is to be a new creature, born of God, begotten of His own will. If you take your place amongst those who are of the truth, you are a new creature *in Christ Jesus*. The truth is the seed of God forming you anew and with power.

Verse 20.—"If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things." Conscience may indeed be severe, a fine filter to pass your actions through, but there is a finer, there is a subtler sieve than your deceitful heart. If your heart condemns you, God is greater than your heart; many a thing passes through the coarse sieve of your conscience, which cannot pass the eye of God. You may be satisfied about your ways, still Paul says though I do not condemn myself, yet am I not thereby justified. It is not my own judgment that can justify.

Verse 21.—"Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, *then* have we confidence towards God." As I have said, this is moral and not judicial justification. It is not judicial

position, but moral nature. John occupies himself with our moral recovery. You have the judicial recovery in Hebrews, and boldness to enter into the Holiest. You stand justified in Christ Jesus, in Divine Righteousness in Romans; but that is not the confidence here in John. This confidence is from another source—it is because the heart does not condemn. And what more shall I say to this marvellous variety? Look at the floor of the world studded with various beauties, and then at the moral world, and see a more exquisite variety. If I go into the Holiest, because the blood is on the mercy seat, I can go again, because *my heart* does not condemn.

Verse 22.—“And whatsoever we ask we receive of him, because we keep his commandments.” Mark says, “Whatsoever things ye desire.” John says, “If my word abide in you,” and here again, “because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.”

Is there any collision between these things? None! The three things are necessary, *faith, abiding, and obedience*. Lay your requests before God as an obedient child, with a beating heart! Oh! what it would be to be simple in our intimacy with Christ. Little we know of it; therefore, we must speak of it. But oh! to be going in and out, and finding pasture, as the flock of a well-known land. And now love one another, as He gave us commandment, and believe in Jesus Christ, and you shall *take*, in moral power, a better position than Adam lost. He lost Eden, Eve, himself, and God; when new created, you get God in a richer way than Adam had Him; you get a better nature, a better life, and a better portion. May you believe that, as a sinner now accepted, you enjoy *yourself* in a way that innocent Adam never enjoyed himself! Are you conscious of having regained yourself in a higher character than ever? Is it not more blessed to pass ages with Christ, as a pardoned sinner, than to have the delights of Eden?

Verse 24.—In Paul's Epistles the simple statement is made, “If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” But here we have the Spirit distinguishing Himself. God gives His own blessed Spirit to dwell in the believer, and then the Spirit characterises Himself. We have seen Him, as unction, earnest, and seal, and now He displays a new characteristic, but this would take us into the fourth chapter. These profound thoughts are not like the beautiful

flow of Luke, to whom the eye so often turns and finds all its human desires answered. Here, chastened, we linger over every line, and as we do so, a world unknown peeps out upon us. We are not borne along a flowing, easy current with sensible delight, but, stopping at every undulation, we find unknown worlds opening themselves before us. Truly it is a wealthy place into which we are brought!

SOME THOUGHTS ON JOHN'S GOSPEL.

CHAPTER X.

IF the Jews have rejected Christ, that does not hinder Him having His sheep; only God does not wish to have His sheep in their fold. He calls them out, as He has done the man born blind; and when they are outside, He goes before them to guide them.

In order to enter by the door, the Lord has submitted to everything the Holy Scriptures said of Him; they had spoken about Him as to everything that He should have been on earth. He must be the Son of David, born in Bethlehem, and such like. But He was cast outside the fold by the Jews themselves, who were within. Jesus has not only entered by the door, but He has become the door Himself, in order that the sheep might enter by Him, not into the sheep-fold on earth, because there is no longer a sheep-fold on earth, but into the blessings of God.

I have said there is no longer a sheep-fold there, but a flock under a shepherd. Our security no longer consists in being a sheep-fold, but in the hand of the Shepherd. The Church external wants to be a sheep-fold, but it is a false one. The sheep-fold is a sort of prison; it was surrounded by walls. Such was the Jewish fold. The law was a wall that separated it from all the nations, but it was a prison. This fold had been made by God (after the nations had been scattered and fallen into idolatry) in order to separate one family, and place it in security in contrast with the nations.

The new flock of Christ is composed of Jews and of Gentiles. The porter is God who works by the Holy Spirit and by Providence. The rulers of the nation had done everything to hinder the sheep from going to Jesus to hear the voice of the good Shepherd; but all was in vain. It was a terrible thing for the Jews to say that the Lord's sheep must go outside their fold, because that was setting them aside

altogether. The sheep hear the voice of the Shepherd. Of this the blind man was an example ; the same thing we see in Mary Magdalene, who recognises the Shepherd by His voice. How precious to know that Jesus knows us by our own name, if we are His sheep !

But the sheep do not listen to the voice of the stranger, because they do not know it. They do not know every voice—that is, they do not know all the evil that makes pretension to be listened to ; it is enough for the sheep to know that it is *not* the voice of their Shepherd ; as a child who only knows its mother's voice, and does not need to know any other. This is of great importance, because the sheep cannot know all the bad doctrines and all the evil, in order thereby to cleave to the good. If a heretic comes to preach a bad doctrine the sheep will not listen to him, for the simple reason that their ears do not know his voice. Should one come to me to speak of good works as a means of salvation, and of sacraments, I perceive that this is not the voice of my Shepherd, I do not know what voices these are. I may be most ignorant of all these things, but Christ is enough for me, my confidence is in Him alone, and I do not want to know any one else than Christ.

The Shepherd goes before the sheep, because in the way there may be many difficulties, or the way may be doubtful for us, so that I would certainly miss my way. But Jesus goes before to dispel the difficulties and to point out the way, so that I have nought to do but follow Him.

At *v.* 6 it is said that the disciples did not know the things of which Jesus spake ; but if they did not know this doctrine, at least they followed the Good Shepherd. Now this ignorance and weakness of the disciples in not knowing how to use the power of the Lord, was more painful to the Lord than even the very evil that was in men. For it was the evil that brought Him to the earth, while the unbelief of the disciples made Him say, "How long shall I be with you ?" (*Matt.* xvii. 17).

At *v.* 7 Jesus says He is the door of the sheep, and not the door of the sheep-fold, because, as I have already said, Christians have no fold but in heaven. Many thieves and robbers have tried to make themselves leaders, and to draw the sheep after them, but these knew they could not be the Good Shepherd. For example, in *Acts* v. it is said of Theudas, and of Judas the Galilean, who tried to draw away

people after them, but the sheep of the Lord well knew that their leaders had not the qualities for being the Good Shepherd. How could Simeon, who had held the babe in his arms, have followed these ambitious men?

At *v.* 9 we have three things—the salvation of the sheep, their liberty, and then their nourishment.

At *v.* 10 we have the character of the robber; he destroys everything. The word *sheep* is in italics; he not only destroys the sheep, but everything. The sheep then not only have life, but life more abundantly—that is resurrection life. Jesus, at *v.* 11, speaks of His death, not as to its worth, but as His goodness and faithfulness for the sheep. The hireling is the man who is paid to keep the sheep; the sheep are not his, he keeps them only for the salary, and has no other interests nor affection for the sheep; and, therefore, if the wolf come he saves his own life, and leaves the sheep in his power.

H Y M N .

PHILIPPIANS V., VERSE 11.

JESUS, God's delight and pleasure,
 Who can utter all Thy worth?
 Thou—from heaven—Thyself renouncing,
 In the manger had'st Thy birth;
 And, as Man—God's willing servant—
 In Thy grace did'st walk the earth.

Pure obedience, deep and fervent,
 Mark'd Thy perfect path below;
 Heart's surrender to Thy Father's
 Will and pleasure Thou did'st shew;
 And to death Thyself did'st humble,
 Yea, the death of shame and woe.

For Thy humbling, now exalted,
 Crown'd with glory, for Thy shame,
 God to Thee a Name hath given
 Which from all shall homage claim:
 Heav'nly, earthly, and infernal,
 Bowing to that honour'd Name.

Jesus, Saviour! we adore Thee,
 Sing Thy praise with one accord:
 Soon, all knees shall bow before Thee,—
 Every tongue confess Thee Lord,
 Unto God the Father's glory,
 Who in Thee is e'er ador'd.

THE PRESENT SERVICE OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.

V.—AN ADVOCATE WITH THE FATHER.

IN considering what the Scriptures tell us of the present service of the Lord Jesus Christ, we find that the subject naturally divides itself into two parts—(1) Service rendered to us; (2) Service entered into for us. As the Shepherd of the sheep, as the Bishop of our souls, as the Washer of our feet, the Lord Jesus Christ ministers *to* us; as Advocate with the Father, and as High Priest He is engaged in heaven *for* us. The former character, that of Advocate, is treated of by John; the latter, that of High Priest, is dwelt upon by Paul.

“My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not,” are the words of the Apostle John. At first sight they might seem to be merely a repetition of thoughts, expressed in the Old Testament Scriptures, under the form of God’s commands to His people not to sin. But looking at them in the original, we are taught their true bearing, and discern how different is the way, here taken by God, to impress on believers His desire for them, from that of which of old He was pleased to make use. At Sinai He gave Israel commandments, which forbade the activity of the evil nature that by birth is in each one of us. Whilst they were in the wilderness He commanded them, by Moses, to be holy, because He, the Lord their God, was holy (Lev. xix. 2). Now, such injunctions proclaim the holiness of God, and the sinner’s proneness to do wrong, but they do not strengthen him to act aright, nor do they of themselves imply that he can obey them. On the contrary, as was afterwards dogmatically taught, “the law entered, that the offence might abound” (Romans v. 20). “It was added because of transgressions” (Gal. iii. 19), to bring home to Israel, who alone were placed under it by God (Romans ii. 14), what they really were in themselves before Him. And the right action of the law on a quickened soul produces this judgment of itself, leading it to confess, that in itself dwells no good thing, and whilst it approves what is right, it is powerless of itself to do it (Romans vii). But the law never leads a soul into liberty, nor can it give life (Gal. iii 21), nor is it able to bring into subjection the flesh (Romans viii. 7). So God’s commands by Moses, whilst they told

Israel what they ought to be, and reminded them of the holy nature of the One who was their God, left them powerless to obey, calling on man, as they did, for that which he could not in his own strength, as a fallen creature, render to his God, viz., the obedience of his heart, the subjection of his will. John, on the contrary, wrote to those who were enabled to keep from sin. "My little children, these things write I unto you, in order that ye may not sin." Their liability to sin is expressly declared, their proneness to it, if unwatchful, is clearly implied; God's holiness, too, is maintained, as His wish for His children is thus conveyed to them, but their ability to conform to it is most evidently assumed.

But why this difference? The answer is simple. God is now dealing with *individuals* who are of the number of the elect, and not, as formerly, with an elect nation. Dealing with Israel on national grounds, individuals amongst them might be lost, but the nation never can. The nation was, and is an elect nation (Isaiah xlv. 4), but that did not ensure the everlasting security of every individual who by birth belonged to it. Dealing now with individuals, each one of whom is a member of that company chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, God addresses them as His children born of Him. And since the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal life, has been manifested, and we, who believe on Him, have Him for our life, we should learn from His walk how we ought to walk. So God can write to us in order that we should not sin, because we possess through His grace a nature, which in itself is impeccable, though we, who partake of that nature, are liable to sin every day.

Thus we distinguish, and it is important that we should, between person and nature. The Christian partakes of two natures, the one, the old man—the other, the new man. By birth he has received both. By natural generation he partakes of the evil nature, by being born of water and of the Holy Ghost he receives the new nature. The character and actings of each nature are unchangeable. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John iii. 6). Of the incorrigibility of the flesh we are taught, when we read, that it is "enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Romans viii. 7). The undeviating course in which the new nature runs is as clearly traced out, as we

hear John declaring, that "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world" (1 John v. 4); for the world, we learn (1 John ii. 15, 16), is in direct opposition to the Father, and all that is not of the Father is of the world. When the person is treated of, Paul tells us, "They that are in the flesh cannot please God" (Romans viii. 7). John, on the other hand, writing of the spiritual characteristics of one in whom the new nature is found, tells us that "Whosoever is born of God sinneth not" (1 John v. 18). Man, then, acts as his nature inclines him. Man, in the flesh, cannot please God. But the Christian, having a new nature, Christ being his life, is responsible to act in accordance with the dictates of that nature. For responsibility attaches to the person, though the acts are the natural outcoming of the nature within. But, as a nature can only act in accordance with what it is, John, when viewing the Christian abstractedly, declares that "Whosoever is born of God does not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God" (1 John iii. 9). On the other hand, viewing him, not abstractedly, but as a person possessed of two opposite natures, either of which may at any given moment, if he allow it, dominate over him, he writes, he tells us, to believers, in order that they should not sin. Thus the absolute impeccability of the new nature is affirmed, and the Christian's ability now through grace to keep from sin is declared; yet his liability to fall into it, and therefore his constant need of watchfulness against it, are ever kept before him.

"In order that ye should not sin." God would then display His grace and power by enabling creatures to refrain from sin, who are not merely able to sin as Adam was before he fell, but who are prone to it, because conceived in sin, and shapen in iniquity. The weakness of man in himself was evidenced, when the devil succeeded in his design on Adam and Eve, who till then were innocent. The inability of fallen man to conform to God's will in his own strength was demonstrated in the history of Israel, to whom Jehovah gave His statutes, and showed them His judgments, "which, if a man do, he shall even live in them"; but they did not observe them, and their captivity by the Assyrians and by the Babylonians was the consequence of their failure. Now, God would exemplify in Christians the ability of those born of Him, but who were first born in sin, to keep themselves

from it when walking as new creatures in Christ. The ability is theirs, as born of God, and indwelt by the Holy Ghost. But, though strength is freely bestowed on His children to do His will, the sense of personal responsibility is constantly maintained, and the need of watchfulness is impressed on us, as such exhortations, God's recorded desires for His people, are read and pondered over by us; and as we are reminded of the blessing, which every Christian, who is walking aright, can now enjoy, viz., communion with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.

That we should have fellowship, then, in this with John and others, the apostle wrote (1 John i. 3). Enjoying it himself, he desires those whom he addressed to share it with him. Fellowship, or communion with the Father, all that that is, John wished them to know and rejoice in. The knowledge of the Father's thoughts and purposes, and all that He has unfolded to us of the Son, this John wished them to enjoy. Fellowship, or communion with the Son in all that He has told us of the Father, and in all that He has declared to us of God, this too the apostle earnestly longed for for them. But to enjoy this, the possession of a nature capable of understanding such things is requisite. Hence we must be born of God. And, since communion implies the sharing of God's thoughts and purposes, we can only enjoy it on the terms prescribed. "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." To have fellowship with Him, and to walk in darkness as well, is impossible. Between light and darkness there is, there can be no communion. But we, who are addressed in this Epistle, have sin in us (1 John i. 8), and we often yield to it. How, then, we can be restored to that communion, which by our unwatchfulness has been interrupted, is a most serious question to be considered, but one to which, thank God, we have a very clear and a very full answer. This leads the apostle to acquaint us with the active ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ on high for us, as Paraclete, or Advocate* with the Father, a term only met with in the New Testament in the writings of John, applied by the Lord Jesus in the

* The Roman *patronus*, whence our English *patron*, pleaded his client's cause in the court; the *advocatus*, gave advice, but did not plead. Hence *patron*, if understood in the sense of *patronus*, would express more exactly the Lord's service, than *advocate* as used in Roman law. But now by *advocate* we understand one who pleads, by *patron*, one who does not.

Gospel to the Holy Ghost, who was to come (xiv. xv. xvi.), applied here by the Holy Ghost to the Lord Jesus Christ in heaven. Often, when reading the First Epistle of John, we are reminded of truths dwelt on in his Gospel, and especially of those touched on by the Lord in that last discourse with His disciples on the night of his betrayal (John xiii.-xvi). The hostility of the world, the new commandment, abiding in Christ, the character of God, the water and the blood, these, as John treats of them in his Epistle, carry us back in thought to his Gospel, and the designation of the Lord Jesus in the Epistle, as Paraclete or Advocate, throws light on the Lord's own description of the Holy Ghost, as "another" Paraclete, or Comforter. For the Holy Ghost was not to be a substitute for the Lord, making up, by His presence with the disciples, for the loss they had sustained through His departure; but He came as an additional Paraclete, engaged on earth on behalf of God's saints (Rom. viii. 26), whilst the Lord Jesus would be occupied with their affairs in heaven. Yet the office of the Lord in heaven was not a new one, created for Him only after His return to glory. The term "another" implied the existence of one already, and the Lord's words to Peter, before he fell, illustrate to us how He takes up the cause of His failing people before ever they are aware of their need of it (Luke xxii. 32). What He was for Peter then Christ's words told him. But now, since His work on the cross has been accomplished, His advocacy, based upon it, can be treated of for our instruction and comfort.

"If any man sin, we have an Advocate." Then this service is called forth, when sin has interrupted the communion we may enjoy with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ; for though the fullest grace is ours now in Christ, and we possess a nature, which, if active in us, would make us keep from sin, yet, in spite of all that we know and all that we have, we do fail, and how often that is, the history of each soul could surely tell. But He, who died to save us from the outpouring of that divine wrath which we have so justly merited—He, who is our life, takes up also our cause on high, that we may afresh enjoy that communion about which we have manifested so little concern.

"An Advocate with the Father." How sweet are these words to a Christian who mourns over his sins! From God Himself we learn about this, not from man, though a man

has been the channel of the divine communication. As of old the Israelite knew, on the authority of Jehovah, through the instrumentality of the lawgiver, that his sins were forgiven him when he had brought his offering, and that offering had been duly dealt with at the altar, so we learn on the same authority (God's word) of His gracious provision for us who are His children. In human affairs, the man who has need of an advocate selects one, and entrusts his matters to him. In divine things, it is God who has selected the Advocate, and that Advocate needs not, nor waits for, any instructions from us. He acts when, and as He sees fit.

"With the Father." Then the link of relationship, the birth-tie, we are assured, has not snapped. Thank God, it never can! And at such a moment He reminds us of it. He is our Father, and we are His children, however naughty we may have been. Restoration to communion, nevertheless, is no light matter, since it needs the active service of the Lord Jesus Christ as Advocate to effect it. But, had He not first made atonement, it never could be done. "Jesus Christ the righteous." Of what He is in Himself we here read: "The propitiation for our sins." What He is before God for us we are also to remember. Thus we are turned to a consideration of His person in this double character—righteous in Himself and the propitiation for our sins.

And here divine wisdom is manifested, as the written word treats of the Lord Jesus. How often is the language of a Christian who has failed, 'I must go back to the blood;' and ground is taken, in words at least, as if he needed a fresh atonement to be made for him to blot out the sin which, unhappily, he has committed. The Spirit, however, speaks not to us here of the blood, but of the personal fitness of the Lord Himself to take up our cause, and of what He is for us before God. Righteous He is, so can always be heard. The propitiation for our sins He is, so can act for us who have failed. "He is the propitiation." Not He was it, not He will effect it, but He is it. Not a thought is ever allowed to weaken in the least the sense of the abiding value of His atoning work. No suggestion have we that we need a renewal of the sacrifice. "*He is the propitiation.*" Then its value remains unaltered before God; to it we can add nothing, and time can make no change in either its character or its efficacy. Man's teaching would often unsettle in the soul the fixed sense of the perpetual validity of Christ's

work, by telling us we need, as saints, after each sin, to be washed in Christ's blood; or, by affirming the necessity of a renewal of the sacrifice in some shape or other. God's word shuts the door against both these errors, and that at a most critical moment of a saint's history. He is "the propitiation for our sins," are words indited by the Spirit of God, to fall on the ear of a Christian when really repentant before His Father for something, by which he has brought dishonour, it may be, on the name of Christ.

Do we, then, no more need the blood of Christ? some may ask. We do need it, and that constantly, is the answer provided by God. For "if we walk in the light, as God is in the light, we have fellowship one with another;" yet, besides that, John adds, "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John, i. 9). How different are the thoughts of God from those of men, and even of Christians, unless they are subject to the Word. Men teach too often the need of recurrence to the blood, when it is a question of restoration to communion. God at such times recalls to our remembrance who, and what, He is before Him, who has undertaken the office of Advocate on high. Our standing remains unaltered and unalterable, because He, who is our Advocate, is the propitiation for our sins. But when it is a question of our being before God, walking in the light, as God is in it, a wonderful thing to be allowed, and to be able to do, the word reminds us that the blood of Jesus cleanseth us from all sin. At such a time we assuredly are not sinning, yet it is then we as saints need the blood of Christ. Not that we are then to be sprinkled with it, nor that the High Priest again takes it in before God on our behalf, for the language of the Apostle points, not to any fresh dealing with it, but to its characteristic action before God. "*It cleanseth.*" Shut up to this at such a moment, nothing else will avail us, but nothing more is wanted. It cleanseth. Its virtue abides unimpaired. John had proved it surely, and the Holy Ghost, writing by him, asserts its characteristic efficacy. Where the Christian then might have thought, in his ignorance, that he needed not the blood, the Apostle tells him it is everything to him. Where men would have brought it in, the Apostle, divinely guided, leaves it out. Nothing but the cleansing action of the blood can enable a fallen creature to be at rest in the light before its God, where no stain of sin can remain concealed. Our need of the blood constantly

is most fully affirmed, but the everlasting validity of the atoning work is as unhesitatingly declared.

Another question may be asked. If the Lord is our Advocate, do we need to ask Him to act for us? We never read that we are to go to the Advocate at all. "We have an Advocate," John writes. He is that always, and when it is needed He exercises His advocacy before God. Peter was prayed for by the Lord before he had sinned, and certainly before he felt his need of the Lord's intervention. So the Lord acts as our Advocate without our asking Him, and we reap the fruit of His service, when brought to feel the need of confessing what we have done wrong. Confession is our part, advocacy is Christ's. Unless we had Him for an Advocate with the Father, restoration to communion would never be effected. Unless we confess when we have sinned, it can never be enjoyed.

Gracious and merciful He is--He thinks of us--He knows all about us. And, as we learn from Peter's history, He knows all that is before us. Communion with the Father and with His Son is a wonderful favour, and restoration to it, as often as it has been interrupted by our sinful ways, should surely be prized very highly, when we learn the need of an Advocate for that purpose, and know who He is, "Jesus Christ the righteous, the propitiation for our sins."

ON THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN.

CHAPTER IV.

THESE first six verses form a very serious portion of Scripture. Another subject commences at the seventh verse, and between the two is a close and beautiful moral connection. Here I would say, what I meant by calling the Lord Jesus the moral representative of God, was, that He was the representative of the Divine character. He was God incarnate, and that in every characteristic. We talk commonly of the likeness of two persons. When we say that they are like in face, we mean that there is a physical likeness; but if we say they are like in character, that is the moral likeness; now, we see both in Christ. He is the express image of God's person, and morally, He is God, as to His character, while He is God Himself too.

