

THE REMEMBRANCER

*A MAGAZINE FOR THE LORD'S PEOPLE
PUBLISHED MONTHLY
("IF THE LORD WILL.")*

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

2 PET. i. 12, 13.

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The Remembrancer

“MY THOUGHTS ARE NOT YOUR THOUGHTS,
NEITHER YOUR WAYS MY WAYS,
SAITH THE LORD.”

What is the sign of God's accomplishment of promise and of His presence in the world? “A BABE IN A MANGER!”—*the weakest thing, and the lowest place!* But God is found there, though these things are beyond man, who cannot walk with God, nor understand His moral glory. But God's sign is within the reach of faith. It is the token of perfect weakness: a little infant who can only weep! Such, born into this world is Christ the Lord. And the place God chose—not a palace but a manger—the low degree! God's intervention is recognized by a sign like this. Man would not have sought that. The heavenly host praise God and say, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill towards [in] men.” Nothing higher nor more astonishing (save the cross) for those who have the mind of heaven. The choir above see God in it—God manifested in flesh, and praise God in the highest. They rejoice that His delights are with the sons of men; Of old God had displayed Himself to Moses in a flame of fire, without consuming the bush; and here, still more marvel-

lously, in the feeblest thing on earth : infinite thought morally, though despicable in the eye of the world ! How hard it is to receive that the work of God and of His Christ is always in weakness ! The rulers of the people saw in Peter and John unlearned and ignorant men. Paul's weakness at Corinth was the trial of his friends, the taunt of his enemies, the boast of himself. The Lord's strength is made perfect in weakness. The thorn in the flesh made Paul despised, and he conceived it would be better if that were gone. He had need of the lesson, "My grace is sufficient for thee : for My strength is made perfect in weakness." We get God's rule of action in I Corinthians i. 27 *and seq.*, "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise ; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty." And why ? "That no flesh should glory in His presence." Everything must rest on God's power, otherwise God's work cannot be done according to His mind. One can hardly believe that one must be feeble to do God's work : but Christ was crucified in weakness, and, "the weakness of God is stronger than men." For the work of God we must be weak : "that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." (2 Cor. iv. 7.)

THE WORTHINESS OF THE LAMB.

“And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the living-ones and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying with a loud voice, WORTHY IS THE LAMB THAT WAS SLAIN to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.”—Rev. v. 11, 12.

Rich and blessed as are the associations in the mind of every saint of God connected with Christ's title of “*the Lamb*,” it may be questioned whether that which stamps it, in the mind of Heaven, with its peculiar significance, has, so fully as it ought, its place and bearing in the soul. The emphatic exclamation of the Baptist, “Behold the Lamb of God!” indicates the grace and beauty and lowly virtues of Him who bears this name, and marks His title to the adoring worship of our hearts. But this title, as borne by the same blessed One, *on high*, unfolded in the book of Revelation, brings us associated with other glories and other scenes than those that, it is likely, met the holy musings of John, when he gazed on the blessed JESUS walking by the banks of Jordan, and said, “Behold the Lamb of God!”

This title, familiar as it is to our hearts,

is almost exclusively connected with the book of Revelation ; and is unquestionably designed to indicate the special character in which the Bearer of it is there presented. The observance of this may present no un-useful key to the understanding of that wondrous book, which may be called “the book of *the rights of the Lamb* ;” for, certainly, it may be affirmed, that the whole of the details and principles of the prophetic part of it are knit up with this title ; while, on its first occurrence in this book, we see *heaven, earth, and all redeemed creation*, roused by it in joy to accord to Him who bears it, this seven-fold ascription of praise : “saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.” He *alone* is declared *worthy* to receive the whole tribute of the universe and to become the Centre of its universal praise.

There is, doubtless, a marked difference in the presentation of “the Lamb slain” in this book, and in His presentation by the same title in John i. 29, 36, the only other place in Scripture in which *as a title* it occurs.*

*Nowhere else, indeed, is the *exact* expression ; for in John i. 29, 36, it is “*ho amnos* :” but in the Revelation throughout, it is “*to arnion*.” Acts viii. 32, and 1 Pet. i. 19, are comparisons, expressive of a blessed moral truth, but not applied by way of *title*.

In the expressions of John, "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world!" we see the *Person* of the Lord Jesus, as God's Lamb, presented to the eye of faith, as the substantiation of all that had been prefigured in the way of atonement. He is here pointed out as the full and perfect provision of God for man's need as a sinner, and the only basis on which the mercy of a holy God can restore the guilt-stricken and polluted to His presence. This, there can be no doubt, was the immediate bearing of John's pointing to JESUS, as "the Lamb of God." But in the breadth of the terms, "*that taketh away the sin of the world,*" it seems as if the Spirit would lead us on beyond the speciality of individual redemption, to the ultimate purpose of the manifestation of the Son of God—in the destruction of the works of the devil—to that point in the counsels of God, in which the blessed stream of redemption reaches its limit; and creation, brought back from "being subject to vanity," is again made capable of receiving and reflecting back the rays of its Creator's goodness and glory, rejoicing in "the glorious liberty [or rather, 'liberty of the glory'] of the children of God" (Rom. viii.).

The Lamb *slain* in sacrifice, from Abel downward, had declared on the part of the

righteous holiness of God, that “Without shedding of blood is no remission ;” and on the part of the love of God, the spotlessness of the victim and its being as a burnt offering “A sweet savour unto the Lord,” declared as fully His delight in the perfectness of JESUS—that “Lamb without blemish and without spot”—and of His satisfaction in His wondrous, perfect, atoning work. “Christ hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet smelling savour.” “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.” But in the Revelation, the “Lamb slain” is not presented so much as God’s provision of love to meet a sinner’s need, or as the perfect Doer of His *Father’s* will, as He is shown, by His rejection and suffering on earth, to have gained a title in heaven to universal homage, and to be the Holder of universal power. In the revelations of God to His church, things in reference to JESUS have passed beyond the limit of grace and atonement now ; and we are called to contemplate what are the righteous claims of this suffering and rejected Victim, as recognized on high. It is true that the heart of a saint knows Him still as “the Only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” The *cross* abides still in all its wondrous mystery of love, as

the attractive point of mercy to meet a sinner's heart. "Pentecost," as the pledge and seal of the resurrection and ascension-glory of the church's Head, tells, by the presence of the abiding "Comforter," of *present union* as well as of coming glory as the portion of the church. But beyond what the Gospels reveal of incarnation and suffering; and the Epistles of grace untold, flowing down as the church's present portion, from her Head in glory, and presenting the brightness of her hope in being "for ever with the Lord,"—we have, in this book, the lifting up of a curtain, and showing things beyond the Spirit's direct testimony in the church. First, JESUS is shown in the position of rebuke and chastening, through the hour of the church's decadence, as His witness in the world, until rejection comes of that which was wholly unworthy of His care. And then, in the prophetic part, it is not so much the Spirit down here testifying of Christ, as seen on high, in close connection with "the Lamb," who is in the midst of the throne; and as the Spirit of prophecy telling indeed of the progress of things here on earth; but that not so much in regard to the events themselves, as in connection with heavenly counsels, which result in the vindication of the claims of "the Lamb." The progress of evil is

noticed; but it is noticed only as giving occasion to the introduction of the hand of power by which "the mystery of God" is finished. The opening of the seals, and the sounding of the trumpets, and the pouring out of the vials—whatever may be their effects on the earth—have for their one central object, either the declaration or the enforcing by the hand of Divine Power, of the claims of the Lamb. It is, in a word, the blessed accomplishment, *in power*, of that word in Philippians, "He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a Name that is above every name; that at the Name of JESUS every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that *Jesus Christ* is LORD, to the glory of God the Father." Though there is this difference in the aspect in which this result of the Lord's humiliation and death are presented—here it is the *reward* of Christ's perfect obedience to the Father's will. In the Revelation it is the vindication, on the part of God, of the claims of HIM, who, as to man, had been but a suffering Victim—"led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before

His shearers, so He opened not His mouth." Therefore, necessarily, judgement, in this vindication, falls on the world that had inflicted His injuries, and still resists His claims. The most cursory study of the book of Revelation must teach us that its object is not so much to unfold the character and fruits of redemption in relation to those who are its happy subjects, as to present the rights and claims of Him by whom redemption was, in "the travail of His soul," accomplished—His right, through redemption, to "inherit all things." And therefore it is, throughout, that Christ, as "the Lamb," in the midst of the throne, and the actings of the throne itself, are in connection with the earth and creation, rather than directly with the church.

The fifth chapter, in which this worthiness of the Lamb is proclaimed, appears to give the entire outline of the prophetic part of the book. Nothing, as it seems, in accomplishment, can go beyond this. Heaven, earth, and all redeemed creation, in this anticipative song, recognize the full claims of Christ's mediatorial glory, as the "Lamb that was slain;" and, in accomplishment, we are brought by it down to the point, "When He shall have put down all rule, and all authority and power;" and when He shall deliver up the kingdom to God,

even the Father. "Every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto *the Lamb* for ever and ever."

In the challenge which brings the Lamb upon the scene, however symbolic the action, there seems to be but little difficulty in ascertaining the simple truth conveyed. The question—"Who is worthy to open the the book, and to loose the seals thereof?" is designed to present, in strong relief, and in contrast with the hoplessness that springs from all besides, the worthiness and the power of Christ to enter into, and declare the whole mystery of God concerning the course of evil in this world, and its final redemption from its power. And more than this, to show, on whose behalf it is, and on account of whose worthiness it is, that creation shall be delivered from the thrall of Satan, and the tribute of its praise be restored to Him whose right it is.

"No man in heaven, nor on earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon." The redemption of God's inheritance from the power of Satan, is no work for man. Neither is it in

the creature's power to declare through what appliances of power and wisdom the whole craft and power of Satan should be set aside. But there is ONE and *One only* found, to accept the challenge; and thus is relieved the oppressive sorrow that hung upon the prophet's heart: "I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon; and one of the elders saith unto me, *Weep not*; behold the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof. And I beheld, and lo, in the midst of the throne, and of the four living-ones, and in the midst of the elders, stood a LAMB as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent forth into all the earth. And He came and took the book out of the right hand of Him that sat upon the throne." Here the mystery is solved. In *redemption* Christ has obtained a title to be the whole creation's LORD, as well as the church's blessed Head. As the suffering, meek, and unresisting Victim, Heaven accords to Him the title to universal power and praise. Already—though hidden in the throne—He is manifested to the eye of faith, as being possessed of the perfection of power—"having seven horns"—and also of

the controlling, all-pervading energy of God's universal Spirit—"having seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God, sent forth into all the earth." Here, therefore, there is ONE equal to solve this problem: unsolvable by all besides; and to accept a challenge that must be declined by all besides. For who can undertake to save the rights of the eternal God, and to bring back a sin-stained universe to His favour? And who can expel the power of evil by which the scattering and dissevering from God of His creation had been achieved? Before this can be, sin must be atoned, and death undone, and Satan bound. But all this power and worthiness is found, *and found alone*, in HIM who was David's Son and David's Lord. "The Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof." In death, this title of Redeemer has been sealed as the Lamb; and in redemption-power will all God's glory, in connection with the creature, eventually stand. The tribute of the universe must be paid alone to Him, Who *to the death* asserted the glory of God in a world of evil; and Who, in the administration of the affluence of His power and glory, will turn every stream of creature-good back to the Creator's praise.

Happy it is for the saint, thus instructed in the mind of heaven, to rest in the love and grace of Him who is in the midst of the throne; and happier still, *in seeking NOW to uphold the honour of His Name, to count on His power and wisdom alone*, who has the "seven horns and the seven eyes." For how surely is His power and grace directed to sustain the heart that counts on His goodness in seeking in a world of evil to do His will. Soon that power, which now secretly sustains, controls, and overrules, amidst the confusion of Satan's power, will be openly displayed. And how the heart's joy is augmented by the thought, that then the worthiness of the Lamb will not be a secret carried feebly in the bosom of the saint, and contradicted and gainsaid on every hand besides; but evil being removed by the hand of power, every eye shall gaze upon His beauty, and every heart shall own His claims, and every voice re-echo His worthy praise! And O how soon will this bright scene of glory burst upon our dim anticipations! "We have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." "And HE which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly."

But there is another side of the picture.

Heaven's counsels about the Lamb, alas! are fraught alone with sorrow for great Babylon in her luxurious glory, and for the thoughtless dwellers on the earth! When power Divine shall be put forth to vindicate the claims of the *earth-rejected Victim*, what but dismay and displacement can be the result to those who despise His Name, and will at last be found in martial array to resist His claims. "These shall make war with the LAMB, and the Lamb shall overcome them; for He is King of kings, and Lord of lords!" But before this hour arrives what a picture of the world's dismay does the *Lamb's* opening of the sixth seal present! "And I beheld when He had opened the sixth seal, and lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; and the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; and said to the mountains

and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the LAMB: for the great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?"

It would be too wide a field, to comment in succession on each instance in this book in which, in different aspects and varied connections, we are brought into contact with *the Lamb*. In tracing through, from the fifth chapter to the end, "the Lamb is ever in the ascendancy.

The song of Heaven is, "Worthy is *the Lamb* that was slain" (v. 6-13). It is from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of *the Lamb*, that the men of this world seek to hide themselves in fear (vi. 15, 16). The palm-bearing multitude, before the throne, have "washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (vii. 9-14). It is *the Lamb* that feeds them and leads them (as a shepherd) "to living fountains of waters" (vii. 17). It is the blood of *the Lamb* that answers all the accusations of Satan, as the accuser of the brethren day and night, on high (xii, 10, 11). It is in the book of life of *the Lamb slain*, that the names of the faithful are found written amidst the corruptions of the beast (xiii. 8). It is *the Lamb*, also, on Mount Zion with the sealed-ones, whose honor and

privilege it is, to “follow *the Lamb* whithersoever He goeth” (xiv. 1-4). Again, whoever worships the beast or his image, and receives his mark in his forehead or in his hand, will be tormented in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of *the Lamb* (xiv. 9, 10). It is the song of Moses and the song of *the Lamb*, that is sung with the “harps of God,” by those who, in victory over the beast, stand on “the sea of glass” (xv. 2-4). It is against *the Lamb*, that the beast and the ten kings make war; and *the Lamb* shall overcome them; for He is “King of kings, and Lord of lords” (xvii. 12-14). It is the marriage of *the Lamb*, that strikes the note of joy in heaven; and to be called to the marriage supper of *the Lamb*, is the mark of honour and blessing then (xix. 7-9). And, after the seals are loosed, and the trumpets are blown and the vials poured out, when Satan is bound and the clangour of earth’s judgment is hushed, it is “*the bride the Lamb’s wife*,” that is the wondrously glorious spectacle on which the apostle is called to gaze (xxi. 9). They are the twelve *apostles of the Lamb*, whose names are in the twelve foundations of the “holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God” (xxi. 14). Of this city the Lord God Almighty and *the Lamb* are the temple and “*the Lamb is the light thereof*” (xxi. 22, 23). There is to be no inhabitant in this

glorious city “ whose name is not written in *the Lamb's* book of life ” (xxi. 27). And “the pure river of water of life proceedeth out of the throne of God and of *the Lamb*” (xxii. 1). And finally, there is to be *no more curse*, because the throne of God and of *the Lamb* is to be there (xxii. 3, 4, 5).

These are but brief and desultory notices of the wondrous character and claims of Him who in heaven is seen as “THE LAMB.” A suffering Victim here on earth, now hid for a season in heaven, but about to be brought forth in full investiture of heaven's glory; and in vindication of His claims, no place to be allowed for any that refuse to bow in homage to His Name. “I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the living-ones, and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.” The scattering and confusion, and sorrow, and death, that sin has brought into the universe of God, admit of no remedy but redemption. And accordingly *the Lamb's* title to the glory and praise of restored creation is founded in this. “They sung a new song,

saying, Thou art *worthy* to take the book and to open the seals thereof; for Thou wast slain, and hast *redeemed* us to God by Thy blood." This estimate of Heaven of the Lamb's worthiness and the preparations on high to enforce His claims, cast a dreadful shadow over the ease, and glory, and power, and security of the world! "*Redemption*"—alas! the world knows not the meaning of the word! And as to "*the Lamb*," its whole peace hangs only on the abeyance of His claims!

While the main subject of this book is the presentation and enforcement of the claims of Christ to universal homage, and to universal power, as the suffering Lamb, there is that which gleams forth, as it were incidentally in the vindication of His glory. Far away from the scene of conflict, and before the Lamb comes forth sitting on "the white horse, as "King of kings, and Lord of lords, in righteousness to judge and make war," there is seen in the peaceful courts of heaven, "*the marriage of the Lamb*," and, it is added "*His wife* hath made herself ready!" For His glory cannot be asserted, and *another* not be with Him in the scene. That "we may be glorified *together*," is the strange word of Scripture! The joy must begin on high, before the glory is displayed below. *From heaven* the Lamb comes forth to redeem the inheritance, and to take possession of His glory; and "when Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall we also appear *with Him* in glory."

And how this does teach the heart of one

who knows the espousal of the church to Christ, how little it has to do with all the busy aims of men ; and how little reason it has to covet the world's wisdom, power or glory, which are but the usurped rights of Christ ; while another lord and prince is owned. (John xiv. 30 ; 2 Cor. iv. 4.) It is not the earth in the power of redemption yet, and yielding its willing homage to the Lamb ; but it is the world which made the Lamb a suffering Victim, and still retains its opposition to His claims.



THE BRIDE.

John xiv. 3.

'Midst the darkness, storm, and sorrow,
 One bright gleam I see ;
 Well I know the blessed morrow :
 Christ will come for me.

'Midst the light, and peace, and glory
 Of the Father's home,
 Christ for me is watching, waiting,
 Waiting till I come.

Long the blessed Guide has led me
 By the desert road ;
 Now I see the golden towers,
 City of my God.

There, amidst the love and glory,
 He is waiting yet ;
 On His hands a name is graven
 He can ne'er forget.

There, amidst the songs of heaven,
 Sweeter to His ear
 Is the footfall through the desert,
 Ever drawing near.

There, made ready, are the mansions,
 Glorious, bright, and fair ;
 But the bride the Father gave Him,
 Still is wanting there.

Who is this who comes to meet me
 On the desert way,
 As the Morning Star foretelling
 God's unclouded day ?

He it is who came to win me,
 On the Cross of shame ;
 In His Glory well I know Him
 Evermore the Same.

Oh the blessed joy of meeting--
 All the desert past !
 Oh the wondrous words of greeting,
 He shall speak at last !

He and I together entering
 Those bright courts above—
 He and I together sharing
 All the Father's love.

Where no shade nor stain can enter
 Nor the gold be dim ;
 In that holiness unsullied,
 I shall walk with Him.

Meet companion then for JESUS,
 From Him, For Him, made—
 Glory of God's grace for ever
 There in me displayed.

He who in His hour of sorrow
 Bore the curse alone ;
 I who through the lonely desert
 Trod where He had gone.

He and I, in that bright glory,
 One deep joy shall share ;
 Mine, to be for ever with Him
 His, that I am there.

THE CHRISTIAN WALK.

(Read Ephesians iv. 20—v. 21.)

We find in Ephesians iv., v., a very seasonable unfolding of the principles of the Christian walk, of the height of the principles which ought to govern it, and of its moral elevation, to which I desire to draw attention. In chapter iv., the apostle, after having developed christian doctrine as to our relations with the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (relations founded on these two names, and afterwards the relations of the church with Christ), begins his exhortations to Christians with respect to their walk. They ought not to walk as the rest of the nations in the corruption which was bound up with the state of darkness in which they were found; they had “not so learned Christ,” if they really knew what “the truth is in Jesus,” namely, to have put off the old man and put on the new man, which is created according to God in righteousness and holiness of truth.

For there is the truth such as it is in JESUS; not that we should strip off, but, inasmuch as we are risen with Him, that we have put off the old man and put on the new man. There then is the first principle of the christian walk: we have put on the new man; and here is its character, created

according to God ; not only the absence of sin, which was realized in the first Adam, but according to God fully revealed to one who has already the knowledge of good and evil, and created according to the thoughts of God Himself as to good and evil, according to the estimate which God by His very nature has of good and evil. What an immense privilege ! The new man, born of God, is, in his nature, the reflection, and the intelligent reflection, of the nature of God Himself. Wherefore the apostle John says, he cannot sin because he is born of God. Also we find in the epistle to the Colossians, which is parallel to this, “renewed into knowledge (or ‘full knowledge’—epignosis) according to the image of Him who has created him” (New Trans.). Such is the first principle of the christian walk, a nature which comes from God, created as an expression and reflection of what He is in righteousness and holiness of truth. Here it is a life, a nature, that which we are.

The second principle is the presence of the Holy Spirit. “Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.” It is God Himself who dwells in us by His Spirit. Nothing unworthy of such a Guest, unworthy of God Himself, ought to go on in us. Also, our walk should be characterized by that which

characterizes God Himself, for His love is active in us. Consequently we find here love also, and not only righteousness and holiness. We forgive one another, even as God in Christ has forgiven us. Christ being ascended on high, and thus the righteousness of God being established, ourselves perfectly purified by the blood of JESUS, the Holy Spirit is come down, and the bodies of the believers are become the temple of God. It is the seal of God put upon their persons, the earnest of their entire redemption and of their part in the inheritance of glory.

The walk of the Christian ought then to be the manifestation of the divine nature, and of the ways of God in grace towards us. Such is the instruction which chap. iv. gives us ; but chapter v. furnishes still more light. Who is it that has been the expression of this nature in man down here below? Evidently it is the Saviour, the image of the invisible God. Thus, God Himself becomes the expression of this divine life in man, the Model of our conduct. Let us examine our chapter v., in this point of view, that we may draw from it the instruction it contains.

“Be ye therefore imitators of God.” Have I not been right in speaking of the moral elevation of the christian walk? Be imitators of God! Partakers of His nature and

of the indwelling of His Spirit, we are called to imitate Him in the principles of His conduct. But then, as we have said, Christ is the perfect example of it; as the Holy Spirit goes on to say, "And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour." This adds a very precious element to the principles of the christian walk. Here love has not the character of the divine love which pardons, being above evil, when a wrong is done us, as God pardons (in virtue of Christ) sin against Him. Here it is devotedness, an offering made of oneself to God. It is no more a law which would have one love his neighbour as himself, which would be blessedness without any remains of evil in the world. It is not loving God with all the heart, which supposes that evil is not there. It is a devotedness, which supposes evil, a necessity which is the occasion for the exercise of love. One is given up for others, one is devoted. But for love in man, there must be a motive, an object. For this love to be perfect, the object, the motive of the love, must be perfect. If one is given up to a man, there may be a noble devotedness in it, but the motive is imperfect: love does not and cannot rise above its object. Just so, that there should be devotedness, there

must be needy objects. These two elements are found in Christ. He gave Himself *for us*, for needy beings, objects of compassion on His part; but He gave Himself *to God*, infinite and perfect Object, which could not have been, had He only given Himself to us and for us.

It is thus we ought to walk, ready to sacrifice ourselves for our brethren, always in self-abnegation to serve them, whilst offering ourselves to God Himself, to Christ whose we are. Thus the measure of our conduct is that of God Himself, Christ being our example in His life here below, in order that we should add love, the bond of perfect action, to brotherly kindness. It is not said that we are love, which is God's prerogative. He is love, and He loves, as to us, without any other motive than what He is; which could not be the case with a creature. We imitate Him in the matter of the wrongs that have been done us. But the love which acts from itself towards others is of God alone.

Again, light is a quality in itself, a purity which also manifests everything. It is the second name that God gives Himself to express what He is. God is light. So Christ, when He was in this world, was, "the light of the world." (John viii. 12.) We were in darkness, we are light in the Lord. Thus

in the Epistle to the Philippians we find, respecting Christians, that which might be said in every point of Christ Himself, "blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of light." In this pure nature we share, inasmuch as we have Christ for our life—purity in motives, in thoughts according to the divine nature; that which, manifested in this world, manifested the true character of all that is around us. We are light in the Lord.

Thus the two names, the only ones God gives Himself to express what He is, love and light, become the expression of what the Christian ought to be in his work. He is even light in the Lord.

There exists another sort of motive and of rule, the relationships in which we are found, as father and children, husband and wife, master and slaves. We are in these relationships also with God and with His Christ. But it is another ground on which I do not enter at present. That of which I speak is the Christian character, as having divine life and the Holy Spirit indwelling us: so that one has to imitate the conduct of God, and to take Christ for model on the earth.

“THE SIMPLICITY THAT IS IN
CHRIST.”

Read 2 Cor. xi. 2-4.

Is it not seasonable, dear fellow-believer, in these days in which our lot is cast, to warn one another to keep our minds incorrupt in the simplicity that is in Christ.

In the preparation-season, to which the present age is analagous, Eve was getting ready, under the forming hand of God, for Adam, and for Adam *only*. Adam slept for Eve, and Eve was made for Adam. So with Christ and the church. He slept in death for us, and we are preparing, under the Holy Ghost, for Him. “I have espoused you to *one* husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.” (2 Cor. ii. 2.) As he says also in Gal. iv. 19, “My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until *Christ* be formed in you”: Christ, and Christ only, Christ in His precious sufficiency for a sinner, in answer to the Hagar or Galatian thought of “days, and months, and times and years,” that other gospel which yet is not another.

But this is assailed. The Gospel in its claim on the sinner to give his undivided confidence to Christ, has been abroad on the lips of many witnesses, to the gladdening of thousands of souls. The enemy has

watched and hated this. Working in the scene in which he goes "to and fro" and walks "up and down" (Job i. 7), he is busy to seduce the heart from this Gospel. And is not his success far beyond the measure of the fears of any of us? The religion of fleshly confidences or of ordinances is to this hour among us. It admits of worldliness; and worldliness is, at this same hour, flourishing in company with it. There is the erection of temples for worship, and of palaces for the worshippers; stricter care to observe, in its season, due attendance in the sanctuary, together with unparalleled skill and energy and enterprise in advancing the indulgence and elegance of human life, so as to make the world a *desirable* and *safe* place to live in—a place where religion may now be seen to be observed and honoured.

This is seductive from the principle of faith—this is corruption of the mind from the simplicity that is in Christ. The Gospel addresses itself to man, not only as a *guilty* but as a *religious* creature. It finds him under the power of *superstition* or *religiousness*, as well as of *sin*. It is as natural for man to refuse to go "into the judgment-hall lest he should be defiled," as it is, in very enmity of heart to God, to cry out, "Crucify Him, crucify Him." (John xviii

28 ; xix. 6.) And the Gospel gets as stern a refusal from the *religious* man as from the *lustful* man. As the Divine Teacher tells us, the harlot goes into the kingdom before the Pharisee.

Religious vanities are deeply playing their part in our day, and fascinating many souls. What answer, fellow-believer, do you and I give them? Is JESUS so precious that no allurements has power? Is the virgin of the new mind still kept? and as chaste ones are we still betrothed to Christ only? Like the newly-formed Eve, are we in our place of earliest, freshest presentation to our Lord? or have we, apart from His side, opened our ear to the serpent?

'The kingdom of heaven is as a supper, a royal, joyous feast got ready for *sinners*, that they might taste and see that the Lord is good, and that blessed is the man that trusteth in Him. It does not put God in the place of a *receiver*, for man *to bring Him His due*; but it puts Him in the place of a Giver, and man is called to value His blessing. But the question is, Who listens, with desirous heart, to the bidding? Who wears "the wedding garment?" Who prizes Christ? Who triumphs in His salvation? Who longs for the day of His espousals? John had this garment on him, knowing, as he did, the joy of being the Bridegroom's

friend (John iii. 29): It was flowing at liberty on Mary's shoulders, as she "sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word" (Luke x. 39). Paul tucked it tight about him when he said, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Gal. iv. 14). The eunuch had just put it on as "he went on his way rejoicing" in the faith of the name of JESUS (Acts viii. 39). Every sinner adorns himself with it the moment his heart values Christ. And what joy is it thus to know that when we put on Christ it is not "sackcloth" we put on, nor is it "the spirit of heaviness" we enter into; but "a wedding garment" has clothed us, and with "the spirit of praise" we array our spirits!

Have we thus learned "the kingdom of heaven"? Have we, in spirit, entered it as a banqueting-hall over which waves the love of JESUS as a banner, where both magnificence and joy welcome us? Are we, consciously, guests at the marriage of a King's Son? Have we learnt the mysteries of the faith? Have we meditated upon these things"? (1 Tim. iv. 15.) Has the musing over them kindled a fire in the heart to burn up the chaff of worldly rudiments? Paul had this element in his soul as he travelled through Greece. And how did the glow of these mysteries address

itself to "the princes of this world" there? It consumed them all. "Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" (1 Cor. i.) Precious ardour of the Spirit! What a pile was thus fired in the famed cities of the learned and the wise! and how were all the thoughts of men thrown as rubbish into it!

And how did he treat the rudiments of the *religious* world? He bore the same fervent sense of Christ with him into their regions, to test what chaff and dross were there. In Galatia he found much of it; but he spared none of it. Though an angel from heaven gather such rubbish; though Peter himself help in the work; though the Galatians, who once would have plucked out their own eyes for him, be enticed, nothing could stand before the heat of the Spirit that bore him onward. "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you? Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you."

