

THINGS NEW AND OLD VOLUME 7

by C.H. Mackintosh

A collection of articles and writings by C.H. Mackintosh from Things New and Old Volume 7, covering various biblical topics and Christian teaching.

47 Chapters

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Things New and Old Volume 7

Alone With God

Alone with thee, my God! alone with thee!

Thus would'st thou have it still — thus let it be.

There is a secret chamber in each mind,

Which none can find

But He who made it — none beside can know

Its joy or woe.

Oft may I enter it, oppressed by care,

And find thee there;

So full of watchful love, thou know'st the why

Of ev'ry sigh.

Then all thy righteous dealing shall I see,

Alone with thee, my God! alone with thee!

The joys of earth are like a summer's day,

Fading away;

But in the twilight we may better trace

Thy wondrous grace.

The homes of earth are emptied oft by death

With chilling breath;

The loved departed guest may ope' no more

The well-known door.

Still in that chamber seal'd, thou'lt dwell with me,

And I with thee, my God! alone with thee!

The world's false voice would bid me enter not

That hallow'd spot;

And earthly thoughts would follow on the track,

To hold me back,

Or seek to break the sacred peace within,
With this world's din.
But, by thy grace, I'll cast them all aside,
Whate'er betide,
And never let that cell deserted be,
Where I may dwell alone, my God, with thee!
The war may rage! — keep thou the citadel,
And all is well.
And when I learn the fullness of thy love,
With thee above, —
When ev'ry heart oppress'd by hidden grief
Shall gain relief, —
When ev'ry weary soul shall find its rest
Amidst the blest, —
Then all my heart, from sin and sorrow free,
Shall be a temple meet, my God, for thee!

Be Still, My Soul!

“Be still, my soul! — the Lord is on thy side,
Bear patiently the cross of grief and pain,
Leave to thy God to order and provide,
In every change, He faithful will remain.
Be still, my soul! thy best, thy heavenly Friend
Through thorny ways leads to a joyful end.
Be still, my soul! — thy God doth undertake
To guide the future, as He has the past;
Thy hope, thy confidence, let nothing shake,
All now mysterious shall be bright at last.
Be still, my soul! — the waves and winds still know
His voice, who ruled them while He dwelt below.
Be still, my soul! — when dearest friends depart,
And all is darkened in the vale of tears,
Then shalt thou better know His love, His heart,
Who comes to soothe the sorrow and thy fears.
Be still, my soul! —thy Jesus can repay From
His own fullness all He takes away.
Be still, my soul! — the hour is hastening on
When we shall be forever with the Lord;
When disappointment, grief, and fear are gone,
Sorrow forgot, love’s purest joys restored.
Be still, my soul! when change and tears are past,
All safe and blessed we shall meet at last.
Be still, my soul! —begin the song of praise
On earth, believing, to thy Lord on high;

Acknowledge Him in all thy works and ways,
So shall He view thee with a well-pleased eye.
Be still, my soul! —the Sun of life divine
Through passing clouds shall but more brightly shine.”

The Breathings of Faith

(2 Cor. 4:17.)

Is it a long way off?

Oh! no, a few more years,

A few more bitter tears,

We shall be there.

Sometimes the way seems long,

Our comforters all go,

Woe follows after woe,

Care after care.

Oh! brethren dear, how weak,

How faint and weak we are,

Yet Jesus leads us far,

Through tangled ways,

Into the very heart

Of the dark wilderness,

Where dangers thickest press,

And Satan strays.

But Christ is strong and wise,

And we, His children, blind,

Must trust His thoughtful mind

And tender care.

So gentle is His love,

We may be sure that eight of Him

Would show us all is right,

And answered every prayer.

'Tis no uncertain way

We tread, for Jesus still
Leads with unerring skill,
Where'er we roam.
And from the desert wild,
Soon shall our path emerge,
And land us on the verge
Of our dear home.

Christian Love

“A new commandment write I unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.” John 13:34.

What a lofty standard of love is set before us in the above words! We are to love one another as Christ loved us. Now how did Christ love us? Well, He loved us notwithstanding all our infirmities, all our failures, and all our sins. He did not love us because we had none of these things, but despite them all. His was a love that rose above every barrier, and proved itself superior to every hindrance. Many waters, even the dark waters of death, could not quench the love of Jesus. He loved us and gave Himself for us.

Now, this is to be our model. We are to love one another as Christ loved us. “Herein perceive we the love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.” “My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth.” “And this is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another as he gave us commandment.” “Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love.” “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.”

This is Christian love. It is the outflow of the divine nature in the believer. It may express itself in various ways. It may sometimes have to rebuke, reprove, and smite. Our great Exemplar had occasionally to do so in reference to those whom, notwithstanding, He loved with an everlasting and unchangeable love. It is a mistake to suppose that love is blind or cannot be faithful. Such love would not be worth having. Indeed it should be called fatuity, not love. True love sees my faults, and can reprove them. It can occupy itself with my faults in order to deliver me from them. It will take occasion, even from my very errors and infirmities, to display itself in its own elevated and holy activities. “Love suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, endureth all things. Love never faileth.” “And now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.” 1 Cor. 13:4-8, 13.

But there are two kinds of spurious love which we may just glance at, in contrast with the lovely moral picture presented in the above quotations. These are sectarian love, and clique love. We have to watch against these. We are in great danger of loving persons merely because they hold the same opinions as we do; or because their habits, tastes and predilections are agreeable to us. The former is love of sect; the latter, love of clique; neither is Christian love. We may traffic largely in both the one and the other, and not yield obedience to the “New Commandment” — not love others as Christ loved us. It is not Christian love to love our own opinions, or our own image. It is Christian love to love the image of Christ wherever we see it.

May we have grace to apply our hearts to the study, the cultivation, and the exhibition of genuine Christian love! May we drink more deeply into the spirit of Christ, and then we shall love people not because they agree with us or suit us, but because they are agreeable to Christ and reflect His blessed image. Oh! for a vast increase of Christian love!

I bow me, to thy will, O God!

And all thy ways adore;

And every day I live, I'd seek

To please thee more and more.

Thy will the end — the blessed rule

Of Jesu's toils and tears;

Thy will the passion of His heart,

Those three and thirty years.

And He hath breathed into my soul

A special love to thee,

A love to lose my will in thine,

And by that loss be free.

I love to kiss each print where Christ

Did set His pilgrim feet;

Nor can I fear that blessed path,

Whose traces are so sweet.

I have no cares, O blessed Lord!

For all my cares are thine!;

I live in triumph, too, for thou

Hast made thy triumphs mine.

And when it seems no chance nor change

From grief can set me free,

Hope finds its strength in helplessness,

And, patient, waits on thee.

Man's weakness, waiting upon God,

Its end can never miss;

For men on earth no work can do
More angel-like than this.
Lead on, lead on, triumphantly,
O blessed Lord! lead on;
Faith's pilgrim sons behind thee seek
The road that thou hast gone.
He always wins who sides with God,
To him no chance is lost;
God's will is sweetest to him when
It triumphs at his cost.
Ill that God blesses is our good,
And unblest good is ill;
And all is right that seems most wrong,
If it be His sweet will.

Divine Counsels and Ways

(Read Rom. 9-11.)

We listen either to doctrinal, moral, or dispensational teaching, as we read the Epistles. Doctrines instruct us; morals direct us; but dispensational teaching has this dignity with it, that it introduces us to the wisdom of God in the counsels which He has taken for the glory of His own great Name.

We have a wondrous piece of dispensational teaching in these chapters. The Apostle stands in the sight of the present judged condition of Israel. But in occupying that position, we shall see him, not so much bringing out any new truths, but rather commenting on old truths, such as had already appeared and were to be found in the Jewish scriptures; putting them in their due relation to each other, and meditating upon them. This is characteristic of this fine scripture.

We find, therefore, a very large number of Old Testament truths considered, and Old Testament scriptures cited. We have, for instance, election, divine righteousness, faith and its consequences, human responsibility and its failure, and the like — and then also, the remnant, the call of the Gentiles, Israel cast off for a season, and then restored, and the renovation of the world in the days of the kingdom. All these things are brought before us here and commented upon. But none of them are marked here as for the first time; they are found in the scriptures of the Jews, patriarchal, Mosaic, historic, and prophetic, and from those sources, are here drawn and commented on.

The Apostle opens this great matter by uttering his heart over the present sorrows of Israel. He declares his devoted love to them, (like Moses in such a case, Exod. 32) and their former holy dignity passes before the vision of his heart to deepen his sympathy. But then he at once lets us know, that all this present loss and degradation of Israel had only verified the word of God; because all were not “Israel” that were “of Israel;” as Israel’s scriptures had abundantly taught. The children of Abraham and the children of Isaac, in the book of Genesis, witnessed this. There were those who were “the seed,” but not “the children,” or the “called” seed. Election had, then, been announced and acted on at the very beginning. But having shown this from the old scriptures, the Apostle then comments upon it, telling us many weighty truths in connection with it. He tells us, for instance, that it involves no unrighteousness in God, but only reveals the sovereignty of His mercy, and that, but for that, but for election or the sovereignty of grace, not one would be saved, but the whole scene would be a Sodom and Gomorrah, a vast witness of judgment, from one end of it to the other. And, still further, he tells us, that acting thus on the principle of sovereignty or grace, God is free to take up Gentiles as well as Jews, as had already been told by Him through His servant Hosea.

So, as to “hardening,” a fact or truth already shown us in Old Testament times and scriptures, the Apostle comments on that, as well as on election. He teaches us that “hardening” is judicial. Pharaoh was so dealt with, when he had fitted himself for destruction as a vessel of wrath, but not till then. The hardening had not corrupted him; it was judgment on him when he had corrupted

himself.

These are Paul's inspired commentaries, in these chapters, on the Old Testament truths of election and hardening.

He speaks also of "righteousness." He shows us that Israel had not attained it, because they had sought it by the law, though their own scriptures had told them that it was to be had or attained by faith. So that they are guilty in not having attained it. Their failure was disobedience and pride. They had sought to acquire it, in the stead of submitting themselves to it; to work it out for themselves, and not accept it as the gift of grace from God, according to their own scriptures.

Thus it is, and thus the Apostle gives us fine moral commentaries on these profound truths which prophets have already announced. The sequel is well weighed. Election must be, or none would be saved, and yet man is guilty. And this is the end of the controversy that so hotly engages man in human religious wisdom and strife. Man is responsible, and is brought in guilty because of unbelief, which is disobedience; and yet salvation depends altogether on the exercise of divine good pleasure, or sovereign, electing mercy. God has followed man as to the very ends of the earth with the cry of invitation and the assurances of welcome, and pleaded with Him around Him and near Him all the day long — but to no purpose. Man is guilty, but God must be sovereign. See chap. 10:18-21.

What a light and consolation, when the blessed Spirit gives us a commentary as well as a text! When He thus delivers us from the reasonings of nature!

This puts us at the close of chapter 10. Then, in chapter 11, the Apostle takes up the subjects of the remnant, the present call of the Gentiles, together with the present rejection of Israel, and also the future restoration of Israel and of the whole world. These, in character, are a different order of truths from those just considered, but they are like those Old Testament subjects, and the Apostle, in treating of them, is in company with Old Testament scriptures, as he has already been.

A remnant is recognized, as of old, so now — as in the day of Elijah, so now in the day of Paul. And the Apostle comments on such a fact. He tells us that a remnant is the fruit of grace or election, the fruit of God reserving to Himself a people. And he tells us that God will surely be true to such a people, while He is, for the present, blinding and casting off His nation, because of their unbelief, according to the voice of the Prophets.

He then discusses the subject of Israel as a nation, and not as a remnant merely. He teaches us, that the present casting off of Israel, as a nation, is not final; that though many are now cast off, because of unbelief, they shall be restored, or "grafted in again," when brought to faith; and that that restoration shall be as new life, as resurrection-life to the world, as well as the accomplishment of covenant-mercies to themselves, and the setting of all, according to God's purpose and glory, on the ground of grace. For all must stand there, if they stand with God forever. There can be no other link with Him. And he also considers the question of the Gentile as well as that of Israel. He teaches us that the Gentile was now brought in, upon the present rejection of the Jew; but that he stood in faith; so that if he did not believe, if he did not continue in God's goodness, he would be cut off, as the Jew now was. And he shows us that this very story, the present call of the Gentiles, was to be found in the Jewish Old Testament scriptures. "I will provoke them to jealousy by them that are no people," was already written; and he hints, that being the

Apostle of the Gentiles, he was the instrument by which God was fulfilling this word. Thus, he magnified his office; and, moreover, would, if he might, though the Apostle of the Gentiles, save some of his own nation. Yea, and though their Apostle, he would sound an alarm in the ears of the Gentiles, that they should beware of high-mindedness and conceits, because of their present standing in divine favor — letting them know, that though God had a purpose in their present call and grafting in, yet that they might assure themselves He was not bound to them. He had not committed Himself to them, and would do nothing less than irrecoverably cast them off, if they were disobedient as Israel had been.

What a perfect piece of writing! Under the Holy Ghost the Apostle unfolds, thus completely, the wisdom of God, the counseled wisdom of God in His dispensational ordering of the story of this world! How grand the moral of the whole! “The gifts and calling of God are without repentance. For as you, in times past, have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief: even so have these now also not believed your mercy, that they also may obtain mercy. For God hath concluded all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all.”

And he closes, as well he may, this great exhibition of dispensational wisdom in which God is vindicated in the presence of evil, displayed in the exercise of goodness, and glorified in the counsels of His wisdom, by a note of admiration. It is not, however, ignorant, but intelligent admiration — nor is it admiration of the mercy and salvation of God — that we get at the close of chapter 8 — but of His wisdom and knowledge; admiration drawn out by, rendered to, and spent upon the sweets of scripture. For all the incidents in this wondrous story of God's dealing with the earth, are found, as the Apostle shows us, in the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms, in the patriarchal, Mosaic, historic, and prophetic scriptures, as I have already noticed. He does but arrange them in their places severally, and in their relation to each other. But this is a blessed service under the Spirit. We get the divine commentary here, as we get the divine text before. What a Teacher was here! Line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little, there a little, to suit our infant, and yet enlarging understandings. O the insolence of that infidelity that insults the depository of such moral glories!

It is a great writing, indeed, on the counseled wry and wisdom of God, and that, too, from the beginning to the end, from the call of Abraham to the glory of the kingdom. And mercy is maintained and dispensed throughout. As we sing, “Grace triumphant reigns.” The very first event in the story of this ruined, revolted world is reproduced, or made to re-appear at the very end. Adam was saved through grace, sealed to him through the death and resurrection of the Woman's Seed; and so “the all” at the end, shall, in like manner, be debtor to the same grace. “For God hath concluded all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all.”

The Apostle opens this great scripture, with breaking his loving heart over the present ruin of his loved brethren, “his kinsmen according to the flesh;” and he closes it by indulging his worshipping heart in admiration over the ways and words of God. How affecting, as well as great and beautiful!

“Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law!”

An Earnest Appeal

Yes, reader, whosoever thou art, if thou art yet “neglecting so great salvation,” be assured no other proof will be required of thy unbelief. Thy contempt of the Savior is sufficiently evinced in thy neglect of His salvation. And oh, remember that this is the great, the crowning sin, for which, especially, if you persist in it, condemnation, hopeless, eternal condemnation, is sure to overtake you. Nay, you are now under condemnation. “He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” Other sins you are guilty of; sins more in number than the hairs of your head: and if you live and die in unbelief, these too you will have to answer for; the punishment of these you will have to bear forever: but the great, the awful sin of all, is that of which you think the least — the sin of disbelieving God’s testimony to his Son, and of slighting the mercy proclaimed to you in the gospel. All your other sins, yea, and your past unbelief as well, would be forgiven this moment, if at this moment your heart were but opened to believe God’s testimony concerning Jesus. But unbelief, persisted in to the end, binds upon you with chains of adamant, the whole burden of the guilt of all your other sins, besides aggravating, by its own weight, that burden ten thousand-fold! O that you might be really convinced of sin because you believe not in Jesus! Convinced in your conscience — so as really to wake up and inquire, What is this testimony I have despised? Who is this Jesus of whom God speaks to me in His word? God grant that your souls may be aroused to these inquiries. And may you find them so met by God’s testimony in His word — His word brought home with power to your consciences, and your hearts — that you may at once believe in Jesus, and be saved.

There may be those, however, who, in view of the question we have been considering, would anxiously say, “I do indeed believe in my heart that Jesus is the Son of God, and that He died for our sins, and that God raised Him from the dead; but I wish to know my personal interest in Him: I wish to know that I am one, to whom the benefits of His death and resurrection are applied.” Dear reader, whoever you may be, will you ponder this question — how do you know — what proof have you — that Jesus is the Son of God, and that He died and rose again? “The word of God, to be sure,” is your instant reply. “It is God’s word which assures me of these facts.” Is this your real and only reason, for believing these blessed facts? Then you have the same word to assure you, and the same reason for believing, that you are a saved person. “By him all who believe ARE justified from all things.” He who believes the facts on the authority of God’s testimony to them in His word, is the one who has a personal interest in the benefits of them, and he knows this by the same word which assures him of the facts themselves.

Ecclesiastes and the Song of Solomon

The soul is much instructed by the different purpose of the Spirit of God in Ecclesiastes and the Song of Solomon. Placed together, as I may say, in the progress of the oracles of God, they may naturally be looked at together, one penman also, under the Divine Author, being employed in both, and they will be found to read our souls very different, though consistent lessons.

In Ecclesiastes we are taught that “he that drinketh of these waters shall thirst again;” in the Song we learn that “he that drinketh of the water that Christ giveth shall never thirst.”

In Ecclesiastes the soul is presented as having full capacity to try everything under the sun Solomon had been raised up as such an one. What could any man do which he could not do? What, within range of human attainments, was beyond him? He could say, and it was not a vain boast, “What can the man do that cometh after the king? meaning himself. (Eccles. 2:12.) And the only answer is, “even that which hath been already done.” No one had, or could have, the command of more extended resources than he had, because God had exalted and appointed him. He commanded wealth, and honors, and pleasures, and learning, all manner of such various stores of delights were found with him. He could wield the instruments, and traffic in the markets of all human, natural, earthly, and carnal attainments and treasures, without stint and difficulty, and he tried them to the full, he tried them in all their variety, as he eloquently tells us in his Ecclesiastes. He found, however, that they would not do, they left his heart a parched ground and wilderness still. Instead of raising music there, it was all and only “vexation of spirit” that was felt, and “vanity” that was uttered over it all. He that drank those waters thirsted still.

In the Song of Solomon the soul is differently affected altogether. It is in a different attitude and with a different experience. It has but one object but that one is enough. It is satisfied, and never for a moment thinks of looking for a second. It has “the beloved” and cares for nothing else.

The soul, here, it is true, has its grief as well as in Ecclesiastes. But it is a grief of an entirely different character. Here, it sighs over its want of capacity to enjoy its object fully; there, as we saw, it sighed over the insufficiency of its object, having full capacity to prove all that it was with. “Draw me, we will run after thee,” is the fond language of the heart here. It seeks for nothing but Jesus, but laments that it is not nearer to Him, more intimate with Him, more fully and altogether with Him. “I sleep but my heart waketh,” tells us, in like measure, that want of power in wakefulness is felt, but no want of an object, as indeed the sequel of that fervent breathing discloses; for when that drowsy soul is questioned about its object, it recounts His beauties from head to foot, and thinks not for a moment of searching for another.

Such is the experience here, and such the character of the grief of the heart. It is conscious want of capacity to do the object presented justice, to answer its worth worthily — a grief that deeply honors it, and, I may say, hallows it, and we want a little more of this in ourselves. We want to find in Jesus a full and satisfying object, a corrective for the wanderings of the heart, which, till it fixes rightly on Him, will, in the spirit of Ecclesiastes, go about and still say, “Who will show us any

good?” The building of palaces, the planting of vineyards, the getting of singing men, and singing women, and musical instruments of all sorts, the multiplying of the children of men, all the trammels of the heart should end at the discovery of Jesus. Thus will the grief of the soul change — then, as in the Canticles, it will be sorrow over our want of capacity in ourselves to enjoy what we have reached in the blessed assurance that there is no defect or insufficiency in our portion itself. For he that “drinketh of that water shall never thirst.”

Faith's Victory Under Death's Shadow

The days and nights of solitude drew near a fatal close. I could not think of his death. At that prospect nature revolted. I felt as if it would be comparatively easy to die for him. But the day before his death, when all spoke encouragement, I felt that we must part. In the bitterness of my soul, I went into the garret. It was the only place I could have without interruption. Never shall I forget that hour. Whether in the body or out, I could scarcely tell. I drew near to God. Such a view of the reality and nearness of eternal things I had never had. It seemed as if I was somewhere with God. I cast my eye back on this life, it seemed a speck. I felt that God was my God, and my husband's God; that this was enough; that it was a mere point of difference whether he should go to heaven first or I, seeing we should both go so soon. My mind was filled with satisfaction with the government of God. "Be ye followers of them who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises," seemed to be the exhortation given me upon coming back to this world. I do not mean that there were any bodily or sensible appearances. But I seemed carried away in the Spirit. I pleaded for myself and children traveling through this distant country. It seemed as if I gave them, myself, and husband up entirely; and it was made sure to me that God would do what was best for us.

From that time, though nature would have her struggles, I felt that God had an infinite right to do what He pleased with His own; that He loved my husband better than I did; that if He saw him ripe for his rest, I had no objections to make. All the night he was exercised with expiring sufferings, and God was pouring into my soul one truth and promise of the Gospel after another. I felt it sweet for Him to govern. A solemn tranquility filled the chamber of death. It was an hour of extremity to one whom Jesus loved. I felt that He was there, that angels were there, that every agony was sweetened and mitigated by One, in whose sight the death of His saints is precious. I felt as if I had gone with the departing spirit to the very utmost boundary of this land of mortals, and as if it would be easier for me to drop the body which confined my soul in its approach toward heaven, than retrace all the way I had gone. When the intelligence was brought me that the conflict was over, it was good news; I kissed the clay, as pleasantly as I ever did when it was animated by the now departed spirit. I was glad he had got safely home, and that all the steps of his departure were so gently ordered.

It would be in vain for me to attempt a description of my feelings the next morning. I had never seen such a sunrise before. It beheld me alone. Were, I the only created being in the universe, I could not, perhaps, have felt very differently. I went into the chamber in which he died. There, on the pillow, was the print of his head. The bed of death was just as when it resigned, forever, the body of him who was all the world to me. God wonderfully supported me.

The First Anniversary of My Mother's Departure to Be With Christ

What strange emotions rise
And struggle in my breast!
A chord unstrung! a mother gone!
But oh! to endless rest.
How fresh the wound! though now
A year has passed away,
But oh! how many hearts have bled
Since that heart —rending day!
I wept, and well I might!
I found the waters deep,
My sinking heart well-nigh o'erwhelmed,
'Twas but relief to weep.

I ought to praise — I do!
One whom I fondly love,
Beyond the reach of grief or pain,
Is blessed with Christ above.
Her face, her own sweet smile,
No more below I see;
But, though I weep, full well
I know They wait to welcome me.
A year! — and what a year
Of patient grace and love!
What openings of the Father's heart!
What mercies from above!
In waters deep I've learned

Depths in His gracious heart,
And, of His mercies, I would least
With these sweet lessons part.
What have I learned of Christ!
His tender sympathies!
The meltings of His yearning heart!
His gentle ministries!
If then in deepest grief,
When sorrows most abound —
Such depths of love and tenderness
In Thee, my Lord, are found;
Do Thou with me whate'er
It seemeth good to Thee;
That I Thyself may better know,
Thy power may rest on me.
Edinburgh, Feb. 28th, 1859.

The Former Things Are Passed Away

Oh, she's reached the sunny shore, Over there!

She will never suffer more,

All her pain and grief is o'er, Over there!

Oh, the streets are shining gold, Over there!

And the glory is untold,

'Tis our Shepherd's peaceful fold, Over there!

Oh, she feels no chilling blast, Over there!

For her winter time is past,

And the summers always last, Over there!

Oh, she's done the weary fight, Over there!

Jesus saved her by His might,

And she walks with Him in white, Over there!

Oh, she needs no lamp at night, Over there!

For the day is always bright,

And the Savior is her light, Over there!

Oh, she never sheds a tear, Over there!

For the Lord Himself is near,

And to Him she's ever dear, Over there!

"GOD IS LOVE."

"My beloved spake, and said unto ME, rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone."

Fragment

“The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” (John 1:17.) The law told man what he ought to be. It did not tell him what he was. It told him of life if he obeyed, of a curse if he disobeyed; but it did not tell him that God was love. It spoke of responsibility; it said, “Do this, and live.” All this was perfect in its place: but it told neither what man was nor what God was; that remained concealed, but that is the truth. The truth is not what ought to be, but what is — the reality of all relationships as they are, and the revelation of Him who, if there are any, must be the center of them. Now that could not be told without grace; for man was a ruined sinner, and God is love. And how tell, moreover, that all relationship was gone, morally? For judgment is not a relationship, but the consequence of the breach of one. Hence, Christ is the truth. For sin, grace, God Himself, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, even, are revealed as they are; what man is in perfection in relationship with God; What man’s alienation from God; what obedience, what disobedience; what sin, what God, what man, what heaven! what earth — nothing but finds itself placed where it is in reference to God, and with the fullest revelation of Himself — while His counsels even are brought cut, of which Christ is the center.

God Is Love

“God is Love,” His word has said it,
This is news of heavenly birth;
Fly abroad and quickly spread it,
Make it known through all the earth,
That “God is Love.”

Not in yonder blessed regions,
Where the Lord, with glory crowned,
Reigns amidst angelic legions,
Will the brightest proof be found,
That “God is Love.”

‘Tis on earth the Lord discloses
All His love, how vast it is;
Earth’s the favored spot He chooses
To convince the world of this,
That “God is Love.”

‘Tis that Man of Sorrows yonder,
Object of contempt beneath,
But in heaven, of highest wonder,
Teaches fully by His death,
That “God is Love.”

Not for those who ever loved Him,
Did the Lord of Glory die:
Pity to the wretched moved Him,
Who that hears it will deny,
That “God is Love.”

Glorious truth! away and spread it,

Spread the tidings far and near,
O may sinners give it credit
And be joyful when they hear,
That "God is Love."

The Golden Candlestick

(Num. 8:1-4.)

“And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto Aaron, and say unto him, When thou lightest the lamps, the seven lamps shall give light over against the candlestick. And Aaron did so; he lighted the lamps thereof over against the candlestick, as the Lord commanded Moses. And this work of the candlestick was of beaten gold, unto the shaft thereof, and unto the flowers thereof, was beaten work; according unto the pattern which the Lord had showed Moses, so he made the candlestick.”

Here we have a lovely type of the work and testimony of the Holy Ghost founded upon the atoning work of Christ. “The seven lamps” express, in typical language, the perfection of the Spirit’s light. “The beaten shaft” with which those seven lamps were connected, expresses in the same way, Christ as the foundation of all the Spirit’s action. But not only were the seven lamps” inseparably connected with “the beaten shaft,” they also threw their light immediately thereupon, thus typifying that the grand object of the Holy Ghost, in all His operations, is to bear witness to and glorify the Person of Christ. “The seven lamps shall give light over against the candlestick.” The seven lamps did not throw their light upon themselves, but upon the beaten shaft that sustained them.

Such is the type, and if the reader will turn, for a moment, to the third chapter of the Acts, he will find a very striking instance of the application of the type. Christ, the great Antitype of the golden shaft, had left this world and taken His seat in the heavens; and the Holy Ghost, the great Antitype of the seven golden lamps, had come down from heaven, to emit the bright light of testimony in this dark world. But to whom does this blessed Spirit bear witness? Only, and always to Jesus. Whom does He seek to exalt? Ever and only the Name of Jesus. As in the type, so in the Antitype, “the seven lamps give light over against the candlestick.” If repentance and remission of sin be preached it is in the Name of Jesus. If souls are to be saved, salvation is only in the Name of Jesus. If a poor cripple is to be healed, the healing can only be found in the Name of Jesus. “The seven lamps” can only “give light over against the candlestick.”

How strikingly all this comes out in Acts 3 Peter, filled with the light and power of the Holy Ghost, can only bear witness, and refer all his actings immediately to Christ. The lame man thought only of receiving an alms from a benevolent individual; but Peter at once hides himself, and exalts the Name of Jesus, in those memorable words, “Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk.” Here we see the seven lamps throwing light over against the candlestick. If a benefit is to be conferred upon a poor cripple it must be seen to come directly from a risen Savior. It is not a benevolent man dispensing around him his silver and gold, but a vessel filled with the Holy Ghost bearing witness to the Name of Jesus; or to use the language of our type, it is “the seven lamps giving light over against the candlestick.” “Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”

This is a great principle, and one much needed in this day of activity and effort. We have to remember that activity is one thing, devotedness, quite another. It is not that we want to lessen activity, or cripple effort; by no means, we only want to see them based upon, connected with, and referring to Christ alone. We want to learn, more deeply, the lesson of "the seven lamps," and to remember, at all times, that service, to be of any value, in God's account, must have Christ for its source, and Christ for its object. Be it sweeping a crossing, or evangelizing a nation; be it a penny given to a pauper, or a life and fortune dedicated to the objects of benevolence, it is all of no account with God unless its immediate source and object be Christ Himself, for "the seven lamps shall give light over against the candlestick."

Grace Exemplified

Some weeks since, while traveling from Exeter to Teignmouth, I received from a Christian gentleman, who sat opposite to me in the carriage, the narrative of a very striking instance of the grace of God. The name of the subject has escaped my memory, but the leading facts of his case I can never forget. I delight in the records of God's work in the souls of men, in scenes from real life, in pieces of living history. They tend to illustrate the true nature and proper effects of the grace of God in the gospel.

The young man, to whom our narrative refers, had been a garroter and pick-pocket. He had, if my memory serves, been trained in these vile pursuits. He was a finished thief — an adept in crime. But he was not beyond the reach of that grace which has come down into this world to seek and to save that which is lost, and which, moreover, never raises a question as to whether it is a lost garroter or a lost moralist. The young man was converted, turned from darkness to light, from guilt to righteousness, from Satan to God. He was plucked as a brand from the burning. Marvelous triumph of free, sovereign grace!

But then came the inquiry as to occupation, as to how he was to earn an honest livelihood. He spoke to the person who had been the means used in his conversion. "What am I to do?" said he; "no one will employ me; no one will trust me. I have no character." The gentleman offered to give him a letter of introduction and recommendation. And to whom do you think, reader?

Perhaps to some chemist, druggist, or apothecary, or it may be some person whose business did not present any great temptation to the quondam thief. Not at all. The letter was to a goldsmith and jeweler! Think of this! A garroter and pick-pocket recommended for employment to a jeweler! However could he think of running such a risk? On what do you think the eye of that gentleman was resting when he penned the letter of recommendation? Was it upon hopes and expectations based upon moral reform? Was it upon the vows and resolutions of mended nature? Ah! no; it was upon the efficacy of the grace of God, and the power of the Name of Jesus. It was, we may safely assert, with the eye of faith resting upon the virtues of that precious grace and that peerless Name, that the letter of recommendation was penned. The writer of the letter occupied, according to his measure, the selfsame ground as that on which the apostle stood when he sent back the runaway slave, Onesimus, with a letter of recommendation to his injured master.

But what of the jeweler? How did he feel in the matter? It was all very well for another to recommend to his notice a pick-pocket; but it was quite a different matter for him to let the pick-pocket in amongst his watches and jewelry. Surely it was a risk. But ah! the same grace that filled the heart of the writer, gave confidence to the reader. The jeweler read the letter with his eye resting upon that mighty grace that can convert a thief into an honest, industrious, and liberal man; and, trusting to this grace, he entrusted his property to one who had been trained as a thief.

And was he deceived? No, blessed be God; no one that ever trusted the grace of God or the Name of Jesus was, or could be, disappointed or confounded. The young man is now, I believe, a

successful preacher of the gospel; though, as if to prove at once the power of old habits, and the superior power of divine grace, he found himself, on one occasion, after his conversion, actually picking a lady's pocket in a railway carriage. It was the old thing breaking out in a moment of forgetfulness; but grace was there to assert its holy power and gain its moral triumph. He at once returned the purse to its owner, with an apology, accounting for the act by telling her of his former infamous career, and of what the grace of God had done for him and in him.

May the Lord keep this young man in all humble dependence upon Himself! His case is certainly a rare one. It is not often we meet with an instance of a garroter and thief becoming an earnest and a successful evangelist. The Lord's Name be praised!

The Head and the Heart

Q. “What is the difference between believing with the head or with the heart?”

A. The term itself, “believing with the head,” is thought by some, an objectionable one — one that partakes more of a human distinction, than of the truth of God. That which may only be the result of education, or tradition, they think not entitled to the term “believing.” Nevertheless, it is of great practical importance; and surely we find, in scripture, that which is usually intended to be conveyed by the expression. In the second chapter of the gospel by John, for example, our blessed Lord in the most solemn way, exposes what may be called, mere head belief.

“Now when he was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast day, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did. But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man; for he knew what was in man.” Here it is plainly said, that “many believed in his name;” and yet, we know from the Lord’s own words concerning them, that their hearts were untouched, and their consciences unreached. There was no sense of sin — no concern about their souls, and no turning of the heart to Christ.

The mind, or natural understanding, was convinced that He who wrought such miracles, must be God, or, as Nicodemus expresses it, “must have God with Him.” In this, of course, they were quite correct, and their faith, so far as it went, was quite sincere. But though the understanding was thus convinced, and on the ground of these natural convictions, “many believed in his name,” there was no subjection of heart to God, and no confidence in Christ Himself. Their confidence was in their own minds. There was no going out of self, and from self to Christ, in whom alone blessing is to be found. They could appreciate the miracles which He did, and imagine that they were honoring Him who wrought them. This is a fearful and subtle snare, and alas, most successful with many. Satan knows how to minister to the pride and flatter the reasoning powers of the natural man. But He who knew “what was in man” could not accredit such a profession of faith, however fair in appearance. It might have passed as genuine in the estimation of man, but God looks on the heart, and must have truth in the inward parts. “For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness.”

It is truly awful to contemplate, that under so fair an outward profession, there should be no divine reality. There was no change whatever as to their state, or nature. Their condition, as lost sinners, was unthought of, and untouched. Their belief was a mere human persuasion, founded, as our Lord hints, on what was in man. Whereas, the faith that connects the soul with Christ, is founded on the testimony of God to Him. This makes all the difference, and a most serious difference it is, in all respects.

But there is one thing which marks this merely human faith, and by which we may be able to distinguish it from divine, or living faith—it produces no movement in the soul towards God — it is inoperative. There was no question on the part of these Jews as to man’s sinful state, or of judging sin in themselves. They had no exercise of conscience as to pardon and eternal life. They saw

nothing of God's love in Christ to poor perishing sinners, and did not feel their need of it. It was a dead faith. They never got away from themselves, and understood not that salvation was to be found in another.

If we now turn for a moment to the case of Nicodemus, in the third chapter, we shall see the perfect contrast to all this mere surface work. And a more feeble case, to be genuine, we could scarcely suppose. But this makes the contrast all the more clear and interesting. The essential difference, as to results, between Nicodemus and the Jews in the second chapter is — that he came to Christ under a sense of need. He saw the miracles as they did, but, as in the case of Sergius Paulus, (Acts 13) a desire was awakened in his mind to know God's mind on these matters; hence he came to Christ. This, we believe, is a sure sign of genuine faith, however feeble. It leads the man outside of himself. He has learned, in some measure, that there is nothing good in himself, and that blessing is to be found alone in Jesus. In all such cases, there can be no question that God is at work in the soul.

When truth acts on the heart in the power of the Spirit, it creates a want. We see this exemplified in the case of the Prodigal Son, though mixed with great ignorance of his father's love. And here, Nicodemus evidently felt a lack — a void, which nothing in himself, or in his own religion, could ever meet. He had been a high religionist— no ordinary man; and he may have been so for many years, with the entire approval of his fellow-religionists, and without fear on his own part that all was not right with his soul. Such is the awfully deceiving nature of mere formality and self-satisfaction. He may have been well acquainted with the doctrines and forms of his religion in theory, and a zealous maintainer of them all; but, until his conscience was reached by the blessed Jesus, he was a stranger to regeneration himself, and to the need of it in others. A new desire was now awakened in his heart; perhaps he could not have explained what the need was, but he felt there was something wanting —something wrong — and he was uneasy. To rest contented in this state was impossible. The conviction, no doubt, gained ground in his mind, that the One whom he had seen do such wonderful works, and speak such wonderful words, was the right person to come to in his perplexity.

“The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest except God be with him.” This is the effect of truth, not in the head merely, but also in the heart. So long as it is only in the head, we continue careless about divine things. But when it enters the heart and conscience, we shall manifest real concern for these things. In some it is more manifest than in others, but real in all. Caring, and not caring, marks the difference between the head and the heart. There can be no evidence of a work of grace in the soul more unfailling than that of the heart turning to Christ, and caring really for Him. There may be great feebleness and great slowness in being decided, and most unworthy fear of others; but when there is a true sense of sin in the soul, and Christ Himself the object of its sincere and earnest desires, the full expression of faith will come, and, it may be, great boldness for the name of Jesus.

This was the case with Nicodemus. He came to Jesus by night; he was afraid of the world, and of his fellow professors. He knew that all would be against him if he followed Christ; therefore he came at first by night: still, this showed his earnestness, and the power of grace in his heart. Nothing could keep him from the despised Jesus of Nazareth, feeble and fearful though he was.

This is the grand distinguishing characteristic between the faith that is merely educational, or traditional, and that which is of the operation of God's Holy Spirit by the word. There was a divine energy in his soul which nothing on earth, or in hell, could ever extinguish. True, he was the very type of feebleness, and slow heartedness, but the vital germ was there, and though surrounded with dangers like a spark of fire in the midst of the ocean, it increased in power, and in time manifested its divine origin. In the seventh chapter, we find him standing up for Christ before the council; and in the nineteenth he is bold enough to face the world for the rejected and crucified Jesus. Such is the difference—the infinite difference, between that kind of belief which rests on the mind of man, and the faith which is grounded on the truth of God. The one gives way under adverse circumstances, the other is deepened by them.

It is perfectly plain from the word of God, that all outward expressions of faith are utterly worthless, unless they flow from an inward work of grace in the heart. "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." (Rom. 10:9, 10.) The term "heart," in this passage, may embrace the entire inner man, as contrasted with the confession of the mouth, or outward expression. When the work is of God's Spirit, by the word, the mind is not only instructed, but the heart is touched, especially in its desires and affections; and the conscience is reached. The work, we believe, is never thorough, until the word of God enters the conscience. It is by the conscience that the light comes in and reveals the sad state of the soul. This makes a man serious. Mere head belief never makes any one serious; he may be sincere, but when we have to do with God about our own sins, we are both serious and earnest. And if there be a deep work of conscience before the gospel is known, there may be great distress of mind. And how can it be otherwise in such a state? It is no light matter to face God about sin.

But when the soul is awakened under the preaching of a clear, full gospel, and attracted by the love and grace of Jesus, it may be brought to rest on Him, without much exercise about sin at the time. Such seems to have been the case with the Ethiopian eunuch. Without any exercise of soul about sin, so far as we are told, he at once confesses faith in Christ, is straightway baptized, and goes on his way rejoicing. Still there is ground to believe, from his reading so earnestly the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, that he may have learned something of sin and its fearful consequences.

But in speaking of what may be called, "conversion through the affections," it may be well to observe, that the feelings of the heart in some cases, may be greatly moved under the preaching of the gospel, when there is no real work in the heart itself. The stony ground hearers, we are told, received the word with joy; that is — they received the word for the joy that it gave, but when the same word brings trial and persecution they give it up; or, there may be quite an outburst of sympathy and compassion for Christ, under certain presentations of His sufferings, such as we see in the daughters of Jerusalem, and in the men who smote their breasts. (Luke 23) But Christ could not accredit the mere feelings of the heart, any more than the mere belief of the head.