Verse 7.—We have now another subject, which is not another. But the change is, that from speaking of the person of Christ, the Apostle passes on to speak of His nature, His Divine nature. This is the way you would describe a man, and (this is the way) thus the Spirit describes Christ, in whose person we first reach God, and find that He is love. We reach one of whom we may say with Wesley, “His nature and His name is Love.”

Turn back now to the twenty-fourth verse of the third chapter, “And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit that he hath given us,” and then in the first verse, chapter four, “*Beloved, believe not every spirit.*” These verses are closely connected. When the Spirit is noticed, He is characteristically described. It is not merely the Spirit, but the Spirit in you and me, and His character as producing a true confession of Christ. The Holy Ghost has indeed other characteristics. We have Him as unction, earnest, and zeal, and in you and me He makes intercession as the Spirit of adoption, crying, “Abba, Father.”

Amongst other characteristics is this blessed one, that He makes confession that Jesus Christ is come in flesh. Could you part with this? In Romans you have the truth thus put, “If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” Here you have the Spirit *in you*, characterized by the confession that Jesus is the Christ.

The Spirit of God has made you His dwelling place, in fulfilment of the words of the Lord, “He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.” And now, if the Spirit of God be dwelling in you, let me ask, Is He there in inactivity? No! in action! And if in action, He shows what you are in His character of unction, from the Holy One; as earnest, He shows what you shall be; as the Spirit of Adoption, He teaches you to cry, “Abba, Father;” as Intercessor, He pleads for you and in you with groanings that cannot be uttered. By necessity the Spirit is active, He could not be otherwise by His very nature, and thus we are taught to know He is in us *by His energies*.

One of them is a sound confession of Christ. Now, if I meet anyone who will turn aside from this confession, even suppose him to be a saint, he is not therein moved by the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost knows Christ, and He lets the saint know Christ, and what He teaches of Him is, that He is perfect. Perfect in His manhood, perfect in His

Godhead. One whole person, God and man, one Christ. This is the grand fact that links you with God. No other victim could have done, but the Man—Christ Jesus. The person and work of Jesus have opened the way for me to return to God. How important was that confession of Peter: “Whom do men say that I am?” “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” “Blessed art thou, for *my Father* hath revealed it unto thee.” How blessedly simple this is! God Himself has provided a channel by which the waters of *life* may flow even to me! And this they never would have done had not Christ come in the flesh. Let us look full in the face of this verity of the Godhead and the manhood. This is the channel for the water of life or atonement. If I touch either His manhood or His Godhead, I have broken down the altar and destroyed the only channel for the water of life. Is it not well to repeat it? Everything hangs on the person of Christ, and it is a glorious acting of the Spirit in the individual, which produces a sound profession of Christ.

To talk of human things. If I wanted water to be brought from Wicklow, I should cut *all* the way. How should I be served if the channel reached but half the way? Nay, it must come every bit of the way from the source to myself, in order to serve me. I use this figure to express my meaning. There are many human errors, many of us have been guilty in this matter. I, myself, have before now. Not that there was the least question as to the glorious Person, but in speaking we slip aside at times from true expression of feeling and of truth. In Jesus we have God and Man. As one has said, “He laid His hand upon both; and by His own person He raised a living arch to join the two for ever!” And now, if I look upon the altar, I see justice satisfied; as we have been singing:—

“No victim of inferior worth
 Could ward the stroke that justice aimed;
 For none but He—heaven or earth—
 Could offer that which justice claimed.”

But now I am as *righteously* restored as before I was righteously condemned. It is as righteous of God to bring us back as it was to banish us. When Adam heard and believed the promise from God to the seed of the woman, he was then as righteously in the presence of God, as he was before

behind the trees of the garden. Once you get this victim on the altar, all question as to righteousness is over, and now we speak of life flowing through Him as a channel. Is the channel, then, long enough to reach to me in my lost and distant condition? Yes, it is cast up, cast up before me, for the Son of the living God is this Jesus of Nazareth! All is eternally settled. My person is justified, life is secured to me. Mighty mystery! Is it any wonder that, with such results depending, that I find the Spirit a sound Confessor? Is not everything hanging on the person of Christ? And look how the Spirit follows in the steps of Christ when Christ was where He was, full of activity for you, and now the Holy Ghost has come down, and is full of activity in you. You know well enough what it is to have the intellect or affections active. Do you know as well what it is to have the Spirit active? Is He crying, "Abba, Father!" in your heart? Is He testifying by a sound confession of Him?

Verse 4.—Here we have another blessed characteristic of the Spirit—that of Overcomer of the world. Do you believe that? And mark again how He follows Christ. The Son was Conqueror here; the Spirit in the saint is Conqueror here. Jesus conquered the deceiver in this world; in you and me the Spirit does the same. It is blessed to see the person and the divine nature thus working together and gaining victories. Now, if any one touches the person of Christ, do you gain the victory? If any one touches the verity of the manhood as of the Godhead, do you not shrink by that instinct that makes you shrink at the least touch? And well you may, beloved, for greater is He that is in you than He that is in the world. Verse 6.—Wonderful passage! Ah! well might such truths as these put your souls in the temple! Not into the school to discuss a question, but into the sanctuary to worship! Well may it set you to rest on this conclusion, that everything rests on the person of Christ. Well may you exclaim, "As for me, as far as I'm concerned, if Christ Jesus be not God and Man, the fount of life has not begun to flow." Ay, it might, but for this glorious person, have flowed on for ever and ever, and never have reached me. Well can we understand that upon *this rock* the Church is built, with a power that shall withstand the gates of hell. And can we think with patience that the deceiver should so far prevail as to find ONE who could consent to call Peter "the rock"? What

thought can such have of their own sins? The rock is the person of Christ; Peter confesses Him, and Jesus says, "upon this rock," etc. Ah! I feel that we are dealing with a fact that is immense. This is the One who went to the altar to make an atonement for my soul. The God-man went and satisfied the Throne; and surely when the Throne is satisfied, you ought to be so. The victim has opened the whole road from the living God to the sinner. You have only to look at the wondrous fact and breathe, "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine." "He will never leave me nor forsake me."

Verse 7.—We now find the Spirit, without changing the subject, ascending from the person of Christ to His divine nature. Gently leading you along, the Spirit, having taught you to look at the concrete person of Christ, now bids you look at His abstract nature. And is it not blessed to find it all gushing from a fountain which is the nature of God Himself—a scheme set up before the foundation of the world—and all because "God is love"? Again, we have the test of knowing God. And have you been introduced to Him? Have you found rest in Him? Do you know that the source of all your blessing is the divine nature? You are a debtor to divine love; go, practise it! If God has thus brought you back to life, go show the family character. Is this unreasonable? Could you be asked less than this? You are in God's family, show it. You fail, you say; to be sure, you do miserably! Selfishness comes in; yes, it does; but tell me, how do you treat it? When it comes, do you treat it as an intruder, as a trespasser in the divine nature?

Now, verse 8 lets you know that there is no such thing as knowing about God without the Spirit. What does the beast of the field know about you? "No man knoweth the things of a man," etc. Where is the fellowship of nature between the beast and you? Neither is there any fellowship between you and God, but love. "He that loveth," etc. *Love* is the *only* moral capacity for understanding God, in His own nature. No intellect can ever find Him out. Verse 7 shows the intrinsic necessity of the correspondence between love and God. I bless Him for introducing these thoughts to me—thoughts of the person of Christ. I have no need to fear, as a worshipper, though I may well fear to meddle, with a careless hand, with these glorious truths. And now let us bless God that He has taken up this glorious

Person; that He has sent Him from the throne of heaven to wear our manhood, to take it up, to be, as an old writer has said, "The eternal ornament and admiration of His creation."

OUR PRESENT PATHWAY.

It does not at all follow that because we are at the Lord's table, according to 1 Cor. x., we "discern the Lord's body," as unfolded in 1 Cor. xi. Neither is it inevitably the case that because we are Philadelphians in our confession, Laodicea may not describe the condition of our hearts; nor, as I desire to point out, does the circle of the fellowship of the Spirit necessarily coincide with that of the unity of the Spirit? Alas, that it should be otherwise! But, Scripture on the one hand, and experience on the other, teach us that the condition of our souls too seldom corresponds with the ground of our profession.

Intelligence more or less depends upon natural ability; a true heart never. Most blessed it is when you see one possessed of a gigantic mind by nature, so completely under subjection to the Spirit of God, that his intellect is but a valuable weapon in the Lord's hand, and that which would have commanded the attention and respect of all, is through grace taken up and used by God on behalf of all, to meet perhaps with the scorn of the majority. But instances such as these are few and far between, and for the most part, the wise and mighty find their might and wisdom but stumbling-blocks in their pathway, and that they are only cyphers in the circle of God's interests. True hearts, however, belong to a different order of things, and are in no way indebted to the first creation. They, thank God, exist in far more abundant measure than capacity of intellect, and they are oftentimes the property of the humblest, most unlettered of God's saints. They result from the exercise of the power of God the Father, rather than of God the Creator; possess no other object than God the Son, and are subject to no other influence than God the Spirit. The heart must be true before we can be discerners of the Lord's body—in reality Philadelphian, or walking in the fellowship of the Holy Ghost.

In Gideon's day it was not all Israel that God would use to overthrow the Midianites; neither is it in the present day all the members of the body of Christ that would seem to be in the power of the Holy Ghost His instruments of testimony.

In Gideon's day it was not so much their fearlessness of enemies that was the secret of their power, as their Nazarite-ship to God. At the present time devotedness to the Lord, resulting in separation of heart to Him, can alone make us fitting weapons for the accomplishment of His purposes.

Every one that has, through mercy, learned the truth of the "one body, and one spirit," and the responsibilities attaching to it, will be found "endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." And of course this is the necessary precursor of the response to the call. But the heart must be true before we can be discerners of the Lord's body, in reality Philadelphian, or walking in the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, as we see the apostle Paul, in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Philippians. Long time as he had been a prisoner, his chains had in no wise damped his ardour in divine things, or lessened his appreciation of that Son of God, who had first entranced his soul on his way to Damascus. The outward man might perish, but the inward man was renewed day by day, and his earnest desire to hold every thought in subjection to the power of the cross was responded to by his deliverance unto death for Jesus' sake. God had helped him, and permitted his imprisonment only to make him the more evidently the reflector of the glory of His Son.

SOME THOUGHTS ON JOHN'S GOSPEL.

CHAPTER X—*Continued.*

IN the Church, notwithstanding there are true pastors, as was the Apostle Peter, to whom Jesus had confided His sheep, as was Peter, such also were others. In our days they are rare, but we ought to pray the great Shepherd of the sheep that He would raise them up for the good of the Church. The wolf comes to destroy the sheep in the Church, but see the contrast in *v.* 12 and *v.* 28, the enemy can catch them and disperse them, but he cannot destroy them or snatch them from the hands of Jesus, who keeps them for heaven.

Many are the things which disperse the sheep, as false doctrines, hirelings, worldliness, &c.; as also Paul speaks of them, that after his departure grievous wolves shall not spare the flock. We have a beautiful example of the truth of the love of Jesus for His sheep when His enemies come

to take Him, when He said these words, "I am he," they fell to the ground, so that He could have gone away and left them confounded. But the Lord adds, "If, therefore, ye seek me, let these go their way," in order that it might be fulfilled which He had said, "Of all that thou hast given me I have lost none." The Good Shepherd thinks of His sheep, He defends them.

In *v.* 14 we are known by Christ as Christ is known by the Father, and Jesus is faithful and loving towards us as the Father is towards Him, and if we think of our weakness, we ought to think of Christ and the Father. The flock in *v.* 16 is the Church—not as a body of Christ, but looked at as individuals received into one flock. At *vv.* 17 and 18 we have His power, which He never uses to do His own will. He is always obedient. It was an obedience always voluntary. He always did the will of God, as we have seen in chap. xviii., quoted above, where He shows indeed His power to terrify His enemies with His voice alone. At every step of His life He could have gone to heaven, but He had received a commandment from the Father, and that was to lay down His life, and He does it. How precious it is to study Christ! It is in this study only we learn to understand what is good; without Him there would be no knowing that there is such a thing as *good*.

In this Gospel the Jews are looked at as blind; and Jesus is not occupied with them, except in so far as He treats them as enemies, because their hatred against Him is open and systematic. "Ye believe not because ye are not of my sheep" (*v.* 26). But the more the Jews showed their hatred and enmity, the more His love is centred on His sheep.

At *v.* 28 there are three things—1st, What He gives them—eternal life; 2nd, If it is eternal life, they can never perish; and 3rd, No one can take them out of His hands, *i.e.*, no external power can do it. The Father has given them to Jesus, who will present them at the last day according to the Father's heart. The Jews knew very well that Jesus made Himself God, as we see in *v.* 31, and that was what incited them the more to desire His death. The sheep are held in the hands of the Father and of Jesus, who has broken the chains that bound them to Satan, has overcome the enemy and destroyed the power of death, so that there is no one who can snatch them out of His hands. He who has this power has become a Man, and died; descended into that

death where man was, in order to take him out of it. This is marvellous to us, but natural to Him.

At *v.* 38 we have again the words of Jesus and the works, which are not only works of power, but of goodness and blessing for men. When it is a question of the nature of God and man's responsibility, God is spoken of as God, and when it is a question of grace, then the Father is spoken of, because He has commissioned the Son to put the grace into effect. God is spirit and truth; in this case the nature of God and man's responsibility is the subject treated of; but He who seeks worshippers is the Father. It is true that God is spoken of in chap. iii., "God so loved the world," but it is to show that God is love in His nature, and that He is occupied with the salvation of men. In support of what we say we see another passage (1 John iv. 7, 8, 14), where, speaking of the work, it is said, "We bear witness that the Father sent the Son." When He is revealed as Father, His love is in activity. We have already observed elsewhere that there are four names of relationship by which God is revealed: as Almighty to Abraham, to protect him in his pilgrimage; as Jehovah to Israel, to keep His promises; as Father to us Christians; and as Most High in the Millennium. The names of love and light are essential names.

Now in this chapter we come to an end of the whole history of the ministry of Jesus with the Jews.

CHAPTER XI.

The two following chapters present to us Jesus—first, as Son of God, in the raising of Lazarus; then as Son of David, when He enters on the ass into Jerusalem; and thirdly, as Son of Man, when the Greeks are in His presence. The beauty of these two chapters consists in this, that God would not allow His Son to be rejected by men without rendering a testimony to His triple glory.

Jesus never took one step without having as His motive the will of God. Those who knew how Jesus loved this family would have thought how quickly He would have gone to their house; but Jesus checked His affection in order to wait for the will of God; He allows the sick man to die in order to be able to show the power of resurrection. The delay of Jesus would seem to man as if His heart was hard, and many a time is this the case with us in this world

when we do not see a speedy deliverance from our trials. But Jesus was so sensitive that we see Him weeping at the sepulchre. As soon as the will of God is manifested, then He does not hesitate to say, "Let us go into Judæa." If at the first affection does not make Him move, as soon as He clearly sees the will of God, He likewise sees the moment for His moving. He who walks by day does not stumble, because He is guided by light divine.

At ver. 11 is the first time we find death called sleep, because, in fact, the death of the believer is like sleep, though the soul will be better, much better than in sleep, since it goes into the presence of the Lord to enjoy Him. Thomas' testimony is very beautiful in this instance; it shows his affection for Jesus—ready to die with Him. Chapter xx. of this Gospel by itself alone would have led us to believe that Thomas was very weak in faith, but here the Holy Spirit bears witness to his faith. See also the case of Barnabas and Mark (Acts xv. 37-39; Col. iv. 9, 10; 2 Tim. iv. 11). The raising of Lazarus is the grandest proof of the power of Jesus; it was the most remarkable miracle, because done in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem and known to all. Accordingly, in ver. 28 of chap. xii., God has been glorified in this resurrection, and He must be still more so in the resurrection of Jesus Himself. The name of the Father has been glorified in the resurrection of Lazarus *on this earth* (Lazarus having only had a mortal body), and by the resurrection of Jesus: those who are thus raised will have a spiritual and incorruptible body. During His lifetime He had cured men of sicknesses and infirmities, but here He treats no longer of lengthening their life, but of raising them. His very dearest friends, as Martha and Mary tell Him, believed He could have cured him while he was still in life; but they did not think He had power against the frightful force of death. Martha says, "I know, that even now, whatsoever thou shalt ask of God, he will give it thee;" she believed that God would always hear Him, but she did not know that the resurrection and the life were in Jesus Himself. The resurrection comes expressly before the life, because man, being dead, he needs first to be raised before giving him life.

This scene is very solemn; the burden and anguish of death pressed on all hearts, as also upon Mary's; and, therefore, we see Jesus Himself here entering in His heart into this terrible anguish of death. He groans in spirit

and is troubled, and then weeps. He feels more deeply than any of them the grief and pressure of death; not yet for Himself, but *for others*. This is more than sympathy. Every time He cured an infirmity and disease, He first felt all the anguish of it—as it is written, “Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows.” He became a Man, in order to enter in His death into death, and that, too, really. It is worthy of note that Mary does not go at once to Jesus; she remains quiet till she is called. So here we see in Martha more impatience and more carnal activity than in Mary. The disciples, as the Jews, firmly believed in the resurrection; but it was a mere doctrine, which brought them no consolation, as so many Christians do now-a-days—that is, they believe in a general resurrection at the end. But the power of resurrection and of life is in Jesus, and he that believes in Him may not die, and he that believes and dies He will raise again.

The same sensitive and pitiful heart that Jesus then had He has always, even now in heaven; otherwise, how could He intercede for us? Down here He passed through the experience of our weakness; He passed through infirmities, and He is now in heaven as Man, with the experience acquired on earth (Heb. ii. 17, 18; iv. 15). The question Jesus puts to Martha, “Believest thou?” means whether Martha believed that in Him, *now*, there was the power of resurrection and of life. But Martha could not long sustain a conversation on such subjects with Jesus; and she goes to call her sister, thinking that she would better understand Him, as being more familiar with the words of the Lord. But Mary, so modest as not to go to Jesus when not called, is now ready to go to Him when He calls her. She is humble, and when one is humble, one learns much. Mary throws herself at the feet of Jesus, and the Lord answers her differently from the way in which He had done with Martha. The heart of Jesus responds to Mary's heart.

Jesus is moved in the midst of all the scene. He was really Man, and He had really the heart of man! He does not grieve at having lost Lazarus; since, as regards this, He should rather have rejoiced, because that He knew He was there to raise him again, but He weeps, as we have said, because of the power that death had over the hearts of all. And death is the effect and wages of sin. The expression of Martha's unbelief, when she says, “He stinketh already,” brought out more clearly the state of

Lazarus' death and the power of resurrection. Let us remark, in this case, how the Lord first gives thanks at having received the grace, because His confidence in God was perfect; and so it ought to be with us likewise, as it is said (Phil. iv. 6), "By prayer and supplication, *with thanksgiving*, let your requests be made known unto God." The petition of the Lord shows that He always occupied the place of servant, and therefore of dependence on His Father. The petition of the Lord was within, made from His heart to God; but when He raised Lazarus He cried with a loud voice, so that all might hear Him. Such is always the effect of prayer—the world does not hear it, but it sees the effect of it. As when Elias stopped the rain and then made it rain, there is nothing in the historical account said that this miracle was the effect of prayer; but this is distinctly revealed to us by the Apostle James. (Compare Jam. v. 17, 18, with 1 Kings xvii. 1; xviii. 42). Brethren, let us cultivate prayer, let us watch unto it earnestly, and if we neglect it, we do not know what we lose thereby. The Apostles put prayer before preaching even. There is a special power attached to prayer.

A CHIME.

I KNOW I'm safe with Jesus,
 Come what may;
 In His arms He keeps me
 Night and day.
 Not one conscious thought
 Can disturb my rest;
 All is calm and peaceful
 On His breast.
 Whatever lies before me,
 He knows best;
 In His love confiding,
 I can rest.
 Though thick clouds may gather,
 And the tempest roar,
 I am safe with Jesus
 Evermore.
 My Father, I can trust Thee,
 Choose for me;
 I the unseen future
 Leave to Thee.
 Thou wilt wisely order
 What seems best to Thee:
 So I know it must be
 Best for me.

THE LORD'S SUPPER.

LORD JESUS, we are gathered in Thy name,
 To contemplate Thy love and matchless grace;
 To celebrate Thy glory and Thy fame :
 O wondrous, holy, happy, heavenly place!

Ascended now on high, past death and shame,
 Thou'rt seated on the Father's throne in light;
 Thy title now as "Son of Man" to reign
 O'er all created things in glory bright.

The righteous Man by Thine obedience shown,
 In meek humility whilst here below,
 Thou'rt raised by power divine to God's high throne,
 Beyond the reach of ill, or grief, or woe.

Fulness of Godhead too in thee doth shine;
 All things by Thee were made, to Thee belong,
 Yet Thou didst stoop in love to bear our sin :
 O wondrous theme of ceaseless, endless song!

Possessing life eternal by Thy breath,*
 Delivered from our sins and lost estate,
 We're gathered in Thy name to show Thy death,
 While for Thy promised coming, Lord, we wait.

What praise befits us, Lord, for grace like this !
 We own it quite transcends our scanty thought ;
 Yet we *shall* praise Thee, Lord—O highest bliss,
 In streams of rapture by Thy Spirit taught !

Thou too shalt lead the choir of saints on high,
 For ever by Thy death from death set free,
 Who once a lonely Man in grief doth cry,
 "Why hast Thou, O my God, forsaken me?"

But now 'tis over—all the cross, the shame ;
 Sin's portion, and Thy holy work well done ;
 And thou art raised to joy and endless fame—
 Thy foes beneath Thy feet, the victory won.

We triumph in Thy triumph even here,
 Thy Spirit fills our souls with joy divine ;
 But Lord, we're waiting till we reach Thee there,
 Where we shall in Thy glory fully shine.

O make us holy in our walk and ways,
 As pilgrims journeying home to see Thy face ;
 Let every action, Saviour, speak Thy praise—
 The bright reflection of Thy love and grace.

* John xx. 22.

THE PRESENT SERVICE OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.

VI.—HIGH PRIEST OF OUR CONFESSION.

FROM the lips of the Lord Jesus Christ we learn that He is the Shepherd of the sheep. From His words to Peter, and His lowly service on the night of his betrayal, we are taught what the Lord does to His people, that they may have part with Him. Peter writes of Him as Bishop of our souls; John acquaints us with His gracious service as Advocate with the Father; and Paul, writing to the Hebrews, dwells at some length on the present service of the Lord Jesus Christ as High Priest of our profession, or rather confession.