Could he do less? Could he carry JESUS in his heart, and calmly stand and measure his light with the lights of Greece, or God's great Ordinance with man's traditions?

It is to make much of Christ we want beloved fellow-believer—much of HIMSELF, and His glorious achievements for sinners.

We want simplicity now in that sense of the word—the breathings of a soul content with HIM, and the peace of a conscience for ever at rest in the sufficiency of His work.

“WHAT THINK YE OF CHRIST?”



“A GOOD SOLDIER OF JESUS CHRIST.”

“*Thou, therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.*” (2 Tim. ii. 3.)

Many and varied are the aspects in which the believer is looked at in the Scriptures. I now desire to dwell upon that of soldier.

In the first place it is well to notice the state of things in this Epistle, the only book in the New Testament in which the term ‘soldier’ is applied to the believer. The careful reader will notice that evil (and the consequent sorrow and trouble connected therewith) abounds throughout it. In Matt. xxiv., the blessed Lord speaks of a terrible state of things and warns (ver. 12) that “because iniquity shall abound the love of many shall wax cold.” Is not then 2 Timothy of special value to us, beloved fellow believer, dwelling as it does on what takes place “in the last days when perilous (‘difficult’ New Trans.) shall come.” Let us however remember that any and every time is too difficult for us, but none are so for the Lord. Peter was as unable

to walk on the water when smooth as when rough, except sustained by the power of God; and that same Peter (1 Pet. i.) speaks of being "kept by the power of God," but adds (that we may remember our side) "through faith," for "without faith it is impossible to please God" (Heb. xi). Now who are the ones that are going to stand in a day such as 2 Timothy contemplates, when we have not only Satan in his "roaring lion" character, but also "the wiles of the devil" to contend with. Do we not get a clue to it in chap. ii. 2, where Timothy is enjoined to commit to faithful men what he had himself learnt of the apostle that they might be able to teach others also? Does this not show us that he considers Timothy to be such an one? But not for any *natural* qualification. Naturally Timothy was inclined to be weak and timid, as indicated in chap. i. 6-8. But is that not in accord with the teachings of 1 Cor. i. 27, etc. "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty. etc." He that of old had trained and taught the shepherd boy to slay the lion and the bear (typical of Satan's two ways of working) and sent him against the mighty Goliath, had been training Timothy and was now sending him

forth to a more stupendous conflict. Paul's testimony of him in Phil. ii. 19-22, is a very remarkable one. Taught and trained in God's school he had learnt (by God's grace) to overcome the worst foe that any of us have to contend against, that Hydra-headed monster, *self*. The great lesson of Phil. ii. is self-abnegation. The Lord Jesus immeasurably first, "in all things He hath the pre-eminence," vs. 6-8; Paul, vs. 17, 19, 25; Timothy, vs. 20-22; Epaphroditus, vs. 25-30. "I have no man like minded" is the wonderful testimony Paul (inspired by the Holy Spirit) bears to Timothy. Constrained by the love of Him who had won his heart, the interests of Christ had displaced all self-interest, and that too when self-interest was predominant in all around. He did not *entangle* himself with the affairs of this life that he might please Him who had chosen him to be a soldier.

In reading this 2nd chapter of Philippians I am reminded of a question recently asked as to where collective testimony is now? If I read Acts ii. 42-47; iv. 23-37; v. 41, 42, I see collective testimony beautifully exemplified. But that was, I judge, an answer to John xvii. 21. But when I read Phil. ii. 11, I find that Satan, using the Hydra-headed monster, previously referred to, as his chief lever, had broken it up before the apostles

were off the scene. As to corporate, or church, testimony, He who loved the Church and gave Himself for it had foreseen the unfaithfulness that would come in and made provision for it in Matt. xviii, 20. As He who uttered what is there recorded is, "The same yesterday, and today and forever," and as "The word of the Lord endureth forever," faith is certain that wherever the conditions there mentioned are fulfilled, so surely will He Who "abideth faithful, He cannot deny Himself" fulfill His part. Yes, only *three*, or even *two*, gathered to His name! "Who hath despised the day of small things?" He does not, nor will any one taught of the Spirit who has (through grace) overcome the Hydra-headed monster and in whose heart faith is in exercise.*

To return to our subject. Does not the very term "soldier" suggest fighting, warfare of some description and not a peaceful state of things. Now every believer is a

*NOTA BENE—We can only be, in truth, a testimony to the complete failure of the Church of God (on earth). But, to be such, we must be as true in principle as the thing that has failed. And, as long as we are a testimony to failure, we shall never fail.

(Above reprinted, with slight addition, from "The Remembrancer" Nov. 1910, and comes at end of the article "The Present Testimony." For copies of that number see 2nd paragraph, 2nd page of cover.)

soldier ; but there are bad soldiers as well as good. How many, in the present day, want to have all the blessings and privileges belonging to the Christian and to shirk the responsibilities—why? Because the heart has grown cold, the Hydra-headed monster has done his horrid work and the (I won't say *duty*, but) *privilege* of being wholeheartedly—identified with a rejected Christ in this the time and scene of His rejection is lost sight of. But it is very needful, if our service is to be of an intelligent character and so “acceptable to God,” (Rom. xii. 1, where ‘reasonable’ is rather ‘intelligent’) that we should learn from the word of God the true character of the warfare the Lord is looking for now, and also the sort of weapons. How valuable then is acquaintance with dispensational truth. The conflict for Israel, under Joshua, was against flesh and blood, but not so with us: read carefully Josh. v. 13-15; Ephes. vi. 10-19; 2 Cor. x. 3 5. But as what happened unto Israel were types for us and written for our guidance and instruction (1 Cor. x. 6, 11), we learn valuable lessons from the Old Testament as well as the New. And I desire to say right here that God's word is a beautiful and perfect whole and we need to be careful not to fall into the selfish way some have of reading it, viz. having a few pet

corners that they go to when they do take up the Bible. Dear fellow-believer let us remember the gracious words of our beloved Lord and Master in Jno. xv., where, after referring to His wondrous love so infinitely surpassing all other love (ver. 13), He, the Maker of heaven and earth, says (in connection with fruit bearing) “Ye are My *friends!* (What wondrous language from such an One addressed to the likes of us), “if ye do whatever I command you,” He then proceeds, “I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth: but I have called you *friends*; for all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you,” (vs. 14, 15). Now put that alongside 2 Tim. iii. 16, 19, “*All* Scripture is given by inspiration of God (lit. ‘God-breathed’), and is profitable for doctrine (‘teaching’), for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect (‘complete’), thoroughly furnished (‘perfectly equipped’) for every good work.” In the 1st Epistle Paul had enjoined Timothy to give attendance (‘attention’) to reading. . . Meditate upon these things, give thyself wholly to them,” “for ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price,” and such a price! “*Every word* of God is pure” (Prov. xxx. 5)—then do not omit any of it, but be

like Jeremiah, "Thy words were found and I did eat them, and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart." Beloved fellow-believer is that so with you and me? "Eating" making it our own before God and entering more into the interests of Christ and intelligent as to what concerns His glory, and then like Mary who sat at the feet of Jesus and fed upon His word we get to know what is suitable to Him and are led by the Spirit to the right thing at the right time and perhaps be found fault with for doing it as Mary was. But "let her alone . . . she hath wrought a good work . . . she hath done what she could," from the Master, more than repaid her. (Mark xiv. 3-9.) Do not forget the word of the Lord to Martha, Luke x. 41, 42.

The word of God is the only offensive weapon the Lord gives to His soldiers (Ephes. vi. 16), and remember you must let it do its work in your own soul first ("your loins *girt about* with truth," Ephes. vi. 14), or you will not be a good swordman. The Holy Spirit teaches us a valuable lesson through Ezra who is spoken of as, "A ready scribe in the law of Moses, which the Lord God had given" (Ezra vii. 6). Read carefully the 10th verse (same chapter) and note the order "Ezra had (1) *prepared his heart* to (2) *seek* the law of the Lord, and to (3) *do* it,

and to (4) *teach.*” He was a real help (Ezra means “help,” cf. 1 Cor. xii. 28). I would call your special attention, dear reader, to the first qualification above mentioned “prepared his heart.” O do not let it be mere head work, “the Lord looketh on the heart.” And what a remarkable lesson does the Spirit of God teach us, Ephes. vi. 18, 19. We have in the previous 7 or 8 verses the Lord’s soldier armed from head to foot; and what next? Placed on his knees. What an attitude for a soldier! Conscious of his own utter helplessness (if going on with God) he looks to the Lord that he may be made “strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, (2 Tim. ii. 1. cf. Ephes. vi. 10. He needs to be watchful, even in prayer, against “self” for the Spirit adds “for *all* saints.” Then are there any in the forefront of the battle in the deadly fight that is going on, as Paul then was, it is added further, “for me.”

Lastly I would call attention to two things said of Zebulun, (1 Chron. xii. 33).

(1.) “Could keep rank.” In my mind I associate this with that which is said in Ephes. v. 21 and 1 Peter v. 5 and in contrast with, “Every one, did that which was right in his own eyes,” why? Because “In those days there was no king in Israel.” If JESUS is reigning in our hearts we will not want

to do what is right in our own eyes but will be found in subjection to Him and to one another in His fear. And is that not closely connected with what is said of Zebulun.

(2.) "Not of a double heart." I will here simply quote what that little verse says and may the blessed Lord make it good in your heart and mine, beloved fellow-soldier.

"Oh, that strong in faith abiding,
We may to the Saviour cleave,
Nought with Him our hearts dividing,
All for Him content to leave!"



EXTRACTS.—"The Church's testimony is to a *rejected* as well as to a crucified Lord. His death is to be guarded and witnessed as under *man's* hand, as well as under God's—under God's for the relief of the sinner or the conscience—under man's for the separation of the saints from the world that really accredits that act of man's hand."

"It is the general deepening of spiritual affection we need in the midst of us, more chastened hearts to give place and liberty, in the absence of nature, to the things of the kingdom of God. The lip watched, the thought watched, the pen watched, and all the instruments and agencies of nature watched, that the Spirit may find in each of us a freer vessel for Himself. Had Lot walked separately, his daughters might have been wives of Abraham's seed, instead of mothers of Ammonites and Moabites."

A MEDITATION

1 Tim. iv. 15.

Made *sin*, Thou bar'st my *sins*
 Thou Holy One of God;
 Jehovah's sword awoke,
 Thence flowed Thy precious blood.
 Hail! boundless grace which sets me free,
 Sin judged, my sins too borne by Thee,
 That blood from judgment shieldeth me.

And I am *Thine*, through death
 For me, where wrath impelled
 Its billows all on Thee,
 And ever was annulled.
 Thou liv'st—I live, Thy sorrow o'er;
 Mine—Thine to share for evermore,
 The Father's house, heaven's boundless store.

Be mine **THY** lowly path
 On earth till that blest day;
 Nothing the world hath now
 To give or take away.
 From all its shadows vain, I flee;
 Hail! **JESUS** Saviour, Lord, with Thee
 I come to spend eternity!



TWOFOLD ASPECT OF THE DEATH
 OF CHRIST.

The Lord Jesus died under the hand of
God, His soul was made an offering for sin.
 "It pleased the Lord to bruise Him." (Is. liii.)

And He rose as the One who had thus died, His resurrection witnessing the acceptance of the sacrifice; and He ascended the heavens in the same character also, there to carry on the purpose of the grace of God in such a death and such a resurrection.

But the Lord Jesus died also under the hand of *man* (Acts ii. 23); that is, man's wicked hand was in that death, as well and as surely as God's infinite grace. He was refused by the husbandmen, hated by the world, cast out, crucified, and slain. This is another character of His death. And His resurrection and ascension were in that character also, parts or stages in the history of One whom the world had rejected; His resurrection, consequently, pledging the judgment of the world (Acts xvii. 31), and His ascension leading Him to the expectation of a day when His enemies are to be made His footstool (Heb. x. 13).

These distinctions give us to understand the different sights which faith, in the light of the word, gets of the ascended JESUS, seeing Him, as it does, in priestly grace there, making intercession for us; and, at the same time, waiting, as in expectation, the judgment of His enemies.

These distinctions are very clearly preserved in Scripture.

THE FATHER'S HOUSE.

John xiv. 1-6.

There is no portion we are more familiar with than this John xiv. Surely there is no part more frequently read, and turned to for comfort—and rightly so. “Let not your heart be troubled.” The Lord anticipates the disciples being found in circumstances of sorrow and trouble. Of course He refers mainly to His own going away; but when He comes down to ver. 27, and has spoken of His going away, and of giving the Holy Ghost, He again says, “Let not your heart be troubled.”

It is one thing to be saved *by* Christ, and another thing to throw in your lot *with* Christ. Every *true-hearted* servant of Christ, would say: “If my Saviour died for me, if He came from the glory which He had with the Father before the world was, down to the cross, if *that* was the measure of His love to me, the only answer I can make is, to cast in my lot with Him.” Then he is prepared not to *expect anything* down here. We have no expectations here, where Christ was rejected; and a place is opened out to us up there, where there is no rejection. But there *is* rejection here, and no person can fully enjoy John xiv., who does not accept rejection with Christ. For why

is not Christ here? The fact is (and nothing requires more pressing), that Christ has been rejected, cast out, refused here; and God came in, in the riches of His grace, and turned all that into the fullest blessing for us. Christ has been refused; they would not let Him remain here. (See John xix. 15.) He had a title to everything here, but He accepted this place of rejection. He was the Son of God, the blessed Saviour; and as long as the disciples had the shelter of His wing, they knew what it was to dwell under His shadow and have a place of refuge. Whatever opposition and trouble they met with, they had One to whom they could go and tell their sorrows: they "went and told Jesus." No one can tell what it was to those disciples to walk in the Saviour's presence here. Who can tell what it was to them to hear His voice, to have His ear ever open to them, and to know His care and His presence? Remember that GOD was there manifest in flesh. Think what it was for these poor simple men, who walked in the company of the Son of God in this world, to hear Him say that He was going away, and that He was going to leave them in a world where He Himself met with nothing but rejection. He said He would not leave them comfortless; but they, for their part,

looked at the terrible blank the absence of Christ would make to their souls. We must place ourselves in the very circumstances the disciples were in at that moment in order to understand it.

Nothing is plainer than that "the foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man had not where to lay His head." He had not a place here, but He was going to speak to them about heaven, with which He was *perfectly* acquainted. He knew all that was there, though it was an entirely new revelation to the disciples. Where can you find in Scripture anything about the Father's house? There had never been anything unfolded about it before, and now *we* speak about the Father's house as a place we have heard of all our lives! But think of the Lord going away, and leaving these dear ones He had drawn to Himself; ignorant perhaps, but *they loved their Master*. If you ask me what is the striking characteristic of these men, I would say, their affection for Christ; they really *loved* their Master. Because in an earlier day (John vi.), when the Lord had been speaking of His rejection, and some went back (men who had been outwardly near to Christ, and had seen what they had never seen before, but had no real link in their souls, with Him;

merely a passing interest, and when the moment of testing came, they parted company with Christ), yet still *these* disciples were true to Him, and when He said, "Will ye also go away?" there came that beautiful answer, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." They could answer in all the certainty of what they had learnt from Christ, and they could answer rightly. They were not intelligent perhaps, but where a person's heart is true to Christ, everything else will follow rightly.

Christ has gone to prepare a place for those who are His in this world. It is one thing to have a place prepared *outside* this world, and another thing *inside*. In the gospel God does not propose to prepare a place for us *in* this world; there is the unfolding of that which is heavenly, and not the giving us a place or anything down here in this world. That which marked the Master must mark the servant. Some people say: "I would like to understand the truth of the Church of God." You never will, unless you take part with Christ in rejection. You may read a book about it, and have it all in your head, but if you have not broken with the world you don't *know* what the Church is. You must be *in the company* of Christ, as well as be saved by Him, in order to know what the Church

is. Christianity gives you the most wonderful circumstances outside, but it does not propose to give you anything in this world—it will not set things in order around you.

“Ye believe in God, believe also in Me.” You have God before you as an Object of faith. The invisible God they had believed in; now the Lord was going away, and He was to become an invisible Object likewise, but He *claims* their faith. I do not know anything more beautiful than that in sacred Scripture. He has a right to claim your faith, and you know very well whether He has it or not. Christ came from heaven and walked down here for thirty-three years, died for you, and because He died for you He has a claim over you. Do you know Him? Has He gained the confidence of your souls? The Saviour who stood upon this earth is now up in heaven, but He is just the same Lord Jesus, and in the midst of your sorrow you can know how real a thing it is to be brought into personal acquaintance with Christ in heaven. I ask you, what is the greatest favour that God can give to man? “Well,” you say, “He watches over us, and He gives blessings, such as health and strength.” Yes, He does; it is God’s own special mercy. But what is His *greatest* favour? *The revelation of Christ in heaven*—that is His greatest

favour. For what do you bless God most? That ever He brought me to bow at His blessed feet. He claims your faith.

“I am the way, the truth, and the life.” There is no other way to God. The fact of Christ saying He is the way, declares that man has lost the way. What man wanted was a way back to God, to the Father; and Christ says, “I am that way.” And He is “the truth” as to everything, the truth in relation to God, in relation to man, in relation to time, in relation to eternity; and if you do not know Christ, you do not know the truth about anything. Your judgment of things in this world is a false judgment if Christ is unknown to you. And is He not “the life” too? He claims these three things for Himself. It was claiming to be a great deal, was it not? Is it too much? Do you admit that Christ is the way, the truth, and the life? and have you proved it for yourself? The great thing is for your souls to be brought into association with it. There is no difficulty on God’s side, but on your side there may be difficulties. There is no difficulty about your forming an acquaintance with Christ now. It is a great thing to be able to say you know a Saviour at God’s right hand in heaven, and if you do not know Him, you can go to Him now, as you are, and where

you are, and say, "Lord Jesus, I should like to know Thee as my Saviour." The man that sets out for God and Christ in that way may say, "Well, I do not know much about doctrines, but I know I have a soul that must live for ever; and, Lord Jesus, I want to know Thee as my Saviour." The heart of Christ is delighted with every soul that turns aside to Him; and not only at the first moment, but a *deepening* acquaintance must delight Him and you too. All blessing depends on it. The first thing is to know Christ, to come to Him, to say, "I desire to bow before Thee, to receive Thee as my Saviour." Christ is either inside or outside your hearts; you have opened the door of your heart to Him, or it is shut against Him. Your blessing in this world depends on a *deepening acquaintance with Christ*. To think that the Son of God in heaven loves to increase the acquaintance of your soul with Him! There is no company Christ so delights in as the company of those for whom He died. And is your answer, "I delight to be with Thee Lord Jesus?" Read Psalm xxxvii. 4.

Having claimed their faith He speaks of His Father, a new thing to them. Who can tell what the Father's house is? It was *home* to Christ. Home is home everywhere. Christ had not a home here; He came from

heaven, and He measured things here by it. He saw the poverty, the sorrow, the ruin, and death here, and He came down from heavenly glory to reveal the Father, to open up the way to Him, and to speak of the Father's house. Is not that a divine reality? Supposing it were possible to annihilate the opening verses of John xiv., would you feel a blank as to the future? Supposing you had never read them before, what a revelation it would be to you! What could be more wonderful than that the Saviour should tell us all about it? It is as if He said, "I do not propose to find you comfortable nests down here, and to guard you from every anxiety, but I open up a place for you in heaven." A *place*! That is the whole thing in this chapter. No place here, but a place in heaven, a place for man, redeemed man, in the Father's house! And when the soul has learnt that, it has got hold of divine possessions, of surroundings which God has given for our comfort in this world. The place which Christ prepared for *them* is prepared for every believer in Christ to-day. Our place was prepared the moment Christ went in as a Man. If Christ is your Saviour, where He goes you go. Christ never goes anywhere that the believer has not a place with Him. As a Man on the ground of accomplished redemption He goes up into

glory, and there prepares a place. We have a place in heaven, not amongst *men*, but a place, a *present* place, in heaven. The moment Christ is our Saviour, God is our Father, and in virtue of what Christ has done, we are brought into the family of God, and that which is proper to the family is the *home*. You never get into the thought of verse 2 unless by meditation and prayer before God. The Father's house, it is greater than the glory of the kingdom. If I had been there in that day, what would have comforted my heart? He tells what there *is* for us; He knows what there is; a place, many abodes, a rest, and the Spirit of God is given us as the only power to sustain us here. We should go to the wall completely but for the Spirit of God. Our only power is in the fulfilment of, "And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever."

A Christian is a person who can stand in this world and say, "I am ready at this moment to step into the Father's house." As surely and as really as Christ stood on this earth, and told them what He was going to do, so surely did He tell them He was coming back. Do you believe Christ is coming for you? I do not ask, Do you hold the doctrine of the second coming? but do

you really believe *Christ is coming for you* ? If you believed it, it would settle ten thousand things for you. It is so blessed ! It brings before me the fact that the heart of Christ will find out in this world *every loved* one, wherever they are ; the heart, the eye, the hand, and almighty power of Christ will gather them out of this world. *That*, next to the cross, will be the greatest expression of divine affection. Do you know that may take place now ? There is not a word of Scripture to be fulfilled ere He come, and before another hour has passed Christ may be here. We do not know what the circumstances of the rest of our pathway may be, but we *do* know Christ is coming.

Have you weighed and measured everything connected with you in the light of God's eternity ? Can you say, " Thank God I have a Father, and a place in the Father's house, and thank God I have a future so brilliant and so blessed that nothing can touch or disturb " ? Is it not wonderful ? That Christ is really *for us* ; that, notwithstanding the poverty of our testimony for Him, His heart has not grown cold, and He never loved His people more than at this moment. He was never in greater activity for them. You can look up to heaven and say, " Christ never loved

me more than at this moment, and He is only waiting the Father's time to have me with Himself for ever." (Read 2 Thess. iii. 5, margin). One moment we shall be here, and the next "moment, in the twinkling of an eye," up there, received unto Himself. Then there will be no separation from Christ for ever. Is it not beautiful? And that is our future! I trust that we may honour Christ by real expectancy of heart for Him. When Christ has displayed this most magnificent future, could anything be more sorrowful than that we should treat it as a fable? The moment Satan has got anything in between our souls and the coming of Christ, it has no power over us. If the coming of Christ is a *near* thing to you, it has power. Make it to-morrow, and its power is gone; you cease to wait and watch. Christ has been refused here, but He is accepted there, and the weakest saint that ever looked to Him is dear to Him, and He will come and fetch that one.

May God make His coming the next thing to us!



EXTRACT—The three master principles of "the course of this world" are, "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life."

“ARISE YE, AND DEPART; FOR THIS
IS NOT YOUR REST: BECAUSE
IT IS POLLUTED.”

Micah ii. 10.

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven.” 1 Pet. i. 3, 4.

Scripture shows us that true joy and happiness cannot be had in connection with the earth, or in the circumstances and history of the world, in their *present* state, nor till the earth is made the scene of righteousness; and such is not to be, till the Lord have ridded it of all that offends, and all that do iniquity (Matt. xiii. 41). *The sword of judgment* must go before *the throne of glory*. The earth must be cleared of its corruptions, ere it can be a garden of holy, divine delights again.

The Gospel is not producing a happy world, or spreading out a garden of Eden. It proposes no such thing, but to take out of the world a people, a *heavenly* people for Christ. But the presence of the Lord will make a happy world by-and-by, when that presence can righteously return to it.

The close of the Psalms shows this.

Beautiful close ! All praise —untiring, satisfying fruit of lips uttering the joy of a filled heart, and owning the undivided glory of the Blessed One ! But this had been preceded by the sorrows of the righteous in an evil world, and then the judgment of that world. For that Book gives the cries of the righteous in an evil world, the joys of the Spirit in the midst of that evil, the varied exercises of the soul by the way, and the end of the righteous in the joy of praise. All, however, forbids the heart from entertaining the thought of joy *in the earth* till the judgment have cleansed it ; the *rest* is to be prepared for *Solomon* by the *sword of David*.

The proper thoughts of this will keep the heart from being tossed by disappointments, and take it off from the expectation of any progress to rest and stability for the world, or in it, till the Lord have executed judgment. Our joy now is to be in Himself, in spirit, in the thought of His love, and the sense of His peace, helped onward, day by day, in the hope of full and righteous joy with Him, when the wicked have gone from the scene for ever.

How sensitively does the Lord's mind recede from the thought of joy in the earth, when the people were wondering at all things that He did ! Turning to His dis-

ciples He said, "Let these sayings sink down into your ears; for the Son of man shall be delivered into the hands of men." But this, I may say, was only a sample of all His mind, as He looked to the earth in its present condition. It was ever in His thoughts connected with trial.

Psalm lxxv., strikingly utters this. There Messiah looks on the earth as all dissolved and disordered, about to drink the cup of judgment at God's righteous hand. For the present He expected nothing from it. But then, after the exhausting of that cup, He does look on it as the scene of joy and praise and exaltation of righteousness, He Himself bearing up its pillars, and leading its songs.

I feel it, however, to be a very solemn truth, that God is allowing man, giving him space and time, to ripen his iniquity, that the judgment may fall upon him in the height of his pride, and crush the system which he is raising in its point of greatest pretension and advancement. It is surely a solemn truth. But even in such a purpose, as in all others, "Wisdom is justified of all her children." The believer may be awed by such a fact in the divine dealings with man, but he approves it, understands it to be a fitting thing, that man should be allowed to produce the fully ripened fruit

of his own departure from God, to present it and survey it in the pride of his heart, and then receive his righteous answer to all his boasted and enjoyed apostasy, from the signal judgment of God. The iniquity of the Amorites was to be *full*, ere justice should overtake it. The Lord bore with Babel till the cry of it went up to Him. Nebuchadnezzar had built "great Babylon," as he gloried, by the might of his power, and for the honour of his majesty (not for the glory of God), when he was driven from his high estate; Haman was full when God emptied him even to the dregs (Esther vii. 10). And the great man of the earth, at the last, shall come to his end, just as he has planted the tabernacles of his palace in the glorious holy mountain (Dan. xi. 44, 45).

It is solemn: but it is as wisdom would have it, and as faith deeply approves it. God is justified in His sayings, and overcomes when He is judged. (Rom. iii. 4).

When the scene around is getting full of man's inventions and man's importance, it is well to look to those regions of light and purity, where GOD, supreme and all sufficient, will gather together all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth. Regions of light and purity indeed, where all will tell of intimacy or nearness, and yet of the full sense of the position of

the Creator and the creature, the Sanctifier and the sanctified. In many a delightful page of God's word is this brightly reflected. The Lord dwelt in the midst of the camp of Israel while at rest, and, as it took its journey, went along with it, whether by night or by day, whether the road lay right onward, or turned back to the mountain or the sea. But still He was GOD, the Lord of the camp.

How does all that commend itself to our souls! We bow to this. We rejoice to know that He dwells in a light that no man can approach unto, and yet that He has walked through the villages and cities of earth; that He is One whom no man hath seen, nor can see, and yet that none less than the One who is in His bosom has declared Him to us, been in the midst of us, our Kinsman in the flesh, as well as Jehovah's Fellow. (Zech. xiii. 7).

His supreme authority, as Lord, is infinite; His distance and holiness, as God, are infinite. And yet He is "Head over all things to the church." and God Himself is "for us." (Ephes. i. 22; Rom. viii. 31). At the very moment of His commanding Moses and Joshua to take their shoes from their feet, because of His presence, He was manifesting Himself to them in symbols or characters significant of the deepest sympathy and

of the most devoted service. (Exodus iii.; Joshua v.).

In the days of increasing gloom and perplexity, like the present, the soul is the more sent to the sure hiding-place of safety, or to the sunny Pisgah heights of hope and observation. It gets the more accustomed to meditate on the strength of those foundations which God has put under our feet—the intimacy of that communion into which He has even now introduced our hearts—and the brightness of those prospects which He has set before our eyes.

I ask, beloved fellow-believer, Are we pressing in desire after this portion? Are we unsatisfied with all in comparison with it? Are we refusing to form any purpose, or to entertain any prospect, short of this? In Psalm lxxxiv., the heart of the worshipper is still *on the way*, unsatisfied, though he have “pools,” and “rain,” and “strength” of the Lord, till He reach Zion. In Psalm xc., all which the man of God sees is the vanity of human life and the “return” of the Lord. He does not anticipate changes and improvements in the condition of things, but looks to being “made glad” and of being “satisfied” at the “return” of Christ.

Is this our mind? I again ask. Are we still prisoners of hope, refusing to let any-

thing change the expectant attitude of the soul? The Holy Ghost is given to us, not to change that, but to strengthen it. His very presence does but nourish present dissatisfaction of heart, and the longings of hope and desire. He causes the saint to “abound in hope” (Rom. xv. 13), and gives breadth and compass to the cry, “Come, Lord Jesus.” Spirit of truth, the other Comforter, as He is, He does not show Himself for the Bridegroom, nor propose to make His refreshings “the marriage supper of the Lamb.” The energy of hope, the desirings of the soul after our still unmanifested Lord, only speak the Spirit’s presence in us the more clearly and blessedly. It is His very design and workmanship. He draws us forth to hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

And is He our Object? The heart well knows the power of that which is its object. Do we make JESUS such? Are we able to say, “When He giveth quietness, who then can make trouble?”