What we have to look for, under all appearances, and all confessions, is some movement in the heart Christ-ward —some sense of sin, and of the holiness of God; and some desire after Christ. It may be feeble at first, and scarcely discernible; but we must not be satisfied as to the reality of the

work without it. There may be divine life in a soul when no human eye can discover any evidence of its existence; but when there is the smallest hope, those who have a godly care for souls, will quietly wait for its expression. Even where the scriptures may have been known from childhood, as in the case of Timothy, and their truth and authority never questioned, we have to watch and wait for the operations of God's Spirit in the heart, and the wholesome exercise of conscience. God will have it. He will have us to have the same mind about sin, holiness, and salvation, as Himself. We must be brought to see and own the sin-fullness of our hearts and ways — that we are utterly lost under sin, and that for such Jesus died. When faith takes this place before God, self is condemned, God is justified as the judge of sin, and the soul finds all in Christ. We are thus led to know God, and Jesus Christ whom He has sent, and ourselves in His sight. How could there be fellowship with the Father and the Son without this knowledge? We must know redemption, before we can know relationship with God.

Unspeakable indeed are the advantages of an education like Timothy's; and there is every encouragement in his case, for parents to persevere, and trust God for His blessing; but the grace of God was as needful for the conversion of Timothy, as for the Philippian jailor. To know the scriptures from childhood, and to be saved "through faith in Christ Jesus," were different periods in the history of Timothy.

But as the Spirit of God works very differently with different individuals, it becomes us, wherever we see the least sign of a divine work, to be full of hope and slow in judging. How few of us enter into the spirit of Heaven's joy over a repenting soul! (Luke 15) While angels are celebrating the new birth to the joy of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, we may be looking on the first throbbings of the new life with unbelieving suspicion! And in place of fanning the feeble flame with love, care, and encouragement, we may check it, and all but extinguish it, by our coldness. The soul at such a time is apt to think bitter things of itself, and the more real the work is, the more will this be the case. How sweetening and strengthening to the heart at such a moment are the sympathies of the spirit of Christ! He gathers the lambs with His arm, and carries them in His bosom. Should we not seek to follow His example? What should we say of a shepherd, who left the tender lambs in the open field, while the well-fleeced flock was under shelter?

To the self-righteous Pharisees, the words of the Lord Jesus were of the most withering kind; but, to the soul that had fled to Him in a time of need, His heart overflowed with tenderness. Oh! that every soul who hears of His love would come in faith to Himself! Salvation is found there, and only there. Weary and heavy-laden sinner, "only believe," and come to Himself. Beware, oh, beware, of stopping short of this! God has put away sin and brought in righteousness by the cross, and now "grace reigns, through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord." Jesus died for sinners — He died for the ungodly! All blessing is founded on the death of Christ! Oh, think of His love — His dying love! Only believe God's testimony to the Person and work of His beloved Son, and thou art saved forever. "Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him." Psalm 2:12.

Heart's Ease

“Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds, through Christ Jesus.” (Phil. 4:6, 7.) This is true heart’s ease, and our God would graciously give it to us at all times. It matters not what our condition may be, it is our privilege to enjoy heart’s ease, inasmuch as we are called to cast our every care upon One who is as willing as He is able, and as able as He is willing, to bear it for us. “Cast thy burden on the Lord.” What then? Is it, “He will remove it?” Nay; but “He will sustain thee.” This is far better. The heart may often long to have the “burden” removed altogether; but it is infinitely more gracious of the Lord to sustain us. This latter is the true secret of “Heart’s Ease.” It brings us into closer contact — deeper intimacy with the Lord, and this is just what we want. He, in His tender love, desires to make a most blessed exchange with us; He takes our care, and gives us His peace. What an exchange! He would not have a single care upon our hearts. He would fain have our hearts as free from care as our consciences are free from guilt. He has given us righteousness instead of guilt, and He would give us peace instead of care.

How gracious of God thus to occupy Himself about us! He occupies Himself about our very failures and follies, in order to deliver us from them; and He occupies Himself about our anxieties, in order to relieve us of them, and fill our hearts with His own ineffable peace. He positively says to us, in language as plain as language can be, “Give me your care, whatever it is, little or great, it matters not, personal, domestic, commercial, or whatever else it be, just give it to me, and I will, assuredly, give you instead, my peace which passeth all understanding.” Precious grace! May there be a full response on our part thereto. Why should we keep our cares when God wants to have them? Why should we be careful about ourselves, when God is caring for us? He is ever thinking of us. He has deigned to count the very hairs of our heads. Could care be possibly more minute or tender? Could knowledge be possibly more intimate?

And what is the issue of all this? To what does it lead? Are our hearts thus freed from every care, left without occupation or object? No; blessed be God, His exchange reaches higher still. “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things which ye have both learned and received, and heard, and seen in me, do, and the God of peace shall be with you.”

Here is the blessed issue to which the Holy Ghost conducts our souls. He introduces us to “the God of peace.” Having freed our hearts from every care, and given us His own peace, He presents Himself as the object to be enjoyed by our tranquillized hearts. In other words, instead of care, we have peace; and instead of self, we have God, It is of all-importance for the Christian to remember that he is brought to God now. He has not to wait till he gets to heaven to enjoy God, he can enjoy Him now. “Christ hath once suffered for sin, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.”

We are as fully brought to God now, so far as title is concerned, as ever we shall be. Christ died to put away our sin; He lives to take away our care, and it is our privilege, with a conscience free from guilt and a heart free from care, to delight in God Himself. This is heart's ease.

“Lord, what a change within us one short hour
Spent in Thy presence will prevail to make,
What heavy burdens from our bosoms take,
What parched grounds refresh, as with a shower!
We kneel, and all around us seems to lower:
We rise, and all, the distant and the near,
Stands forth in sunny outline, bright and clear;
We kneel, how weak, we rise, so full of power.
Why therefore should we do ourselves this wrong,
Or others — that we are not always strong,
That we are ever overborne with care,
That we should ever weak or heartless be,
Anxious or troubled, when with us is prayer,
And joy, and strength, and courage, are with thee?”

Is the Link on?

A short time since, in traveling, by an express train, from Glasgow to Bradford, I met with one of those little striking incidents which so frequently prove very suggestive and instructive to the mind. Owing to the opposition of two railway companies, our train had to travel under very high pressure in order to keep time, and every arrangement was made to avoid delay. When we arrived at the junction from which the Bradford line branches off from the Main, instead of the whole train stopping to detach the Bradford carriages, a curious contrivance had been adopted, by which, while the engine was at full speed, the Bradford carriages were, in an instant, detached, and the main body of the train flew on at fifty miles an hour, leaving us, after the impetus had subsided, standing on the line, as though the connecting chain had given way. Not being aware of the arrangement, we felt a little uncomfortable, and a young man who sat opposite to me put his head out of the carriage window and exclaimed, "Oh, we are left behind. I see the train flying round the curve." We could not imagine what had occurred; and for aught we knew, some other train might come, in a few moments, and dash right into us.

It was a solemn moment, and I thought it right to improve it by speaking to the young man about the immense importance of having the link on. I said to him, "What an awful thing it will be, my friend, to be left behind forever — to find, when too late, that there is no link connecting our souls with Christ. May I ask you this solemn question, "Is the link on?" He looked very serious, and replied, "Well, indeed, sir, I am sorry to say, I have not thought so much about these weighty matters as I should."

I then went on to explain to him the simplicity of the link; that it was simply believing in the Son of God. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me hath everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment; but is passed from death unto life." (John 5:24.) Here is the link — the precious, living, eternal link of faith. This link can never be snapped. No power of earth or hell can sever the believer from Christ. In Him is life, and the soul that is linked by faith to Him partakes of His life — "Hath everlasting life." It does not say, "He shall or may have it at some future time." No; he hath it now, and can never lose it. The feeblest believer in Jesus is as safe as the blessed Savior Himself.

Dear reader, let me ask you, as I asked my fellow-traveler, "Is the link on?" What a vital question! How much hangs upon it! Your eternal destiny — your weal or woe for countless ages! In our case the suspense lasted but a few moments, for another engine came down along the Bradford line and carried us off to our destination. But, in the case of an immortal soul not linked on by faith to Christ, it is a totally different matter. There is no other arrangement, no other resource, no other hope, there is nothing to fall back upon. If there is so much as the breadth of a hair separating your soul from Jesus, there is no life. The carriage may be so close to the engine as that the buffers are actually touching, but if the link be not on, there is no connection, and hence, when the engine moves on, the carriage will be left behind. So also, as to the soul and Christ; there may seem to be great nearness, the buffers of mere profession may touch, but if the link of faith is not on, there is

no personal vital connection, there is no life, no security. We live in a day of immense profession. Bibles are circulated in millions, and religious tracts in billions; and we have to thank God for it. But, oh! reader, think of the awful responsibility! Only reflect, for a moment, upon what it will be to pass into eternal fire from a scene of such accumulated privileges! Do let me urge upon you the need of immediate, close attention to the question which stands at the head of this paper, "Is THE LINK ON?"

Judgment

There are three distinct kinds of judgment presented in scripture which it is important for the Christian to understand, namely, self-judgment, church-judgment, and divine-judgment.

1. Self-judgment. This is the solemn duty of every true Christian. It is impossible for anyone to get on who does not sedulously cultivate the habit of judging himself. We are brought into the light of the divine judgment, so that we may see things as God sees them, judge of them as He judges, and have His thoughts about all that is passing around us. In this light it is that we are called to judge ourselves. While we walked in nature's darkness, we could neither form a correct judgment about ourselves nor aught else. But being brought into the light, as God is in the light — having His word and His Spirit, we have both the intelligence and the power to try the things that differ, and to judge the roots and principles of evil in our own hearts, so that they may not show themselves above the surface of practical life.

The ground on which we exercise this judgment, is that God will not impute anything to us, inasmuch as He has already imputed all our sin and guilt to Jesus, on the cross. It is as those who are reconciled to God, who stand in grace, and to whom there is, and can be, no condemnation, that we judge ourselves. If we look at the question of judgment from a legal stand-point, or through a legal medium, we shall be sure to get into a dark, low, servile condition of soul. It is as those who stand in unclouded grace, and breathe the very atmosphere of love, that we carry on the needed and salutary work of self-judgment. The most advanced believer has in him a mass of things demanding constant watchfulness. There are lusts, passions, and tempers to be bridled and subdued. "The members which are upon the earth" are to be mortified. A rigid censorship is to be continually exercised over nature in all its workings. And all this, be it carefully noted, and deeply pondered, is grounded upon the great fact that "there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." If we lose sight of this, the needed work of self-judgment cannot possibly proceed. It is only as we see the judgment of the old nature and all its belongings, in the cross of Christ, that we can judge the roots of evil in our own hearts, day by day. It is as those who have gotten life and righteousness in a risen Savior, that we judge ourselves.

2. Where, then, does church-judgment come in? We believe that church-judgment becomes needful in all cases in the which self-judgment has been neglected. If we look, for a moment, at Matt. 18:15-17, we shall find a striking illustration of this point. If there is a spirit of self-judgment in the trespassing brother, there will be a readiness to listen to others and own himself wrong. But if there be not this spirit, there will be self-vindication, and then the assembly must be called into the scene, and the obstinate, unsubdued, self-justifying trespasser is treated as "a heathen man and a publican."

Again, in 1 Cor. 5, If "that wicked person" had only judged the incipient workings, the earliest buddings of evil in his heart; if he had put the bridle upon his lust, if he had mortified his members, the assembly would not have been troubled; but, inasmuch as he suffered the evil in his nature to show itself in his conduct, the Church became involved, and was responsible before God to act in

the matter. The assembly is not affected by the evil in my nature, so long as that evil is not suffered to act; or, in the event of its acting, if it be faithfully judged, confessed, and put away. It is when evil is suffered to act, where it is allowed to show itself, that the assembly is bound to deal with it, on God's behalf, and for the maintenance of the claims of truth and holiness.

How careful, then, should we be to exercise self-judgment, so that church-judgment may not be called for! It is truly deplorable when we so carry ourselves in private life as to cut out work for our brethren. How much rather should we, so far as in us lies, seek to promote the spiritual health and happiness, the prosperity and progress of the assembly with which we may happen to be locally connected, as well as of the whole Church of God. "None of us liveth to himself." And it is a most solemn and weighty consideration that I am, at this moment, either helping or hindering members of the body of Christ whose faces I may never have seen in the flesh. This, though a stumbling-block to human reason, is only a simple deduction from that great cardinal truth of the unity of the body of Christ upon earth. "There is one body, and one Spirit." And again, "God hath tempered the body together.....That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ and members in particular." 1 Cor. 12:24-27.

We shall not pursue the subject of the unity of the body of Christ, to which we have merely referred in connection with our immediate theme, and for the purpose of urging upon the Christian reader the need of self-judgment. The unity of the body is either a mere human theory or a divine reality. We believe it to be the latter, and hence the walk of the individual affects the whole. We cannot possibly take independent ground, for if we are connected with the Head, we are connected with all the members, and this connection forms the basis of a responsibility which we cannot shake off. Reason may exclaim, "How can these things be?" &c. Faith replies, "God has said it," and this suffices for all those who have set to their seal that God is true.

3. And, now, a word as to divine-judgment and the place which it occupies. We have seen that where self-judgment is not exercised, the assembly becomes involved. But, then, if the assembly fails to judge, what is to be done? God must come in. Solemn thought! "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." "The time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God." Look at the case of Achan, in Josh. 7. Go and gaze upon that great heap of stones in the valley of Achor. What does it mean? What inscription does it bear? What lesson does it teach? It teaches, in the most solemn way, that "The Lord will judge his people," if His people do not judge themselves. If Achan had judged the rising thought of covetousness in his heart, the congregation would not have been involved; and if there had been power in the congregation to detect and judge the evil, God would not have had to judge the congregation; but seeing that there was neither self-judgment, nor congregational-judgment, there was the urgent demand for divine-judgment. God can pardon, He can cancel; but He cannot sanction; and therefore if the ruins of Jericho bespoke the presence of God in victory, the heap of stones in the valley of Achor bespoke His presence in judgment.

So also, when we turn to the New Testament, we learn the same solemn lesson. Look at Ananias and Sapphira in the fifth chapter of Acts. Is not that a solemn act of judgment in the house of God? And, again, look at those sickly and sleeping ones referred to in the eleventh chapter of first

Corinthians. Do not they furnish an illustration of that deeply solemn truth, that "Judgment must begin at the house of God?" Assuredly they do. "For this cause many are weak, and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world." Let us note this. What a vast difference between God's present judgment of His house, and His future judgment of the world! The Father judges His children, in holy, loving discipline, in order that they may not be condemned with the world. We can read "No condemnation" just as distinctly, amid the governmental dealings of 1 Cor. 11, as in the apostolic teachings of Rom. 8. We expect to find it in the latter; but to find it in the former, illustrates, in a most striking manner, the ground which believers occupy in a risen Christ. But, as for "the world," "God will judge it in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead." Acts 17:31.

Legality and Levity

Feeling, as we trust we do, in some little measure, our responsibility to the souls of our readers, as well as to the truth of God, we desire to offer a brief but pointed word of warning against two opposite evils which we can plainly see working amongst Christians, at the present moment. These are, legality, on the one hand, and levity on the other.

As to the first of these evils, we have sought, in many of our former numbers, to deliver precious souls out of a legal state as being, at once, dishonoring to God, and utterly subversive of their own peace and liberty. We have endeavored to set forth the free grace of God, the value of the blood of Christ, the standing of the believer before God, in perfect righteousness and acceptance in Christ. These precious truths, when applied to the heart in the power of the Holy Ghost, must deliver it from all legal influences.

But, then, it frequently happens that persons, when apparently delivered from legality, run into the opposite evil of levity. This may arise from the fact that the doctrines of grace are only taken up intellectually, instead of being wrought into the soul by the power of the Spirit of God. A vast amount of evangelical truth may be taken up in a very light way, in cases where there has been no deep work of conscience, no real breaking down of nature, no thorough subjugation of the flesh in the presence of God. When this is the case, there is sure to be levity of spirit, in some form or another. There will be a very wide margin allowed for worldliness of various kinds — a liberty given to nature wholly incompatible with practical Christianity. In addition to these things, there will be exhibited a very deplorable want of conscience in the practical details of daily life — duties neglected, work badly done, engagements not faithfully observed, sacred obligations trifled with, debts contracted, extravagant habits indulged. All these things we place under the head of levity, and they are alas! too common amongst the very highest professors of what is termed evangelical truth.

Now, we deeply deplore this, and would desire to have our own souls, as well as the souls of all our Christian readers really exercised before God about it. We fear there is a great deal of hollow profession amongst us, a great want of earnestness, truthfulness, and reality in our ways. We are not sufficiently permeated by the spirit of genuine Christianity, or governed, in all things, by the word of God. We do not give sufficient attention to “the girdle of truth,” or “the breastplate of righteousness.” In this way, the soul gets into a very bad state indeed, conscience does not act. The moral sensibilities become blunted. The claims of truth are not duly responded to. Positive evil is trifled with. Moral relaxation is allowed. So far from there being the constraining power of the love of Christ, leading forth in the activities of goodness, there is not even the restraining power of the fear of God keeping us back from the activities of evil.

We appeal, most solemnly, to the consciences of our readers as to these things. The present is a deeply solemn time for Christians. There is a demand for earnest, deep-toned devotedness to Christ; but this cannot possibly exist where the common claims of practical righteousness are neglected. We must ever remember that the selfsame grace which effectually delivers the soul

from legality is the only safe-guard against all levity. We have done very little, if anything at all, for a man, if we bring him out of a legal state into a light easy-going, careless, unconscientious condition of heart. And yet we have frequently marked the history of souls, and noticed this sad fact respecting them, that when they were delivered out of darkness and bondage, they became far less tender and sensitive. The flesh is ever ready to turn the grace of God into lasciviousness, and therefore it must be subdued. It needs that the power of the cross be applied to all that is of nature. We want to mingle the “bitter herbs” with our paschal feast. In other words, we want those deep spiritual exercises which result from positive entrance into the power of the sufferings of Christ. We need to meditate, more profoundly, upon the death of Christ — His death as a victim, under the hand of God — His death as a martyr, under the hand of man.

This, beloved reader, is, at once, the cure for legality and levity. The cross, in its double aspect, delivers from both. “Christ gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world; according to the will of God and our Father.” (Gal. 1:4.) The believer is as completely delivered from this present evil world, as he is forgiven his sins. He is not saved in order that he may enjoy the world, but that he may get done with it entirely. We know few things more dangerous for the soul than the combination of evangelical truth with worldliness, ease, and self-indulgence — the adoption of a certain phraseology of truth where the conscience is not in the presence of God — a merely intellectual apprehension of standing without any earnest dealing with the practical state — clearness in doctrine as to title, without any conscientious reference to the moral condition.

We trust our readers will suffer the word of exhortation. We should deem ourselves deficient in faithfulness were we to withhold it. True, it is not a very agreeable task to call attention to practical evils—to urge the solemn duty of self-judgment — to press upon the conscience the claims of practical godliness. It were far more grateful to the heart to unfold abstract truth, to dwell upon free grace and what it has done for us, to expatiate upon the moral glories of the inspired volume, in a word, to dwell upon the privileges which are ours in Christ. But there really are times when the true practical condition of things amongst Christians weighs heavily upon the heart, and rouses the soul to make an urgent appeal to consciences in reference to matters of walk and conduct; and we believe the present to be just such a time. The devil is ever busy; but just now he is specially on the alert. The Lord has granted much light upon His word during the last ten years. The gospel has been brought out with peculiar clearness and power. Thousands have been delivered from a legal state; and now the enemy is seeking to hinder the testimony by leading souls into a light, careless, carnal condition; by leading them to neglect the wholesome and indispensable exercise of self-judgment. It is simply a very deep sense of this that has suggested a word of warning on “Legality and Levity.”

Man's Paradise Lost, God's Paradise Found

(Read Gen. 3; Luke 23:39-43.)

There are few titles more familiar to general readers, than “Paradise Lost,” and “Paradise Regained.” The subjects are all-important. None can be more so to an immortal soul. But the plain truth of God sets them in a light, infinitely clearer and simpler, than all the poetry of man. The ruin and the recovery are soon told. Through disbelieving God’s word, and distrusting His goodness, the paradise of man was lost. Through believing God’s word, and trusting His goodness, the paradise of God is found. In place of Eve holding fast by the truth of God, and confiding in His unchangeable favor, she gave heed to the lie of Satan. In place of instantly repelling his wicked suggestion, she listened to it — she entertained it. This was the beginning of all the mischief.

The enemy so beguiled Eve, that she began to doubt both the goodness and the word of God. She was off the ground of dependence on Him — she had taken herself out of His hands. Unbelief separates from the living God, and so brings in death; faith unites to Him, and so brings in eternal life. Her course, from the moment she admitted the infidel doubt of the father of lies, was downward and rapid. She disbelieved — she disobeyed — she sinned — she fell, and all her posterity with her. The bloom of Eden was blighted forever, and the whole creation laid in ruins.

The deceiver sought, first of all, by a vile insinuation, to shake her confidence in the goodness of God. “Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?” Here, he merely raises a question — suggests a doubt. So serpent-like, and so like his wiles to this day. As if he had said: “Can this be love? Is it kindness to forbid you the fruit of a tree, which the Creator knows would make you as Gods? But has he really said so? Is this what He means?” Eve, alas, alas, hesitated! Fatal moment! In place of affirming that God had made all this bright and beautiful paradise on purpose for them, she allowed the suggestion to work on her mind — she lost hold of God’s truth, and embraced Satan’s falsehood. God had spoken — she had His word — that should have been enough. It was victorious with Jesus in the temptation in the wilderness. “It is written. It is written,” was the firm ground on which He stood and vanquished the enemy. But the seeds of distrust in God and carelessness about His word, were now sown in her heart, which have borne in her offspring, their terrible fruits ever since.

The enemy now becomes more open through Eve listening to him. He flatly contradicts the word of God. “Ye shall not surely die.” What a bold lie! It is no longer a subtle insinuation. What could Eve have been thinking about, we are ready to inquire, seeing God had plainly said, “For in the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die?” Rather let us ask, what are we thinking about often, when we prefer our own notions to the plain word of God? Have they not their origin in the same quarter, and do they not amount to the same thing? Satan’s suggestions are many, and too often acted on, and the truth of God overlooked, or practically set aside. But he not only contradicts God; he frames a fearful and tempting falsehood. “For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened; and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.” The temptation was too great for poor Eve; pride swelled in her bosom, and she aspired to be as God.

“And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof and did eat; and gave also unto her husband with her and he did eat. And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.” The fatal deed was now done! Adam listened to his wife, after she had listened to the serpent. All was lost that a creature could lose. The friendship of God — innocence — dominion — dignity — happiness, all were gone. The unhappy pair have a bad conscience, they run from the presence of God, and seek to patch up a righteousness of their own. Sad fruits of the fall, and of fallen nature in all ages.

God now enters the scene. Adam is afraid, and hides himself behind the trees of the garden. His fig-leaf apron, in place of covering him, is the witness of his guilt and shame. “And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, where art thou?” This was grace — pure grace. Adam was lost, and God was seeking him. This is the great principle of redemption. Man a lost sinner, and God in love seeking him. “For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.” Luke 19:10.

God now reveals in the garden of Eden, the plan of redemption, though obscurely. The woman’s seed is to bruise the serpent’s head. God’s remedy for man’s ruin is at hand! The word of grace reaches the hearts, we doubt not, of the guilty pair. Wondrous grace, indeed. God passes by fallen angels; He pities fallen man. Precious grace! He had been the dupe of a mighty and crafty foe. With the eye of tender mercy, God looks upon him in his fallen, ruined, miserable, helpless state. But while His eye pities, His mighty arm brings salvation. He graciously provides a garment for the naked ones — a garment which has its origin in the death of another. They are no longer naked, either in their own eyes, or in the eyes of others. God’s covering is effectual. The root of the mischief He traces to Satan. “Thou hast done this” But man in his fallen state must not be allowed to eat of the tree of life, and perpetuate a life of misery here below. “So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden, Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.”

Man is now outside the garden of Eden. Sin has driven him beyond the bounds of the earthly paradise. The world he finds to be a wilderness, in which he must toil for his daily bread, but the believer is not left there. God takes him through it, right on to heaven; but the earthly paradise never can be regained. It is henceforth inaccessible to man in his fallen state. The cherubim and the flaming sword guard the entrance to the tree of life. Man can never be innocent again. True, we read in Psalm 26, “I will wash my hands in innocency; so will I compass thine altar, O Lord.” But this refers, doubtless, to the consecrated priests of God under the law, who washed their hands and feet at the laver of purification, before entering the holy place. The alone source of life and blessing to sinful man now, is Christ in resurrection. He is God’s only means of deliverance from fallen human nature and all its bitter fruits.

From what we have just witnessed in the garden of Eden, a question of deep importance very naturally suggests itself, namely, How could God, who is infinitely holy and righteous, so graciously meet man — a sinner, who had disobeyed and dishonored Him? This is indeed an important question, and one which personally concerns every child of Adam. In the prediction, “It shall bruise thy head, but thou shalt bruise his heel,” we have the answer. The great work of

redemption which was accomplished on Calvary, is shadowed forth, though dimly, in these words. The Savior, Jesus, suffered and died on the cross, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God. The weight of God's wrath fell on Him for us — Christ died for sinners. On the ground of the work of Christ, which God foresaw would be finished on Calvary, He wrought by His grace in the hearts of the first and fallen pair. He forgave their sin, and blessed them with His salvation, on the ground of the foreknown blood-shedding of Jesus — His own blessed Son.

The cross is both the declaration of the righteousness of God, and the vindication of all His ways, in pardoning love and mercy, from Adam downwards. "To declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God. To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." (Rom. 3:25, 26.) This is the only foundation on which God can meet the sinner in peace, grace, and love. But here He can so meet him, consistently with Himself. Christ so glorified God on the cross, and so perfectly blotted out sin, that it is a righteous thing with God to meet the sinner who believes, in perfect grace, and bestow on him that which is due to Christ. From the garden of Eden onwards, God kept before the mind of man, by means of types and shadows, the great work which He purposed accomplishing on Calvary. All who believed God during that period, according to the revelation which He gave of Himself, were justified on earth, and entitled, in virtue of the sacrifice of Christ, to the Paradise of God in heaven.

But the grand illustration, and the formal statement of this glorious truth, was reserved for the solemn scenes of Calvary itself. There we have the complete reversal of the sentence of Eden, in the words of the Lord Himself, to the penitent thief, "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise." And there, too, we have the complete contradiction of all the misrepresentation of Satan. He insinuated that God did not really love man, and that He grudged him the fruit of a tree in his own garden; but God's answer to that, on the cross, is — "I freely give my beloved Son to die for my enemies." On the very spot where the seed of the woman met, in dreadful conflict, the traducer of God and the deceiver of man, the promise and the prophecy of Eden were fulfilled, and its solemn sentence, in the case of all, who believe, formally reversed. There the serpent's head was bruised, and his whole power completely and forever destroyed. And there, too, was opened up the new and living way, by which God can come down to man in richest blessing; and by which man can go up to God, in the liberty, perfectness, and acceptance of Christ Himself.

The conversion of the thief on the cross, was the occasion of the fuller revelation of these glorious truths. The Lord assured the thief in plainest terms, that he would be with Him that same day in Paradise. At the very moment when Jesus was bearing God's judgment against sin for us, and opening up the way to the Paradise above, the eyes of this man were opened to see himself a lost sinner, and Jesus the Savior. His heart, too, was now opened to Christ, and his whole soul filled with the thought of the holy sufferer by his side.

In the case of the thief, we have a bright and true example of God's work of grace in us; and in the person of Jesus, by his side, we see God's great work of grace for us. But though side by side, how perfectly distinct! And yet they are inseparably connected. The work of grace in the heart of a sinner is founded on the work of Christ for the sinner. It is the Spirit that reveals to the soul the glory of the Person, and the completeness of the work of Christ. The conversion of the poor thief, is a marvelous instance of this truth. Before the change had taken place many moments he bears

a noble testimony to Christ, condemns himself and his companion, and gives the lie to the whole world. "This man hath done nothing amiss." But it does appear, at first sight, most remarkable, that though he bears such a testimony to the sinless sufferer, and himself the chief of sinners, he prays not for the pardon of his own sins. How can we account for this? He was completely absorbed, we believe, with the fullness and glory of the Person of Jesus. He was lost, for the moment, to all but Christ. For it is quite manifest that his conscience was lively and upright. Dost not thou fear God," he says to his impenitent companion, "seeing thou art in the same condemnation? and we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this man hath done nothing amiss." He has now but one thought — one desire — that his portion may be with Christ.

Oh! what a scene Calvary presents at this moment! It is covered with a mass of people of all sorts. The world is represented there, and led on by its prince to revile and blaspheme the dying Savior. The two malefactors, at an early period of this awful scene, hearing the revilings, cast the same in His teeth. "The abjects spake against him." But one of them is converted — one heart is broken — there is now one to shed a tear for Jesus. He testifies for Him, and seeks His blessing. What a cordial for the fainting heart of Jesus. Heaven has sent it. The mention of "paradise," reminds the desolate sufferer of where He shall soon be. Christ has His right place in the heart of the young convert. "All must be well." The fear of God, which is the beginning of wisdom, is before his eyes. The light of God shines into his soul. Everything is now seen in an entirely new light. Sin, holiness, righteousness, God, himself, Christ, his companion, all are seen in a light which shows things just as they are. But the suffering, dying Savior by his side, is his one grand object. And, oh! precious faith! he throws himself on the heart of Jesus. "Lord, remember me when thou earnest into thy kingdom." He thinks not of himself, although in all the agonies of the cross. He asks for no relief from his bodily suffering, although he believed Jesus to be Lord. He only asks to be remembered by Him in His kingdom Oh! what holy separation in heart, from self, and sin, and suffering, and everything but Jesus — Lord — the Head of the coming kingdom.

It is perfectly clear from the prayer of the dying malefactor, that he believed the Lord would come again — and come again in power and glory. And this was the more remarkable, because there were no outward signs of power or glory in Jesus crucified. But faith sees as God sees. His own disciples had forsaken and denied Him, but the poor thief owns Him. His kingdom, which had been a subject of scorn and derision, he believes will come again, though at that very moment the King was rejected, and dying between two malefactors. All this is wondrous, marvelous faith! But he was taught of God, and that explains all. In a few moments he travels over an extent of truth far beyond what the apostles knew. He believes in the resurrection; and that Jesus will rise, and come again, in full, manifested, kingly glory.

In the Lord's reply, his faith is fully justified. He had cast himself on the heart of the Savior, and the resources of that heart were thrown open to him then, and forever. He reveals Himself to His dying saint as more than a king. He is a King, but He is more - He is a Savior — He is Jesus — the Savior. "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise." Precious testimony to a dying saint! And, oh! what grace to the chief of sinners! He would not have to wait for the manifested glory of the King, when every eye shall see Him. But, "Today," and "with me," were the gracious words of the Savior — Jesus. It was a present salvation. And from that shameful cross he ascends to a Paradise infinitely holier, happier, and brighter, than that from which our first parents, by transgression, fell.

To be continued if the lord will.
“Hark to the trump! behold it breaks
The sleep of ages now:
And lo! the light of glory shines
On many an aching brow.
Changed in a moment — raised to life,
The quick, the dead, arise,
Responsive to the angel’s voice,
That calls us to the skies.
Ascending through the crowded air,
On eagles’ wings we soar,
To dwell in the full light of love,
And sorrow there no more.
Undazzled by the glorious light
Of that beloved brow,
We see, without a single cloud,
We see the Savior now!
O Lord, the bright and blessed hope
That cheered us through the past,
Of full eternal rest in thee,
Is all fulfilled at last.
Praise, endless praise, alone becomes
This bright and blessed place,
Where every eye beholds unveiled
The mysteries of thy grace.”

Man’s Paradise Lost, God’s Paradise Found

But, it may be asked by some, “Is the soul in every case of conversion, as immediately fitted for heaven as in the case of the penitent thief on the cross?” Surely it is. The state of the believer in Christ, and his title to heaven are the same from the first. His experience may be much lower than his condition in Christ, and he may not be able at times “to read his title clear;” but they are ever

the same notwithstanding. “He that hath the Son hath life.” Every believer has Christ, nothing can be added to Him.

In the preaching of the gospel, the sinner is invited to come to Christ just as he is. No matter what may be his state of mind at the time, or his past history, he is entreated where he is, and as he is, to believe God’s testimony concerning His beloved Son—to look in faith to Christ—to come in heart to Him; and with this assurance front Christ Himself; “Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.” All that come are received, none are rejected. But they are received when they come, and never cast out. They may afterward wander for a time in heart and ways, but the Lord hath said, “I will in no wise cast out.”

There is no thought in the gospel, of the sinner needing to do anything—feel anything—or be anything, to fit him for the Savior. The sinner is addressed as lost. There can be nothing lower than this. There may be many degrees in sin, but there can be none in that awful word “lost.” In this condition he is invited, entreated, besought, to look to Jesus and be saved. “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.” Salvation meets the sinner, not for looking, or after looking, but in looking. Was it the first, second, or third look at the brazen serpent, that was new life to the dying Israelite? We all know it was the first. When he looked he lived. And so must it ever be with the perishing sinner. When he looks to Jesus he is saved. And let us not forget, that what meets him is “the salvation of God;” which includes every blessing. Here the believer begins his eternity with God’s blessed Son, although he may not go to paradise that same day. He may forget his high calling, and act contrary to his new life, and to Him who is its source, but the life remains unchangeably the same. Christ is the believer’s life, and nothing can ever touch the life of Christ. All this is most surely true, from the moment the sinner believes God’s testimony about Jesus. The believer himself may doubt it; “but the word of the Lord endureth forever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.” 1 Pet. 1:25.

In the case before us, that of the penitent thief, these precious truths are strikingly exemplified. What was he? A moral man? No. A religious man? No. What then? So far as we are informed, he was just a thief, and suffering the last penalty of the law for his crimes. Nevertheless, through grace working in his heart, he looked to Jesus, and cried, “Lord, remember me;” and he was saved on the gibbet. His closing eyes were met by a look of perfect love, and his heart assured of a present salvation. He had done nothing good before his conversion, and certainly he had no opportunity after. He could not be baptized or partake of the Lord’s Supper before he died. He was nailed to the cross. So far as we know, he went from earth to heaven, without ever having done one good action. Yet, notwithstanding, he was prepared from the moment he had faith in Jesus, to rejoin Him in Paradise. And such is the marvelous grace of God, blessed be His name, to every poor, perishing sinner that believes in Jesus. We need nothing but Jesus, we have all in Him, and we have Him from the time we first believe. Had the thief lived a hundred years after his conversion, and abounded in every good work, he would have had a richer crown, as the reward of service done to Christ; but he could never have been more fit for the unsullied light of God’s paradise in heaven.

In conclusion, may I ask—Is my reader thus prepared—thus ready to leave the present scene at any moment, and ascend to the perfect light of God’s presence in heaven? Were the Lord Himself to come now; or, as in the case before us, were the eyelids closing in death, and the puke nearly

stopped, would there be joy in departing? Solemn and important question! But one which must come before us all sooner or later. At such a moment, mere profession is worse than nothing. It is only a mockery, and the witness of our hypocrisy. Christ Himself, and Christ alone, is the sinner's fitness for the paradise of God. The poor thief had nothing more, and he needed nothing more; though no thanks to him for such a bright display of grace.

Know then, my dear reader, that there is no good thing in us; and that the outside place must be ours forever, unless we appear before God in the credit of another —unless we stand in the completeness of Christ all is lost —heaven is lost — Christ is lost — the soul is lost — all is lost, and lost forever. Oh, then! is Jesus thine — thine by faith? If there be any uncertainty on thy mind as to this question — Oh! delay not — rest not — sleep not — until it is perfectly settled, through faith in the blood of the Lamb, which cleanseth from all sin. Hast thou seen and condemned thyself as an utterly lost sinner? Dost thou believe God's testimony concerning the Person and work of Christ? If so, then thou art surely saved! Christ Himself is thine. He gave Himself for us. He is the perfect rest of thy soul now. "Only believe," and He will most surely be thy crown, and joy, and glory, forever and ever. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved." (John 3:16, 17.) "And there came a voice out of the cloud saying, This is my beloved Son; hear him." Luke 9:35.

No Partings Yonder

No shadows yonder — all light and song —
Each day I wander, and say, how long
Shall time me sunder from that dear throng?
No weeping yonder — all fled away!
While here I wander each weary day,
And sigh, as I ponder my long, long stay.
No partings yonder! — time and space never
Again shall sunder — hearts cannot sever —
Dearer and fonder, hands clasp forever.
None wanting yonder; — bought by the Lamb,
All gathered under the ever-green palm,
Loud as night's thunder ascends the glad psalm.
B.

Paul and Felix

(Read Acts 24)

This chapter furnishes a very remarkable contrast between a genuine Christian man, and a man of the world — Paul, the prisoner, and Felix, the judge. They are brought face to face, and we are permitted to see, in the light of inspiration, the springs of action in the prisoner and in the judge. Paul's eye was resting on the unseen and eternal; Felix' eye was resting on the seen and temporal. Paul was standing in the light of heaven; Felix was involved in the darkness of earth. In a word, they present a vivid and instructive contrast, in every respect. Let us meditate, for a few moments, on the striking picture. On looking closely at it, we see, what we may venture to designate, the faith, hope, and practice of the two men. And, first, then, let us hear from the lips of Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ, a statement of his faith, his hope, and his practice.

1. "But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and the prophets." Here was Paul's faith; "All things written in the law and the prophets." A Christian man, now, has, as we know, a wider field, being able to add, "All things which are written in the New Testament." This is the faith of a Christian man — the whole word of God — the undivided canon of inspiration. He wants nothing more; he can do with nothing less; he desires nothing different. "All scripture" is the creed of a Christian man; and, assuredly, it is amply sufficient. In it he finds his standard, his confession, his touchstone, his all. By it he can test himself and all around him — his own thoughts and the thoughts of his fellow men. Morals and doctrines can all be measured by this rule, and weighed in this balance. It is divinely sufficient for all ages and all nations. High and low, rich and poor, learned and ignorant, old and young, may find in the precious volume of God all they want. To say that we can ever stand in need of aught beside, is to cast dishonor upon that which our God has so graciously given.

2. And what was Paul's hope? "And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust." This is the hope of a Christian man — "hope toward God" — hope of resurrection. It is not toward man, nor has it reference to anything at this side of the grave. All earthly hopes and creature expectations vanish like the morning cloud. The stamp of death is on everything down here. The grave is the gloomy terminus of man's history in this world. But, blessed be God, the hope of a Christian man carries him beyond the grave altogether, and connects him with those unseen and eternal realities which belong to him as risen with Christ. There is nothing down here worth hoping for. All is rapidly passing away. The chilling breath of mortality is continually passing across earth's fairest scenes, and withering them up; and the fondest hopes we cherish, in reference to the creature, are sure to be most woefully disappointed. Paul was wise, therefore, when he said, "I have hope toward God." Had it been otherwise, his lot would have been most miserable. He had reached the end of all that this world could offer; he had proved the hollowness of man's fairest pretensions; what, therefore, remained for him, but to build all his hopes upon the One who quickeneth the dead — the living

God — the God of resurrection. Thus much as to the hope of a genuine Christian man.

3. Finally, one word as to Paul's practice. "And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offense toward God and men." Such is the practice of a Christian man. May it be ours, from day to day, in all the scenes of life. May we be able to carry ourselves in such a way as to give no offense — no just occasion to man, and to keep a clear, an uncondemning conscience in the presence of God. We ought not to be satisfied with less than this. We may be misunderstood, we may do things ignorantly, make mistakes, and fail in many things; but at this we should ever earnestly and uprightly aim, to have a conscience void of offense toward God and man. It will, unquestionably, demand "exercise" — it cannot be reached without difficulty; but it should be diligently sought, for it is the practice of a Christian man.

Such, then, is the lovely picture presented in the person of Paul, the prisoner — the picture of a true, practical Christian. His faith reposing upon the revelation of God — his hope reaching forth after resurrection, and his practice characterized by earnest exercise to live a blameless and harmless life in the sight of God and man. God grant that we may know and exhibit these things in this day of so much empty profession!