When Israel kept their first passover in Egypt they had no divinely-appointed order of priesthood among them. Redemption by blood was effected without the intervention of a priest. They travelled from Egypt to Sinai, and took part in the ratification of the covenant, when the young men of the children of Israel, sent by Moses, offered burnt-offerings and sacrificed peace-offerings under the hill, and the blood of the victims was sprinkled by the lawgiver on the altar and on the people; and they saw the tabernacle erected, before Aaron stood forth, on the eighth day of his consecration, arrayed in the pontifical garments of glory and beauty, and, with hands uplifted as High Priest, from the altar of burnt-offering, bestowed his first blessing on the nation. The Aaronic priesthood, then, was constituted by God for those who had a recognised position before Him as His people, and none else could avail themselves of its ministrations, but those who, in a measure at least, were associated with the nation of Israel as proselytes (Acts ii. 10), or the stranger which sojourned among them (Lev. xvii. 8; Num. xv. 26-29). Aaron was High Priest for Israel, so the stranger, which sojourned among them, could never have made use of a divinely-appointed priesthood, had not God established it for His redeemed ones. The very existence, therefore, of such an institution betokened the presence on earth of those, whom Jehovah owned as belonging to Himself; and the stranger, as often as he profited by the service of the priesthood, confessed by his action that God had a people on earth, while he himself was, in a measure, the witness of grace to be enjoyed by Gentiles at a future day.

Again, when Israel brought of the herd or of the flock to

offer it on the altar to the Lord, the priest had nothing to do with the offerer or the offering, until it had been killed (Levit. i). Death intervened before the priest had any official relation with the offerer or the victim. These remarks may help some to understand, why it was that the Lord never acted as Priest when on earth. He was not of the race of Aaron, so could never have ministered in the earthly sanctuary, for God maintains inviolate the priesthood which He establishes. A comforting thought this is for God's people. But besides this, whilst the Lord tabernacled down here, neither the death of the offering, nor redemption by blood were accomplished facts. Until they were, the service of the High Priest, following out the analogy drawn from Israel's history, had no place in the sanctuary on high. But, both having been accomplished by His death, when risen and ascended, there was found, as High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary, Jesus the Son of God. It is this grand subject which occupies such a prominent place in the Epistle to the Hebrews, wherein we read of the person of the High Priest, of His title to the office, and of the order and character of His service, as well as of the sanctuary in which He ministers for His people. For the High Priest represents the redeemed people, on whose behalf He acts before God; and His presence in the sanctuary as High Priest bears witness of redemption effected, and of a people in a recognised relationship to God. For God, not Father, is the idea always connected with the work of High Priest. A son has free access to his father at all times. A people, who needed redemption, are provided, as redeemed, with a representative before God.

Accustomed as the Hebrews had been to the service of the Aaronic priesthood, in which, as believers on the Lord Jesus Christ, they could no longer have part, one can see, why to them this Epistle, which treats of the High Priesthood of Christ, should have been originally addressed. For surrounded—those of them at least who dwelt at Jerusalem—with constant reminders of the institution by God of the Aaronic priesthood, as the daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly offerings were brought to the altar, and duly dealt with, there was danger from the trials to which they were exposed, by their constancy to the truth, proceeding from those who still conformed to the Mosaic ritual, there was danger, we must remember, of their apostatising from Christianity, by falling back to that which had been unquestionably established by

divine appointment, and which the Lord Jesus, when on earth, openly upheld (Matt. viii. 4). For them it was essential to know, that, in renouncing all obedience to that ritual, they were carrying out God's mind for His people; and, further, that in giving up what He had once enjoined, they were not worse off than before, since they had, in the heavenly priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ, what never had been, and what never can be enjoyed, by those who are called to have part in the earthly order of things. And those, to whom he wrote, knew well what God had provided for His people of old. All that they gave up. Their position, then, was very different to that of believers from amongst Gentiles. These last turned from idols to serve the living and true God, and to enjoy redemption and an inheritance, as theirs in prospect—blessings they had never even dreamed of. Israelites had known what it was to share, in a way, in such favours. Gentiles renounced heathenism, to be blessed most richly. Jews gave up what they had from Jehovah, to find, indeed, far more in Christ, and with Christ, but they surrendered what had been theirs by divine appointment. The importance, therefore, of the line of teaching in the Hebrews becomes apparent, as the sacred writer ministers to his countrymen truth about the Lord Jesus, and the results of His work, fitted to keep them stedfast to the end. The surpassing excellence of the Lord over Moses and Aaron is set forth, and privileges are enumerated which now belong to those who believe on Him. Free approach to the throne of grace is theirs. A conscience purged, the assurance of everlasting redemption through the blood of Christ, and entrance with boldness into the holiest—these were blessings of which they could partake. An altar, too, was theirs, of which those had no right to eat who served in the tabernacle. Privileges, then, the possession of which could never have been enjoyed under the Mosaic ritual, they had everlastingly secured to them. What Israel never will know, what the priests, the sons of Zadok, never shared in, they knew, and could partake of, by virtue of the accomplished work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Things tangible and visible, such as even the world could value, they surrendered, to have for ever and ever part and lot in what faith then alone could make real, but which will, by and by, be visible, present, and everlasting. And besides all this, they had a *great* High Priest (Heb. iv. 14), so named to distinguish Him as

surpassing, in the excellence of His priesthood, Aaron and his successors, who has passed through the heavens, and has traversed, on His road from the cross to the glory, the distance which, speaking in accordance with the types, lay between the altar and the mercy seat. And His name, by which He was known upon earth, is the name He bears still—Jesus, the virgin's son, but the Son of God likewise. To His person attention is pointedly directed.

Son of God, declared to be that by the words of Jehovah addressed to Him, and recorded in the Old Testament Scriptures for our instruction, He is the Son of Man as well, and proved to be such from the Old Testament Scriptures likewise, but with this difference. When it is a question of His being God's Son, Jehovah attests it, addressing Him directly as such (I). But when the question is as to His being Son of Man, He speaks, and openly confesses it (II). God's Son as born in time, He is yet Jehovah also, the Maker and Upholder of the universe, whose handiwork we see everywhere around us. Now seated in heaven, where none but He, who is God, can sit, He was, He is a Man, and His humanity is a subject of true, practical importance to God's people. He became man that He might die, and so taste of death for everything (*ὑπὲρ πάντων*). He partook of flesh and blood, because the children are partakers of it, that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, and deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage. He became man to make atonement, for without shedding of blood is no remission, and by His blood, as High Priest, He has made propitiation for the sins of the people. As man, He is the example for the people how to begin and to finish the course of faithful testimony to God (xii). As man, too, He knows what men feel, and is able to sympathise with God's saints in their trials, having been tempted in all points like as they are, yet without sin (iv. 15). Thus, by His manhood, He is fitted to understand all the difficulties of the saints in their service and testimony for God, and, as having suffered being tempted, He knows how to help those who are tempted. And this knowledge, acquired before His death—for though He were Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered—made Him suited at once to discharge all the duties of His office. Aaron might acquire fresh experience each day that he lived as High Priest, and so, as time went

on, he would be better able to sympathise with the people in their varied difficulties, the range of his experience increasing day by day; but the Lord finished the career of faith, and was the Leader and Completer of it (xii. 2) before He entered on His Priesthood, and so was perfectly fitted to understand, and to compassionate, as well as to help the people of God, from the first day that He entered on His office.

But how did He become High Priest? The High Priest had to do with God, so none could appropriate this office to themselves. Aaron was called to it, as the Scriptures declare. Not less was the Priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ of divine appointment. And though none witnessed His consecration to the office, as the people of Israel did the introduction of Aaron into the high priesthood, we know on equally sure grounds—the Word of God—that He only entered on his Priesthood pursuant to the divine warrant. For He that said unto Him, “Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee,” saith also in another place, “Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec.” Thus was He saluted of God as High Priest (v. 6, 10), and the form in which this was done testifies to the surpassing excellence of His Priesthood. Aaron and his sons were made priests by command of God. The Lord Jesus Christ was made Priest with an oath of God. “The Lord sware, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever” (vii. 21). No more solemn form of appointment could be conceived; and this form was only used with reference to His appointment, to manifest, when the time looked forward by the Psalmist should arrive, that He, whom the world rejected, is the One by whom God will be approached as the Representative of His redeemed people.

But more. The statement of the Psalmist predicted a change in the priesthood. What he knew, and shared in was the service of a priesthood after the order of Aaron; but he wrote of One to arise after the order of Melchisedec, made priest, “not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life” (vii. 16). For the priesthood of Melchisedec was peculiar in this—that there was no predecessor to the King of Salem in that office, nor was there any successor. He stands forth in the book of Genesis as the sole representative of his order. Aaron died, and Eleazar came down from Mount Hor, clothed in his father’s garments, in token that he had succeeded Aaron as High Priest, but

no one succeeded Melchisedec. When he entered on his priesthood, is shrouded in mystery; when he ceased to exercise it, is a fact unrecorded in history. As a fact, he passed away, but of the beginning or ending of his priesthood we never read. We hear of him only as priest and king. So after his order is the Lord Jesus Christ a Priest, continuing ever, because He hath an unchangeable Priesthood (vii. 24). Differing, then, as the order of the Melchisedec priesthood does from that of Aaron and his successors, it surpasses it also in dignity; and to this point the sacred writer likewise calls attention, as he dwells on the significant fact, that Abraham, from whom Levi, Aaron's ancestor, was descended, paid tithes to Melchisedec, and received from the royal priest a blessing. To Abraham was the promise made, not to Melchisedec; yet Abraham was blessed by Melchisedec, the priest of the Most High God. Thus the superiority of the Melchisedec priesthood over that of the Aaronic is demonstrated. Levi, as it were, paid tithes to Melchisedec, and the ancestor of Aaron was blessed by the King of Salem. "And without all contradiction," as the sacred writer affirms, "the less is blessed of the greater." Thus, that otherwise mysterious passage in Abraham's history receives elucidation, as the Holy Ghost, who directed Moses to write it, was pleased, centuries afterwards, by the Apostle to explain it, the name of the king, and the order of his priesthood finding but once only a place in the sacred volume, between the history of the days of the patriarch and the writing of the Epistle to the Hebrews, which was years after the Lord had been crucified.

Priest after the order of Melchisedec, the Lord acts as High Priest after the character of the Aaronic priesthood. Melchisedec blessed God, and blessed Abraham, and brought forth to Abraham, as the victor, refreshment after his warfare. But we read not of a sanctuary in which he ministered. The character of his priesthood, as exercised on behalf of Abraham, did not require that. As priest of the Most High God, he blessed. Aaron also could do that. But it was the conqueror who had done his work that Melchisedec blessed. Aaron, indeed, could bless, but it was a people in the wilderness who received his blessing, and the form and purport of it is recorded in the Word. But Melchisedec blessed the conqueror, returning from the battle, having done his work. The character of that blessing we

also read of, and comparing the two—that in Genesis xiv. with Numbers vi.—we cannot but note the difference. Aaron blessed Israel in accordance with what they wanted. Melchisedec blessed Abraham with reference to what he that day was (Gen. xiv. 20). Abraham did not seek an interview, that we read of, to solicit his assistance and intervention before he went forth to the war. It was when all danger was over, and he was returning with his spoils, trophies of his victory, that Melchisedec met him. Mark, it was Melchisedec met him, not he Melchisedec, and unasked, as far as we know, the royal priest blessed him. But a priesthood of this character, adapted to the patriarch's condition at that moment, would not meet the wants of God's saints in their journey, nor would it so minister to them that they might go forward and overcome. A different character of priesthood is therefore requisite whilst the day of conflict lasts, and the weakness of the creature is felt at momentous stages of its career, and that God has provided in the Aaronic character of priesthood, according to which the Lord Jesus Christ now ministers on high for God's people. For this, however, a sanctuary is wanted, and a sacrifice to be accepted by God, as the basis upon which the High Priest can intercede for the saints. Of both of these the Epistle to the Hebrews treats. Propitiation for the sins of the people has been made by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ (ii. 17), and by that blood we have boldness to enter the holiest. And the sanctuary in which He ministers is defined to be the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man, heaven itself, the true holiest of all, into which He entered once by His own blood, now to appear in the presence of God for us (viii. 2, x. 19, ix. 12-24). Had they lost, then, by becoming Christians, any privilege which they enjoyed as Jews? On the contrary, they had gained. They had an High Priest, chosen of God, in the sanctuary on high, continually acting as such on their behalf; a Priest of an order more enduring and more exalted than that of Aaron and his sons—One who, like Melchisedec, could bless God, and bless the people, as He will by and by; but, like Aaron, could enter into, and better than Aaron, fully understand all the weakness and trials of the people, and intercede for them before the throne of God, to procure the grace and assistance of which they were so constantly in need. It was true that the Lord, when on earth, could never enter the holy place of the temple at

Jerusalem, though it was His earthly house. But now in a sanctuary through which Aaron never passed, of which the earthly tabernacle was the antitype (ix. 24), He ministers for the people, having an unchangeable Priesthood.

For the Aaronic priesthood had a double service to perform, as Aaron made propitiation every year within the veil (Lev. xvi), and as the wants of the people were provided for during their wilderness career. Of this latter service we are taught in Numbers xix., xx., xxvii., just after the sin of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, in rebelling against the priesthood, had been visited with condign punishment. Then the people learnt the value and need of priesthood, first, as Aaron on the following day stood with a censer full of burning incense, kindled from the altar, between the dead and the living, and the plague was stayed (Numb. xvi. 48); next, as the services of Eleazar were needed to prepare the ashes for the water of separation, lest death should overtake any one defiled, either by its entrance into their tent, or by contact with a dead body, a bone, or a grave (xix). Again, when water was wanted for the host, towards the close of their wanderings in the wilderness, Moses was directed to stand with Aaron's rod, and to speak to the rock, and the refreshment, so much desired, would flow out copiously—typical of the efficacy of the Lord's Priesthood, by which all that the saints require of grace and mercy may be obtained for them on their way. Moses and Aaron disobeyed God, and the former smote the rock, having however the rod which budded in his hand. The symbol of the Lord's Priesthood was then there, that rod which gave tokens of life in its completeness, having blossomed and fruited, when according to nature it could only have been reckoned dead, so God allowed the water to flow forth, though His word to Moses had been by him disobeyed; but punished His servants, by refusing to allow them to lead the people into the land of their inheritance (xx). How then, should the people enter into Canaan and conquer? The need of priesthood is again manifested, as Moses was commanded to set Joshua before Eleazar the High Priest, when about to install him in his office, and was told that Joshua should stand before Eleazar the priest, who should ask counsel for him after the judgment of Urim before the Lord. And "at his word," we read, "shall they go out, and at his word they shall come in, both he, and all the children of Israel with him, even all the congregation"

(xxvii. 21). For Israel then to enter the land, and possess it, the services of the High Priest were essential, Joshua and Eleazar typifying the Lord Jesus Christ, who unites in His person the two characters of Captain of God's people, and the High Priest who ministers in the sanctuary. Thus what Israel had to learn about the priesthood, the Hebrews were in their turn to take up, and to understand. So in this Epistle, especially addressed to them, that subject has a very prominent place.

But here we must mark a difference. Israel had to learn not only how needful were the services of the High Priest to procure the blessing of the water from the rock, and to direct as to their warfare in the land, but also the absolute need of Aaron's ministrations, to stop the disastrous consequences of their sin in murmuring against the leader, and the High Priest appointed by Jehovah. The incense in the censer, kindled by live coals from off the altar of burnt-offering, arrested God's dealings in government with the stiff-necked people of Israel. In the Epistle to the Hebrews, however, the present service of the Lord, as High Priest, is never mentioned in connection with sins. Like Israel, surely we often sin, and the Lord's hand in government we may feel, if we do not judge ourselves (1 Cor. xi. 30-31); but the service in connection with the question of His people's sins is taken up in John, when he presents Him to us as the Advocate, whereas the Epistle to the Hebrews introduces Him as actively engaged in His character of High Priest, because of the people's infirmities and trials. The service of the High Priest in connection with sins is set forth in this Epistle as a service settled and finished for ever, and He has sat down in token that propitiation has been made, and He remains within the sanctuary because eternal redemption has been found. Paul's object, then, in writing the Epistle to the Hebrews, is to strengthen the saints to stand firm in spite of all the difficulties in their way; and this he does, by telling them of the person and service of Christ, as the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, as well as of the sacrifice once for all offered up on the cross. In John the relationship of believers to the Father is kept before them. In Hebrews the saints are looked at as on their way to God's rest. For them, under these circumstances, two things are provided—the Word of God, and the Priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ. By the former, God's mind is revealed,

that whatever is of the flesh in us may be detected, for sharper is the living word than any two-edged sword, and it can do, what no human instrument is fine enough to effect, viz., pierce even to the dividing asunder of the soul (*ψυχή*) and spirit (*πνεῦμα*), two divisions of man's tripartite nature (1 Thes. v. 23), and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. By the latter, what the saint may need by reason of his infirmities and trials, whilst journeying along the road, is abundantly procured for him.

How suited the Lord is to act in this capacity the Epistle makes clear to us, as it recounts how He entered into heaven, and why He remains there (ix. 12); telling us likewise of His personal fitness for the office, being holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens (vii. 26); reminding us, too, where He is, viz., in the sanctuary—the true tabernacle—which the Lord pitched and not man; and disclosing His very attitude and place on high, being seated on the right hand of the throne of the majesty in the heavens. His ability, likewise, to fill the office of High Priest is insisted on, as we learn that He is able to succour (ii. 18), able to sympathise (iv. 15), and able to save to the uttermost all them that come unto God by Him (vii. 25). Nor are we left in doubt as to what He does, not renewing His sacrifice, nor dealing afresh with His blood before the throne. That He did once for all. His service now, as High Priest, consists in interceding for His people.

But how, it may be asked, can we avail ourselves of His priestly help? By going to the throne of grace. And the apostle, be it remarked, to encourage those to whom he writes, exhorts them to come to it as the common privilege and blessing belonging to all believers. He, an apostle, did not go there instead of them, though he could, and we may, intercede for others. Nor did he address them as one who needed not the assistance of which they were in want. He did not send them there as a place to which he did not resort. Apostle though he was, following the Lord very closely as he did, as a man, a saint, and one who had need of preventing as well as of upholding grace, he exhorted them to approach the throne, to reap the fruits of the Lord's gracious intercession on their behalf. Do we need to present a petition there, before we can expect to receive what we require? Must we wait till an answer comes?

We read not of this ; we go to receive ; we are not told even to ask. We go to get, not to wait for a favourable answer to be vouchsafed us. Christ has interceded, and we go to receive the fruits of His priestly act of intercession, even mercy, and to find grace for seasonable help. Varied are the trials of God's saints, but the High Priest can understand them all, having been in all points tempted like as we are ; and having suffered being tempted, never yielding, He has learnt the full extent to which they can go. The trials and the infirmities of His people He then fully understands, and procuring for them, by His intercession, all that they need, He is able to save them to the uttermost who come unto God by Him. With what thankfulness, then, may we say, "We have an High Priest, Jesus, the Son of God."

"GRACE AND PEACE."

It is exceedingly beautiful to mark the way of the Spirit in addressing believers. Knowing, as He does, all their faults and peculiarities, and having some rebuking things to say to them, yet He opens His remarks with these most precious words, "Grace and peace unto you." And who were those persons thus saluted? Were they remarkable for their holiness, for their fidelity, for their love? Doubtless many among them were so; but, taking them as a whole, were they most amiable, loveable, consistent people?

Let us inquire. First, then, I observe, in turning to whatever Epistle I may, and with very little variation, and only three exceptions—namely, the Epistle of James, and John's First and Third Epistles—I find these words addressed to all.

That to the Hebrews may seem another; but, sweet to relate, if the character of the teaching excludes its use when it opens, the Spirit cannot close—cannot bid farewell, so to speak, to those He so tenderly taught and warned, without using those needed, and, by some, well-known words, "Grace be with you *all*. Amen."

But what refreshes one most is not the way the Spirit closes as opens His letters (although that also is worthy of attention, and may occupy us another time). We can all understand how one might close a letter to those they love (after using strong language) with words of comfort; but to

know beforehand all the faults and all that required to be said, and still to send such a greeting—this denotes skill in dealing with souls, which only a God of perfect goodness could show, and which required to be shown before we could imitate.

Amazing skill ! Amazing grace ! Who can comprehend or who can give a reason for it ? Only the One who possesses the skill, and ministers the grace can, and, blessed be His name, has made known the *wherefore* of it all.

Hearken to His own words :—"That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in kindness towards us through Christ Jesus ;" words used doubtless in connection with a different line of thought, but which include all the dealings of God with our souls, from the beginning of our new being till the time when we shall reach the end in a Father's love without end. Sweet thought ! When God breaks the silence between Himself and His people, it is to utter first of all these words :—"Grace unto you and peace."

Yet when one thinks of it, what other words could our God have used ? for was not "grace" reigning ? and had not "peace" been made ? And as the salutation was from God the Father, and His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, so the grace of the One could reign, because of the righteousness established through the cross of the other. The "peace" had been made by His precious blood.

What a mighty leveller grace is as well as sin ! (Compare Rom. iii. and Rom. x.) "The grace of God" as the "God of grace," needing not anything from any man, acting towards man and upon man, as the sun in the heavens shineth equally upon the evil and on the good, the wise and the unwise, the peasant and the peer ; and maketh "no difference" between the dew-drop and the mighty ocean, warming and brightening the one as well as the other !

God, viewing His saints from the "top of the rocks," beholds neither their perverseness nor their iniquity (when the enemy accuses), but the deep, deep need of their souls for what He alone can supply.

Whether they be saints of "Rome," of "Corinth," of "Colosse," or "Thessalonica," it matters not, "Grace to you," "Peace to you," becomes the common greeting.

Strangers to Paul were the Romans, but their faith in Jesus had come abroad. Some, abusing their liberty (pleasing themselves, instead of pleasing everyone his neighbour),

were setting at nought their weak brethren; while those weak and fettered, in place of using the liberty wherewith Christ makes His people free, were judging their more enlightened brethren, pluming themselves, doubtless, with false ideas of holiness.

Certainly the "strong" required to enter into the "grace" that bore with them, as the "weak" might well avoid their strictures, and thus follow after the things which make for "peace."

If they had their schools of opinion, as at Corinth, making Paul, or Apollos, or Christ but leaders of some sect; or their schools of legality as at Galatia, needing to be exposed and closed; if some at Ephesus were asleep, or others at Thessalonica were lazy, the salutation is alike to all. How blessed to have our opinions dispelled, our hard thoughts exposed, our sleep disturbed, and our laziness corrected in such a manner, for it is our Father and our Lord Jesus who are thus dealing with their people's souls.

Some were leaving their early love, others forgetting what they had received and heard; some were forsaking the assembling of themselves together, as others (grown short-sighted) had forgotten the "purging" of their former sins. But, be they love-bearers, grace-neglectors, assembly-forsakers, or cross-forgetters, the unaltered salutation of "Grace and peace unto you," comes from the unalterable God and Father, and from His beloved Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

May it be granted unto us so to grow in "grace" that the "peace" of God, which passes all understanding, may keep our hearts and minds! Amen.