May the Spirit shed abroad more and more, in the heart of each of us, these and the like affections. And to HIM that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, be glory and dominion for ever! Amen.

“ONE THING I DO.”

Philippians iii.

The life of Christ *in* the soul, and the presence of a rejected and glorified Christ *before* the soul, are the elements by which God associates us with His own objects, and sustains a testimony to these objects, in the world.

All real testimony for Christ in a world that has rejected Him, and all true service for His name—that is, the whole living power of Christianity in the world—has this simple ground for its spring.

This is enunciated, not as if it were a truth unknown and unacknowledged by those who are Christ's, but on account of the need there is, in the present day, for the mind to be recalled from man's complex thoughts, to God's simple power of a living Christianity in the world.

“*Christ in you, the hope of glory,*” expresses infinitely more than a doctrine or a dogma. It is the simple exponent of a living and a transforming power.

Nothing is more false in Christianity than the *notion* of “the imitation of Christ.” A single sentence from an epistle teaches more, as to this, than whole volumes of “a Kempis.” Christ must “*live in me,*” if I am to live *like Christ* or *for Christ*. All else is

pitiful mimicry. It is worse. It is to caricature Christ to the world, by an attempt to exhibit Him, while His real character and glory are unknown.

For what *was* Christ in His moral walk in this world? And what *is* Christ, as despised and rejected by the world, and about to be manifested in glory? I do not speak of His essential Godhead, which all who are orthodox, allow, as giving efficacy to His sacrifice, and validity to their hopes of heaven. But Christ's blessed person and glory have another aspect than this; and His cross has another power. "That I may *know Him*" indicates the one; and, "by which I am *crucified to the world*," introduces to the other.

But *what* was the moral exhibition of the life of Christ here—if it was not a life whose every spring of action, and every motive and feeling and affection, was not so entirely from above—from heaven—as to be the utter reverse, and the rebuke, of all that has its spring from this debased and corrupted and corrupting world? I do not speak of "the moral sublime" of Christ's character, which has won the admiration of infidels, and the *conception* of which—to their own condemnation—they have pronounced to be divine; but of that detailed, delineated, portraiture, which] the Gospels

give of His every-day life, which as the *loved* and *owned* of God, He is the *despised* and *rejected* of the world.

How can I be called to exhibit this; or how can I take my place with Him relatively *to the world*, if I am not, by His grace, put relatively in His position *toward heaven*? and if all the springs of heaven's life and purity, and heaven's fellowship, and heaven's abiding peace, and sustaining joy, are not made mine?

But this *is* the real power of Christianity.

It is this which the full heart of Christ unfolds to His disciples, when, rejected by the world, His love puts them in the place of continuing a witness for God in the the world when He is gone.

“Power from on high” (Luke xxiv. 49: cf. Acts i, 8.) to witness for Christ is another thing from that which the fourteenth of John, and the connected chapters, unfold. There, it is an absent Christ preparing for His disciples *a home* in heaven, but assuring them of His return; the certain knowledge of the Father, from what they had seen in *Him*; unlimited power of request in His Name, and His own pledged love for the fulfilment; the presence of “another Comforter,” not so much the power of witness as the Companion of their solitude, and to make them know the unutterable depth of

the union of the Father and the Son, and *their* living union with Him; so that henceforth their life was knit up with His, “*because I live ye shall live also;*” and finally (though these are but the scanty streamlets from that gushing fountain), He tells them *His* place in the world is now to be *theirs*; but not to be theirs amidst its coldness and hatred and scorn, without “*His peace;*” and more—nor without the visits of His love to cheer their obedient hearts, while they were sent into the world, in the consciousness that the world was not their place, but heaven.

It is this which explains that brief epitome of a Christian’s course in the world, “He that saith he abideth in Him, ought himself also so to walk even as He walked.” (I John ii. 6.) May our hearts learn, in the only way in which it can be learned, its heavenly power! “The kingdom of God is not in word, but in power.” (I Cor. iv. 20.)

Few who have any heart for Christ, have ever gazed upon the picture of the *apostle’s* “imitation of Christ,” presented in this third of Philippians, without a just admiration. But few indeed have penetrated the secret of that blessed exhibition, so as to become followers of him as he was of Christ.

It has been observed that “every man, perhaps, at some period of his life, has been

a hero in purpose ;” and in Christianity alas ! how prone are we to live for Christ in *purpose* rather than in *act* ! It is a rare exhibition of the Gospel to see a man intent upon “doing one thing.”

But let us look at the unfolding of those springs of action which formed the beauty of this moral exhibition of Christ in the apostle. Too often the mind misses, by dwelling upon the exfoliation, what it was the intention of the Spirit in the apostle to disclose ; which evidently, here, was not the *result*, but the hidden *spring*, of a life of unlimited consecration to its Object.

What he relinquished in his course is plain ; what was his estimation of present things is equally marked ; what was his future expectation is alike defined. He could say, “Our conversation [‘citizenship’] is in heaven”—which was saying much, if its force be understood. He could further add, “from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ”—which stamped the sacred unworldly character on his hope. But his sorrow was unmitigated when he thought of “the cross of Christ,” being associated with a lower aim, in “mind-ing earthly things.”

But how did he reach this altitude ? And what set in motion, and kept in motion, these unworldly sympathies ? There is but

one simple and unchanging element, whether he be looked at in the outset of his course, its continuance, or its close. And the issue or result is as simple as its spring. If *Christ* was the *spring* of his action, the *end* of his action was also *Christ*.

It was the revelation of Christ in his soul that at first detached him from the world, and from self, and from all that self holds dear. It was the same undimmed view of Christ that kept him with unquenched ardour of affection following in the path of His rejection, and spending himself in unwearied service for that which was dear to Christ in the midst of an unfeeling and hostile world. It was simply and alone the same blessed Christ in glory that brightened the future of his soul, and filled the horizon of his earnest and unfailing hope. "Our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour the Lord Jesus Christ," tells of the goal on which his eye was fixed. "*That I may know Him,*" in a single gush, reveals the first and last and only absorbing passion of his heart.

But is *this* the Christ *we* know? Is it the selfsame Sun that warmed and cheered and brightened the day of Paul's earnest labour, which still shines for us? Or is it that, from length of time, His beams reach us but ob-

liquely, which glowed in their zenith in the apostle's day? Or is it that our hearts have, with the world, grown old; and with their feeble, palsied motion, say that *the time is past*, for *them* to revive beneath His genial glow?

It is not thus. But we have left the mountain-top, where still He pours His fervid beams, and have got down into the fogs and vapours and dampness of the marshy plains below—"a squalid place" indeed when viewed in the light of "the excellent glory." (2 Pet. i. 17, 19. R. V. margin).

Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever," is a truth that can stay the heart when all around is putting on tokens of decay, and that which bears the name of Christ is verging fast towards Laodicean lukewarmness and rejection. But Christ must have a witness in the world till He comes again. And the truth that "Elijah was a man subject to like passions as we are," may well turn the lonely drooping heart in confidence to *Elijah's God*, despite of Israel's apostasy, and Ahab's wickedness, and Jezebel's corruption.

But the moral picture of our chapter is before our gaze.

"No confidence in the flesh," is a leading feature in it, and one, if our souls would copy, we must not forget. It is the obverse

of the medal, with its other inscription, "our conversation is in heaven."

It is the first expression, the essential condition of being so owned of God, as to have "*His Son* revealed in us." "Christ in you the hope of glory," taught one who was not a whit behind the chiefest apostles, that he was "NOTHING." And when it pleased God to reveal His Son in him, immediately he "*conferred not with flesh and blood*"—so that the expression, "We are the circumcision," or those who are acknowledged of God as in connection with Himself, is necessarily followed by, "who serve (*latreuo*) God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and *have no confidence in the flesh.*"

It is a negative effect, it is true; but as such it is essential to the possession and the display of God's grace and Christ's power.

Nothing but the bright revelation of a dying, living, crucified, glorified Christ—a Christ whose love brought Him from heaven's glory to "the dust of death" for us; a Christ whom the world has rejected, and who now beckons us onward to His glory from the throne of our God, can ever produce this effect in us of, "no confidence in the flesh;" but this revelation, when true and bright to the soul, does and can. It alike displaces the claims and pretensions of a *righteous* or of a *sinful* self. It can, and

must do so, because, "It is not *I* that live, but *Christ* liveth in me."

It is not *the world*, whether in its riches, its ease, its reputation, or its esteem, that is in prominence here. That is a thing so alien from the thoughts of the apostle, and has so utterly lost any hold it might have had on his affections, that he has only tears when he mentions those who imagined it could for a moment be associated with the cross. He dismisses such a thought with the stern declaration, "that those who mind earthly things," are "the enemies of the cross of Christ."

That blight of Christianity which has so thickly settled down upon all that bears the name of Christ now, was seen only by the apostle in absolute and deadly *antagonism* to the cross. And his emphatic condemnation of it is heard in the brief expression, "I am *crucified* to the *world*, and the *world* is crucified to *me*."

But in this "no confidence in the flesh," we see the cross, and the glory turning all that could be a ground of confidence, in natural descent—in the participation of divine ordinances—in the exactitude of religious observances, and the perfection of moral virtues—into "*loss for Christ*": and "the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, his Lord," turning everything he had

lost for Him in comparison, into a heap of
 “*dung*.”

“The righteousness which is of God by faith,” “the righteousness which is through the faith of Christ,” puts utterly outside any righteousness that might emanate from self, or that which is by *the law*; and that through being “found IN HIM;” while the power of Christ’s *resurrection* draws him on through a life of suffering, as the legitimate road to “the resurrection from the dead?” And if he seeks to be made conformable to Christ’s death here, it is because he sees in it the moral pathway to the glory, along which his soul is bounding, like a courser, to his goal.

His detailed life amidst such burning desires, such a contempt of the world, such unearthly motives, was still, in one sense, common-place enough; it had only this of pre-eminence in it, that in the ratio in which heaven and glory—CHRIST—possessed his soul, the *world* heaped upon him its neglect, and contempt, and scorn. “Even unto this present hour [he says] we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place; and labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we entreat; we are made as the filth of the world, and are the off-scouring of all things unto this day.”

But did he sigh, that he was thus cast off by the world? No! He had neither time nor heart to think of it, except when some laggard soul, still lingering in the world, needed to be reminded that He who possesses heaven's glory, travelled to it through the world's scorn: and that our God has called us to the same inheritance, "by glory and by virtue." (2 Pet. i.)

One point was in his eye: *one object*, and *one alone*, bounded his view—"Our conversation is in heaven; *from whence, also we look for the Saviour the Lord Jesus Christ*"—and though every step was bringing him nearer to it, nothing did he think he had attained while this was still before.

The ultimate object for which Christ had *laid hold* on him was kept steadily before his mind, and neither successes nor disasters could stop him from reaching onward, until he himself had *laid hold* on this, "not as though I had already attained *this one thing I do*, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling [or 'calling on high'] of God in Christ Jesus."

But is he content to be *lonely* in this ardent race? No! See how he stretches out a friendly hand to those who, through faint-

ness, are dropping in the rear, and says, in effect,—“Come on—come on!”—“Brethren, be followers together of me.” And see him, too, casting a lingering look towards those who have stopped in their course, through “minding earthly things.” He weeps at their condition and sorrowfully vents the word of warning, “They are the enemies of the cross of Christ . . . whose *glory* is in their *shame*?” But he cannot stop. He dashes away the tears which, when looking downwards, dimmed with sorrow his eyes; and again looking upward and onward, his face beaming with the brightness of eternal hope, he exclaims—“Our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body [or ‘body of humiliation’], that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body [or ‘body of glory’], according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself.”

Beloved fellow believer in Christ, is this the simple character of the Christianity we profess? Is CHRIST so simply, so singly the Object of our souls, as to be the power of the displacement of all that we have clung to in the *past*; all that would entangle us, and that would make us turn our backs on the *Cross* in the *present*; and all

the schemes and expectations, the fears or anticipations of the *future* ?

To *his* heart, whose aspirations have for a while arrested the current of our thoughts, CHRIST was all this. And, Oh ! may the precious grace of that God who separated *him* from his mother's womb and called *him* by His grace, and was pleased to reveal His *Son in him*, . . . make it the one object of our souls that CHRIST may be thus revealed, *restored*, to our hearts ! Too often the measure of practical godliness which may mark us—the reading of the word, our prayer, our self-denial—look not beyond ourselves ; or at least not beyond the limit of that service on which the heart may be set for Christ. These things are necessary to maintain a tone of piety, and to keep the heart from being driven backward by the world's adverse current. But this is not "*conversation in heaven*." This is not CHRIST filling, from the centre to the circumference, our affections and our hearts ! This is not "CHRIST *dwelling* in our hearts by faith !" This is not, with the apostle, to do "ONE THING !"

There is a hand that can remove every film from our darkened vision, and make us "with unveiled face [to] behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord, [and be thus] changed into the same image from glory to glory,

even as by the Spirit of the Lord :”—then, and then only, shall we be able to say “ *This one thing I do!* ”



TEMPTATION

It has been much the fashion, of late, to extol and set forth, the peculiar advantages of our day and generation. It has been advanced, that the spirit of inquiry is generally diffused, that objects of utility engross attention, that the industrial classes are advancing in the scale of social improvement; and, in fact, that the world is decidedly and steadily marching onward to a pitch of civilization never yet attained in the former ages of its history.

There are those who seek to counteract this movement, and set up old-fashioned prejudices as a sort of breakwater against them: men of one idea, which, if threatened with destruction, have no other to replace it with. There are again others who are seeking to combine the old and new together: men of a past age, who were fast when the world was slow, who now find themselves out of breath in the efforts to keep pace with the present. And again, there are others who are going with the stream, and think they are progressing, because they are going fast, and that they are making good speed, because they are rushing onwards.

That we live in exciting times no one can for a moment doubt; that we live in eventful times will be readily granted, and that

there is a fast spirit abroad, and a hurry and excitement in everything is apparent; but we need the word of caution not to allow the times, nor the events either, to be so uppermost in our thoughts as to displace the due consideration of our own conduct in them. A man in a house which was on fire, would be well occupied in seeking his own safety and getting out of it. A man on a plain, threatened with inundation, would do well to make for rising ground. To be occupied with the progress of the flames or the rapid increase of the waters, to the neglect of his own safety, would be surely suicidal. However circumstances may change, and the pursuits of any age be more or less stirring, yet *man as man, in his nature, remains the same*. Antecedent to the Deluge, the wickedness of man was great in the earth; so great as to call for Divine interference in judgment. The building of the Tower of Babel was another manifestation of what man would dare to do; and other events in sacred as well as profane history, bear witness to the *unchangeable energy of man in evil*. Circumstances might moderate or excite—but the nature was there to be acted upon, and was affected by them.

Everywhere the world is in motion. We live in a busy and active era, not evil because it is active and busy, but because of the end of its activities—the exaltation of man (the first man, not the Second), the “Go to”* spirit of the associated masses at

*Better rendered “Come on”, as the same word is in Exod. i. 10.

Babel, which is a growing characteristic. Sober men of the world are not indifferent or unmoved spectators of what is passing around them. Dismal forebodings occupy many minds; others indulge cheering anticipations. "We shall see what all this will come to by and bye," is the ominous language of some; "We shall see what man is capable of," the exulting conclusion of others.

Now the child of God, in the midst of it all, is encompassed by snares on every hand. The Bible is his book emphatically, yet has become of common appeal to others, who have not the token of being "fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." Modern Christianity has taken its form from modern characteristics. The age has features of its own, and would fashion a religion of its own. Revelation leaves no field for invention: its authenticity invulnerable, the ingenuity of man is occupied in its perversion. God deals in His word with men as they are. Man would begin with men as they ought to be. Hypocrisy was the first-born of sin. Man's fallen nature, ignorant of God's remedy seeks refuge in disguise. The grace of God apprehended, brings the sinner into His presence about the very sins thus discovered. Where everything is to be gained by confession, concealment is wanton folly. In communion, where the basis of all intercourse is founded on the fact of necessity and the acknowledged need of everything, the best recommendation to obtain grace to meet it, it follows, as an obvious truism, that our greatest wisdom is to seek whatever would

encourage confidence in "the God of all grace," and whatever would convince of the absolute necessity of dependence upon this grace.

Confidence in God, known as, the God of all grace, "Who spared not His own Son," to forgive all our sins; and confidence in God as the God of all grace, to sustain and help us.

Sin is itself absolutely evil; but that evil is only fully known by the judgment of it upon Christ's person. God's holy abhorrence of it is brought fully before us in the fact, that when Christ was, through grace, numbered with the transgressors, He could not escape until He had paid the utmost farthing. Though the fact of His having paid it, proved by His resurrection, is the assurance to the believer that he will never be called in question about it.

"I am the Resurrection and the Life;" "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee ['The Father'] the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent."

Now it is just because the believer has this Divine life, is a partaker of the Divine nature, has his life hid with Christ in God, that he is called upon to put off concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt, according to the deceitful lusts, and that ye put on the new man which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness. As He that hath called you is Holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation and Godliness.

There is present happiness in practical holiness; "Wisdom's ways are ways of

pleasantness." There is positive misery in a sinful course: "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man but the end thereof are the ways of death."

To help to the one, if God permit, and warn off the other, is the object of the writer in considering the various temptations to which we are by nature exposed; and the very positive provocation of our nature in the novel and exciting circumstances of our day and generation. And, as we have before remarked, the truest wisdom is to seek whatever would encourage confidence in the God of all grace, and whatever would convince of the absolute necessity of dependence upon that grace.

The power of Jehovah was made known to Israel in their redemption out of Egypt. Their necessities in the Wilderness gave occasion for the display of His resources, to supply them. So also for us, as the hymn so truly and sweetly puts it:

"In the desert, God will teach thee
What the God that thou hast found"
Patient, gracious, powerful, holy,
All His grace shall there abound!"

In relationship with the holy Lord God, and with the revelation of His will, as to the conduct which became His people, they learned themselves in the light of it.

What they should do was laid down for them; what they did is on record. "These things . . . are written for our admonition" (I Cor. x 11).

They were not redeemed because they knew God, but that they might know Him. We are not redeemed because we are what

we ought to be, but to become so. As with them, so with us. We have the standard of conduct: "He left us an example, that we should follow His steps." In "the light of His life," we learn the darkness of our own. Beholding what is spiritual, we detect what is carnal; but it is because we are redeemed.

Nothing answers for the believer before God but what Christ is: "As He is so are we in this world." "Our life is hid with Christ in God." We have passed from Death unto Life. We have passed through the Red Sea, and are out of Egypt in the Wilderness, to learn, as Israel of old, what resources we have in Christ, and what need we have of Him. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh," and remains so. Saints were sinners; as sinners, were led by the Spirit of God to rely on the work of the Lord Jesus for them, and became saints. Their seed remaineth in them. God planted it. Yet because saints, they enter into conflict. "Then came Amalek and fought with Israel in Rephidim. . . . When Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed: and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed." (Exod. xvii.) However sure of victory they may be in fighting the Lord's battles, the entire dependence of the people, at every moment, on the divine blessing, is presented to us in this, that if Moses (who with the rod of God represents to us His authority on high) keeps not his hands lifted up, the people are beaten by their enemies. Nevertheless, Aaron the high priest, and Hur (purity) maintain the blessing, and Israel prevails. Sincerity, valiant efforts, the fact that the

battle was God's battle, were, though right, of no avail—all depended upon God's blessing from on high.

Doctrinally, we apprehend it; but how apt to forget it in conflict. Our hearts grow discouraged because of the way. Things that happen to us in the way divert us from it. Circumstances arise to make manifest what is in ourselves, and when we see it at home, we are taken by surprise. We could condemn the act in another, judge the sin in the action, and so far it is right: but to judge ourselves as having the seed of that sin in us, and to use the occasion of its manifestation in another, for the bewailing our own liability to it, is moral safeguard against falling into it, and puts the soul right before the God of all grace, in pleading with Him, on behalf of any who have gone astray. "Ye have not rather mourned," was the apostolic rebuke to the church at Corinth. "Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they kept not Thy law," is the language of David. (Psa. cxix.)

The science of Chemistry resolves itself into very few, simple, and primary elements. However compounded or mixed, yet the analysis separates it into comparatively few divisions. And much the same may be advanced of "Temptations." However diversified in their aspect, or different in development, affected by climate, or coloured by circumstances, yet they too are resolved into primary elements: and the triple classification, "the world, the flesh, and the devil," embraces them all.

A BEAUTIFUL SUNSET.

“For which cause also I suffer these things ; but I am not ashamed ; for I know WHOM I have believed, and am persuaded that HE is able to keep for THAT DAY the deposit I have entrusted to HIM.”

(2 Timothy i. 12.-New Trans.)

The words of “such an one as Paul the aged” would at all times be pregnant with deep interest ; how much more so when they are his parting words, his paternal legacy ! What marks this epistle is the blending of the most solemn truth with the greatest tenderness. It is the utterance of chastened affections, and the language of a man who, in the midst of unparalleled trials, can look into the past without regret, and into the future with the confidence of triumph. Yet nothing looked more unlike triumph than the circumstances in which the apostle was. From chapter i. he states that “all in Asia had turned away” from him, and such was the contagiousness of defection, that his own beloved son in the faith himself needed the exhortation, “Be not thou ashamed of the testimony of the Lord, nor of me his prisoner.” When we come to the last chapter, the sight is that of a battle-field, where, when the fight is over, a list is drawn, not alas ! of the wounded only, but of deserters as well, the commander himself heading the first class. But faith rose above appearances, and then it was that the victorious prisoner could say, “I know,” and “I am persuaded.” Blessed confidence !

Great is that end of the journey which resembles (in what can be imitated) that of our blessed Lord. He, the Author and Fin-

isher of faith, resisted unto blood, striving against sin, but did it by self-surrender. So His faithful servant Stephen, whose end Paul recalls long afterwards in these touching terms, "And when the blood of Thy martyr, Stephen, was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him." And so now the persecutor of that day, condemned and worsted in human eyes, can with inexpressible satisfaction say, "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure ['release'] is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day." Like his Master,

"By weakness and defeat

He won the meed and crown."

No end is more sweetly triumphant than this. He had fondly cherished it before, when he said, "I count not my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus." He was now being gratified in this respect. The few years that elapsed between his last interview with the elders of Ephesus, and his last defence before the Roman tribunal, had been, as he knew beforehand they would be, fraught with many a danger and sore temptation; hence the charm, now that the last contest was over, of saying, "I have finished." This means he was conscious of having left nothing undone, or half-done, of his extensive service, "That by me the preaching might

be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear." O that each of our days went toward such an end! that we knew more of this holy and sober confidence as regards our feeble service!

In the first epistle we find the apostle in the full active energy that produced such immense labours, and, in beautiful consistency with it, we see a spirit not slow to rise in indignation against those who gave up "a good conscience," and the indignation sternly expressed in these words, "Of whom is Hymenæus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme;" but in the second, whilst his estimation of a "pure conscience" has in no wise been lowered, he seems to feel that it was now best to leave it to the Lord to deal with such cases as that of Alexander; and although the latter had been frightfully bitter and wicked towards the apostle personally, he calmly says, "The Lord reward him according to his works"—not in the least anxious to have the last word himself.

Then, next, when he thinks how the ranks of his fellow-soldiers had been thinned by desertion, he sorrowfully says, "Only Luke is with me," instead of qualifying the conduct of the deserters by withering words as it deserved, he enters into the difficulty of standing the storm, and gently adds, "that it may not be laid to their charge." So with the blessed Master, in the hour of His incomparable trial, "What, could ye not watch with Me one hour?" The servant said, "Only Luke;" but that was one to

watch with him; whereas the yet more deeply tried Lord had none—no, not one. And, then, the gentleness of His rebuke! “Sleep on now, and take rest.” How true that in all things He must have the pre-eminence, even in sorrow, and in the patience that tribulation worketh! Yet it was the faithful apostle’s lot to have, at this trying final moment, the precious words made good to him, “The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord;” and thus the conformity is completed by linking together these two blessed utterances: “Yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me;” and, “Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me.”

This much for his immediate circumstances. But the Scripture heading this paper takes in a wider range yet. It was not merely in the face of death that he could say, “I know,” “I am persuaded,” but in the face of rapid declension in the church, which would culminate in nothing less than the awful picture so faithfully drawn in chapter iii. 1-5. And why not? Man is at best but a broken reed, and when the last page of his sad history is read, faith turns towards another, and says, with immense delight, “HE is able.” Steadfast peace and perfect confidence are thus maintained, the clouds not allowed to weigh the spirit down, nor to dim the light of His blessed countenance. We are so foolish, and so forgetful of our good-for-nothingness, that we often need trials, in the shape of

disappointments, to cast us more absolutely upon the Lord. Were our faith stronger, the trials would not take this shape. With Paul it never came to that. He was given to witness that which was most painful, and to predict that which was most terrible; yet the peace of his spirit and the confidence of his heart remained unmoved, undisturbed. He knew "WHOM" he had believed.

The abstract way in which he speaks of the Lord is very telling. It is the peculiar feature of John, and the way of one who is so engrossed with His person, that he cares for nought beside. "WHOM" and "HIM" convey the thought of profound, yet holy, intimacy.

It was not only, I apprehend, with regard to his own individual safety that he said, "I know," and "am persuaded." We may fairly conclude that the "deposit" alluded to in this verse is more than himself. The very manner of his conversion had taught him Christ's estimate of, and love for, the Church—"Why persecutest thou ME?" and ever afterwards was this the prominent feature of his own character. It was by this standard that he measured his former life and path. To him there was nothing so humbly bad as that he had persecuted the Church of God." How these words tell of the intense love he now bore it, of the beauty and excellency he now saw in it, when looking upon it with the eye of Christ? *Oh, for more of a kindred feeling in us! We need it pressingly.* Much of our dryness and narrowness is due to the lack of it. We need not fear lest this feeling should produce in-

difference to the evil of the church. Is Christ indifferent to it? Nor shall we be; but tenderness will cause us to make more frequent use of the basin and towel, and more unfrequent use of the stone and the sword. We shall not lose thereby. I cherish the thought that this "deposit" comprised that church which, next to Christ, Paul loved most. When he had committed it to the care of its Nourisher and Cherisher, he could calmly speak of the worst times, saddest departure, and darkest evil as powerless to sever it from that diligent care. And beyond this present dark and evil day there is a day mentioned—"that day"—when all will look different from now.

"**THAT DAY.**" How suggestive! It needs no other qualification: it stands alone in the estimate of Christ, as His "hour" stood alone in the estimate of God—this for suffering, that for joy. It is the time when He will "present it to HIMSELF a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." The spots and wrinkles tell of failures and cares with which we are sorrowfully acquainted. Do you want comfort in the midst of this heart-breaking scene? Think of "THAT day." Our apostle thought of it, as well as of the present faithfulness of God's grace, and the sufficiency of His word, when he spoke to his beloved Ephesians, even then yet so fresh in their first love, the words of Acts xx. 29, 30. Wolves and perverse men might, and would, make a fearful havoc in that best and most fertile of the apostle's fields, where a labour

of "three years and a half, night and day, with tears," had produced such an abundant harvest; and in the field would grow tares, in the shape of giving "heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions rather than godly edifying which is in faith." But, notwithstanding all, he who knows the love of Christ to the Church does not faint, because he can reckon upon Christ being fully gratified in "that day;" and if He, surely we also.

Faith never surrenders anything to man and his unfaithfulness, and when God prepares it by His word for dark shadows and blighting winds, it refuses to stop therein, and passes right beyond, where Christ is seen, unchanged and unchangeable, and where the Church stands as closely connected to HIM and as cherished by HIM as ever.

May our hearts be more filled with this enlarging love? And while we grieve and sorrow over our own faults and the faults of all, let us remember that "God has not given us the spirit of fear ['cowardice'], but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind ['wise discretion']."

Soon shall my bark be safe on shore,
Lodged in the port where JESUS is;
Where neither winds nor waters roar,
And all the tides are tides of bliss.

But while my floating bark doth ride
And beat on life's tempestuous sea,
My dang'rous course Lord Jesus guide,
And Thou my constant Pilot be!

Though surges swell as mountains high—
Though death and dangers threaten me—

Though sleep may seem to close Thine eye,
Stay faithless fear from waking Thee.

On the dark wave may I behold
Thy Spirit form, my Lord Most High,
And with these words my heart enfold,
“Be not afraid; 'tis I! 'tis I!”

Thus have I found that blessed shore—
That port whose tides are only bliss;
And though the winds and waters roar
Know Thee, my Pilot and my peace.



WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

This is a question raised in many hearts by that which is passing around us—a question of the deepest interest in itself, even though circumstances did not make one feel the need of a clear and satisfactory answer. But the state of the professing world, now so much agitated on the question of the *Church* in every form, and in which a multiplicity of movements (in general only creating more perplexity and questions in most souls) present themselves as the reply to the need which is felt of finding the truth on this point—this state of things, I say, will render a serious examination of what the word of God says on the subject useful to many. Enlightened by that only true light, they may, by learning at the fountain of light, while putting themselves in possession of the light itself, be able to judge calmly and soundly of all that presents itself as such, and, as a con-

sequence, claims submission, or at least adherence, to the course which is proposed, as being according to it.

But this is not all. I doubt not but that God has not only permitted, but it has been His will, that this question should be raised, in order that His children may learn what is the extent, and what are the thoughts of His love; and that they may take morally, and with true christian devotedness, a position practically answering to His infinite goodness. For the question of the Church, seen as presented in the Bible, is one eminently practical. The position in which the Christian is placed by the very fact that he is a member of the Church of God, governs the affections, and forms the character. This consideration makes still more opportune a work which views the Church in the light of God's word. As a matter of fact, the question of the Church is generally presented as a question of the organization of some new body amongst Christians—a question of which the heart gets wearied. Hence it follows that many persons discard the subject altogether, as injurious to sanctification, and seek, and induce others to seek, spirituality by setting aside a point of which, after all, it is evident that the New Testament is full, and of which it treats in terms which attach to such a point great practical im-

portance. In fine, if, as many serious Christians think, we are in the last times, although circumstances can add nothing to the essential importance of truth, the fact that we find ourselves to be near the end of the age, makes its practical importance to be more felt. The obligation under which the wise virgins were, to watch and to keep their lamps ready at all times, became an imperative duty, when the cry had gone forth at midnight, "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him."

The considerations I have just presented will have clearly pointed out to the reader the object of this paper, namely, an examination of the teaching of the word of God on the subject of the Church, and of the practical results for our souls which flow thence. My aim is not to examine the basis of individual salvation, although the teaching of the word on the Church throws much light on this point. It is even of consequence to understand that they are distinct things; for God never passes by our individual responsibility, whatever privileges may be conferred upon us by being joined to an assembly. We are saved as individuals, although God may, if He sees fit, gather into one body those whom He saves. Salvation is a thing which, though complete in Christ, supposes in the heart of the per-

son enjoying it, personal exercises, which go on necessarily and exclusively in his own conscience, and which bring his soul into immediate connection with God, and without which all relationship with Him—all happiness—the very existence of spiritual life—would be impossible. The intercourse between God and an intelligent and responsible soul, which before was in sin, necessarily supposes that consequent on the establishment of this new relationship many things pass within which are for that soul alone. The special form which the relationship takes may add much—may give special character to it; and this is the case; but this does not do away with personal relationship. This is one of the essential differences between the truth of the word and the idea of the Church as it is viewed by the Romanist; who, making ordinances a means of salvation, attaches salvation to being of the Church, instead of making the Church the assembly of those who are saved. If but one individual were saved, his salvation would be equally perfect and sure, but *he* would not be the Church. This (the Church) includes an additional thought, an additional relationship, to that of the saved individual. What is this thought? Let us lay aside human definitions, and cleave to the word.

The Church is something infinitely precious to Christ. He "loved the Church, and gave HIMSELF for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word; that He might present it to HIMSELF a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy, and without blemish." (Ephes. v.) This is a revelation that makes us feel the importance which God attaches to what He calls the Church. What an object of the affections of Christ—of His care; and how glorious will be the accomplishment of the counsels of God respecting this Church! What a privilege to be part of it! This passage teaches us, moreover, that there is, in the union of Christ and the Church all the intimacy* that exists between a husband and a wife beloved—a feeble figure after all of the reality of this great mystery—that we are thus members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones; that the Church holds to Christ the place which Eve held with regard to Adam—the figure

*It is well to remark that it is no question in this passage of mutual affection, nor of anything connected with fleshly imaginations. It is the love of Christ only, perfect according to His own heart before the existence even of the Church, having as the object of His labour of love the presentation of the Church to Himself without spot and glorious. All is on the side of Christ Himself, and the object perfect according to His heart.

of Him that was to come; who was associated with Adam in the enjoyment of all that had been conferred on Him by God. This last thought, it is true, is only suggested here by the analogy of the position of Eve, used by the apostle to represent that of the Church; but it is taught as a doctrine elsewhere. It is natural to suppose, that what holds so prominent a place in the mind of God should be found more than once in the word; and such we shall find to be the case in passages, the bearing of which we will presently consider. At the same time, it will be easily understood, by the nature of the thing itself, that this position is quite peculiar; that such an association with Christ is a special object of the counsels and purposes of God; for the place of a bride, like that of Eve, is a very special one. She is not the inheritance; she is more than a child, however dear, as a child, she may be to the father. It is a higher thing than being God's people, though both may be true at the same time. It is difficult to imagine anything more closely linked with self than one's own wife, one's own body. "No man," says the apostle to express it, "ever yet hated his own flesh." It is one's self. It must be evident to the reader, that from such a relationship must flow immensely practical consequences; because it

is connected at the same time, with the closest affections, and the most absolute duties. The Lord Himself expresses the force of the position of His Church, the first time He speaks of it in a formal manner after the commencement of its existence, when He says, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou ME?"

Let us notice the three chief points presented by Ephesians v., which has suggested these reflections. First, Christ loved the Church, and gave Himself for it. It is redeemed at the cost of His blood, of His life, of Himself. Having thus purchased it exclusively for Himself, He begins, secondly, to fashion it, to sanctify it, that it may be according to His own heart's desire; that He may, in the third place, present it to Himself a glorious Church, without the least thing unbecoming the glory, or that might offend the eye or the heart of her Divine Bridegroom. There is here a testimony to the divinity of JESUS, so much the more remarkable as it is only by the way; and the allusion is made as to a known truth. God, having formed Eve, presented her to the first Adam; but Christ Himself presents the Church to Himself; because if He be the Second Adam, He is at the same time the One who can present it to Himself as being the Author of its existence, of its beauty,

and of the perfection in which it must appear in heaven, to be worthy of such a Bridegroom, and of the glory that is there.

We will consider its history farther on : but we may already observe here, that whatever may be the circumstances through which the Church is called to pass, she is always considered as a whole, as much while she is being purified by the word upon earth, as when she is presented glorious to her Bridegroom in heaven. The redemption of this body by the blood of the cross was made upon earth. Her purification through the word, by the Spirit, also takes place on earth. The glorious result, at the return of Christ, will take place in heaven, for which place she will have been made ready. Although the marriage has not yet taken place, the relationship has always existed as to its rights. I do not speak merely as regards the eternal counsels of God, but in fact as to the knowledge and the duties of those who were called. Since Christ purchased the Church to Himself (I speak of the fact, and historically now, always allowing time for the communication of the truth as to this, by the Holy Ghost), the Church has been His, as regards the conscience of those who were called to the enjoyment of this position. The relationship exists ; and as

Christ has always been faithful, the Church ought to have been so also. Her purification, on the part of Christ, had necessarily reference to this relationship, as this passage formally proves. It ought to have been viewed in the same light by Christians, by those who, alas! may fail in this relationship as in all others. But their responsibility is in connection with the obligations that flow from it.

The manner in which this truth must act upon the knowledge of an accomplished salvation, and upon sanctification, as well as upon the joy of hope, is plain. For with regard to the first, the existence of the Church is based on the fact that Christ has loved it, and given Himself for it. So that its purchase, its salvation, and the gracious, perfect love of Him who redeemed it, with the end in view, which cannot fail, of presenting it in glory to Himself, form the basis of its whole life—of its every-day relations.

It is not a people put to the test, by a rule given. The Church is the object of a perfect work, through which Christ purchased it to Himself, when it was enslaved to Satan, defiled, and guilty. It has no other responsibility, as the Church, but that which is based on its being the purchase of Christ. This tells her, no doubt, that she ought to be entirely His; but if she ought to be His,

it is because she is so already. The Christian, instructed of God in this doctrine, has the peaceful assurance (an assurance which gives a calmness that is the basis of the the sweetest affections) that he belongs to Christ, according to God's perfect love, and the efficacy of a work in which Christ—that His heart might have satisfaction in the object which the Father had given him—could not fail.

The influence of this truth in the conscience is equally great as regards sanctification; for it is the purification of that which already belongs to Christ in an absolute manner, in order that it may be fit to live with Him for ever, a purification which extends consequently to the thoughts, the affections, and the manner of viewing things in all respects. Being wholly His, the Church has to do with Him in each movement of the heart, in each sentiment; if not, she fails in her relationship with Him, in every circumstance in which it is not so. As to the result which He has in view, He will certainly no more fail in that, thanks be unto God, than He has with regard to to the redemption. He will present the Church to Himself without spot or wrinkle. But the heart of the Christian ought to respond to that work.

The influence of the relationship of the

Church with Christ upon her hope, is no less great. She is outside the judgments which the coming of the Lord will bring upon the world—outside the course of the prophetic events which will take place in a world of which she forms no longer part. She awaits the happy moment when the Lord will call her, taking her to Himself to realize the glory and the joy of the relationship which she already knows by grace.

Such is the position of the Church, and her relationship with Christ. But there is a consequence resulting from these, the figure of which we have seen in the connection in which Eve was placed with the creation, but on which I will make a few more remarks by the way. Christ, says the apostle, in Ephesians i., is the Head of the Church, "which is His body, the fulness of [or 'that which makes complete'] Him that filleth all in all;" that is to say, Christ is the Head, and the Church the body; and as the body is the complement of the head to make up a man, so it is with Christ and the Church: He as Head directing, exercising all authority over the Church, His body—but the Church, as the body, rendering complete the mystical man, according to the eternal counsels of God. For it is evident that this is no question about the divine person of Christ, but in the counsels of God,

Christ, as Head, would not have been complete without the Church.

Let us remark by the way, that it is this thought which was completely hid (hid in God) under the old covenant; and which is not found in the whole of the Old Testament. The idea of a Christ not perfect, simply in his own person, as an individual, would have been unintelligible to the most advanced saint of the Old Testament. There was to be blessing under His government—but the being a part of the Christ, as a member of His body would have been incomprehensible. The union between Jew and Gentile, which flows from it, will come before us afterwards. Now the effect of such a union of the Church with Christ, has been to associate the Church in His dominion over all things and with all His glory, such as He received it as Mediator from His Father. And such is the force even of Ephesians i. 21, 22, which we have just quoted. That is why he sets forth the members of the Church as a new creation; as being the fruit of that same power which placed Christ there. (Chap. i. 19—ii, 7.) And that is connected with the whole of chapter i., where the apostle has revealed the fixed purpose of God, as to the administration of the fulness of times; which is, that He will gather together in one all

things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, in Him, in whom also we have obtained an inheritance. In the meantime, God has given us, who have believed before the manifestation of Christ, His Spirit, as the earnest until the redemption of the inheritance itself. Therefore the apostle shows, that, in order that we might enjoy the inheritance with Christ, we are the objects of the exercise of the same power which placed Him above all things, when He was in grace in our state; and that in Him we are in His state. If it be asked how such things can be, chapter ii. 7 tells us the reason. But numerous declarations confirm the consequences to us of this union. We speak here only of the consequences. "The glory," says the Lord, "which Thou gavest Me, I have given them, that the world may know that Thou hast loved them as Thou hast loved Me." "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." (Rom. viii.) "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? Know ye not that we shall judge angels?" (1 Cor. vi. 2, 3.) I do not speak of these things, as being all exclusively characteristic of the Church; but as of things which to us are the consequence of our belonging to it.

(To be continued, D. V.)

WHAT IS THE CHURCH ?

(Continued from page 100.)

After the short review, in the last number, of the position of the Church with regard to Christ, and the whole creation which will be subjected to Him, we will consider, in a more consecutive manner, the doctrine of the word respecting the Church itself, and then the position it holds historically in those ways of God, the course of which is given to us in detail in the Bible.

The fixed purpose of God, as it is expressly revealed to us in Ephesians i., is to gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth. The Church will be associated with Him, as His body—His bride—at that time. (Eph. i. 22, 23; v. 27.) But all things are not yet put under Him. God has not yet put them all, as a footstool, under His feet: nor is the Church as yet presented in glory to Christ, who as yet is sitting on the right hand of God. (Heb. ii. 8.) It is needless to quote passages to prove that the Church is not yet glorified nor raised. We are, dear Christian reader (you and I), proofs of it*—

* I do not feel it needful specially to notice here the heresy of a handful of enthusiasts, who think that the Lord has come, and that the resurrection is passed already (some avowing this latter doctrine

happy to be so—waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.

Whilst waiting, then, for the happy moment of our meeting with JESUS, is there still a Church? Did it enter into the thoughts of God, that there should be a Church upon earth, till the final accomplishment of His magnificent designs respecting her glory in heaven? There can be no doubt about it to one who is subject to the word of God. Let us examine the word on this point. Christ Himself is the first to announce the commencement of the Church : * “ Upon this rock I *will* build my

as a necessary consequence of the other ; others saying nothing about it). Revelation xxii. 16-21 suffices to refute this idea. It is well to bear in mind that the Revelation was written long after the destruction of Jerusalem.

* This declaration of the Lord (Matt. xvi.) has a very decisive character, if we consider the circumstances under which it was uttered. In the beginning of the chapter He had pronounced the judgment of the Jewish generation, giving them His death, under the figure of Jonas, as the sign ; and leaving to themselves those who were seeking a sign. Then He asked His disciples what was said of Him. Peter, on this occasion, makes the unique confession—“Thou art the Christ, *the Son of the living God.*” This latter part is only found on this occasion, and it is that which gives its peculiar importance to this confession. The Son of the *living God*, in building His Church, would shelter it from the power of Hades and of him who had the power of death. The death of the Messiah might break the links between Israel after the flesh and the head of their blessing, whatever grace might do afterwards for that nation ; but what-

Church." The declaration, that the gates of hell should not prevail against it, shows plainly that it is not a question of the Church already presented in glory. It is upon earth.

I would notice a few important points which are revealed by this passage. The Church was yet to begin. Christ recognized as Son of the living God, was to form the foundation of a new work upon the earth. The fact that there are believers upon the earth, and even believers acknowledging JESUS to be the Christ, does not constitute the Church. It was so when JESUS spoke, and yet the Church was still to be builded. This was a work to be done as regarded the children of God ; which thought is confirmed by a declaration of John respecting the involuntary prophecy of Caia-phas, that JESUS should die for the Jewish nation ; "and not for that nation only," adds the apostle, "but that He should gather together *in one* the children of God that were

ever was based on the power of the resurrection (and it is in resurrection that Christ has been declared the Son of God with power) was secured against him, who, at the most, had the power of death. Peter is always full of this idea of life. (I Pet. i. 3, 21, 23, 24 ; ii. 4, 5.) Matthew xvii., adds the millennial glory of the Son of man ; and towards the end, leading His disciples back to the subject of His rejection amongst the Jews, explains the ways of grace, and on this occasion introduces Church action (xviii. 17).

scattered abroad." There were already children of God, but they were scattered abroad—isolated. Christ by His death was to gather them together; not merely to save them, so that they might be together in heaven (since they were children of God, that was done already), but He was to gather them together *in one*. They were believers already; but the Church* was yet to be builded by the gathering together of these believers, and that upon the earth. We know that this has now taken place as a fact, through the word of JESUS, and through the power of the Holy Ghost come down from heaven. We may cite here the request of JESUS, that not only those already manifested, but those also who should believe through their word, might be one that the world might believe. Before passing on to the epistles, we may remark by the way, that the Lord, besides the general idea of the Church which He was about to build, gives us an insight into the practical operation of the assembly in detail (Matt.

* Remark here, that what is falsely called an invisible church, was precisely the state of Israel—a body of professing Israelites, by birth and ordinances; and a certain number of isolated believers in the midst of that, enjoying through faith the goodness of God, and their common faith when they met. (See Matt. iii. 16; Luke ii. 38.) It is out of this state that the Lord has brought believers by "building *the Church*."

xviii.); attaching to it at the same time, the efficacy of this operation, and the authority of heaven itself—though but two or three should thus form the assembly—provided it was really in His name they were thus gathered. How precious the light that the word affords for times of darkness!

But through the descent of the Holy Ghost, the doctrine of the Church has received a much fuller development. The fact of her existence is declared in Acts ii. “All that believed were together,* and had all things common,” and “the number of them was” already “three thousand.” “And the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved.”† The union and unity of the saved ones were accomplished as a fact by the presence of the Holy Ghost

* This passage shows the futility of the objection—an objection refuted besides by a thousand experiments—that the gathering together in one is an impossibility. It may be so *materially*, and it was no doubt the case here. When they broke bread from house to house, they were not three thousand at once together. Yet that does not hinder, in the mind of God, their being gathered together in moral and real unity. There is no question of disposition here, but of facts which demonstrated the power of the Holy Ghost.

† The word rendered here by “should be saved” (a meaning given in other good versions) is a word used by the LXX. (and I doubt not in Luke) for the remnant of Israel, who were to escape the judgments of God. Now, what the Lord did with them was to add them to the christian assembly.

come down from heaven. They formed one body upon the earth—a visible body owned of God, to which all whom He called to the knowledge of Himself joined themselves, and that as led of the Lord who was working in their hearts. It was the Church of God, so far composed of Jews only. The patience of God was yet waiting in Jerusalem; and if this city owed ten thousand talents, by the death of Jesus, He was still proposing repentance by the testimony of the Holy Ghost. God was remembering mercy, and declaring that, on the repentance of the nation, guilty as they were, JESUS would return. This is the subject of Acts iii. But Jerusalem turned a deaf ear to the call; and subsequently her rulers, resisting, as always, the Holy Ghost, stoned him through whom He was testifying. From that time, though the unity of the whole was preserved by the conversion of Cornelius, a new instrument of the sovereign grace of God appears on the scene. Saul, who had been himself consenting also unto the death of Stephen—Saul the persecutor, the expression of the hatred of the Jews against the Christ, becomes the zealous witness of the faith he had sought to destroy. But this sovereign grace, whilst still mindful of the Jews, no longer goes out from Jerusalem as its starting point. It was from Antioch, a

city of the Gentiles, that Paul went forth to fulfil his apostolic work. But this event was accompanied by a very remarkable development of the doctrine of the Church; or rather preceded by a revelation, which made not a new gospel (for the way of salvation is ever one and the same), but a new starting point in the preaching of this gospel as regarded the Person of Christ Himself. Up to this time, although they had preached a Christ exalted, the only Saviour, yet it was as a Man known amongst the Jews "by miracles and wonders and signs," as they knew, and whom God had raised and made both Lord and Christ. I need not say, that this testimony was quite according to God, and in its proper place in the midst of the Jews. "Ye also," the Lord had said, "shall bear witness, because ye have been with Me from the beginning." Peter and the other apostles, having accompanied Christ during the time of His ministry, followed Him up to the time that the cloud received Him out of their sight. They had received the testimony that He should return in like manner. The consequence was, that the relations of Christ with the Jews were always maintained on the ground of faith in Him—exalted to the right hand of God, no doubt—but whose sceptre was to go out from Sion, and who awaited the repentance of His

people. But we have seen the testimony of the Holy Ghost to a glorified Christ rejected by the blinded nation; and the death of Stephen, in making this rejection signally manifest, reveals to us the Son of man in the glory of God in heaven, receiving the spirit of His servant above, instead of returning to Israel here below. This transition from the character of the Christ or Messiah to that of Son of man (suffering, and inheriting all things in heaven and on earth) is often taught by JESUS in the Gospels. See, for instance, Luke ix. It is now being accomplished as a fact (the Lord, at the same time, not losing His rights as Christ). They are reserved for the age to come. But here Paul enters on the scene, and God, whilst continuing the work at Jerusalem, begins a new one; and that by a new revelation of His Son, to him who was not to know Him personally after the flesh. Saul sees JESUS for the first time in heavenly glory, too resplendent for human sight. It is not JESUS known upon earth made Lord,* but the Lord of glory who, as

* An examination of the Acts of the Apostles will show that JESUS is never preached as Son of God, before He is so by Paul after his conversion. With Peter, it is always the Man known upon earth glorified. But Paul, immediately after his conversion, preaches JESUS in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God. We must not think that there is any

such, declares that He is JESUS. But for Paul and his ministry, where is He found on earth? In those who are His. Seen unequivocally as Lord in heaven, Saul asks, "Who art thou, Lord?" "I am," replies the Lord, "JESUS whom thou persecutest." The saints were Himself, His body. The conversion of Paul identifies itself with the full revelation of the union of the Lord in glory with the members of His body upon earth. His starting point, his knowledge of salvation, could not be separated from these two things. They are reproduced in his epistles. Thus (2 Cor. iv.) he says, "If *our* gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel* of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." This, whilst setting forth in a still more striking manner the worth of His sufferings, invested, at the same time, the preaching of the apostle with a peculiar character.

I will not enlarge on this part of the re-

imperfection in the ways of God here; on the contrary, it is a proof of their perfection. The expression, "raised up His Son JESUS," is quite a different word from Son of God. It would even be more correctly translated "servant."

* Literally and properly, "the gospel of the glory."

lations* of Paul with Christ, in order that we may come to that which concerns more directly our subject—the Church. Whatever God's way upon earth may be, it is evident that all question of Jew and Gentile was at an end when the question was about the Lord of glory and the members of His body. The relations became heavenly, and in the unity of the body of Christ thus known in heaven, there was neither Jew nor Gentile. The Church was upon earth according to this revelation of her position, for she was persecuted; but she was identified with the Lord in heaven; it was He (the Lord glorified) who was persecuted in His members.

To what precious ground does not this in-

* It is, however, a subject full of interest—the contrast between a Christ, Object of prophecy and of promise, and a Christ revealed in the fulness of His Person, as beginning and foundation (having accomplished His work) of the new creation, its Head, filling all things, having re-established the relationship between God and them, a relationship ruined by sin; and, at the same time, beginning, foundation, and Head of the Church, which He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, having united it, quickened in Himself, by the Holy Ghost to Himself as His body. These two things constitute the mystery in its whole extent.

The second part is more fully treated in the word, as concerning us more particularly, and also the admission of the Gentiles which flowed from it. But what presents the highest interest in this subject is the glory of the Person of Christ Himself, which is the foundation on which the fulfilment of all these counsels of God rests.

roduce the heart! We have (and that from the mouth and the heart of the Lord Himself) the strongest expression of our union with Him—that He considers the feeblest member of His body as a part of Himself. Let us pursue, however, our subject, that we may get the doctrine as a whole.

Let us examine the epistles of the apostle Paul. Of the Epistle to the Romans, the Church is not the subject. Having convicted the Gentile without law and the Jew under the law of being both guilty before God, it shows the individual justified before God, not by the law but through faith, introducing resurrection as putting him in a position quite new as regards justification, as regards life (that is, a new life outside of the dominion of sin); and as to the law, by grace the believer was justified, renewed, an heir of God, had the feelings of the Spirit, and was kept for glory by a love from which nothing could separate him. This well established, the apostle reconciles (chaps. ix.-xi.) the admission of Jew and Gentile, without distinction, to the enjoyment of these blessings with the promises made to the Jews; and he shows that the Gentiles have been grafted in to be a continuation of the line as children of Abraham in the enjoyment of the promises.

But, although the main subject of the Epistle to the Romans does not afford opportunity for teaching concerning the Church, the exhortations at the end of the epistle furnish us with an element which flows naturally from the revelation made on the way to Damascus. It is that, being members of the body of Christ, we are necessarily for that reason members one of another. (Chap. xii. 4.) "For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office; so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Having then gifts differing, etc."

The Church is absolutely one. It is evident here also, that the apostle speaks of what is upon earth; and even though there were members whose souls were with the Lord (thus being no longer able to glorify the Lord upon the earth, whence He had been rejected and where Satan exercised his power), he refers to those only who were still down here. The body in its practical and true sense was composed of these only.

(To be continued, D. V.)

"Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that for your sakes He being rich became poor, in order that ye by the poverty of such a one as He might be enriched."
(2 Cor. viii. 9. *New Trans.*)

STRENGTH IN WEAKNESS

“I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance: knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath showed me. Moreover I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance.” (2 Pet. i. 13-15.)

Having had before us in the last number of “The Remembrancer” (“A Beautiful Sunset”) the close of the life of the apostle of the uncircumcision; it would be well, I think, to dwell a little on that of the apostle of the circumcision, and seek, by the Spirit’s teaching, to gather up what will be profitable to our souls, and answer likewise to the desire of the apostle’s heart as expressed in the above verses.

The apostle is nearing the end of his journey, and knowing that shortly he must put off this his tabernacle, as the Lord Jesus had shown him (John xxi. 15-19), after He had so thoroughly probed his heart to see whether any self-confidence was still left there. Precious faith and true love to the Lord there had always been since the day his brother sought him, and brought him to JESUS, when He gave him his name and place in view of the Church yet to be built: (John i. 42.) “And he brought him to JESUS; and when JESUS beheld him, He said, Thou art Simon, son of Jona: thou

shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, a stone." "Verily verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. This spake He signifying by what death he should glorify God; and when He had spoken thus, He said unto him, Follow ME."

There had been much else besides faith and love in the heart of Simon, son of Jonas, and that much undetected by him. Man admires his natural character, his ardour, boldness, and self-reliance. A will not yet judged is not subjection to grace, and what Christ values is not nature (see Ps. cxlvii. 10, 11; John vi. 63.), but the Spirit of God by grace working, and shown out in patient dependence and long-suffering for His name's sake. All this, so largely treated in his first epistle, as that which is suited for all Christians, he had yet to learn. The key-note he gives us in I Pet. iv. "Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind, for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh, to the lusts of men, but to the

will of God." Christ did God's will, and suffered for it; so the believer arms himself with the same mind, that is, to walk in the path of suffering, and thus has done with sin. God's will guiding, the flesh does not act, and the lusts of men have no place. All this Peter had yet to learn when first called to follow the Lord.

Leaning on nature is ever the source of failure, and, if it does not lead to a thorough break-down, always leads to weakness and mistakes. To find out this was Simon's great lesson (as it is of all). The way he learnt may not be needed for all, nor always; nay, may we not say, that it was not absolutely needed for him? A low opinion of himself, dependence on God, and self-judgment, watchfulness and prayer, would have saved even Peter from his dreadful fall. But he must learn what he was as a natural man, and know the true source of strength for service, and for feeding the sheep of Christ; and, in Paul's words, have "the sentence of death in himself, not to trust in himself, but in God who raiseth the dead." Here alone is strength for patient service and endurance in the conflict and sorrow, for Paul as well as Peter—yea, for all.

Satan is God's allowed instrument in Peter's case, and in passing through that fear-

ful sifting of the adversary, there is much to get rid of. His practice failed lamentably, but Satan could not destroy that which the Lord had prayed might be preserved. "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not." Beneath all the rubbish which seemed to bury that "precious faith," from the first it had been deposited in Simon's heart, unseen by man and unindicated outwardly, yea, belied by oaths and denial whilst in the hands of the adversary, yet at that moment proved to be there by the look of Him on whose heart this poor sifted disciple had been all the while. That look of the Lord broke down pride, self-will, and natural energy—deeper self-judgment following. "He went out, and wept bitterly."

On the shore of the sea of Tiberias the Lord would make this work a thorough one in Peter's heart, testing the strength of his love. Was it love beyond the love of others? Peter had said, "If all forsake Thee yet will not I"—yea, though prison and death itself should be in the path, This was Simon's measure of his own love, compared with the love of others—too large a measure doubtless, when nature was there, and as the strength for executing it (though love there was too); for, when true love would use natural energy (and this is disallowed by the patient, lowly One, who was led as a

Lamb to the slaughter) it suited nature to use the literal sword and fight for Christ, not at all to suffer patiently, and endure in meekness. The weapons for the latter were not carnal. The wrath of man did not work the righteousness of God. Peter was warring after the flesh, and there needed a "casting down of his imaginations, and every high thing that exalted itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." (2 Cor. x.)

When Peter hears these words, "Put up thy sword again into its sheath," what else had he to fall back upon in nature? The path of self-sacrifice was not of nature. Thus is there a complete collapse in heart and service—not patient endurance—where natural energy had wrought, impelled doubtless by true love to Him for whom in this way he was proving it. Going to prison and death was out of the question now for him. He was even more scared and crest-fallen than Elijah, who fled to Horeb from the face of Jezebel when she threatened his life. Will was working when the servants of the high priest challenged him as a disciple of JESUS; and what is it worth before death or danger?

The Lord would know from Peter's own lips whether he had now curtailed the mea-

sure of his love to Him, by Himself using it in its original dimensions. "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?" This is thrice repeated too.

How deeply probed was that heart, which, whilst now discarding the measuring of its own love, yet could not but plead the truth that love was there, though none but the Omniscient could give him credit for it? "Lord, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee." Here then is one whose heart is fitted to feed the lambs and to shepherd the sheep; and that now, following in the path of patient suffering and self sacrifice which the Good Shepherd Himself had trod, giving His life for the sheep.

Natural will and energy would at last be thoroughly dealt with, as expressed by the Lord's words immediately added: "When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest; but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. This spake He signifying by what death he should glorify God; and when He had spoken this, He said unto him, Follow Me."