2. We may now glance rapidly at the picture of a thorough man of the world. We shall not dwell upon it, but merely call the reader's attention to its three prominent features.

1. As to what we may call the faith of the man of the world, the Spirit of God has given it to us in very forcible language, in the chapter before us. "And as Paul reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and of judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way, for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee." The faithful ambassador in bonds stood before the voluptuous governor, and thundered into his ear solemn and faithful accents concerning righteousness, temperance, and coming judgment — weighty themes! And as the prisoner spoke, the judge trembled. How unusual! It was something new — something quite the reverse of what is ordinarily witnessed in judgment halls. "Felix trembled." Poor creature! Well might he tremble; and well would it have been if his trembling for himself had led to his trusting in Jesus. But, alas! he contented himself with the faith of a "more convenient season;" which, so far as the record informs us, never came. It is vain for a man to speak of a "more convenient season," inasmuch as he is sure never to have it. There will ever be something occurring to hinder his looking seriously at the great question of his eternal destiny — something to render it inconvenient. He may "tremble" under some powerful appeal on the momentous subject of "judgment to come," but the world, in its varied forms, will come in and render it an inconvenient season, and thus he goes on from day to day, and from year to year, until death comes and ushers him into that place of everlasting misery, "where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." God's time is now. "Now is the accepted time, behold, now is the day of salvation." "Today, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts."

2. But look at Felix' hope. "He hoped also that money should have been given him of Paul." What a thought! Felix could send for Paul "often," with the hope of getting money; but as to righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come he had no "convenient season" for them at all. What an unfolding of the hidden springs of action is here! What a development of the roots of things. Eternity put off — money diligently sought after! All seasons are "convenient" if there be a hope of money — no season is convenient if it be the fear of judgment to come.

3. And, now, one word as to Felix' practice. "But after two years, Porcius Festus came into Felix' room; and Felix, willing to show the Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound." This completes the melancholy picture of a man of the world. His faith, "a convenient season," which never came — His hope, "money," which he never got — His practice, leaving a blameless man bound, to gain a little popularity. May the Spirit of God engrave upon our hearts the profitable lesson suggested by this graphic picture of Paul and Felix.

Peace

Fierce was the wild billow; dark was the night;
Oars labored heavily; foam glimmered white;
Mariners trembled; peril was nigh;
Then said the God of might, "Peace, it is I!"
Ridge of the mountain wave, lower thy crest!
Wail of Euroclydon, be thou at rest!
Peril can none be, sorrow must fly,
Where saith the Light of light, "Peace, it is I!"
Jesus, Deliverer! come thou to me! Soothe
Thou my voyaging over life's sea!
Then, when the storm of death roars sweeping by,
Whisper, O Truth of truth! "Peace, it is I!"

The Pilgrim's Wants

I want that adorning divine,
Thou only, my God, canst bestow;
I want in those beautiful garments to shine,
Which distinguish Thy household below.
I want every moment to feel
That Thy Spirit resides in my heart—
That His power is present, to cleanse and to heal,
And newness of life to impart.
I want — oh! I want to attain
Some likeness, my Savior! to Thee;
That longed-for resemblance once more to regain—
Thy comeliness, put upon me!
I want to be mark'd for Thine own,
Thy seal on my forehead to wear;
To receive that “new name” on the mystic white stone,
Which none but Thyself can declare.
I want so in Thee to abide,
As to bring forth some fruit to Thy praise.
The branch which Thou prunest, though feeble and dried,
May languish, but never decays.
I want Thine own hand to unbind
Each tie to terrestrial things—
Too tenderly cherish'd, too closely entwined,
Where my heart too tenaciously clings.
I want, by my aspect serene,
My actions and words, to declare,

That my treasure is placed in a country unseen—

That my heart's best affections are there.

I want, as a traveler, to haste

Straight onward, nor pause on my way;

Nor forethought, nor anxious contrivance, to waste

On the tent only pitch'd for a day.

A Few Words on Preaching

I believe we ought to preach the love of God to sinners and appeal to them more than we do, though I do so much more when addressing a mixed crowd, of probably careless people, than in the assemblies where you would hear me. In these, you must remember, that the great body are believers, and want rather to be better founded than called. All I look for is that the preaching should be such that it should convict of sin, and the impossibility of sin and God going together, so that it should be well understood that there is need of reconciling. And here Christ at once comes in, and atonement, and righteousness. Holiness precludes all sin from God, righteousness judges it. This, I believe, the sinner should understand; so that he should know what love applies to, yet that love should be fully preached. It does itself often convict of sin, for the conscience has often its wants already, and this draws them out; so that men find consciously where they are. But conviction of sin under righteousness is a very useful thing if grace be fully preached with it, and both unite in Christ. I think it very important that preachers should go to the world, especially now, with a message of distinct love to them. All I desire is that it should be love manifested in Christ, so as to bring out the sinner's condition to himself; that it should not be mere easiness as to sin; that it is a gracious love to sinners — grace abounding over sin — grace reigning through righteousness, than which nothing is more perfectly grace. Sometimes I think the love of God is so preached, as if it was a kind of boon of the sinner to accept it. It is God's joy. Still as a sinner, his being a debtor to God ought to be before his soul.....I count evangelizing the happiest service. Yet my heart yearns over the saints and the glory of Christ in the truth too. Happily, there is One above who does all.

The Red Heifer: Part 1

(Num. 29.)

The book of Numbers is, pre-eminently, a wilderness book. Its very opening lines bespeak its character throughout. “The Lord spake unto Moses in the wilderness of Sinai,.....take ye the sum of all the congregation of the children of Israel, after their families by the house of their fathers, with the number of their names, every male by their polls; from twenty years old and upward, all that are able to go forth to war in Israel: thou and Aaron shall number them by their armies” (Chap. 1:1-3.) And again, as another indication of the character of the book, we read, “And the Lord spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, Every man of the children of Israel shall pitch by his own standard, with the ensign of their father’s house.” (Chap. 2:1,2.) Finally, each one was required to “declare his pedigree,” as well as to rally round his proper standard. These things were specially needed for the walk and warfare of the wilderness. The true pedigree must be known, and the proper standard adhered to, else there will be uncertainty and confusion. The two things were intimately connected. If a man did not know his father’s house, he could not recognize his father’s ensign. If he did not know whence he had sprung, he could not tell where he was to stand in the day of battle. He should be able to trace his genealogy up to the great original source, the ancient stock; and he should also be able to take his stand, with certainty and decision, beside the divinely appointed standard. Uncertainty or vacillation is unworthy of a soldier.

The spiritual application of all this is too plain to need explanation. We, too, must be able to declare our pedigree and we must keep close to our standard, else we shall fail in the day of battle. The walk and warfare of the wilderness demand clearness as to these points. “He that is born of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.” “We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.” “Who is he that overcometh the world but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?”

But we merely refer to the above as illustrating the true character of the book of Numbers — a character fully sustained throughout. In the book of Genesis, we see the election of the people of God; in Exodus, their redemption; in Leviticus, their priestly service and worship; and, in Numbers, their walk and warfare in the wilderness. These are the grand prominent characteristics of the books, while, as might be expected, many other things are presented in connection.

Now, this will account to the reader for the fact of our having the ordinance of the red heifer introduced in the book of Numbers, and not, as we might naturally expect, in the book of Leviticus, where all the offerings and sacrifices are so minutely recorded. It is a provision for defilements by the way, and furnishes a striking and beautiful type of the death of Christ, as a purification for sin to meet our need in passing through a defiling world — a moral wilderness — onward to our eternal rest above. It is truly a most instructive figure, and tells forth most precious and needed truth. May the Holy Ghost, who has penned the record, be graciously pleased to expound and apply it to our souls!

“And the Lord spake unto Moses, and unto Aaron, saying, This is the ordinance of the law which the Lord hath commanded, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring thee a red heifer without spot, wherein is no blemish, and upon which never came yoke.” When, with the eye of faith, we gaze upon the Lord Jesus, we not only see Him to be the spotless one, in His own holy Person; but also one who never wore the yoke of sin. The Holy Ghost is ever the jealous Guardian of the Person of Christ, and delights to present Him to the soul in all His beauty and preciousness. Every type and every shadow designed to set Him forth exhibits the same careful guardianship. Thus, in the red heifer, we are taught that not only was our blessed Savior intrinsically pure and spotless, but that He stood perfectly clear and free from every mark and trace of sin. No yoke of sin ever came upon His sacred neck. When He speaks of “My yoke,” it is the yoke of implicit subjection to the Father’s will in all things. This was the only yoke He ever wore, and this yoke was never off for one moment, during the entire of His spotless and perfect career — from the manger, where He lay a helpless babe, to the cross, where He expired as a victim.

But He wore no yoke of sin. Let this be distinctly understood. He went to the cross to expiate our sins, to lay the groundwork of our perfect purification from all sin; but He did this as one who had never, at any time during His blessed life, worn the yoke of sin. He was free, and as such, was fitted to do the great work of expiation. To think of Him as bearing the yoke of sin in His life, would be to think of Him as unfit to atone for it in His death. “Wherein is no blemish, and whereon never came yoke.” It is as needful to remember the “whereon” as the “wherein.” Both expressions are designed by the Holy Ghost to set forth the perfection of our blessed Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who was not only internally spotless, but also externally free from every trace of sin. Neither in His Person, nor in His relationships, was He, in any wise, obnoxious to the claims of sin or death. He entered into all the reality of our circumstances and our condition; but in Him was no sin, and on Him no yoke of sin.

“Touched with a sympathy within,
He knows our feeble frame;
He knows what sore temptations mean,
For He has felt the same.
But spotless, undefiled, and pure,
The great Redeemer stood,
While Satan’s fiery darts He bore,
And did resist to blood.”

“And ye shall give her unto Eleazar the priest, that he may bring her forth without the camp, and one shall slay her before his face.” The thoughtful student of scripture will not pass over any expression, how trivial soever it may seem to be. Every little word is pregnant with meaning. Each little point, feature, and circumstance contains some spiritual teaching for the soul. Of course, infidels and rationalists do not see this, and hence when they approach the divine Volume, they make the saddest havoc. They see flaws where the spiritual student sees gems. They see incongruities and contradictions where the devout, self-distrusting, Spirit-taught disciple beholds

divine harmonies and moral glories. This is only what we might expect, and it is well to remember it, now-a-days. "God is His own interpreter" in scripture, as well as in providence; and if we wait on Him, He will assuredly make it plain. But as in providence, "Blind unbelief is sure to err, and scan His ways in vain," so, in scripture, it is sure to err and scan His lines in vain. And the devout poet might have gone further, for surely unbelief will not only scan God's ways and God's word in vain, but turn both the one and the other into an occasion of making a blasphemous attack upon God Himself, upon His nature, and upon His character, as well as upon the revelation which He has been pleased to give us. The infidel would rudely smash the lamp of inspiration, and quench its heavenly light, and involve us all in that deep gloom and moral darkness which enwrap his own misguided mind.

We have been led into the foregoing train of thought while pondering the third verse of our chapter. We are exceedingly desirous to cultivate the habit of profound and careful study of scripture. It is of immense importance. To say or to think that there is so much as a single clause or a single expression, from cover to cover of the inspired Volume, unworthy of our prayerful meditation, is to imply that God the Holy Ghost has thought it worth His while to write what we do not think worth our while to ponder. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God." This commands our reverence. "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning." This awakens our personal interest. The former of these quotations proves that scripture comes from God; the latter proves that it comes to us. That and this taken together, bind us to God by the divine link of holy scripture — a link which the devil, in this our day, is doing his very utmost to snap, and that, too, by means of agents of acknowledged moral worth and intellectual power. The devil does not select an ignorant or an immoral man to attack the Bible, for he knows full well that the former could not speak, and the latter would not be listened to. But he craftily takes up some amiable, benevolent, and popular person — some one of blameless morals — a laborious student — a profound scholar, a deep and original thinker. Thus he throws dust in the eyes of the simple, the unlearned, and the unwary.

Christian reader, we pray you to remember this. If we can deepen in your soul the sense of the unspeakable value of your Bible; if we can warn you off from the dangerous rocks and quicksands of rationalism and infidelity; if we can stablish, strengthen, and settle you in the assurance that when you are hanging over the sacred page of scripture, you are drinking at a fountain every drop of which has flowed into it from the very bosom of God Himself; if we can reach all or any of these truly desirable results, we shall not regret the digression from our chapter to which we shall now return.

"Ye shall give her unto Eleazar the priest." We have in the priest and the victim, a joint type of the Person of Christ. He was at once the victim and the priest; but He did not enter upon His priestly functions until His work as a victim was accomplished; and this will explain the expression in the last clause of the third verse, "one shall slay her before his face." Heaven, not earth, is the sphere of Christ's priestly service. The apostle expressly declares, as the sum of a most elaborate and amazing piece of argument, that, "we have such a high priest, who is set on the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man. For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer. For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law." (Heb. 8:1-4.) "Put Christ

being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption." "For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." (Chap. 9:11, 12, 24.) "But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, forever sat down on the right hand of God." Chap. 10:12.

From all these passages, taken in connection with Num. 19:3, we learn two things, namely, that the death of Christ is not presented as the proper, ordinary act of priesthood, and further, that heaven, and not earth, is the sphere of His priestly ministry. There is nothing new in these statements; others have advanced them repeatedly; but it is important to notice everything tending to illustrate the divine perfection and precision of Scripture. It is deeply interesting to find a truth which shines brightly in the pages of the New Testament, wrapped up in some ordinance or ceremony of Old Testament times. Such discoveries are ever welcome to the intelligent reader of the word. The truth, no doubt, is the same wherever it is found; but when it breaks upon us with meridian brightness in the New Scriptures, and is dimly shadowed forth in the Old, we not only have the truth established, but the divine unity of the Volume illustrated and enforced.

But we must not pass over, unnoticed, the place where the death of the victim was accomplished. "That he may bring her forth without the camp." The priest and the victim are identified, and form a joint type of Christ; but it is added that "one shall slay her before his face," simply because the death of Christ could not be represented as the act of priesthood. What marvelous accuracy! And yet it is not marvelous, for what else should we look for in a Book every line of which is from God Himself! Had we read, "lie shall slay her," then the nineteenth chapter of Numbers would be at variance with the epistle to the Hebrews. But no; the harmonies of the Volume shine forth among its brightest glories. May we have grace to discern and appreciate them!

Jesus, then, suffered without the gate. "Wherefore Jesus, also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate." (Heb. 13:12.) He took the outside place, and His voice falls on the ear from thence. Do we listen to it? Do we understand it? Should we not ponder more deeply and seriously the place where Jesus died? Are we to rest satisfied with reaping the benefits of Christ's death, without seeking fellowship with Him in His rejection? God forbid. "Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach." There is immense power in these words. They should rouse our whole moral being to seek more complete identification with a rejected Savior. Shall we see Him die outside, while we reap the benefits of His death and remain within? Shall we seek a home, and a place, and a name, and a portion in that world from which our Lord and Master was an outcast? Shall we aim at getting on in a world which could not tolerate that blessed One to whom we owe our present and everlasting felicity? Shall we aspire after honor, position, and wealth where our Master found only a manger, a cross, a borrowed grave? May the language of our hearts be, "Far be the thought." And may the language of our lives be, "Far be the thing." May this language come forth, in glowing fervor from our hearts, and be inscribed in unmistakable characters upon our entire course and conduct! May we yield a full, clear, and hearty response to the Spirit's call to "Go forth Christian reader, let us never forget, that when we look at the death of Christ, we see two things, namely, the death of a Victim and the death of a Martyr — a Victim for sin, a Martyr for righteousness — a Victim, under the hand of God, a Martyr, under the hand of man. He suffered as a Victim, that we might never suffer.

Blessed be His name, for evermore. He suffered for sin that we might never taste such suffering. But then His martyr-sufferings, His sufferings for righteousness under the hand of man, these we may know. "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake; having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me." (Phil. 1:29, 30.) It is a positive gift to be allowed to suffer with Christ. Do we so esteem it?

To be continued, if the Lord will.

The Red Heifer: Part 2

In contemplating the death of Christ, as typified by the ordinance of the red heifer, we see not only the complete putting away of sin, but also the judgment of all that is in this present evil world. These two things must never be separated — the judgment of sin, root and branch — and the judgment of this world. The former sets the exercised conscience entirely at rest; while the latter delivers the heart from the ensnaring influence of the world in all its multiplied forms. That purges the conscience from all sense of guilt; this snaps the link which binds the heart and the world together.

Now, it is of the utmost importance for the reader to understand and enter experimentally into the connection existing between these two things. It is quite possible to miss this grand link even while holding and contending for a vast amount of evangelical truth; and it may be confidently affirmed that where this link is missing, there must be a most deplorable lack in the Christian character. We frequently meet with earnest souls who have been brought under the convicting and awakening power of the Holy Spirit, but have not yet known, for the ease of their troubled consciences, the full value of the death of Christ, in putting away, forever, all their sins, and bringing them nigh to God, without a stain upon the soul, or a sting in the conscience. If this be the present actual condition of the reader, he must pause here, and dwell upon the fourth verse of the nineteenth chapter of Numbers. May the Spirit of God enable him to understand, appreciate, and apply the truth contained in this passage!

“And Eleazar the priest shall take of her blood with his finger, and sprinkle of her blood directly before the tabernacle of the congregation seven times.” Here we have the solid groundwork of all real purification. We know, of course, that, in the type, it is only, as the inspired apostle tells us, a question of “sanctifying to the purifying of the flesh.” (Heb. 9:13.) But we have to look beyond the type to the Antitype—beyond the shadow to the Substance. In the sevenfold sprinkling of the blood of the red heifer, before the tabernacle of the congregation, we have a figure of the perfect presentation of the blood of Christ to God, as the only ground of the meeting place between God and the conscience. The number “seven,” as has frequently been observed, is expressive of perfection; and in the figure before us, we see the perfection attaching to the death of Christ, as an atonement for sin, presented to, and accepted by, God. All rests upon this ground. The blood has been shed, and presented to a holy God, as a perfect atonement for sin. This, when simply received by faith, must relieve the conscience from all sense of guilt. There is nothing before God but the perfection of the atoning work of Christ. Sin has been judged and put away. It has been completely obliterated by the precious blood of Christ. To believe this is to enter into perfect repose of conscience.

And here let the reader carefully note that there is no further allusion to the sprinkling of blood throughout the entire of this singularly interesting chapter. This is precisely in keeping with the doctrine of Heb. 9 and 10. It is but another illustration of the divine harmony of the Volume. The sacrifice of Christ, being divinely perfect, needs not to be repeated. Its efficacy is divine and

eternal. "But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God." (Heb. 9:11-14.) Observe the force of those two words "once" and "eternal." See how they set forth the completeness and divine efficacy of the sacrifice of Christ. The blood was shed once and forever. To think of a repetition of that great work would be to deny its everlasting and all-sufficient value, and reduce it to the level of the blood of bulls and goats.

But further, "It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; for then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world; but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." Sin, therefore, has been put away. It cannot be put away and, at the same time, be on the believer's conscience. This is plain. It must either be admitted that the believer's sins are blotted out, and his conscience perfectly purged, or that Christ must die over again. But this latter is not only needless, but wholly out of the question; for, as the apostle goes on to say, "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment; so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time, apart from sin, unto salvation."

There is something most marvelous in the patient elaborateness with which the Holy Ghost argues out this entire subject. He expounds, illustrates, and enforces the great doctrine of the completeness of the sacrifice in such a way as to carry conviction to the soul, and relieve the conscience of its heavy burden. Such is the exceeding grace of God that He has not only accomplished the work of eternal redemption for us, but, in the most patient and painstaking manner, has argued and reasoned, and proved the whole point in question, so as not to leave one hair's breadth of ground on which to base an objection. Let us hearken to His further powerful reasonings, and may the Spirit apply them in power to the anxious reader!

"For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then, would they not have ceased to be offered because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins." But that which the blood of bulls could never do, the blood of Jesus has forever done. This makes all the difference. All the blood that ever flowed around Israel's altars — the millions of sacrifices offered according to the requirements of the Mosaic ritual, could not blot out one stain from the conscience, or justify a sin-hating God in receiving a sinner to Himself. "It is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins;" and it is not possible that the blood of Christ should leave sins unatoned for. Blessed, emancipating, triumphant conclusion! A conclusion arrived at by God the Holy Ghost for the eternal tranquility of

every anxious soul, and the confusion of the archenemy and accuser. But let us continue to drink in this divine and heart-cheering logic.

“Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come, (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God.....By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once.” Mark the contrast. God had no pleasure in the endless round of sacrifices under the law. They did not please Him. They left wholly unaccomplished that which He had in His loving heart to do for His people, namely, to rid them completely of sin’s heavy load, and bring them nigh unto Himself in perfect peace of conscience and liberty of heart. This Jesus, by the one offering of His blessed body, did. He did the will of God, and blessed forever be His name, He has not to do His work over again. We may refuse to believe that the work is done — refuse to commit our souls to its efficacy — to enter into the rest which it is calculated to impart — to enjoy the holy liberty of spirit, which it is fitted to yield; but there stands the work in its own imperishable virtue, and there too stand the Spirit’s arguments respecting that work, in their own unanswerable force and clearness; and neither Satan’s dark suggestions, nor our own unbelieving reasonings, can ever touch either the one or the other.

“And every priest standeth daily ministering, and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices which can never take away sins; but this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, forever sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected forever (τετελειωκεν εις το διηνεκες) them that are sanctified.” It is due to the blood of Christ that it should impart eternal perfection; and, we may surely add, it is due to it likewise that our souls should taste that perfection. No one need ever imagine that He is doing honor to the work of Christ, or to the Spirit’s testimony respecting that work, when he refuses to accept that perfect remission of sins which is proclaimed to him through the blood of the cross. It is no sign of true piety, or of pure religion, to deny what the grace of God has done for us in Christ, and what the record of the Eternal Spirit has presented to our souls on the page of inspiration.

Christian reader, anxious enquirer, does it not seem strange that, when the word of God presents to our view Christ seated at the right hand of God, in virtue of accomplished atonement, we should be, virtually, in no wise better off than those who had merely a human priest standing daily ministering and offering the same round of sacrifices? We have a divine Priest who has sat down forever. They had a merely human priest, who could never, in his official capacity, sit down at all, and yet are we in the stale of the mind, in the apprehension of the soul, in the actual condition of the conscience, in no respect better off than they? Can it be possible that, with a perfect work to rest upon, our souls should never know perfect rest? The Holy Ghost, as we have seen in these numerous quotations taken from the epistle to the Hebrews, has left nothing unsaid to satisfy our souls as to the question of the complete putting away of sin by the precious blood of Christ. Why then should you not, this moment, enjoy full, settled peace of conscience? Has the blood of Jesus done nothing more for you than the blood of a bullock did for a Jewish worshipper?

It may, however, be that the reader is ready to say in reply to all that we have been seeking to urge upon him, “I do not, in the least, doubt the efficacy of the blood of Jesus. I believe it cleanseth from all sin. I believe, most thoroughly, that all who simply put their trust in that blood are perfectly safe

and will be eternally happy. My difficulty does not lie here at all. What troubles me is not the efficacy of the blood, in which I fully believe, but my own personal interest in that blood of which I have no satisfactory evidence. This is the secret of all my trouble. The doctrine of the blood is as clear as a sunbeam; but the question of my interest therein is involved in hopeless obscurity.”

Now if this be at all the embodiment of the reader's feelings on this momentous point, it only proves the necessity of his deeply pondering the fourth verse of the nineteenth of Numbers. There he will see that the true basis of all purification is found in this, that the blood of atonement has been presented to God. Atonement is not made up of the blood of Jesus and our interest in that blood, but of the blood alone, as we read in Lev. 17, “It is the blood that maketh atonement for the soul.” This is a most precious truth, but one little understood. It is of all importance that the really anxious soul should have a clear view of the subject of atonement. It is so natural to us all to be occupied with our thoughts and feelings about the blood of Christ, rather than with that blood itself, and with God's thoughts respecting it. If the blood has been perfectly presented to God, if He has accepted it, if He has glorified Himself in the putting away of sin, then what remains for the divinely exercised conscience but to find perfect repose in that which has met all the claims of God, harmonized His attributes, glorified His character, and laid the foundations of that marvelous platform whereon a sin-hating God and a poor sin-destroyed sinner can meet? Why introduce the question of my interest in the blood of Christ, as though that work were not complete without aught of mine, call it what you will, my interest, my feelings, my experience, my appreciation, my appropriation, my anything? Why not rest in Christ alone? This would be really having an interest in Him. But the very moment the heart gets occupied with the question of its own interest — the moment the eye is taken off that divine object which the word of God and the Holy Ghost present, then spiritual darkness and perplexity must ensue, and the soul, instead of rejoicing in the perfection of the work of Christ, is tormented by looking at its own poor, imperfect feelings.

But, it may still be urged, Must we not have an interest in the blood? Must we not appropriate, must we not apply that precious sacrifice to our own souls? We repeat, and press it with much earnestness upon the exercised reader, if only you heartily believe that the blood has been presented to, and accepted by, God — if you believe that God is satisfied as to sin—that the perfect record of Christ's atoning work has been laid, with His own hand, upon the throne of God, then have you, in very deed, a deep, personal, and eternal interest in the blood. This, truly, is to apply, appreciate, and appropriate, the sacrifice of the Son of God — to know its perfect efficacy for your own soul. Depend upon it, beloved friend, the devil is seeking to cast dust in your eyes, to darken, perplex, and confound your soul, by leading you to dwell upon your own imperfect apprehension rather than upon the sevenfold sprinkling of the blood of atonement, before the true tabernacle of the congregation.

“The atoning work is done,

The Victim's blood is shed;

And Jesus now is gone,

His people's cause to plead:

He stands in heaven their great High Priest

And bears their names upon His breast.”

Here, blessed be God, we have the stable groundwork of “purification for sin,” and of perfect peace for the conscience. “The atoning work is done.” All is finished. The great Antitype of the red heifer has been slain. He gave Himself up to death, under the wrath and judgment of a righteous God, that all who simply put their trust in Him might know, in the deep secret of their own souls, divine purification and perfect peace. We are purified, as to the conscience, not by our thoughts about the blood, but by the blood itself. We must insist upon this. God Himself has made out our title for us, and that title is found in the blood alone. Oh! that most precious blood of Jesus that speaks profound peace to every troubled soul that will simply lean upon its imperishable virtue. Why, we may ask, is it that the blessed doctrine of the blood is so little understood and appreciated? Why will people persist in looking to aught else, or in mingling aught else with it? May the Holy Ghost lead the anxious reader, as he reads these lines, to stay his whole soul upon the atoning sacrifice of the spotless Lamb of God!

To be continued, if the Lord will.

The Red Heifer: Part 3

Having, in our last paper, endeavored to present to the reader the precious truth unfolded to us in the death of the red heifer, we shad now ask him to join us while, for a few moments, we sit and meditate upon the burning of the heifer. We have looked at the blood, let us now gaze upon the ashes. In the former, we have the sacrificial death of Christ, as the only purification for sin. In the latter, we have the remembrance of that death applied to the heart, by the Spirit of God, in order to remove any defilement contracted in our walk from day to day. This gives great completeness and beauty to this most interesting type. God has not only made provision for past sins, but also for present defilement, so that we may be ever before Him in all the value and credit of the perfect work of Christ. He would have us treading the courts of His sanctuary, the holy precincts of His presence, "clean every whit." And not only does He Himself see us thus; but, blessed be His Name, He would have us thus in our own inward self-consciousness. He would give us, by His Spirit through the word, the deep inward sense of perfect cleanness is His sight, so that the current of our communion with Him may flow on without a ripple and without a curve. "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." But if we fail to walk according to the light — if we forget, and, in our forgetfulness, touch the unclean thing, how is our communion to be restored? Only by the removal of the defilement. And how is this to be affected? By the application to our hearts and consciences, of the precious truth of the death of Christ. This is the work of God's Spirit, in each case, and the type thereof is presented to us in the ashes of the red heifer.

"And one shall burn the heifer in his sight.....And the priest shall take cedar wood, and hyssop, and scarlet, and cast it into the midst of the burning of the heifer.....And a man that is clean shall gather up the ashes of the heifer, and lay them up without the camp in a clean place; and it shall be kept for the congregation of the children of Israel, for a water of separation: it is a purification for sin."

It is the purpose of God that His children should be purified from all iniquity, and that they should walk in separation from this present evil world where all is death and defilement, when viewed from a divine stand point. "Grace to you, and peace, from God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father." (Gal. 1:4.) And again, "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Titus 2:13, 14.

It is remarkable how constantly the Spirit of God presents, in intimate connection, the full relief of the conscience from all sense of guilt, and the deliverance of the heart from the moral influence of this present evil world. Now, it should be our cave, beloved Christian reader, to maintain the integrity of this connection. Of course, it is only by the grace of the Holy Ghost working in us that we can do so; but our souls ought to seek earnestly to understand and practically carry out the

blessed link of connection between the death of Christ as an atonement for sin, and as the moral power of separation from this world. Many of the people of God never get beyond the former, if they even get that length. Many seem to be quite satisfied with the knowledge of forgiveness of sins through the atoning work of Christ, while, at the same time, they fail to realize deadness to the world in virtue of the death of Christ, and their identification with Him therein.

Now, when we stand and gaze upon the burning of the red heifer in Num. 19 — when we examine that mystic heap of ashes, what do we find? It may be said, in reply, “We find our sins there.” True, blessed be the God of all grace, and blessed be the Son of His love, we do indeed find our sins, our iniquities, our trespasses, our deep crimson guilt, all reduced to ashes. But is there nothing more? Can we not, by a careful analysis, discover something more? Unquestionably. We find nature there, in every stage of its existence— from the highest to the lowest point in its history. Moreover, we find all the glory of this world there. The cedar and the hyssop represent nature in its widest extremes; and, in giving its extremes, they take in all that lies between. “Solomon spake of trees, from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall.” “Scarlet” is viewed, by those who have carefully examined scripture on the point, as the expression of the glory of this world — the glory of man. In a word, then, we see, in the burning of the heifer, the end of all that is in this world, and the complete annihilation of the flesh with all its belongings. All this renders the burning of the heifer deeply significant. It shadows forth a truth which is too little known, and, when known, too readily forgotten — a truth embodied in those memorable words of the apostle, “God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, whereby the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.”

We are all far too prone to accept the cross as the ground of escape from all the consequences of our sins, and of full acceptance with God, and, at the same time, refuse it as the ground of our complete separation from the world. True, it is the expression of our entire deliverance from guilt and consequent condemnation; but it is more than this. It has severed us, forever, from all that pertains to this world, through which we are passing. Are my sins put away? Yes; blessed be God. According to what? According to the perfection of Christ’s atoning sacrifice as estimated by God Himself. Well, then, such precisely is the measure of our deliverance from this world — from its fashions, its maxims, its habits, and principles. The believer has absolutely nothing in common with this world, in so far as he enters into the spirit and power of the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. That cross has dislodged him from everything here below, and made him a stranger and a pilgrim in this world. The truly devoted heart sees the dark shadow of the cross looming over all the glitter and glare, the pomp and fashion, of this world. Paul saw this, and the sight of it caused him to esteem the world, in its very highest aspect, in its most attractive forms, and brightest glories, as dross.

Such was the judgment formed of this world by one who had been brought up at the feet of Gamaliel. “The world is crucified unto me,” said he, “and I unto the world.” Such was Paul, and such should every Christian be — a stranger on earth — a citizen of heaven, and this not merely in sentiment or theory, but in downright fact and reality; for as surely as our deliverance from hell fire is more than a mere sentiment and theory, so surely is our separation from this present evil age. The one is as positive and as real as the other.

But here let us ask, Why is not this great practical truth more pressed home upon the hearts of evangelical Christians, at the present moment? Why are we so slow to urge upon one another the separating power of the cross of Christ? If my heart loves Jesus, I shall not seek a place, a portion, or a name, where He found only a malefactor's cross.

This, dear reader, is the simple way to look at the matter. Do you really love Christ? Has your heart been touched and attracted by His wondrous love to you? If so, remember that He was cast out by this world. Yes, Jesus was, and still is, an outcast from this world; and be it remembered that one of Satan's special devices is to lead people to accept salvation from Christ while, at the same time, they refuse to be identified with Him in His rejection — to make use of the atoning work of the cross while abiding comfortably in the world that is stained with the guilt of nailing Christ thereto. In other words, he leads people to think and to say that the offense of the cross has ceased; that the world of the nineteenth century is totally different from the world of the first; that if the Lord Jesus Christ were on earth now, He would meet with very different treatment from that which He received then; that it is not now a pagan world, but a Christian one, and this makes a material and a fundamental difference; that now it is quite right for a Christian to accept of citizenship in this world, to have a name, a place, and a portion here, seeing it is not the same world at all as that which nailed the Son of God to the tree as a malefactor.

Oh! Christian reader, will you pause and ponder this? We feel it incumbent on us to press upon all those who read our pages that this is, in very deed, a lie of the archenemy of souls. The world is the world still. It hates Jesus as cordially as when the cry went forth, "Away with him! Crucify him!" There is no change. If only we try the world by the same grand test, we shall find it to be the same evil, God-hating, Christ-rejecting world as ever. And what is that test? Christ crucified. May this solemn truth be engraved on our hearts! May we realize and manifest its formative power! May it detach us more completely from all that belongs to the world! May we be enabled to understand more fully the truth presented in the ashes of the red heifer! Then shall our separation from the world and our dedication to Christ be more intense and real. The Lord, in His exceeding goodness, grant that thus it may be, with all His people, in this day of hollow worldly profession!

Let us now consider, for a moment, how the ashes were to be applied.

"He that toucheth the dead body of any man shall be unclean seven days. He shall purify himself with it on the third day, and on the seventh day he shall be clean; but if he purify not himself the third day, then the seventh day he shall not be clean. Whosoever toucheth the dead body of any man that is dead, and purifieth not himself, defileth the tabernacle of the Lord; and that soul shall be cut off from Israel: because the water of separation was not sprinkled upon him, he shall be unclean; his uncleanness is yet upon him."

It is a solemn thing to have to do with God — to walk with Him from day to day, in the midst of a defiled and defiling scene. He cannot tolerate any uncleanness upon those with whom He deigns to walk, and in whom He dwells. He can pardon and blot out, He can heal, cleanse, and restore; but He cannot sanction evil, or suffer sin upon His people. It would be a denial of His very name and nature were He to do so. This, while deeply solemn, is deeply blessed. It is our joy to have to do with One whose presence demands and secures holiness. We are passing through a world in which we are surrounded by defiling influences. Of course defilement is not now contracted by contact with "a dead body, or a bone of a man, or a grave." These things were, as we know, types

or figures of things moral and spiritual with which we are in danger of coming in contact every day of our lives. We doubt not that those who have to do much with the things of this world are most painfully sensible of the immense difficulty of escaping with unsoiled hands. Hence the need of holy vigilance in all our habits and associations, lest we contract defilement, and interrupt our communion with God. He must have us in a condition worthy of Himself. "Be ye holy, for I am holy."

But the anxious reader whose whole soul breathes after holiness, may eagerly inquire, "What then, are we to do, if it is true that we are thus surrounded on all hands by defiling influences, and if we are so prone to contract that defilement? Furthermore, if it is impossible to have fellowship with God, with unclean hands and a condemning conscience, whatever are we to do?" First of all, then, we should say, be watchful. Wait much and earnestly on God. He is faithful and gracious — a prayer-hearing and a prayer-answering God — a liberal and an unupbraiding Giver. "He giveth more grace." This is positively a blank check which faith can fill up to any amount. Is it the real purpose of your soul to get on, to advance in the divine life, to grow in personal holiness? Then beware how you continue, for a single hour, in contact with what soils your hands and wounds your conscience, grieves the Holy Ghost and mars your communion. Be decided! Be whole-hearted! Give up, at once, the unclean thing, whatever it be, habit, association, or anything else. Cost what it may, give it up. Entail what loss it may, abandon it. No worldly gain, no earthly advantage, could compensate for the loss of a pure conscience, an uncondemning heart, and the light of your Father's countenance. Are you not convinced of this? If so, seek grace to carry out your conviction.

But it may be further asked, "What is to be done when defilement is actually contracted? How is the defilement to be removed?" Hear the reply in the figurative language of Num. 19. "And for an unclean person, they shall take of the ashes of the burnt heifer of purification for sin, and running water shall be put thereto in a vessel.

And a clean person shall take hyssop and dip it in the water, and sprinkle it upon the tent, and upon all the vessels, and upon the persons that were there, and upon him that touched a bone, or one slain, or one dead, or a grave. And the clean person shall sprinkle upon the unclean on the third day, and on the seventh day; and on the seventh day he shall purify himself, and wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and shall be clean at even."

The reader will remark that, in the twelfth and eighteenth verses, there is a double action set forth. There is the action of the third day, and the action of the seventh day. Both were essentially necessary to remove the ceremonial defilement caused by contact with the varied forms of death above specified. Now, what did this double action typify? What is it in our spiritual history that answers thereto? We believe it to be this. When we, through lack of watchfulness and spiritual energy, touch the unclean thing and get defiled, we may be ignorant of it; but God is not ignorant. He knows all about it. He cares for us, and is looking after us, not, blessed be His name, as an angry judge or stern censor, but as a loving Father, who will never impute anything to us, because it was all long ago imputed to the One who died in our stead. He knows all about it, and He will make us know it too. Yes, He will make us feel it deeply and keenly. He will be a faithful reprover of the unclean thing, and He can reprove all the more powerfully, simply because He will never reckon it against us. The Holy Spirit brings our sin to remembrance, and this causes unutterable

anguish of heart. This anguish may continue for some time. It may be moments, days, months, or years. It was only last evening we heard of a young person who was rendered miserable for three years, by having gone with some worldly friends on an excursion. This convicting operation of the Holy Ghost we believe to be shadowed forth by the action of the third day. He first brings our sin to remembrance, and then He graciously brings to our remembrance and applies to our souls, through the written word, the value of the death of Christ as that which has already met the defilement which we so lightly contract. This answers to the action of the seventh day — removes the defilement and restores the communion.

And be it carefully remembered, that we can never get rid of defilement in any other way. We may seek to forget, to slur over, to heal the wound slightly, to make little of the matter, to let time obliterate it from the tablet of memory. It will never do. Nay, it is most dangerous work. We know of few things more disastrous than trifling with conscience or the claims of holiness. And it is as foolish as it is dangerous; for God has, in His grace, made full provision for the removal of the uncleanness which His holiness condemns. But the uncleanness must be removed, else communion is impossible. “If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.” The suspension of a believer’s communion is what answers to the cutting off of a member from the congregation of Israel. The Christian can never be cut off from Christ, but his communion can be interrupted by a single sinful thought. It is well to remember this. It is a serious thing to trifle with sin. We may rest assured we cannot possibly have fellowship with God and walk in defilement. To think so is to blaspheme the very name, the very nature, the very throne and majesty of God. No, dear reader, we must keep a clean conscience, and maintain the holiness of God, else we shall very soon make shipwreck of faith and break down altogether. May the Lord keep us walking softly and tenderly, watchfully and prayerfully, until we have laid aside our bodies of sin and death, and entered upon that bright and blessed world above where nothing that defileth can ever enter.

To be continued, if the Lord will.

The Red Heifer: Part 4

In studying the ordinances and ceremonies of the Levitical economy, nothing is more striking than the jealous care with which the God of Israel watched over His people, in order that they might be preserved from every defiling influence. By day and by night, awake and asleep, at home and abroad, in the bosom of the family and in the solitary walk, His eye was upon them. He looked after their food, their raiment, their domestic habits and arrangements. He carefully instructed them as to what they might and what they might not eat, what they might and what they might not wear. He even set forth distinctly His mind as to the very touching and handling of things. In short, He surrounded them with barriers amply sufficient, had they only attended to them, to resist the entire tide of defilement to which they were exposed on every side.