EXTRACT OF LETTERS.

"Now you will like to hear of what the Lord has been giving us. Our prayer meeting was quiet and happy; Exodus xvi. in connection with John vi. (middle part) was read. There must be an individual, personal feeding on *Christ Himself*, day by day, or the soul will not get on. The manna came *fresh* daily; its purity, as it lay *on* the dew, was like Him who is altogether lovely (Num. xv.); only to be got *early* and to be collected in little pieces (verse by verse). On the sixth day (this was new to me) a double portion was gathered for the day of rest. Surely we may say that,

as "we see the day approaching," we should redouble our exertions to gather up as much as we can of the Christ that will be our solace, joy, and comfort throughout the eternity of rest. There remaineth therefore a Sabbatism, or keeping of a Sabbath (Grk.) for the people of God—"let us labour therefore." The six days are the period of the Church's service, the seventh the time of her rest. The Lord refreshed me much by this thought.

"We finished Hebrews x. yesterday morning, and came to the conclusion that "the wilful sin" could be committed only by *professors*, who give up the one Sacrifice for Ritualism or anything else, and thus become "adversaries." Exodus xxiv. explains "them who are sanctified"—a different sanctification from that given earlier in the chapter. All who *professedly* take their stand on the ground of the finished work of Christ, are *outwardly* sanctified, or set apart to God. Having the *knowledge* of the truth is one thing, having the truth itself is another. Dear ——— compared the adversaries to the bad branches of John xv.—a very suitable comparison, seeing Jewish disciples are primarily contemplated in each place. "No more sacrifice" means simply no *other* sacrifice. Verse 36, *Patience* is the only thing we need in this chapter. "Any man" and "we" of verses 38-39, are like the "man" and "ye" of John xv. 6-7, and the "him" and "you," of 1 Cor. x. 12-13: in each case, the professor placed in contrast with the Christian."

"I have to thank you very much for your very welcome letter, expressing your gratitude to the Lord in me for what He has done for you. I praise Him for the grace displayed towards you, and do not cease to wait upon Him, that He may still more and more fill you with His Spirit, that in all things Christ may be magnified in your body.

"I often look back with pleasure at the many happy walks and talks we had together, and wonder sometimes if we shall ever be thrown together again; but, as I think I mentioned to you when I saw you, I am more and more satisfied daily that we live in a time when there must be, if ever, the individual clinging to *Christ Himself*. Ripening friendships are in a moment broken through, fellowship in the Spirit interrupted by intervening distances, but nothing can alter with Him.

"He maintains His place of nearness in spite of everything,

washing our feet (and sometimes the process is painful enough), in order that He may do this, and insisting upon His right to retain the first place in our hearts, knowing full well that it *must* be His, where there is no flesh to hinder and no enemy to seduce. Happy, beloved brother, to think of that time when He shall no longer allow our eyes to rest on things around, but only on Him, the cry of my heart is, "Come, Lord Jesus." I doubt not you can echo it. In the meantime, as you say it is well to be steadfast, unmoveable, *always* abounding in the work of the Lord, leaving the rewards to Himself, satisfied to "win *Christ*"; and surely both you and I may rejoice that it is our privilege to be thus, for though our lives are different, yours being to serve Him in an earthly calling (1 Thes. iv. 11, 12), and mine being to serve Him in the Word alone, yet we both serve the same Master, and both can ask His blessing on our work, "doing all in the name of the Lord Jesus."

"With *me* I find there is plenty of work, but I have much reason to complain of the way in which it is done, for we must ever remember it is not the amount we do, but to do what we have in hand *well*, as if His eye was upon us. I look at Him as a servant (say in the Gospel of Mark), and I find that though there never was a moment lost (you have observed how often "straightway" occurs) yet never was the work ill done. His prayer was interrupted, but He took it as from the Lord, and went on with His preaching.

"He could feel the danger of overwork for others, for in this very Gospel we find the invitation, "Come ye yourselves apart with me, and rest awhile." And surely this has a word for us. Are we as happy and peaceful sitting in alone with Jesus, as mixed up with the toil of necessary commerce, or engaged in the more exciting scenes of night after night of meetings?

"I believe this true secret of happiness is to sit at His feet *while* we serve, enjoying His presence continually, which is quite possible amid the most bustling scenes. May it be your portion and mine to do this, abiding in Him and in His love, fruit-bearing resulting from the former, joy from the latter (John xv).

"Now midnight is past, so I must close this letter. O that "Himself our hopes may crown" at the "cock-crowing!"

SOME THOUGHTS ON JOHN'S GOSPEL.

CHAPTER xi.

IF Christ has been declared Son of God in power when He rose, so also shall we believers, who are sons of God, be publicly declared such when we rise. Then here we see how, with a single word of Christ, He destroyed the whole effects of sin; "Lazarus, come forth!" This single word overthrew the whole power of Satan in death. Death may be viewed under three aspects—it is the wages of sin, it is the judgment of God, and finally, it is the power of Satan; but in resurrection, by the word of Christ, man will be freed from all this. It is written (1 Cor. iii. 22), that "death is ours." It frees us from sin, from the world, from all evil; then it will open to us the gates of heaven. The Apostle Paul would have preferred, for himself, death to life in this world, because by death the veil that separates us still from Jesus is rent, and we are brought into His presence.

It is said at *v. 45* that many believed in Him because of this miracle; but the same love and the same power that was the occasion for some believing in Him, for others was the occasion of their going to accuse Him (*v. 46*). Here we still see the horrible state of the Jews, who wished to kill Him because many believed in Him. For them it was not a question of truth or no truth, but of their own reputation. Is it not always so with man in all times? The high priest is moved (*v. 50*) by the Holy Spirit to prophesy, as Balaam was moved, a wicked man. Here we have two objects for the death of Christ—first, for the Jewish nation to lay the foundation for its restoration and all its blessings; and then, second, to gather together in one the children of God who were scattered abroad. Nothing is said here of the individual salvation of the soul. It ever was and is the intention of God to have His children united together, and He has sent the Holy Spirit to gather them together. This union was, in fact, first effected at Jerusalem, and maintained for some time; however, the seeds of divisions sprung up from them ever since. Already, in the second century, the greater part of Christians were not converted; and in the fourth century the mass of the unconverted came into the Church. Thus, for long this unity has disappeared through the infidelity of Christians, to whose responsibility

this truth was entrusted. The unity of Christians on earth ought to have corresponded to the unity of the body of Christ. All God's children ought to be together in one body, and the world outside; the Holy Spirit always works to gather them together, and it is always our duty to meet outside the world. If Christians have failed in this, our duty is ever the same. Christ is dishonoured by the scattering of the children of God.

At v. 53 we see how man is a murderer, and that, because Christ had given life to a dead man.

CHAPTER xii.

Mary, better than the rest, had understood the true position of Christ. She saw and felt the hatred of man to Him constantly increasing, and consequently that His death was not far distant. Then she spends everything she has most precious upon Jesus. Mary's love for Jesus increased in proportion to the hatred of men, and, foreseeing His death near, anticipated, as best she could, His embalming. Mary had moral intelligence of the position of Jesus, and the Lord commends her. Martha we ever find occupied with service. We have here the two extremes—the one in Mary, the other in Judas. What a distance between the state of these two hearts! However, we find elsewhere (Matt. xxvi. 8) that likewise all the disciples entered into the same kind of thought with Judas and approved Judas. It is easier to receive bad thoughts than good. One must be in the presence of God to understand the horror of our real state, because outside of His presence we cannot understand it. Like a man who has been bred up all his life in filth, he does not know what cleanliness is. The world, and also many Christians, lack entire consecration to God, and therefore the bare idea of it condemns them. Jesus defends Mary, as He defended the woman who came into the Pharisee's house to weep at His feet. Jesus answers, "Me ye have not always;" with these words He justifies Mary's action, with them He made all feel that He is the proper object of the soul.

When one is consecrated to God, one sheds round himself a sweet savour that all feel. If one is consecrated to God, all one does, one does to the Lord; but at the same time the testimony is rendered to men; however this is not the motive, but the effect. There are two things that diffuse a good odour amongst men: the one we have here, that is, entire

consecration to God, spending all for Him; the other we have in Luke vii., in the woman convicted of sin at the feet of Jesus. There are, therefore, the conviction of sin, and the attraction of the sinner to Christ, and on the other hand the spiritual intelligence of who Christ is, so as to be consecrated to Him. The enmity we find at v. 10 is natural to man, though frequently it is seen in persons whose natural character is amiable and gentle; nevertheless when Christ is presented to these persons, the natural enmity against the things of God comes out. See the case of the rich young man whom Jesus loved for his amiable and attractive qualities, but as soon as Christ speaks to him of following Him, he shows that he loves riches more than Christ. No doubt amiability is a good thing, and we prize it even in animals; every human endowment comes from God, and we are far better pleased to have to do with a person of an affectionate and good disposition, than with a hard, irascible, or cruel one. But if the good qualities of men come from God, certainly they are not directed towards God, nor do they impel man to God.

Ver. 13 is a quotation from Psalm cxviii., which speaks of the millenium. *Hosanna* means, I pray thee, Hail. Here we have an anticipation of what will happen to Jesus in the millenium; because God wished to render this testimony to His Son when He was rejected by men: as much as to say—You will not have Him as King, but I will have Him such one day.

Ver. 15 is a quotation from part of a text of the prophet Zechariah, chap. ix. Only that part of the text is quoted which refers to this circumstance, the rest of the text speaks of the remnant looking for the coming of the last days when all will be fulfilled.

Then comes the testimony to His third title, *viz.*, the Son of Man. And here He speaks of His death, because He could not take possession of what belongs to Him under that title without first dying. If you read from Psalm ii. to viii. you will see the three titles that we have found in these two chapters. Psalm ii. presents Him to us as Son of God, born into the world, and being in Sion, spite of the combined opposition of men; the following Psalms iii.-vii. describe the state of the remnant, as a consequence of His rejection; in Psalm viii. we have the Son of Man Head of all things. The Son of God became a man to die to have men with Him,

the co-heirs, when all things will be put under Him in the millenium, as Son of Man. In Heb. ii., where the same subject is spoken of, it is said, that Ps. viii. is not yet fully accomplished, but only in part, *i.e.*, that He is in heaven crowned with glory and honour, waiting for the fulfilment of the rest; that is, that all His enemies will be put in subjection under Him, as the footstool of His feet, according to Ps. cx, and that all things will be put under Him. In the meantime He is gathering out the chosen heirs who will be with Him in this glory. So also Daniel vii. agrees with this truth, because there we see that the Son of Man comes to the Ancient of days to receive the kingdom and dominion of all. Then, as Son of Man, He goes much farther than as Son of David: under the latter title He will be only King of Israel, but under the former all created things are put under Him. And now it is the patience of Jesus, and ours likewise, because we are Christ's wages.

The occasion of this introduction of the title of Son of Man was the coming of the Greeks to Jesus; they were Gentiles, and consequently had nothing to do with the Son of David—their connection was with the Son of Man. But if Christ must hate His life in order to set out to take possession of this place, it follows, therefore, as the Saviour says, that we likewise must hate our life; that is to say, not to take care of it, hating everything that would be a hindrance to following Jesus in His path. It is said justly, that it is more difficult to live every day following Jesus, than to suffer martyrdom, because the suffering of martyrdom is brief, however great it may be; and besides, when you are brought to decide between dying and denying Christ, you are forced to act with energy; but to sustain the combat every day, every hour, demands constant watchfulness, constant self-denial. Paul practised this continual death, and could say, "I keep under my body and bring it into subjection;" and again, "We, which live, are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake" (1 Cor. ix.; 2 Cor. iv.)

(To be continued if the Lord will.)

THE WARNINGS OF HEBREWS VI. AND X.

I HAVE been long assured that the apostle, in Heb. vi. and x., does not contemplate any amount of *moral* evil, but such offences as call in question the glory and sufficiency of the Word of the Son of God. Such as “do despite to the Spirit of grace,” or, “that tread under foot the Son of God,” or “count the blood of the covenant an unholy thing.” Such offences as take the place of presumptuous sins under the law. (See Num. xv.)

Presumptuous sins were not pieces of moral iniquity, but direct insults to the majesty of the Lawgiver—such as picking up sticks on the Sabbath-day. And now, when grace, and not law, is dispensed, when the effectual work of the Son of God is declared, presumptuous sin is putting dishonour on that by going back to carnal, legal, self-righteous confidences.

The present system of ordinances is very like the offence contemplated in those solemn passages. It is committed against the *dispensational* provisions of grace.

HYMN TO THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH.

O WHAT love was Thine, Lord Jesus,
 For the Church Thyself to give ;
 That, redeem'd to God for ever,
 She in Thee might ever live !
 Precious was the blood Thou sheddest,
 Great the grace which Thou didst show ;
 And ascending, Lord, Thou leddest
 Captive every mighty foe.

Now, from all that is defiling
 Thou dost cleanse her by the Word ;
 Savest from the snares, beguiling,
 Spread for her, as net for bird.
 Thou dost love her, cheer and nourish,
 As Thy body, bones, and flesh :
 Thus Thy life in her doth flourish,
 Love to Thee is true and fresh.

Who Thy gladness, Lord, can measure,
 When Thou home shalt bring Thy bride ?
 Thy delight ! Thy bosom's treasure !
 In Thy glory glorified !
 Then she'll shine as Thy reflection,
 Glorious, spotless, free from blame—
 Perfect in Thine own perfection,
 Blest in Thine enduring Name.

“THAT ROCK WAS CHRIST.”

THE Lord permitted that there should be two occasions on which the want of water brought out utter want of faith in God in the people of Israel. He has allowed also considerable resemblance in the accounts of the two occasions, which we find in Exod. xvii. 1-7, and Num. xx. 8-11; so that unbelief is apt to confound them, and lose the blessing of both.

The greatest blessing God has for man brings out, through unbelief, its unlimited danger; and there are none in greater danger than they who hear the truth constantly, and have not bowed to Jesus. No one who knows what the grace of God is, could regret that children should hear the word; but we may well tremble when we see them passing on from year to year without the blessing of that which is brought so close, and which God is urging on them in His word.

I shall endeavour to show this from what the Holy Spirit tells us in these two Scriptures.

The first occasion was when Israel was brought to an extremity. God purposely brings them into circumstances where none but God could appear for them. He brings them into the wilderness where there was no water; they were helpless; but God was there. He led them there, and was there to turn their desolation into an evidence of His tender and paternal care, which deigned to enter into their every want.

How painful to see that they murmured, not only against Moses, but against the Lord! Moses tells out his grief, and the Lord brings a beautiful shadow of the only means of blessing for sinful man. He was to take the rod wherewith he had smitten the river (Red Sea), and to smite the rock, and the water should come forth. How God has always Christ before him! How he loves to prove to us from His Word the ways of His grace, not only after the effect but before it. What a book the Bible is to our souls, when once we see what Christ does; for in truth it was Jesus, as we know from the distinct teaching of the Spirit—“That Rock was Christ” (1 Cor. x. 4).

That Rock in the first instance was smitten. The rod was to be taken and the rock smitten, and thus, and in no other way could the water flow forth. Was not Christ smitten—not merely given, but smitten; and have you learned for your souls, for your need, have you tasted for your blessing

now and ever more, what there was in the smiting of the True Rock for your souls?

There are some who may read this paper, who have not rest; souls that have not the peaceful enjoyment of God; some that know there is a blessing, have seen the proof elsewhere, but have not got it. How is it to be had? In that which this scene means, and in no other way; by a smitten Christ—by an humbled Christ—by a Christ that passes under judgment—for that rod was the same that had brought judgment upon judgment upon Egypt; that rod that Moses had taken, and the plague had fallen on the enemy. What, then, can be the meaning of judgment falling on Christ? There is but one answer to it, as far as you are concerned—a little word, but a great thing—SIN! SIN! That dreadful thing, under which you lay helpless, and it may be hopeless, that very thing has given Christ occasion to show what He is for you, and to show it in the most solemn way.

It is impossible for a soul to have the blessing of God if sin be not only forgiven, but judged. But grace has come in—Christ has come in after the sin, and before the judgment. And why? That God might be able to send forth a full as well as a free message of pardon and peace. God must be able to fill the heart that accredits Him—that rests only on Jesus Christ the Lord. Such must be able to have the certainty now that sin—your sin—is judged, before the judgment. That your sin is dealt with more divinely than even the judgment will prove—that your sin has brought out the holiness of God. Nevertheless, to put it away brought out the righteous dealing of God, by which He makes you more happy than all His love ever could have done without it.

But would it be for God to say without this—"Thy sins be forgiven thee"? Very merciful, no doubt; but, could you respect God? Could you revere Him, if He who pronounced the hatefulness of your sin let you off? If He that thundered against iniquity closed His eyes to it? And more, He ought not; were such a great thing possible, it would be the ruin of your soul and of God's honour, if such could be.

I need hardly tell you, the reverse is the fact. The glad tidings are not merely of "love" but of "righteousness." They are not shutting out sin from the eyes of God, but having it all out before Him. This is what God has done in the smitten Christ, and all that God feels against evil, all the

hatred of His nature against a selfish, vain, proud, rebellious race, has already come out. Do you believe in Him? Then not an evil thing that has passed in your heart, not only what you have done, but what you are, but has been charged upon the spotless Son of God! Most righteously God takes delight in Christ; He gives out His expression to His joy in this Man, which drew out all in God in the delight of what He was, as He walked up and down on earth.

Now, another thing, the delight God could have in Christ is transferred righteously even to such a poor sinful creature—to you or me it may be shown and is shown, if we have received the word of God.

God is not giving people abstract propositions to believe. I know nothing worse than a mere creed, a vague confession that means nothing, and confessing sin in such a way has a deleterious effect. When men are in earnest, sin is not confessed in a crowd; no, the closet is the place for true confession of sin. A sin common to all, all should confess together; but I speak of souls that have wants for eternity, whose deepest want has not been met. You know you are not fit for the presence of God; you know, when you read of Him, of His untiring devotedness. Is that what you are? Ever doing good to those around. Is that what you have done? Never sought His own will, never once! Came to do the will of God, and only did it. That is the One who was smitten for sinners, and when all His ways had brought such glory to the Father. It is thus and thus God gives that beloved Son and faithful servant. We see in Him a complete renunciation of His own will for God's glory. He enters into and bears the judgment of sin, that sinners should be saved.

If this be the form and depth of the grace that God can show, what shall we say if you despise it? God speaks of “neglecting so great salvation.” Are you neglecting it? Have you secured it? Is He yours now? Can you say in the sight of God, “I have come out and confessed my own sins”? Have I come out before God alone, and taken God's part against my sin and against myself, and been willing to go down to judgment in my conscience before God. Not hoping, and in the very hope showing that I do not believe the wrong I have been doing Him and His love? No; the only way that proves you have a sense of it is, that you come out and stand as a guilty and self-condemned sinner, and

own you need His mercy; that you need that Saviour, that salvation, to meet your soul; that unless you have God dealing with all you have been, and putting it away in holiness that has forgotten nothing, you cannot be saved.

Blessed be God, we have to do with a God that can forget nothing, and has laid hold of all we are, in order to deal with it in a crucified Saviour. What, then? To receive Him, to take Him from God, to know this, is what God means for me—that it is the very reverse of presumption. My need draws me to Him. Ah, do not theorise about sin; bow to this, as God's way of screening, cleansing, putting away all; so that even He may "remember (them) no more"!

But it is by a smitten Christ—no other way; and once He has that before Him, blessing can flow out, and the Spirit, instead of being a convictor of sin, can cause the refreshing streams of His grace to flow.

On the second occasion of which I read of this stream flowing from the Rock, we find the people just as bad as ever. Flesh is never better. We must not think it is any-wise remarkable that flesh should shew itself. There is no good in any save what is in Christ; and only so far as Christ is before the soul, that which is of Christ will be manifest.

We see Israel forgetting God, with no thought of His grace. What could they shew but a rebellious spirit? But God always acts as the "God of all grace." The time is coming when He will show Himself the God of judgment. You may well tremble. It is of the mercy of God that He has not yet closed the door. Israel broke out in complaints, the most ungrateful and unreasonable. The Lord says, "Speak to the Rock"; and Moses takes the rod, gathers the congregation together, and says:—"Hear, now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?" "And Moses lifted up his hand, and with *his* rod he smote the rock twice." Not only the spirit of Moses is an utter falsification of the grace of God, but what he did was opposed to the will of the Lord. He took *the* rod. He did right. But with *Moses'* rod he smote the rock. Who told him to do so? He took the ground that unbelief does constantly—that the faults, the sins, the failure of the people of God, make it necessary they should be (as it were) saved over again!—that because the people had failed God, that God had failed the people!

He supposed this through haste. Overcome by the rebels, provoked, he acted differently from the word of the Lord, and from the truth involved in it. The rod the Lord told him to use was the priestly rod of Aaron, not of Moses. You have its history in this book. Never were the people in a more critical condition than when Korah, Dathan, and Abiram had stirred them up to dispute the grace of God that had given Moses and Aaron their high place; and the Lord used that occasion to bring out the character of the priesthood. He not only destroyed their misleaders, but showed the difference between man's pretension and God's gracious power.

The rods were laid up before the Lord (Num. xvii.), and that of Aaron was taken, and caused to break forth into fruitfulness; the others were left dead and worthless—Aaron's alone bore fruit. Which shows that the only power that can bring the people through the wilderness was the intervention of grace, the power of resurrection life, that produces life where all is dead; and the Lord Jesus is the only true and adequate expression of it. There was the rod given to show that *nothing was too hard, nothing too good* for the Lord; then when all is hopeless, it is just the time for God to show His resources.

This rod Moses was told to take; but he, filled with indignation, smote the rock. The incongruity of smiting the rock with the first rod would be seen at once, but he takes his own.

Who was responsible to represent God? It was Moses, and a precious, honoured servant he was; but he misrepresented God. This was most serious. Who is misrepresenting God now? O, beloved friends, it is the crying sin of Christendom—ever rising up before God—what sins are not? But this is one of them. Where, then, is the testimony to the grace with which He deals so pitifully with His people, because of the value of Christ? His is a redemption so complete that God would not add to it. Here is the gravity of the sin. The reason why people cannot rest simply on the blood of Jesus is, that they do not really believe in the full divine glory of His Person. If they entered more into *who* He is, they would believe more readily *what* Jesus has done. For whom has He done it? What God thinks of most is what will glorify Him. Would saving little sinners glorify Him most? No; but great

sinner. There never was a soul the worse for having a deep view of sin; you cannot exaggerate what your sin is in the sight of God. A little sight of sin goes with a little value of Christ. When God gives you to feel what it is, and what God has expended, in the Lord Jesus, then how blessed to find that this is what meets His heart! and the only thing that can give pleasure to God in a guilty man, is to come confessing all, and to rest on Him.