Was it to end thus, and Peter to follow his Lord to death? Even so it was. What nature was not competent to do, grace would accomplish. He had become weak,

and by it had gained divine strength. This then was Peter's own original measure of his love to Christ; was he to be privileged to do even as he had promised at the first? This was to be his privilege—self-emptied and passive, he would when old stretch forth his hands for another to gird him, and carry him whither he would not. It was contrary to nature and will, but through grace he had learnt to reckon himself dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus, and to walk in the Spirit instead of the energy of nature; and, when such was the case, the Spirit of his Master enabled him to follow Him thus. "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh," in order to hinder us from doing the things that we would. Now this strife was over. The Spirit predominates, and the flesh is set aside. As another could say, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." Blessed state and un-failing strength for every saint as well as Peter and Paul!—to be strong in weakness, to live daily dying, to make many rich though in poverty; to know how to be abased, and how to abound; everywhere and in all things being instructed, both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. (Phil. iv.) Who or what could disturb the repose of a heart in such a state of dependence on and confidence in, the Lord?

This, too, not only gives true rest and strength, but leaves the heart at leisure to be occupied with and for others. Having got rid of our own cares, we the more fully

care for all saints ; and, having judged our own will, we do God's will, or suffer for it. Thus Peter, knowing that shortly he must put off this his tabernacle as the Lord had shown him, with a true Shepherd's heart and care thinks of the Lord's blood-bought sheep, and would now the more fully warn them, exhort them, put them in mind, that after he was gone they might have these things always in remembrance. Though they knew them, yet would he put them in mind, and press upon them that which would sustain them, so leading them on in diligence, that they might have an abundant entrance ministered unto them into the glory, and be kept from falling whilst here. Failure was not a necessity, though he had fallen ; but they never would, did they but give diligence to do the things of which he speaks to them ?



FRAGMENT.—Do you indeed believe that you are part of the royal priesthood ? (I Peter ii.)—that you are a child of God, and waiting for God's own Son ? Do you go through the wilderness musing upon all these wonders, knowing how to enjoy the blessings into which you are brought ? When, for example, a little plan comes in, do you say, "No ; I am waiting for *Thee* from heaven, Lord Jesus?" And then, do you know what it is to gird yourself afresh as one who has taken the attitude of expecting the Lord's return ? Surely, if God is calling our attention to our varied positions and dignities which He has given us in Christ, and pours into our souls things of such character and moment, it is not a marvellous thing, thing that we should be called to show forth His praises. I must say, 'What a heart He must have !' and I ought to be able to find water to satisfy my thirst, and have some for others besides.

“THE LOVE OF CHRIST, WHICH
PASSETH KNOWLEDGE.”

Ephes. iii. 14-21.

In the prayer in chap. iii., the apostle loses himself, as it were, and no wonder. After he has said, “I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,” he adds, “that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man ; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith ; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love ” (that is what God is, the Divine nature), “ may be able to comprehend with all saints ” (taking in the whole unity in which the Holy Ghost dwells), “ what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height ” —he has now got into the infinitude of all God’s thoughts and purposes of blessing, and he cannot say of what. Just as the groanings could not be uttered, so the thought cannot be uttered. It is God that has come in, and Christ fills all things, according to the power of redemption, from the throne of God down to the dust of death, and from the dust of death up to the throne of God. Having all things, and filling all things (he says), here I am placed in the midst of this infinitude ; and then he adds, “and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge.” He could go to

no place but there he found infinite love and power, the love that brought Christ down, and the power that took Christ up again.

This meets all the exercises of the heart. If brought down even as Christ came down, into the dust of death, the Holy Ghost comes down to the poor man who feels this power of death in his soul, and dwells in him, and carries him up by the knowledge of redemption into all the fulness of God Himself.

Well, that, beloved, is the result of the dwelling of the Holy Ghost down here, consequent upon redemption accomplished by Christ. The Holy Ghost can come and bring peace to our souls, and the effect of that peace to our souls is to make us pass through all the evil around "according to the power of God." When the apostle speaks to Timothy, he says, "Be thou a partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God." Where shall we stop? The soul rejoices in that which must be the joy and gladness of the heart that knows God has come down to dwell in it—the immutable blessedness of God's presence. Then, whatever the circumstances in which we are placed, if they be only those of sorrow and trial, what is the consequence? God ministers of the fulness of the sympathy of His love to our souls; and thus they become, so to speak, as the door or a

think to let in God. All the riches, "the unsearchable riches of Christ," are ours, and Christ fills everything. There is not anything we can think of but we find there of the fulness of Christ. If we think of death, we see Christ there; of sin, we do not know what sin is fully until we see Christ "made sin;" of God, it is only in Christ we can know God; of man, it is only in Christ we can see man raised to the height of his blessing; of peace, it is through Christ we know the peace of God; of life, Christ is our life; of glory, it is all in Christ. There is not anything, no matter what we think of, whether in creation or above it, or between God and man, but we must think of Christ in it all. He is the "Head of His body, the Church, which is the fulness of Him that filleth all in all." We can turn our thoughts to no one thing in which we do not find the fulness of Christ; and by the power of the Holy Ghost our souls are brought into the joy of this fulness, as that to which we are, through living union with HIM, everlasting and perfectly united.

There is another point which I have not touched upon, the practical effect of this. What would the effect be on our souls if we really felt we were "builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit" (Ephes. ii. 22), if we felt that in the whole

world Christians were in truth the dwelling-place of God? What a thought should we have to act upon as to everything! That by which the church of God has been corrupted, ordinances and the like, would disappear as clouds before the presence of the sun. And what thoughts of glory should we have, what thoughts of holiness, what peace as to practical circumstances, what jealousy of grieving the Holy Ghost, what love toward all saints, what joy, what confidence! How we should (not in pride, but in the sense that God was there) mock at all our enemies (Isa. xxxvii. 22, 23), how live and act among men as "sons" and "heirs" of God! What power for everything, in short, would be ours if we remembered the completeness, the peace-giving completeness, of redemption, and could really say that God was dwelling with us!

This is our portion, and whatever our weakness and infirmity (and, alas! it is very great), whatever our failure, **STILL IT REMAINS TRUE.** We may grieve the Spirit, we may weaken the consciousness of our joy, but still **GOD IS WITH US. THE HOLY SPIRIT DWELLS AMONG US!**

May the Lord give us to know and to own what this presence of God on the earth, and that with men, is, by reason of the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.

WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

(Continued from page 112.)

The First Epistle to the Corinthians furnishes us with precious instructions on the point now engaging our attention. This epistle gives us details of the interior of a local and particular church, being addressed at the same time to all that call on the Lord. It teaches us that the Christians of a locality gathered in one body are the realization so far of the unity of the whole body.* The church at Jerusalem was, at the beginning, both these two things at once; and though there were many assemblies, yet the Christians of each locality gathered together in a body, and formed the church or the assembly of God in that locality. "Unto the Church of God which is at Corinth." There was but one. It was composed of those that were sanctified in Christ Jesus, of call-

*People have wished to make an invisible Church of the whole body and visible churches in which evil might be found. But it is very evident that baptism introduced not into a church, but into the Church in general upon earth, so that this way of looking at it has no support in the word. The true distinction is not between the Church and the churches, but between the Church viewed in its human responsibility, and the Church in the counsels of God—counsels which shall be infallibly accomplished. "The Lord knoweth them that are His. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." Such are the two sides of God's medal, and not an invisible Church and visible churches.

ed saints who were at Corinth. The apostle reckoned on their being confirmed to the end. They were outside the world, a body known as entirely separated from it by their profession and common walk as a body. Their individual relations with the world are discussed, and go no farther than the ordinary communications of life; but even in these the most formal and complete distinction is marked between the brethren and the world. There were those without and those within; that is to say, it was not a moral difference in the individual walk alone, but a common walk as a body, and as a body formally separated from the world. (See I Cor. v. 7-13; x. 17, 21, 22. Cf. 2 Cor. ii.; vi. 16, 17.) The Lord's Supper was the external sign that gathered them together. (I Cor. x. 17.) Now the presence of the Holy Ghost was found in the body—in the whole body of the Church; but it was realized and manifested in the local body according to its state.

The presence of the Holy Ghost in the body is distinguished from the presence of the Holy Ghost in the individual. The body of the individual is the temple of the Holy Ghost. (I Cor. vi. 19.) But the Church was also the temple (chap. iii. 16, 17), because the Spirit dwelt in it.

Having gathered this scattered informa-

tion, we may examine the chapter (xii.) which expressly treats of our subject, introduced by that of the spiritual powers which were manifested in the assembly. The demons are many. The Spirit of God is only one Spirit, whatever may be the manifestations of His presence. These manifestations of the Spirit were found in the gifts; and these were given for common use, the Holy Spirit dividing to every man severally as He will. These gifts were found very largely developed among the Corinthians. Having long been carried away by the craft of demons, they were in danger of confounding the energetic manifestations of these demons with those of the Holy Spirit, because they were looking for power rather than for grace. The apostle gives them, first, an absolute rule for discerning between the Spirit of God and the demons, in the confession that JESUS was Lord—a confession which these demons would never make. Afterwards, he takes pains to make the Corinthians understand the true doctrine of the presence of the Holy Ghost; the effect of which went much farther than to produce the confession of the Lordship of JESUS; though this confession was the touchstone of it. The Holy Ghost united all Christians in one body; and

christian service, or the exercise of gifts, was nothing more than a member of the body exercising its functions for the good of the whole body. It was that one and self-same Spirit which divided to each, "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body; so also is *Christ*"* —Christ; for the Church is Himself, His body. "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body." The unity of the body being thus established, all the gifts came under the idea of members of this body; that is, all exercise of ministry was the activity of the members of the body. It is well to recall here that the consequence of this truth is that the gifts have for the sphere of their exercise all the extent of the body; it is even their duty to edify it if that be given them.

But other truths of the greatest moment are revealed to us in this chapter, and particularly the means God uses to produce this unity, to form this body. "By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body."†

*The identification of the body with its Head is expressed in a remarkable manner by the use of this word.

†The Lord's Supper is the sign and the external centre of this unity; as the presence of the Holy Ghost is the power of it. (I Cor. x. 17.) This declaration gives a very interesting character to the Lord's Supper.

Christ having fully accomplished His work, and having ascended up on high, has received the promise of the Father; that is, the Holy Ghost, and has sent Him into this world to be, on one hand, the witness of this accomplishment, and of the personal glory of JESUS at the right hand of God; and, on the other, to unite the members of this body to Himself, and at the same time to one another, whether Jews or Gentiles; who, all distinction being lost, form but one body, united to its Head in heaven, that is, to the Lord Jesus.

Two truths clearly result from the teaching of this chapter: first, that the formation of the body is accomplished by the presence of the Holy Ghost come down from heaven; and, second, that this body is formed upon the earth. Its unity, such as it is presented in the word, takes place essentially upon earth, since the Holy Ghost has come down here to accomplish it. The accessory circumstances confirm this truth; for it is most evident that the gifts in question are exercised upon the earth. The disciples were the body of Christ, by the union produced among them by the presence of one Spirit; who being One was found in them all, and at the same time in the whole of the united body. It is well to recall the passages already quoted, which teach us the

difference between these last two points. While I Corinthians iii. 16, reveals to us that the whole is the temple of the Holy Ghost; chapter vi. 19, shows us that each believer individually is the temple of God.

It is evident that this unity will not be lost in heaven, when all the members of the body are re-united; and that God keeps the souls of these who sleep in JESUS for that day of glory; but the manifestation of the unity of the body of Christ is now exclusively upon earth, where the Holy Ghost has come down to establish this unity. Faith knows very well that souls are preserved with JESUS for that day; but thus disunited from the body, they do not for the present enter into the account, being in a position where communion with a body on earth is no longer a possibility, any more than manifestation of unity or service for the glory of Christ.

Where the Holy Ghost has come down, and where He abides, there is the manifestation of the Church, whilst its Head is seated on the right hand of the Father. The Spirit, in speaking to the Church, addresses Himself to Christians on the earth, and to them alone. Thus it is said: "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. And God hath set some in the Church; first, apostles; secondarily, prophets; third-

ly, teachers ; after that, miracles ; then gifts of healing," etc.

I need not stop to prove that this applies to earth.

Here, then, we are taught by God, that the Church, which is the body of Christ, is formed in unity down here upon earth by the Holy Ghost come down from heaven, and manifesting Himself by gifts in the members of this body. Let me add that this presence of the Holy Ghost is to be distinguished from the regeneration of souls, and even from His work in the hearts of the regenerate : it is His presence in the body, sent from above as truly and personally as the Son was sent of the Father, though not in the same manner. It is evident, from Acts i. 5, that the baptism of the Holy Ghost is the descent of the Holy Ghost.

The Epistle to the Galatians treats of the question of justification, and of the right to the enjoyment of the inheritance, through promise, as contrasted with the law ; and only touches the doctrine of the Church by the single declaration, that the Christians are all one in Christ Jesus (chap. iii. 28).

But the Epistle to the Ephesians treats the subject at length, and requires special attention.

Chapter i., after having laid the foundation of sovereign grace, declares (ver. 10) the fixed purpose of God; which is to “gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth;” and, having pointed out the children of God as sealed with the Holy Spirit for the inheritance in the end, shows us the Church united, as His body, to Him who was constituted Head over all things.

Chapter ii. reveals the working of the power which has united the Church to Christ and the manner of this union; and showing that the Jew by nature was a child of wrath quite as much as the Gentile, and that both were dead in trespasses and sins, presents both as quickened together with Christ, raised up together, and seated together in heavenly places with Christ. Thus the distinction was lost; God having made of the two one new man; reconciling them both in one body by the cross. Now that was the Church. That work had its accomplishment in the Church. The Christian was built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets (of the New Testament, cf. iii. 5), Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone. The Gentiles were builded together with the Jews to be the habitation of God through the Spirit. This chapter teaches us then (according to the word

in Matthew), that the Church, by its union with its Head in heaven, was accounted as being there; and that its calling was absolutely heavenly. As Israel was separated from the nations, so was the Church from the world—it was no longer of it. Its formation on earth began after the breaking down, by the cross, of the middle wall of partition. It was as a new man: Jews and Gentiles being reconciled to God in one body. Besides, we find that instead of a temple made with hands, where Jehovah dwelt, this union of Jewish and Gentile believers in one body, formed the habitation of God upon earth; and that this habitation was by the Spirit. This latter truth gives us the true character of the Church upon earth—a character, it is evident, of the most important bearing—a character which involves the deepest responsibility; and, let me say it, a character most precious. For the responsibilities of Christians all flow from the grace which has been shown them. This character, in fine, thanks be unto God, in spite of its unfaithfulness to this responsibility, the Church cannot lose, because it is made to depend on the grace and the promise of God, that this other Comforter, the Spirit of truth, would not go away as Christ did, but abide for ever with those that were His. It is also most plain, that it is on the

earth that all this takes place ; though, being on earth, our special position is to be seated in the heavenly places in our Head, and to wait for the realization of our condition when we shall be gathered unto Him.

Chapter iii., the whole of which is parenthetical, unfolds this mystery, hid through all ages, but now revealed, of which the apostle was the minister ; viz., that the Gentiles should be of the same body with all saints. But I will reserve my remarks on this passage, till we come to the second part of our subject—the place which the Church holds in the ways of God.

Chapter iv. is the application of the doctrine of the second ; and the apostle beseeches the saints to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they were called ; which vocation is, to be the habitation of God through the Spirit. The sense of the presence of God always produces humility ; and the apostle, in pressing this point, exhorts them to keep the unity of the Spirit (that which has been set forth chap. ii.), in the bond of peace. For the doctrine in question is this, “There is one body and one Spirit.” This leads the apostle to the subject of gifts in connection with the body. Christ had gained the victory over Satan, and could confer on the Church He had redeemed the power which would be the

testimony of that victory; for it was rescued from the slavery of the enemy, and could be the vessel of this power and this testimony. Christ, by means of these gifts, was nourishing and ministering to the growth of this body. The exercise of them was for the edification of the body of Christ. It is worth while quoting the verses which follow what we have just examined. "He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers: for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: that we henceforth be no more children ('babes' *neepioi*, as in I Cor. iii. 1; Heb. v. 13), tossed to and fro, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, who is the Head, even Christ, from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." Thus the unsearchable

riches of Christ, by which He fills all things in the power of the redemption which He has accomplished—these riches, I say, form the basis of the edification of the Church of Christ, who is no longer looked at as a mere Messiah fulfilling the prophecies and the promises, but in a greatness of which no prophet had any idea, and of which no prophecy had foretold the extent—each member supplying, according to the grace given, these riches of Christ to the body. The body itself developed in its members, grows thereby into that fulness of which Christ is the measure (the truth which reveals this fulness being the means of making the body grow up into Him, whose fulness is revealed). Thus the perfect stature of Christ is always the object and the only recognized measure.

What infinite grace? Yet it could not be otherwise; since the revelation of Christ is the means by which the Church must grow; and Christ is such, filling all things, from the dust of death up to the throne of God. Having come down in love, and gone up in righteousness, He expels for faith, from the universe which He has made His by redemption as well as by creation, the conquered enemy; as, in fact, He will expel him from it, when He accomplishes all the effects of His power. And where is this

body found? Where are these gifts exercised? Where does this growth take place? Blessed be God! down here. It is that which Christ does after the accomplishment of His work, whilst He is seated on the right hand of God. It is through the Holy Ghost. It is the body—the Church—that one body which is the vessel of this ministry, and of the Spirit which accomplishes it through the members of the body; and which causes the body to grow according to the mind of God in Christ, who is the Head of it; a body, the members of which are the members of Christ. Moreover the apostle has before him the *whole* body; and “the whole body” viewed upon earth. Charity necessarily embraces all the members of it, as being the members of Christ. The connection between all this and the Church, seen in the whole extent of her privileges and of the thoughts of God, is shown in a striking manner at the end of chapter iii.; where the apostle exclaims, “Now unto HIM that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.”

I will not go over the infinitely precious teaching of chapter v. again, because I

have already called the attention of the reader to this portion in beginning our thesis ; but it is clear that the Epistle to the Ephesians treats the subject of a Church which is one body, whose Head is Christ—a body formed and developed upon earth, since the ascension of JESUS, by the Holy Ghost sent from above who makes it His habitation—a body in which the glory of God will be reflected throughout all ages—a body which is the vessel upon earth of the Spirit, which He who, having gained the victory over Satan, and established the glory of His redemption everywhere, from death up to the throne of the Father, has sent to be the testimony of the power through which He has overcome ; and who associates the Church with its Head in the heavens, giving it a heavenly calling, as being seated there in Him. This body, formed in its perfection at the beginning, was to grow by the energy of the Holy Spirit which dwelt in it, just as a child, perfect in all its parts, grows through the power of the life which is in him, in order to attain to the state of manhood.

(To be continued, D. V.)



Though grace may shine in all His ways,
 With Israel's chosen race ;
 'Tis in His Church alone we see
 The Full display of grace.

THE NIGHT OF THIS WORLD.

“Knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep : for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.” Rom. xiii. 2.

The night of this world is the absence of the Sun of righteousness. Let us clearly conceive this. In the busy and pleasure-seeking course of this world, for him who has understanding, and to whom Christ is known, it is still night. The gloom of night is over it, but the day has dawned to his faith ; the Morning Star has arisen in his heart, but the world is asleep in the still-continuing darkness of night : for indeed the night is far spent, but the world is asleep in the night. The waking soul sees, in the horizon the Morning Star, the dawn along its edge, and waits for day. The heart is in the day, and walks as in the day. As Christians we have done with works of darkness. In conflict we are still, but our armour against evil, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, is the light in which we walk. The power of light, and truth, and godliness, and judgment of evil, which belongs to that day, is in our heart, and the weapons and snares of darkness are foiled and detected, getting no entrance into, no hold on, the soul. We walk honestly as in the day ; we put on in our ways and

heart the walk and character of Him who is the true light of it, the Lord Jesus Christ. Having the hope of being like Him there, we purify ourselves as He is pure. We do not provide for the lusts of the nature which belongs to the darkness to satisfy it, but walk as Christ walked.

Such is the Christian in view of Christ's coming and bringing on this dark and benighted world the light and day of God, in His effectual power; and such are the two springs and characters of Christian conduct: recognition of, acting up to, every relative duty in love: and knowing the time, the near approach of day to which he belongs. (Compare I Thess. v.) "The night is far spent, the day is at hand."



NO MIDDLE PATH.—There is no middle path: for there is nothing good in this world. It is either Christ or flesh. Man is fallen and out of paradise, and there is nothing owned at all of man now. God made paradise, and man is out of it; and He made heaven and man is not in it. But between the two there is nothing that God owns. God never made the world as it is, nor man as he is; that is, the moral state that man and the world are in. It grew up when God had driven man out of His presence. Then Cain went and built a city, and established himself and his seed outside God. It must therefore be, either "Ye are from beneath," or, "I am from above;" either "Ye are of this world," or "I am not of this world." (John viii. 23.)

THE LORD'S ROLL-CALL.

“The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God.” (I Thessalonians iv. 16.)

O JESUS, come descending
 For saints that sleep in Thee,
 When Thou wilt change the living
 To immortality!

Aye, for the Captain's roll-call,
 Its trumpet-shout is come,
 His double-hosts to gather
 In one assembly home.

The rapture-morn is breaking
 Unclouded, bright and fair;
 His waiting ones are ready
 To meet Him in the air.

“HIMSELF,” with shout descending,
 Fulfils His faithful Word,
 To fetch His saints to glory,
 “For ever with the Lord.”

“Caught up,” for His adorning
 In beauty to excel;
 “Caught up,” with shouts exulting,
 In unity to dwell.

“Together” there assembled
 “Together” round HIM throng,
 With transport ever singing
 The never-ending song.

THE LORD'S LOVE FOR HIS PEOPLE.

The Lord takes notice of every circumstance, every shade of difference in assemblies, as also in individuals in them, thus showing that He is not indifferent as to the state of His people by the way—their daily steps—because He has secured blessing for them at the end. His love is not a careless love. We have all, more or less, lost sight of the judgment exercised by the Lord in “His own house;” and it is too frequently supposed that because the salvation of the saint is a sure thing God is indifferent about character here. But to love—this is impossible. A child would be sure eventually to inherit his father's property; but then what parent would be satisfied, if he loved his child, with knowing that? Would he not anxiously train him up, watching every development of his mind and faculties, and ordering all things in his education so as best to fit him for his future destination? How much more is this the way of God's love with His children!

We have to remember that the Church, and indeed every individual saint, is set in the place of direct conflict with Satan, the more so because of the high standing and privilege given us in Christ. Now it may be in triumphant victory, as it is said, “The

God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." (Rom. xvi. 20.) To effect the purposes of God's glory, coming in as it will by-and-by, when He shall establish His kingdom, we know that Satan must be fully dethroned ; but in order even now, ere that time comes, that we realize our blessings in heavenly places, it is needful he should be practically dethroned from the heart through the power of the Holy Ghost.



A FEW REMARKS ON THE TYPICAL CHARACTER OF JOHN II.

Read John ii.

This chapter is one of signs throughout : the *third* day ; the marriage ; the vessels of purification empty ; the wine failing ; the water turned into wine ; the, " Woman, what have I to do with thee ? " ; the casting out of the temple the profaners of His Father's house ; and the raising up of the temple of His body.

The first and second days, in John i., give us the ministries, respectively, of John the Baptist, and of Christ : John directs to Christ, JESUS gathers to HIMSELF. With the third day, the scene is changed ; we are here on resurrection ground. JESUS must come again as they had seen Him depart. Great events, belonging to that day, are figured

here in the marriage in Cana, and the cleansing of the house of God. The marriage of the Jewish bride will then take place, and judgment overtake the profaners of the house of the Lord: "For the day of vengeance is in my heart, and *the year of my redeemed is come.*" "She shall be brought unto the *King* in raiment of needlework; upon thy right hand did stand the *queen* in gold of Ophir." (Is. lxiii.; Ps. xlv.) We must not confound the description of the heavenly with that of the earthly bride. "Bride of the Lamb," applies to the heavenly assembly, which He presents to Himself all glorious, without spot, morally perfect. The earthly bride or queen, is also "all glorious within," but the "within" seems to refer to the chambers of the King, the nearest relationship to the King. Compare the hundred and forty-four thousand belonging to Judah, who stood *with the Lamb* on mount Sion (Rev. xiv.), this was anticipative of the glory coming in. They are, I believe, of Judah, not of Israel (the ten tribes), the latter class had no part in the sufferings of the rejected Messiah. What a privilege to be permitted to share in His rejection! "Ye are they who have continued with Me in My temptations, and I appoint unto you a kingdom." The prophets who wrote after the captivity, Haggai

Zechariah, and Malachi, speak of the Jews and Jerusalem, in connection with Christ and the last day. Waterpots without water will no more be found in that day: "Every pot in Jerusalem and Judah shall be holiness unto the Lord." "The pots in the Lord's house shall be like the bowls before the altar." (Zech. xiv. 20, 21.)

But see how He gives! All is from Himself in John—Himself and the Father. "My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven." "The bread of God is He which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world."

Verse 7. "JESUS saith unto them, *Fill* the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim." That was the measure, blessed word! oft repeated in various connections, but what marvel, from One in whom the *Fulness* itself was pleased to dwell (Col. i.), and who but Himself could administer of this fulness? "Draw out now, and bear," another word of power and grace. "The servants which drew the water knew." Those who do His will are let into the secret of their Lord's mind.

You will note the order: the water first and then the wine, holiness and joy, separation to God, and then power in the Spirit. To think of wine first would be folly, the denial of the truth. "Fill the waterpots

with water," was the word, the obedience of the servants was shown in filling to the brim. The Holy Ghost, the living water, is the power of sanctification. Neither the heavenly nor the earthly people can be with God without it. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." The way to real joy, to what God calls joy, is through sanctification—the Lord Himself being their righteousness.

Verses 9, 10. There were two mysteries here for the master of the feast: he knew not whence was the wine, nor how it was that the bridegroom had kept the good wine until now. The finger of God was there, nay, God Himself; who but He could have wrought thus? And to keep the good wine until the last, is not man's way at all, with him all ends with the wine out. Man's joy very soon passes away. Look at him in his most joyous and religious aspects, where Christ is not, how soon it withers away; because it is only his, not the joy of the Lord, it all runs away from the beginning. "All flesh is as grass, and its glory as the flower of grass. The grass has withered, and its flower has fallen."

We realize purity by walking in the Spirit, and joy as the fruit of it. The joy that we realize from mere human things, or even God's providential dealings in our

favour, runs out, but He gives the true joy in communion with Himself. We abuse God's natural gifts, so the wine runs out. The Lord keeps the good wine and He gives it in His own good time. In communion we realize it, we often say, "Thou hast kept the good wine until now." Practically, we constantly find it thus, in our pathway here.

With regard to verse 4, which we passed by "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" I may remark, that the relationship referred to here, represents that existing between Himself and the Jewish people. "Unto us," said the prophet, writing by His Spirit, "a child is born, unto us a son is given,"—but what had He to do with them, in accomplishing His Father's business, or they with Him? "His own received Him not." "He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor;" "When He called, none to answer;" "When He looked, there was none to help, none to uphold." And so in the end, when dying for that nation, as well as for others, it is said, "When He had *by Himself* purged our sins." Blessed word! who could be with Him there? In His path on earth He had said, "Who is my mother?" but when all was over, and His work done, "Woman, behold thy son; son behold thy mother."

To go back a little, I suppose it is clearly understood, that the marriage figured here sets forth His relationship to His earthly people in that day. "Bride of the Lamb," is the designation of the heavenly bride. It was JESUS who said, "Fill the water-pots with water," JESUS who turned the water into wine—considered apart from Him, how empty and unreal that festal scene in Galilee! The words of power were, "*Fill with water,*" "*Draw out,*" and "*Bear.*"

Verse 11. "This beginning of miracles did JESUS in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth His glory; and His disciples believed on Him." This is His glory in connection with His earthly kingdom, His power to bring in the blessing. It is not like that of the transfiguration, nor that spoken of in the first chapter, the glory of relationship to the Father. In the transfiguration it is the heavenly glory of the kingdom in His Person — His garments shone as no fuller on earth could whiten them. They are very distinct forms of glory. (That which moves us most, and is indeed the deepest of all, is His eternal relationship to the Father.) Peter says, "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of the Lord Jesus Christ,

but were eyewitnesses of His majesty." The glory of His Person shone there in heavenly radiance, along with that came the Father's voice, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I have found my delight." How attractive to the hearts of the saints, the Father's testimonies to His beloved Son! Peter would encourage them by telling them that it was no cunningly-devised fable, that what he saw was the confirmation of the prophetic word.

In this second chapter also, the contemplation of His glory moves the heart. He manifested His glory, and His disciples believed on Him.