In all this we read, in unmistakable characters, the holiness of God; but we read also, as distinctly, the grace of God. If divine holiness could not suffer defilement upon the people, divine grace made ample provision for the removal thereof. This provision is set forth under two forms, namely, the blood of atonement, and the office of the priesthood. Precious provision! A provision illustrating, at once, the holiness and grace of God. The blood imparts perfect cleanness; the priesthood maintains it. The former makes us clean, the latter keeps us clean. We are made as clean as the blood can make us; and we are kept as clean as the priesthood can keep us. Did we not know the ample provisions of divine grace, the lofty claims of divine holiness would be perfectly overwhelming; but being assured of the former, we can heartily rejoice in the latter. Could we desire to see the standard of holiness lowered a single hair's breadth? Assuredly not. How could we, or why should we, seeing that divine grace has fully provided what divine holiness demands? An Israelite of old might shudder as he hearkened to such words as these, "He that toucheth the dead body of any man shall be unclean seven days;" and again, "Whosoever toucheth the dead body of any man that is dead, and purifieth not himself, defileth the tabernacle of the Lord; and that soul shall be cut off from Israel." These words might indeed terrify his heart. He might well exclaim, "What am I to do? How can I get on? It seems perfectly impossible for me to escape defilement." But, then, what of the ashes of the burnt heifer? What of the water of separation? What could these mean? They set forth the memorial of the sacrificial death of Christ applied to the heart by the power of the Spirit of God. "He shall purify himself with it the third day, and on the seventh day he shall be clean; but if he purify not himself the third day, then the seventh day he shall not be clean." If we contract defilement, even though it be through negligence, that defilement must be removed, ere our communion can be restored. But we cannot get rid of the soil by any effort of our own. It can only be by the use of God's gracious provision, even the water of purification. An Israelite could no more remove, by his own efforts, the defilement caused by the touch of a dead body, than he could have broken Pharaoh's yoke, or delivered himself from the lash of Pharaoh's taskmasters.

And let the reader observe that it was not a question of offering a fresh sacrifice. It is of special importance that this should be distinctly seen and understood. The death of Christ cannot be repeated. "Christ being raised from the dead, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over

him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.” We stand, by the grace of God, in the full credit and value of the death of Christ; but inasmuch as we are surrounded, on all sides, by temptations and snares, and as we have within us such capabilities and tendencies, and further, seeing we have a powerful adversary who is ever on the watch to ensnare us, and lead us off the path of truth and purity, we could not get on for a single moment, were it not for the gracious way in which our God has provided for all our exigencies, in the precious blood, and all-prevailing advocacy of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is not merely that the blood of Jesus Christ has washed away all our sins and reconciled us to a holy God, but “We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous,” “whoever liveth to make intercession for us,” and who is “able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him.”

Now, then, Christian reader, what should be the practical effect of all this grace upon our hearts and lives? When we think of the death and of the burning, of the blood and of the ashes, of the atoning sacrifice and the interceding Priest and Advocate, what influence should it exert upon our souls? How should it act upon our consciences? Should it lead us to think little of sin? Should it cause us to walk carelessly and indifferently? Should it have the effect of making us light and frivolous in our ways? Alas! for the heart that can think so. We may rest assured of this that the man who can draw a plea from the rich provisions of divine grace for lightness of conduct, or levity of spirit, knows very little, if indeed he know anything at all, of the true nature or proper influence of grace and its provisions. Could we imagine, for a moment, that the ashes of the heifer or the water of separation would have had the effect of making an Israelite careless as to his walk? Assuredly not. On the contrary, the very fact of such careful provision being made, by the goodness of God, against defilement, would make him feel what a serious thing it was to contract defilement. Such, at least, would be the proper effect of the provisions of grace. The heap of ashes, laid up in a clean place, gave forth a double testimony — it testified of the goodness of God, and it testified of the hatefulness of sin. It declared that God could not suffer uncleanness upon his people; but it declared also that He had provided the means of removing it. It is utterly impossible that the doctrine of the sprinkled blood, of the ashes, and of the water of separation can be understood and enjoyed, without its producing a holy horror of sin in all its defiling forms. And we may further assert that no one who has ever tasted the anguish of a defiled conscience, could lightly contract defilement. A pure conscience is far too precious a treasure to be lightly parted with; and a defiled conscience is far too heavy a burden to be lightly taken up. But, blessed be God, He has met all our need, in His own perfect way; and met it, too, not to make us careless, but to make us watchful. “My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not.” But then he adds, “If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but for the whole world.”

But we must draw this paper to a close, and shall merely add a word on the closing verses of our chapter. “And it shall be a perpetual statute unto them, that he that sprinkleth the water of separation shall wash his clothes; and he that toucheth the water of separation shall be unclean until even. And whatsoever the unclean person toucheth shall be unclean, and the soul that toucheth it shall be unclean until even.” (Num. 19:21, 22.) In verse 18, we are taught that it needed a clean person to sprinkle the unclean; and in verse 21, we are taught that the act of sprinkling another defiled oneself. Putting both together, we learn, as another has said, “That anyone who has to do with the sin of another, though it be in the way of duty, to cleanse it, is defiled; not as the

guilty person, it is true, but we cannot touch sin without being defiled.” And we learn also that in order to lead another into the enjoyment of the cleansing virtue of Christ’s work, I must be in the enjoyment of that cleansing work myself. It is well to remember this, Those who applied the water of separation to others had to use that water for themselves. May our souls enter into this! May we ever abide in the sense of the perfect cleanness into which the death of Christ introduces us, and in which His priestly work maintains us! And let us never forget that contact defiles. It was so under the Mosaic economy, and it is so now. You cannot touch pitch and not be defiled.

Rejoicing in the Lord

Phil. 4:4-7.

Oh! surely 'tis a precious thing,
That such an one as I
Amos privileged to work and sing,
As days go fleeting by.
My heart is fixed; and patient waits
For that full hour of bliss,
When Christ His ransom'd
Bride translates From such a world as this.
This feeble tent — this fragile clay —
This “earthly house” of mine,
Which bears about, from day to day,
A treasure most divine.
Oh, give me grace Thy word to keep,
To heed Thy gracious voice;
To weep and mourn with them that weep;
And with the glad rejoice;
To comfort and support the weak;
To energize the cold;
In grace the wand'ring ones to seek,
And bring them to the fold.
Whenever danger threatens me,
Or troubles thickly flock,
My eyes are upwards unto Thee—
My feet are on the rock.
And thus I'll labor, love, and watch,

All through the dreary night,
As one whose longing eyes would catch
The first faint streak of light.
Lord, haste that bliss without alloy,
When we shall know as known—
And share Thy consummated joy,
Thy scepter, crown, and throne!

Restoration

(John 21:1-19.)

A careful study of these verses will enable us to trace, in them, three distinct kinds of restoration, namely, restoration of conscience, restoration of heart, and restoration of position.

1. The first of these, restoration of conscience, is of all-importance. It would be utterly impossible to overestimate the value of a sound, clear, uncondemning conscience. A Christian cannot get on if there is a single soil on his conscience. He must walk before God with a pure conscience — a conscience without stain or sting. Precious treasure! May my reader ever possess it.

It is very obvious that Peter possessed it in the touching scene, “at the sea of Tiberias.” And yet he had fallen — shamefully, grievously fallen. He had denied his Lord with an oath; but he was restored. One look from Jesus had broken up the deep fountains of his heart, and drawn forth floods of bitter tears. And yet it was not his tears, but the love that drew them forth, which formed the ground of his thorough restoration of conscience. It was the changeless and everlasting love of the heart of Jesus — the divine efficacy of the blood of Jesus — and the all-prevailing power of the advocacy of Jesus that imparted to Peter’s conscience the boldness and liberty so strikingly and beautifully exhibited on the memorable occasion before us.

The risen Savior is seen, in these closing chapters of John’s Gospel, watching over His poor, foolish, feeble, erring disciples — hovering about their path — presenting Himself, in various ways, before them — taking occasion, from their very necessities, to make Himself known, in perfect grace, to their hearts. Was there a tear to be dried, a difficulty to be solved, a fear to be hushed, a bereaved heart to be soothed, an unbelieving mind to be corrected? Jesus was present, in all the fullness and variety of His grace, to meet all these things. So also when, under the guidance of the ever forward Peter, they had gone forth to spend a night in fruitless toil, Jesus had His eye upon them. He knew all about the darkness, and the toil, and the empty net, and there He was on the shore, to kindle a fire and prepare a dinner for them. Yes, the selfsame Jesus who had died on the cross to put away their sins, now stood on the shore to restore them from their wanderings, gather them round Himself, and minister to all their need. “Have ye any meat?” developed the fruitlessness of their night’s toil. “Come and dine,” was the touching expression of the tender, thoughtful, all-providing love of the risen Savior.

But let us note, particularly, the evidences of a thoroughly restored conscience, as exhibited by Simon Peter. “Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved, saith unto Peter, It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his fisher’s coat unto him, (for he was naked,) and did cast himself into the sea.” He could not wait for the ships, or for his fellow-disciples, so eager was he to get to the feet of his risen Lord. In place of saying to John or to the others, “You know how shamefully I have fallen, and although I have, since then, seen the Lord, and heard Him speak peace to my soul, yet I think it more becoming in one that has so fallen to keep back, do you therefore go first and meet the blessed One, and I shall follow after,” in place of aught in this style,

he flings himself boldly into the sea, as much as to say, "I must be the very first to get to my risen Savior; none has such a claim on Him as poor, stumbling, failing Peter."

Now, here was a perfectly restored conscience — a conscience without a single spot — a conscience basking in the sunlight of unchanging love. Peter's confidence in Christ was unclouded, and this, we may boldly affirm, was grateful to the heart of Jesus. Love likes to be trusted. Let us ever remember this. No one need imagine that he is honoring Jesus by standing afar off on the plea of unworthiness; and yet it is very hard for one who has fallen or backslidden, to recover his confidence in the love of Christ. Such an one can see clearly that a sinner is welcome to Jesus, no matter how great or manifold his sins may have been; but then he thinks the ease of a backsliding or stumbling Christian is entirely different. Should these lines be scanned by one who has backslidden or fallen, we would press upon him, most earnestly, the importance of immediate return to Jesus. "Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings." What is the response to this pathetic appeal? "Behold, we come unto thee; for thou art the Lord our God." "If thou wilt return, O Israel, saith the Lord, return unto me." (Jer. 3:22; 4:1.) The love of the heart of Jesus knows no change. We change; but He is "the same yesterday, today, and forever;" and He delights to be trusted. The confidence of Peter's heart was a rich feast to the heart of Christ. No doubt, it is sad to fall, to err, to backslide; but it is sadder still, when we have done so, to distrust the love of Jesus, or His gracious readiness to take us to His bosom again.

Beloved reader, have you fallen? Have you erred? Have you backslidden? Have you lost the sweet sense of divine favor, the happy consciousness of acceptance with God? If so, what are you to do? Simply this, "Return." This is God's own special word to the backslider. Return, in self-judgment, and in the fullest confidence in the boundless, changeless love of the heart of Christ. Do not, we beseech you, keep away in the distance of your own unbelief. Do not measure the heart of Jesus by your own thoughts. Let Him tell you what is in His heart toward you. You have sinned, you have failed, you have turned aside, and now, it may be, you are afraid or ashamed to turn your eyes toward the One whom you have grieved and dishonored. Satan, too, is suggesting the darkest thoughts, for he would fain keep you at a chilling distance from that precious Savior who loves you with an everlasting love. But you have only to fix your gaze upon the blood, the advocacy, the heart of Jesus, to get a triumphant answer to all the enemy's terrible suggestions, and to all the infidel reasonings of your own heart. Do not, therefore, go on another hour without seeking to get a thorough settlement of the question between your soul and Christ. Remember, "His is an unchanging love, free and faithful, strong as death." Remember also His own words, "Return, ye backsliding children" — "Return to me." And, finally, remember that Jesus loves to be trusted.

2. But the heart has to be restored as well as the conscience. Let this not be forgotten. It often happens in the history of souls, that though the conscience may be perfectly clear as to certain acts which we have done, yet the roots from whence those acts have sprung have not been reached. The acts appear on the surface of daily life, but the roots are hidden down deep in the heart, unknown, it may be, to ourselves and others, but thoroughly exposed to the eye of Him with whom we have to do.

Now, these roots must be reached, exposed, and judged, ere the heart is in a right condition in the sight of God. Look at Abraham. He started on his course with a certain root in his heart, a root of

unbelieving reserve, in reference to Sarah. This thing led him astray when he went down into Egypt, and although his conscience was restored, and he got back to his altar at Bethel, yet the heart was not reached for years afterward, in the affair of Abimelech, king of Gerar.

All this is deeply practical and most solemn. It finds its illustration in Peter as well as in Abraham. But only mark the exquisitely delicate way in which our blessed Lord proceeds to reach the roots in the heart of His dear and honored servant. "So when they had dined." Not till then. There was no allusion to the past, nothing that might cause a chill to the heart, or bring a cloud over the spirit while a restored conscience was feasting in company with a love that knows no change. This is a fine moral trait. It characterizes the dealings of God with all His saints. The conscience is set at rest in the presence of infinite and everlasting love, ere there is the most distant allusion to the roots of things in the heart. When Simon Peter, in the full confidence of a restored conscience, flung himself at the feet of his risen Lord, he was called to listen to that gracious invitation, "Come and dine." But, "when they had dined," Jesus, as it were, takes Peter apart in order to let in upon his soul the light of truth, so that by it he might discern the root from whence all his failure had sprung. That root was self-confidence, which had led him to place himself in advance of his fellow-disciples, and say, "Though all should deny thee, yet will not I."

This root had to be exposed, and, therefore, "When they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?" This was a pointed and pungent question, and it went right to the very bottom of Peter's heart. Three times Peter had denied his Lord, and three times his Lord now challenges the heart of Peter — for the roots must be reached if any permanent good is to be done. It will not do merely to have the conscience purged from the effects which have been produced in practical life, there must also be the moral judgment of that which produced them. This is not sufficiently understood and attended to, and hence it is that again and again the roots spring up and bring forth fruit, and scatter their seed a thousand-fold around us, thus cutting out for us the most bitter and sorrowful work, which might all be avoided if the roots of things were thoroughly judged and kept under.

Christian reader, our object in this paper is entirely practical. Let us, therefore, exhort one another to judge our roots, whatever they may be. Do we know our roots? Doubtless, it is hard, very hard, to know them. They are deep and manifold; pride, personal vanity, covetousness, irritability, ambition — these are some of the roots of character, the motive springs of action, over which a rigid censorship must ever be exercised. We must let nature know that the eye of self-judgment is continually upon it. We have to carry on the struggle without cessation. We may have to lament over occasional failure; but we must maintain the struggle, for struggle bespeaks life. May God the Holy Ghost strengthen us for the ceaseless conflict.

3. We shall close this paper with a brief reference to restoration as bearing upon the soul's position or path. The conscience being thoroughly purged, and the heart, with its varied roots, judged, there is moral preparedness for our proper path. The perfect love of Jesus had expelled all fear from Peter's conscience; and His threefold question had opened up the roots in Peter's heart, and now He says to him, "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 hand, 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 saith unto him, follow me."

Here, then, we have, in two words, the path of the servant of Christ. "Follow me" The Lord had just given Peter the sweetest pledges of His love and confidence. He had, notwithstanding all past failure, entrusted him with the care of all that was dear to His loving heart in this world, even the lambs and sheep of His flock. He had said to him, "If you have affection for me, feed my lambs, shepherd my sheep," and now, in one brief but comprehensive utterance, He opens before him his proper path. "Follow me." This is enough. It includes all beside. If we want to follow Jesus, we must keep the eye continually upon Him; we must mark His footprints and tread therein. Yes, mark them and walk in them; and when tempted, like Peter, to "turn about" in order to see what this one or that one has to do, or how he does it, we may hear the correcting words, "What is that to thee? Follow thou me." This is to be our one grand and all-absorbing business, come what may. A thousand things may arise to distract and hinder. The devil will tempt us to look hither and thither, to look at this one and that one; to imagine we could do better here than there, or there than here; to be occupied with, and imitating the work of some fellow-servant. All this is met by those pointed words, "Follow me."

There is immense danger, in the present day, of following in the wake of others, of doing certain things because others do them, or doing things as others do them. All this has to be carefully guarded. It will be sure to come to nothing. What we really want is a broken will—the true spirit of a servant that waits on the Master to know His mind. Service does not consist in doing this or that, or running hither and thither; it is simply doing the Master's will, whatever that maybe. "They serve who stand and wait." It is easier to be busy than to be quiet. When Peter was "young" he went whither he would; but when he got "old" he went whither he would not. What a contrast between the young, restless, ardent, energetic Peter, going whither he would, and the old, matured, subdued, experienced Peter going whither he would not! What a mercy to have the will broken! To be able to say from the heart, "What thou wilt — as thou wilt — where thou wilt — when thou wilt." "Not my will, but thine, O Lord, be done."

"Follow me." Precious words! May they be engraved on our hearts, beloved reader! Then shall we be steady on our course, and effective in our service. We shall not be distracted or unhinged by the thoughts and opinions of men. It may happen that we shall get very few to understand us or sympathize with us — few to approve or appreciate our work. It matters not. The Master knows all about it. Let us only be sure of what He has told us to do, and do it. If a master tells one of his servants, distinctly, to go and do a certain thing, or occupy a certain post, it is his business to go and do that thing, or occupy that post, no matter what his fellow-servants may think. They may tell him that he ought to be somewhere else, or to do something else; a proper servant will heed them not; he knows his master's mind, and has to do his master's work.

Would it be more thus with all the Lord's servants! Would that we all knew more distinctly and carried out more decidedly, the Master's will respecting us. Peter had his path and John had his. James had his work, and Paul had his. So it was of old, the Gershonite had his work, and the Merarite had his; and if one had interfered with the other, the work could not have been done. The Tabernacle was carried forward or set up by each man doing his own proper work. Thus it is in this our day. God has varied workmen in His house and in His vineyard; He has quarrymen, stone-squarers, masons, and decorators. Are all quarrymen? Surely not; but each has his work to do, and the building is carried forward by each one doing his own appointed work. Should a quarry-man despise a decorator, or a decorator look down with contempt upon a quarryman?

Assuredly not. The Master wants them both, and whenever the one would interfere with the other, as, alas! we so often do, the faithful correcting word falls cu the ear, "What is that to thee? Follow thou me."

The Resurrection Day

FROM A POEM OF THE 12th CENTURY, BY AN UNKNOWN AUTHOR.

(Dies ilia, Dies vita!.)

Lo, the Day — the Day of Life,
Day of unimagined light.
Day when Death itself shall die
And there shall no more be night.
Steadily that Day approacheth,
When the saints shall find their rest,
When the wicked cease from troubling,
And the patient reign most blest.
See the King desired for ages,
By the just expected long;
Long implored, at length He hasteth,
Cometh with salvation strong.
Oh, how past all utterance happy,
Sweet and joyful it will be
When they who, unseen! have loved Him,
Jesus face to face shalt see.
In that Day how good and pleasant,
This poor world to have despised!
And how mournful and how bitter
Dear that lost world to have prized!
Blessed, then, earth's patient mourners
Who for Christ have toiled and died,
Driven by the world's rough pressure
With Him waiting to abide!

There shall be no sighs or weeping,
Not a shade of doubt or fear,
No old age, no want or sorrow
Nothing sick or lacking there.
There the peace shall be unbroken,
Deep and solemn joy be shed,
Youth in fadeless flower and freshness
And salvation perfected.
What will be the bliss and rapture
None can dream and none can tell,
There to reign above e'en angels,
In that heavenly home to dwell.
Quickly to those realms, oh call me,
Lead me up to that blest gate,
Thou whom, loving, looking, longing,
I, with eager hope, await.

Meditations on Song of Solomon

“How beautiful are thy feet with shoes, O prince’s daughter.” The spouse of the King is again minutely surveyed, and addressed by a new title. “O prince’s daughter.” Her connection with royalty is now acknowledged. She is brought into the closest relationship with the King. This is manifest to all. When Messiah takes the throne, according to the plain and forcible language of the forty-fifth psalm, this will be her place. There we read, “Upon thy right hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir” When He enters the scene, and takes the throne of his father David, everything is changed in Israel. What a change for Jerusalem! What a change for the Jewish people! Jerusalem will have the first place, and all the cities of Judah shall own it. The earth’s blessing will also come in then through the exaltation of the Jews. “Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children, whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth.”

And now, hear, as it were, his first address from the throne to His beloved people. “Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forgot also thine own people and thy father’s house; so shall the king greatly desire thy beauty; for He is thy Lord, and worship thou him.” It is no longer the glory of the fathers — Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but the brighter glory of the true seed royal of the house of Judah. Christ is all in all. He who loves righteousness and hates wickedness, proves Himself fit to govern. In righteousness and in judgment, He has brought in the full triumph and glory of the Jewish people. He has led them on to victory over the heads of all their foes. He who led them into captivity, is now a captive in the bottomless pit. Christ is on the throne, and all his enemies are made His footstool. And now, the people are to look to Him, not to the fathers, in whom they have hitherto boasted. “We be Abraham’s seed,” was once their empty boast, to the lowly Jesus; but everything is changed now, Hence the emphatic word to the daughter of Zion; “Forget thine own people, and thy father’s house: so shall the king greatly desire thy beauty: for he is thy Lord; and worship thou him.”

But has this beautiful address from the lips of Jesus, though as King of the Jews, no voice to thee, my soul; Is it only fit for Israel? Far from it, I would say. In spirit, and in principle, it is plainly applicable to all Christ’s disciples now. “Abide in me” — “Follow me,” are still deeper. No sooner is a soul converted to Jesus, than it should, in that sense, forget, and turn away from, all its old associations. Everything contrary to His will, or that would hinder us in carrying out His will, should be given up, and, as it were, forgotten. The application of the passage is easy, provided we are prepared to give up our hearts to Him. “My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways,” is surely a fair demand, at all times, from Him who gave Himself for us. His devotedness to us is complete. He kept nothing back; He gave all. He loved us, and gave Himself for us. Not only His life, true and blessed as that is but He gave Himself. The cross, of course, is the strongest expression of His love that we can ever have. But in giving Himself, He gives all that He is, as the Man Christ Jesus — the Savior of sinners. Observe, especially, I pray thee, the greatness of this gift — HIMSELF! And also, the giver — HE, gave Himself. All His qualities — all His excellencies, are given in this gift. This is love — this is devotedness — this is consecration. He keeps back nothing from us. His love is perfect. He — Himself, is mine.

Now I have found a friend, Jesus is mine; His love shall never end, Jesus is mine.

We have a full Christ, adored and blessed be His name! May we allow nothing, that would diminish to the soul His fullness — may we count self, and all that belongs to it, as dross. His wisdom, His righteousness, His peace, His joy, His grace, His glory — in short, the perfection of His work, His more abundant life in resurrection, and the glory of His Person — all are the believer's in the gift of Himself. Take one illustration of this marvelous truth, and see that thou fully understand this mystery of perfect love, O my soul. It is written, that He "made peace through the blood of his cross." "Peace," in this connection, means reconciliation. We are reconciled, our peace is made, according to the perfection of His work on the cross. But it is also written, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you." Here, "peace" does not mean reconciliation, but Christ's own peace. "My peace" — a peace answering to the glory of His Person, which He leaves to us as a legacy in this troubled scene. And He gives not as the world gives; the world gives a part, and keeps a part, but He, gives all. Oh, what blessing! What has love not done! Oh, what a ground of confidence for the heart in this unspeakable gift. To know that "Jesus is mine," is to know the sweetness of full peace, and quiet rest, in His own blessed presence. But if there be such a ground for confidence in this gift, Oh, what a motive there is, for wholehearted devotedness — for entire consecration of body, soul, and spirit to the blessed Lord! May we know the confidence, and act from the motive. May our love be the fair reflection of His.

"Thine eye confiding — manifests the love,

A love producing love reciprocal,

Which overshadoweth Thy being's course,

As face to face in water answereth —

Yea, as one passing by Bath-rabbim's gate,

In Heshbon's waveless mirrors may behold

The faithful transcript of o'erhanging skies."

It is rather difficult to say, whether the first five verses of this chapter, are addressed to the Bride by the daughters of Jerusalem, or by the Bridegroom. The tone of the sixth verse, which is evidently His, appears to be deeper. In the fourth chapter, when speaking of her qualities He begins with the head. And in the fifth chapter, where the Bride gives a full length portrait of her Beloved, she also begins with the head. But here it is different, the description begins with the feet, and ends with the head. She appears to be looked at, in this passage, from earth's point of view; as if the daughters of Jerusalem were first attracted by her walk. Besides, the portrait here given, is not so much her own personal, faultless beauty, which the Bridegroom so admires, and delights to dwell upon, as the circumstances and associations of royalty. Or, perhaps, more that which is national glory, than personal beauty. But we must bear in mind as we go along, that the spouse represents, for all Israel, great glory and blessing.

Having examined with some care, when meditating on chapters 4, 5, each feature therein described, we would now do little more than endeavor to point out the most obvious bearing of the present comparisons.

The expression, “How beautiful are thy feet with shoes, O prince’s daughter,” conveys to the mind, more the idea of majestic footsteps — stately goings, than of the general walk. “The joints,” being like jewels, giving freedom to the step, strengthens this view of the passage. Her gait is noble, majestic, suited to royalty. “A round goblet which wanteth not liquor.....an heap of wheat set about with lilies” surely denote an abundance of that which cheers and sustains; and yet, these are surrounded with grace and humility. A fence of lilies forbids the approach of none to come and partake of the king’s munificence; but sweetly invites, as it were, in the words of wisdom, “Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled.”

Such will be the fullness and character of earthly blessing, under the peaceful reign of the true King Solomon. An abundance of corn and wine, fenced off with lilies. What an idea these beautiful and significant symbols give of millennial blessing! An overflowing abundance with true lowliness of mind. What must be the beauty and fragrance, the peace and security, of that land, whose border defenses are the lilies of the valley! What must be the impression produced on those who come up to Jerusalem! Jesus is there! The King of Salem reigns, He is having everything His own way. That explains all.

The twin roes may point out the unity, harmony, and great family likeness, which shall then characterize the people of the land. Referring to their blessing under the new covenant in the future day, the word says, “Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers: and ye shall be my people and I will be your God. (Eze. 36:25-28.) The apostle, in applying these promises to Israel, notwithstanding their present dispersion, says, “For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people. And they shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me from the least to the greatest.” (Heb. 8:11, 12.) Who could doubt, with such texts before them, the full restoration of Israel, the reality and uniformity of their blessing?

The “tower of ivory,” would suggest the thought of great riches and exaltation. It would also bespeak national glory, if not national purity — ivory being snowy white. “The fish-pools of Heshbon,” that which is calm, deep, clear, and reflective. If the “tower of ivory,” bespeak Israel’s national riches, may not “the fish-pools of Heshbon,” bespeak their national character. What so beautiful or suggestive, as the calm, full, bright eye? Besides, it is said of Israel, “Mine eyes are ever toward the Lord.” (Psalm 25) This will be singleness of eye. Lord, hasten it in thy time!

“Serene as Heshbon’s tranquil lake,

Thy meditative eyes forsake

The world’s distracting joys.”

“The tower of Lebanon which looketh toward Damascus,” suggests the idea of strength, security, supremacy. The Jews, once so persecuted as a people spread over the earth, and so frequently

invaded as a nation, especially by the Syrians, can now look out on Syria, and on all the surrounding nations, in tower-like strength. All the nations of the earth are at their feet. The tower, looketh toward Damascus “the capital of their once restless and powerful foe.” For the head of Syria is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is Rezin.” A tower on the heights of Lebanon looks out on all, and is seen by all. It will then be known, that the power of Jehovah-Jesus dwells in the midst of His beloved people. This will be their national supremacy.

“Thine head upon thee is like Carmel.” “Carmel,” in scripture, is the type of fruitfulness. It was famous for its vineyards, gardens, and rich herbage. “Thine head upon thee,” would seem to point out a head ornament, not the head of the body. The reference may be to a crown, or wreath of laurels, presenting “the excellency of Carmel,” and emblematic of the land’s fruitfulness — national abundance. Israel is crowned with goodness. They are blessed with all earthly blessings in Emmanuel’s land. But glorious as that will be (and glorious it shall be), still, it is but the contrast, divinely drawn, of the Church’s blessings, even while she wanders a pilgrim in this world. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.” This is the character and measure of the Christian’s blessing, if measured it can be. And here, note, my soul, for thy deepest and loftiest meditations, the three things spoken of in this wonderful verse: 1. “All spiritual blessings” Not one is wanting. And, observe, they are spiritual, adapted to our new nature. 2. “In heavenly places.” The highest sphere — the best of places — not earthly places, like Israel’s in the land of Canaan, blessed as theirs will be. 3. “In Christ — in the most blessed and excellent way that God could give them. Here, we can draw no comparison; we can only worship and adore. Oh! to enter more fully into that which is already ours, in Christ, according to the love of God our Father; that we may be holy and without blame before Him in love.

“And the hair of thine head like purple; the king is held in the galleries.” “Purple” is the emblem of royalty. The eye rising from the beautiful shoes, to the bridal coronet, finds all perfect. The fair spouse of the King is faultless. And the comparisons are suggestive of true national greatness and glory. The King is overcome by her attractions. He is bound, as it were, by her comeliness — the comeliness which He has put upon her. “She is all glorious within the ivory palaces; her clothing is of wrought gold; she shall be brought unto the King in raiment of needlework.” “The King is held in the galleries.” He cannot leave His royal Bride. Wondrous love! wondrous grace! Oh, to know the heart of Jesus!

“The glorious and majestic One,
Whom death nor hell could e’er detain,
Is by thy powerful graces won,
And tied as with a mighty chain.
Strange loveliness it is that sways
The Sovereign Regent of the skies;
Constraining Him to stay and gaze,
The charms do so attract His eyes.

Faith's efforts bold o'ercome the King;
How happy they the conquest share,
Who to His sacred courts Him win,
And then have power to hold Him there!

Meditations on Song of Solomon

"How fair and how pleasant art thou, O love, for delights!" This, we doubt not, is the Bridegroom's voice. We perceive more depth of feeling and interest in this verse, than in the previous five. Others may admire her, but He delights in her. Through His patient grace, a moral resemblance to Himself has been wrought in her. This He now sees and delights in. The more perfectly Christ sees in us His own likeness, the more He will delight in us. This is necessarily true, yet a truth that is easily understood by all.

A strictly upright man can find no delight in one that is crooked in his ways. An honest man can find no pleasure in one who is dishonest. A morally pure person can have no fellowship with one who would drag him through all the impurities of a low and degraded nature. Assuredly not. The upright man can only delight in uprightness; the honest man in honesty; and the pure in purity. So the blessed Lord can find His delight only in that which resembles His own moral perfections. Oh! what a needed, practical lesson, thou mayest learn from this fact, O my soul! In what respect, let me ask, and in what measure, is thy moral resemblance to Christ? Think of His love, His holiness, and the perfection of all His ways; and then inquire — in what respect, in what measure, does He see His own moral image practically reflected in thee? And, consequently, how far can He find His delight in thee? Resist not these searching inquiries — abide in the light — let all thy practical ways be fairly examined there. And seek above all things, conformity to Him, who has left us an example that we should walk in His steps. How sweet to a soul that loves Him, must that word be from His own lips, "How fair and how pleasant art thou, O love, for delights!"

But before dismissing this subject, it may be well to notice for a moment the teaching of scripture on the blessed subject of our oneness with Christ — our completeness in Him; which is like the other side of the same subject. Practically we come infinitely short of Christ, yet, in spirit and in virtue of His finished work, we are one with Him, as risen and glorified. This is a glorious truth: is it plainly taught in scripture? Take the following texts as a sample of many that might be quoted. "He that is joined unto the Lord is one Spirit." (1 Cor. 6:17.) "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:13.) "And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses." (Col. 2:13.) "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Rom. 8:1.

The blessed position of the believer in Christ, is abundantly taught in Scripture. And faith asks nothing more than the plain word of God. Our own frames and feelings would only mislead us on this all important subject; and doubts and fears would only be to doubt the work of redemption, on which the truth of our oneness with Christ is based. Being one with Him as risen from the dead and exalted on high, we are partakers with Him of the same life and privileges before God. It is plainly

stated, for example, that Christ is our life. "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear." If, then, the question be raised as to whether we have eternal life, the believer may reply, by asking the question, "Has Christ eternal life? for the word of God affirms, that Christ is our life." Again, as to our oneness in righteousness. We are "made the righteousness of God in him." As to acceptance, we are "accepted in the beloved." As to position, we "sit together in heavenly places in Christ" Observe the form of the expression, "In Christ — in Him." And mark especially the fullness of the following verses. "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." (1 Cor. 1:30.) "And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power." (Col. 2:10.) "In Him," observe, who is above "all principality and power," even the angels that never sinned.

Some, we are aware, speak of this heavenly character of truth as unpractical, and sometimes in less worthy terms. This we think a serious mistake, and one that must lead to serious consequences. On the contrary, we firmly believe, that the Christian's full assurance of pardon, justification, peace, acceptance, will be in proportion to the clearness of his apprehension, and the measure of his enjoyment, of these truths, as taught in the word of God. Salvation is nothing short of passing from death unto life. Then, where am I — what am I, if death is behind me? Associated with a risen Christ, and eternally one with Him, "We are members of his body." As the hand and foot, the eye and ear, are included in the man, so is the believer included in Christ.

So far from this character of truth being unpractical, we have no hesitation in saying, that our moral resemblance to Christ now, will be proportionate to our knowledge of, and fellowship with, our exalted Head in heaven. What made Paul so heavenly minded? His eye was fixed on Christ in the glory, and his heart breathed fervently after Him there. "One thing I do." Christ in heaven was the "one thing" before his soul. This, and this alone, will produce on earth, that in which Christ finds His delight — His own moral image reflected in us. Knowing this, may we set the Lord always before us, and ever seek to do the things which please Him.

But in the midst of all our shortcomings, it is comforting to know, that in the day of His coming glory, He will be surrounded with that which He loves, and in which He delights, Then the heavenly saints shall be fashioned like unto His own glorious body — changed into the same image. "We know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." And then, too, of Israel, as a nation on the earth, it will be said, "Thou shalt no more be termed forsaken; neither shall thy land be termed desolate; but thou shalt be called Hephzibah, (i.e., my delight is in her) and thy land, Beulah, (i.e., married) for the Lord delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married." (Isa. 62:4.) Lord, hasten it in thy time, for thine own name's sake!

"This thy stature is like to a palm tree, and thy breasts to clusters of grapes." The "palm tree," and the "clusters of grapes" may be considered as the emblems of victory and maturity — of uprightness and fruitfulness. The palm is much spoken of throughout scripture, and variously applied as a symbol. As to its natural form, its stem is slim, but graceful, erect and lofty; the type of uprightness. "They are upright as the palm tree." Though pressed, or bound downwards for a time, it refuses to grow crooked, and soon recovers its perpendicular form. Wondrous illustration of the long pressure that has been on the Jews, and of the way they will yet lift up their heads. The leaves and fruit cluster richly at the top, and have the form of a crown or canopy. Some kinds grow to a great height, so that the fruit is not easily reached, the stem being branchless. This

circumstance may be referred to in the next verso; "I said, I will go up to the palm tree, I will take hold of the boughs thereof." The fruits of the Spirit are never beyond the Lord's reach. He gathers, and appreciates the fruits of grace in His people. It is said to be the sure sign of water in the desert — that sweet springs of water are always found near to the palms; so that no sight is more welcome to the eye of the thirsty traveler than the palm tree. This historical fact is most interesting and suggestive, and seems to agree with scripture. "And they came to Elim, where were twelve wells of water, and three score and ten palm trees: and they encamped there by the waters." Exod. 15:27.

We have also frequent reference in scripture, to the branches of the palm tree as the emblem of victory. They were the sign of the feast of tabernacles to the Jews; a period of great rejoicing in Israel. "And ye shall take you on the first day the boughs of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and the boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook: and ye shall rejoice before the Lord your God seven days." (Lev. 23:40.) The innumerable multitude which John, in vision, saw, before the throne, and before the Lamb, were "clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands." Many thoughts as to Israel's past, present, and future history pass before the mind, in meditating on the expressive illustrations before us, but we can only at present briefly apply them.

The fair spouse of the King has now reached her moral maturity. Blessed truth! Grace has triumphed! She is perfect in His sight — the delight of His heart — the reflection of Himself. The prayer is answered; and the promise fulfilled. "Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us." "The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree." Moreover, the feast of tabernacles is come! She waves her palm of victory— her joy is full. Elevated and upright as the palm, with its luxuriant crown, and living waters welling up, and flowing forth from its roots. Lowly, weak, and dependent, like the feeble vine, yet clinging to the Mighty One, and bearing much fruit to His glory. Loveliest of emblems of man's low estate, and of abundant fruitfulness through trust in God — abiding in the true vine. "For when I am weak, then am I strong." Fragrant also, she is, as the apple tree — the chosen emblem of the well-Beloved, she spreads abroad the sweet odors of His name.

From the ninth verse it would appear that the Bridegroom now reposes in the charms of His Bride. His heart is at rest. Wondrous truth! He sees in her of the travail of His soul and is satisfied. The desires of His love are answered. What love! What grace! What blessing! Happy Bride! Happy Israel! Perfectly, and forever restored; the Lord thy God rests in thee. He is revived, refreshed, and cheered, by "the best wine," which thou hast prepared for thy Beloved. "Causing the lips of those that are asleep to speak." Should there be the least doubt on my reader's mind of the full, happy, glorious, and blessed restoration of the Jews, let him carefully read the following beautiful prophecy. Surely no one could question that it is still unfulfilled. "Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel: be glad and rejoice with all the heart, O daughter of Jerusalem. The Lord hath taken away thy judgments, he hath cast out thine enemy; the King of Israel, even the Lord, is in the midst of thee; thou shalt not see evil any more. In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, Fear thou not; and to Zion, Let not thine hands be slack. The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love; he will joy over thee with singing." Zeph. 3:14 - 17.

"For what though Judah's palm tree now is dry,

Withered and leafless, like a beacon-mast,

Though 'Raze it, Raze it,' is the taunting cry,
You pallid crescent-moon is waning fast;
'Twill soon be quenched. Then Israel's night is o'er,
Her sun shall rise, her moon shall wane no more.
Palm branch in hand, go forth to meet the
King Messiah comes! rejected once, and slain.
Daughter of Zion, loud "hosannahs" sing!
Who came to suffer once — now comes to reign.
Beneath the palm tree Israel's Judge shall sit;
Behold the people gathering at His feet."

"I am my beloved's, and his desire is toward me." This, we may truly say, is the highest note in the Song of Songs. And yet, we may as truly say, it is the lowest. Now, the soul is done with itself, and entirely occupied with Christ. It expresses, we believe, the highest apprehension of Christ. His desire is toward me — He delights in me. Consequently, self is lost sight of. Grace has done its perfect work — the soul is established in grace. This is the perfection of beauty in the people of the Lord; and always that in which He delights. So long as a soul is under law, it never reaches this place of confidence, rest, peace, and joy. It never strikes so high a note. No matter who, where, or when, the soul that is under law, must be troubled with doubts and fears. Not but that the law is good, but we cannot keep it, and we cannot remain always here, for leave this world we must; then the solemn question arises, how shall it fare with me at the judgment-seat? A dark cloud hangs over the future. The troubled soul believes not, though plainly written, that by grace, through faith, it has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but is passed from death unto life. John 5:24.

Grace alone can bring the soul into this blessed, happy state. Law never can, because it condemns those who break it, and shows no mercy. Besides, if I have fear now, I have torment. But "perfect love casteth out fear; because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love." This "perfect love" expresses itself in perfect grace, and grace alone establishes the soul in the perfect love of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in the perfect work which He has accomplished for us. Israel sang praise to God on Canaan's side of the lied Sea, where grace flowed without rebuke in their complete redemption; but at the foot of Sinai, where they heard the thunders of the law, there was no singing; it was all fearing and trembling. Ever since then, Israel has been under law, and must be, until their Messiah come again. At the same time, we know, of course, that those who now repent, and believe in Jesus, give up their Jewish ground, and become members of the Church of God — the body of Christ; and are brought into all the privileges and blessings of a present salvation.