May not a soul be guilty of dishonour, unwatchfulness, unprayerfulness, satisfied with what we hear?—not the word itself penetrating the heart and conscience? Beware of it, my beloved friends; if the enemy has gained an advantage, has darkened the soul. What, then? Must the work be done again? Is sin to be slighted? How does God meet this? He has not merely given a sacrifice but a Priest; One who enters into everything—to whom you can bring your difficulties. Go into His presence. That mighty work cannot lose its value; and the proof of its perfection is, that it was done once and for all, and never to be repeated. He died *for* sins once, He died *to* sins; that is what we know now.

We see the craving in souls after something yet to be done. If God had ordered the rock to be smitten then, why not now? The word was plain—"Speak to the rock." Cleave to the word—never reason on it; cleave to it—rest on it, and you will find the foolishness of God is wiser than man. That which seems slighting sin, is the deepest testimony to it.

Constant asking for forgiveness, is sinning and repenting, and sinning and repenting; there is no real depth in either. The deepest judgment that can pass on sin has passed already on the only One that could bear it, and bring you deliverance.

It is all a question of believing *who* He is, and *what* He has gone through. This is what God gives you now to rest on. Doubt not, but believe in the efficacy of the work of Jesus Christ. You have Him now not merely living, but fruitful in resurrection. You have but to "speak," and all the blessing comes. It is an assured spring of blessing. You can go to God—not merely to ask Him to intercept the judgment, but by Him you believe in Him who gave Him glory, that your faith and hope may be in God. Can you say that you now count on Him? I speak of your faults as that which grieves your soul; grieving the Spirit after you receive salvation is of all things most grievous;

after all the blessedness—after the proof of His love, that you should forget Him. Do not add, then, a deeper insult, and slight what God has given. Make much of Christ—make all of Him that God is making. I appeal to your own conscience, to say what has He not met? It is impossible to find a difficulty which God has not anticipated. All are pressed to come boldly, with the certainty of finding grace for every time of need.

How easily a blessed and honoured servant of God can forget it! Principles are all very well for fine weather, but the time will come when nothing but Christ will stand, and nothing but such a Christ will meet the wants of your soul. Forget it not; you are members one of another—you have to do with all that love Him, and ought to have to do with the hour of their danger. There is an enemy watching to dishonour Him. There is nothing so dreadful as to dishonour Christ. What was the proposition of Moses? Are we to suppose we have no such danger?

May God then keep us in the midst of all our weakness, cleaving to Jesus—using Him for the need of others, and never hesitating to do so. To disparage His grace is the same for a Christian, as to do without it in an unbeliever.

Why, in the face of such a presentation of Jesus, should you be another hour without Jesus—an offer pressed on you by God Himself? May the Lord give you to decide if your heart has been turned; if it has been seeking to escape, you are escaping eternal life—risking, nay, insuring eternal judgment.

Think of Jesus; but think of both sides. You are afraid of being saved—afraid of losing somewhat of “the life that now is.” You cannot be saved on *your* terms. God’s terms are these—Be you a sinner ever so ungrateful, and ever so guilty, still He wants to bless you, to save you; and not only that you are to be saved, but to know it.

When you take that ground, beware of the enemy; he can speak as an angel of light—it is a lure of destruction and of dishonour to Jesus. He will tell you you are not fit to bear His name; then you need the more such a Saviour. Remember the rod that budded; life out of death. What can it not do? What can it not bring through the wilderness? Jesus smitten for you; Jesus living for you.

The Lord bless you so fully, that you will feel all blessing apart from Him is only a snare of the devil!

ON THE MESSAGE TO THYATIRA.

(REVELATION ii. 18-29.)

LOOKING at the messages to the churches as a picture of the successive conditions of the professing Church of God on earth, from the day when she left her first love till the day when she is spued out of Christ's mouth, thus showing the final result of losing the first love; we have Ephesus, the church in her coldness; Symrna, the church under persecution; Pergamos, the church in her worldliness; Thyatira, the church in her corruption, and a remnant separated; and Sardis appears to be the church in her deadness; Philadelphia, the church in weakness, but faithfulness; and Laodicea, the church in lukewarmness.

The whole gives a successive picture of the state of the professing church during the last 1800 years, from the day she left her first love till the day she is rejected by the Lord Jesus Christ.

Coldness is succeeded by persecution, persecution by worldliness; worldliness is followed by corruption—a state which runs on to the end, but which has running alongside it a condition of deadness, one of weakness, but faithfulness, and another of lukewarmness. These last four run on side by side to the end—that is, to the day the Lord deals with the Church in judgment.

Thyatira is the corrupt state. It is generally referred, and I believe justly, to Popery. It reminds us of the Popery of the present day, just as Sardis gives us Protestantism, and Philadelphia what we have at the present time; while Laodicea sets forth the state of lukewarmness which has crept over Christendom.

There may be something in the names of these churches. Ephesus means "Desirable;" Symrna, "Myrrh," which may give us the thought that when the pressure of persecution comes there is a special fragrance to the Lord; and it is remarkable that there is not a word of complaint or rebuke addressed to the saints in that condition. Pergamos means "Elevation," and corresponds with the tree of Matt. xiii. It gives the thought of the Church exalted by the world. Pergamos answers to the state of the Church in the days of Constantine, and his son, Constans, when Christianity became popular, and was patronised by the world.

Thus the term, "Elevation," seems a very suitable one.

Thyatira means "A sweet savour of labour," and it is interesting to remark that the Lord speaks so much of her works. There was a fragrance attaching to her labour in which the Lord could delight. Sardis means "That which remains," in keeping with the exhortation in the Epistle, "Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain." The connection, at any rate, is rather remarkable. Luther's preaching of justification by faith was such according to God. It is to that, probably, that the Lord refers when He says, "Remember what thou hast heard."

It is well known that Philadelphia means "Brotherly love," "The love of the brotherhood." When we are on the ground of the truth, brotherly love can be in the fullest exercise; there is no hindrance to it.

I suppose it is true that a vision appeared to Constantine or his son? It is stated so. It is only mentioned as the common report. The Church histories say so, and we will take the report at its value.

Laodicea is compounded of two words, "people" and "righteousness." The description seems very appropriate, for they were a very self-righteous people. "Thou sayest," says the Lord, "I am rich and increased with goods," &c. "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire"—that is, "divine righteousness."

The names seem very appropriate to the condition of each. Surely there was in Ephesus that which was desirable in the sight of God, while there was surely a precious fragrance to the Lord when persecution was going on (Smyrna). And the condition set forth by Pergamos was certainly elevated in a new and extraordinary way. So in the period included under Thyatira there was a sweet savour of labour to a certain extent.

The angel is the representative of the assembly, the one standing before God in the assembly; as "I am the angel Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God." The word "angel" is not used merely for a heavenly being, but for a man also. When John sent messengers to Christ, they are called angels. In each assembly there was one person whom the Lord specially addresses, and who represented the whole. He was one whom God could trust to hear what He had to say to him, and to convey the message to others. He is one representing the whole, and who had an ear to hear what God had to say to him.

Do you think the angel must necessarily mean a single person?

Sometimes the word "angel" is used when there is not a person meant. We read about "their angels," referring to children.

When it says their angels, it means real angels.

I question if any particular angels are referred to at all.

What is the meaning of that passage, "Their angels do always behold"? &c. (Matt. xviii. 10). Do you not think that each little child has its special angel according to that passage?

It may have; very likely it has. But I have sometimes thought that it simply meant a representative, which might be addressed to an assembly when no particular person was referred to.

In the Epistles the saints are directly addressed; here the addresses are through an angel. There is a distance noticeable; things are not in their primary condition. Failure has set in, so God has to keep them at a distance. He retires into an atmosphere of reserve, and deals with them by means of the spiritual.

The angel is one to whom he could communicate his mind.

Probably: one representing the whole, and one calculated to understand and convey the message entrusted to him.

Do you think that this one had a prominence above the others?

Yes: from God's point of view. There was no appointment. There can be no question that God has His own special messengers for His own special service. I am sure one would repudiate the worldly system of Bishops; still the thought of one specially in prominence is not contrary to God's mind.

I suppose it is always the case that spiritual power will commend itself?

I suppose so. I think any one would acknowledge Paul.

Christ is called here "the Son of God," which comes with wonderful power when we consider the state of things in the midst of which He is seen. He appears here as the Son of God, that is, in the fulness of divine glory, the One who is Son over His house, and the one who is the true foundation, though the superstructure is decaying rapidly. It is a comfort to see that, in the midst of all the corruption of Thyatira, Christ is still Son over His own house. Observe the use of

the term in Heb. iii. 6. In Matthew xvi. 15, 16, we see that the foundation of the Church of God is the Son of the living God. Whatever corruption may set in, the Son of God is still the resource of the faithful.

Does "the Son over his own house" take in the thought of priesthood?

I do not think it does. It is an accessory glory there. He is Son, as the Apostle and High Priest of our profession; and then comes an additional glory, He is Son over His own house. It is a distinct glory from the Apostleship and High Priesthood.

What is meant by the words, "His eyes like a flame of fire?"

The thought of fire is judgment, and the thought of the eye is intelligence. His intelligence as to the state of things results in an indignation suited to His glory. Then as to His feet being like fine brass. His feet, that upon which He stands, and by which He comes into connection with things, are characterised by righteousness dealing with man responsible.

It is judgment in connection with righteousness?

Yes; intelligence resulting in unsparing judgment.

I suppose gold, being "divine righteousness," man has nothing to do with it?

Yes; it is imputed to him.

What is meant by "committing fornication, and eating things sacrificed to idols?"

Woldliness, and recognising centres not of God. It is civil evil, as one may say, and religious evil. Fornication is the friendship of the world, which is enmity against God; and eating things sacrificed to idols, is turning away from God's centre and identifying one's self with human centres. Observe: He takes the fullest notice of the condition of things. He first of all praises what He can, and then blames what He has to blame. It is blessed to see that the praise always comes first—a principle which you will find all through the word of God. In the Epistle to the Corinthians, the Apostle Paul, in the first chapter, praises what he can, and afterwards shows them where they are wrong. It is the same in the Epistle to the Colossians. If you read only the first chapter, you would not think anything had gone wrong; but when you go on to the second, you find he shows them the error of their ways. In the nineteenth verse of this

chapter the Lord recognises all He can, and in the twentieth He says, "Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee," &c.; "the last more than the first"—that is, as evil increased, they had been doubly diligent.

What difference would it make if we read faith before service?

Perhaps that is the proper order. It is natural that faith should come before service. It is interesting to connect the nineteenth verse with the twenty-fifth. In the former we find faith and love, but we do not find the other cardinal virtue, hope. He gives them that which produces it in the twenty-fifth verse. In 1 Corinthians xiii. you have the three. So in Romans v. you have faith in the first verse, hope in the second and fourth, and love in the fifth. In 1 Thess. i. 3, you have the three combined. It would seem that the Thessalonians had not the true thought as to the hope, and He gives it to them, as here. The first two chapters are Paul's recollections of them, and in the third chapter he begins a new date, "Wherefore, when we could no longer forbear," &c. If you notice, he does not say anything about hope. The first two chapters, in which we find faith, hope, and charity, refer to the condition in which he left them when he planted the gathering; he left them exhibiting the three graces in all their brightness. But during his absence the Judaising teachers got among them, and when Timothy returns to him, bringing his report as to their state, he has nothing to say about their hope, but confines himself to their faith and love. He takes occasion, in chapter iv., to deal with the question of hope in the fullest way; and it is interesting to see how the assembly is looked at as recovered in the fifth chapter, where we have the three again spoken of.

We find the same in Ephesians, Colossians, and Galatians, as, for instance, in Galatians v. 5, "We, through the Spirit, wait for the hope of righteousness by faith;" and 22nd verse, "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith." So in Eph. i. 15-18, Col. i. 4, 5, Heb. x. 22-24 (where "profession of our faith" should read "confession of the hope,") and 1 Peter i. 22. It shows us that Christianity is not complete without the three; in its complete form it embraces faith, hope, and charity—*i.e.*, love.

I suppose one could have two without the third?

Yes; but if so, one is not walking in the power of the Holy Ghost.

If one possesses faith, must he necessarily have some measure of love?

Yes. We read of faith working by love.

Will one have hope also?

Not necessarily. A soul walking in the Spirit will have the three. It is by the Spirit we cry—"Come, Lord Jesus." If we walk in the Spirit we will answer to the Spirit's cry.

"Every man," we read, "that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, as he is pure." I suppose living in the power of the hope would have that effect?

Surely.

Faith may be in exercise apart from hope; but hope scarcely can apart from faith?

No: faith must come first.

I suppose many are exhibiting a considerable measure of faith, who have not hope at all?*

Yes, who have never heard of it. But there will always be love if there is faith.

Is there any stress to be laid on the "now" in 1 Cor. xiii. 13. "And now abideth."?

Yes; it is a present thing. The force of the text is what we have now—not what will abide, but what abideth.

Can there be love apart from the truth?

I do not believe there can be true divine love.

I suppose there might be love in the measure of the truth we have?

"This is love, that we walk after his commandments."

We frequently hear persons say that they love every child of God, and yet they themselves may not be walking in the truth any more than those they profess to love. Is that divine love?

That love may be of the lower order. We are told by Peter to add to brotherly affection the love of God. Brotherly affection includes everyone, but the love God applies to those walking after His commandments, being a corrective of brotherly affection. In 1 John iv. 20, we read, "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar;" but it does not stop there. It tells you who to love. "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that

* Doubtless the speaker here refers (as elsewhere) to the true Christian hope—the Lord's coming to take up His people to meet Him in the air.—
ED.

is begotten of him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep his commandments." Thus the circle that looks wide in the twentieth verse, narrows itself when we come into the next chapter. There can be no love apart from the truth.

Is it not true that we love every child of God, whether they walk in the ways of God or not? And do not we show our love to them, not by walking with them, but by walking with God?

Quite true. It is an injury to our brother not to walk according to God's commandments. It is a stumbling-block to him, and tends to draw him aside.

We see many unconverted people exhibit amiability, kind-heartedness, and all that. What kind of love is that?

It is natural character, natural affection.

Is it not of God?

Yes, it is, according to the first creation. The young man that came to Christ exhibited traits of natural character, which caused Christ to love him. We are right to recognise everything amiable and lovely in the first creation as of God,

Then natural affection is right?

Of course. It struck me as remarkable that, in 2 Timothy, where we are specially warned of the evil of the last days, and where the absence of natural affection is spoken of as one of their characteristics, that Paul specially refers to Timothy's tears of affection for him.

Had this remnant in Thyatira taken the place of separation?

No: I think they were godly within. Like the Hebrews, they had not gone without the camp. They were apart, but apart within. In verse 20, the word "few" ought to be omitted. The case of Thyatira is worse than that of Pergamos. In the latter it was Balaam, but in the former Jezebel. Things we had enough in the days of Balaam, but in the days of Jezebel evil had reached a climax.

In 1 Kings xvi. 29-34, you have a description of the state of things in Israel in that day. In the very worst time of Israel's history Jezebel appears. So here we find the very darkest period of the Church's history is come. Balaam has been displaced by Jezebel. Balaam was the man that commenced the evil. In Jezebel we have the woman, as it were, that hid the leaven in the three measures of meal.

What is, or has Jezebel been in the Church?

A special evil influence, corrupting everything.

Was not disregard of God exhibited in the re-building of Jericho?

Yes. It is remarkable that the two things go together.

I suppose this is a woman taking the place of authority?

Yes. It is an exercise of authority contrary to the command in 1 Timothy, "I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man." Christ says—"Thou sufferest that woman Jezebel to teach." In Timothy we have God's order when things were set up in the earth; here we see that order subverted.

He does not recognise her in the character she takes to herself?

She is responsible for the place she occupies. She was self-ordained.

God always binds the responsibility on those that take it upon themselves. I suppose that is a universal principle?

Yes; just as in the case of the servant in Matthew xxiv. Perhaps Lot might be taken as an instance. He took the place of one who had the heavenly calling.

We see it in all the systems. Men have taken upon themselves the responsibility of overlooking the flock of God. Well, God binds it upon them. So Christendom has been professedly Christianized in a wrong way.

I suppose you would say that Jezebel was akin to Popery?

Yes. I suppose this refers to Popery before the Protestant element was introduced.

Do you not think that it goes on?

Yes, but here there is nothing but Thyatira.

Quite so. The time for Sardis has not come yet in the historic view.

In the case of Naboth, Jezebel seems the principal mover. So with the murder of the prophets. She usurped authority in these cases.

Yes. I think that "calling herself a prophetess" is a usurping a place of authority to which she had no right. Besides this, she also teaches.

Do we not see here the worst elements of the world brought into the Church? Rome joined, for instance, the theatre to the Church, and the Church was the patron of all sorts of amusements and pleasures. Would that be comprised in the teaching to commit fornication?

Well, it certainly is recognising that friendship of the world which is enmity with God.

Yes ; that may be in a modified form, but here it is in its worst character.

I think in fornication you have the thought of that which *God has forbidden*. I should be a little sorry to have fornication limited to theatres and places of amusement. Do you not think the faintest letting down of the barrier between the Church and the world would be what is referred to here? It is the direct admixture with the world, bringing in what should be distinct and different. We have not only a contrast here, but more than a contrast. God's commandment was that a Christian woman should not teach, but here is a woman teaching, who is not even a Christian.

Why is the order of the words "fornication" and "eating things sacrificed to idols" different in the twentieth verse from that in the fourteenth? In the fourteenth verse perhaps the owning of centres that are not of God leads to improper commerce with the world?

It might be so.

What is the form of evil in "eating things sacrificed to idols?"

It is identifying yourself with altars not of God. In the twenty-first verse we have the patience of God beautifully brought out.

Who are meant by "my servants?" Has it a more limited application than teaching this to the children?

It is teaching these things to the saints of God.

It was not merely the professing people, but Christ's?

Yes.

Would you think that such a thing as bishops having honours offered to them was included in it?

I daresay, what we see at the present day. It is the eating and drinking with the drunken ; it is friendship with the world, and indifference to God's centres and the recognising of other centres. In verse 14 we have passive evil tolerated, but in verse 20 active evil sanctioned. In verse 14 they had there them which held the doctrine of Balaam ; here there was an active energy of Satan with regard to his wiles, and that with respect to the children of God. "Behold, I cast her into a bed"—that is, into a place of sleep and ease. "They that sleep, sleep in the night"—that is, the very thing she is caught in. That very thing becomes her doom.

It is the Christians who are reproached when leading God's servants astray. They look up to ministers, and forget that they lead them astray. Peter was led astray through fear of the brethren. The tendency of the people under the systems is to cast all their responsibility on the minister, forgetting that they themselves are responsible—that God holds individual Christians responsible for leading His servants astray.

The whole assembly was guilty of suffering such an influence to be brought to bear on those that took the lead. The whole meeting is responsible for the way in which the ministers were influenced.

That is, getting into ease and worldliness?

Yes. Christ says in effect, "The thing you desire I will give you." I will cast you into a bed, the place of ease and rest; you desire rest, and you shall have it. Then He says, "Those that commit adultery with her," which is worse than fornication, "into great tribulation." He says, "That great tribulation is coming upon the world; you have chosen the world, and if you are to have the ease, you must have the consequences of the ease—tribulation which is coming upon the world."

Has it more the force of, "I do cast," than "I will cast?"

Yes; it is present action. "I gave her space," He says, "to repent, and she had no will to repent."

Is not that a very forcible expression, "I will kill her children with death?"

That is a contrast to Pergamos. The doctrines existed in Pergamos, but they had been so active in Thyatira that children were the result—"I will kill the children with death." There is a contrast between "my servants" and "her children." It is absolute death from the presence of the Lord.

Are those that were to suffer tribulation the servants she had seduced?

No; the Lord removes the righteous from the judgment to come. No doubt they take warning by what is written. You see He does not say that they (the servants) commit adultery with her; they commit fornication and eat things sacrificed to idols. That is a different thing from committing adultery with her. In chap. xvii. there is a key to this. He says, "with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made

drunk with the wine of her fornication." There is the full form of the evil in chap. xviii.

Who are her children?

Those that are the produce of her doctrines. Paul says, "I have begotten you through the gospel." She has been so active in introducing her doctrines that children have been born to her—unconverted persons, of course.

"All the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts." He takes that character in Jeremiah xvii. 10. That is what He was doing in the ruin of Israel, to give every man according to the fruit of his doing. In Romans viii. we find, "He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to God." Now Christ has come in and given us the Holy Ghost, and instead of searching the heart to give every man according to the fruit of his doings, He soon searches the heart to find out what is the mind of the Spirit.

When we reach this chapter in Revelation, we find evil and ruin have come in, and the Lord subsequently returns to the Jeremiah character, that is, as a Judge—a judicial Governor, and not as a Saviour. He "searches the reins and hearts, and will give unto every one of them according to their works." The answer to the Christian character is in Psalm cxxxix. 23, 24, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." We respond to Him in that character.

ON THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN.

(CHAPTER IV. 7, Continued.)

THIS verse commences a profound subject. It introduces to the Divine nature. Having spoken of Jesus Christ come in the flesh, the Spirit ascends to His nature, and here it is necessarily abstract thought. This is natural. We must be more abstract in the description of a man's nature than of his person. Having described the person of Christ, it is the natural business of the Spirit to speak of the Divine nature in its essential qualities and in its manifestations.

As regards this nature, two distinct statements are made, *viz.*, that "God is light," and "God is love"; but the Spirit lingers more over the second than over the first. "God is

light" is the contradiction of the old lie of Satan, which accused God of lying in—"Ye shall not surely die." "God is love" is the contradiction of the other lie—"Hath God said, ye shall not eat"? Ah, then, He has refused you something; He does not love you. Here, then, are light and love, and they contradict the serpent's lie; and this, as before remarked, keeps us in company with the early part of Genesis, where individual, and not dispensational matters, are in question.

The Spirit lingers longer over the love than over the light; not that it is not quite needful to say both "God is light" and "God is love." If God be not light as well as love, all is over with our souls, and we are left without hope; but the Spirit delights to linger over love, and here (*v.* 7) He unfolds this subject, shewing that not only is God love, but absolutely love is of God, and every one that loveth is born of God. All love is of God's creation. There is no other way of comprehending God. Does the beast understand man? No. 1st Cor. ii. tells me that if you have not the Divine nature, you cannot understand God. If you have derived life from God, you have a capacity for understanding Him—not otherwise. If there is no love in you, you are not born of God; you cannot understand Him.

Verse 8 follows as a matter of course. Not having the nature of God, you cannot know Him any more than the beast knows you.