Verse 13. "And the Jews' passover was at hand, and JESUS went up to Jerusalem." He goes up to Jerusalem, and, finding the temple profaned, drives out the traffickers—this was a sign of judgment to come—and on the Jews asking Him, "What sign showest Thou unto us, seeing that Thou doest these things?" He answered, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." This was the sign of death and resurrection, also that God Himself was there: "I will raise it up." This passage intimates also, that in *His mind* the house at Jerusalem was already judged. At the end He says, "*Your* house is left unto you desolate." His own body, then, was the only true temple

of God. "He spake of the temple of His body." "When therefore He was risen from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this unto them." Previously we are told that His disciples remembered that it was written, "The zeal of Thine house hath eaten Me up." This reminds us of the words of His youth, "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" The thoughts of His youth were not different from those of His manhood, as we speak. What concerned the Father—His Name—His house—His glory, was ever the first thought of the Son who is in His bosom.



WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

(Continued from page 138.)

The epistle to the Colossians brings before us some precious instructions on the subject we are considering. The Epistle to the Ephesians has taught us that God would gather together all things in Christ, and that the Church was united to Him as His body, associated with Him in His dominion over all things. The Epistle to the Colossians teaches us the same truth under another aspect. We shall also find that the idea of Christ which is presented in chapter i., contrasts with all that He was as the

hope of the Jews, according to the testimony of the prophets, as much as that which is found in the Epistle to the Ephesians, but in a different manner. Let us first look at what is said of the double glory of Christ—Head over all things, and Head of the Church. In verses 15 and 16 He is presented as the First-born of every creature; and the reason of it is given: He has created all things. He who had created all things, having taken His place as a Man in the midst of the creation, must at all events be the Head of it. This thought is confirmed in verse 17. The second part of the glory of Christ is declared in verse 18. He is the Head of the body, the Church; who is the beginning, the First-born from the dead. These are the two truths presented in Ephesians i. 22, 23; only the two things are considered separately here as two diverse glories of Christ, in whom it has pleased all the fulness to dwell. The *reconciliation* of all things and of the Church follows. Having made peace through the blood of His cross, the thought of God is to reconcile all things through Him, whether they be things on earth or things in heaven. This answers to verse 16. Then the apostle, addressing the Christians at Colosse, says to them, “And you that were sometime alienated . . . yet now

hath He reconciled." This answers to verse 18. They were part of the Church of which Christ was the Head, and of which the reconciliation takes place now. Verses 24 and 25 present, as following this distinction of the double glory of Christ and the double reconciliation, a double ministry—the ministry of the gospel to every creature under heaven, and the ministry of the Church, which is the body of Christ. This ministry, a complement in its doctrine of all the preceding revelations, completed the teaching of the word of God. (Vs. 24-26.) The Church was a mystery which had been hid from ages and from generations—a mystery which admitted the Gentiles into all the privileges which it revealed, and spoke of a Christ, not the crown and accomplishment of the glory of the Jews, but who, in the Gentiles, or in the midst of the Gentiles, in Spirit, was the *hope* of glory. The presence of JESUS amongst the Jews ought to have been, and will one day be, the accomplishment of the glory which had been promised to them. But the presence of Christ in Spirit among the Gentiles was the hope of glory—of a more excellent glory—a heavenly glory. In Ephesians, Christ is considered as exalted at the right hand of God, whence He sent the Spirit to confer upon the Church the gifts which were the testi-

mony of His victory and the manifestation of His power as Man victorious over the enemy—a glorious Head of the Church which was upon earth. In Colossians, He is considered as present in the Church, securing to the Gentiles the possession of the heavenly glory into which He has Himself entered. This chapter, then, brings the Church into prominence in a very interesting manner. Christ raised is the Head—the Church is His body; its practical reconciliation takes effect now, being founded on the peace made through the blood of the cross. Gentiles belong to it quite as much as Jews; and Christ in Spirit dwells in it, the hope of glory. This last expression teaches us, without controversy, that the Church is contemplated as exclusively upon earth, though having the sure hope of a heavenly glory. Its unity is not declared as in the Epistle to the Ephesians; but it is self-evident that the body of Christ can be only one.

I confine myself to the doctrine; adding that the epistle, as a whole, shows that the Colossians were in danger of losing sight of their close union with the Head of the body—Christ, in whom everything was accomplished, and they complete in Him; and of seeking, by forgetting this truth, to add something else, which was nothing but the

setting aside of Him. Consequently, the epistle brings into prominence the riches and the perfection of Christ to remind the Colossians of them; whilst the Ephesians, who held fast the faith of their union with Him, were able to profit by the teaching which revealed to them the whole extent of their own privileges. The faithfulness of the one, and the unfaithfulness of the other, have both turned, in the hand of our God, to the blessing of the Church in all ages.

The First Epistle to Timothy furnishes us with some precious thoughts in a short sentence: "The house," it is said (chap. iii. 15), "of God, which is the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." Here we stand on ground more connected with the *practical* character of the Church upon earth. It is the house of God—it is there that truth is found and nowhere else; there alone it is maintained in the world. Let us understand this declaration. The Church does not create the truth, but has been created by it. It adds to it neither authority nor weight. The truth is of God before it is received by the Church; but the latter possesses it. It exists because it possesses the truth, and it alone possesses it. Where, besides in the Church, is the truth found? Nowhere.

The supposition that the truth is anywhere else would be the denial of the truthfulness and ways of God. The truth can be nothing but what God has said; it is the truth, independently of all church authority; of any but that of God, who is the source of it. But where the truth is, supposing a body to be constituted by its means, there is the Church; and the Church which possesses it, and subsists by possessing it, thereby manifests it to the world. The authority of the Church cannot make that which it teaches to be truth. Truth alone does not constitute the Church; that is, the meaning of the word Church embraces other ideas. A single man holding the truth is not the Church; but *the assembly of God* is distinguished by the possession of the truth. An assembly which has not the truth, as the condition of its existence, is not the assembly of God. The passage under consideration, and the importance of this point must be my excuse for this little digression, which is but indirectly connected with the subject of the Church.

There is one more passage, which presents the Church in so complete a manner, as to its hope and its service, that I will quote it in closing this series of testimonies from the Bible. It is that of Revelation xxii. : "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.”

In this passage we find the Spirit introduced in a very remarkable manner, somewhat analogous to Romans viii. Both passages show how far the Holy Ghost is considered in the word of God as dwelling upon the earth since the day of Pentecost, and as identifying Himself either with the believer or with the Church. In Romans, it is “He that searcheth *the hearts* knoweth what is the mind of *the Spirit*; because,” it is added, “He maketh intercession for the saints according to God.” Now it is our groanings that are spoken of there. Here in the Revelation, the Spirit and the bride say, Come. The Spirit so takes His place with the bride, that the sentiment of the Church is that which the Spirit Himself expresses. The Spirit is upon earth and animates the Church, being the true source of its thoughts. The Church, animated by these very thoughts, expresses her own affections under the influence of the Holy Spirit. Had it been only an expression of affection, one might have questioned its legitimacy; and that also of the groans spoken of in Romans viii.; but since the Holy Spirit connects Himself with it, this

desire of a feeble heart has the power and authority of a divine thought. This, then, is what characterizes the Church, in her desires and in her hope. She desires that her Bridegroom should come. It is not a question about prophecy; it is Christ, the Communicator of the prophecy, who presents Himself: "I am the bright and morning star." The Church knows Him. She will be with Him before the great day of His manifestation comes—she will appear with Him in glory. But when He is thus presented in His person, it awakens the earnest desire of the Bride that He should come. But there is also a testimony to be borne. It is what follows. She calls upon those who hear, but who have not understood their privilege of being of the bride, to join this cry, and to say, Come. In the meantime, she already possesses the river of living water, and, turning towards those who are athirst, she invites them to come and make a free use of it. How beautiful a position for the Church—for our hearts! The first affection of her heart is towards her Head—her Bridegroom, who is to come like the morning star, to receive her to Himself in heaven, before He is manifested to the world. Then she desires all believers to share this desire, and to reinforce her cry that He may come. In the meantime, she

is the vessel and herald of grace, according to the heart of Him who has shown grace to her.

What more blessed position could be thought of, for such poor worms as we are, than that which sovereign and creative grace has given us? If the reader examines John xvii., he will find that the object of the chief part of the chapter is to place believers, beginning in a special manner with the apostles, in the same position as JESUS was; they taking His place upon the earth. We well know, that He alone, by His Spirit, can be the strength through which they can accomplish such a task.

This truth enables us to apprehend what the true position of the Church is. Christ was upon earth, but at the same time one with His Father. He was manifesting Him upon the earth. He was a Man upon earth, but He was a heavenly Man, displaying upon earth the spirit and sentiments of heaven, where love and holiness reign; because God is love and God is holy. He says, "The Son of man which is in heaven." He was separate from sinners and yet at the same time perfect in grace towards them. In His case, His person was the cause of it (He being at the same time true Man and acting by the power of the Holy Ghost in a dependence upon God, which constituted

His perfection as Man). In the case of the Church it is clear that the question is no longer of a divine person, yet she is not of the world, even as Christ was not of the world. United to her Head in heaven by the Holy Ghost come down from thence, dead and risen with Him and seated in Him in heavenly places, her character is purely heavenly. She is upon the earth, where the Holy Ghost has come down, to manifest there a heavenly walk—the motive and the mind of heaven. She lives above in Christ by the Spirit; her life is hid there with Christ in God; she seeks for nothing down here, declaring plainly that she is yet seeking her country. She is one, she knows it; it cannot be otherwise. Can her heart recognize that Christ has another bride as companion of His heavenly joys? The manner of her being necessitates her unity, as well as the character of her Bridegroom, and the unity of the Spirit. She is upon earth; she sighs after her country, but still more after the Bridegroom who will come to receive her unto Himself, that, where He is, there she may be with Him. In the meantime she bears testimony upon earth, as united into one body by the presence of the Holy Ghost. This is the place where God owns her, till Christ comes to take her to Himself. From that time she

will bear testimony in the glory and by the glory to the love which has placed her there, and to the mighty redemption which has taken poor sinners and placed them in the same glory as the Son of God, and in the same relations with His Father, except that which is essentially divine—"that in the ages to come He [God] might show the exceeding riches of His grace, in His kindness towards us through Christ Jesus."

(To be continued, D. V.)



FRAGMENTS.

May the present sweet sense, divinely taught, of our privilege as part of the Bride, espoused to Christ—keep our souls enjoying His love for Whom we wait. While some overlook and some discuss, may we *enjoy* the Church's bright place—surely fed by, and feeding on, the love of our absent LORD—THE LAMB!

God's ways are behind the scenes : but He moves all the scenes which He is behind. We have to learn this, and let Him work, and not think much of man's busy movements : they will accomplish God's—the rest of them all perish and disappear. We have only in peace to do His will.

WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

(Concluded from page 160.)

What we have already said leads us naturally to the second part of our subject, viz.

WHAT PLACE DOES THE CHURCH HOLD IN THE WAYS OF GOD?

The heavenly aspect of this question finds its answer in several passages which we have just examined, which treat the subject of the nature of the Church. God has willed that His Son, Ruler of all things as Son of man, should have a bride to share His glory and His dominion. Glorious position! testimony of the infinite grace of God! Such is the Church—the companion of JESUS in the heavenly glory. This will take place at the same time with the earthly glory, which will be the fulfilment of the prophecies of the Old Testament. God, for the dispensation of the fulness of times, will gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him, as Head; whose bride and body the Church is. The Old Testament, which gives us the history of the ways of God upon earth, and in its prophetic part announces what the result will be, does not reveal to us this mystery. The Church, as

such, does not come as part of the course of the ways of God upon earth. The object of the counsels of God from *before* the foundation of the world, she had been hid in the depths of these counsels, till Christ, having been rejected upon the earth, might become her heavenly Head; and the testimony to this glory, having also been rejected by the Jews, who, in a certain sense, had a right to the promises, the door was fully opened for the revelation of this glorious mystery—hid in all ages.

In considering a little the facts, either with regard to man or with regard to the Jews, the suitableness of these ways of God will be understood without any difficulty. Until the rejection of Christ, man had been put to the test in every way—without law, under the law, and even under grace, presented in the Person of Christ, for God was in Him reconciling the world unto Himself not imputing their trespasses unto them. Now man, by the death of Christ, has proved himself an enemy of God, an enemy who hated even His mercy, which was nevertheless his only resource, because it was of God. Christ, as new Man, raised, glorified, at the right hand of God, outside the world, takes as Man the place where man was to be in the counsels of God. There is a Man at the right hand of God, to whom the

Church can be united as His body by the Holy Ghost.

Such a heavenly standing of the saints could not possibly exist before. The body could not be before the Head, to which it was to be united, had taken His place, such as it had been prepared for Him in the counsels of God. There was not a glorified Man in heaven before, to whom the Church could have been united.

If we consider the Jews, the thing is still more intelligible for other reasons. They had prophecies and promises. Christ was to be presented to them. Till they had rejected Him, God ever faithful, could not set them aside to establish anything else which denied their privileges, blotting out all distinction between Jew and Gentile—a distinction which the Jew was bound carefully to maintain. The crucifixion of JESUS has put an end to all that. No one is a Jew in heaven. But man having completely failed in his responsibility, and the Jews having rejected the One in whom the fulfilment of the promises had been presented to them, God (before fulfilling them, as He will do) has revealed the hidden mystery which was connected with the heavenly glory of the Son of man; that is, with the body united to Him, gathered during the rejection of Israel—a body which was to be manifested

in glory with Him, when He should in His sovereign grace resume His dealings with Israel upon earth: for “blindness, in part, has happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.” Israel, unfaithful as men, have lost all title to the enjoyment of the promises by the rejection of Him in whom they were to have this enjoyment. They were, after all, children of wrath as others; but that will not hinder God from fulfilling His promises. He cannot be unfaithful to His promise whatever the unfaithfulness of man may be. His gifts and calling are without repentance, and the blindness of Israel is only temporary. This is what Romans xi., teaches; as the Lord Himself said to them, “Your house is left unto you desolate *till* ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord.” But here is the perfect wisdom of God. Israel having rejected the Christ when He came to present Himself to the nation, they are without remedy. It will be the sovereign grace of God which will reinstate them in the enjoyment of the promises, according to the word, as poor sinners. Israel, under chastening, and kept for that day, abide without the true God, and without a false god, according to the prophecy of Hosea ii.; and God, during this interval, brings in the fulness of the Gen-

tiles, displaying His multiform* wisdom in the calling of the Church, a heavenly people, established upon more than promises, on a perfect redemption, accomplished through the act by which Israel placed themselves under condemnation. But it was not only that man and Israel had been fully tried in the history of past ages, before the accomplishment of redemption. God had also displayed His wisdom in His ways with both: His power, His patience, His mercy, His government in the hands of man and according to the conditions of His holy law, by promises, and by miraculous interventions, by chastenings and blessings, by righteous judgements, by the most tender care and the most magnificent providences, had all been displayed. Even a world swallowed up in the mighty waters had borne witness, in disappearing before His judgments, to the ways of God with man upon earth.

Angels had seen these things; they had seen the wisdom and power of God in exercise in His ways with men on the earth. The Church was to supply them with quite a fresh manifestation of the depths of the counsels and wisdom of the infinite God whom they adore.

*The word used in Ephes. iii. 10, *polupoikilos*, 'all-various,' 'multifarious,' 'much variegated,' is remarkable.

The demonstration of the inability in which man was found, to profit by the ways of God, furnished the occasion of it. It was no longer proofs that God was governing on earth, but the care which, leaving apparently in the hands of the wicked that which was the dearest object to God upon earth, prepared it thereby for heavenly glory and joy.

There remains yet one thing to which I would call the attention of my reader. It is, that, until Christ was glorified, the Holy Ghost could not come down to earth ; for the object of His testimony, the heavenly glory of Christ and the redemption accomplished by His means, were yet wanting. “The Holy Ghost was not yet* [given], because

*The expression “was not yet,” which is the simple and exact translation of the passage, shows to what a degree the presence of the Holy Ghost upon earth, come down from heaven, and dwelling in the Church, was a reality for the apostles, and filled their mind ; as being to them, the whole of the idea of the Holy Spirit ; for indeed He was there. This is evidently not a question as to the existence of the Holy Ghost as a Person ; but since He was now come down and His presence was upon earth, in consequence of the redemption and the glory of Christ, this presence was to them the Holy Ghost. The same expression occurs in Acts xix : “We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.” They had been told by certain disciples of John the Baptist, that the Lamb of God would baptize them with the Holy Ghost ; and what they said to Paul was, that, not only had they not received Him, but that they did not know whether He was yet.

JESUS was not yet glorified." We shall see with what clearness the word of God presents the Church to us, as quite a new revelation of that which had no existence before, save in the eternal counsels of God, who thus predestinated for her an existence outside the course of ages.

The writings of Paul, who was chosen to bear this testimony and to preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ—a ministry which was connected with these truths—are full of this doctrine; bringing into prominence this glory of Christ, which was beyond all that the prophets had spoken. Thus 1 Tim. iii. 16. Having spoken of the Church, in a passage already quoted, he naturally turns to the truth of which the Church was the pillar—this mystery of godliness. A Messiah, the fulfilment of the prophecies, was not a mystery; but a Christ such as the apostle presents Him in verse 16 had never been known before: "God manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." Certain elements found here were connected with Messiah upon earth: because this same Messiah, ascended up on high, must come down again to fulfil the promises made to the Jews; but such things as a whole,

had never been presented to faith.

As to the Church, the thing is true in a still more absolute manner. This is what the apostle says of it, Ephesians iii. 9-11: "And to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known, by the Church, the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." It is impossible to get anything more absolute than "hid in God." This mystery of the Church, hid in the depths of His counsels, did not get disclosed, nor did she exist in fact, till then. It is "*now*," that unto the principalities and powers is made known, by the Church, the manifold wisdom of God. They had seen His patience, His power, His government; but never a heavenly body upon the earth, united to His Son in heaven. Thus God could set aside, for the time, the course of His earthly government, to enter into relationship with a heavenly people. This passage is very clear on this point; that the Church neither existed nor was revealed before. Up to that time it was a mystery hid in God; who, having established it in

His counsels, was testing man under His government, before creating a heavenly system, based upon an accomplished redemption, in union with the Second Adam in heaven. It is important that the reader should get very clearly in his mind the teaching of this passage. The object of the apostle is to show, that the Church is a new thing. There had been other means to show forth the wisdom and ways of God, earthly means. *Now*, heavenly powers saw, in the Church, a kind of wisdom quite new. Not only the Church had had, as yet, no existence; but it had not been revealed before its existence; it had been a mystery hid in God. This last point is confirmed by other passages which we will quote; but it is well to develop the first point, by the teaching at the end of chapter ii.

The truth of the union of Jews and Gentiles in one body, the Church, is established, as the consequence of the cross, in verses 14 and 15, in the most formal manner. The middle wall of partition, established by God Himself and absolutely binding, had been broken down only by the cross; and by means of this, also, they were both reconciled in one body—those who were afar off, and these who were nigh. Then, they had been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets. That is, the

Church could exist only after the cross had rendered possible the union of Jews and Gentiles.* The enmity of man against God having been manifested, the enmity of his nature—Jew or Gentile—and the Jews having lost all title to the enjoyment of the promises, grace received in a sovereign manner both the one and the other, according to the eternal counsels of God, for a better inheritance. God (having been manifested in the flesh, and having set things on the footing of eternal realities outside all earthly economy or dispensation, and, received up into glory, having acquired a people which was associated to Himself according to the election of God) purposed, before the foundation of the world, that He should share this glory with His bride and His body.

To return to the revelation of this mystery. Speaking of the Church, the body of Christ (Col. i. 26), the apostle calls it “the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to His saints: to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.” For the Jew, Christ is the accomplishment of the

*This union would have been a sin before the rejection of Christ, before the cross.

glory ; but Christ, present in Spirit, becomes the hope of heavenly glory for those in whom He dwells.

Thus, also in the Epistle to the Romans—
 “Now to Him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest,” etc.

The more the Epistles of Paul, or of Peter, are examined, the more examples we shall find of the contrast between the hopes and the election of Jews and Christians (only Peter never treats the subject of the Church), and the more we shall find the eternal election of the Church brought into light. In Ephesians iii., this mystery is called also the mystery of Christ ; for indeed before, it was Christ an individual Man, and not Christ the Head of a body spiritually united to Him : and the apostle declares, that it was by a special revelation that it had been made known to him (vs. 3-5)—the knowledge of a mystery, which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men (this mystery being, that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs of the same body).*

*In the epistles it is Paul only who speaks of the Church ; and as we see (Ephes. iii. 3), he speaks as of a truth which he had received by a particular revela-

These passages show sufficiently the way in which Paul presents the Church as an essential doctrine of truth; but yet as a mystery, which had never been revealed under the old Testament, and which never had any accomplishment before the death of JESUS had closed all those relations of God with Israel, which had reference to the prophecies and promises, so far as they depended upon the faith and faithfulness of man. They show that blindness having come upon them for a time, God, who will fulfil His promises to His earthly people, has found, in the period of their blindness, the occasion of manifesting this admirable fruit of His eternal counsels; viz., the Church which, when Israel is restored through grace to the enjoyment of the promises made to them, will shine as the bride of the Lord in the brightness in which He will Himself be manifested.

Such is her destiny! Whilst waiting, what is her place and what is her calling? We have said that the Holy Ghost, come down from heaven, gathers her upon earth.

tion. He alone employs even the word in its application to the whole body. John speaks twice of a particular church. I recall the expression already quoted, "minister of the Church to fulfil [complete] the word of God." There was yet wanting to this word something of the revelations willed of God, namely, the Church. God made use of the apostle Paul to administer this truth.

If the Bridegroom delays His coming ; and if souls go to wait with Him for the moment of the assembling of all that are His, raised or changed, in His presence in the air, those of the redeemed who remain gathered down here, where the Holy Ghost the Comforter abides, always form the Church. There may be ignorance, the members may be scattered here and there, the Church may have been unfaithful and stripped of her ornaments ; but it remains equally true, that until Christ calls her to meet Him in heaven, she is always the Church, always the bride of Christ. She has been espoused as a chaste virgin to Him ; but it is to a heavenly Christ. Israel is His people upon earth. Whilst Christ is in heaven, the Holy Ghost is gathering the Church to be His in heaven.

However, it is not merely that the Church has a heavenly calling ; this is not the whole truth as to her relations with Christ. She is also His bride and His body. When all the thoughts of God have been fulfilled, she will, as a fact, be with Him. Her thoughts and her character are (or at least they ought to be) formed after her portion, according to God. Also she is already united to Christ by the Spirit. She is one and can be one only. But she is characterized by yet other traits. When the world rejected Christ, it

passed judgment and condemnation upon itself. "Now," said the Lord (John xii. 31), in referring to His cross, "is the judgment of this world."

The Church was set up in grace, when the relations of God with the world, on the footing of the responsibility of man, were ended for ever by the rejection of Christ. Thus she has been called to come out of the world to be received of God. She is Christ's alone. "Come out from among them," says the word, "and I will receive you." It is a peculiar people belonging only to Him. "They are not of the world," says JESUS, "as I am not of the world." And this is true, not only as regards individuals; but "that they may be one," says the Lord, "that the world may believe." It is a unity perceptible to the world outside itself. "What have I to do," says the apostle, "to judge them also that are without? Do not ye judge them that are within? Them that are without God judgeth." (I Cor. v.) The Holy Ghost was upon earth to establish the closest and most formal union between the members of the body; they were members one of another. This unity was recognized among them. All knew that a Christian was not of the world, because he was of the Church. If one member suffer, all the members suffer with it. This unity was

truly and distinctly manifested in each locality. There was the church of each place as the very addresses of several epistles show. But this local unity proved the universal unity. Any one member of it was thereby a member of the universal unity. Teachers, evangelists, apostles, Timothy, Titus, Paul, did not belong to one church more than another. The gifts were members of the body. The idea of a member of a church is not found in the Bible. The thought there is very different; it is that of members of the body of Christ. But these "joints and bands," which might exercise their activity in local churches, proved the unity of the whole body, and made it visible and perfectly perceptible to the world.

Christians acknowledged one another, and were acknowledged as one body—a sole, well known, and well defined body, having common interests and the most intimate ties, as a body apart from the world. The Holy Ghost cannot unite the Church with that world out of the midst of which He has taken her. Persons might come in unawares into the formal body, but it was a distinct body, into which they come as false brethren. It is plain that if the Church be one in the midst of the world, her duty is to glorify the Lord in that unity, and by that unity, and as a whole. For this responsibil-

ity cannot be separated from any position whatsoever in which we are placed by God.

But the motives are so much the more powerful as the grace of that position is excellent. We are the salt of the earth, the light of the world, a city set on a hill, the epistle* of Christ, an epistle which ought to be read and known of all men. The body of Christ ought to reproduce, by the power of the Spirit—that power which overcomes all the separative principles which selfishness and sin have introduced into the world—the character of its Head; and thus glorify Him on the earth. The bride should manifest her attachment to the Bridegroom—that she is wholly and exclusively His!

People talk about an “invisible” church. The word says nothing about this. It is a notion which quite denies the force of the passage we have just quoted. The scattering of the children of God has hid them. Would any one venture to maintain that individuals should be invisible; that is, that they should conceal their Christianity? “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” It is clear, then, that individuals should not be invisible. Now, if that be true, to say that the

*It is not said “epistles.” It is the whole of the Church at Corinth which was “the epistle.”

Church may be invisible means nothing short of this, that these individuals ought not to be united. Yet it is certain that the Lord says that they ought to have been one, that the world might believe.

If there be divisions, they are carnal, and walk as men. If the duty of all individuals be to let their light shine before men, and if all these individuals are closely united, and form a separate body outside the world, making everywhere a profession of their union (as it was undeniably the case at the beginning), to say that this body is invisible has no sense. "A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid." But this is passing.

The question I am now treating is not, how far the Church realizes this position. I am speaking of the Church such as it is presented in the word.

But if the Church be the bride of JESUS, she ought to desire as such to glorify Him during His absence. Her heart must be given to Him—she must receive her directions from Him alone. If she be the house of God, she must seek to keep herself pure on account of the holiness of the Spirit who dwells therein. If she be the pillar and ground of the truth, she will not be able to endure anything but the truth, which is the basis of her existence; for the glorious revelation of Christ, who has accomplished her

redemption (God manifested in the flesh, preached to the Gentiles, received up into glory), has given her being; and she is the witness of it.

Conscious of being the bride of the Lamb, she will have the affections proper to such a relationship; she will long for the coming of the Bridegroom to receive her to Himself. She will understand that she belongs to Him in heaven; and consequently will not mix herself up with the world, nor confound her expectation with the coming of JESUS to judge the world, while she believes it firmly.* She knows that, when He appears, she will appear *with Him* in glory. Thus, separated from the world by the Spirit who is the power and earnest of this hope, she will seek to realize it as much as possible upon the earth "He that hath this hope purifieth himself, even as He is pure."

This is also the force of the teaching of Philippians iii., which however has an individual for its object. I quote it because I speak of the normal effect of this truth in

*When it is a question of the responsibility of individuals, whether Christians or of the world, the New Testament speaks of the *appearing* of JESUS. For the joy and portion of the Church, according to the counsels of God in grace, it is the *coming* of Christ into the air, before His revelation, that the word presents to us as the object of faith and hope.

the heart of the Christian. He who has learnt it will have the conscience that the Church is one—can be only one. He will have the conscience that she belongs to Christ and can belong to none other. He will have the conscience that she ought to manifest this unity, and render a constant and practical testimony that she is His alone. The presence in her of the Holy Ghost, who gathers the members in one body, will be the power and life of this testimony. The path will be the path of faith ; and the path of faith will be the path of sufferings, but they will be the sufferings of Christ for His body, that we may be glorified together.



MASTERPIECE OF DIVINE WORK- MANSHIP.

Is there, anywhere upon earth, anything to which we can turn and say, according to the truth of God, and with certainty in our own minds as we point to it, “The Father worketh herein and the Son also”? Most assuredly, Yes. The Church of the living God is still upon earth, and that Church is the workmanship of God—is the subject and field of the operations of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

Yes! God is working a work upon the earth ; a work, too, which was counselled

from everlasting, which is for God's own eternity, and for Himself and His Son, in that eternity. Let this be once seen as to the Church, and man (the renewed, saved man) will see how near He is to the work of God. Questions will, then, surely follow to each one—questions, such as, “How far do I understand God's thoughts in the Church?” — “How far am I *practically* working together with God in this matter?” or “How far is my life, here below, practically inconsistent with the present aim and the present object of God in this His work?”

It is not merely eternal life to one's own soul, but eternal life connected, through the Spirit of God, dwelling in a body which is seen in the Church, upon earth; a body which is made responsible for the honour and the glory of the Lord; a body, in which God not only forms by faith the souls of His own for eternity, but which He has placed as a pattern to show forth that which is to come.

Eternal salvation to each soul individually is through faith in the Lord Jesus;—but the individuals so saved were to be gathered together, in each place, under the present guidance, corporately, of the Holy Ghost;—and be the body which is responsible for the truth and the honour of the Lord.

“AT JESUS’ FEET.”

Luke x. 39; John xii. 3.