The condition of the Jews, as such, and especially as having crucified the Lord, is strikingly presented in the case of the man-slayer under the law. He was compelled to remain in the city of refuge, until a change took place in the priesthood. (Num. 35) In this significant type, we see

Israel's fall deliverance when their Messiah comes in His Melchizedec glory. Then He will set them free from the pressure of law, under which they are suffering; and deliver them out of the hands of all their enemies. He will also meet them according to the ancient type in Gen. 14, and refresh and cheer their fainting hearts with the bread and wine of the kingdom. Then their long blinded eyes shall be opened to see their own Messiah, and that He is all for them. This will be the relief, the rest, and the joy of their hearts.

This is a character of experience which the Spirit of prophecy does not present in the Song of Solomon. It would not be in harmony with its object. Here, it is more the exercises of the heart — the affections, that are given. In the Psalms, for example, it is chiefly the exercises of conscience that we find the remnant passing through.

If we look back to chap. 2:16, we find the Bride expressing the joy of her heart in that she had found the Messiah — in possessing Him. "My beloved is mine, and I am his." In chap 6:3, we find her experience considerably higher. Her heart finds sweet satisfaction in knowing that she belongs to Him. "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine." But in the verse under our immediate meditation, she reaches the highest point in a soul's experience, she rests in the happy assurance that His heart delights in her. "I am my beloved's and his desire is toward me." This is the happy fruit of His own patient, perfect grace; she is all beauty and perfection in His sight — she is clothed in the comeliness of grace. She knows this, and this is the perfect rest of her heart. "His desire is toward me." Higher than this, the soul never can rise; better than this, the soul never can find. It is finding all in the love — the changeless love of Christ. This must ever, and only be, the heart's deepest joy, and sweetest peace. Oh! happy state for a poor sinner saved by grace to be in, and to be in now. To find all its fresh springs in the love of Jesus! To be able to say, "He knows me thoroughly — He knows what I am in myself — what I am in Him. Yet, nevertheless, He not only loves me, but delights in me." There is nothing beyond this. Oh! wondrous truth! Here pause for a moment, in thy meditations, O my soul. And may I venture to ask of thee, "Has thy harp ever been tuned to take this note? And canst thou take it easily? Is there no strain in reaching it? And hast thou learned to dwell upon it — sounding it long and fully? "This ought to be the key note of all our praise — the uniform condition of our souls. We start, if we start aright on our Christian course, with the knowledge of the love of Jesus — of the efficacy of His sacrifice — of the completeness of redemption — of the certainty of glory. And should the song of His love ever become feeble on our lips? Surely it should become stronger and stronger, as we near the bright realms of glory, where the same Jesus, and the same love, shall be our happy song forever.

"O how I thirst the chains to burst,
That weigh my spirit downward;
And there to flow, in love's full glow
With hearts like thine surrounded!
Lord, haste that day, of cloudless ray, —
That prospect bright unfailing
Where God shall shine, in light divine,

In glory never fading.”

Meditations on Song of Solomon

“Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the fields; let us lodge in the villages; let us get up early into the vineyards; let us see if the vine flourish, whether the tender grape appear, and the pomegranate bud forth; there will I give thee my loves.” The Bride now addresses the Bridegroom, in the full communion, and happy enjoyment of His love. Observe the change in the tone and character of her address. It is far beyond anything we have heard from her before. And she speaks only of those things which she knows to be well-pleasing to Him. There is oneness of mind and heart. Her faith has attained to the measure of His thoughts and affections concerning herself. Thus it was with David in the Valley of Elah. His faith rose to the height of God’s thoughts and affections concerning His people Israel; and so reckoned on Him. This is the true ground of communion. In Christ the believer has it fully and perfectly displayed now, and such should be the character of his communion — oneness of mind and heart with Christ.

The love of Jesus to us-ward, is not in word only, but in full, perfect manifestation. His work is finished. And, moreover, we have, according to the promise in John 14, the Holy Ghost in us, as individuals, (1 Cor. 6:19.) and with us, as the assembly of God. (1 Cor. 3:16, 17.) And is not He the witness, seal, and revealer to our souls of the love of Jesus, and our oneness with Him? Why then should the tone and character of our communion be lower than the whole will of Christ concerning us? But it may be that we grieve the Holy Spirit by our unbelief, our worldliness, and the untenderness of our ways; and so lose that character of communion with Christ, which an ungrieved Spirit alone can give. Oh! watch and pray, my soul, that thou mayest live, walk, and worship, in the light and power of a present, ungrieved Holy Spirit.

The expression, “Let us go forth into the fields; let us lodge in the villages,” &c., seems to intimate that the blessings and glories of the millennium are extending beyond the limits of Israel. The fields and the villages are outside the city. Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, as forming the earthly center of Messiah’s glory, will, no doubt, first be filled therewith. But from this center it will spread forth on the right hand and on the left, until the whole earth be filled with His glory. But the peculiar sweetness and blessedness of the truth before us is — that the Jews are associated with their Messiah in this wide spreading glory. They are formed for each other; and they, together, spread, witness, enjoy, and delight in all the blessings of the earth. This seems perfectly clear from the words of the Spouse, “Come, my beloved, let us go forth — let us lodge — let us get up early — let us see if the vine flourish,” &c. They visit and survey, in happy fellowship, the varied, and wide-extending fields of millennial glory. Then she adds, with a confidingness of heart that is thoroughly at home in His presence, “There will I give thee my loves.” Her heart is overflowing. There is now, as it were, an excess of love. Hence she uses the plural, “loves.” Exceeding, abundant, excellent love. Our love can never be too fervent, or too abundant, when Christ is the object.

The Church, I need not say, and all saints that are raised with her, shall, ere this, be glorified with Christ in the Jerusalem above. For it is the purpose of God to gather together all things in heaven and earth under one Head, Christ. He will hold under His power, both the heavenly and earthly departments of His kingdom. Then they will be joined together, as by Jacob’s ladder. The glory of the heavenly saints will be visible to those on earth, and indeed to all the world. “That the world

may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.”

(John 17:23.) And in reference to the New Jerusalem it is said, “And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it.” Rev, 21:24.

“The mandrakes give a smell, and at our gates are all manner of pleasant fruits, new and old, which I have laid up for thee, O my beloved.” The happy Spouse now finds that there is in her heart for the Son of David, an abundance of precious fruits; such as love, gratitude, praise, and devotion. Indeed, all manner of precious fruits, new and old. There is much depth and beauty in the closing sentence of her address, “Which I have laid up for thee, O my beloved.” An entirely new character of feelings have been awakened in her soul for the Lord Himself. Such as she has never had, and never could have for anyone else. Her heart, so long desolate and barren, is now filled and fruitful with her own Messiah’s love. He has created affections peculiar to Himself — affections which have been laid up, as it were, during the whole period of her wanderings, and kept for the Lord alone. “Which I have laid up for thee, O my beloved.”

Chapter 8. “O that thou wert as my brother, that sucked the breasts of my mother! when I should find thee without, I would kiss thee; yea, I should not be despised. I would lead thee and bring thee into my mother’s house, who would instruct me: I would cause thee to drink of spiced wine of the juice of my pomegranate.” These verses evidently take us back and not forward, as to the position and experience of the Bride. We parted with her, at the close of chapter 7, amidst the ripening scenes of the latter-day glory, and in happy companionship with her Beloved. They were together. The dark night of her sorrow was past, with all its painful experience; and the happy day of her glory had come with all its untold blessedness. But here we are led back to the very foundation of all the exercises through which she has passed in reaching this point; namely, the ardent desire of her heart for unhindered, unrestrained communion with Messiah, the King. She desires the full liberty of kindred affection. “O that thou wert as my brother!” This answers to the commencement of the book: “Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth: for thy love is better than wine.”

The eighth chapter, as has been said, stands by itself, and recapitulates the principles of the whole book. Looking at it in this light, we will do little more than point out what we believe to be the path of the Spirit in this concluding chapter of our beautiful Song of Songs.

The deep desires of the spouse, as here expressed by the Spirit of prophecy, are at once, and fully satisfied. She desires full possession of Christ; and to have the opportunity of causing Him to drink of the spiced wine of her pomegranates. Now she knows, that once He drank the bitter cup of God’s wrath for her sins; and she longs to present to Him a cup of choice wine, which her gratitude and devotedness have mingled for Him alone. Like the returning prodigal, she is immediately embraced, and rests in the arms of her Beloved. The daughters of Jerusalem are again charged not to stir, or awake the loved one while she is enjoying His love. “His left hand should be under my head, and his right hand should embrace me. I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love until he please.” She is next seen as “coming up from the wilderness, leaning on her beloved.” She is moving on — journeying towards the sunny hills of Canaan, in dependence on Her Beloved, and under the shadow of His wings, Egypt and the wilderness are left behind.

The Bridegroom now reminds the Bride of the source of all her blessing, “I raised thee up under the apple tree.” The “apple tree” is the emblem of Christ Himself. “As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons.” Her divine life, and every blessing connected with it, she derives from Christ. “I raised thee up under the apple tree” — quickened, — blest, with all earthly blessings in a glorious land, under Christ. It is never said that the Christian has life and blessing under Christ, but with Him. This important truth marks the difference between Jewish and Christian blessing. Both, of course, derive their life and blessing from Him. But it is said of Christians that they are quickened together with Christ — raised up together — and seated together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” (Eph. 2:5, 6.) Israel, as such, belongs to the earth; we, as Christians, belong to the “heavenly places.” Before conversion, we belong to earth; after it, we belong to heaven. There, our names are written, and there we are now seated in Christ.

The Bridegroom further reminds His spouse of her relation to the nation of Israel. “There thy mother brought thee forth; there she brought thee forth that bare thee.” The remnant of the nation in whose heart grace works, becomes the Bride of the great King. She represents, more especially, the remnant of Judah, who will be at Jerusalem before the remnant of Ephraim, or the ten tribes are gathered in; but, in principle, she represents the whole nation of Israel. And as Christ Himself sprang from the tribe of Judah, the Spirit of God evidently sanctions the use of relative titles, and the expression of affections belonging to them.

A feeling of sadness and sorrow passes over the mind, when we think that those for whose faith and encouragement these relationships are owned, and these beautiful scenes described, are still in the depths and darkness of a terrible unbelief. The veil is still on the heart of Israel. But the way of love, so beautifully described in these Canticles, shall, ere long, become the truthful expression of their experience. But, meanwhile, the Christian has the benefit of this wondrous revelation of hearts and feelings; the Song of Songs having a blessed, moral application to us.

The quickened remnant — Bride of Messiah in His Solomon character — now desires to be as a seal upon His heart according to a love that passeth knowledge. “Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm; for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it; if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned.” (See vol. 5, pp. 232, 233.) Where shall we find love like this? Only in the heart of Jesus. What takes such a hold as death? What keeps it like the grave? What so unsparing as the vehement flame? There is nothing to compare with love. Were a man to offer the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be despised. Many waters cannot quench it; the floods cannot drown it. When love and death met in fearful conflict on the cross, love triumphed, and death was forever vanquished.

The “seal” on the “heart” and the “arm,” may refer to the breastplate and shoulder pieces, as worn by the high priest. The names of the twelve tribes were engraven on precious stones, “like the engravings of a signet,” and worn on the heart, (type of affection) and on the shoulder (type of strength) of the high priest, before the Lord. So shall the happy spouse, ere long, be as a seal on the loving heart and powerful arm of her blessed Lord, as her great High Priest, after the order of Melchizedec.

“We have a little sister, and she hath no breasts: what shall we do for our sister in the day she shall be spoken for? If she be a wall, we will build upon her a palace of silver; and if she be a door, we will enclose her with boards of cedar.” Ephraim, or the long lost ten tribes, are referred to, we doubt not, by the “little sister.” Their captivity had taken place before the birth of Christ; so that they know nothing of the exercises through which Judah, or the two tribes, have passed with reference to the birth, death, resurrection, and return of the Messiah. Nevertheless they come into the enjoyment of the blessed results of His first coming in grace, and of His second coming in glory. And they are instructed, built up, and established in the doctrine of Christ, by their more highly favored sister Judah. “I am a wall,” she says, “and my breasts like towers: then was I in his eyes as one that found favor.” She is strong in the Lord, richly furnished, and in full favor with the King. God’s Israel is restored! There are twelve tribes united, in the Israel of God; not ten and two divided.

“O pray — intensely pray,
Build up Jerusalem, and God will hear
Petitions He has prompted: God will hear,
And from her desolations cause to rise
A wall conspicuous — her growing strength,
Her shining palaces, will teach the world,
That God is faithful, and His promise sure.”

“Solomon had a vineyard at Baal-hamon; he let out the vineyard unto keepers; every one for the fruit thereof was to bring a thousand pieces of silver.” “Baal-hamon,” signifies — Lord of a multitude; and evidently refers to the multitude of nations — the whole earth, which now form the vast vineyard of the Lord of Glory. “The earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof, the world and they that dwell therein.” (Psalm 24) The millennium has come! The glory of the Lord fills the earth — all hearts rejoice — Jesus reigns; a suitable return is now made to Him by the keepers of the vineyard. Everything is now under the eye of Christ, and according to the principles of His government. But from the vineyard of the Bride, she would have the whole of its fruits to go to King Solomon, save a portion for those who have the charge thereof. “My vineyard, which is mine, is before me: thou, O Solomon, must have a thousand, and those that keep the fruit thereof two hundred.” All shall share in the spoils of the fruitful, peaceful, joyful, millennial earth. But Christ is Lord of all.

He now addresses, for the last time in these songs of love, His fair, and highly favored spouse. “Thou that dwellest in the gardens, the companions hearken to thy voice: cause me to hear it.” He invites her praise. She is to give the key note to the companions - to the whole earth. Then shall all peoples, tribes, and tongues, catch the flying joy, and roll the rapturous hosannas, “from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth.” Creation is filled with joy and gladness, and its loud, long anthems of praise and thanksgiving, greet the ear of its glorious King. “Cause ME to hear it.”

“Make haste, my beloved, and be thou like to a roe or to a young hart upon the mountains of spices” Our lovely song is ended. Its last note is rich and full. The loving spouse fervently desires her Lord’s speedy return. She entreats that He may come without delay. The deep affections of her soul for Jesus are manifested by the intensity of her desire for His glorious appearing. Oh! that all our hearts might be united together, as the heart of one man, to join in the deep, earnest, fervent prayer of the spouse, that He may come quickly to our longing hearts—that He may come for the rapture of the Church, the glory of Israel, and the blessing of the whole earth.

Having often been refreshed by quotations from “Metrical Meditations, on the sacred Book of Canticles,” we add the closing lines of the poem, with grateful thanks to the author.

One echoing response, and all is still!

One loving answer from the sacred harp

Of waiting Zion to that kind command —

Make haste! Come quickly! O beloved Lord!

Like the young roe that moveth rapidly,

That tarrieth not for man — like agile hart

That springs to sight as with a single bound,

On the spies mountains be thy glory seen,

MAKE HASTE! COME QUICKLY! O BELOVED LORD.

The Southport Life-Boat

We watched the wreck with great anxiety. The life-boat had been out some hours, but could not reach the vessel through the great breakers that raged and foamed on the sand bank. The boat appeared to be leaving the Norwegian crew to perish; but it was only to get round the sand bank. My eye was to the glass; "I think I see the boat leaving the vessel," said I to my friend. "Just you look." He did so. "Yes, there she is," said he, "plain enough, but I have lost her again. Why, dear! dear! the vessel has gone down." Yes, it was so. But a very few minutes after the captain and sixteen of the perishing crew had been taken off, the vessel went down. We were having a meeting to read the word of God on the Monday night, and five of the rescued sailors came in. They were so deeply interested in hearing the Gospel preached, that the whole sixteen "besought that the same words might be preached to them," the next night. It was very affecting to look at these sixteen men, rescued from the very jaws of death. There was an aged sailor of near sixty, and a boy about fifteen. A Norwegian Bible had been washed on shore, a beloved brother turned to the passages in it, as I spoke in English; some could understand me, whilst the mate read the Norwegian texts, and interpreted to the others. It was a solemn meeting. We had provided supper, and asked whether they would have tea or coffee. They replied they had come for neither, but to hear the word of God.

I said, "When your vessel had struck, and those immense waves were rolling over the deck, suppose I had taken a speaking trumpet, and, standing on the shore, had hailed you with these words, 'I invite you to come on shore and then you will be safe.' Would that have been good news for you?" "Oh no, sir," said they, "that would not have met our case at all." Well, then, when the life-boat had come three miles, and was now only one hundred yards from you, suppose the captain of the boat had said, "There, we have done our part, you must now do yours." Would that have met your case? "Oh, no; that would have been no better than staying on shore." Of course not, they might as well have attempted three miles, in such a sea, as one hundred yards. Every sea that struck them threatened to send them to the deep. In such a storm, free will, will not help a man a yard. In their case there was the will, but where was the power? One more question, "When the lifeboat came to you in the storm, did you expect it had brought some tools to repair your old ship? or did you expect to be taken off the old vessel and put in the life-boat?" "Oh, no; the vessel was a total wreck," said they. They well knew that she was past mending. Two of her masts were gone, and if they had stayed mending her, only a few minutes, they must have gone down, to rise no more in this world. They had to be taken off the vessel and strapped fast to the lifeboat. That is a noble life-boat, The Jessie Knowles, she is so built that she cannot sink. I think she was buried four times in the waves, but rose, and emptied herself each time. What a mercy there was such a life-boat at Southport; but for her, there was no way of escape for those poor men. It is a solemn thing for seventeen men, in health and strength, all to go down in a moment to a watery grave. It was a fearful storm, and many long hours had passed, darkness had come on, but at last they emerged from the darkness, and all were saved.

I tried to illustrate the gospel by the manner of their rescue; some believed the message, and I doubt not I shall meet them at the coming of the Lord.

I showed them that by nature, every man is in the very condition that they had been in — a total wreck. The power of Satan, and the awful billows of sin beating on the soul, are of far greater strength than those waves that rolled over the ship. Poor man, when he really awakes to his true condition, he finds, like the stranded vessel, he has lost both his masts. Yes, and if even he has the will, where is the power to escape? The Apostle Paul, describing his own experience when in the flesh, on the old ship, says, "For to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not."

When the blessed Jesus was upon earth, man's condition was fully proved. He came to His own, but His own received Him not. He invited men to come unto Him; but they rejected, and slew Him. Such is the crew of the old vessel — to which, by nature, my reader belongs.

What a wreck is humanity, and in what a storm. No, the gospel is not a mere invitation to the sinner, to give up his sins, to come out of the storm, and come serve Christ on shore. No, it shows me how Jesus gave his precious blood to come and serve me in, and save me from, the storm. All rejected the invitation to the gospel supper. None came but those that were fetched, yea, compelled to come in, (Luke 14:16-23.) Such is man, and such is God. Sin has abounded, grace has much more abounded.

Blessed Jesus, thou didst not come within one hundred yards of us, and then bid us help ourselves. No, had Jesus only come to this world to invite sinners to Himself, He must have remained alone. To save, He must die. (John 12:24.) If pity led the crew of the life-boat, to go into the midst of the raging storm, right to the sinking vessel; was it not love that led the blessed One to leave the realms of glory, and descend to this world of sin; yea, to take the sinner's place, to die for our sins, according to the scriptures? Jesus took no half measures. Infinite in love, mighty to save. Well did He count the cost. None but He fully knew the perils of that deep, into which He entered, when His soul was made an offering for sin. Before He could reach us, all God's billows must roll over Him. Those dark, deep waters of death into which He sank. And, Prince of Life! what must that death have been to Him? Such death was never died but then. The awful weight of God's righteous judgment on sin, and on my sins, struck His soul; fell on Him; and, as it fell, made even Him cry out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Ah, had the whole Atlantic, with one mighty swell, struck the Norwegian wreck; this would have been as nothing in comparison. And there was no way to reach poor sin-wrecked man, but through this sin-expiating death. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up." "Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ." (Acts 17:3.)

However light man, duped by the great enemy, may make of sin, God cannot make light of it. Without the shedding of blood, pardon there is none. In heaven or earth naught could be found to maintain the high consistency of God, most Holy, in pardoning sin, but the expiating death of His ever-beloved Son. Oh, sinner, "God hath spoken in His holiness, I will rejoice." In perfect righteousness the gospel comes to every opened ear. The work is done. The wreck is reached. He sank in death, He is risen in life — in life that dies no more. "Delivered for our offenses, and raised again for our justification."

Oh! sin-tossed, sin-wrecked soul, perishing, sinking, lost one! hear the words of thy great Deliverer, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my words, and believeth on him that sent me hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." (John 5:24.) Oh, sweetest words of heavenly certainty, to him that thus believes the wondrous love of God, in sending Jesus to the wreck. Long may you have been rowing in the dark and stormy night of sin.

Oh! do you hear His voice? He says, Do not be afraid, it is I. What love to come to you just where you are, helpless and lost. He comes with words of pardon, words of peace. Through Him is proclaimed to you the forgiveness of sins, and by Him all that believe are justified from all things. This is the plain statement of His word. (Acts 13:38.) I only ask, do you hear His words, do you believe on God that sent Him, in infinite righteousness, thus to save the lost? Then, as surely as you thus believe God, so surely you are passed from death unto life. It is thus by the word of God, that faith comes to sin-wrecked man.

The Norwegian sailors were a good deal surprised at the illustration of their not trying to mend the old ship. There is no greater, or more common mistake, than the attempt to mend the old man. The moment these sailors were taken off the wreck, and strapped to the life-boat, that moment the old vessel passed away, and they sailed in the new life-boat; if they had clung to only one rope of the old, they could not have escaped in the new. It is just so with all who are saved in Christ. "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new. And all things are of God," &c. (2 Cor. 5:17.) The resurrection life-boat is entirely of God — built of God when He raised Christ from the dead. Thus God takes the once wrecked sinner, from his old condition, in the wrecked vessel of Adam the first, and places him, yea, straps him fast, with cords of never-breaking love, in the resurrection life-boat; the new creation. Hear what Jesus says of all who are in this lifeboat, "I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." (John 10:28.) Oh, blessed Captain, they who know thee best, know that the sin-wrecked sailor, once in the life-boat, is as safe as those who have landed on heaven's shore. True, he is still in the storm; but he cannot sink, he cannot perish. What confidence this gives to work out our salvation with fear and trembling!

The Norwegian sailors very gladly pulled at the oar in concert with the life-boat crew. The certainty that they could not sink, gave strength to the pull. So it was with Paul, when addressing the sin-wrecked ones in the resurrection life-boat at Philippi. Being confident that he who had begun the work would see them safe to land, he therefore bids them, joyfully, pull for the shore. Surely, I would not say one word against good works, only mind you are not pulling in the old ship. Man's utmost effort to improve himself, is just like trying to mend a sinking ship. Still she settles lower and lower in the water, and the next sea that strikes her may be the last; and so it is with man. With all his religiousness and resolutions, he sinks lower and lower in sin, awful condition! the next sin may be the last; and then, he sinks in perdition. When the vessel is full of water, it is too late to pump. Alas, man is not only full of sin; but there is no strength in his timbers to keep it out — all is rottenness. There must be a new birth, a new creation. All hope in self, like the broken ship, must be given up. Well, reader, how is it with you? has God shown you your utterly wrecked condition? It may be, you say, "That sinking wreck is an exact picture of my state; but what am I to do? I have tried long to be better, but I only sink lower and lower? "Nay, it is not what are you to do; but, what has been done? Christ has died. God needs no more; nay, God says so, by raising Him from the

dead. Now, think of the death of Jesus for sins. Do you need more? God is just in justifying—is not this enough? Oh, that, from this moment you may let go every hope, and every rope of the old ship, self, and believing what God says, through Jesus pass from death unto life!

Though I Be Nothing

2 Cor. 12:11.

My Father, can I learn so hard a task?
You must; no more my child of you I ask,
Than He hath done — my well-beloved Son.
Must I be nothing? Must I nothing do?
Nothing, my child. Christ hath done all for you;
You cannot buy, the price is all too high,
Freely I give; — only “believe and live.”
Enough — Give Thou the humble heart, and I consent;
Oh, make me nothing, and therewith content.
My gain is loss, my trust is in the Cross:
Hold me — I’m weak, I fall; be thou mine All in All.
Here give me, Lord, some quiet place,
Where I can work, and yet behold Thy face:
While Thou wouldst have me stay,
Keep my feet steadfast in Thy way: They must not tire,
Till Thou shalt bid me “Come up higher.”
I will be nothing still,
That Christ alone my heaven of heavens may fill.
Yet set me, Lord, a little glowing gem
Upon His diadem; to shed my tiny ray
Among the splendors of His crowning day;
Though unperceiv’d, I still should like to shine,
A tribute glory on that brow divine.
And let me raise one little note of praise,
Though hardly heard among the myriad voices,

When the redeemed church above rejoices:

That it may blend.

With angel Hallelujahs that ascend,

A lowly offering to my Savior — Friend.

Lord, I am nothing — Christ in all must shine;

Do with me as Thou wilt, for I am Thine.

The True Workman: Part 1: His Rebuffs, His Resources, His Returns

(Read Matt. 11.)

There is a never-failing freshness in every part of the Word of God, but especially in those portions of it which present to us the blessed Person of the Lord Jesus; which tell us what He was, what He did, what He said, how He did it, and how He said it; which present Him to our hearts in His comings and goings, and matchless ways, in His spirit, tone, and manner, yea, in His very look and gesture. There is something in all this that commands and charms the heart. It is far more powerful than the mere statement of doctrines, however important, or the establishment of principles, however profound. These have their value and their place, most assuredly; they enlighten the understanding, instruct the mind, form the judgment, govern the conscience, and, in so doing, render us invaluable service. But the presentation of the Person of Christ transfixes the heart, rivets the affections, satisfies the soul, commands the whole being. In short, nothing can possibly exceed occupation of heart with Christ Himself, as the Holy Ghost has unfolded Him to us in the Word, and especially in the inimitable narratives of the gospels. May it be given as, beloved reader, to prove this, as we hang together over the eleventh chapter of the Gospel of Matthew, in which we shall get a view of Christ, the true Workman, in His rebuffs, His resources, and His returns — the rebuffs which He met with in His ministry; the resources which He found in God; and the returns which He makes to us. And first, then, let us look at The Rebuffs.

There never yet was one who stood as a workman for God, in this world, that had not to encounter rebuffs in some shape or form, and the only perfect Workman is no exception to the general rule. Jesus had His rebuffs and disappointments, for had it been otherwise with Him, He could not sympathize with those who have to meet them at every stage of their career. He, as man, perfectly entered into everything that man is capable of feeling, sin excepted. “He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.” “He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities.” He perfectly understands, and fully enters into, all that His servants have to pass through in their work.

Now, in this eleventh chapter, the Spirit has grouped together a series of those rebuffs or disappointments which the perfect Workman, the true Servant, the divine Minister had to encounter, in the discharge of His ministry. The first of these came from a quarter from which we should not have expected it, namely, from John the Baptist himself. “Now, when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples, and said unto him, Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?”

It is very evident that at the moment in which the Baptist sent this message to his Master, his spirit was under a cloud. It was a dark season in his experience. This was nothing uncommon. The very best and truest of Christ’s servants have had their spirits overcast at times, by the dark shadows of unbelief, despondency, and impatience. Moses, that highly honored, faithful servant of God, gave forth, on one occasion, such accents as these, “Wherefore hast thou afflicted thy servant, and wherefore have I not found favor in thy sight, that thou layest the burden of all this people upon me.....I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me. And if thou deal

thus with me, kill me, I pray thee, out of hand, if I have found favor in thy sight, and let me not see my wretchedness.” (Num. 11:11-15.) Such was the language of the meekest man upon the face of the earth—language drawn forth, no doubt, by very aggravating circumstances, even by the murmuring voices of six hundred thousand footmen — but still it was the language of Moses; and surely it would ill become us to marvel, for where is the mere mortal who could have endured the intense pressure of such a moment? What merely human embankment could have resisted the violence of such a mighty tide?

Again, we find Elijah the Tishbite, in a moment of heavy pressure, when a dark cloud was passing over his soul, flinging himself down under a juniper tree, and requesting for himself that he might die. “ It is enough; now. O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers.” (1 Kings 19:4.) This was the language of Elijah, one of the most highly honored of the servants of Christ — language evoked, no doubt, by a combination of the most discouraging influences—but still it was the language of Elijah the Tishbite; and let no one blame him until he himself has passed, without a wavering feeling or a faltering word, through like conditions.

In like manner, also, we find Jeremiah, another of Christ's highly-favored workmen, when under the smitings of Pashur, and the derisive insults of the ungodly around him, giving vent to his feelings in such language as this, “O Lord, thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived: thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed; I am in derision daily, everyone mocketh me. For since I spake, I cried out, I cried violence and spoil; because the word of the Lord was made a reproach unto me, and a derision daily. Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name.” And, again, “Cursed be the day wherein I was born: let not the day wherein my mother bare me be blessed. Cursed be the man who brought tidings to my father, saying, A man child is born unto thee; making him very glad. And let that man be as the cities which the Lord overthrew, and repented not: and let him hear the cry in the morning, and the shouting at noontide. Because he slew me not from the womb; or that my mother might have been my grave, and her womb to be always great with me. Wherefore came I forth out of the womb to see labor and sorrow, that my days should be consumed with shame?” (Jer. 20:7-9, 14-18.) Such was the language of the weeping prophet — language drawn forth, no doubt, by sharp rebuff's and sore disappointments in his prophetic ministry, but still the language of Jeremiah; and, ere we condemn him, let us see if we could acquit ourselves better under similar pressure.

Need we wonder, then, after reading such records as the above, when we find the Baptist, amid the gloom of Herod's dungeon, faltering, for a moment. Should we be greatly astonished to discover that he was made of no better material than the workmen of former generations? If Israel's lawgiver, Israel's reformer, and Israel's weeping prophet had, each in his day and generation, tottered beneath the ponderous weight of his burden, are we to be surprised to find “John the son of Zacharias” giving way to a momentary feeling of impatience and unbelief, beneath the dark shadow of his prison walls? Assuredly not, until we ourselves have sat unmoved amid similar influences.

And yet we have ventured to assert that John's message was a rebuff and a disappointment to the spirit of his Master. Yes, that is just what we assert, and we find the authority for our assertion in the style of Christ's answer. “Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see. The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are

cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me.”

It is very possible, nay probable, that the Baptist, under a passing shadow of unbelief, had been tempted to wonder if indeed Jesus was the One to whom he had, in the discharge of his ministry, borne such full and unqualified testimony. He was, doubtless, stumbled, for the moment, when he saw himself in the iron grasp of Herod, and heard of the works of Christ. His poor heart might indulge itself in such reasoning as this, “If indeed this be the glorious Messiah for whom we looked, whose kingdom was to be set up in power, then why is it thus with me His servant and witness? Why am I here in the gloom of this prison? Why is not the strong hand of power stretched forth to free me from these bonds and fling open these prison doors?”

If such were the reasonings of the captive Baptist, and we can easily believe it, what a powerful, pointed, pungent answer lay folded up in his Master’s reply! He points him to those grand moral evidences of His divine mission, which were amply sufficient to carry conviction to everyone that was taught of God. Was it not to be expected that if the God of Israel appeared in the midst of His people, He should address Himself to their actual condition? Was that the moment for the display of mere power? Could the Son of David set up His throne amid disease and misery? Was there not a demand for the exercise of patient, lowly grace and mercy in the midst of the varied and multiplied fruits of sin? True, mere power could have burst open Herod’s prison, and set the captive free; but then what about the lame, the blind, the deaf, the leper, the dead, the poor, the wretched? Could the display of royalty alleviate their condition? Was it not plain that something else was needed? And was it not equally plain that that something was being supplied by the gracious, tender, soothing ministrations of the lowly Jesus of Nazareth? Yes, and the Baptist ought to have known this. But ah! beloved reader, you and I may well tread softly in the prison chamber of this honored servant of Christ, not only because grace would have us so to do, but also because of the conviction which, assuredly, must possess our souls that, had we been in his position, the foundations of our personal faith, if not sustained by grace, would have given way far more deplorably.

Still, it is important that we should fully comprehend the failure of John the Baptist, and sedulously gather up the seasonable instruction furnished by his temporary depression. We shall do well to see, with distinctness, what was lacking in his faith, in order that we ourselves may profit by this touchingly interesting narrative. It would have greatly helped the Baptist had he only understood and remembered that this is the day of Christ’s sympathy, and not the day of His power. Were it the day of His power, there would be no dungeon, no block, no stake, no trial, or pressure, or sorrow of any sort or description for the saints of God. There would then be no ripple upon the ocean, no cloud in the sky, no storm to brave, no roughness to endure. But this is the day of Christ’s sympathy; and the question for the tried and tempted, the harassed and oppressed, is this, “Which would you rather have, the power of Christ’s hand in deliverance from the trial, or the sympathy of Christ’s heart in the trial?” The carnal mind, the unsubdued heart, the restless spirit, will, no doubt, at once exclaim, “Oh! let Him only put forth His power and deliver me from this insupportable trial, this intolerable burden, this crushing difficulty. I sigh for deliverance. I only want deliverance.”

Some of us can well understand this. We are so often like a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke, restlessly struggling, instead of patiently submitting; rendering the yoke all the more galling and grievous by our senseless and useless efforts to shake it off. But the spiritual mind, the subdued heart, the lowly spirit, will say, and that without a single particle of reserve, "Let me only enjoy the sweet sympathy of the heart of Jesus in my trial, and I ask no more. I do not want even the power of His hand to deprive me of one drop of consolation supplied by the tender love and profound sympathy of His heart. I know, assuredly, that He could deliver me. I know that He could, in the twinkling of an eye, snap these chains, level these prison walls, rebuke that sickness, raise up that beloved object that lies before me in the cold grasp of death, remove this heavy burden, meet this difficulty, supply this need. But if He does not see fit to do so, if it does not fall in with His unsearchable counsels, and harmonize with His wise and faithful purpose concerning me so to do, I know it is only to lead me into a deeper and richer experience of His most precious sympathy. If he does not see it right to take me off the rough path of trial and difficulty — that path which He Himself, in perfection, and all His saints, from age to age, in their measure, have trodden — it is His gracious purpose to come and walk with me along that path which, though rough and thorny, leads to those everlasting mansions of light and blessedness above."

We cannot, for a moment, doubt but that the knowledge and recollection of these things would greatly have relieved the heart of John the Baptist, in the midst of his prison experiences; and surely they would serve to soothe and sustain our hearts amid the varied exercises through which we are called to pass, in the wilderness scene. The moment has not yet arrived for Jesus to take to Himself His great power, and reign. It is the day of His patience with the world, of His sympathy with His people. We must ever remember this. He did not put forth the strong hand of power to avert aught of His own suffering. Nay, when Peter, in mistaken zeal, drew the sword in His defense, He said, "Put up again thy sword into its place; for all they that take the sword shall perish by the sword. Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled that thus it must be?" Matt. 26:52 - 54.

But while we fully recognize the momentary failure of John the Baptist, and while we clearly discern the points in which his faith proved itself defective, let us remember the pressure of his circumstances, and the great practical difficulty of the lesson which he was called to learn within his prison walls. It is very hard for a workman to find himself laid aside. Indeed, there are few things more difficult for an active mind than to learn that we can be done without. We are so apt to think that the work cannot get on without us. And yet the Lord can soon teach us our mistake. Paul's bonds advanced the cause of Christ. The imprisonment of one great preacher drew out a multitude of minor preachers. Luther's confinement in the Wartburg furthered the cause of the Reformation.

Thus it is always, and we have all to learn the wholesome lesson that God can do without us, that the work can go on without us. This holds good in every case. It matters not, in the least, what our sphere of action may be.

We may not be apostles or reformers, teachers or preachers; but whatever we are, it is well for us to learn that we can very easily be spared from the scene around us. The remembrance of this gives great rest to the heart. It tends amazingly to cure us of all that bustling self-importance which

is so truly hateful, and enables us to say, "The Lord be praised! The work is being done. I am satisfied."

To be continued, if the Lord will.

The True Workman: Part 2

The reader will discern a very marked difference between Christ's message to John and his testimony of John. In speaking to His servant, He lets him know, in a way not to be mistaken, that He felt his question. We can have no difficulty in seeing this. We feel persuaded that the Lord's answer to His servant contained a sharp arrow. True, that arrow was enclosed in a very delicate case; but it was an arrow, and a sharp one too. "Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me." John would, doubtless, understand this. It was designed to go right home to his very inmost soul. That dear servant had said, in reference to Jesus, "He must increase, but I must decrease," and he was called to enter practically into this, not merely in his ministry, but in his person. He had to be content to end his career by the sword of the executioner, after having spent his closing days in the gloom of a dungeon. How mysterious! What a profound lesson to be set down to! How difficult to flesh and blood! What need — what urgent need there was, at such a moment, for John to have whispered into his ear these words, afterward uttered to Peter, "What I do, thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter."

What pregnant words! "Now" and "Hereafter." How much we all need to remember them! often it happens with us that "Now" is involved in deep and impenetrable obscurity. Heavy clouds hang upon our path. The dealings of our Father's hand are perfectly inexplicable to us. Our minds are bewildered. There are circumstances in our path for which we cannot account — ingredients in our cup the object of which we cannot understand or appreciate. We are confounded and feel disposed to cry out, "Why am I thus!" We are wholly engrossed with. "Now" and our minds are filled with dark and unbelieving reasonings until those precious words fall, in a still small voice upon the ear, "What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter." Then the reasonings are answered, the storm hushed, the dark and depressing "Now" is lighted up with the beams of a brilliant and glorious "Hereafter," and the subdued heart breathes forth, in accents of holy and intelligent acquiescence, "As thou wilt, Lord." Would that we knew more of this! Assuredly, we need it, whatsoever may be our lot in this world. We may not be called, like the Baptist, to the prison and the block; but each has his "Now" which must be interpreted in the light of "Hereafter." We must look at the "seen and temporal" in the clear and blessed light of the "unseen and eternal."

But let us now turn, for a moment, and hearken to Christ's testimony of John. "And, as they departed, Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind? But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? behold they that wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet.

For this is he of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding, he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."

Such was the glowing testimony borne by Christ of His servant, John the Baptist. "Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than he." There is a great principle in this — a principle which we may see illustrated, again and again, in the record of God's dealings with His people. If the Lord had a message to send to His servant, He would send it. He would speak to him, plainly and pointedly. But, the moment He proceeds to speak of him, the case is totally different.

Thus it is always, and blessed be God that it is so. We have our ways and God has His thoughts; and while He will deal with us faithfully as to the former, He can only speak of us according to the latter. What relief for the heart is here! What comfort! What moral power! What solid ground for self-judgment! God has given us a standing, and He thinks of us, and speaks of us according to that. We have our practical ways, and He deals with us and speaks to us in reference to them. He will expose us to ourselves, and make us feel our ways and judge our doings; but the moment He begins to speak of us to others, He brings out the perfection of His own thoughts respecting us, and speaks of us according to the perfect standing which He has given us in His presence, the fruit of His own eternal counsels respecting us, and of His perfect work on our behalf.

Thus it was with Israel, in the plains of Moab. They had their ways, and God has His thoughts; and while He had, often and often, to reprove them for their ways, to speak plainly to them about their perverseness and stiff-neckness; yet no sooner did the covetous prophet appear upon the scene, to curse Israel, than the Lord placed Himself right between His people and the enemy to turn the curse into a blessing, and pour forth the most sublime and marvelous strains of testimony on their behalf. "God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good? Behold, I have received commandment to bless, and he hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it. He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel: the Lord his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them. God brought them out of Egypt: he hath as it were the strength of an unicorn. Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel; according to this time it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What hath God wrought!" Num. 23:19-23.

What grace is here! "I have not beheld iniquity, nor seen perverseness." What could the enemy say to this? "What hath God wrought!" It is not, "What hath Israel wrought!" They had wrought folly, many a time; but God had wrought salvation. He had wrought for His own glory, and that glory had shone out in the perfect deliverance of a crooked, perverse, and stiff-necked people. It was no use the enemy's talking of iniquity and perverseness, if Jehovah would not see either the one or the other. It is of very little consequence to us that Satan accuses, when God has acquitted — that Satan counts up our sins, when God has blotted them all out forever — that Satan condemns, when God has justified.

"I hear the accuser roar,

Of ills that I have done;

I know them well, and thousands more,

Jehovah findeth none."