In verse 9 we have the manifestation of the Divine nature. There are three distinct revelations of God made known to us—1, His personal glory; 2, His essential glory; 3, His character in manifestation.

1. We have the glory of God, the invisible God, whom no man hath seen, or can see—the unapproachable God. Here you have only eternally to worship.

2. We have the Divine nature, which can, and does display itself in action; and 3, we have His character, which may be illustrated, and is so, in the Man Christ Jesus. We are introduced to the glory of God, but no man can penetrate that mystery; it is right to stand inside. This is true, and yet the nature of God can be, and is illustrated: "In this the love of God was manifested." Every virtue in Jesus was a ray of the Divine character. Simple this is to understand, very blessed to grasp! Thus we are largely and fitly introduced to God. If I am introduced to His nature, it is that I may

therein find my own blessedness, while His character compels me to cling to Him for ever. Now the nature of God being love, when He set about to manifest it, He did it perfectly. It would be impossible for love to be more entire in its expression, "for God sent his only begotten Son," &c. God lifts up His love, as it were, before you in its form of perfectness, its meridian glory, and here the Spirit loves to linger.

We have in *vv.* 9-10, two different aspects of this love—first, that the Son is given, that we might live through Him; second, that He might be the propitiation for our sins. If we read John vi., we find that life comes out of sacrifice. There is no life but in feeding on the slain Lamb. Here we have the two aspects severally given. In the Gospel it is seen that there is no life but in death; sin is put away by the death of Christ.

It will never give me life to look on the Lord Jesus as an example. He is that, but how am I to get rid of my sins? There is no life but by the death that puts away sin, and therefore the voice of Christ links death with sacrifice.

There is another thought on this tenth verse. Love in God is self-originating; it is not so in us. In God, love is an emanation of nature; in you, love is an emanation of the Divine nature, not of your own nature; no, not even when you get it from God. And this is the contrast, that when we compare our love with the love of God, ours is as nothing. How He outshines us! Nothing moved Him to love but His own nature. No attraction of ours based the history of the cross of Christ. Its foundation lay in the Divine nature. We find this in *v.* 10. We never drew out the love of God, it flowed out spontaneously, and this gift of the Son was the expression of it.

Verse 11.—Humbling, but very precious—very humbling, love in us, is matter of exhortation; it is not so with God. Let me say it, who could exhort Him? Ah! but He has no rival nature, "God is love." In you there is the rival nature, and there, though you be participant in the Divine nature, you need an exhortation to love your brother. Love is God's nature, but I am a complete creature, morally composed of principles of love and hatred, and I am therefore the proper subject of the exhortation in *v.* 11.

(To be continued, if the Lord will.)

GRACE AND TRUTH.

(MARK vii. 1, 30.)

It is said that the Lord is the truth. He is "the way, the truth, and the life;" and in this character He brings out the true nature of all things in every respect. He brings out what God Himself is, and what man is, in perfection, and in sin too.

The words of the Lord here bring out what the reasonings of man really are. "Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." We find both in this chapter—truth in the first part of it, then the grace that came by Him; the truth as to what is in man's heart, and the grace of God's heart, as seen in the case of the poor Syrophenician woman. It is a great thing to have both together. God is love, that is part; but God is light. Suppose we separate them for a moment, man is unfit for God and heaven; so that it is an immense comfort that both are found together in Him.

There is nothing more striking than the two essential names of God which are thus brought together—"Love" and "Light." The light breaks in upon our souls, and shows us what we are. If we are in the light, as He is in the light, light will only condemn us, if we have not the love with it. There is perfect light, that brings us just as we are into His presence, and then we find perfect love in Him! Our comfort is that the light does come, and reveal everything just as it stands; light makes everything manifest. Light and love being God's very nature, you cannot separate them. If He reveals Himself as light, He reveals Himself as love; it is always the case. In all the details of a Christian's life you must have both.

In many instances in Scripture you find the way light penetrates into the soul, and shows what man is, but always with attraction to the heart. Sometimes terror may predominate—there may be more of the light and less of the love apprehended; but the conscience *must* be reached—even for the Christian. He is accepted in the Beloved, and can say, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me" (Ps. cxxxix. 23). You could not say that if there was a question of imputing sin to you. The prodigal finds that he is lost, but he is attracted to the Father—"I am not fit to be received, still I go."

There is never a real work in a soul without a certain

attractive power. It is the revelation of God to the soul. In the case of the poor woman of the city who was a sinner, light showed how dreadfully vile she was ; still "she loved much." The measure of light which shone into her soul is not separated from the measure of love ; and while it breaks her to pieces, still it attracts her.

When the Lord brought the fish to Peter's net (Luke v.), he knelt and said, "Depart from me." Why, then, did he go up to Him? It was not terror ; there was a sense of his sinfulness, still he is drawn to Him. "Fear not" is the answer of grace to it all.

When God is revealed to the soul there is nothing left in darkness. "The true light now shineth ;" it manifests everything. If anything is not revealed now, it will have to come out at the day of judgment. But that will not do ! If it is revealed now, and I am in the light as God is in the light, I am in the presence of love as much as of light. There is a perfect revelation of God. There is growth in the apprehension of it, of course ; but both light and love do break in upon the soul. If conscience is not reached, all will fade away as the morning dew. On the one hand, conscience, thoroughly reached and brought into the light of God's presence, and on the other hand God's love made known.

It is blessed that we are brought to God with everything brought out that we want to know. But then we must look to the cross. Jesus stood there before God, drinking the cup in grace that He had to drink for us. He was made sin for us. There we see full light shining out in judgment, and full love, not sparing His Son for us, to put the sin away. There you find the full revelation and expression of it.

In the Gospel there are two parts—one the revelation of God ; the other, the work done by the Lord standing as Man for us on the cross. You find both in 2 Cor. v. 18—"All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation : to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself." He was down here reconciling the world to Himself ; the world rejected Him in the character—"not imputing their trespasses unto them." Then he adds : "And hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation ; now, then, we are ambassadors for Christ." That is the

second part. First, there is the revelation of God Himself, then the word of the Lord reconciling—not revealing sin—but Man standing before God in the One who drank that cup in grace to us. Here it is more the character of God, thus revealed, than the work. “He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” We have that righteousness.

In this chapter (Mark vii.) the full truth comes out, first as to religious man—very religious man. He must not have a dirty hand. The things of this world defile. The condition of those who have this notion of cleansing comes out: the commandments are set aside by the traditions of men.

The commandments maintain in everything a positive relationship which God has established. You must have “no other gods but me,” and must “love your neighbour as yourself.” I need not go into each of them; but every relationship has been maintained in them. The summary is, “Love God with all your heart, and your neighbour as yourself.” Man has not fulfilled the law, there has been no real fulfilment of it. It is much easier to wash the hands than to wash the heart—“to bow down his head as a bulrush,” as Isaiah says (lviii. 5). Man hides the state of his heart by all these things; it is not cleansed. “In vain do they worship me,” while “the heart is far from me.” Light comes in and searches the religiousness of man, and pronounces complete contempt for it. Religiousness is the sign of hardness of heart.

Take it from the beginning. Cain is the expression of the religiousness of the world; he was just as religious as Abel, and his sacrifice cost him more than Abel's. Cain was tilling the ground from which he was taken. Ought he not to worship God? Of course he ought, but *ought* often stands for nothing. There is another question. “What hast thou done?” and “Where art thou?” are very different. We should keep the commandments, of course; but that is not the real question; the question is not if the *law* is right, but if *I* am right. It is totally different. Abel says, ‘I am all wrong; we have been turned out of Paradise, and if God meets me I am condemned.’ His sacrifice was a thorough confession of sin, and that he could not come in himself. He came in the way God desired, and God testified of his gifts that he was righteous. But Cain says, ‘He turned us yesterday out of Paradise, but I can come to Him.’ That is

the very thing that is so awfully wicked. Of course, people ought to worship God; but the question is, Can they come? A sinner is not fit to go to God; and I have the conviction that I cannot go; but God has shown a way of infinite grace, and Abel found it.

There are two questions, What you are? and What you have done? The question to Adam was, "Where art thou?" and he ran away, knowing that he was naked. He says to Cain, "What hast thou done?" There there was positive sin. The real question for souls is, Who is able to come? "There is none righteous, no not one." Are you, reader, what you ought to be? Nay, who is?

It is bold—audacious, coming to God when you are not righteous. But God has appointed a place where He can meet us; there is a secret consciousness in souls that they are unfit to come to Him; and man invents a way to do a great deal—gives the fruit of his body for the sin of his soul. But all this cannot purify the conscience, there is a craving after purity. Man's thought is trying to purify himself outwardly, because he is not pure inwardly. He knows there is a claim he has not met, and cannot meet. There is incessant toil in "washing pots and cups;" there is pain and sorrow which owns the sin, but never can get free from it, and the result is, "making the word of God of none effect through your tradition."

Then He calls all the people to make it plain to them (*v.* 14); that it is not what enters into a man that defiles him, but what comes out. Then I get another part of the truth; the heart of man in itself is detected. You are full of religiousness; but look what comes out. Then he gives a terrible list (*vv.* 21, 22). All these evil things come from within, and defile the man. *What about the good? Not one word from the Lord—not a single word. He had nothing to say.*

You may be affectionate; you may have an amiable nature, or a cross nature, like an animal; but there is no good thing in the flesh. Man is a judged creature. It is needful to get hold of what man is. Man will set up man, but God has pronounced his judgment.

I do not deny man's cleverness any more than his natural affection. Suppose I had invented the finest telegraph in the world, what good would that be to my soul? "His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish" (Ps. cxliv. 4).

Some are affectionate, some are cross ; no one denies that. But what has it to do with the state of the soul before God ? The former might be a snare to a man, and draw him away from God ; but it has nothing to do with his state before Him.

Take the history of man all through. When God did not deal with man in a special way, he became so bad that the flood came ; then He gave the law, and man made the golden calf. He sent prophets ; they were slain. "What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it ?" Then, He says, I have one Son, and when they saw Him they said, "Come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours."

We are living in a world that has rejected God come in grace. The question is not what we *shall be* in the day of judgment, but what we are now. If you look into details, not merely man was wicked, but the first thing he does is to depart from God. It was the first thing with Adam. The first thing man has always done, when God set up anything good, was to spoil it. The last test of man was God sending His Son, and this drew out his enmity. There was lawlessness when there was no law, law-breaking when there was law, and God-hating when Christ came in grace. That is a positive history of man—it is our history, and it is better to know it. It is better that light should come in now. "In the flesh" there is "no good thing."

But God has set forth a meeting-place with man in the cross. God has set up that as the one way by which we can meet Him. Meet Him we must. Christ is the Altar, the only meeting-place. If you do not come as a sinner, you do not come in truth, and you do not get the grace ; you do not find man as he is, and you do not find God ; you get a lie ! Thank God that Christ is that Altar ! There is the fullest grace for us, but you must come in the truth of what you are.

Thus the Lord has first ripped up all these outward religious services which do not let God into the heart. He gives a terrible list—terrible because true—of things that defile, and says all come from within. The light has thus come in, and He did not come to judge, but that they which see not might see. He came unto a world of darkness. Light will not let me say, '*Man is a sinner.*' That is quite true ; but '*I am a sinner.*' But never till then is there light in the conscience. The thief on the cross says, "Dost

thou not fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? and *we* indeed justly." He brings himself in, and there is truth in the inward parts.

Now all dispensations are set aside, and sovereign grace works. There are thus two parts in the Gospel: God in Christ reconciling—His manner of dealing with the world. God comes into a world of sinners, as such. Think of that—it is another way of dealing with people. Men know there is a judgment; it is a solemn truth. They think they ought to be fit for judgment, and hope to get into a condition that will suit the judgment. Christianity puts its seal on the judgment, but it is not Christianity, though it fully recognises it. The Christian applies that judgment to everything he does every day, if he is wise.

Suppose a man owes me £1000. If I claim it, it is righteous; if I pay it, it is a different thing—in both cases I say the debt is there, but the actions are different. God does come at the judgment day and demand from man; the grace of the Gospel is opposite. Men are in their sins, and God comes in grace into the world and dies for them—wicked, defiled, just as they are. The world never receives it, never sees that God is dealing with men above their sins, instead of waiting for the judgment day, when they will be judged according to their own righteousness. It is an opposite way of dealing with the same sins.

Now, if we are to have part with Him, it must be in anticipation of the judgment, finding Him as perfect light and perfect love revealed; that is what Christianity is—God showing them another way of dealing with them contrary to judging them; and that is *saving them!* You see how it was with this poor woman. We read that "He could not be hid." She had no title to promise whatever; religiousness was first set aside; all pretension to righteousness was set aside. She was a Canaanite, of the cursed race—"Cursed be Canaan." They were people under a curse—that is, opposite to a promise. The Lord, in order to test her heart, dealt with her on this ground—"Let the children first be filled"—"to the Jew first." He seemed hard, but it was to bring her to her true place—what God always does. You may try and spare souls. It will not do; you must get them in the truth before God, in order that grace may have its full place in their souls.

"It is not meet to take the children's bread and to cast it

unto the dogs." She owns all this, and answered, "Yes, Lord." Would you all say "yes" if the Lord called you a "dog"?—in common language it means "a cur." He puts her on the right ground, where simple grace could meet her. 'I know I am one of these Canaanites; it is true I have not a word to say for myself;' but she had a word to say for God! The Pharisees justify themselves, and God condemns them; the publicans and harlots justify God, and God justifies them. She says, "Yes, Lord"—'but even for a cur you can show this goodness.' She seeks something at His hands, above the curses and all.

The moment the soul is brought to this, it has real knowledge of God and of itself: that is what we want. Truth must be there—must break down outward religiousness. It is more distressing when I learn the evil of my nature, than seeing all the sins that have gone by. I have no righteousness, I have no promises, but I have God, I have Christ revealed in love in a world to which He came because men were sinners! The blessed Lord never said, "Come unto me," until He had come into the world where sinners were.

The whole life of Christ was an expression of perfect light, and holiness, and love; so that where sin abounded grace did much more abound. The convicted sinner finds himself in the presence of One who has perfect love to him.

Have you ever said, "Yes, Lord," when the Lord has pronounced that you have no righteousness—no anything? Have you acknowledged that it is so, and that you have not a word to say, but that you trust the perfect love that brought Him into the world? The soul has to be brought to the same point—that it is perfectly worthless, but only to find a title in God's heart, and be brought to the consciousness that there is none in its own.

The heart of God meets the broken heart of the sinner, and the broken heart meets the heart of God. When the heart of man really meets the heart of God, it is a wonderful thing. The world occupies men; the things of the world occupy them; we excuse ourselves; there is no meeting God there. The moment I am brought down, through grace, and have the consciousness there is no good in me at all, then I find I am in the presence of Christ: I find One in whom there is nothing but good is my Saviour! The thought of what *God is towards me*, takes the place of what *I am towards God*. This could not be in righteousness but through the cross.

I speak of the heart meeting God now without any righteousness of its own, without promises; in the presence of God, just as I am; in the presence of perfect love that cannot deny itself, that stopped at nothing to make it good, but was made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. Then we learn to trust God perfectly in His perfect love. The work—Christ does it Himself alone; and I find God Himself—God justifies me, meets me exactly where I was, with the fullest conviction of sin in His presence, but with the knowledge that He cannot deny Himself, and that He loves!

I have only one word to add. We are bought with a price—we are not our own. In consequence of this perfect salvation, this finished work, I am no longer my own at all. Whatever I do, I should do all “in the name of the Lord Jesus.” It is a new place to which I am brought by divine righteousness. I am brought to God Himself, into the full light and favour of God. The Christian is set in this world to be what Christ was. He that saith he abideth in him ought to walk even as he walked, always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in my mortal body.

If you call yourselves Christians, and I suppose most of you do, you are “the epistle of Christ.” That is the place where God has put you; it is not “you ought to be,” but you are. You are to express the life of Christ in a world that rejected Christ. The effect of bringing you to God is that you are perfectly purged. He sends you back to witness what is of God. Blessed place! There is the responsibility, not of a man, but now of a child of God, heir and joint-heir with Christ. That is where you are, beloved friends. All responsibility flows from the place man is in; all know this in human things. The Christian’s responsibility is founded upon and measured by the thing he is already. Christ’s precious blood has saved you. The blood was put on the right ear, the right hand, and the right foot of him who was to be cleansed (Lev. xiv. 14). Nothing that does not suit the blood is to come into your head, or into your hand, or to be seen in your walk. There is responsibility flowing from the place the blood has brought you into.

We are in the presence of God as “dear children”—that is what you are; now act like your Father. Light and love are taken as the standard of life for a Christian. “Ye were

sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord ; walk as children of light." You that name the name of Christ, is that the way you are walking ? Is Christ your motive for everything you do ? It is not a rule of this or that ; now I have to please my Father. Is Christ the motive for everything you do in your house, your dress, your ways, your life ? In all the things that constitute your everyday life, is Christ your motive, and nothing less ?

The Lord give you to believe His perfect love in redeeming you, perfecting for ever those that are sanctified. In a world where He has been rejected, He leaves us to be the expression of Christ. It is infinite blessing to us, but requiring watchfulness and care—Christ the constant motive of everything we do.

LETTERS ON SUBJECTS OF INTEREST.

"You give me the following extract:—'When Jesus was crucified, and died, and was buried, God's Church was crucified, died, and was buried in Him ; and when He was quickened, arose, and ascended, she was quickened, arose, and ascended in Him. If you see Him, you are of His Church.'

"Now this is altogether incorrect. It is like some Calvinistic doctrine, overstrained and misapplied. In the first place, the Church of God did not exist as a matter of fact at all, while the blessed Lord was doing the work of the cross, or while He was in death, or even resurrection. The Church did not exist until the Holy Ghost was sent down by Jesus from the Father (Acts ii.). What is stated above is quite true of the *individual*, who is now a member of His Church, of His body, of His flesh and of His bones ; and the Scriptures that might be adduced to further the ideas will be found, on examination, to apply to the sinner who has become, through grace, a member of Christ."

"In Ephesians iii. you will see that Paul has before him believers from amongst the Gentiles. Verses 1 and 2 speak of such ; the 'you' and the 'ye' clearly applying to them, as the 'we' and the 'us' do to Jews (of whom he had been one) of verses 3 and 4. In verse 5 he joins both : first, by the 'we' and 'us,' referring to the Jew in 'mercy,' and the

little parenthesis in the A.V. taking in the Gentile—as saved by ‘grace,’ a fine and lovely distinction of the Spirit; mercy must be showed to those who had sinned against grace, which the Jew had. I mean here that you will frequently find this distinction made in Scripture.

“All this part of Ephesians treats of individuals, whether Jews or Gentiles, and verse 11 proves the truth of this; while in the Church there is neither Jew nor Gentile, all time distinctions having vanished away. So that the expression ‘when Christ rose we rose’ is incorrect, if applied to the Church, while true if applied and appropriated to the individual in whom faith has wrought. Hence also that of Col. ii. 13—the ‘you,’ there, still being Gentiles; the last clause of the verse, the correct reading is ‘us’ (Jews), ‘Having forgiven us all trespasses.’ This is not ‘the Church’ either, but the individual, whether Jew or Gentile. Indeed, the Church, as such, is not even named in Colossians, though individuals composing her are, unless in chapter iii. 15, in the sentence, ‘to the which also ye are called in one body,’ and this even after showing that in the *new man* (v. 11) ‘there is neither Greek nor Jew;’ rather than in the *Church*, or in other Scriptures.

“Individual sinners, who are to become members of Christ’s mystical body, were dead in trespasses and sins—there was no movement of the heart going out towards God. The blessed Lord Jesus goes in divine grace into that place for sins, and was there made sin for us. As Man, God quickened Him, and raised Him up, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenlies (Eph. i.). Then God puts forth the same power—and bestows faith (the ‘gift of God,’ ch. ii. 8) on individuals—quickening dead souls, and appropriates in divine grace what Christ passed through to the individual, who is thus co-quickened and co-raised with Christ, and co-seated in Christ Jesus in heavenly places. Remark here that ‘in Christ’ is resurrection, or new creation; while ‘in Christ Jesus’ is union on high and place.

“Remark, too, in the details of God’s working with souls, that a point here (largely developed in Epistle to Romans, chapter vii., which comes in between the quickening of the dead soul and union with Christ by the Spirit), which does not appear in Ephesians. I refer to the exercises passed through after the soul is quickened and converted to God, but before

union takes place. This experience is needed, because of our state. Life is in the soul long, it may be, before the Holy Ghost dwells in us, thus uniting us to Christ. This is because Ephesians only treats of God's operations in chapter ii., in carrying out the counsels of chapter i.; not that of the soul's history when under these operations, which we find in Romans doctrinally, and in Acts historically. Hence all experiences of the soul (as Rom. vii.) are omitted.

"Then again, *time* not being counted now, since Christ went on high (it has to do with the Jew and the earth), we can say, 'When Christ died I died,' &c., &c. His quickening and that of individuals who compose the Church, now going on, happens in what *does not count as time at all*. It is a timeless interval since the Cross, and the counting of 'times and seasons' will commence at the taking up of the saints to heaven, and God's fresh operations with the Jew and Israel. Hence Christ's ascension and that of the Church is all looked upon as one thing. This is an interesting point, and worthy of some more special development.

"Of course, as you say, the Church is 'composed of living stones,' but this is looking at the Church as a temple or spiritual house, as in 1 Peter ii. If, however, we speak of her as the body of Christ, all individuality, as the thought of 'living stones' conveys, is lost in union with the Head in heaven—the body of that Head. This is Paul's way of looking at her.

"Neither justification, quickening, raising up, or the like, happens apart from the exercise of faith in the soul. You are quite right, therefore, in saying that otherwise you would have been justified before you were born, which is not the case.

"The thought you refer to as to our being in Egypt in fact, in the wilderness as to experience, and in Canaan as to conflict, is long current. Indeed, an old tract published years since, called 'Fact, Faith, Experience,' shortly developed these thoughts. I should say that it simply means, that the world being Egypt in type, we are there in our bodily presence as a simple historic fact. Then the truths of redemption having been applied to our souls, we find that while we were *of* it, now we are *in* it; but that it has changed its character as regards us, and we find it a wilderness, instead of being our home and portion. Then again, we are, by faith, in the land—seated in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus.

If, therefore, we realize our position practically, we find the conflict, which belongs to such, our portion. I think it means no more than this. John xvii. 15, might carry out the thought; but John speaks morally of things, and does not take the believer to heaven, unless in one or two passages, as chapters xiv. 2; xvii. 24. Besides, all these thoughts are typical, and must not be strained too far.