Silently the hours were passing,
 As she sat *at Jesus’ feet* ;
 One blest voice all else surpassing ;
 Self is hushed in that retreat.

Wondrous place of lowly nearness
 Mary chose with Him alone ;
 Lord, may we too know its sweetness,
 Take her place to be our own.

At Thy feet, when grief’s dark shadow
 O’er our desert pathway lies,
 We shall find Thee in the sorrow,
 Thou wilt wipe the weeping eyes.

Jesus, Lord, though man despise Thee,
 We would pour *upon Thy feet*
 All the wealth of hearts that prize Thee,
 Precious ointment, pure and sweet.

One there was, when man betrayed Thee—
 Heaven records it to her fame—
 Who, for death, with cost arrayed Thee,
 Loved Thee in Thy garb of shame.

Saviour, every crown in glory
 Will be cast *before Thy feet*—
 Feet that tell of Calvary’s story,
 Tale of love divinely sweet.

Till that day, oh, keep us near Thee !
 We would *at Thy feet* abide,
 Whilst our voices rise to praise Thee,
 Son of God, once crucified.

ON 'THE GROUND OF GRACE

John xii. 1-36

It is a wonderful thing for us really to be on the ground of grace. That, I think, is what is specially brought before us here—what God is in Himself, and what He is towards us. He has been manifested in the Lord Jesus Christ. God *loved*, and God *gave*; that is the beginning of the reality of it to our souls. But when we have that, we have set before such hearts as ours what God is in Himself, in His resources for us, and in the activities of His love; giving the most precious thing God has to give, that we may delight in Him. We bless Him and we praise Him as our Saviour; and so He is, but He is the blessed Son of God Himself—the Son of the Father—and by the grace of God, and in the power of the Spirit of God, that is what we have discovered—what He is in Himself. And it is in the measure in which the soul has apprehended that grace, and what He Himself is personally, that the soul counts all things but loss for what the Lord Jesus is in Himself, “the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.”

We have a wonderful expression of that here, “Six days before the passover.” (v. I.) The Spirit of God settles the date for us,

that we may have all the surroundings before our hearts, our consciences; that we may be, as it were, in the very midst of the scene itself. "He came to Bethany," the Spirit tells us.^a That is where Lazarus was, whom He had raised from the dead; the mighty power of God interposing on behalf of the little family at Bethany. Death had come into the home there. JESUS, the Resurrection and the Life, calls Lazarus back out of the grave. In the face of that—in the face of the manifestations of the power of God bringing that one back from the dead—there is one in that house who sees something more—the Life-giver Himself must die. Where had she learnt it? She had sat at His feet, and she had heard His word; and this is what she had learned for herself. When, through grace, we have reached this, we have reached the blessed foundation of everything God would enable us to be in this world for His glory. Mary knows Him to be the Life-giver Himself, but the Life-giver must die. It is not the soul measuring grace by the way in which its own needs have been met, but we learn what it is to be before Him in His grace; not according to what there is in us, but according to what there is in Him. Learning that there is not one thought in His heart toward us of giving us anything on

the ground of reward, but everything on the ground of grace, in the fulness and greatness of HIMSELF.

We have then the one that sees, and the one that does not see—Mary and Judas. The one that does not see leads away the others after him ; the one that sees had discovered that the Life-giver Himself must die, and she just goes and expresses that in a way that shows how she had been reached in the inmost recesses of her heart. She takes all that is precious, all that she could pride herself upon, and she places it at the feet of JESUS. Only think what it is ! All that was most precious in her sight ! Are you and I in that state of soul now ? If we are not, we shall not see clearly the right way—the path. Further down in the chapter the Spirit of God shows us how clear that is for us now—JESUS glorified. Mary had heard Him ; she knew Him as the dying One. Thus she has no reserve. She does not care what others may think, or may say. She does not say a word ; but she takes precious ointment of spikenard, all that is costly, and lays it at the feet of JESUS. The one with the natural heart—the one who does not see—finds fault. He says, “That is waste, that is waste.” It is the natural heart coming out, indignant at the idea of all this being bestowed on

JESUS. "Oh," says the natural heart, "that is waste; consider the poor, consider the poor." Then the Spirit of God stops to tell us what the natural heart really is, and here we have a wonderful principle brought out. In Mary there was no such thing as covering up. She is not occupied with what she is doing, but with the One to Whom she is doing it; and the whole house was filled with the odour of the ointment—the fragrance of that act rose up to God and was a sweet savour to Him! What do you think delights the heart of God in this world? Seeing a number of the Lord's people together, and happy together? No. At the very last a few gathered round the Person of the blessed Lord, and appreciating HIM through grace. That is what the Spirit of God will produce and keep here in this world—keep alive and responsive to Christ—until the very moment when He comes.

Now in Judas we have the very reverse of all this. He covers up, and the Spirit of God uncovers, and shows it to us. He did not care for the poor, he cared for the bag, he bare what was put therein. In the blessed scene the Spirit of God comes down to what the natural heart is—trying to cover up its distance from Him, and using what in itself is a good object to do so. Nearness

to Him is the heart uncovered in His presence because satisfied with HIMSELF. There is no seeking to make a good appearance when we have Himself before us. We do not think of it then. It is not what we are doing, but He is there to Whom we are doing it.

What always strikes the heart so, in this chapter is, that what was outside—what was seen outwardly—was not what the Lord was doing: what He was doing lay beneath the surface. He was drawing the heart to Himself, and the blessed Lord was on the way to the cross. He takes upon Himself Mary's cause; He answers for her. She shall not be disturbed; He takes it all in hand. 'Then He makes His entry into Jerusalem, and the people begin to sing; they begin to treat Him as a Conqueror, according to Psalm cxviii.: "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord." They were all wrong, not seeing the ground on which alone victory could be based. Thy King cometh." But how? With no earthly power and majesty; nothing that the eye could see, nothing that could carry captive the natural heart of man; but with His heart yearning over them in a way wholly divine. There was the secret of it in what He is in HIMSELF. The secret had been discovered by Mary. How had she

learned it? In her own soul first—her own need. Here is the Life-giver Himself; He has brought Lazarus back from the dead; but He must die, or He will abide alone. When by grace we have apprehended the Lord of glory as the dying One, we are on the road; we have touched the head and spring, the fountain of all the grace of God toward us. He enters into Jerusalem in this spirit: “Behold, thy King cometh unto thee: He is just, and having salvation; lowly,” &c. (Zech. ix. 9.)

The next thing the Spirit places on record is the coming of the Greeks to see JESUS: “Sir, we would see JESUS”—Jehovah saving His people. So Andrew and Philip bring them to Jesus; and He says [as it were], “You must see Him as Mary has discovered Him—the corn of wheat that falls into the ground and dies.” Now let us go back to the entry into Jerusalem, and read it in the light and spirit of this, and what a wonderful insight we have below the surface. The people shout and sing, and strew palm branches before Him; they celebrate victory, but victory for them can only be through His death. We have before us what was in His heart in the midst of their shoutings. Wonderful and most blessed!

The whole secret comes out to the Greeks, but Mary had discovered it beforehand. She

had herself anointed Him for the burial; she had learned that He must die; and He discovers to the Greeks the very thing she had learned and had anointed Him for. Wonderfully blessed this oneness of thought between Mary and the Lord Jesus! It is what you and I can have, and by the grace of God do have—oneness of thought with our Lord Jesus Christ. But some may say, “I see all that, but how am I to get along down here? How are we to find the way through all the troubles and difficulties and sorrows down here?” Well, the way is Christ Himself. If we can only bring all the troubles and difficulties, the things that distress us, into the light of His presence, we discover the way directly; the Spirit of God enables us to look at them in the light of His presence. The darkness of the path has been turned into light by looking at it in His presence. What is for the glory of Christ? What will glorify Him? Ah! but we have so much to get rid of, many of us. The darkness lies in the state of our own souls towards Himself; the defect lies there. Mary was counting all things but loss for Himself. The soul may be a little way only from Him, the eye a little off Him: it is quite enough to make one dark. If we are not looking at Christ, not considering Him, darkness comes in.

The Lord goes on to speak of the denial of self, the judgment of this world, and His being lifted up and drawing all to Him. The people answer Him, "We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth for ever Who is this Son of man?" He says, "Walk while ye have the light with you." That is all. There was an opportunity for Him now to make a great display of His glory. Not a word of it. He appeals to the heart and the conscience: "Walk while ye have the light." There is one of the children of light in the chapter; it was the one who sat at His feet and heard His word. That was the one that spent all that was precious upon Him, that abased herself, emptied herself at His feet. "Who is this Son of man?" they say. "Walk while ye have the light," He says, "that ye may be the children of light." Oh, beloved brethren, it is really a great thing to be searched out! We do not know much of it, but that is what we have come to—really and truly to be searched out in ourselves. We see the needs be of this really individual searching out, in order that we may be fit to be here in this world for God and for Christ. Paul learns it, and says, "I know that in me, that is, my flesh, dwells no good thing." We are really before God now on the ground of His grace. We know all our needs are

met; but to know God is for us, that He is towards us in His grace, everything we hold to of the old man we have to let go, and to learn what real dependence on "me and my grace" is. (See 2 Cor. xii.) Look again at Peter on the housetop. Alone with God: a wonderful place to be in. And what has God to say to him? He lets down the sheet from heaven: "Arise, Peter, slay and eat." "No," says Peter, "nothing common or unclean has ever entered into my mouth," forgetting what had come forth from his poor lips—the cursing and swearing and denying his blessed Master. Have we learned this lesson, the lesson of His grace? Peter had well-nigh forgotten even the grace that had met him in his need, and there, alone with God, he had to learn this; and so at Jerusalem he says, [as it were] "The lesson I have learned is this; God hath cleansed." That is what God gave him. God spoke to him, distinguishing between what God was in Himself and what He had done, and what Peter was in himself and what he had done. And that is how God speaks to us now. Peter could now go forth. Who could he reject now? It is just a question of God and His grace. "What God hath cleansed call not thou common."

But to return to our chapter. In all this that went on there is this wonderful appre-

hension of this child of light shown forth in her actions; she says not a word, but actions speak louder than words. Then the entry into Jerusalem. These things, the Spirit of God says, His disciples did not understand then, but when JESUS was glorified, then they remembered, &c. ; *i. e.*, when the Spirit of God is down here, He brings to remembrance all things that had taken place or had been spoken. When this chapter is before us, we bless God for this wonderful apprehension of JESUS as the dying One here ; but we have higher ground, the Holy Ghost is here. Now we begin to think about subjection to Him, really entering into the mind of Christ. It is not merely light on the way here, it is the way itself ; it is the Spirit of Christ, and learning what it is that glorifies Him. We have the Spirit of God ; the Spirit of God always leads according to the mind of Christ. When you hear people say, " I do not see," why do they not see ? No mortal man can give them eyes ; but if they have the Spirit of God, how is it they do not apprehend ? It is no light thing now not to see, and see clearly too. The hindrance is always in oneself. Search your own heart and soul before God ; set your own conscience before Him, and you will discover it.

The reason of all the inability to appre-

hend, and to act for God, is distance of heart from Himself; that is the real, true secret of it all; and if of the grace of God we really search ourselves out, and get near to Himself, we shall have the blessed knowledge of His mind, of Himself. The power of evil is conquered, under His feet. You go to people and say, "God has put all things under the feet of JESUS." "Oh," say they, "we do not see it! What confusion and distress there is around—the power of evil rising up." I say, "God has done it now." Where do I look? I see JESUS, and have faith through grace; all things are put under His feet, everything, everything the souls of people can be led astray by, everything is under the feet of JESUS. I look to Him. I see not yet all things put under Him, but I see HIM under whose feet they are put. Mary saw Him here the dying One; we see Him the risen One, sitting at the right hand of God in heaven. All things are working out His mind and will, conducing to further His glory; and the question for us is not, "Where is power?" but, "Where is subjection to Himself?" That is where power lies. If you say, "Where is power?" I say, "Where is subjection to Christ?" It is the having to do with HIMSELF, the heart satisfied with HIMSELF, contented that JESUS should be

glorified, and really thankful to be in this world only for Himself, for His sake. The Lord grant us to know more of it, especially in a day like this when so many, instead of "Trusting in the Lord with all the heart," are, "leaning on their own understanding" and "doing that which is right in their own eyes, (see Prov. iii. 5; Judg. xvii. 6.) with the sad result, as a consequence, of what is spoken of in Is. v. 20, 21.



FRAGMENT.—God has connected the discovery of the path of His will, His way, with the inward state of the soul: see Ps. xxv. 4, 5; 9, 10.



THE ETERNAL LIFE AND FELLOWSHIP.

I John i.

It is a wonderful way in which the apostle speaks here. He brings down to us the reality of "that eternal life which was with the Father," and manifested here in this world, that life "which was from the beginning," and the greatness of His love, His interests, what God has before Himself with regard to His people. You may say, "We do not see the energy of the Spirit."

One indeed told me lately he believed the epistle to the Ephesians was written to the Ephesians only, and that the time for it had gone by, that it was impossible nowadays to understand it, or to put its precepts into practice. Are we to lower the standard because of the failure? Do you believe His love to you is, that you are to be like Christ in glory? That is God's purpose, and His fulfilment too. We shall be with Him, and like Him. Unattainable for us so long as we are in the body, but sure and certain prospect; and, by the grace of God, we "follow after" (Phil. iii. 12). It is what we are going to be, in all the blessed fulness and reality of it, one day. How soon may that not be!

The apostle speaks of "that which we have handled of the word of life," actually handled and declared unto us, that our joy may be full; brought so near, made so manifest to us! The Spirit of God remains to make all this good to us. I was struck with one thing as to the remnant of Israel. They say, "I will wait upon the Lord that hides His face from the house of Jacob." (Is. viii. 17.) What God is doing now is, He is exercising our faith in Himself, He is exercising our souls in His grace, blessed be His name. He is not making much of us, but He is making much of Christ. He is exercising our faith in Himself, whether we really have confidence in Him to put into practice that which He has given us, that which remains to the end. The same Holy Spirit remains—outraged, ignored, thought to be a mere influence, His personality de-

nied; still that same Holy Spirit, before Whom Ananias fell down dead, that same Spirit remains, the same truth of God remains. Are our souls in the enjoyment of it? Our hearts? Feeble we may be; feebleness is no sin. Thinking we have strength may lead to sin. I don't think any of us can say weakness is a hindrance. What is the hindrance is being a little off dependence upon Him.

Notice the word "fellowship" in this chapter. We talk of fellowship so often on a lower platform altogether than what God speaks of. God knows no fellowship out of the light. He recognizes no such thing as fellowship which is not "in the light." "These things write we unto you, that your joy may be full"—that the heart and soul may be fed and nourished with what God alone, in the power of His Spirit, can impart and enable us to receive, "that your joy may be full." If we look around, what is it characterizes the people of God generally? A poor joyless set! Occupied with the sorrows and trials and difficulties of the way, instead of with God and His grace. Not only being at the Fountain-Head, but not drinking into what He could give and delights to give (see Luke xii. 32; John xvi. 27; Rom. viii. 32.), and what, by His grace, He means us to receive. He goes on to the most wonderful statement as to us: "If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." One can never read that verse without wondering at the little appre-

hension we have of how "He is in the light." If it speaks of God Himself, "He dwells in the light to which no man can approach." If it speaks of the Lord Jesus, He is at the right hand of God in heaven. Well, there is nothing dark there! nothing covered up, nothing concealed, nothing but what is wholly to His mind and heart, according to what God is in Himself. "If we walk in the light, as He is in the light"—that is the place in which fellowship exists, according to God. We may try to get up a sort of fellowship among ourselves, but it is a poor spurious thing. God knows no fellowship but "in the light, as He is in light." No reserve there at all, no keeping things back, no hiding up things, but being in our own souls in the light—simple, transparent, cloudless. We cannot be that, if we have not in our own souls the apprehension of what He is in grace. "We have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin"—that is the blessed remedy for everything the light makes manifest. It will make manifest all kinds of things, but the blood answers to and blots out everything that the light makes manifest.

God gave His Son. I am brought back again, not to the forgiveness of sins—blessed reality as that is—but, when brought back to "God gave His Son," I have come to the ground on which I can look up to God, and delight in Him. I do not fear the light. To a soul that has apprehended this, it becomes a pain and a grief to excuse anything that the light makes manifest. The light mani-

festis it, to have it removed between the soul and God; and the soul goes out in all the blessed light of His presence towards Him, and towards one another down here. I do not know any word in the word of God, as to the walk of His people down here, that conveys to my own soul such a solemn and blessed reality as "fellowship." It is "in the light, as He is in the light." This is where it exists, where we learn all about it, where we enter into and enjoy it. We speak of this or that person's temper, or peculiarities, or short-comings, etc.; but the question is, Does the person apprehend the light so far as to judge what the light discovers? for that is what the light does—it "makes manifest." It is not the light you have got, or I have got; it is that we are set in the light. It is our place, in which we are set before God Himself. What He speaks of here is the place in which God has set us before Himself. God is light. It is a wonderful place to be set in. That is what God speaks of as fellowship—"Fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ."

Now look at a verse lower down— "If we confess our sins." Look at this word "confession." There is a great deal of difference between confessing and asking for forgiveness. In confession we do not excuse ourselves. In asking for forgiveness we may say, and think too, things might have been different, and if they had been we should not have fallen in this way into the sin. Now the first thought in the soul of the one that is confessing is not the thought of for-

giveness. Forgiveness comes to the one who confesses; but we have to do with the Father Himself, with the One against whom we have sinned, and we have sinned in spite of the grace that would have kept us. The first thought is, "I have sinned—sinned in spite of the grace, the blessed grace, that would have kept me from it." It is deeper, far deeper, than merely asking forgiveness. Grace would keep us. If we were always dependent on His grace, we should never sin; grace would keep us. But if we have sinned, what are we to do? "If we confess our sins"—come before Him without making any excuse whatever, the soul laying itself before Him in all the blessed realization of what His love is, His grace is—acknowledging His grace would have kept us; but we have sinned. Well, I can come and tell Him all that without any thought that anything can change His love to me, and I do thus tell it all out to Him. This is confession, and far deeper and more searching than merely seeking forgiveness. Indeed, not to tell it is a pain, a sorrow, a burden.

I think what we have to look for is more individual walking in that way with Himself. It is very individual here, "If we confess our sins." It is the individual walk that is lacking so in each one of us; in the secret of our souls we know something of that. It is the being before Him according to His grace. You see people so often measure the grace by the way in which their needs have been met. We must surely know, and do know, how they have been met—this is how we first learn grace—but to stop there is

not stepping over the threshold as it were. In Timothy we have: "Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus"—in Him, not in what you have experienced. That will never fail. You and I may fail to understand it. There may be trials of all kinds for His people while here in the body; but, no matter how great the difficulty, His grace is sufficient. Look at the wonderful way He helps as to the grace! Look at the thorn in the flesh Paul had! People tell you, "My grace is sufficient for thee" means that the grace of the Lord was sufficient to enable Paul to bear the thorn in the flesh. Why, beloved brethren, the thorn in the flesh was grace; it was the Lord enabling him, helping, to keep the old man in its right place, to walk according to the grace He had set him in—his own nothingness. He begins to say, "I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." We are set in the light, not according to our measure of light, to have every single bit about us made manifest (a poor, hell-deserving sinner, as to the old man) with the grace and power of Christ upon us; His grace toward us, His power upon us, and His grace sufficient for us to help us to be here for Him, to His honour and glory.

It is that He may fill our hearts with joy; out of such hearts as ours produce heavenly music that He delights to hear. He can bring us, even at the very last, in spite of all our failures—nay through them—to de-

light in His grace, which is sufficient. We need to be broken for this, to be emptied and searched out; and to find our thoughts even are no good at all. You may say, perhaps, "I do not see this or that;" then you are going wrong. You see something that hinders you from seeing what He puts before you. Here, in the light of His presence, all is transparent, "if we walk in the light." May God in His mercy give us to understand it better, and to learn what the greatness of His love is, the greatness of His interest in us, His sympathy with us in all our trials and sorrows, all His wonderful interest in us. We go on handling things so often in our own strength, then we give it up because we make such a dreadful mess of it—we do not know at all what to do—and then we find He is there, and He has been waiting for us.

Well indeed may we all thank God. If we look up to Him, there is no difficulty, no trial, no hindrance there. People say, "Oh, but then you must look at the consequences!" Consequences! I have nothing to do with them, they are His care, and He alone can manage them. I believe it is one of the devil's choicest weapons to hinder souls acting for Christ by occupying them with the consequences. I have nothing to do with the consequences. I am responsible for this one thing—to be subject to Christ and to the Spirit, to be by His grace true to Him; He will settle the consequences. May we all be, according to His grace, and by His grace, open-hearted with Him, and subject to Him.

HARK! THESE SOUNDS OF JOY AND MIRTH.

“It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad.”

Hark! these sounds of joy and mirth,
Telling of a heavenly birth;
Hark! these long triumphant chords,
Triumph more than earth affords;
Say, what may the meaning be
Of such untold ecstasy?

Wouldst thou know the secret spring
Of this gladsome revelling?
Find it in a Father's heart,
From a son no more to part;
Find it in the sweet surprise
Echoing welcome through the skies.

Lonely wanderer no more,
Exiled on a distant shore;
“Lost” and “dead” but yesterday;
“Found,” “alive,” at home to-day;—
Is't not meet that there should be
Sound of gladdest minstrelsy?

Holy Father! long above
Didst Thou wait to show Thy love;
Justice, holiness, and power,
All of these have had their hour;
But Thy love, though sometimes seen,
Manifested had not been.

Now the Father's heart of grace,
Seen at length in JESU'S face;
Father's arms are opened wide,—
Prodigals are reconciled;
And *of right* there now may be,
Feast, and robe, and revelry!

Heaven's vaults and arches ring
With the praise the angels bring;
Countless myriads adore,
Of His grace the wondrous store;
But the Father's heart must prove
All the joy of conqu'ring love.

Give us hearts, Thou Blessed One,
 To Thy love and grace to own,
 That in us for Thee may be
 Springs of truest sympathy ;
 We Thy holy joy would share,
 We would have our portion there.

Every wanderer homeward bound,
 Every "piece of money" found,
 Every "sheep" within the fold,
 Is to Thee a joy untold ;
 We would "friends and neighbours" be,
 When Thou say'st, "Rejoice with Me."



GOD'S EARTHLY DWELLING-PLACE.

Exodus xxv. 1-22.

The Lord gives instructions to Moses that the children of Israel should make Him a sanctuary *that He might dwell among them*. (See verse 8.)

There is a great sense in such a word, I believe. The Lord had already spoken from the fiery hill, down to which He had come in fire and earthquake. But He had not *rested* there. He had found no *dwelling-place* there; He could not. The law gave Him no occasion, no opportunity, to display Himself, or to do His proper business. He "found fault" with it, therefore (Heb. viii. 8), though it was perfect in its way—"holy, just, and good." (Rom. vii. 12.) How rapidly, in like manner, the Lord Jesus, in spirit, passes Mount Sinai in John viii., and reaches the sanctuary of life and peace!

The opening of this chapter (Ex. xxv.) shows that He made a rapid journey beyond it. And He desires a dwelling-place, a sanctuary, where mercy was to be seen

rejoicing against judgment, and where a believing soul could meet Him, This is full of comfort. Love, the divine nature, so to speak, rapidly passed Mount Sinai, and rested only in the place where a sinner could be *relieved* instead of being *destroyed*.

The sinner himself, once convicted, makes the same journey. Sinai does not suit him either. Conviction or conscience (through the spirit of faith) gives him wings to fly beyond it, to rest not till he reach the very spot where the Lord had gone before. The journey of the Lord was only somewhat the more speedy and immediate. It is taken *at once*, taken under necessity of nature, as I have said. The sinner *lingers round the fiery hill*, and leaves it only on the discovery that it is the place of death to him. So, at the creation, God gives witness *at once* that He could not rest in it, for even the garden of Eden tells of His counsel and purpose touching redemption.

All this has meaning for our comfort as sinners. If we reach the gospel by faith, we know that God is there before us. It is *His* gospel (Rom. i. 1.). And as Israel here had to make a sanctuary, or a dwelling-place for God, so it is saved sinners who now make a dwelling-place for Him. "He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and *God in him.*" Here is the sanctuary which the Israelite of this day, the poor believing soul, builds for God. Faith rests in God and then God rests in the soul that, previously having "made Him a liar," has now "set to its seal that He is true." (I John v. 10; John iii. 33.) For we can repose in one that re-

poses in us, but in none else. A person may serve us, a person may admire and flatter us, and seek to imitate us, but all that will not do for the heart. He must *trust* in us, or we cannot commit ourselves to him. So with God. Nothing builds a dwelling-place for Him but the faith that rests in His love, the faith which enjoys His acceptance and adoption of us in Christ Jesus. What an argument with our hearts it should be, that our happy confidence in Him as pardoned sinners is really the only way now to build Him a house!

But again. It is from this sanctuary God issues His commandments, from the place of enthroned mercy—mercy sustained and made effectual and glorious by the Person and work of Christ. “And thou shalt put the mercy-seat above upon the ark, and in the ark thou shalt put the testimony that I will give thee; and there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee, from above the mercy-seat, from between the Cherubim which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel?”

This is also very full of blessing. For when issuing commands to His people the Lord is still upon the throne of grace. Paul, in New Testament form, gives this thought: “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice. “The earlier part of the Epistle to the Romans had been, as it were, constructing the mercy-seat, or raising the throne of grace in the sight of

the congregation of the Lord—unfolding the gospel, “the law of liberty,” the mystery of mercy rejoicing against judgment, or of grace abounding over sin; and now, entering on the details of duties, the voice still breaks forth from the mercy-seat. (Rom. xii.)

Deeply precious is all this. Did the Lord return to Sinai, when delivering *commands*? No; He speaks from the sanctuary of peace. Does commandment or precept come to our hearts invested with the fire and smoke of Sinai? Does it come bringing with it a spirit of fear and thoughts of judgment? Do we listen to it as though life or death hung on the answer we gave it? This must not be. We are besought “by the mercies of God” to do so and so, in obedience, for His Name’s sake.

Such is the blessedness of this Scripture (Ex. xxv. 1-22), I judge. It tells us how the Lord passed the fiery hill where the law delivered its words of righteousness; how He passed also the thick darkness, where the statutes of the realm were published. See chapters xx.—xxiv. In neither place could He rest. He found no dwelling-place there. But where does He? Either in the cloud which was on high above the hill and beyond the darkness, or in the sanctuary which faith—the faith of sinners—built for Him; that is, either in His own native glory (so to say), or in the bosom of a poor convicted and humbled, yet trustful, confiding sinner. And where He dwells at peace with us, there He delivers His will and commands to us.

Who can tell it? *Heaven* has prepared HIM a place, and so has *faith*! Faith does for HIM the same work as His own all-perfect power and skill! "He is my GOD, and I will prepare HIM an habitation!"



PAUL AS A PATTERN.

Acts xxvi.; I Tim. i.

The apostle Paul is the pattern of all who are called and converted now, though they may not *come up* to the pattern. All the feebleness of Christian life is traceable to want of perfectness of foundation—it is not according to the pattern. A great many saints who are wishing to get on and do not, would find out why if they would compare their foundation with the pattern. They are satisfied with an acquisition that meets their own necessities. That is a poor thing. I want to reach that which it is the mind and purpose of the living God to give me. Paul and Paul's gospel are the pattern of that. You become partakers of the grace that would make you up to the pattern, or you are not a Christian at all. That grace, if you did not hinder it, would work you up to it.

Turn to Acts and you will see what Paul was appointed to do—to be a minister and witness of those things which he had seen. On his way to Damascus a light shines suddenly round him, and JESUS was revealed to him in the glory. This is what he had seen—*JESUS in the glory*. Simple it is, but its reception involved the most wondrous

consequences. We all admit that man is naturally at a distance from God, not on terms of intimacy, and that he ought to be. Nothing is so condemnatory to man, the first creature of God on earth. A conscience awakened wants that distance removed, and the first thought is that of Cain—"I must repair it." Of course the offender is the one who ought to do so, but *man* cannot. It must be done by one not under the penalty which is on *him*. God can do it through the intervention of Christ; but the intervention, even of Christ, must be from God's side, not man's. Do you understand the nature and object of God? Christ came out to declare it. Satan has been trying to darken the knowledge of God from the beginning. Until you know what God is in His own essential nature you are not on the right foundation. Having to do with God in His own nature is the only solid, unshifting foundation for a soul. "The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, HE [*ekeinos*, 'such a one as He'] hath declared Him"—disclosed an unknown subject, the heart of God. God in His own nature is essentially love. Who knew it? No one but His own Son, and He came to do His will, and He knew His heart towards poor, lost sinners in the world; and what was His will? That His heart should be set free to take His prodigals to His arms, to express itself in its own mighty love. HE was found in fashion as a Man, and as the Exponent of the heart of God He carried out His love, which was a love *for ever*. Like the good Samaritan, he

to whom he became neighbour needed no other neighbour after—he took the *whole* charge of him. Now God is free *in the strength of righteousness* to open His heart!