But some may feel disposed to ask, "Is there not danger in the statement of such a principle as this? Might it not lead us into the dark and perilous region of antinomian-ism?" Reader, be thou well assured of this, thou art never further removed from that, justly dreaded region than when thy soul is basking in the bright and blessed beams of God's eternal favor, and exulting in the stability of His unconditional and everlasting salvation. There never was a greater mistake than to imagine that God's free grace and full salvation could ever lead to unholy results. Man's notions of these things may have that effect, but wherever grace is fully known and salvation enjoyed, there you will, most assuredly, find "The fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God." But we know it is an old habit of ignorant and self-exalting legality to attribute an antinomian tendency to the free grace of God. "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?" is no modern objection to the precious doctrines of grace; and yet those doctrines remain untouched in all their purity and power, and find their divine center in the Person of Christ Himself, who, having died on the cross to put away our sins, has become our life and righteousness, our sanctification and redemption, our all in all. He has not only delivered us from the future consequences of sin, but from the present power thereof.

This is what God hath wrought, and this is the groundwork of the great principle on which we have been dwelling, and which we have seen variously illustrated in God's dealings with Israel in the plains of Moab, and in Christ's dealings with the Baptist in the dungeon of Herod. Jehovah was compelling Balaam to exclaim in the ears of Balak, "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel," at the very moment when those tents and tabernacles were furnishing ample material for judgment. So also, Jesus was telling out in the ears of the multitude the greatness of John the Baptist, at the very moment when the messengers were on their way back to their master, carrying with them an arrow for his heart.

Now, we want the reader to get a clear view of this principle, and to bear it in constant remembrance. If we mistake not, it will greatly help him, not only in the understanding of God's word, but also in the interpreting of His ways. God judges His people. He will not and cannot pass over a jot or a tittle in their ways. The splendid testimony of Balaam on Moab's heights, was followed by the sharp javelin of Phineas in Moab's plains. "Our God is a consuming fire." This is what our God is now. He cannot tolerate evil. He speaks of us, He thinks of us, He acts toward us according to the perfection of His own work; but He will judge our ways. Let an enemy come forth to curse, and what is it? Not a spot, not a stain, all perfect and comely and goodly. How could it be otherwise? How could the eye of God behold those sins which have been forever obliterated by the blood of the Lamb? Utterly impossible. What then? Does this make light of sin? Far be the thought. Does it open the door for licentiousness? Nay, it lays the only true foundation of personal holiness. "The Lord will judge his people." He will look after the ways of His children. He will take care of His holiness, and not only so, but He will make His people partakers of that holiness, and chasten them with the rod of faithful discipline for that very purpose. It was just because Israel's tents were goodly in the eyes of Jehovah, that he sent Phineas into those very tents with the javelin of righteous judgment in his hand. And so, now, it is because His people are precious to Him, and comely in His eyes, that He will not suffer aught in them, or in their ways, contrary to His holiness. "The time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God." (1 Peter.) God is not judging the world now. He is judging His people now. He will judge the world by and by. But, be it remembered, that it is as a "holy Father" He judges His people; it is as a righteous God He will

judge the world. The object of the former is practical holiness; the issue of the latter will be eternal perdition. Solemn thought!

But there is another point in connection with this which we desire to press upon the attention of the Christian reader — a point of very great practical moment, namely this, we must not measure our standing by our state, but ever judge our state by our standing. Many err in reference to this, and their error leads to most disastrous results. The standing of the believer is settled, perfect, eternal, divine. His state is imperfect and fluctuating, he is partaker of the divine nature which cannot sin; but he bears about with him also his old nature which can do nothing else but sin. Now his standing is in the new and not in the old. God sees him only in the new. He is not in the flesh, but in the Spirit. He is not under law, but under grace. He is in Christ. God sees him as such. This is his perfect and unalterable standing. His sins gone. His person accepted. All complete. His practical state can never touch his standing. It can very seriously affect his communion, his worship, his testimony, his usefulness, his spiritual enjoyment, his mental repose, the glory of Christ as involved in his practical career. These are grave consequences, in the estimation of every sensitive conscience and well-regulated mind; but the standing of the true believer remains, and must ever remain intact and unalterable. No power of men or devils can ever interfere, in the smallest degree, with that which has been given of God, and is perfect in Christ. The very feeblest member of the family of God has his place of security and settled repose behind the impregnable bulwarks of God's salvation. To deny this is to remove the only true basis of self-judgment and practical holiness.

Hence, if the Christian sets about measuring his standing by his state, he must be miserable, and his mental misery must be commensurate with his honesty and intelligence. There may be cases in which ignorance, self-complacency, or want of sincerity, will lead to a sort of false peace; but where there is any measure of light, intelligence, and uprightness, there must be mental anguish if the standing is measured by the state.

But, on the other hand, let it never be forgotten, indeed the earnest Christian never could desire to forget, that the state must be judged by the standing. If this wholesome truth be lost sight of, we shall very speedily make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience. We have to keep the eye of faith steadily fixed on a risen Christ, and never be satisfied with anything short of perfect conformity to Him, in spirit, soul, and body.

The True Workman: Part 3

A very few words will suffice to present to the reader the remainder of those rebuffs with which our blessed Lord had to deal, as recorded in our chapter. Having disposed of the question of the Baptist and his ministry, He turns to the men of that generation, and says, "But whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows, and saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented. For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil. The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children."

The piping and the mourning were alike neglected by an unbelieving age. "John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not." The Lord Jesus came in perfect grace, and they would not have Him. The stern and distant minister of righteousness, with the ax of judgment in his hand, and the lowly, gentle Minister of divine grace, with words of tenderness and acts of goodness, were alike rejected by the men of that generation. But wisdom's children will ever justify her, in all her doings and in all her sayings. The Lord be praised for this rich mercy! What a privilege to be of the favored number of wisdom's children! To have an eye to see, an ear to hear, and a heart to understand and appreciate the ways and works and words of divine wisdom! "Oh! to grace how great a debtor."

"Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not. Woe unto thee, Chorazin! Woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, "It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell; for if the mighty works which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Sodom, in the day of judgment than for thee."

With what deep and awful solemnity does the word "Woe!" fall upon the ear, as coming from the lips of the Son of God. It is the woe consequent upon rejected grace. It is no longer merely a question of law broken, ordinances dishonored and abused, divine institutions shamefully corrupted, prophets and wise men rejected and stoned. All this there was, alas! But there was more. The Son Himself had come, in purest, richest grace. He had spoken in their ears such words as none other had ever spoken. He had wrought His mighty miracles in their midst. He had healed their sick, cleansed their lepers, raised their dead, fed their hungry, opened the eyes of their blind. What had He not done? What had He not said? He longed to gather them beneath His sheltering wing; but they would not nestle there. They preferred the wings of the archenemy to the wings of Jehovah. He had opened His bosom to receive them; but they would not trust Him. All day long had He stretched forth His hands to them; but they would not have Him; and now, at length, after long forbearing, He pours forth His solemn woes upon them, and tells them of the

appalling destiny awaiting them.

But, beloved reader, does it not occur to you that the “woe” of the eleventh of Matthew may have a wider range than even Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum? Should it not fall with still deeper emphasis, and more soul-subduing power, upon the ear of Christendom? For our part, we cannot doubt it for a moment. We cannot attempt to enter upon the circumstances which conspire to aggravate the guilt of the professing Church — the wide diffusion of scriptural knowledge and evangelical light — the numberless and nameless forms in which spiritual privileges lie scattered upon the pathway of this generation. And what is the return? What the true practical condition of even those who occupy the very highest platform of Christian profession? Alas! who shall venture a reply? We look in one direction, and see the dark shadows of superstition enwrapping the minds of men. We turn the eye to another point, and there we see infidelity raising its bold and audacious front, and daring to lay its impious hand upon the sacred canon of inspiration. Combined with these, we see the poor heart eagerly grasping at everything that can possibly minister to ease and self-indulgence. In a word, it may be safely affirmed that during the entire history of the world, there has not been exhibited a darker spectacle than that which professing Christianity presents at this very hour. Take Chorazin and its companion cities; take Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities of the plain; take Tyre and Sidon; put all these together into one scale, with all their guilt, and Christendom will outweigh them all. For if, in those cities, you find wickedness and infidelity, you do not find them, as in Christendom, tacked on to the name of Christ, or covered with the specious robes of Christian profession. No, this latter was reserved for Christendom, and hence the terrible “woe unto thee” may be heard by all who have ears to hear — a woe, the solemnity of which is only to be measured by the vastness of her privileges and consequent responsibility.

If, however, these lines should be scanned by one who, up to this moment, has rejected the testimony of the gospel, we would affectionately remind him that he, as an individual, should feel the solemnity of the words, “Woe unto thee.” We fear that very few, comparatively, realize the awful responsibility of continually hearing and rejecting the gospel message. If it was a solemn thing for Capernaum to reject the light which shone upon it, how much more solemn is it for any one now to reject the still brighter light that shines upon him in the gospel of the grace of God. Redemption is now accomplished, Christ is exalted to be a Prince and a Savior, the Holy Ghost has come down, the canon of inspiration is complete, everything has been done that love could do. If, therefore, in the face of all this accumulated light and privilege, a man is found still in unbelief, still living in his sins, surely he has much reason to fear lest this word should be pronounced upon him, at the last, “Woe unto thee, gospel rejecter.” “Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand and no man regarded; but ye have set at naught all my counsel, and would none of my reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me.” (Pro. 1:24-28.) May these words be used by the Holy Ghost, to awaken some careless reader, and lead him to the feet of Jesus!

Let us now turn, for a moment, to

THE RESOURCES

which the true, the perfect, the divine Workman found in God. That blessed One had, most surely, His rebuffs in this wretched world; but He had His never-failing resources in God; and, hence, when everything seemed against Him, when He might say, "I have labored in vain, and spent my strength for naught and in vain;" when unbelief, impenitence, and hardness of heart met His view, on every side, "At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight. All things are delivered unto me of my Father; and no man knoweth the Son but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him."

Here, then, were the resources — the rich and varied resources of the true Workman, who could thank God for everything. He was unmoved in the midst of all. If the testimony was rejected, if the message fell upon deaf ears and uncircumcised hearts, if the precious seed which was scattered by His loving hand fell upon the beaten highway and was borne off by the fowls of the air, He could bow His head and say, "I thank thee, O Father. Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight." There was no failure on His part. He ever walked and worked in the perfect line of the divine counsels. Not so with us. If our testimony is rejected, if our work is unproductive, here or there, we may have to inquire as to the cause. We may have to judge ourselves in the matter. Perhaps we have not been faithful. The lack of result may be wholly attributable to ourselves. It might have been different had we been more single-eyed and devoted. We might have gathered golden sheaves in yonder corner of the field, had it not been for our own carnality and worldliness. We were self-indulgent when we ought to have been self-denying; we were governed by mixed motives. In short, there may be a thousand reasons, in ourselves and in our ways, why our labor has proved unproductive.

But with the only perfect Workman, this was not the case, and hence He could calmly retire from the rebuffs without into the resources within. It was all bright with Him there. "I thank thee" He stayed His heart upon the eternal counsels of God. All things were delivered unto Him; and, as He says, elsewhere, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me." It was all settled, and all right. The divine counsel shall stand, and the divine good pleasure shall be accomplished. What a sweet relief for the heart amid rebuffs and disappointments! God will perfect that which concerneth His servants; and even where there are mistakes and failures, as, alas! there are in abundance with all of us, the Lord's rich grace abounds over all, and actually takes occasion from our very mistakes to shine out all the more brightly — though, assuredly, the mistakes must produce their own painful and humiliating results. It is the remembrance of this which alone can give calm repose in the midst of the most discouraging circumstances. If we take the eye off God, our souls must soon be overwhelmed. It is our privilege to be able, in our little measure, to thank God, in view of everything raid take refuge in His eternal counsels which must be made good despite all the unbelief of man, and all the malice of Satan.

But we must draw this paper to a close, though we confess the difficulty of so doing with such a very fruitful and interesting section of inspiration before us. We shall do little more, however, than quote the precious words which set forth

THE RETURNS

which our blessed Lord and Savior makes to us. "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

These words are familiar to our readers, and have been directly dwelt upon in one of our earlier numbers; but we introduce them here as completing the lovely picture presented in our chapter. We feel assured the spiritual reader will greatly enjoy the presentation of the divine Workman in His rebuffs, His resources, and His returns. It is a marvelous lesson indeed. The Lord Jesus retires from a scene of disappointments, and finds all His springs in God; He then comes forth into the midst of the very scene that had repulsed Him, and makes His gracious returns. It is all in perfect grace — grace unfailing- mercy inexhaustible-patience unwearied. True, He had sent an answer to the Baptist; He had faithfully portrayed the men of that generation; He had denounced a solemn woe upon the impenitent cities; but He can come forth in all the divine freshness and fullness of the grace that was in Him, and say, to every heavy-laden soul, "Come unto me."

Beloved reader, all this is divine. It draws out our hearts in worship and thanksgiving. If faithfulness is constrained, in the view of aggravated impenitence, to say, "Woe unto thee," grace can address every burdened heart in the touching accents, "come unto me." Both are perfect. The Lord Jesus felt the rebuffs. He would not have been very man if He had not felt them. Yes, He felt the rebuffs. He could say, "I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none." Mark, "I looked" His loving human heart fondly "looked" for pity, but found it not. He looked for comforters, but looked in vain. There was no pity for Jesus — no comforters for Him. He was left alone. Loneliness and desolation, thirst, ignominy, and death — such was the portion of the Son of God and Son of man. "Reproach," says He, "hath broken my heart." It is a fatal mistake to suppose that the Lord Jesus did not feel, in every respect, as man should feel, the varied exercises through which He passed. He felt everything that man is capable of feeling except sin, and this latter He bore and expiated on the cross, blessed be His name!

This is not only a great cardinal doctrine of the Christian faith, but a truth of infinite sweetness to the heart of every true believer. Jesus, as man, felt what it was to be neglected, to be disappointed, to be wounded and insulted. Blessed Jesus! thus it was with thee, down here, because thou wast very man, perfect in all that became a man, in the midst of this heartless world. Thy loving heart sought sympathy, but found it not. Loneliness was thy portion while craving sweet companionship. This world had no pity, no comfort for thee.

And yet, mark the grace which breathes in those words, "Come unto me." How unlike us! If we, who so often deserve them, because of our ways, meet with rebuffs and disappointments, what returns do we make? Alas! for the answer. Chagrin and sourness, faultfinding and bitter complaints. And why is this? It may be said we are not perfect, certainly not in ourselves; but we may rest assured that if we were more in the constant habit of retiring from the rebuffs of the world or of the professing Church, into our resources in God, we should be much better able to come forth and make gracious returns in the midst of the scene which had repulsed us. But it too often happens that instead of being driven in upon God, we are driven in upon self, and the consequence is that instead of returning grace we return bitterness. It is impossible that we can make a right return if we fail to realize our right resource.

Oh! that we may really learn of Jesus, and take His very yoke upon us. May we drink into His meek and lowly spirit! What words! "Meek and lowly!" "How unlike nature! How unlike the world! How unlike us! How much pride, haughtiness, and self-sufficiency in us! What self-confidence, self-seeking, and self-exaltation! May the Lord give us to see ourselves as He sees us, so that we may be in the dust in His presence, and ever walk humbly before Him. May it be given us to prove, in this day of headiness and high-mindedness, the moral security of a lowly mind and an humble spirit! It is a wonderful thing to be called to wear the self-same yoke that Jesus wore — the yoke of entire subjection to the Father's will in all things. This is the secret of true peace and power. We can only taste of true rest of heart when the will is kept in subjection. It is when we can meet every dispensation of our Father's hand with an "even so," that rest is our portion. If the will is active, rest must be out of the question. It is one thing to receive rest of conscience, on coming to Jesus, at the first, and quite another thing to find rest of heart through taking His yoke, and learning of Him. May it be given us to know very much more of the latter, in this day of restless activity.

Truth for the Times

There is a character of truth in the Epistle to the Galatians, very seasonable at this present time, and very strengthening to the soul, at all times. It teaches us to know, that the religion of faith is the religion of immediate personal confidence in Christ. A truth which is, again I say, seasonable, in a day like the present; when the provisions and claims of certain earthly church forms, and a system of ordinances, suggested by the religious, carnal mind, are abundant and fascinating. To learn, at all times, that our souls are to have their immediate business with Christ, is comforting and assuring. To be told this afresh, at such a time as the present, is needful.

The apostle is very fervent in this epistle —naturally and properly so — as we all should be, as we all ought to be, when some justly prized possession is invaded; when some precious portion of truth, the dearest of all possessions, is tampered with.

In this epistle, in the first instance, as at the beginning, the apostle lets us know, with great force and plainness, that he had received his apostleship immediately from God; not only his commission, or his office, but his instructions also; that which he had to minister and testify, as well as his appointment and ministry itself. He was an apostle immediately from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ; and what he knew and taught he had by direct, immediate revelation.

And, in connection with this, he tells us, that as God had thus dealt immediately with him, so had he, in answering confidence, dealt immediately with God. For, having received the revelation, having had the Son revealed in him, he at once withdrew from conversing with flesh and blood. He did not go up to Jerusalem, to those who were apostles before him, but down to Arabia, carrying, as it were, his treasure with him; not seeking to improve it, but as one that was satisfied with it, just as it was, that is, with the Christ who had now been given to him.

And, here, let me say, this brings to mind the Gospel by St. John, for that gives us, before this time of Paul, sample after sample of the soul finding its satisfaction in Christ. Every quickened one there illustrates it. Andrew, and Peter, and Philip, and Nathanael, in the first chapter, afterward the Samaritan and her companions at Sychar, and then the convicted adulteress, and the excommunicated beggar, all of them tell us, in language which cannot be misunderstood, that they had found satisfaction in Christ, that having been alone with Him in their sins, they were now independent — having had a personal, immediate dealing with Him as the Savior, they looked not elsewhere. Arabia will do for them as well as Jerusalem, just as in the experience of the Paul of the Galatians. They never appear to converse with flesh and blood. Ordinances are in no measure their confidence. Their souls are proving that faith is that principle which puts sinners into immediate contact with Christ, and makes them independent of all that man can do for them.

How unspeakably blessed to see such a state of soul illustrated in any fellow-sinner, in men “of like passions with ourselves,” like corruptions, like state of guilt and condemnation. Such things are surely written for our learning that by comfort of such scriptures we may have assurance and liberty.

And what is thus, in living samples, illustrated, for our comfort, in John's Gospel, is taught and pressed upon us in this fervent Epistle of Paul to the Galatians. Having shown the churches in Galatia the character of his apostle-ship, how he got both his commission and his instructions immediately from God, and was not debtor to flesh and blood, to Jerusalem, the city of solemnities, or to those who were apostles before him for anything; and having discovered, as it were, his very spirit to them, telling them that the life he was now living was by the faith of the Son of God, he begins to challenge them — for they were not in this state of soul.

He calls them "foolish," and tells them they had been "bewitched." For how could he do less, than detect the working of Satan in the fact, that they had been withdrawn from the place where the Spirit and the Truth, the cross of Christ and faith, had once put them. But then, he reasoned with them, argues the matter and calls forth his witnesses. He makes themselves their judges, appealing to their first estate. "Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" He cites Abraham, 'in proof, that a sinner had immediate personal business with Christ, and through faith found justification. And he rehearses the character of the gospel which had been preached to Abraham, how it told of Christ, and of the sinner, and blessing being put together and alone. "In thee (Abraham's seed, which is Christ) shall all nations be blessed." Precious gospel! Christ, and the sinner, and blessing, bound up together in one bundle. And he goes on to confirm and establish this, by teaching them how Christ bore the curse, and, therefore, surely was entitled to dispense the blessing.

Surely these are witnesses which may well be received, as proving the divine character of the religion of faith, which is the sinner's immediate confidence in Christ.

But then, he does further and other service in this same cause. He goes on to tell us the glorious things faith works and accomplishes in us and for us. "After faith is come," he tells us in chap. 3: 25 - 27, "we are no longer under a schoolmaster — for we are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus — for as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." Here are precious deeds of faith! It dismisses the schoolmaster, it brings the soul to God as to a father, and then it clothes the believer with the value of Christ, in the eye and acceptance of God. And "God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father." (4: 6.) And "we are redeemed from under the law." (4: 5.) Can any more full and perfect sense of an immediate dealing between Christ and the soul be conceived, than is expressed and declared by such statements? We are brought from under the law — the schoolmaster, and, with him, tutors and governors are gone — we are children at home in the Father's house, and have the rights and the mind of the First-born Himself put on us, and imparted to us! Can any condition of soul more blessedly set forth our independence of the resources of a religion of ordinances, and the poor sinner's personal and immediate connection with Christ Himself?

But Paul finds the churches in Galatia in a backsliding state. They had turned again "to weak and beggarly elements." They were "observing days, and months, and times, and years." It was all but returning to their former idolatry, as he solemnly hints to them, "doing service to them which by nature are no gods," as they had been doing in the days of their heathen ignorance of the true God. (4:8.) What a connection does he here put the Christianity that is merely formal, and observant of imposed ordinances into? Is it not solemn? Was it not enough to alarm him? And does it not do so? "I am afraid of you," says he to the Galatians in this state, "lest I have bestowed

upon you labor in vain.”

But, dear man, as he was, gracious, patient, and toiling, according to the working of Him who was working in him mightily, he consents to labor afresh — yea, more painfully than ever — to travail in birth again of them. But all this was only to this end, that Christ might be formed in them. Nothing less or more, or other, than this. He longed for restoration of soul in them, and that was, that they and Christ might be put immediately together again; that faith might be revived in them, the simple, hearty, blessed religion of personal and direct confidence in God in Christ Jesus; that, as in himself, the Son might be revealed in them; that, regaining Christ in their souls, they might prove they needed nothing more.

How edifying it is to mark the path of such a spirit under the conduct of the Holy Ghost! How comforting to see the purpose of God, by such a ministry, with the souls of poor sinners! How it lets us learn what Christianity is, in the judgment of God Himself! The going over to the observance of days and times, the returning to ordinances, is destructive of this religion. It is the world. “Why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances,” as the same apostle says in another place. Confidence in ordinances is not faith in Christ. It is the religion of nature, of flesh and blood. It is of man and not of God.

And surely it carries in its train the passions of man. Man’s religion leaves man as it found him — rather indeed cherishes and cultivates man’s corruptions. This showed itself in Ishmael in earliest days — nay, in Cain before him — but in Ishmael, as the apostle in this same epistle goes on to show. And he declares that it was then, in his day, the same; and generations of formal, corrupt Christianity in the story of Christendom, the prisons of Italy some few years since, and the prisons of Spain still later, declare the same. “As then, he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so is it now.” Man’s religion, again I say, does not cure him. He is left by it a prey to the subtleties and violence of his nature, the captive still of the old serpent, who has been a liar and a murderer from the beginning.

The decree, however, has been pronounced. It was delivered in the days of Isaac and Ishmael, of Abraham and Sarah; it is rehearsed and re-sealed by the Spirit Himself in the day of the Apostle Paul; and we are to receive it as established forever. It is this, “Cast out the bondwoman and her son.” (4: 30.)

What consolation to have this mighty question between God and man, settled! And, according to this consolation, we listen to this further word: “Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ has made you free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.” (5:1.)

All, surely, is of one and the same character. The Holy Ghost, by the apostle, is preparing the principle, the great, leading, commanding, principle of divine religion. It is faith. It is the sinner’s personal and immediate confidence in Christ. It is the soul finding satisfaction in Him, and in that which He has done for it. And such a religion as this, the sinner, in possession of this faith, is set, as I may express it, next door to glory. The apostle quickly tells us this, after commanding us to stand fast in the liberty of the gospel, for he adds, “We, through the Spirit, wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.” (5:6.) This hope is the glory that is to be revealed — “the glory of God,” as a kindred passage has it. (Rom. 5:2.) We do not wait for any improvement of our character, for any advance in our souls. Should we still live in the flesh, only fitting will it be, to “grow in grace and in

the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” But such things are not needed in the way of title. Being in Christ by faith, we are next door to glory. “Whom he justified, them he also glorified.” (Rom. 8) “Being in the kingdom of God’s dear Son, we are meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.” (Col. 1) As here, in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, we wait only for glory. Glory is the immediate object of our hope, as Christ is the immediate confidence of our souls.

It is all magnificent in its simplicity, because it is all of God. No wonder that scripture so abundantly discourses to us about faith, and so zealously warns us against religiousness. The “persuasion,” as the apostle speaks, under which the Galatians had fallen, had not come of God who had called them, and the apostle sounds the alarm, blows the blast of war on the silver trumpet of the sanctuary, uttering these voices in their ears, “a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.” Again, “If ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.” (5:8, 9,18.)

And in the happy structure of this epistle, as I may also speak of it, the apostle ends with himself, as he begins with himself. We have seen how he told them, at the first, of the peculiarities of his apostleship, how he had received both his commission and his instructions immediately from God, and how he had then, with a faith that was an answer to such grace, at once conducted himself in full personal confidence in Christ, and independently of all the resources of flesh and blood. And now, at the close, he tells them, that, as for himself, he knew no glorying but in the cross of the Lord Jesus, by whom the world was crucified to him and he to the world. And he tells them, further, that no one need meddle with him or trouble him, neither fret him nor worry him, with their thoughts about circumcision and the law, or the doings of a carnal religiousness, the rudiments of a world to which he was now crucified, for that he bore in his body the marks of the Lord. He belonged to Jesus by personal, individual tokens, immediately impressed on him, as by the appropriating hand of Christ Himself, and no one had any right to touch the Lord’s treasure.

Precious secret of the grace of God, precious simplicity in the faith of a heaven-taught sinner! It is not, beloved, knowledge of scripture, or ability to talk of it, or even teach it from Genesis to Revelation — it is not the orderly services of religion — it is not devout feelings — but, O, it is that guileless action of the soul that attaches our very selves to Jesus in the calm and certainty of a believing mind.

Meditations on the Twenty-Third Psalm

The Twenty-third Psalm is familiar to many. To some, it recalls the earliest associations of youth, and even of childhood. Scenes, voices, faces, long, long, passed away, and never more to be seen or heard in this world, are vividly brought before the mind, in meditating on this beautiful Psalm. The heart, at times, loves to, recall, and dwell on such early associations. And not infrequently, in mature years, and even in old age, the lessons learned in youth are the best remembered. Hence, the importance of early training and instruction in the things of God, and of the immortal soul.

The following anecdote from the pen of a missionary who labored in India, touchingly illustrates what has just been referred to; but as it is now given from memory, we can only vouch for its being substantially correct. In visiting an hospital he came to the bedside of a dying soldier, and spoke to him about the concerns of his soul, but he gave no heed to what was said. He was evidently dying fast, but utterly careless and hardened through a long course of sin. The earnest missionary could not bear the thought of leaving him to die in his sins, knowing what an eternity of misery his must be were this to be the case; yet every appeal seemed ineffectual. At last the thought crossed his mind — ‘I can hear from his accent that he comes from a country where the Psalm of David are generally committed to memory in youth; I will try if a verse of a Psalm will touch his heart.’ So when he had gained his attention, he calmly repeated to him, Such pity as a father hath Unto his children dear; Like pity shows the Lord to such As worship Him in fear. For He remembers we are dust, And He our frame well knows. Frail man, his days are like the grass, As flower in field he grows.

The dying soldier now looked at the missionary earnestly, he stared as if a voice from afar addressed him. The scenes of home and youth rushed into his mind — a tender chord had been touched. The well-known, though long-forgotten lines of the beautiful hundred and third Psalm, thrilled his soul, and were, we trust, the voice of God in his conscience. He was thoroughly broken down, so that a thousand avenues, we doubt not, might now have been found to his heart.

We are willing to believe that in such a case, we see the happy fruits of the early instruction of the child, and of the parents’ prayer to God for His blessing. For a long time, both the instruction given, and the prayers offered, seemed fruitless and forgotten. But God can never forget. The child may, and alas, often does, but our God, blessed be His name, never can. The prayer that has been laid in faith on His table, can never be overlaid. It may often seem so, and our evil hearts of unbelief are too prone to fear that it is so; but faith affirms that it never can be overlooked, or unanswered. The prayer that has been thus spread out before Him, is ever beneath His eye. He has a father’s heart, He knows what it is to bring up children; as we read in Isa. 1: 2. “I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me.” He knows every feeling that exercises a parent’s heart. And the good seed of the word, too, may often seem to have been banished from the mind, and the heart and conscience become so encrusted by the world and sin, that to pierce through it is impossible. But God is faithful, and faith will never yield its hold of Him. It can ever fall

back on that broad and blessed word, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things." And, again, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." Romans 8:32; Acts 16:31.

By means the most simple, and at a moment when we least expect it, our gracious God often works in the hearts of those we love. And when the light of God does shine into the soul, a long life of sin, with its dreadful realities, may startup before the trembling sinner in u moment; and in another moment, by the grace of God, he may see them all blotted out, and his peace made with Him, through the precious blood of Jesus. When God works, who, what, can hinder Him?

Could we conceive of a case more hopeless than the one just described? The Philippian jailor, or the thief on the cross, were not more so. Far from home — no relatives near, and, it may be, without a friend in this world. And now, laid down to die in an hospital at the close of such a life; is he not, we may exclaim, beyond all hope? Who thinks of him now? Who cares for him there? Only ONE. He who had often heard, it may be, the parents' frequent, fervent prayer — ("O Father of Mercies, keep thine eye on my wandering son — let thy hand of unwearied love be spread over him night and day —, bring him early to Thyself, that He may not so dishonor Thy name,") —now graciously vouchsafes an answer in peace. The parents may have passed off the scene, and prayer may have long been silent for the careless one; but God forgets not the heart that trusted Him, and in due time will surely fulfill its desires. He sent His servant at the right time —gave him the right word — and all in good time accomplished the blessed work! Glad surprise will often fill our souls in heaven, in meeting those we once feared might never reach that happy land. Oh! that we may count only on God, and never doubt or fear.

Knowing that many hearts are deeply interested in this subject, must he our excuse for saying so much thereon. But we now return to our beautiful Psalm; and it may be we shall find, that however early we were taught to repeat, "The Lord's my Shepherd," we have yet to learn its meaning and application.

"THE LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want." This is surely the expression of a heart that is filled avid occupied with the Lord Himself. It may be the expression of one who only knew the Lord as Jehovah, revealed to Israel; or, of one who knows Him as Jehovah-Jesus, who saves His people from their sins; but it is evidently the language of one who is truly godly, whether Jew or Christian, and who makes the Lord his only trust. The soul, under all circumstances, is here viewed, as resting on the unfailing care, and quietly enjoying the varied resources of the well-known Shepherd of the sheep. And that, not only for the present time, but for all times, and forever.

This is precious faith! Mark it well, O my soul, and patiently meditate thereon. It is most practical! "The Lord is my Shepherd." It rises, observe, above what He gives, what He does, what He promises, blessed as these are, and calmly rests on what He is Himself. As the eye of Abraham rested not on the promises when he put forth his hand to slay his son, but on Him from whom the promises came; so here, the eye of the pilgrim resting on the Lord, he can say, "I shall not want." When such confidence fills the heart, peace, evenness, and quietness, will characterize the life.

But knowest thou, my soul, the secret spring of such a blessed state? How is it that so few rise to this measure? Hast thou? Hast thou this rejoicing and confidence in the Lord, in the midst of wilderness circumstances? "The Lord is my shepherd," sounds like the voice of one rejoicing. "I

shall not want,” like that of quiet confidence.

When we have learned the deep lessons of the twenty-second Psalm, we shall understand the path of the twenty-third; and further, we shall rejoice in hope of the glory of the twenty-fourth. The three Psalm are linked together. But the twenty-second must be learned first. To know the grace that shines on the pilgrim’s path in the twenty-third, and on the pilgrim resting in glory in the twenty-fourth, we must know the grace that shines in the sufferings of Christ in the twenty-second. The grace and the glory are due to Him who suffered there, and to all who own Him, in the day of His rejection. We must travel, in faith, through the twenty-second, to reach the twenty-third; there is no other path to it; and when there, we find that the next thing is glory. The Christian is thus, in spirit, between the sufferings and the glory — the cross and the crown. He looks back on the one, and onward to the other. Sin, death, judgment, the grave, the world, Satan, are all behind him. Victory over every foe, is stamped on our life in resurrection.

The three grand aspects of the Lord’s Shepherd-character, as revealed in the New Testament, teach the same precious truths. 1. As the “Good Shepherd,” who laid down His life for the sheep. (Comp. John 10, Psalm 22) 2. As the “Great Shepherd,” — risen from the dead, He takes charge of the sheep as they journey through “ that great and terrible wilderness.” (Comp. Heb. 13 Psalm 23) 3. As the “Chief Shepherd,” who will give a crown of glory to all His under shepherds, at His appearing and kingdom. (Comp. 1 Pet. 5, Psalm 24) Surely, if we know the Lord thus, our confidence in Him must be without a question. We shall know His love, care, power, grace, and goodness, as the Shepherd of the sheep. And having gone through the wilderness Himself, He knows all the dangers and difficulties of the way.

The immediate occasion of the blessed Lord taking this place of care and responsibility, is also worthy of special note. In the eighth chapter of John’s Gospel, He is rejected as the light and the truth. In the ninth, He is rejected in His work. Thus rejected by the Jews in His Person and work, He formally takes His place in the tenth chapter, outside the Jewish fold, as the “Good Shepherd.” Now, He gathers “the poor of the flock” around Himself, as the new center. “They shall hear my voice; and there shall be one flock, (flock, it should be, not fold,) and one shepherd.” They are a “little flock” with Himself, outside the Jewish fold. They have been cast out of the synagogue, but they have all blessing in Him. Appearances may be against them, but His word assures them of a present salvation, and happy liberty. “I am the door; by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out and find pasture.” How unlike the narrow limits of Israel — the place of bondage! Now they have the full assurance of salvation; and, also, “can go in” to the sanctuary of God’s holy presence to worship, and “out” in service to a perishing world. But this is not all — grace abounds — His heart over flows with deepest interest and tenderness for those who leave all and follow Him-who follow Him in His rejection; or, as the apostle expresses it, who “go forth unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach,”— sharing His rejection. For all such, that wonderful revelation of grace was especially given. “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. And I give unto them eternal life: and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand. I and my Father are one.” These verses will be read with tenfold more interest when we understand the circumstances in which they were first uttered; and still more, if we are in similar circumstances ourselves.

But it may be said by some, that as David, the writer of this Psalm, lived long before the humiliation and cross of Christ, he could know nothing of these things. True, so far; but he knew what it was to be rejected by man and cast upon God, even after he was the Lord's anointed. David and his companions in "the cave of Adullam," typify Christ and those that gather around Him. But we doubt not that "the spirit of Christ," in David, so guided him in writing the Psalm, that it applies to both Jew and Christian, and may be the truthful expression of the experience of both; only, in a much higher, and more spiritual way with us.

"The Jews' religion" had its place and day before the cross, Christianity after it. This makes all the difference. We know not Messiah after the flesh, but a risen Christ in heavenly glory. We are associated with Him there. Judaism was earthly in its character; it had "divine service," and a "worldly sanctuary." Christianity is heavenly. Christians are seated together in heavenly places in Christ. Our place is to be outside the camp with Christ, as witnesses, and inside the veil with Him, as worshippers. And now, from this heavenly point of view, it is our happy privilege to meditate on the rich experience of this delightful Psalm, in the full light of gospel truth.

My Shepherd is the Lamb,

The living Lord, who died:

With all things good I ever am

By Him supplied.

He richly feeds my soul

With blessings from above;

And leads me where the rivers roll

Of endless love.

Meditations on the Twenty-Third Psalm

Ver. 2. "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside the still waters." The effect of the knowledge of Jesus as the good and great Shepherd, is rest of soul in Himself, and the quiet enjoyment of His love and grace. To know Himself is life — eternal life. To know His work is peace — perfect peace. "He maketh me to lie down," To sit down is to rest; but to lie down gives the idea of full, perfect, refreshing rest — complete repose. This is what the Shepherd provides — what He leads to; not, alas, what we always accept. We often wander in fields wherein is no pasture, and beside the troubled, not the quiet waters. But this comes from occupation with self and unbelief, not from the Shepherd's hand and care. He would have the feeblest of His flock to be free from all anxiety as to the future. The Shepherd's thoughtful love is enough. He has charged Himself with the entire care of all who follow Him. We have only to watch the direction of the Shepherd's eye, and confide in His unfailing care. "I will guide thee with mine eye" — "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee," are His own words. His sheep cannot want. They may often be greatly tried in their journeyings through the wilderness, and often be ready to faint and fail because of the way; but we must remember that the Lord's grace never fails, and that we must ever count on Him, and what we have in Him. He is with us always, even unto the end. We may

quietly rest in Him. He maketh us to lie down in “green pastures” — in the midst of plenty — we rest in the abundance of His grace; and He ever leads beside the still waters.

The Lord's my Shepherd, I'll not want,

He makes me down to lie

In pastures green; He leadeth me

The quiet waters by.

Peace, plenty, and security, characterize the portion of the Lord's beloved flock. “They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.” This beautiful passage, which so touchingly represents the Lord's delight in the sealed remnant of the Gentiles, will be literally true during the millennium, of all who are faithful to “the King of Glory.” Comp. Isa. 49, with Rev. 7 But it is also true now, in a spiritual sense, of every sheep and lamb in the highly-favored flock of Christ. But knowest thou this blessed truth, O my soul, for thyself — is it thine own experience? It can only be known by the word of God, and enjoyed in the heart by faith. “For we walk by faith not by sight.” Our rest and plenty are not natural and worldly, but spiritual and heavenly.

When the heart is simple, all is plain and easy. We have heard the feeblest sing in the joyous sense of deliverance, and with amazing heart, even before the pangs of the new birth were well over;

“He took me from a fearful pit, And from the miry clay, And on a rock He set my feet, Establishing my way. He put a new song in my mouth, Our God to magnify: Many shall see it, and shall fear, And on the Lord rely.”

Further on we learn, that the measure of our blessing is the Lord's own measure. “Because as he is, so are we in this world.” “Whosoever drinketh of this water,” pointing to Jacob's well, “shall thirst again. But whosoever shall drink of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst.” The deepest well of human bliss may soon run dry, but the “living fountains of waters” have their spring in the heart of God, which can never fail. And again, “Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life; he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.” (John 4:6) And further still, as the foreign shoot that is grafted into the olive-tree drinks of its richness and fatness; or, as the members of the body have nourishment ministered from the head; so are we vitally united to Christ, and we feed on Him, both as to our heavenly and our time-condition.

But in the passage before us, it is rather the Lamb feeding us, than we feeding on Him. “For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters.” Both are blessedly true; but the former agrees more fully with the strains of the twenty-third Psalm. He who laid down His life for the sheep, and washed them from their sins in His own blood, now feeds them and leads them with His own hand. What grace! What gentleness! To be protected and nourished, in our journey through the wilderness, by the very hand that was pierced for our sins, should fill our hearts with perfect confidence in our Shepherd, notwithstanding the manifold trials and difficulties of the way.

The great thing, undoubtedly, is to know Himself, and to know what we are to Him, and what He is to us. What has He done in the past, what is He doing in the present, and what will He do in the future, to manifest His love? May not His great work be all briefly summed up in this? When we had lost all — the soul, holiness, happiness, and God — He not only brings the lost one back to God, but, oh, wondrous truth, — truth fraught with complete blessedness! — He recovers God for the soul! and this is all, for “God is love.” He is the living God, the only source of the soul’s life, holiness, and happiness. Oh! what a truth! Who can estimate its blessedness? Dwell upon it, O my soul; only think —the soul recovered for God, and God recovered for the soul! What a recovery! What a reconciliation! Not, observe, that God needed to be reconciled to us; no, God never was man’s enemy; on the contrary, He so loved us when we were in our sins, that He gave His Son to die for us. And it is plainly stated, that “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself not imputing their trespasses unto them.” Nothing was needed to turn God’s heart to us, blessed be His name! But the cross was needed, that by it God might receive the atonement and we the reconciliation. We, alas, were enemies to God in our minds by wicked works; but love triumphed in the cross; for thereby righteous reconciliation was accomplished, and man’s enmity to God was slain. “For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.” 1 Pet. 3:18.