“As to when a person is sealed—on conversion, or afterwards? Does a soul believe before he is quickened? Does believing, quickening, and conversion all take place at the same moment of time, and then at some future period sealing takes place? A few words will suffice, I think. The sealing of the Spirit takes place, generally speaking, when the person has believed in Christ for remission of sins. Quickening takes place in the action of the Holy Ghost, through the Word of God, or the truths revealed therein on the dead soul. This action produces and imparts faith, which is simultaneous with the quickening. A soul believes in what has been directly revealed, though forgiveness and salvation may not be known for long after. The new life thus imparted, being in action, finds the incongruity of the evil within. It begins to find its sins, as measured before God, a burden it cannot bear; even when forgiveness of these sins is known, it finds an evil nature over which it has no power, and this leads to the exercises of Rom. vii. till deliverance is known. In fact the sinner requires two things for peace: forgiveness for what it has *done*, and deliverance from what it *is*. When it learns to look out of self at Christ for forgiveness, the sealing of the Spirit takes place. And at times there may be the experiences of Rom. vii. in a modified way, when forgiveness is known, and the Holy Ghost there. Still, to take up Rom. vii., pure and simple, it does not suppose that the Holy Ghost has been received; it is an abstract case that is assumed. Generally speaking, however, the Holy Ghost is given as a seal, when Christ is rested upon for remission of sins; this is never the case at the moment, when the soul is born again.”

“I find in the case of the younger son, in the parable (Luke xv.), a happy illustration of the various divine actions of God with a soul. When he “came to himself” he was *quickened*, and faith was in exercise. This produced a judgment of his state before God, and, as measured by His goodness, when he said, “I perish with hunger.” This was

repentance—the action of the new life. Then came *conversion*, in, “I will arise and go to my father.” Conversion means simply that the heart is turned towards God, which had been turned away, from two Latin words, which signify to turn towards. Hence a man may be converted, according to its simple literal meaning, more than once; as Peter, to whom the Lord said, “When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren,” *i.e.*, when his heart was turned back again after his fall. But while one could be thus converted more than once—the heart turned back to God when turned away (How blessed that it is so!), one can only be once born again, or born of God, and this never can be undone or redone.

Thus, when the prodigal was on his journey to meet his father, all the exercises of his soul present those passed through by the soul before sealing takes place. The father’s kiss would typify the time, probably, when sealing took place. This meets, I think, your question on that point.

“Christ is the expression of God’s righteousness, as having been set on high as Man, by God, acting in the full consistency of His nature towards One who had met all the claims of that nature as to sin. It is only meet that He should have this place, when God’s nature is considered. He should act consistently with it, and, in righteousness set Him on His throne; thus making Him the expression of His righteousness. We read, then, “He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might become the righteousness of God in him” (2 Cor. v. 21). When we are set on high in Christ, we also become this expression of His righteousness as in Christ; and thus Christ is our righteousness. If we look at Romans’ truth, it is rather our being justified by God himself, in virtue of Christ’s sacrifice, and acting in righteousness; we are thus counted righteous of God, rather than our being in Christ, God’s righteousness.

“It can truly be said that ‘Christ took our nature upon Him,’ if you mean our human nature. His incarnation is of living importance, and eternal. Of course He did not take it in its sinful condition, I need not say. He was ever that ‘Holy thing,’ even when born of the substance of His mother, and by the power of the Holy Ghost. While the humanity of Adam was innocent in Paradise, and then came fallen humanity; His was holy.”

II.

One has said, speaking of the manner of Stephen's death, in Acts vii., "He was alive in death." A fine commentary upon that happy moment in the history of the Church; and a *true* commentary also. Jesus, I may say, *died* in death that we might *live* in death. He met death *in all its horrors*, made sin for us, suffering death as judgment, as the pouring out of righteous wrath on sin. But we speak of life in death, and though under the hand of murderers, the region of life and of glory is seen beyond and above it, and is seen as the *home* of our *spirit*. This is to be "alive in death." "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."

His *victorious* life we receive from the risen Lord. By death He destroyed him that had the power of death, and the life He imparts to us is life in victory—not life to be tested, as it was in Adam (Gen. ii. 17), but life that has been already in the battle, and has won the day, as we speak. The display of this in Himself was sweet to Christ—the acknowledgment of it as in Him, by the faith of others was sweet also. In John xi. we see the first—that He delighted in the opportunity of displaying victorious life, and waited, therefore, till the sickness of Lazarus had ended in death, that He might then shine as "the resurrection and the life." And in Matt. xvi. 17, 18, He lets us know with what delight He had listened to Peter's confession, which owned Him as the Son of the living God, the One who was about to break the gates of brass asunder, and give His saints power over hell, and the power of death.

III.

"I have been struck lately with the line of truth in the Acts of the Apostles. As you are aware, the Head takes His place in heaven in chap. i., and in chap. ii. the Holy Ghost descends to form the Body. This work begins at Jerusalem and gradually spreads to 'the uttermost parts of the earth.' Of the Jewish believers, Jerusalem was the principal gathering; of the Gentiles, Antioch. At the former, Peter, James, John, Stephen, and Philip were the principal gifts. At the latter, Paul, Barnabas, Julius, Manaen, and Simeon.

"From Jerusalem, Philip evangelized Samaria; and Peter, Lydda, Saron, Joppa, and Cæsarea. From Antioch, Paul and Barnabas were used to convert souls and form assemblies in Antioch of *Pisidia* (different from Antioch of Syria), Iconium, and Lystra—and subsequently Paul and Silas were

used for the same purpose, and starting from the same point in Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth, and Ephesus. Silas sometimes accompanied Paul, and sometimes not, and this until Paul's active ministry was closed by his imprisonment at Jerusalem and Rome.

"As the Lord guided, they stayed in places, *perhaps* eight years at Antioch; eighteen months at Corinth; three years at Ephesus.

"But how manifestly different were God's ways with the gifts and the ordinary members of the body. Never do I find the members moving about except when *driven* out by absolute persecution (Acts viii. 1), but on the contrary I find Paul and Barnabas selecting the chief men amongst them and giving them the charge of the flock in their absence (Acts xiv. 23), and the Holy Ghost most strenuous in rebuking the restlessness of the Thessalonian saints (2 Thes. iii.) whom trial was inducing to throw up their employment. The labourers, as we have seen, moved about as the Lord directed.

"With these Scriptures before me you can well understand how uneasy I felt when I heard that you were again trying to leave your present home for America, and how grieved I was to hear

* * * *

"I have therefore thought it well to bring before you the line of truth I have referred to, in the hope that it may lead you to accept cheerfully, even though 'with persecutions,' the place the Lord has allotted to you. You will see from what I have said that the number of gifts in a place should be no hindrance to another gift going there—that the place of those converted and gathered together in the name of the Lord, is to stay and adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour in all things, *in the place where they have been brought to Christ*; and this the more especially if they in any way answer to the 'elder' of the Acts and Timothy, and Titus; for though we have no power to appoint, we should surely recognize those who seem used to take the lead in the assembly, even though they be not gifted members. I feel sure you will take what I have said in good part as from the Lord. I desire only your sanctification. With much love, &c., &c.

IV.

"I spent the Lord's day at C——, but the condition of the assembly is not such as to give one much encouragement. When saints are not 'awake to righteousness,' the Holy

Spirit cannot fill their hearts with praise. It was a contrast to my last happy Sunday at S——, but one must be prepared for the rough *and* the smooth. I have not time to write more, but desire to send our kindest love to all the dear saints with you. They are much on one's heart in prayer."

QUERIES AND ANSWERS.

“W.”—“The second time” (Isaiah xi. 11). If the future restoration of Israel is the “second time,” what is the first? There is nothing about the return from the Babylonish captivity in Isaiah.

A.—It might have been said that the return of the Jews from the captivity in Babylon, as well perhaps as that of some of Israel from Assyria, &c., was the deliverance as forecasted by the prophet, had not the words “the second time” been used. Isaiah wrote and prophesied until the end of Hezekiah's reign, some time *before* the Babylonish captivity. The prophetic Spirit thus makes the return from it only a little rehearsal of the great future one, but names this latter as the “second” great intervention of the Lord, when He would not only recover a remnant from Assyria and Babylon (Shinar), but from Pathros, Cush, Elam, &c., as well. He may refer, too, to the first great deliverance out of Egypt, as typical of the final one; still it was rather a whole “nation,” than the “remnant of his people, which shall be left.” The first and “second” seems to refer to the return from Babylon, &c., then to come, and the final return when the day of glory arrives.

Q.—“*We* speak,” &c. (John iii. 11). Whom does the Lord associate with Himself to make “*we*”?

A.—There is nothing peculiar in the use of the plural here. The Lord speaks as personating the divine teaching of which He was the exponent, using the “*we*” in contrast with that other of which Nicodemus was the representative, as He refers to by “*Ye* receive not,” &c. The “*we*” and the “*ye*” stand in contrast in the same verse, though the Lord, as one person, spoke personally to Nicodemus as another.

Q.—What are the “earthly things,” and why so called?

A.—The “earthly” blessings are those of this earth—the kingdom for which a Jew looked according to the promises of God, and for which a new birth was needed, as the Teacher in Israel, Nicodemus, should have well known from the Prophets, as Ezekiel xxxvii., &c., showed. They are called “earthly” in contrast with the “heavenly” blessings which Jesus had come to reveal.

“Zeta.”—How are we to understand the “kingdom of God” in Luke xiii.? Is the kingdom of God corruptible; if not, what are we to understand by the “heaven”?

A.—It is here the kingdom as left to the responsibility of, and taken up in profession by man—not, of course, the kingdom established by God in power, which works through righteousness. The “fig tree,” emblematic of the Jewish nation, was doing harm to all around; the name of God was blasphemed amongst the Gentiles through them. It cumbered the ground, and would be cut down. Jesus had sought fruit from it in the three years of His ministry, and found none. His intercession on the cross brought the answer in a fresh offer by the Holy Ghost sent down at Pentecost. This offer we have in Acts iii. This was met by the imprisonment of the apostles and the martyrdom of Stephen. Then all closed—it was “cut down.” “This year also,” was this fresh grace from God. (See Acts ii.—vii., *passim*.) Another tree takes its place (Luke xiii. 18, 19); but is taken up by man in responsibility, and thus it would become a great sheltering power; while God wrought out His own counsels.

“Leaven” is not used in Scripture as typical of what is good; but there are different uses of it, and possibly different shades of meaning. In 1 Cor. vi. 8, we find “old leaven,” and “leaven of malice and wickedness” distinguished. It would seem that old creation is the thought in the first-named clause, and the fruits of it in the second. Now the old creation in itself is not evil; but man having fallen, it has become different in state to what God had made. Evil came in, and what was perfectly good fell. The gradual and sure cropping up of the old creation in Christianity is manifest and allowed. The Church was set in the power of a new creation by the ascended Lord, through the Holy Ghost. She was to display its virtues while in the old. The workings of the old man and flesh soon began, and so

displaced the place of the new: flesh took the place of Spirit. Thus the old creation—fallen, and under sin—worked like leaven, and will do so till all is leavened,—till the Lord removes those who remain of his people, and nothing remains but the old man—the old creation, fallen, and yet professing Christianity, and in responsibility that which owns, or had owned, God's authority, His kingdom here on earth. Everything within the sphere of the kingdom in profession has this tendency. Every appeal in a religious way to man in nature. Music, architecture, painting, sculpture; that which arouses the senses, gratifies the tastes of the natural man, is that which makes, so to speak, the leaven to rise. So also in sensational preaching—popular, and suited to gather the crowd. This leaven works in a hidden way at first, “till all is leavened”—till old creation replaces the new; till Antichrist replaces Christ. Then comes the judgment.

“The leaven of malice and wickedness” would be rather the evil fruits of the old creation, as fallen from God.

“It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.”

SOME THOUGHTS ON JOHN'S GOSPEL.

CHAPTER XII. 26, &c.

At *v.* 26 we see that to serve Him means to follow Him; and if I walk with Him I will find myself at length with Him in glory. Parents are sometimes a hindrance in the way of following Jesus: they demand obedience, and it is true that we owe them obedience, because God has given them this authority; but if they will use this authority to make us disobey God, we must appeal to God and return to the highest obedience. So much for the obedience we owe to authority. At *v.* 27 Jesus realises death, His soul feels how bitter is the cup of the wrath of God; but He scarcely shows His horror of this death when, turning His thoughts to God, He submits immediately. He did not give time for reflection as to the bitterness of the cup, but He glorifies the Father's name. To be entirely subject to the will of God is the means of having greater revelations and blessings; so here the Lord, immediately being subject, finds that the cup was the only means of drawing men to Him (*v.* 32). We have a similar example in *Matt.* xi.; there Jesus submits

Himself to the Father's will, saying, "Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight;" because the Father had hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and had revealed them unto babes. But from this submission He derives the consciousness of a greater glory and blessing, viz., "All things are delivered unto me of my Father." The same is true also of us; if we are subject, we shall have greater and better blessings.

It is a good and useful thing to realise in our souls the sufferings of Christ: one understands better how He cannot suffer again, and that we are fully saved, and then the heart has a greater horror of the sin, on account of which Christ suffered so much; and we know too, better the love of God which moves me to love Him. At *v.* 31 the Lord says, that "Now is the judgment of this world"—this judgment did not then follow, it was only pronounced. Man having failed in both ways, under law and without law, Christ was presented to him, but having rejected Him, judgment was pronounced on this world. He who does not believe is already condemned—now. Satan is the god and prince of this world, and he is cast out; *i.e.*, in principle, though God permits him still to try and tempt men to see if they will follow Christ or the world. Up to this point He was putting man to the proof, but now the trial is over, and man is declared lost. This *v.* 32 is very solemn for the world.

At *v.* 32 Jesus speaks of the moment when He will be outside the world on the cross between earth and heaven to draw men unto Him. The world has not the least idea that it is judged, and therefore it goes on towards the judgment without giving itself any thought. In the words that Jesus quotes from Isaiah (*vv.* 38-41) we see the perfect long-suffering of God in waiting on the people for repentance, because these words that contain the judgment had been pronounced many centuries before; and though the Lord confirmed the sentence, the execution of it has still been suspended during this time; because Paul repeated them to the dispersed Jews. Ver. 41 is a bright testimony to the divinity of Jesus, if the 6th Isaiah, quoted by the Lord, be examined. There Isaiah speaks of Jehovah, and here the Holy Spirit tells us that Isaiah spoke of the glory of Jesus.

At *vv.* 42 and 43 it is said that many of the chief rulers believed on Him, but, preferring the praise of men, they would not confess Him. Paul in Rom. x. tells us that two

things are necessary for salvation, to believe with the heart, and to confess with the mouth. And Jesus says, "Whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I deny before my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. x. 33). At v. 47 the Lord says that He is not come to judge, but to save; nevertheless He will judge one day, for judgment is given into His hands. With this chapter all connection in His ministry with the Jews ends absolutely: in chapter xiii. He commences His work, which He will complete in heaven.

A MEAT-OFFERING.

LEVITICUS II.

To Thee, O God, with joy we sing
 Of Jesus' walk and ways;
 A pure "Meat-Off'ring" thus would bring,
 All-fragrant to His praise.

In all His perfect path, from birth,
 We see Thy glory shine;
 In ev'ry step He took on earth
 Was grace and truth divine.

Thy faithful Witness!—wholly true,—
 He was, indeed, The Light;
 Though only those His glory knew
 To whom Thou gavest sight.

'Twas joy, yea, meat and drink, to Him,
 To do Thy holy will;—
 Though sorrow's cup o'erflow'd its brim,
 He wrought Thy pleasure still.

Thine only Son, He pleas'd Thee well;
 Perfection Thou did'st see;
 And Thou did'st ope the heav'ns to tell
 The joy He gave to Thee.

'Tis little we to Thee can show
 Of all that He hath done,
 But Thou dost all the virtues know
 Of Thy beloved One.

His praises we would fain proclaim,
 And, in His Name divine,
 Upraise to Thee pure worship's flame:
 The "frankincense" is Thine.

SOME THOUGHTS ON JOHN'S GOSPEL.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE Lord down here was ever a servant among His own, since He came to minister, not to be ministered unto; but now that He was about to depart, His disciples would have thought that He necessarily ceased to serve them. And Jesus, knowing that His hour was come that He should depart out of this world unto the Father, rises from the supper, so as to separate Himself from them and go figuratively to heaven. He then takes a towel and a basin of water and sets Himself to wash their feet. In this way His service always continues in heaven for His disciples. If His earthly service is ended, now He commences the heavenly. If He is obliged to leave them to go to heaven, He will act so as to make them fit for heaven, that they may be ever with Him. Oh, the infinite love of Jesus! The distance from heaven to earth does not exhaust nor diminish His love. He in heaven will still occupy Himself with us, as in fact He does occupy Himself, praying and interceding for us. He has not only loved us to the cross, but He loves us for ever, even "unto the end."

It was the work of slaves to wash the feet of those who came from off a journey; thus has Jesus made Himself a slave to serve us. Simon Peter is ever putting himself forward, but always without much spiritual intelligence; however, the answers the Lord gives him are of great value to us. It was the sense of the greatness and the majesty of the Lord that made Peter say, "Dost thou wash my feet?" But Jesus makes them all feel that if He could not remain in their company, He must cleanse them from every uncleanness, in order that they may be with Him in heaven. We could not enjoy communion with the Lord if our feet were defiled walking in this world of sin; nevertheless, though we are sons of God, we may constantly defile ourselves in the mire of sin. Peter then, whose heart desired to have a place with the Lord, replies:—"Not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." To this Jesus says:—"He that is bathed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit; and ye are clean." He that was bathed, that is, born anew, of water,—figure of the word—is all clean; this work is never renewed. Our righteousness is Christ, ever the same before God for us; and the infinite value of the blood is ever before the eyes of God; so that there is no need to have any doubt

as to our acceptance with God. But if we are always clean, our feet are not so always, because we have the flesh in us, and sin within and without us. The Lord is in heaven our Advocate, and is Priest for us, interceding for us that we may not fall; and, if we fall, He lifts us up, assists us, strengthens us, applying to us by the Holy Spirit the holy word, making us feel and judge the evil, that we may be humbled, and more careful for the time to come. In this way the soul is restored.

In all this it is not a question of imputation, which has been settled once and for ever at the cross, by Jesus Himself. But if I am not vigilant and neglect to nourish myself in the things of God, evil thoughts enter immediately, and communion is interrupted, lost; because I cannot have communion with the Lord if the heart is occupied with evil things (see 1 John ii. 1, 2). When one fails, one ought not to have recourse to the law, which condemns us, nor to the renewed application of the blood, because the sacrifice of Christ cannot be renewed—expiation has been made; but we ought to have recourse to grace, remembering that Jesus is *there for us before the Father, interceding for us, to restore our souls*. It is there that grace begins: Christ intercedes for him who has sinned, then the Holy Spirit works in the heart to humble us. The intercession of Christ precedes, to produce humiliation in the soul. It is said, "If any man sin," not, if he repents: the repentance is produced by the intercession of Christ. See the case of Peter. Christ prayed for him, and Peter is humbled because Christ prayed for him; it was not because Peter was humbled that Christ prayed for him.

In the red heifer (Numb. xix.) we have a very beautiful figure of this instruction. The blood was sprinkled seven times in the place where God met the people. This work was not repeated; but if a person had touched a dead body, or was rendered unclean in any way, then such a one was to wash himself in the water where the ashes of the heifer had been put. The fact is, that sin has been entirely burned at the cross, but when one who has been purged by the blood has been made impure in any way whatsoever, then the Holy Spirit applies by the Word the memory of the cross to restore the soul. With all this, communion is more easily lost than restored. An evil thought may be the occasion of a great fall. God sometimes allows it in order

to awaken the conscience of a Christian who neglects communion with the Lord. At other times falls are not only the effects of an evil thought, but of the state of the soul, which may be the effect of pride or too much confidence, as was the case with Peter. A fall is a chastisement of the greatest kind, as we see in his case.

What a comfort that Jesus is always there in heaven, occupied about us to make us enjoy Himself! In this chapter we have, then, a very beautiful figure. Jesus wishes our hearts to be full of confidence in Him. Who would do what He does—wash our feet? and nevertheless, the Lord! We ought to imitate Him, washing one another's feet, because such is also our portion as being priests, the Lord having introduced us fully into His position. But, to exercise this priestly office towards one another, we need much humility; we should entreat and speak to the weak brother fallen into an error, making use of the word with the power of the Holy Spirit towards him, and in such a way restore his soul. It is not the office of a judge, but of a priest.

At *v.* 21 the soul of Jesus is troubled, thinking that he who should betray Him was one of His intimate companions and friends. Remark the progress of evil in Judas: first, the lust for money, then Satan presents the temptation of procuring it, and finally the heart is hardened, when it is said that Satan entered into him, so that he betrays and sells his Master—a perfidy so horrible that many worldly men would not commit it. Judas thought, perhaps, that the Lord, by His power, would free Himself from His enemies, and that he would have his money; but when he saw that He did not free Himself, then he repented, but with the repentance of despair. At *v.* 20 we find the value of the Word of God; it matters not from whom we receive the Word, the essential point is if one receives the Word of God. The instrument who brings the word may be bad, as it was in the case of Judas, who was sent out to preach; and if he brings the Word, we are bound to receive it, because it is from God. He that receives the Word receives Christ, and he that receives Christ receives the Father.

John was leaning on the bosom of Jesus; so that Peter, who was farther off, asks him to enquire of Jesus who he was of whom He had said that he would betray Him. John was nearer, he was more familiar with Jesus, because

John loved Jesus, and Jesus loved John. It was his love, then, that kept him so near to Jesus, and therefore he was in a position to learn more from Him than the others. Some have asked if Judas took of the Supper; to whom the reply is, that, at least, according to the Gospel of Luke, it seems so: "Behold, the hand of him that betrayeth me *is* with me on the table" (Luke xxii. 21). But it is of no importance to us; first, because we have nothing given to us here of the Church, nor of discipline: and, in the second place, we have, as it is, a very useful instruction, because Judas had not yet been manifested as to what he was. Jesus knew him by His own divine knowledge, by which He knew everything that was in man; and if He had wrought according to His knowledge, how could we imitate Him? Our rule is that we should not judge unless evil is manifested; and had he been known as a traitor, who would dare maintain the doctrine and the practice that we ought to admit traitors, openly known as such, to the Lord's table?—and traitors of such a sort?

Vv. 31 and 32 are very precious. God has been glorified by the case of the Son of Man, and this is much more than the pardon of our sins, because the cross has glorified God in every sense. Had God destroyed man for his sin, His righteousness would have been satisfied, but not His heart; had He pardoned him without atonement, His righteousness would not have been satisfied. But the cross has satisfied every attribute of God—His majesty, His righteousness, His love, in fact, are perfectly glorified. God was, as it were, dependent upon man for this glory; and it is an immense glory for man to have glorified God; and that is what Christ has done on the cross; and, in return, man is glorified, as it is written, "and shall straightway glorify him." God does not wait for the kingdom to glorify Jesus, but He has glorified Him already, and that is what happened when He ascended to heaven, as the Holy Spirit testifies to us that He is now crowned with glory and honour (Heb. ii. 9). The pardon of sins and the glory are two very distinct things; God might have been content to have pardoned us and saved us, without giving us the glory, but the cross has so glorified God, that He is bound to glorify man.