God gives me the gift of eternal life. Not merely does He bring me to heaven, but that gift is the expression of the love of God. The glory is opened, and the One who has accomplished the purpose of God in redemption is seen in it. God's satisfaction for sin altogether is thus revealed to Paul, and the glory shone out on Paul, and not a word is said of the sort of man he had been. Had he been under the law, that glory would have destroyed him; but in another place (2 Cor. iii. 18.) he says that the more he looked into it the more like it he grew. Remember, Paul is the pattern, and we have to look at JESUS as Paul saw Him. Every one of you who knows Him at all, knows Him in the glory, for it is there He is. There is not a particle of light that has reached the soul that is not the light of the glory of God. We *ought* to have the *sense* of it; but whether we know it or not does not change the wondrous fact. What *is* the gospel? Why, that you have a Saviour in the glory. Where will you get rest to your soul? Go to the glory. Where get full satisfaction for your soul? Go to the glory, for you have a Saviour there, and only there. If Christ had done only all that was required of me, it would have been but human righteousness. But He did the *Father's whole* will and finished *His* work. (See John iv.)

It was God's work that Paul should be

saved. We have such a low idea of what the gospel is. We think it is merely that Christ has come to save from judgment. That is not it; but God desired to have such as I am in the very nearest circle of glory to Himself, and none but Christ could bring it about, and He was ready to do it. After conversion Paul was a pattern still. (Phil. iii.) He wanted to get back to the sphere of what he had seen—"I press toward the mark for the prize," etc. Where my history began, there it ends. The Lord grant that your hearts may be exercised to know what God is in Himself. His heart has been satisfied to the full by His own Son. It is easy for me to travel into all the regions of the glory of God *if I have entered it from the right side—the love of God. All Christian truth is compromised if you have not the full foundation.* The Lord rests in the magnitude of His love.



GOD'S WAYS AND TESTIMONY

Jeremiah ii.

There are two distinct points in the ways and testimony of God as regards us; first, faith is the condition of soul in us which, as it is in exercise or otherwise, may either hinder or favour the enjoyment, which habitually the testimony of the word is to give us. Then in presenting the objects of faith to our souls—the Father's love, the Son's work—the word of God applies itself

to the *conscience* and heart ; for where the conscience is not in exercise the heart will not be, and all will be hollow. When the affections are dull then self comes in, and I attach these holy affections to myself ; for when I am thinking about *my* affections I am thinking about *myself* ; but when the conscience is in exercise we are thinking of the object presented, otherwise the heart is turned in upon self, the Lord is forgotten, and weakness ensues. Consequently we sink into a feeble state ; but then the word of God presenting the object of faith applies itself to the conscience, bringing that into exercise, and thus the heart is brought back to God.

There can be no true love to Christ while there is the sense of wrong done ; for I cannot love a person I have wronged. What is needed then is the consciousness of the wrong done. "I have sinned, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." When the conscience is aroused, and the heart is brought into play, we rest in the presence of God. The Spirit of God may humble us on account of what *we have done*, but when conscience is in play it brings out our *whole condition* before God. It is not law coming in again, but God presenting *Himself* ; thus there will be right affections, and the conscience will be in exercise. Self-

confidence and self-exaltation in every form are always the effects of an unexercised conscience. Only put a man in the Lord's presence, and that will keep him lowly, and in a spiritual state of discernment; but there is nothing out of which we so easily get as the consciousness of the presence of God. So also in our prayers. You may often be sensible that you go on praying after you have lost the consciousness that you are speaking to God, still the soul goes on expressing itself; even when led by the Spirit the consequence will be that the manner will be all wrong, though the words may be right. Well, though all this be true, whenever the Lord recalls a soul He recalls it to His own presence. He will act on the conscience; He will speak plainly to us. Why? Because He is conscious of the relationship which ought to have produced the conduct befitting the relationship which we have forgotten. "Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels are troubled for him." When the Lord recalls a soul to Himself He may reproach it with having *orgotten* the relationship in which it stood to God and God to it; but He cannot reproach it as *not having known* that relationship. The power of every rebuke is found-

ed on the relationship, and God remembering the relationship acts on the ground of it with all the affections belonging thereto. Thus every rebuke comes to us as the expression of the most wonderful tenderness ; and the more deeply we learn that there is no failure in God's affection, the more deeply we lament our short-coming and failure in that relationship which never fails.

God said to Jeremiah, "Go, say in the ears of Jerusalem ;" but, alas ! Israel would not hear. Now this was most disastrous ; but God remembers His relationship to them, and says, in Hosea ii. 16, "In that day thou shalt call me Ishi ;" that is, my husband, "and shalt no more call me Baali ;" that is, my lord. Evil as their state was, He recalls with all its force and energy the remembrance of their relationship—"Go, cry in the ears of Jerusalem." It is not, "He that hath ears to hear," but God goes and speaks in their ears. Oh that He may speak in our ears ! When God spake comfortably to Jerusalem then He spake *to the heart*, and that was after chastening ; but here He is at another work, speaking in the ears of Jerusalem that they might hear what God had to say to them. He could say—the true Servant—"The Lord God hath opened mine ear" to hear what God had to say to Him, and He was not rebellious,

neither turned away back ; but Israel “ had forsaken Him days without number ; ” they had done a terrible thing, such as no other nation had done. “ Hath a nation changed its gods, which are yet no gods ? but My people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit.” And again, “ Be astonished, O ye heavens at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate, saith the Lord. For My people have committed two evils ; they have forsaken Me, the Fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.” And now that God is sending a message after them, does He say, “ Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, I remember *thy sins* ? ” No, but “ I remember thee, the kindness [‘ filial affections ’] of thy youth, the love of thy espousals, when thou wentest after Me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown.” He is recalling what Israel was to God Himself—I remember the outgoings of thy heart toward Me ; “ I remember the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals.”

Now what a thing it was for God to say to Israel, “ I have not forgotten what you were to me in the days of thy youth, when the heart first turned to Me.” In all this we have the same principle as “ Ye are they which have continued with me in my temp-

tations," when they were quarrelling which should be the greatest. And so Israel was always murmuring, thinking their leeks and cucumbers better than God; but God remembers the *principles* on which Israel acted—"When thou wentest after *Me* in the wilderness." They got much of this world's goods in Canaan by following God; they got cities that they had not built, wells that they had not digged, palm-trees that they had not planted, and the like. All these things were the consequences of following God; but He does not mention these. But "thou wentest after Me in the wilderness, which was a land of deserts and pits, a land of drought and the shadow of death, a land that no man passed through, and where no man dwelt;" "thou wentest after *Me* in the wilderness" where there was nothing to set your affections on but Myself; I *Myself* was the whole and sole Object of your affections;" and this it was that God remembered. He overlooks all failure, and the condition which God notices is that He Himself was everything to them; and this is what characterizes a heart when first converted to God—the Lord is everything to it. What is the world to that heart? Dross and dung. Everything, cares and pleasures are alike forgotten, everything counted as nothing, except what is found in God Him-

self. The praises of Israel were freely given—"I will prepare Him an habitation ;" "My father's God, I will exalt Him," because they had found Him who was everything to them, and the world and all it had to give a mere nothing.

Now let us look at the other side of the picture, and see the desperately bad state which the heart of Israel had got into, remembering they are but types of us. They were dissatisfied, and cried, "Would to God we had died in Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and ate bread to the full." And again, "Wherefore have you made us to come up out of Egypt, to bring us into this evil place? It is no place of seed, or of figs, or of vines, or of pomegranates; neither is there any water to drink." In the wilderness there is nothing to see, nothing to look at; and that is what Israel wanted. God says, "I brought you into a plentiful country to eat the fruit thereof, and the goodness thereof; but when ye entered ye defiled my land, and made my heritage an abomination." They felt their own importance, and forgot the Lord; they had the blessing, and did not want the Lord of the blessing.

And is this not true of the Church of God? We bring in self, which is but a broken cistern, and depart from HIM who is the living fountain and power of blessing,

forgetting that "a Syrian ready to perish was my Father." Consequently there is moral weakness, and Satan gets power. A believer cannot get back into the world. A mere professor may, and enjoy it; but a real Christian cannot. An Israelite could not get back through the Red Sea again. You cannot think of yourself and the Lord together with satisfaction to your own souls. The Lord's presence in the soul will bring *self* into utter ruin and nothingness. We have only to let the Lord have His place in our souls, and that will put us into our place. If I am walking through the world, shall I find it a wilderness? To be sure I shall; but then I shall not be thinking about the wilderness if the Lord is my joy and my strength. Are your hearts saying, This is a land we cannot see? If so, what does that prove? Why, that you are looking for something to see; and this is the thought you will find in your hearts, "*It is a land not sown,*" although you may be ashamed to own it. (See 2 Cor. iv. 18; v. 7.) But God remembered Israel when they thought it worth while to follow God for His own sake. We feel bound to say it is a happy thing to be a Christian; but when we are alone do not our hearts say, "It is a land not sown"? If it be so with you, do not rest until the Lord Himself alone satisfies

your soul ; for you should delight yourself to Him. Lot *saw* a well-watered plain and a city, and then dwelt in it on the earth, and consequently was in the midst of judgment ; while Abraham sought a city *out of sight*, and he enjoyed the blessing and comfort of God being with him, go where he might. When the soul is down like a ship when the tide is low, it is in danger of shoals and sandbanks ; but when the tide is up there are no sandbanks, because the ship is lifted up above them all. Thus when the soul is happy in Christ it will go on peacefully, independently of all the trials we may be called to meet with in our fellow-saints. We are called to walk together through the world, and a mere natural fitness will not do for that. No. We can only go on so far as Christ fills the soul ; and thus going on in the tide of divine goodness, forgetting everything else, we can walk together happily, being occupied with Christ, and not with each other.

But notwithstanding what Israel was, still God does not forget Israel. And why? Because He remembers her affection in the day of her espousals, “when thou wentest after Me in the wilderness.” The soul, when occupied with *God alone*, is holiness *to the Lord*. God says to Israel, “If thou wilt return, return unto *Me*.” It is of no use to

attempt to set the soul right except it be set right with God. Israel was "holiness to the Lord." Now, holiness is not innocence. God is not what we call innocent, but holy. He perfectly separates between evil and good. So Christ Himself when on earth was separated unto God; and when about to depart out of it He says (John xvii.), "For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified through the truth;" for the meaning of the word "sanctify" in this place is separation to God. So it is with the Church of God. She is separated from the world unto God, taken out of creation for Himself, the first-fruits of His increase. There will be a harvest of blessing when Israel and the nations are brought into blessing, but the Church is the first-fruits of God's increase. God remembers this, though the Church may have forgotten it; but if we know what it is to get back into the *affections* of God, we must enjoy the love that fails not; for God says, "I remember." The soul then apprehends what the Church of God is in the affection of God, and not what it is down here. Christ was the corn broken and bruised, and afterwards the wave-sheaf before God. So the Church is to be in a low and oppressed state, and afterward to be exalted to where Christ is. God will have the

whole harvest, but the first-fruits of His increase, is that which occupies His affections.

“What iniquity have your fathers found in me?” Have I failed towards you in goodness? What is the matter now? Is the Lord changed? Is He worth less now than when thou wentest after Him in the wilderness? No; but we have got far from Him, and have walked after vanity, and have become vain. We have enjoyed His blessing, and have got fat and kicked, and consequently have fallen down into the weakness and wretchedness of our own hearts. When did the Lord bring up His people? When the very circumstances through which, and into which, He brought them was the proof that *the Lord* was bringing them there; for He brought them into a land of deserts and pits, where they had no need to lean on “a broken reed, whereon if a man lean it will go into his hand and pierce it” (Is. xxxvi. 6), because they leaned on God Himself. “Neither did thy raiment wax old upon thee, nor thy foot swell, these forty years.” And why? Because “the Lord alone did lead them, and there was no strange god with Him.” So was it with Gideon. (Judges vi.) He remembered what God had been to Israel in the day of their espousals, saying, “Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt?” And the Lord looked upon him,

and said, "Go in this thy might." Thus we see that Gideon's remembrance of what God was to Israel in the day of their espousals was the secret of his strength. In Gideon was a soul near enough to God to say, "Where is the Lord?" and then what a burden is taken off the heart. Only let us place ourselves before the Lord, and see if He does not come in remembering the day of espousals.

If I am thinking of the cucumbers of Egypt, the wilderness will not suit me; but if I am thinking of the Lord, I shall have no thought at all whether I am in the wilderness or not. The affections of my soul will be going on with God's affection for me; for He ever remembers "the love of thine espousals" when He first revealed Himself to our souls. It is true we may see chastening, but God never forgets the work of grace in our souls. He never forgets "the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals when thou wentest after Him in the wilderness, in a land not sown." And now thou art "holiness to the Lord;" and though God will have His joy in the harvest of the earth, yet thou art the first-fruits of His increase.

“HE IS WORTHY.”

HE is worthy! Take it with thee,
 Just this thought to ponder o'er,
 Till His loveliness and beauty
 Fill thy soul yet more and more;
 Till thy heart o'erflow with longing,
 Till thy lips be filled with praise,
 Till **HIMSELF** become the Object
 Of thy thoughts and words and ways.

HE is worthy! Take it with thee
 To the throne of grace on high;
 What thou in His Name requirest
 God will never thee deny.
 Art thou asking for the interests
 Of His kingdom here on earth?
 Ask more largely, **HE** is worthy—
 Ask according to His worth.

Shine this word upon thy labour,
 Lighting up thy pathway dim:
 Does the daily task seem trivial?
 Think, “I’m doing it for **HIM** :”
 Do it heartily and gladly,
HE is worthy of thy best;
 Those who will in much be serving
 Must be faithful in the least.

HE is worthy! Let it brace thee
 For the tempest or the fight;
 Difficulties, dangers, conflicts,
 Borne for **HIS** sake, seem but light.
HE is worthy! Let it teach thee
 How for **HIM** to speak a word,
 Though the world may scorn and slight thee,
 Standing for thine absent Lord.

HE is worthy! **HE** who loved thee
 Ere this world began to be;
HE who suffered to redeem thee—
 Yea, who gave **HIMSELF** for thee.
 Then of **HIM**, the Lamb, the slain One,
 Be e’en here on earth thy song.
 Till thou “face to face,” behold **HIM**,
 Praise **HIM** with the ransomed throng.

O WHAT A GOD IS OURS!

“HE healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds. HE telleth the number of the stars; HE calleth them all by their names.” Ps. cxlvii. 3. 4.

What a vivid but beauteous contrast is brought before us in the above! The very ONE who “telleth the number of the stars; and Who calleth them all by their names,” is the very ONE Who “healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds.”

That is the One, dear fellow believer, of whom our thoughts once were, “I knew thee that thou art a hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: and I was afraid?” How different are our thoughts of Him now that He has,

“Won our hearts, once worse than nought,” and made good to us those words, “Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that for your sakes He, being rich, became poor, in order that ye by the poverty of such a One as He might be enriched.” As an illustration of what the above Psalm brings before us let us turn to a precious and touching scene in Luke’s account of our blessed Lord (chap vii. 11-15). “It came to pass the day after, that He [JESUS] went into a city called Nain; and many of His disciples went with Him and much people. Now

when He came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow; and much people of the city was with her. And when the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her and said to her, 'Weep not.' And He came and touched the bier: and they that bare him stood still. And He said, 'Young man, I say unto thee arise.' And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And He delivered him to his mother." How exquisitely human, and withal how unmistakeably divine!

Touchingly indeed, yet in how few words, is the deep loneliness of this woman's condition presented to us by the Spirit. The dead man was "the only son of his mother, and she was a widow." The heart of JESUS was arrested, and then He arrested the bier of the dead young man. His compassions always went before His mercies. It is often said that the heart moves the hand. Do we not prize a blessing that comes to us in that way? Salvation came gushing forth from the heart of Christ. To say that the Cross of Christ is the source of our blessedness, would be slandering the heart of God. God *loved* the world, and sent His Son; Christ's heart went before His hand. A blessing from Christ is given, as Jeremiah (xxxii. 41) says, with His whole heart and His whole soul.

“He came and touched the bier.” He was undefilable, or He must have gone to the priest to cleanse Himself after touching it. Did Christ ever want the washings of the Sanctuary? He might have restored the young man without touching him, but He had God’s relationship to iniquity. He not only stood apart from the actuality of sin, but from the possibility of it.

“And He delivered him to his mother.” Let me be bold and say, the Lord does not save you that you may serve Him. To suggest the thought would be to qualify the beauty of grace. He did not say, “I give you life that you may spend it for Me.” Let His *love* constrain you to spend and be spent for Him, but he never stands before your heart and says, “Now I will forgive you if you will serve Me.” Surely He had purchased him, yet He gave him back to his mother! Yet you and I go back to the world, and seek to make ourselves happy and important in it! Ah! throw the cords of love round your heart, and keep it fast by JESUS! Amen.



Wherever we follow Thee, Lord,
 Admiring, adoring, we see
 That love which was stronger than death,
 Flow out without limit, and free.

THE SIN OF ZIPPORAH.

“A bloody husband art thou to me . . . because of the circumoision.”—Exodus iv., 25-26.

When the man by whose hand God would deliver Israel out of the land of Egypt, had received his authority and commission for that great work, and was on his way from the land of Midian, where he had been a stranger, we are told, he took with him his wife, and his sons. An incidental occurrence during the journey gives us an insight into the condition of the family, its responsibility before God, and the light in which that painful rite, which God had imposed as the outward mark of His relationship with the seed of Abraham, was viewed by its different members.

Circumcision had not been performed upon Gershon, their first-born, though years had elapsed since the reception of Moses into this Gentile family, and the birth of the child who is mentioned in a previous chapter (Ex. ii.). Zipporah, it seems, had long been averse to it;—it was a painful, if not a dangerous operation, and distressing to her feelings as a mother. Why should her child be made to suffer in this way? Why should her husband require that which was so severe and bloody? Nothing of the kind was thought necessary in her own family, it

was quite contrary to the univereal practice around her, and had better at least be deferred to the time when Moses should again rejoin his own nation. Thus would human nature reason. Moses apparently had yielded, and God was forgotten. and the mother pacified at the expense of obedience to Him.

Such was her foolish tenderness towards her child, which well nigh became, as is here related to us, the destruction of Moses, her husband. "And it came to pass, by the way in the inn, that the Lord met him, and sought to kill him." The Lord did not hold him guiltless for his negligence of His word, and foolish compliance with the wishes of his wife. And Zipporah, having quitted her own country, to accompany him, was on the point of being left desolate by the loss of her protector, for the anger of the Lord was kindled against him. "Then Zipporah took a sharp stone and cut off the fore-skin of her son, and cast it at his feet, and said, surely a bloody husband art thou to me." The rite she so much disliked, and in which she saw so much cruelty, she has herself to perform, at a time and under circumstances, which must greatly have added to the distress she felt, and increased the suffering of her son. And with a heart still inexperienced in, and rebellious against, the dealings

and requirements of the Lord towards those whom He has set apart as His own, she vents her indignation against her husband in language and in an action such as this. The circumcision was compelled at last, she was forced to it by the hand of God, but *Moses* was “a bloody husband”!!

Thus he escapes we are told. “So He let him [*Moses*] go: then she said, ‘A bloody husband thou art, because of the circumcision.’” Her heart is untouched, though the trial is over; and she cannot restrain her anger from breaking forth against the most apparent author of this grievance. As yet there is no feeling of what was due to the Lord, who had imposed this as a sign of separation to Himself. And though she is forced by the threatening attitude which the Lord had assumed, to perform the rite, and that even *with her own hand*, she has not learnt the meaning of it, nor ceased to dislike it. In the end she has to return to her own country, sent back by *Moses*. (Ex. xviii. 2). Her selfwill and ignorance of the ways of the Lord made her ill-suited to be his companion, while accomplishing, under the hand of God, the rescue of His people out of the land of Egypt.

Such was her sin and folly; and such has been our own. God has been dealing with us that He may separate us to Himself. He

has found fleshly evils allowed among us—subtle and refined errors of the human mind, leading us in the end to heresy, sectarianism, and clericalism—a turning back to establish and to lean upon what He had shown to us as evil, and called us out from—desiring somewhat of that position and respectability which natural men can look upon and value. As Israel with the nations of old, we have too much learned the ways of those around us. If our unbelief has not gone so far as theirs when they desired a king, there has been much of a similar character in our want of practical confidence in the presence, power, and guidance of the Spirit of God, and the distribution of His gifts. We have failed individually and collectively in condemning the world as that which crucified the Lord of Glory,—we have not been as those who are crucified to it, and know nothing but Christ risen, and in heaven; and who, united to Him, have done with all that is properly earthly. Thus Satan has found principles to act on among us, the means to introduce leaven which might corrupt in different ways. As in the instance before us, the hand of God has been raised against this fleshly evil, this unheavenly condition, so unsuitable for Himself, into which we have relapsed. And have *we* been ready to act in purging it

out when discovered? Have we not rather, in foolish tenderness, shrunk back, thinking more of the pain we should inflict than the honour of our God, or of His jealousy, which required this prompt and decisive action? Surely God is to be thought of first, and what He looks for, however dear, and justly so, the object may be on whom the suffering has to be inflicted. When God came out to meet Moses there was no alternative then. It was to ask why *He* had been slighted, why *His* word had been neglected, *His* wishes and feelings disregarded? Is not God making this demand of us now, if we are inclined to tolerate what He has openly showed His judgment of, and what we found so corrupting in its nature, will not that provoke Him? Shall we stir Him to jealousy; are we stronger than He? Are we to tamper with the evil when God has made manifest its true character, and when His hand has been stretched out against us all on account of it? Surely it must be clean cut off and rejected, whatever suffering we cause ourselves in the act. Those most dear and favoured must be sacrificed, and sacrificed to the Lord at such a time. Had the circumcision been performed at an earlier period, and under other circumstances it might not have been felt so severely, for this had to be done on a

journey by the wayside. So we may have felt the manner of excision of evil to be rough and severe, and by such materials as were at hand or presented themselves on the emergency ; but what of that, if we have been *saved* by it and our common blessing recovered? Shall we, with Zipporah, resent what we now own to have been necessary, and what others saw the honour of God required, when we were unwilling to admit it, yea, opposed it, shall we utter our reproaches against them? Is this the season for such words from our lips? It is written, "Others save with fear, plucking them out of the fire, hating even the garment spotted by the flesh,"—we have been thus rescued from the fire, and instead of looking up and owning God in our deliverance, we are occupied in seeing whether the plucking out was gentle enough!! Is this God's estimate of the matter? Have we understood His ways, and appreciated His goodness, that we can indulge in such trivial complaints, but not the less dishonouring to Him for their unsuitableness.

If the usage has been rough in putting away evil, we may attribute much of that to ourselves, and humble ourselves in that we have allowed it to go on so long unchecked. We have to thank God that there are some to consider what is due to Him,

when we ourselves have forgotten it, and to act upon that. even though it be distressing to those dear to us, and to ourselves at the same time. There are times when we may have to lay aside the ties which otherwise most rightly bind us (Exodus xxxii. 25-29). And faithfulness to God contains often more true love than the outcry sometimes so loudly raised concerning charity. It is worthy of notice that some of those who cry loudest, utterly fail in charity towards their brethren, both in evil insinuations and an̄ direct censures. Nor should we be surprised if flesh repeats, "I know thy pride and the naughtiness of thy heart," or with loud indignation repeats, "A *bloody* husband art thou to me." After all, it only shows itself in its true colours, and will be judged by the Spirit of God dwelling in the saints. No doubt the child that suffers by the infliction will cry out, and the mother's heart is tender, and may be pained by it; but so it is with all parental discipline, and it may be, as it often is, real kindness to disregard that.

Let us not imitate the conduct of Zipporah, and upbraid those who have been bold of God against evil, when others kept aloof through want of faith and faithfulness, and left them to fight the battles of the Lord alone. Let us not say to them, "A

bloody husband art thou to me . . . because of the circumcision ;” they have been acting for God toward us in what they have done, and it ill becomes us to adopt this evil tone and bearing.



THUS SAITH THE LORD :

CURSED BE THE
MAN

That trusteth in man,
and maketh flesh his
arm, and whose heart
departeth from the
LORD.

For he shall be like
the heath in the desert,
and shall not see when
good cometh ; but shall
inhabit the parched
places in the wilderness,
in a salt land, and not
inhabited.

BLESSED IS THE
MAN

That trusteth in the LORD,
and whose hope the LORD
is.

For he shall be as a
tree planted by the wat-
ers, and that spreadeth
out her roots by the river
and shall not see when
heat cometh, but her leaf
shall be green ; and shall
not be careful in the year
of drought, neither shall
cease from yielding fruit.

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked ; who can know it ? I the LORD search the heart, - I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings. [Jeremiah xvii. 5-10].



FRAGMENT—“There is no blindness like that which results from resisting the light and in presence of the light not renouncing one’s own will.”

EVIL ONLY JUDGED FULLY IN THE LIGHT.

“With Thee is the fountain of life : in Thy light shall we see light.”

“Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness.”

“Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart.”

“Then spake JESUS, . . . ‘I am the light of the world : he that followeth ME shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.’ ”

(Pss. xxxvi. 9 ; cxii. 4 ; xcvi. 11 : John viii. 12.)

The Lord's purpose in trials is often to get at the root of evil. When the fruit from that evil root is seen, the saint himself is shocked and mourns over it very sincerely. But then fresh fruit springs and will spring from it as long as the root remains untouched ; but coming to the light, it is discovered and judged. A Christian may be doing a deal out of the presence of God. Look at Job, and hear all his words ; but at last the pressure brings him into the very presence of God (chap. xlii. 5, 6). Then his words of repining and complaint are stopped : “I have heard of Thee,” says he, “by the hearing of the ear ; but now *mine eye seeth THEE* : wherefore I abhor myself, etc.” Nearness to God never lessens responsibility. When in the light, every speck will be seen ; to the saint when caught up to meet the Lord ; to the world when judged before the throne.

Light must make manifest (Ephes. v. 13.). It could not hinder our joy because of our standing in such fulness of grace, and the grace too that is to be brought to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ (I Pet. i. 13). Peter never judged the self-confidence of his heart, that which had led to his fall, till the searching question of the Lord which brought out his reply, "Thou knowest all things." Sadly as he had failed, yet at the bottom of his heart, the Lord's searching eye could see that he loved the Lord. Notwithstanding his going out and weeping bitterly or the love for his Master manifested by his visit to the sepulchre, and his casting his coat about him, and going through the sea to Him, Peter was not restored till the searching of the Lord brought from him, at the third enquiry, "Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee."

But is there not a time when the counsels of every heart will be made manifest? (Rom. ii. 16: I Cor. iv. 5.) The counsels of each will have praise of God; for every saint's heart, however he may fail, is to glorify the Lord. We may make many mistakes, and be drawn aside; but after all the counsel of his heart, his inmost desire, is to glorify God.

Peter could no longer appeal to his purpose (his acts of course not), but simply cast

himself on the Lord's all-searching power :
 "Thou knowest all things."

Then, whereas Peter had formerly in the energy of nature professed to be ready to suffer even to death, the Lord, now that He had searched him, shows that he should serve in the breaking down of his own will, even unto the very death he, from true love to his Master, desired to suffer. Then, and not until then, JESUS says; after this full revelation of what is involved, "Follow Me." Had there been any very deep work wrought in Peter's heart by the Lord's look that melted him to tears, he would not have been the first to say, "I go a fishing."



EXTRACT—We count on Him, not to have this world our rest—God forbid!—but sure, unfailing love, and ever watching over us. Not a sparrow falls to the ground without our Father. He withdraws not His eyes from the righteous. He must wean us if He will use us, and make us know ourselves too. Our part is to be very near Him, that a lowly heart is judged in everything by the light, as He is in it, for there we are placed—walk in peace, and serve directly from Himself, come out from Him to others. *This is true service; indeed, if it be not thus, service is a danger to ourselves.*

“POOR AND AFFLICTED;” LORD, WE’RE
THINE.

“I will leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people,
and they shall trust in the Name of the Lord.—Zeph. iii. 12.

“ Poor and afflicted,”—Lord we’re Thine,
Nor would we, Lord, in this world shine;
For, though the world may think it strange,
We would not, Lord, with it exchange.

“ Poor and afflicted,” we may be,
But, JESUS, we belong to Thee;
Thou hast redeemed us by Thy blood,
“ Made us kings and priests to God.”

“ Poor and afflicted ”!—Is that our lot?
Let thanks flow forth and murmur not.
Our path, Lord Jesus, do Thou choose:
To follow Thee, let’s ne’er refuse.

“ Poor and afflicted ? ”—let us sing:
Who grace has brought, will glory bring—
Through sufferings, perfect—he doth know
To feel for us in every woe.

“ Poor and afflicted ”!—but ere long
W’ell join the bright celestial throng—
Our suff’rings then will reach a close—
“ E’er with the Lord,”—O blest repose!



“ Content with beholding His face,
My all to His pleasure resign’d,
No changes of season or place
Could make any change in my mind.
When blest with a sense of His love,
A palace a toy would appear;
And prisons would palaces prove,
If JESUS would dwell with me there.