And now, mark well, my soul, in thy meditations, this inviting aspect of God’s love towards us; it is well fitted to quiet many a fear, and comfort thee in any trouble — to fill thee, even now, with joy unspeakable and full of glory. And mark, too, that word of exquisite tenderness which refers to the wind-up of thy weary journey through this vale of tears; “And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.” With His own hand He wipes away the last tear that shall ever dim the pilgrim’s eye. May we not call this the privilege of love, which the Father claims for all the children?

“He restoreth my soul; he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name sake.” Though under the faithful care and watchful eye of the Good Shepherd, we have to pass through a world, in which many and powerful foes surround us, and closely beset our path. “The god of this world,” we are sure, hates us, because he knows full well that when he is chained in the bottomless pit, we shall be in the full liberty of the glory with Christ. There is no book in all the Bible he tries to keep people from reading, or dislikes, so much as the book of “The Revelation;” and, why? Because, therein his own complete overthrow, and eternal misery, are plainly foretold. He wants to conceal this from the eyes of men; and, alas, how wonderfully he has succeeded, as to this precious and profitable book. Many think it cannot be understood, and that it is unprofitable to read it; whereas, the Lord has connected a special blessing with the reading and the understanding of this book. “Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things that are written therein: for the time is at hand.” (Chap. 1:3.) The Lord’s judicial dealings, not only with Satan, the source of all evil, but with the Jew, the Gentile, and the Church of God, are herein unfolded. He shows us how He will square accounts with each. There can be no millennium until these judgments are past. “Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee?” It is all important to see the final results of the rise and progress of these three great divisions of mankind. Other books show us the failure, “The Revelation” the fall and the setting aside of these bodies, or classes, as the responsible witnesses of God in the earth. But more than that, “The Revelation” shows us the Lord Jesus Christ taking the place of the faithful and true witness, on the failure of all others, and re-establishing all things on a new footing, that God may

be fully glorified in the scene wherein He has been dishonored. "These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God.....Jesus Christ the faithful witness, and the first begotten from the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth." Rev. 1; 5; 3:14.

But we cannot yet say, in the language of the twenty-fourth Psalm, which is strictly millennial, "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof; the world and they that dwell therein." No, we are still on the ground of the twenty-third Psalm, as the sheep of Christ in much weakness, and Satan is still "the god of this world" — "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." Hence the many trials and sorrows by the way; and hence the need of the Lord's refreshing, restoring grace. Satan does all in his power to injure, and terrify the sheep of Christ, as they pass through his territory. He lays many snares for their feet, and he gilds many a scene that he may attract the eye, and take it off the Good Shepherd who goes before them. Well the enemy knows that if they follow closely after Him, all his own snares and attractions are unsuccessful. He who goes before His flock meets the danger or the difficulty, and removes it, before they come up to it, blessed be His name. All difficulties vanish from His presence, and all enemies are powerless before Him. The great lesson to be learned in the wilderness, is entire dependence on the Lord.

When Israel had safely passed through the deep, and stood in triumph as the Lord's redeemed on the margin of the desert, their redemption was complete, but Canaan was not reached. The wilderness, with all its temptations and difficulties, lay between. The Lord had many lessons to teach His people there. But before they were called to this character of experience, God had made Himself known to them in His grace and power — as the great "I AM." In their glorious deliverance out of the land of Egypt, He had acted for them, in pure grace, through the blood of the lamb. Thus far, it was grace without rebuke, so that they ought to have known Him as worthy of ail their trust.

As characteristic of the wilderness, the first thing that meets them is a difficulty. "In which direction does our way to Canaan lie?" they might say to each other. There were no roads to be seen — nothing but a trackless desert lay before them. What was now to be done? Just what they were always to do, and what the Lord's redeemed should ever do — LOOK UP. There they would see Jehovah Himself, the true Shepherd of Israel, in His cloudy chariot, moving on before them. They were only safe in following Him; having no will, no wish, no way of their own, only to follow Him, in the full assurance that He would lead them by the best way, to the promised land. Oh! how happy for Israel had this been the case then; and how happy for us now, were we always content thus closely to follow the Lord — "the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls."

But another, and a deeper trial for Israel soon came. The knowledge of accomplished redemption, the full assurance of forgiveness, and the enjoyment of God's favor, never exempt us from trials and disappointments in this world. We have many profitable though painful lessons to learn in the wilderness. But if we never knew want, we could never know relief; and the value of a divine restorative, is best known to a fainting soul. "So Moses brought Israel from the Red Sea; and they went out into the wilderness of Shur: and they went three days in the wilderness and found no water. And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter." What a disappointment! At the end of a three days' journey in the wilderness to find no water, and when they did find it, it was bitter! What a trial! But Jehovah, the great "I AM," was there: and faith could say, even in these circumstances, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not

want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul." His grace never fails. If I grow faint and weary, "He restoreth my soul." If I forget and fail, "He restoreth my soul." Yes, and more, "He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake." Gracious Lord! He maintains my soul in spite of my weakness, in the paths of true holiness. Such is the language of a calm and patient faith. But on the other hand, the natural heart would reason within itself and say, can this be love? Does the Lord not care for His people after redeeming them out of the hand of the enemy? Most surely He does; only have patience. He is about to teach them a lesson, which is of present, future, and eternal value: a lesson, which when learned, is worth all the disappointments of the desert to know. This is the object of His perfect love, in the present trial.

"And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink?" And what, we may ask, could the man Moses do in such a state of things? Only, as before said, —look up. "And he cried unto the Lord; and the Lord showed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet." Thus, the Lord sweetens the bitter waters. It was not their murmurings that sweetened them, nor any means of their own devising, but the Lord's own remedy, and applied according to His own directions! He only can sweeten the bitter cup, but He always can, and He always does; blessed be His name! Better have a bitter cup, and the Lord to sweeten it, than have no bitter cup at all — better far be cast, bound hand and foot into the fiery furnace, and have the honor and blessing of walking there in perfect liberty with "the Son of God," than be saved from going into the furnace. Oh! what a field, my soul, for meditation, is the rich field of experience! Like the hind let loose, roam through it, and feed in it. Shepherds tell us that "variety of pasture is good for the flocks;" and sure thou art that to be occupied with only a part of God's word, and not with the whole, is to see only one side of truth, and not the truth of God generally. It is thus that many become narrow and confused in their views, and faulty in their faith and practice. In our beautiful, and highly instructive Psalm, we have the wide, wide field of wilderness-life spread out before us.

But we will return to our lesson. What kind of a tree, we may ask, can this be, that changes the bitter waters into sweet? In all the forests of the universe, there is but one tree to be found that can do this. But this tree is a divine specific — it never fails. It is enough to sweeten the bitterest cup that ever was pressed to human lips, and to turn all the bitterness of wilderness-experience into the most delectable cup of heavenly blessedness. It was on that tree that Jesus died — that divine love triumphed over human hatred — that God was fully glorified — that sin was utterly abolished — that Satan was completely overthrown— that death was made stingless — that the grave was made powerless — that eternal peace was made for the feeblest of the flock — that the gloomy gates of hell were forever shut— and the glorious gates of heaven thrown wide open, for all who believe in Him who died upon the tree. This tree, rooted in Calvary, sends its boughs of rich blessing into all the earth, and fills the highest heavens with its ripened fruits. It stands as the moral center of the universe, and is the brightest display of God's moral glories, that can ever be seen or known. Oh! who would not accept the wilderness-cup, to be taught thereby, the many glories of the Savior's cross?

"We are by Christ redeemed:

The cost — His precious blood;

Be nothing by our souls esteem'd

Like this great good.

To God our weakness clings

Through tribulation sore,

And seeks the covert of His wings

Till all be o'er."

Meditations on the Twenty-Third Psalm

It is always true — true at all times, and true of all saints —that when the Good Shepherd "putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice." This is a truth — a divine principle — of immense value; it has a deep and wide practical bearing. It assures our hearts that whatever betide, He is at hand —always near; within sight, as we may say, and within the sound of His voice. Yes, and the believer finds in the scene, through which the Lord has passed before him, such a fragrance of His presence, as not only strengthens, but enriches the soul therein. When — at what time soever, He putteth forth His own sheep, HE goeth before them. See that thou understandest well this precious truth, O my soul; it is the great truth for the sheep of Christ. It affects everything as to thy path through this world. It is thy safeguard in danger — thy victory in conflict — thy light in darkness — thy strength in weakness — thy comfort in sorrow— thy fellowship in solitude — thy brightest hope amidst the deepest gloom. He who is with thee and before thee, has tasted the bitterest sorrows of the wilderness, and has passed through the darkest night into the brightest day: and so shalt thou, only follow Him.

This truth, so blessed to the pilgrim, assures us of the Shepherd's care in every step, rough or smooth, of our wilderness journey. He is ever present — He never leaves nor forsakes. And through His perfect knowledge of the way, He confounds the enemy, turning all his hostility to the account of our blessing, and His own glory. Blessed fruit, through His grace, of all that befalls poor human nature, when traveling through the deep sand of the desert.

"The shepherd's bosom bears each lamb

O'er rock, and waste, and wild;

The object of that love I am —

And carried like a child."

"If any man serve me," says the Lord, "let him follow me." He does not say, observe, "let him do this for me, or do that for me," but "let him follow me." Quietly to wait on the Lord that we may know His will, and faithfully to follow Him, hearkening to the voice of His word, is the most pleasing service we can render to the Lord. Some He may lead into more public, others into more private paths of service, but closely to follow the directions of His word, while looking by faith to Himself, is our most acceptable service. And for all such He has left His richest promise. "And where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me him will my Father honor." John 12.

These weighty and solemn truths were uttered, when the dark shadows of Gethsemane and Calvary were crossing His path. It is comparatively easy to be active for the Lord, and, as it were,

to be doing some great thing for Him, in a bright and sunny day; but, oh, how difficult to follow Him through the solitudes of His rejection in a homeless world! Who of us can endure, it may be, to be separated from our dearest friends on earth, and to be thought weak and unstable? — who can endure to be in the outside place for the reproach of Christ? These waters are often very bitter. But His love desires that we should know something experimentally of His own path through this world, and the fellowship of His sufferings. It was not enough for the Lord's great love to Abel that he should bear testimony by his slain lamb to the truth that death had come by sin; but he was honored to bear witness in a more solemn way in his own death. Not only was the blood of his lamb shed, but his own blood, as God's witness on the earth. How much more Abel had to do with death in this world than Cain! How significant, and solemnly instructive to all who follow with Abel! But after all, it was the Lord's love to Abel, and the Lord's honor conferred on him.

We have the same great principle, in type, at the waters of Marah. The people knew the value of the blood of the lamb in Egypt, as their safeguard from judgment, and their complete redemption in virtue of that blood. And now the Lord would have them further to know in their own experience, the unfailing power of the blood for all the vicissitudes of the wilderness. In this way they had to do with death in all their journeyings. They were marching through the wilderness, under the shelter of the blood — the expressive symbol of death. It was on this ground alone that Jehovah could say to Balaam, "I have not seen iniquity in Jacob, nor perverseness in Israel." He does not say "there is none there," but, "I have not seen it." True, it was all in type, but we can easily see what was always uppermost in the Lord's mind. "When I see the blood I will pass over you." As if the Lord had said, "When I see the blood of the lamb I see that which glorified me — blotted out sin — destroyed the power of the enemy, and obtained eternal redemption for my beloved people." It left Jehovah free, in all circumstances, to act in pure grace towards the people. They had only to look up, however naughty they had been, or however sorely they were distressed, and grace flowed — the need was met — the bitter cup was sweetened, and they were freely forgiven.

The blood of the Lamb was their divine passport from Egypt to Canaan. Nothing could stand before it, everything yields to its power. If the hosts of Egypt attempt to stop the journeyings of the blood-sprinkled people, they are cast into the depths of the sea; and if all the nations of the earth had sided with them, they must have shared the same fate. "I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Sheba for thee." The deep waters of the lied Sea must make a way for the ransomed of the Lord to pass over; not an hoof was left behind. The manna, the cloud, and the living stream from the flinty rock are supplied, all enemies are subdued, and every need is met in virtue of the same precious blood. And though the river of death, at the end of their journeyings, overflowed all its banks, and Jericho walled to heaven, as the threatening rage of the enemy, and the tokens of his power, they present no barrier to the infinite power of the blood. But where is its power not felt and owned, willingly or unwillingly? It rent the veil of heaven, and unlocked the portals of the grave. What is higher than heaven? What is deeper than hell? Matt, 27. 50-53.

But we are all prone to forget, like Israel of old, what the Lord has done for us — what bitter cup He drank for us — and that we carry through the wilderness with us, the same "token" of His unchanging love. Hence, we often need to get a taste of the bitter, in order to remind us of that which alone can sweeten; and that all the difficulties, trials, and temptations of this life, are to be borne in fellowship with Him. This His love desires. He has gone through them all for us, and that with infinite patience, meekness, and wisdom, as an example to us. And, oh! wondrous grace, He

allows to us in our afflictions, a ministry of love, sympathy, and kindness, which He allowed not Himself. He was forsaken of God in His sore distress — He was surrounded by the violence and rage of His shameless enemies, who gaped upon Him with their mouths like ravening and roaring lions. All refuge failed Him, comforters there were none. Psalm 22:1-21.

This was for us; there he drank the bitter cup of God's wrath against sin. And He will have us to know Him there, in love for us. And we have to learn by experience, however painful the lesson, that nothing but the bitter cup of Calvary can sweeten the bitter cup of Marah. In other words, the sympathies of His heart who died there, are alone sufficient to soothe the sorrows of ours. But glory be to God who gave His Son, we find all in Jesus. His cross is ours — His heart is ours. The full value of the cross is ours — the tender, boundless sympathies of His heart are ours — ours now — ours forever. Oh! wonderful, precious, blessed truth! What more do we need? The cross and heart of Jesus — ours. Eternal springs of all blessing! The blest, though bitter waters of Marah lead to a deeper knowledge of Calvary; and the deep, and painful need of a broken heart to deeper fellowship with His. He could say, and in truth, as none else ever could, "Reproach hath broken my heart." Yes, and more, in place of the tender sympathies of fellow pilgrims, which His people so abundantly enjoy, He had to add— "And I am full of heaviness; and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none." (Psalm 69) Oh! what a refuge we have in the once broken and desolate heart of Jesus!

"Jesus, my All in all Thou art,
My rest in toil, my ease in pain;
The medicine of my broken heart;
Mid storms, my peace; in loss, my gain;
My smile beneath the tyrant's frown,
In shame, my glory and my crown.
"In want, my plentiful supply;
In weakness, my almighty power;
In bonds, my perfect liberty;
My refuge in temptation's hour;
My comfort 'midst all grief and thrall,
My life in death, my All in all."

When the Lord has thus brought us down to a true sense of our own weakness, and to more real dependence on His unfailing strength and constant care, the purposes of His tender love are answered. The deeper the trial, the stronger the expression of His love. And now we can say in the rich experience of our souls, "HE restoreth my soul." Not the green pastures and the still waters, pleasant and excellent as these are — No; but the Lord Himself. The path becomes more and more individualized; there must be greater nearness to the Lord as our shepherd, and more direct fellowship with Himself. "HE restoreth my soul: HE leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for

His name's sake.”

Meditations on the Twenty-Third Psalm

Before passing on to the fourth verse, which gives a still deeper shade of wilderness trials and sorrows, we would turn for a moment to another use and application of “a tree,” which may be for our edification.

In 2 Kings 6:1-7, we have an account of “the sons of the prophets” going to the banks of the Jordan, to cut down beams of trees, for the purpose of enlarging their dwelling place. “And the sons of the prophets said unto Elisha, Behold now, the place where we dwell with thee is too strait for us. Let us go, we pray thee, unto Jordan, and take thence every man a beam, and let us make us a place there, where we may dwell And he answered, Go ye.” The young prophets, very wisely, secure the presence of Elisha with them. He consents to go; and works a miracle there, which saves them from the loss of the head of the borrowed ax. “And one said, Be content, I pray thee, to go with thy servants. And he answered, I will go. So he went with them. And when they came to Jordan they cut down wood. But as one was felling a beam, the ax head fell into the water: and he cried, and said, Alas, master! for it was borrowed. And the man of God said, Where fell it? And he showed him the place. And he cut down a stick, and cast it in thither; and the iron did swim. Therefore said he, Take it up to thee. And he put out his hand and took it.”

Some have thought that there is a deep typical meaning in this apparently unimportant incident; others have been afraid to press it as such. But surely, at any rate, it is a striking illustration of resurrection life and power. As to the typical meaning of Jordan, all are agreed. It is the type of death. And as for “the ax head,” it lay as lost and dead in its depths. And what is deeply interesting, and instructive too, in connection with, this miracle, Elisha was, typically, the resurrection-life prophet. He passed through the river of death in company with Elijah, and started on his ministry of grace and resurrection power from the point of the ascended prophet. (2 Kings 2) Elijah's ministry, on the contrary, was judicial in its character. He started, we may say, from Sinai, which stamped its character on his miracles. He shut the heavens over a rebellious people, “and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months.” And he called down fire from heaven on the captains of the idolatrous king of Israel. At Horeb he became linked up with the broken law, and the responsibility of the people, so that his ministry called for judgment.

But Elisha starts from resurrection ground, and with his eye, as it were, on the ascended man. This is the place of God's measureless grace—the place of the risen Christ Himself, and the saved myriads that joyfully cluster around Him. Scarcely had the two prophets crossed the Jordan, when Elijah proposed blessing to Elisha, according to the desires of his heart. Not now, observe, according to law, or earthly promise, but according to his heart's desire. “ And it came to pass, when they had gone over, that Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee. And Elisha said, I pray thee let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me.” They had left the land of law and earthly promise behind them; and death, the judgment of God against sin, was past, so that He was free to bless. This is grace, and most significant as to the character of Elisha's mission, and of God's ways in grace, through the death and resurrection of Christ, down to the present time.

Here pause for a moment, my soul, and meditate on this instructive scene. God begins His work, where sin, Satan, and all evil, cease from theirs. He quickens the dead. No evil can ever cross the grave of Christ.

The path of life, and holy, happy liberty, is beyond the domain of death. Elisha, observe, now returns to Israel.' but all is changed. He acts in grace, according to the new condition of things. Sweet foreshadowing of the risen Jesus who died for us, and for God's glory, so that His grace flows forth freely to the children of men now, and will do so abundantly to Israel in the latter day. Elisha tarries at Jericho, the place of the curse; but he brings in the power of God in blessing, and removes the curse, and heals the spring of waters, so that there would be no more death or barren land. " And the men of the city said unto Elisha, Behold, I pray thee, the situation of this city is pleasant, as my lord seeth: but the water is naught, and the ground is barren. And he said, Bring me a new cruse, and put salt therein. And they brought it to him. And he went forth into the spring of the waters, and cast the salt in there, and said, Thus saith the Lord, I have healed these waters; there shall not be from thence any more death or barren land. So the waters were healed unto this day, according to the saying of Elisha which he spake."

Salt is a well-known symbol in Scripture. Here it represents the healing power of grace, as flowing through the death and resurrection of Christ. The whole scene is richly and permanently blessed. Evil is overcome; the curse is removed from the ground—the world — and especially from His people Israel; and the spring of waters—the fountain of blessing — secured forever. The "new cruse" may shadow forth the renewed condition of all things under Christ in the latter day. The prophet next proceeds to Bethel, which, we know, speaks of God's unchangeable faithfulness to Jacob and to his seed forever. Now he links the people with the sovereign counsels of God's love and grace towards them. From thence the prophet goes to Carmel, which tells us of the fruitful land, thus connecting the people with the faithfulness of Jehovah, and the abundance of the land. What grace!

The curse removed — evil put away — the scene purified —the spring of waters healed — the God of Bethel known and enjoyed; and the blessings of Carmel covering the land like a fruitful field. Nevertheless — oh! most solemn and weighty warning for the present moment, as well as for all time! — if the testimony of the grace of God be despised, and His messengers mocked, judgment must take its course. Verses 20, 21.

Thus, in my meditations, have my thoughts traced, and retraced, the mystic path of these two great servants of God in this wonderful second chapter, though professedly meditating on the miracle in the sixth. But the ground we have gone over sheds wondrous light on the miracle. It now looks more like a passage in Ephesians or in 1 Peter. "And you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins." "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

There is no power to save the lost, or to quicken the dead soul, but the cross of Christ. When the tree is cast into the waters, the iron swims. The moment the cross is seen by faith, and applied by the Holy Spirit, the soul is quickened together with Christ, raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. All this takes place in virtue of our union with Christ, when we believe in His name, and trust in His cross. But, alas, till then, the soul, however light,

gay, and active, or otherwise, is morally and spiritually in the place of death. O, that poor, thoughtless, Christless souls would think of that now! What a condition to be in! The place of death — the cold depths of the river of death! What a lowering—what a sinking of an immortal soul—a soul that grace can render capable of enjoying God, and His Son, and the full glories of heavenly blessedness forever!

Where, O where, let me ask, is my reader at this moment? In the depths, or on the heights? It must be either the one or the other. There is no middle place. To die in the former state is to be there forever — in the depths of anguish and despair. There can be no change after death. And wilt thou, O thoughtless one, sell thy eternal happiness for a moment's present gratification? Why be so unreasonable — so cruel to thine own soul? Was it wise in Esau to sell the whole land of Canaan for a mess of pottage, because he could enjoy the latter at the moment? Wouldst thou call this manly, noble, or high spirited? And is it wise in thee to sell the heavenly Canaan for that which can be enjoyed only for a moment in this world? Do think of all this, my dear fellow sinner. Thy present life is most uncertain; and what an agony to those left behind, were there no hope in thy death! And what an eternity - thine! What could sweeten such a bitter cup as this, or change its wormwood and its gall? O then, from every consideration, look to Jesus now — just now — before laying down this paper. Let thine eyes and thine heart be up to Him. "Look unto me," He says, "and be ye saved," The great work of redemption teas finished on the cross; there is nothing for thee to wait for. "It is finished!" Only look to Him, believing this, and thou art surely and forever saved.

But some, I know, are ready to say, by way of excusing themselves, that if they are as dead as the iron at the bottom of the stream, they must be entirely passive in the work of conversion. There is some truth in this remark, but it is far from being the whole truth. The soul is dead as regards God and spiritual things, but it is all alive as regards this world. There is no heart or energy for Christ, and His salvation, but there is plenty of both for present things; and Scripture presses in innumerable places the responsibility of the sinner. It assures him that the work by which alone he can be saved is finished, and that he has only to believe it on the sure testimony of God Himself, and, thus believing it, he is saved, and finds his present and eternal rest in Jesus.

"Wilt thou go with this man?" is a plain question. And where is the sinner—active and intelligent as to present things — who cannot answer, Yes, or No?

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." "If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness (or testimony) in himself; he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son." "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." Acts 16:31; John 3:19 John 5:9, 10; Rom. 10:13.

Thus we find in types and shadows, truths and substance, that there is no virtue for the soul apart from Christ — from Christ crucified. The knowledge of Jesus — His love—His cross, quickens the dead sinner, and gives him a place with the risen Jesus. It strengthens the weak saint — upholds the fainting spirit — comforts those that are in trouble and bowed down. It destroys the power of the waters of Jordan, and sweetens the waters of Marah.

Ver. 4. "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." This verse of our beautiful Psalm, is generally spoken of as descriptive of the believer's experience in the passage of death - the death of the body. "The valley," is generally viewed as the path that lies between the two regions of life, and though dark and dismal, the saint of God, having the Shepherd's rod to guide, and His staff to comfort him, need fear no evil.

Most truly, there is every reason for the departing soul, calmly to trust the Lord at that solemn moment, and during that brief, but mysterious, passage; but we do not think the text refers, merely, to the believer's experience in his own death, but rather to the dark shadow which the death of another may cast on his path. To the departing one, all shadows flee away. To those left behind, they may be dark and heavy. For example: —A dear and loved fellow-pilgrim has been called up higher. His, or her, place is empty. The broken circle is overwhelmed in sorrow. The whole scene below is clouded. The pallor of death shades everything to the eye, and in the felt loneliness of the bereaved heart, the path, once so bright and joyous, has been turned into "the valley of the shadow of death." But the happy soul of the dear departed rests in the pure light of God, and in the unmingled blessedness of His presence.

"No shadows yonder — all light and song;

Each day I wonder; and say, How long

Shall time me sunder from that dear throng?"

In the text, we doubt not, it is the shadow of death that the pilgrim speaks of walking through, and of his experience therein; not of death itself. Were it his own death, surely it would not be called a shadow. To go through death, and to go mourning through its shadows, are widely different things.

Here pause for a moment, O my soul. Such experience demands thy calm and deep meditation. In the whole realm of creation, no event is more solemn. The sanctuary is thy proper place. God's eye, His word and Spirit, alone can guide.

The experience of the believer is changed, though still under the Shepherd's tender care and mighty hand. Yes — everything is changed — changed as from light to darkness— as from joy to sorrow — as from strength to weakness. What a change! In the third verse, the pilgrim tastes the waters of Marah; in the fourth, he is plunged into them.

But the Lord Himself has done it. It must be well, and wise, and good; it must be the strongest expression of His love, and of His shepherd care. "Thou art with me" —Thou, O Lord, who knowest the taste of the waters, and the depths of the waters too, as none of thy people ever can know.

A loved one may be ill, very ill; all hope of recovery may be gone; still the soul is present in the body, and thoughts may be exchanged. But the moment the soul has passed into the unseen world, this ceases — absolutely — irretrievably ceases. The dear departed one may love as ever, nay, infinitely more than ever, for " God is love," and heaven is its home. The love of the bereaved may be quickened into a burning flame, and the desire to express it may be intensified a thousand fold, but there is no more communication of thought — no exchange of affection. The dark, impenetrable veil that separates the two states of being must not be passed. Faith alone may cross the threshold, and see the departed one resting — at home — with Jesus — in the Paradise

of God. For a moment, the eye is bright —something like gladness passes through the mind; but a tender recollection touches the heart — the eye is dimmed —and sadness presses down the weary soul. Everything, save the blessed Lord Himself, seems gone; but He is near, very near, blessed be His name. “Thou art with me: thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.”

“Be still, my soul! — when dearest friends depart,

And all is darkened in the vale of tears,

Then shalt thou better know His love, His heart,

Who comes to soothe thy sorrow and thy fears.

Be still, my soul! — thy Jesus can repay

From His own fullness all He takes away.”

Could there be, however far apart, only the means of exchanging our thoughts and affections, it would no longer be death. We may often be parted from each other in this life, without the thought ever crossing the mind that we have suffered loss. Letters go and come; the path of the absent one may be traced, and the joys of reunion anticipated. This is life—the object of affection is possessed. It is neither death, nor its dark shadow. But from the moment that the Lord has taken the soul to Himself, all such communion is at an end. The awful fact of separation is felt. The heart may burn with the purest affection, for love never faileth—the whole soul may long to say something to, and to hear something from, the loved departed, but all is in vain. The body may be there still, and every feature may only seem in calm repose; but that which thought, loved, intended, remembered, is gone. Stillness reigns—the stillness that is indescribable. You cannot awaken the sleeping one. The heart that would have been moved to its depths by a sigh, or melted by a tear, hears not the deepest wail, and sees not the flowing tears. This is death — the death of the mortal body. And, to those that are left behind, it is “the valley of the shadow of death.” And so dense is that shadow sometimes in this weary wilderness, that even the heavenly orbs seem changed, and shine differently.

At such a time, the enemy is sure to assail the distressed soul, from all points, with his fiery darts. A thousand thoughts may be suggested from the past. A lifetime may be reviewed in a moment by a mind in agony. Time misspent — precious opportunities allowed to pass unimproved, may be amongst the accusations of the foe. In such overwhelming circumstances, nothing but the firm footing of God’s own plain statements of truth could bear up the stricken soul. But the Good and Great Shepherd is near. He causeth His voice to be heard. The eye is turned to Him. He lifts the fainting soul, folds it in His bosom, and bears it far above its mere human feelings, and spiritual foes. What would such trials and conflicts be, could we not say in truth, “Thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me?”

Nothing can now be known of the condition and occupation of the loved departed, save that which holy scripture reveals. But, oh, blessed be the God of all grace! the light of a cloudless sky rests on the whole scene — the beams of divine light break through the darkness of these darkest of earthly days — we can see behind the veil. From the chamber of death to the house of many mansions, a bright pathway has been consecrated for the believer by the risen and victorious Christ. The light of the glory “is now made manifest by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ,

who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.” 2 Tim. 1:10.

Glorious truth! precious certainty for the believer — for every believer in Christ Jesus — death was abolished on the cross, and triumphed over in the resurrection of Jesus; and by the gospel, eternal life to the soul, and incorruptibility to the body, have been brought into the clearest, fullest light. There may be great feebleness, on the part of many Christians, in apprehending these all-precious truths, but the blessed facts remain the same. They are all connected with the Person of Christ; and from the moment that He is received and trusted, the believer is associated with Him beyond the power of death and the grave. “I know,” says the apostle, “whom I have believed, (trusted, margin) and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.” (Ver. 12.) Christ, personally, was his one object. All that was dear to the apostle, right on to the glory, was committed to Him.

What truths — what comfort for the soul that is passing through the dark valley. Death annulled — the eternal life of the soul possessed — the incorruptibility of the body secured. Such is the sure portion of all who have fallen asleep in Jesus — of all who can say with the apostle, “I know whom I have trusted” — of all who are simply looking by faith to Jesus, and resting on Him alone for salvation.

Meditations on the Twenty-Third Psalm

Here, meditate, O my soul, on this wondrous revelation — this bursting forth of light, and living strength from the dark and, hitherto, unknown regions of the tomb. The victory is complete! Christ has, personally, gone through the straits of death, and cleared the passage for all His followers, of every difficulty and danger. He who was in the lowest parts of the earth, is now in glory. And from that glory — the glory of God in the risen Man — divine light now shines into these low and lonely depths. The gloom of death is dissipated — the darkness of the grave illuminated — the shadows of death are only on the human side, and felt by our poor human hearts.

Death itself, by man, the justly styled King of Terrors, is completely vanquished! Every circumstance of death and the grave is mastered forever. The Lord is risen from among the dead, and associates us with Himself in resurrection life, power, and glory. What a blessed position to be brought into! We stand on the same triumphant ground as the Conqueror Himself, and enjoy, with Him, the spoils of His victories.

What is death? What is the passage of death? What are the issues of death? are questions that had never been fully answered in Scripture until now. Up till the time that the blessed Lord appeared, died, rose again, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, comparatively little was known on these solemn subjects. No doubt, godly souls in Old Testament times, who had been taught of the Spirit to trust God through all their pilgrim days, could quietly trust Him in the hour of their departure. The last glimpse we have of Jacob is truly beautiful. We see him as an aged pilgrim, leaning on his staff, worshipping the living God. And the picture of Joseph is that of peace and victory. “By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff. By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones.” Heb. 11:21, 22.

But to the Jew, as such, the subject of death was necessarily a more gloomy one than it is to the Christian; consequently, the application of verse 4 (Psalm 23) would be somewhat different to the latter. It is of the Jews that the apostle speaks when he says, "who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." Christians may get into this state of mind, and some may never have been in any other, but it is certainly contrary to the cheering light, and happy liberty of the gospel. Such, we fear, have never seen, or understood, the death and resurrection of Christ, as God's great principle of blessing to the Christian. This is the alone ground of peace with God, oneness with Christ, and of full liberty from the fear of death.

Again, to the Jew, as such, this world was the land of the living. It was the place of his blessing; and the great promise to obedience was, "That thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." "I had fainted," says the Psalmist, "unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living." (Psalm 20: 7,13.) But to the Christian, we may say, it is the land of the dying. "I protest," says Paul,.....

"I die daily." It is also the land of death — the death of the Lord Jesus Christ; consequently, it is the valley of the shadow of death. The cross has thrown its dark shadow over the whole scene. And where, it may be asked, is the place of the Christian's joy and blessing? In heavenly places in Christ.

Heaven is the Christian's home; he is from home in this world. As men, we speak of the place where we were born as our natural place; then is the Christian entitled to speak of heaven as his natural place. He is born of God — born from above. And the place, circumstances, and company, that are suited and proper to his nature as a child of God, are on high. And never, never, until he reaches the shores of his father-land, shall he breathe his native air, or know what the feeling of home means. Hence, the instinctive longings and desires of the heart to reach his Father's house are only natural,

"My cheerful soul now all the day
Sits waiting here and sings;
Looks through the ruin of her clay,
And practices her wings.
Faith almost changes into sight,
While from afar she spies
Her fair inheritance in light,
Above created skies.
Some rays of heaven break sweetly in
At all the opening flaws;
Visions of endless bliss are seen,
And native air she draws."

Here, in this body of sin and death, and sojourning in a world of evil, where Christ was crucified, we may have much, and most blessed fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ, through the power of the Holy Ghost. But this is the effect of grace in the midst of evil, and of the Holy Ghost's presence in the believer. The Father cares for the children — the Shepherd cares for the sheep, and the Holy Ghost's presence on the earth is the power by which we enjoy our inheritance on high.

This is a great truth, my soul; the truth, I mean, as to thy new birth — thy new life — that thou art born of God — born from above — quickened together with Christ! What then? What flows therefrom? That thou art a child of God — an heir of God — a joint-heir with Christ, and placed in Him, far, far above the power of death and the grave. Meditate, I repeat, O meditate, deeply, patiently, on what is involved in this most marvelous truth. The knowledge thereof will go far to explain thy wilderness experience, relieve thee of thy wilderness burdens, and shed a flood of light over the dark valley.

Beyond all question, all who have been quickened since death entered by sin, have received their new life, through Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit. The apostle, referring to Old Testament saints, speaks of "the Spirit of Christ which was in them." He is that eternal life which was with the Father, and was, in due time, manifested unto us. There is no other life — no life anywhere else, for the soul dead in sin. "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." (1 John 5:11, 12; John 3:36.) But although, from the beginning, life could only be found in and by Christ; still, it appears quite evident, that the condition of the life enjoyed by the Christian, is quite different to that of the Old Testament saint. "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." (John 10:10.) This abundant life, we doubt not, is life in resurrection. John 20:22.

Not only is the Christian a child of God, but he is said to be quickened together with Christ, raised up together, and seated together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Now, only mark, into what scenes of blessedness this great truth—this union with Christ, introduces the believer? United to Him, the risen Head, He communicates to us the privileges of His own position before God. He is the well-spring of the believer's new life; it is fed by Him every moment. Neither sin, Satan, nor death can ever touch it. The Christian, by faith, has begun his eternity with Christ. He needs not to wait till death, or the coming of the Lord, relieve him.

The foundation of all this great truth for the soul, is the death and resurrection of Christ. He who knew no sin, was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. In the greatness of His love, He bore the burden of our sins in His own body on the tree. Death in all its bitterness He tasted for us, and put away sin, the source and sting of death, by the sacrifice of Himself. But God raised up that blessed One, and quickened us together with Him. And now, blessed be His name, we know of a truth, that our evil nature has been judged, our sin and sins all blotted out — that righteousness has been divinely accomplished — that our peace with God is made — and that we are one with the risen Jesus, in an entirely new sphere, where no evil can ever come, and where the light of God's countenance shines on us perfectly, and forever. 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pet. 2:24; Heb. 2:9; 9:26; Col. 2:12, 13; Eph. 2; 1 Cor. 15.

This is the only position from which death can be fairly and calmly viewed. Like Joshua of old, who, from Canaan's side of Jordan, returned to its center, and there planted his twelve stones of victory. From the heavenly side he could calmly contemplate the river of death, and go down into its depths. But the priests were there before him with the ark of the covenant, and, with "the Lord of the whole earth," it was as easy to pass the Jordan as the Red Sea.

But to the merely natural man, who knows he is un-pardoned — unsaved — death must be a fearful thing. If he thinks at all about it, and is intelligent and honest, the very thought of it must be dreadful. Death and judgment, the fruit of sin, are the two great objects of men's fears. And so they may. Terrible indeed, to an immortal soul, must be the consequences of death and judgment. And how humbling, too, is death to the natural man. He must succumb. The strong man must bow to it — the proud man must humble himself to it. The wise and the rich are alike unable to avoid it, or resist it. It is an implacable enemy that cannot be appeased or turned aside — that cannot be guarded against — that will not be sent away — that is relentless — rapacious — insatiable.

Can I prevail on my reader, if this be his, or her, state, to give this subject a serious thought? And, oh, let it be now — just now. Delay not! Time is on the wing — thy days are flying fast — already they may be few. And what then? The eternal ages — an eternity of unmingled blessedness, or unutterable woe.

In the whole field of fallen human nature, there is nothing to be found more awful than death. For as in the forest, so in this field, "as the tree falls, so it lies." How solemn — how eternally solemn! As death finds the soul, so will the judgment-seat, and so will a long, long eternity. Beyond death there is no repentance. As the breath leaves the body, the state is unalterably fixed. This is man's last change — a change which admits of no succeeding one forever. Oh, then, my dear reader, listen to the affectionate entreaties of one who loves thy soul, and would earnestly warn thee against neglecting its salvation! "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? "The whole material world, in the Savior's estimation, is of less value than one human soul. And, it may be, that the well-being of thy precious soul has never cost thee a serious thought. The most ordinary things of this life, or some ornament for thy person, may have cost thee more thought than thy soul's eternal destinies, or the sufferings and death of Christ, by which alone it can be saved.

Do think, I pray thee, my fellow sinner, on this all-important subject! At all costs yield to its pressing claims. If it should involve the breaking of many engagements as to this life, and the blasting of all thy prospects therein, care not — suffer not such considerations to detain thee on the world's enchanted ground, or hinder thy decision for Christ. Remember this, and this is plain; that he who sides not with Christ, sides with Satan, and must share with him the lake of fire. This is the second death. Oh, dreadful thought! What shall I say unto thee? How shall I plead with thee? Shall I fall down at thy feet and shed the beseeching tear? Shall I be as a fool in thy sight? Shall my loud and bitter cry be to thee as the noise of some fanatic — or of one who is righteous over much? Well, be it so; all these and more. I speak from feeling, not by rule. I am content if only thou wilt bethink thyself, and flee at once to Jesus, who has paid the ransom price of the sinner's redemption. To see thee at last as a jewel in the Savior's crown, or as a monument of grace on the plains of eternal glory, would be a rich compensation for being reckoned fool or madman in this world. But, soberly, tears of blood, could I shed them, would not be too much to shed over a soul that refuses

the provision God has made, for His own glory in our eternal happiness.

Jesus, God's blessed Son, "was made a little lower than the angels.....that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man." (Heb. 2:9.) Here all is plain. Scripture never exaggerates, if preachers do. What does this text teach us? This truth, plainly, that sin, unrepented of, brings the sinner to the place, that the grace of God brought Christ. In grace and love, He took the sinner's place — the place of the curse — the forsaken place, where it Was not possible that the cup of wrath should pass from him. Now we see, in the cross, where sin leads to — what sin deserves — and how God deals with it. Doubtless, sin was measured and dealt with in the holy Person of Jesus, in a way that can never be done even in the lake of fire. God's hatred of sin was perfectly expressed on the cross. One drop of that cup which He drained — one stroke of that judgment which He exhausted, would sink a world of rebellious sinners in the depths of woe. But there, alas, the cup will never be drained — the judgment never exhausted.

Truly, may we not say, — If such things were done in the green tree, what must it be in the dry? If the true and living tree so felt the fires of holy justice, what must become of the dry and rotten tree? If He, who had not a particle of sin in Himself, was thus dealt with, when sin was imputed to Him, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? What, my friend, would the rotten branch of thy good deeds avail thee, in the swellings of Jordan? One thing seems perfectly plain — he who rejects God's green tree now, can have nothing to say at last, when God rejects the dry.

But, oh, the Lord grant that this may never be the case with thee, my reader, or with any soul who has ever read, or heard, that beautiful text, "Jesus was made a little lower than the angels.....that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man." What a revelation of the heart of God for us! "By the grace of God;" and what a blessed work by the Son! He tasted death that we might never taste it. Oh, believe it — rest in Jesus —trust all to His finished work! Glory in the fact, that the God of all grace loves thee — that He spared from His bosom His well-beloved Son, that He might taste death for thee a sinner. And now, can I hear thee saying? — 'Bless the Lord — He has tasted death for me a sinner. Now I believe it-the bitterness of death is past-had I a hundred hearts He should have them all.'