At *v.* 33 it is said that men in the flesh could not go to the cross, and by the cross to heaven, because the cross would be their eternal death; as the Jordan would have been for

Israel, had they attempted to cross it without the ark. But now that Jesus has passed through death, we can go through it also ourselves; death is for us now but the door that introduces us into heaven.

In v. 34 we have the new commandment which is called "old" in 1 John ii. 7. It becomes new inasmuch as it comes practically not from the old man, but from the new, divine life in us, "because the darkness is passing and the true light is now shining." We ought to love one another, as Christ has loved us; this is the character of the love. Christ loves us notwithstanding our faults and our weaknesses; the motive for His love is not in us, but in His own heart, and we ought to love after the manner of the love of Jesus.

At the end of this chapter we have to find poor Peter full of self-confidence, and therefore God permitted his fall, in order that he might learn and find out his own weakness; then only would he be of use in comforting his brethren, after he had bitterly experienced his own weakness: but Christ prayed that his faith would not fail; He did not pray that he should not be sifted, for of that he had need; and He prayed for him not after he repented, or because he repented, but in order that he should repent.

LETTERS ON SUBJECTS OF INTEREST.

I.

"I WENT up to—— on Saturday, as I daresay you know, and, finding the brethren praying for the Gospel, was happy in joining them, and we found it materially increased the power in the Gospel meetings to have an hour's prayer before them."

II.

"I had not noticed the contrast of Matthew v. 48; Luke vi. 36. Might Genesis xvii. 1, Deut. xviii. 13, be a help to explain why it is 'perfect' in Matthew? As you know, he commends the truth to Jewish consciences, and they were aware that Abraham had been told to walk *before* the Almighty God, and that the Jews had been instructed to walk *with* Jehovah perfectly. Now, says the Spirit, carrying on the line, 'Be perfect *as* your Father is perfect.' I merely suggest this."

III.

“I am beginning to long to hear something of you all, for though one prays and trusts that all are well and happy, and going on with the Lord, yet (like Gideon and his fleece), one likes to have one’s faith confirmed by a sign. It was when the nobleman was on his way back the servants met him. Signs are not given to lead us into the pathway, but confirm us when we are in it.

“I conclude you have two readings—one on Sunday, and one on Wednesday—and feel sure you find them profitable and blessed. It makes such a difference when one remembers at each meeting that one goes not to meet man but the Lord; and though at a reading there may not always be the same body of truth brought out, yet it is good that all should be led to search for themselves, and contribute their share to the general profit. The presence of (prominent) gift is so far a disadvantage that it may produce laziness in searching the Word for oneself. In its absence, each one must bestir himself to contribute to the general benefit, and thus individual communion with the Lord, seeking Him to give light, is produced, and the result is positive blessing. It has often been remarked that in——, where teachers are constantly present, the saints are much less in dependence upon the Lord than in other gatherings, where they necessarily are, through weakness, cast over on Him.”

IV.

“I know you will like to have a line from me, and to hear how the Lord has prospered my way. I last wrote, I think, from——, and mentioned how happily they seemed to pull together, though in much weakness (the true place of the saints in these times), from the absence of any prominent gift. Y—— was my next halting-place, and I stayed there six days, giving them two readings, three Gospel meetings, a lecture, and an address to the school children. Through your prayers I had the Lord much with me in all. The first night we had Ephesians, as I had heard that some of the saints, through ignorance of the principles of the Church of God, had begun to stray away to systems of a Sunday evening. So we took up individual privilege in chapter i.; collective privilege in chapter ii.; and individual and collective responsibility in chapter iv., (chapter iii. is parenthetical), to ‘*endeavour*’ [how sad that, when responsibility comes in, there ever needs an effort—*none* when God’s counsels

and work (chapter i. and ii.) are spoken of]—to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, and thus, too, with the Spirit of Christ.

“Several questions were asked as to whether it would grieve the Holy Spirit, whereby we are sealed, to go to any place of meeting but our own, to which I had, of course, but the one answer. They may call it narrow-minded, but Christ’s was a narrow pathway, and His was the path of blessing. They have suffered much in——, strange to say, from the effect of too much ministry. It was for fourteen years the head-quarters of one of the brightest gifts we ever had—dear——. Many of the saints came out, I fear, rather to him than to Christ; and now that he is removed, though outwardly with us, I fear they are not so in heart, and consequently come very seldom to any meeting but the morning one on Sunday for worship.”

V.

“The Lord has been much with me since we parted, and, as you know, *His presence* is everything. How often are we like the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, who, though the Lord was with them *all* the way, did not know it was He until the *end* of their journey? For eight miles He was with them, and they knew not He was there. But, when once they had the sense of His presence, they thought no more of their fatigues, but went back the whole eight miles to tell the others of the One who had revealed Himself to them as the First-born from the dead.

“I am sure what we need is to cultivate the sense of His presence all the day long—then the wilderness would be no longer weary; then the longest journey would seem but a short one.

“It has often struck me what a distance the ‘wise men from the East’ (Matthew ii.) came to worship the Lord, and how richly they were rewarded! It has also struck me how the One who was ‘weary with His journey’ (25 miles) can, in perfection, sympathise with those who, like Paul, know the meaning of ‘weariness and painfulness,’ as well as ‘journeyings often’ (2 Cor. xi). May you have the constant sense of the Lord’s presence as your daily and hourly portion!”

VI.

“Weak is the moral effort we make in the service of Christ; but it has occurred to me lately with comfort, that though weak, service to the Lord by a believer, in thi

world, is the sublimest moral sight in the creation. For angels serve with a consenting will, a consenting nature, and in a consenting system. We serve against all within and all around, the flesh and the world, and I cease to wonder that the Church is called therefore into such dignity and such nearness to the throne in the Kingdom.

“Yes, and let me ask, Is there not a solemn warning to us in the history of Amaziah, in 2 Chron. xxv., to watch the state of our affections towards the Lord, and not to be satisfied by the mere performance of duties or services without a heart engaged for Him in the midst of these? For we read of Amaziah ‘that he did what was right, but not with a perfect heart’—that is, as I suppose, ‘not heartily, as unto the Lord.’ He did what he did, perhaps, through fear of the law, or to keep good account with his own conscience; but, in his doings, he had no care about the Lord, or His pleasure, or His glory, and was indifferent as to the state of his affections towards Him. Terribly, indeed, and more than we could easily have believed, he gets a victory over the children of Edom! In this, and in his previous acts—such as avenging the death of his father, and in dismissing the army of Israel—he had done right, according to the letter of the commandment, the voice of the prophet. But his victory became the occasion of manifesting how hollow everything may be where there is no ‘perfect heart’—no reference to God in our doings; no affection for Christ; and no concern about the coldness or barrenness of our poor heart toward Him.

“But to return to Amaziah. He gets a victory, but his heart not being already possessed by the Lord, his victory gets possession of it, becomes the master of it, and seats itself supreme there. Accordingly he is lifted up, he boasts and is proud, and the victory he got over Edom becomes the victor, is the master of his heart, because that heart was empty—not filled with the Lord. He, therefore, as full of his victory, boasts—challenges the King of Israel, and suffers loss and dishonour in the battle.

“But even more, the gods of the conquered Edom become the gods of his heart; he worships them; he adopts the spoils, the captives of his own hand in war, as the deities to whom he bows down! Monstrous folly!

“Is this not written that we may learn to what a length of blindness and stupidity, as well as to what a length of madness and self-destruction, the heart may be hurried that does not what it *does* in reference to the Lord? Whatever is done, should be done ‘heartily, as unto the Lord.’”

ON THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN.

(CHAPTER IV. 12).

WE have anticipated *v.* 12. It teaches us not to sit as scholars, but as worshippers in the presence of the Divine glory—that impenetrable veil. “No man hath seen God at any time.” Jesus said, “not that any man hath seen,” etc. When Jesus says this, we can say, ‘Thou hast seen the Father, Thou hast been in the secret of that light impenetrable to all save Thyself; “the light that no man can approach unto.”’ Jesus was in that light which was impenetrable to creation, and if He had not been God, He could not have been there.

Now if we love one another, we are partakers of the Spirit; and if we are partakers of the Spirit, we have the nature of God. God dwelleth in us by His Spirit.

VERSE 14.—And by the light of this new nature God is revealed in perfect love, and we can “testify that the Father sent the Son,” etc. God has through Christ a twofold connection with this world. He has a connection with this world because of Christ—demanding, as another has said, “What have you done with my Son?” God asked of Cain, “Where is Abel thy brother?” What has the world done with Jesus? This is the controversy. But again, salvation is come through Christ; God has sent His Son to be the Saviour of the world. Wonderful it is, to see these things all clustering round Christ.

VERSE 15.—We have the text of confession of Christ as a proof of the indwelling Spirit. To be sure we have. What said Jesus to Peter? “Whom do men say that I am?” “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” That is not a revelation of flesh and blood, it is the revelation of the Father. So he that confesses that Jesus is the Christ, dwelleth in God, and God in Him. It is a direct, personal dealing with the soul by the Father of lights, this revelation, which carries the knowledge of the Son into the heart. The Spirit delights to linger here, and, to speak as a man, we must excuse Him for it. He has reached the highest heights, and He cannot but linger there. You think there is repetition? Be it so—it is repetition ever grateful to our ears. The Divine Spirit speaks of the Divine nature. He tarries, and invites us to tarry with Him.

VERSE 16.—If I can look in the face of Jesus of Nazareth and say, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God,”

can that be accounted otherwise than by perfect love? It is well to have this re-asserted, for where do you dwell but in love? Can you dwell in power? Never! The throne may have power, but love has a bosom! John could rest on the bosom of Jesus, and we in eternal love. Nowhere but in eternal love! Nowhere but in love find a home! Our communion is in the apprehension of love. Our communion is not with God as a Judge, but as Love. And we are conscious of relationship.

We have *love with us*, and *love in us*. Here it is with us, and perfect, if we love one another. A poor perfection, indeed, if compared with the love of God, though good enough for poor creatures—a perfection far outshone (*v. 12*). Perfection in us is a poor thing when compared to perfection in God (*v. 17*); which gives those who were His enemies boldness to stand before Him in the day of judgment, with an answer for every demand of the throne. That is the Gospel! Grace has made provision whereby a rebel can stand in the judgment with an answer in his mouth. *I love my brethren!* No thanks to me. Ah! how the Divine nature outshines me! I defy your imagination to conceive anything finer. The offended God provides His rebel creatures with an answer to His own demands! We see this in Noah, Egypt, and Rahab.

And now what have we to do with judgment? We can measure it, for our righteousness is resplendent as the throne itself. Righteousness is seated on the throne, and the very same righteousness has invested me; for if Christ is the righteousness of God, He is my righteousness also. This righteousness is on me, so I can challenge the throne in my person. The throne has righteousness, so have I. So instead of a controversy, we have communion; we have fellowship, for we have the same glory—Christ. As a matter, then, of course, we have boldness in the day of judgment.

In verse 10 you have the underived love of God; in you love is derived, and there was nothing in you to attract love but your misery.

VERSE 19 shows this love in you is only a reflection, it is but a response. In God love originated, and this is well. It is well that the glory of the creation should be co-ordinate with the glory of the Creator. Well we may excuse these varied echoes of truth. The first speaks of place in God for you.

VERSE 20.—The brother is supposed to be a reflection of

Christ. He is not looked at by the Spirit in his own muddy, turbid condition, but as a reflection of God. Now if you do not love the reflection, how can you love the original? It is not a mere exhortation, but a command to love. The commandment makes the right thing the obedient thing. Suppose you love without minding the commandment, you are doing the right thing, but not the obedient thing.

Having ascended from the person to the nature, we here find commands suited to that nature as communicated to us. And we find a rest and a dwelling-place for the eternal satisfaction of the heart. We are introduced to His glory in His Son, we glory in it; we hear of His moral character, and find it all manifested in Jesus.

CHAPTER V.

You will remember our having referred to the confession of Peter—"Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God." The Lord sealed this truth in Peter's soul, and He seals it still to the heart of every believing sinner. "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee," etc. This is the simple but important history of the truth, whether given or revealed. It is the revelation of the Father written in the heart of the sinner, not by inbred power, but by distinct revelation. This is the origin of all life amongst us; it comes from the Father of lights. "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God." The confession of Christ is the fruit of the Father's revelation, it is the exhibition of that which comes from the Father.

Is there anything you would prefer to this? Would you rather that you should discover Christ by the exercise of your own intelligence? The scholarship of man comes by his own intellect. The knowledge of Christ comes by light from without and light within. It is a double revelation. If there were a candle burning on the table, what would I be the better if I had not an eye in my head? The candle may shine, but, if I am blind, I am in the dark still. I want an eye in my body. There is a double action required—the object without and the faculty for observing it within; and both these are from the Father.

Now, the more thoroughly I see my debtorship, the happier I shall be. I am a poor, dark, impotent sinner. Let me read in this, first, my debtorship to the Father. If I do believe that Jesus is the Christ, it is because I am born of God. It is no modification of my own old nature, but a new thing by revelation of the Father of lights.

And here, again, we have the Levitical marks of the clean animal. The law made a difference between clean and unclean. They were distinguished by the form of the hoof, etc. So it is in this Epistle. We have the marks of love and obedience. This is moral testimony to my title, and I would not refuse it. I would not refuse to have my title tried by moral tests. Could power of intellect satisfy me? Let me have the proofs of love and obedience.

VERSE 4.—(We may leave out the word “for.”) We have a weighty truth brought out here, “Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world.” Yes, it does, and it does so by Divine necessity. Let me ask you two things:—Was the Devil ever a conqueror? Was God ever defeated? Never! You may lay this up for your comfort, that the Devil has never conquered, and that God has never been defeated. It becomes, therefore, a Divine necessity, that that which is of God is a conqueror—always in victory. You may be a very different instrument from your Lord! He could say, “I have overcome the world.” You can but say, “My faith has overcome.” Faith in you does what Jesus did in His own person; but faith can do it, and it is blessed to be brought into the light of this comfortable truth.

I do not deny that Satan gets advantage over us too often, but all advantages do but return to his own confusion. And when Satan seemed to have the victory, when Jesus was under death for a moment—what was it, but to give to Jesus the more splendid victory? He was indeed as truly dead as ever man was, and in a worse view, as being under judgment, but only that He might gain the third day’s victory. If Christ appeared to be conquered, it but set forth His victories; if Satan seems to conquer, it is but for his own confusion.

The thing that is born of God is the power of God in you, gaining Divine victories, because it is of God. New and magnificent truth! I find myself part of that mighty thing which is sent into the battle-field, confident of victory. The flesh must be made a show of, but that which I possess from God is a principle of victory. The Holy Ghost is a Conqueror too, because, greater is He that is in you, than He that is in the world. He that is in the world is the spirit of darkness. God is the God of victory. Let me be humbled that God may be magnified. This lesson must be learned—it may be taught severely to some, and gently to

others ; but whether by gentleness or severity, we must learn our own good-for-nothingness.

VERSE 5 is a glorious truth ! It is by dependence we get the victory—by dependence on Jesus. There are two victories which I have share in—one in communion, the other in power. I share with Christ the victory over the world, and the victory over death. “Death is swallowed up in victory.” But when we come to the victory over judgment, we must stand aside and receive it at Christ’s hands. Had you anything to say to the putting away of sin ? You know you had not ; you are a debtor. Stand by, gaze, and worship at what Christ has done. And now you are called to victory. You must be made a fool of, but you carry the power of God. You possess that which is victory over the world ! Ah ! we want large thoughts. God’s thoughts are very large, though He confines them within the nutshell of a single text. Large they are and abundant. We want accuracy, too, and we want to learn a lesson from our own inaccuracy.

VERSE 6.—Now we are taught how to use the instruments of victory. If I admit that Jesus is the Son of God, let me use this truth. So to speak, let me show a little of this mettle. If Jesus be the instrument of victory, use Him. Lean—lean with all your weight of sins upon His blood, lean heavily. His object in coming here was to cleanse you from your crimson sins ; He came not by water only, but also by blood. He could not give you communion but by atoning for your lost condition. Then use Christ. Oh ! what a grasp of Him we thus get ! A full Christ, very Man and very God—very Man, as one of us, yet God blessed for ever ! This is a full Christ. He came into this world to make, by His blood, a full provision for sin, and to keep the soul in communion by the washing of water. God and Man in one, He works by water and blood. This Epistle truly demands that we should linger over every word. We might well do it in Ephesians and other Epistles, but here it is imperative, and that because I find myself alone with Christ. I do not care if I be the only saint on earth ; for it is to one in such a place of solitude that this writing is addressed. I do not say my heart would not feel it, it ought to feel more than if one were alone. But here I am, as it were, insulated, and this is an immense comfort amidst confusion ; *I am blessed and I bless Him.* Yes ! The more the confusion presses, the more the consolation rises.

VERSE 7.—I believe that if the Spirit had written these words He would have said, “The Son,” and not “The Word.” “The Word” is an official title, Jesus is the personal title. John is the only one who calls Jesus “The Word.” It is well chosen, and speaks of Jesus as the revealer of the mind of God, as your word reveals your mind. Again, as one has said, “I cannot understand why a record should be wanting in heaven.” I agree with those who reject this—*v.* 7.

VERSE 8 should be read in the light of John, chap. xix., xx. When Jesus died, blood and water came out of His side, and when risen He imparted the Holy Ghost to His disciples. In the mouth of these three witnesses is your title established. The blood and water from the crucified Jesus justifies you from sin. The Spirit of the risen Jesus imparts life to you. Cleansed, washed, and justified by blood, you have life by the Spirit. “Receive ye the Holy Ghost.” The law itself received the testimony of three witnesses—on these three your title rests secure. Your mind’s working may give you trouble, but have you read your title clear? Christ having cleansed you by water and by blood, appears in risen power to fill you with an eternal treasure!

VERSE 9.—And do we not do this? Of course we do; we dare not but do it. Do you question your friend’s veracity? Will you not take his witness? The witness of God is greater. God had expended His measure of testimony on man when He had given the blood and water of a crucified Christ, and the Spirit of a risen Christ. There are His three witnesses.

There are three ways in which God has presented life to His creatures. There are His elect angels, who kept their first state; in them He *maintained* life. To Adam He *committed* life as a stewardship. Adam lost it. In neither of these ways have you life, neither supported nor deposited, but by *derivation*. You are not independent of a source of life outside you; your life is in Christ, and is therefore infallible—yes, infallible in the risen Jesus. It is better than Adam’s or than angel’s life, for it is a life out of death! Life eternal in its quality. And now would you exchange with Adam or the angels? Would you wish life were committed to your stewardship? Oh, what it is to derive life from Christ!

VERSE 10 is exceedingly characteristic of John’s writings. Here we stand in individual connection, independent of all else, church or anything. It is very blessed to have companions on the rugged road, and many are the duties which

we must perform, which isolation deprives us of doing, for we cannot do them if we are not in the right relationship.

Our life is not what we trace in angels, but derive from the glorious Head of Life.

John is a mighty writer. He deals with the mighty Son of God, and puts poor believing sinners with Him. If you do not believe you are a sinner, you make God a liar, just as Adam did. God spoke to Adam of death in a world of life, and Adam did not believe Him. God speaks to you of life in a dead world, and if you do not believe His record you make Him a liar. The Spirit is dealing with realities. God can bear with and comfort the feeble-minded, but if I say I am not a sinner, I make God a liar. God sent Jesus to this world, freighted with life for the sinner's use. Weighty words! Here may we have something for our solitary hours—a link between God and us. "I delight in thy testimonies." Was this insolence in David?—"I know more than the ancients; I am wiser than my teachers." No; it was the boldness of faith. There is no humbler thing in the moral creation than for faith to take the place God gives.

QUERIES AND ANSWERS.

"W. T."—If the "appearing" of the Lord Jesus be not the immediate hope of the saints (instead of His descent into the air), in what sense could the Corinthians be said to be "waiting for" His "revelation," 1 Cor. i. 7?

A.—There are three words used in Scripture when speaking of that event—the Lord's coming. The "coming" or "presence"—(*παρουσια*) is one of large import, embracing the whole thing, from the rapture to His revelation, when every eye shall see Him. Hence, this word is used generally, and with reference at times to the first action of it—the taking up of the saints; or the subsequent details of it until He appears.

The "appearing" (*επιφανεια*) is used for the closing action of that event when He shines forth and is seen to every eye. The former word is used generally, as I have said; the latter not so, but for that closing point of His coming.

The word used here (1 Cor. i. 7) in this sense, (as also in Rom. ii. 5; viii. 19; 1 Pet. i. 7, 13; iv. 13; Rev. i. 1), might rather be translated "revelation" (*αποκαλυψις*), than by "appearing." It is a well-chosen word (if we may

so say) of the Spirit in this passage ; for at that "revelation" all things will be made manifest—declared by the day. Even the use which the Corinthians were making of the manifold gifts of Christ, of which they came short in no respect, as Paul says. The manner of their use of them would then become the subject of the appraisal of the Lord Jesus Christ. How much more suitable then was the Spirit's choice of this word, than that of His "coming" or of His "appearing," which referred to that moment which would reveal all that passed now. He would bring their consciences under its power, while comforting them at the same time with the thought that God would preserve them *blameless* at the day of the Lord Jesus. If he would do this at such a time, they could rejoice that he would, in love, *blame* them for all and everything unsuited to Him *now*.

"J. P."—I reply to your question without citing your letter. Rev. xxi. 9-xxii. 5, gives us a description of the *Millennial* glory of the Bride—the Lamb's wife. No doubt all in that day will "know the Lord," *i.e.*, "Jehovah." But this knowledge of Jehovah does not at all amount to what we now understand by "knowing the Lord"—Jesus Christ. The former may be external and by sight, and without life being possessed ; the latter can only be by faith while He is unseen, and therefore the possessor has life in his soul.

When the Church is displayed in her heavenly glory to and over the earth, she is owned by these nations about whom you enquire, as the channel of Christ's blessing to the earth. These nations, and kings of the earth, who have been saved through the great tribulation, or during the time of it, own this, therefore, and bring their glory and honour to it. (We are told by competent persons that we should read this word, *vv.* 24, 26, "to," and not "unto.") They could go *into* the earthly Jerusalem, but not into the Heavenly ; rather, therefore "they bring the glory and honour of the nations *to* it."

During the Millennium there are Jews (or Israel), Gentiles, Kings, Priests, &c.—all the time distinctions which we now know. In the eternal state which follows, all these time distinctions are gone away for ever.