Descending from glory on high,
With men Thy delight was to dwell,
Contented our Surety to die,
By dying to save us from hell;
Enduring the grief and the shame,
And bearing our sin on the cross,
Oh! who would not boast of this love,
And count the world's glory but loss?

It is well for thee, my soul, to plead, and to plead earnestly, with sinners who are unprepared for death. "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord," as the apostle says, "we persuade men." But now, for a little while, let thy contemplations be confined to the triumphs of the saint in that solemn

hour. Thou hast spoken of the human side — the dark valley; now look at the heavenly side — the way of glory. Suppose then — The messenger of peace is come — come to close, in quiet sleep, the pilgrim days of one who has been something like forty years in the wilderness. Of one, we shall still suppose, who had become foot-weary, but whose sympathies were all with Christ and His people, and who cared for the testimony of Jesus on the earth. But the Lord's appointed time has come. The tie is dissolved; the body is left behind; the happy soul is liberated — it is present with the Lord.

Here pause, one moment, my soul. Pray what tie is it that is dissolved? The tie that binds the divine life in the earthen vessel. "For we know, that if the earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Here the apostle speaks on behalf of all Christians. "We know." There is no thought whatever, in such a case, of death being "the wages of sin." Christ, our Surety, paid the penalty in full — so full, we may say, that it is not necessary the Christian should die at all. And certain it is, that all Christians shall not die. "We shall not all sleep," says the apostle plainly, "but we shall all be changed." And again, "then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." (1 Cor. 15:51; 1 Thess. 4:17) The dissolving of the tabernacle, gently or roughly, touches not our eternal life in the risen Jesus. It simply dissolves its connection with the earthen vessel. The new man in Christ can never taste of death.

Meditations on the Twenty-Third Psalm

But here it may be profitable to dwell a little on the blessed and comforting truth just alluded to, namely, that all Christians shall not die — that many shall be changed, and caught up with the quickened dead to meet the Lord in the air. It is quite evident from the passages already quoted, that those who are alive on the earth when the Lord comes, shall not pass through death at all. In their case, as the apostle says, "Mortality shall be swallowed up of life." Such will be the power of life in the Son of the living God, that every trace of mortality, in their human nature, shall instantly disappear from His presence. It will be swallowed up — annihilated. And, observe, it is mortality, not death, that is here said to be swallowed up of life. Death, too, we know, shall be swallowed up in victory. In the one case, the apostle refers to those who have fallen asleep in Jesus; in the other, to those who are alive on the earth at His coming. How beautiful and interesting is the perfect accuracy of Scripture! If a word is changed, there is an important reason for the change. The same truths, and their distinctiveness, are taught by the Lord, when speaking of Himself as the resurrection and the life. "Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." John 11: 25, 26.

But need we wonder at this manifestation of the power of life in the coming Lord? Sin, we may say, is an accidental thing. It is no part of the divine arrangements. It was introduced by an enemy. But every particle of the poison of sin, with all its baneful effects, shall be completely expelled from the living saints when the Lord comes for them. There is no need that they should die: Christ has died for them. And, oh! how sweet the thought, it will be the same body still, but without the sin and its effects. Then shall our bodies of humiliation be fashioned like unto His body of glory; yet the perfect identity of each shall be preserved. And all this, observe, shall be accomplished by the

power of a life, which we now see in the risen Jesus; and, O, wondrous truth! this life is ours — ours now — ours in Him where all is victory!

It is most interesting to observe, what we may call the four-fold state, in which our divine life, is here contemplated in the reasonings of the apostle. (2 Cor. 4:6-18; 5:1-9.) But although it is viewed in four different aspects or conditions, the life itself remains unchanged and unchangeably the same. It is eternal life — the life of the risen and glorified Christ.

He had spoken, in the third chapter, of the gospel in contrast with law — of the ministration of righteousness and the Spirit, in contrast with the ministration of death and condemnation. The law, as presenting God's claims on man, condemns him, because he breaks it. But the gospel reveals a righteousness on God's part, in place of requiring it from man. Christ Himself is this righteousness. When He is received by faith, we are made the righteousness of God in Him, and sealed with the Holy Spirit. And where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty — liberty from the pressure of law, and from the fear of death.

Christ glorified, is the foundation of the whole argument. "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." The man Christ Jesus, who was on the cross for us, as our sin-bearer, is now on the throne. Blessed proof to the heart, of the perfect and eternal settlement of the whole question of sin. Humanity has been carried to the throne of God. The divine glory is fully displayed in the risen Man. He is also the blessed manifestation of our place and portion in the same glory. And, O, precious truth, in meditating on this glory, as it shines in the face of Jesus, we are changed into His likeness through the power of the Holy Ghost. Lord, grant me this grace, that I may indeed meditate, with delight and intelligence, on Thy glory, and become here, on earth, its true reflection.

The apostle preached to the world, the good news of Christ in glory. "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord." He preached Christ victorious over sin and Satan, death and the grave. He invited and entreated sinners to believe on a glorified Christ - to come to Him in faith, and enjoy the love, and share the blessings and glories of the Savior. Christ has established righteousness for the sinner in the presence of God, so that there need be no doubting and fearing. The full blessing is promised to all who trust in Him. "Blessed are all they that put their trust in him." What an immense power there is in such a gospel; but what weakness must characterize every other! All who believe the gospel Paul preached, are introduced into the pure light of the glory, as it is revealed in Christ. Those who reject the light, are, alas, blinded by Satan, the god of this world. What a thought! Refusing the glorified Savior, alas, alas, they fall into the hands of the enemy.

The sixth verse gives the explanation of what we call the first state, "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." The heart is the vessel of the light. A light from the glory is kindled in the human heart. Divine life, through faith in a glorified Christ, being thus communicated, we are responsible for its manifestation, as a light shining in a dark place. It is the light of life. It comes direct from God. He who at first commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts. Christ is our life, our light, our glory. In this dark world, before the eyes of man, we are called to be the reflection of our absent Lord. This is the first state of the new life. And how important! What a place it gives us here! The men of this world, who will neither read the Bible

nor religious books, will surely read the lives of Christians. O to be an epistle of Christ, known and read of all men! As the Jew could read the ten commandments when he looked on the tables of stone, so may the eyes of those that are around us, be able to read Christ, in our daily walk and conversation.

“But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.” This is the second state. The divine life is viewed in near contact with the mortal body, and with all the infirmities and evils connected therewith. But no evil can ever touch the life of Christ in the soul. The more the vessel was troubled on every side, the more evident it became that the power of God was there. It rose above the working of death in the apostle, and triumphed over all the difficulties of his thorny path. “For we which live,” he says, “are always delivered unto death for Jesus’ sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal body.” This “dying daily,” caused the life of Jesus to shine forth more brightly. Like Gideon’s pitchers, the light was manifested when the vessel was broken. But what experience! What conflict! What service! His many and heavy afflictions he calls light, and but for a moment, in the view of that eternal weight of glory, which he saw before him. Encourage, Lord, and strengthen the hearts of thy weak and sorrowing ones now, who come so far short of the example of thy servant Paul.

We now come to the third state. The “unclothed” state — the one more immediately under our meditation. Paul was “willing rather” to be in this state; although, at the same time, he saw in the Man Christ, glorified in heaven, the perfect, or resurrection state. This is the fourth state, when the person, complete, shall be glorified, after the image of Christ in glory. This was the grand object before the apostle’s mind. “For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.” See also Phil. 3.

The fourth state being connected with the Lord’s coming, we have much more light and definite teaching on it. than on the intermediate state. Comparatively little is said on the third, or separate state of the soul. A veil, we doubt not, has been purposely drawn over it, so that it might not come between our hearts and our Lord’s return. Had the soul’s blessedness with Jesus, during the present period, been fully revealed, we might have been selfish enough to have thought so much about it, and to have longed so much after it, that the hope of His coming might have lost its proper place and power in our hearts. The Holy Ghost guards the hope of the Church on all sides, and with special care. But enough is revealed to satisfy the heart of faith, as to our dear departed ones. Further light is, in love, withheld. Meditate deeply, my soul, on what is revealed, and be subject thereto. And knowing the love of Jesus, and the unchangeableness of our divine life amidst all changes, the interpretation thereof will be easy.

“For me to live is Christ,” says the apostle, “and to die is gain.” This is a contrast. To live is Christ—to die would be a gain upon that. And, further, he adds, “For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart and to be with Christ; which is far better.” “With Christ,” would be his “gain.” This would be “far better.” But first of all, carefully note the blessedness of the state with which he contrasts departing “to be with Christ.”

“For me to live is Christ.” What nearness to Christ, what communion with Him, the servant must have that can say this! It includes the idea, first of all, of having Christ for his object, his motive, his joy, his strength; and, also, of great love for the Church, a deep and tender interest in all that

concerned the name and glory of Christ, and the well-being of His people. “ For me to live is Christ,” — is like the condensed energy of the Spirit, that would sum up all of that mighty heart, that bright light, that noble servant, in these few words. And now comes the important question — How much would such an one “gain” by death? He would be “with Christ” —in the enjoyment of Christ, personally, in heaven. And this is like the condensed energy of the Spirit as to the other side — the consummation of all blessedness — “with Christ.” But would the soul not lose much of its interest in all these lower things, now that it has reached the higher? Most assuredly not! It has the higher things in addition. This is the point of great interest as to the “unclothed” state. We can never lose anything that we now have, in fellowship with Christ; because, He is already risen and glorified. He is our life — that life has no trial to go through. It only loses, in death, the poor, cumbersome body in which it groaned, being burdened.

All that we now know, and enter into, through the teaching of the Spirit, must abide forever. We only lose that which belongs to the first Adam, but nothing of that which belongs to the last Adam. There is immense force in the apostle’s words of contrast, far better — Even better! This would be true as to everything touching the soul’s connection with the blessed Lord, both as to the higher and lower things.

It is no longer in our power to communicate to the dear departed soul, that which we know would have given it joy here; but being present with the Lord, everything that is worthy of His love, and fitted to deepen the joy, and elevate the worship of the loved departed, we can happily trust Him to communicate. All is well! How well! “Absent from the body, present with the Lord.” How far the soul, apart from the body, (its own proper instrument of expression) can express itself, we venture not to say, but in its bright consciousness, it remembers and loves. It thinks of the past and present; it anticipates the future. It waits in patience, with Christ, for the morning of the first resurrection; but its present and blessed feast is His unchanging, never-ending love.

“There are our loved ones in their rest:

They’ve crossed time’s river — now no more

They heed the troubles on its breast,

Nor feel the storms that sweep its shore.

But ‘there’ pure love can live, can last —

They look for us their home to share:

When we in turn, away have passed,

What joyful greetings wait us there —

Across the river!”

There is only one other passage I would refer to on this point. It has always been a favorite with the weary pilgrim. I mean the Lord’s own word to the penitent thief, “Today shalt thou be with me in paradise.” The sweetness, the comfort, the rest of heart, which this assurance gives, is beyond all expression. There, “with the Lord” and with loved ones who have gone before, the soul rests, clothed in light, and breathing the air of heaven. The mother has found her first-born, long, long,

gone before her, but never forgotten. And, oh! what a fresh spring to her worship! “O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together,” will now be their joyous song. And there, too, the husband meets the wife of his youth, who was early called, but whose hearts were formed to love, not only for time, but for eternity. True, human relationships will be unknown there, but hearts and loves remain forever.

But lest we should anticipate the resurrection-state, we leave, O most contentedly leave, our dear, our loved, our cherished, departed ones, “with the Lord,” and with each other, in that blooming garden of heaven’s choicest delights. Now, we often travel by faith, between the dark valley and that bright Eden above; but soon, soon, the Lord will come. Lord, Lord of that happy land, how soon? — when, O when, shall the cloudless morning come? “A little while,” is the Master’s own measure of His absence. Then, when that happy morning dawns, we, too, shall say farewell to this vale of tears. Faith’s work shall then be done; “for we shall see him as he is.” Hope, too, shall then be realized in the Person of the Lord, as it is written, “And they shall see his face.” These all-important companions of the valley are no more needed. Faith, so long accustomed to the flight, shall then, and forever, “fold her wings.” Farewell, “precious faith,” but, oh, how much I owe thee! Hope, “blessed hope” — soul-sustaining hope, shall then be lost amidst the glories of the Jerusalem above; but love remains; yes, love, eternal love prevails through all the ransomed throng.

But what, my soul, what of the poor body, that lies moldering in the grave? The now humbled body, shall, ere long, share eternal glory with the soul. Scripture is plain on this point. But I will do little more than quote two or three passages.

“What! know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you.” (1 Cor. 6:19.) Here, observe, the Holy Ghost has taken possession of the body. He has thus appropriated the body to God. Had the text said, “your heart is the temple of the Holy Ghost” — the question of affection might have been raised; but it is your body — which plainly assures us that the body, living or dead, is in the custody of the Holy Ghost — that, henceforward, He is the Custodian of the believer’s body. Again, “But if the spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.” (Rom. 8:11.) Here it is said not merely “your bodies,” but “your mortal bodies,” which meets the heart in sweetest grace. But what a volume of truth we have on this subject in 1 Cor. 15 “It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body.....And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.”

Need we anything more, O my soul, to set the heart of strongest affection at rest forever! Let patience have her perfect work — the “little while” will soon be past. “Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.”

“The resurrection-morn will break,

And every sleeping saint awake,

Brought forth in light again;

O morn, too bright for mortal eyes!
When all the ransomed Church shall rise,
And wing their way to yonder skies —
Called up with Christ to reign.”

The Two Links: Part 1

There are two very important links in Christianity which we should seek to understand, namely, first, the link of everlasting life; and, secondly, the link of personal communion. These links, being perfectly distinct, should never be confounded; and, being intimately connected, should never be separated. The former is the ground of our security; the latter, the secret spring of our enjoyment and the source of all our fruitfulness. That can never be broken; this may be snapped by a thousand things.

Seeing, then, that these links are of such immense importance, let us reverently and prayerfully enter upon the examination of them in the divine light of inspiration.

And, first, then, as to the precious link of everlasting life, we cannot possibly do better than quote a few plain passages of scripture setting forth whence it comes, what it is, when, and how, it is formed.

But, first of all, it must be distinctly borne in mind that man, in his natural state, knows nothing of this link, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." There may be much that is truly amiable, great nobility of character, great generosity, strict integrity; but there is no eternal life. The first link is unknown. It matters not how you cultivate and elevate nature, you cannot, by any possibility, form the grand link of everlasting life. You may make it moral, learned, religious, but so long as it is mere nature, there is no eternal life. You may select all the very finest moral virtues, and concentrate them in one individual, and that individual may never have felt so much as a single pulsation of everlasting life. It is not that these virtues and qualities are not good and desirable in themselves; no one in his senses would question that. Whatever is morally good in nature is to be estimated at its proper value. No one would think, for a moment, of placing a sober, industrious, amiable, well-principled man on a level with a drunken, idle, cross-grained spendthrift. Looked at from a social and moral point of view, there is, obviously, a wide and very material difference. But, be it clearly understood, and well-remembered, that we can never by the finest virtues and noblest qualities of the old creation purchase a place in the new; we can never by all the excellencies of the first Adam, even if concentrated in one individual, establish a title to membership in the Second. The two are totally distinct — the old and the new — the first and the Second. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." "Therefore, if any man be in Christ he is a new creation; old things are passed away; behold all things are become new."

Nothing can be more explicit, nothing more conclusive, than the last quoted passage from the fifth chapter of Second Corinthians. "Old things" of what kind so ever they be, "are passed away." They are not recognized as having any existence in the new creation, wherein, "all things are of God." The old foundation has been completely removed, and new foundations laid in redemption. Nor is there so much as a single particle of the old material worked up into the new. "All things are become new" — "All things are of God." The old creation "bottles" have been flung aside, and redemption bottles set in their stead. The old creation "garment" has been cast away, and the new, the spotless robe of redemption, substituted. In this fair robe man's hand never wove a

thread, nor set a stitch. How do we know? How can we speak with such confidence and authority? For the best of all reasons, because the divinely authoritative, and therefore absolutely conclusive voice of holy scripture declares that, in the new creation, "All things are of God." The Lord be praised that it is so! It is this that makes all so secure — that places all so entirely beyond the reach of the enemy's power. He cannot touch anything or anyone in the new creation. Death is the limit of Satan's domain. The grave forms the boundary of his dominion. But the new creation begins at the other side of death — it opens upon our enraptured gaze at heaven's side of that tomb where the Prince of Life lay buried — it pours the brilliant beams of its glories around us in the midst of a scene where death can never enter, where sin and sorrow are unknown, where the hiss of the serpent can never be heard, nor his hateful trail be seen. "All things are of God."

Now, it would remove a host of difficulties and perplexities, and simplify matters amazingly, if this point of the new creation were clearly understood. If we look around on what is called the religious world, or the professing church, what do we see? A large amount of effort to improve man, in his Adamic, his natural, or old creation condition. Philanthropy, science, philosophy, religion, are all brought into play; every species of moral leverage is brought to bear, for the purpose of raising man in the scale of existence. What do men mean when they talk, as they often do, of "elevating the masses?" How far can they go in their operations? To what point can they elevate them? Can they raise them into the new creation? Clearly not, seeing that in that creation all things are of God.

But, further, who, or what, are these "masses" that are sought to be elevated? Are they born of the flesh, or born of the Spirit? Of the flesh confessedly and assuredly. Well, then, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." You may elevate it as high as you please. You may apply the most powerful lever, and raise it to the very loftiest point attainable. Educate, cultivate, sublimate it as you will. Let science, philosophy, religion (so-called), and philanthropy bring all their resources to bear; and what has been done? You cannot make it spirit — you cannot bring it into the new creation — you cannot form the first grand link of everlasting life. You have done absolutely nothing towards man's best, his spiritual, his eternal interests. You have left him still in his old Adamic state, his old creation circumstances; you have left him in his liabilities, his responsibilities, his sins, his guilt; you have left him exposed to the righteous wrath of a sin-hating God. He may be more cultivated in his guilt, but he is guilty all the while. Cultivation cannot remove guilt; education cannot blot out sins; civilization cannot remove from man's horizon the dark and heavy clouds of death and judgment.

Let us not be misunderstood. We do not want to make little of education or civilization, true philanthropy or true philosophy. We say, distinctly, let them go for what they are really worth, let them be estimated at their true value. We are ready to allow as large a margin as may be demanded, in which to insert all the possible advantages of education, in all its branches; and having done so, we return with accumulated force to our grand thesis, namely, that in "elevating the masses," you are elevating that which has no existence before God, no place in the new creation; and we repeat it, with emphasis, and urge it with energy, that until you get the soul into the new creation, you have done absolutely nothing for it, with respect to eternity, to heaven, and to God. True, you may smooth man's way through this world; you may remove some of the roughness from the highway of human life; you may dandle the flesh in the delusive lap of luxury and ease; all this you may do, and much more; you may wreath man's brow with every species of

laurel that ever was won in the various arenas in which men have carried on the competitive struggle for fame; you may adorn his name with all the titles that ever were bestowed by mortal upon his fellow mortal, and after all this, you may leave him in his sins, and exposed to death and eternal damnation. If the first grand link be not formed, the soul is like a vessel broken from her moorings, and driven over the watery waste, without either rudder or compass.

Now, we most earnestly desire to press this point upon the attention of the reader. We deeply feel its immense practical importance. We believe there is hardly any truth to which the devil offers more fierce and constant opposition than the truth of the new creation. He knows well its mighty moral influence, its power to lift the soul up out of present things, to produce deadness to the world, and practical and habitual elevation above the things of time and sense. Hence his efforts to keep people ever engaged in the hopeless work of trying to elevate nature and improve the world. He has no objection to morality, to religion as such, in all its forms. He will even use Christianity itself as a means of improving the old nature. Indeed, his masterpiece is to tack on the Christian religion as a "new piece" upon the "old garment" of fallen nature. You may do what you like, provided you leave man in the old creation; for Satan knows full well that so long as you leave him there, you have left him in his clutches. All in the old creation is in the grasp of Satan, and within the full range of his guns. All in the new creation is beyond him. "He that is born of God keepeth himself and that wicked one toucheth him not." It is not said that the believer keepeth himself and that wicked one toucheth him not. The believer is a complex being, having two natures—the old and the new, the flesh and the Spirit, and if he does not watch, "that wicked one" will speedily touch him, upset him, and cut out plenty of sorrowful work for him. But the divine nature, the new creation, cannot be touched, and so long as we walk in the energy of the divine nature, and breathe the atmosphere of the new creation, we are perfectly safe from all the assaults of the enemy.

And, now, let us proceed to inquire how it is we get into the new creation - how we become possessed of the divine nature — how this link of everlasting life is formed. A quotation or two from the word will suffice to open this point to us. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Mark these words, reader, observe the connection, "Believeth in him— "Have everlasting life." This is the link — simple faith. Thus it is we pass from the old creation, with all its belongings, into the new creation with all its belongings. This is the precious secret of the new birth—faith wrought in the soul by the grace of God the Holy Ghost — faith that takes God at His word, that sets its seal that God is true — faith that links the soul with a risen Christ, the Head and beginning of the New Creation.

Take another quotation, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my words, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment; but is passed from death unto life." Here is the link again. "Believeth on me" — "Hath everlasting life." Nothing can be more simple. By natural birth we enter the precincts of the old creation, and become heirs of all that appertained to the first Adam. By spiritual birth, we enter the precincts of the new creation, and become the heirs of all that appertains to the Second Adam. And if it be asked, what is the secret of this great mystery of the spiritual birth? the answer is, "Faith." "He that believeth on me." Hence, if the reader is one who believes in Jesus, according to the language of the above passages, he is in the new creation —he is a possessor of the divine nature - he is linked on to Christ, by a link

which is perfectly indissoluble. Such an one can never perish. No power of earth or hell, men or devils can ever snap that link of everlasting life which connects all Christ's members with their risen Head in glory, and with one another.

And let the reader note particularly that, in reference to the link of eternal life, and its formation, we must take God's thoughts in place of our own; we must be governed exclusively by the word of God, and not by our own vain reasonings, foolish imaginings, and ever-changing feelings. Moreover, we must be careful not to confound the two links which, though intimately connected, are perfectly distinct. We must not displace them, but leave them in their divine order. The first does not depend upon the second; but the second flows out of the first. The second is as much a link as the first; but it is second, and not first. All the power and malice of Satan cannot snap the first link; the weight of a feather may snap the second. The first link endureth forever; the second may be broken in a moment. The first link owes its permanency to the work of Christ for us, which was finished on the cross, and to the word of God to us, which is settled forever in heaven; the second link depends upon the action of the Holy Ghost in us, which may be, and alas! is, interfered with by a thousand things, in the course of a single day. The former is based upon Christ's victory for us; the latter is based upon the Spirit's victories in us.

Now, it is our firm conviction that thousands get shaken as to the reality and perpetuity of the first link of everlasting life, by reason of failure in the maintenance of the second link of personal communion. Something occurs to snap the latter, and they begin at once to question the existence of the former. This is a mistake; but it only serves to show the immense importance of holy vigilance in our daily walk so that the link of personal communion may not be broken by sin, in thought, word, or deed; or if it should be broken, of having it instantly restored by self-judgment and confession, founded upon the death and advocacy of Christ. It is an undeniable fact, confirmed by the sad experience of thousands of true saints of God, that when the second link is snapped, it is next to impossible to realize the first. And this, though so vitally important to us, is, in reality, but a secondary thing; for, surely, the suspension of our communion is a small thing when compared with the dishonor done to the cause of Christ, and the grief offered to the Holy Ghost by that which occasioned the suspension.

May the Spirit of God work in us mightily to produce watchfulness, prayer fullness, seriousness, and earnestness; that nothing may occur to interrupt our communion, but that the two links may be understood and enjoyed in their due place and order, to the glory of God by us, the stability of our peace in Him, and the integrity and purity of our walk before Him!

The Two Links: Part 2

In order to unfold, somewhat more fully, the subject of “The two links,” we should like to call our reader’s attention, for a few moments, to a very important passage in the fifth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians. “For even Christ our passover is slain for us; therefore let us keep the feast.” In this brief quotation, we have a wide range of truth presented. We have, first, a great fact stated, “Christ our passover is slain;” and, secondly, an earnest appeal, “Let us keep the feast.” In the former, we have the ground of our security, in the latter, the true secret of personal holiness.

Now, here again, we have the two links, in their proper distinctness, and yet in their proper order. We have a sacrifice and a feast, two things quite distinct, but yet intimately connected. The sacrifice is complete; but the feast is to be celebrated. Such is the divine order. The completeness of the sacrifice secures the believer’s title, and the celebration of the feast involves the whole of the believer’s practical life.

We must be careful not to confound these things. The feast of unleavened bread was founded upon the death of the paschal lamb, and it typified that practical holiness which is to characterize the whole of a Christian’s life down here. “Christ is slain.” This secures everything as to title. “When I see the blood, I will pass over you.” God, as a Judge, was fully met and satisfied by the blood of the lamb. The destroying angel passed through the land of Egypt, at the midnight hour, with the sword of judgment in his hand, and the only means of escape was the sprinkled blood. This was divinely sufficient. God had declared, “When I see the blood, I will pass over.” Israel’s salvation rested on God’s estimate of the blood of the lamb. This is a most precious truth for the soul to dwell upon. Man’s salvation rests upon God’s satisfaction. The Lord be praised! “Christ our passover is slain for us.” Mark these words, “is slain” — and that, “for us.” This settles everything as to the great and all-important question of salvation from judgment and wrath. Thus the precious link of salvation is formed — a link which can never be broken. The link of eternal life, and the link of eternal salvation, are one and the same. The Lord Jesus Christ — the living Savior — the risen Head, maintains, and ever will maintain, this link in unbroken integrity, as he says, “Because I live, ye shall live also.” “If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.” “He ever liveth to make intercession for us.”

And, now, a word or two as to the exhortation of the apostle, “Therefore let us keep the feast.” Christ keeps us, and we are to keep the feast. He was slain to spread a feast for us, and that feast is a life of personal holiness — practical separation from all evil, Israel’s feast was composed of three things, namely, a roasted lamb, bitter herbs, and unleavened bread. Precious ingredients setting forth, in typical language, first, Christ as having endured the wrath of God for us; secondly, those deep, spiritual exercises of heart which flow from our contemplating the cross; and, thirdly, personal holiness, or practical separation from evil. Such was the feast of God’s redeemed; and such is our feast now. Oh! that we may have grace to celebrate it according to its due order! May our loins be girt, our feet shod, and our pilgrim staff in hand.

And be it remembered, it is not a feast celebrated in order to reach a sacrifice; but a sacrifice slain to provide a feast. We must not reverse this order. We are very prone to reverse it, because we are apt to regard God as an exactor, instead of a giver — to make duty the basis of salvation, instead of making salvation the basis of duty.

An Israelite did not put away leaven in order to be saved from the sword of the destroyer, but because he was saved. In other words, there was first the blood-stained lintel, and then, the unleavened bread. These things must not be confounded, neither must they be separated. We are not saved from wrath by unleavened bread, but by a blood-stained lintel; but we can only enjoy the latter as we are diligently and jealously maintaining the former. The two links are ever to stand in their divine order, and in their inseparable connection. Christ Himself infallibly maintains the one; and we, by the grace of His Spirit, are to maintain the other. May He enable us so to do!

The Two Musts

In our Lord's discourse with Nicodemus, He twice makes use of the word "must" — a word of immense depth and moral power in both cases. Let us ponder it for a few moments; for, though but a word of one syllable, it contains a volume of most precious evangelical truth in whichever light we view it.

1. And, first, then, we read, "Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again." Here we have the total setting aside of man, in his very best estate. The "must" of the third of John, like the flaming sword of the third of Genesis, "turns every way to keep the way of the tree of life." It completely shuts out the first man and all who are linked with him, from the tree of life. If I must be born again — if I must have a new life — a new nature, then it matters not, in the smallest degree, what I am or what I have, I am shut out. Man, as born of a woman, enters this world with the image of his fallen parent stamped upon him. Man, as he came from the hand of his Creator, was made in the "image of God." Man, as he issues from the womb of his mother, wears the image and likeness of a fallen creature. Hence the force of our Lord's expression, "Ye must be born again." It is not said, "Ye must mend, ye must try and be better, ye must alter your mode of living, ye must turn over a new leaf." Had it been thus, Nicodemus would never have asked, "How can these things be?" A man of the Pharisees would have understood any or all of these things. A change of conduct, a change of character, any moral reform, any self-improvement, is perfectly intelligible to a Pharisee of every age; but to be told, "Ye must be born again," can only be understood by one who has reached the end of himself and his doings, who has been brought to see that in him, that is in his flesh, dwelleth no good thing, who sees himself as a thorough bankrupt—a bankrupt without a certificate, who can never again set up on his own account. He must get a new life to which the deed of bankruptcy cannot apply; and he must trade in the wealth of another, on which the creditors have no possible claim.

There is immense power in this little word "must." It bears upon all alike. It speaks to the drunkard, and says, "You must be born again." It addresses the most rigid teetotaler, and says, "You must be born again." It speaks to every class, to every condition, to every grade and shade of character, to man in every rank and every clime, to every creed and every denomination, in its own clear, emphatic, sweeping style, and says, "You must be born again." It bears down with far more weight upon the conscience than any appeal that could be made on the ground of moral conduct. It does not interfere, in the least, with the question of moral reform in any one of its many phases. It allows as broad a margin as any philanthropist or moral reformer may desire. It does not disturb the various distinctions which society, public opinion, law, or equity has established. It leaves all these things perfectly untouched; but it raises its clear and commanding voice above them all, and says to the sinner — to man as born of a woman — to the worst and to the best of men, "You must be born again." It demands not reformation, but regeneration — not amendment, but atonement.

2. What, then, it may be asked, are we to do? Whither are we to turn? How are we to get this new life? Our Lord's second "must" furnishes the reply. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the

wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.” This makes all plain. A second Man has entered the scene. There are two men and two musts. As to the first man, he must be born again; and, as to the second Man, He must be lifted up. In a word, the cross is the grand solution of the difficulty, the divine answer to the “How?” Am I completely struck down by the first “must?” Am I overwhelmed by the insuperable difficulty which it proposes to me? Am I on the very verge of despair as I contemplate the apparent impossibility of what, nevertheless, must be? Oh! then with what power does the second “must” fall on my heart. “The Son of man must be lifted up.” Why must He? Because I must have new life, and this life is in the Son, but it could only be mine through His death. The death of the Second Man is the only ground of life to the first — life to me. One look at Christ, as lifted up for me, is life eternal. The moment this look is given the new birth takes place. The soul that simply believes on the Son of God, as dead and risen, is “born of water and of the Spirit;” he hath everlasting life — he is passed from death unto life, from the old creation into the new, from the first man to the Second — from guilt to righteousness, from condemnation to favor, from darkness to light, from Satan to God. May God the Spirit unfold to the reader’s heart the beauty and power, the depth, comprehensiveness, and moral glory of “the two musts!”

The Untrodden Way

“Ye have not passed this way heretofore.” Josh. 3:4.

“Whither I go thou canst not follow me now” John 13:36.

When the Israelites were about to enter the promised land, the waters of Jordan rolled between them and the object of their hope. Those waters were a type of death, but of death in a certain aspect, namely, as that which lay between the wilderness and the land, as the Red Sea typified death separating Egypt and the wilderness. The people passed through the sea into the wilderness. They passed through Jordan into the land of Canaan. In Egypt, in the wilderness, and in the land of Canaan, we see the three distinct positions of the people of God. As to fact, we are in, Egypt; in our experience, we are in the wilderness; by faith we are, in spirit and principle, in heaven. We are walking through the world which is morally a wilderness to the new nature; our home is on high where Jesus our Head and Forerunner is.

Now the river Jordan had to be crossed ere the people could enter their promised inheritance. There stood that terrible barrier — never more terrible than at the very time in the which “the living God” was about to act on behalf of His people, “For Jordan overfloweth all his banks all the time of harvest.” Death was never more terrible, never more deathlike, never put on more awful forms, than when the Prince of life destroyed its power on our behalf, and turned it into a pathway by which we pass into our heavenly home. The deep bed of Jordan was an untrodden way to Israel; they had therefore to wait until the ark of the living God, carried by the priests, went before them to open up their way. “And it came to pass, after three days, that the officers went through the host; and they commanded the people, saying, When ye see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, and the priests the Levites bearing it, then ye shall remove from your place, and go after it. Yet there shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure: come not near unto it, that ye may know the way by which ye must go; for ye have not passed this way heretofore.” “And Joshua said unto the children of Israel, Come hither and hear the words of the Lord your God. And Joshua said, Hereby ye shall know that the living God is among you, and that he will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites,” &c. “Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth passeth over before you into Jordan.”

Here, then, we have a very magnificent type of the Lord Jesus Christ overcoming the power of death for His people. He met death in its most appalling form. Jordan had put on its most forbidding aspect when the ark of God drove back its mighty flood and formed a highway for the ransomed of the Lord to pass over. “And the priests that bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord stood firm on dry ground in the midst of Jordan, and all the Israelites passed over on dry ground, until all the people were passed clean over Jordan.” It was a complete victory of life over death. It was the power of the living God changing death itself into a pathway of life. The feet of God’s redeemed were not allowed to touch death’s dark waters. These waters looked dreadful in the distance; to nature’s view they were truly appalling; but the moment the people approached, instead of an appalling flood, they found a dry pathway. God —the living God, was there — there

in grace and truth, as expressed by the priests and the ark of the covenant. This changed the character of everything. Death is not death if God be there. Sin brought death into the world. Sin is the very sting of death; but grace has come in and altered everything, so that the believer can say, "O Lord, by these things men live; and in all these things is the life of my spirit." Such is the moral triumph of that grace which "reigns through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord." Grace has so wrought for us in and by Christ, as to change death into a servant for the believer. Instead of being a dreadful foe, it is actually part of our property (see 1 Cor. 3:22). Instead of being an insuperable barrier, it becomes a pathway.

Now, in John 13 we have the antitype of what we have been looking at in Joshua. Our blessed Lord there teaches His disciples that He must go before them through the Jordan of death, and that there must be "a space" between Him and them, for they could not come near unto Him while treading that tremendous pathway. "Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me; and as I said unto the Jews, whither I go, ye cannot come; so now I say to you." It was as impossible for the disciples as it was for the Jews to tread that way. Jesus had to tread it alone. Who could accompany Him? Who could meet the terrific array of all the powers of darkness, the malice of Satan, the rage of hell, and, far beyond all, the wrath of God? Who could encounter these things? Who but Himself, the God-man?

Peter did not understand this. He thought he could meet death. He would attempt to overleap the divinely appointed "space" — the mystic "two thousand cubits." Poor Peter! How little he thought that the distant sound of Jordan's dreaded flood would so terrify him as to cause him to curse and swear that he knew not his blessed Master! "Lord," said he, "whither goest thou? Jesus answered him, Whither I go thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterward." In other words, that gracious Savior tells His poor servant that He must go before, in order to open a dry pathway through death's dark waters, along which Peter, in common with all the redeemed, might pass unscathed to glory. What grace! He went alone - in profound and awful solitude. Single-handed He met death in all its power, and armed with all its terrors. There was not a single bank of the real Jordan that was not covered. It was all a dark, dreary waste without so much as a single ray of light. There was the malice of Satan, the enmity of man, the faithless desertion of His nearest friends; and, finally, when men and devils had done their utmost, there lay before the Prince of life a region so dark and dreadful that no human or angelic mind could enter into it, wherein He was called to drink "the cup" of God's righteous wrath against sin— to bear, that we might never have to bear, the hiding of God's countenance.

All this should be entered into in order to answer Peter's question, "Whither goest thou?" Who could understand the reply? No one; and therefore Jesus does not give it; but simply says, "Thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterward." When the way was laid open, Peter should follow, for then he could. Gracious Lord and Master! He would meet all the terrors of death, that we might have the joys of immortality.

But still Peter is dull of comprehension. "Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake. Jesus answered him, Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice." So much for Peter. He neither knew himself, nor the path he so confidently undertook to tread. But Jesus knew both, blessed be His Name, and was going first to tread the path alone, and then conduct His poor servant in peace and

victory by that self-same path up to glory. Then, in His own precious grace, He calls off the thoughts of Peter and the rest from everything that might chill or depress them, and speaks words of sweetest comfort to them, “Let not your hearts be troubled, ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.”

Victory Over the World

(1 John 5:4, 5.)

“Who is he that overcometh the world?” The first thing I have to know is, what the world is, and in one verse this is summed up: “The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life is not of the Father, but of the world.” Of course, if I do not know what the world is, I cannot know what I ought to be delivered from. The world knew not Christ; whatever knows not Christ is the world, and whoever loves it, the love of the Father is not in him.

There are, I may say, four distinct ways in which we are delivered, or rather, in which the sense of deliverance is made known to the soul, as well as the power of it.

1. The first is stated as a principle in the passage before us. “That which is born of God overcomes the world;” and, therefore, every divinely new-born soul does in some degree overcome the world. Faith is the power by which it is effected, and the Son of God is the object for faith, by which the victory is consummated. If I, by faith, have my soul set on Jesus as the Son of God, apart from, and beyond the world, I receive the strength and sense of His victory over it. I am of good cheer, because He has overcome it. I am in His strength and with Him above it. I am not alone, buffeting the adverse activities here; but I see Him above them all, as having surmounted them, and from the very fact of my believing in Him, my soul is with Him, away and apart from all that is contrary to Him. I am above it, in the very action of life, the result of faith in Him. If the world besets me, or hampers or baffles me in any way, the moment my eye rests on Him, the Son of God, I am above it. I may not see my extrication, but I am in victory over it, I have a place and power superior to it.

2. The second way or power of deliverance is that my true place now is with Christ in heaven. That is the reach, if I may so say, of the Spirit of God now. It is the place where the soul by faith enters into the great result of the love of God; that inner circle of His presence where the prodigal shares in the joys of God, and knows that He is in intimate nearness in his Father’s house; where he is unencumbered, irreproachable, and irreprovable in His sight. My citizenship is there, and if known and enjoyed there, I must, in proportion, be dissociated in principle, taste, and interest, from the world. A really heavenly man could not be of the world, for the great power, or effect, of being in heaven now, even by faith, is an unconsciousness of the existence of that which connects me with the world, while abundantly conscious of the great blessedness into which I have been introduced. A man happy with Christ in heaven as his own place, could not be happy in the world as such.

3. The third is that I am dead — that God treats me as dead. Now if I am dead, the world is nothing to me, because it is only as a man I could enjoy the world. A man really dead has no interest whatever in it.

The place of death in which God sets us morally, effects varied blessings for us in respect to our deliverance from the world.

Let us note them seriatim. In Romans — I being dead through the body of Christ am freed from the law, and therefore I am to present my body a living sacrifice as my reasonable service, not conformed unto this world, but transformed by the renewing of my mind. How else could it be if I am freed from the law by being dead? What more grateful than to present it to Him who freed me from a world where I could only cry out, “O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”

In 1 Cor. 1, &c, the apostle shows how the cross of Christ sets aside the wisdom of the world; and therefore he determined to know among them only Jesus Christ, and Him crucified; for if there had been wisdom in the world, the prince of it would not have crucified Him, therefore the cross is foolishness to it. The cross — Christ crucified —delivers me from the wisdom of the world, as in 2 Cor. 5. I am an entirely new creation; “old things are passed away, all things are become new.”

In Galatians — I find that because I am crucified with Christ, the law has no place in perfecting me; and therefore the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world.

In Ephesians — I am on the other side, through Christ’s death, and therefore above the prince of the power of the air, which otherwise I could not be.

In Colossians — I am not like the Gnostics, trying to detach myself from the world by not touching or tasting, but through Christ. I am dead to the rudiments of the world.

4. The fourth way in which I am loosened and detached from the world is by being impressed with the vanity and impermanency of it; but this is the lowest order of deliverance. It is only alluded to when there is distinct leaning of the heart to earth. St. Paul speaks of it in 1 Cor. 7, when writing on marriage; and again in Heb. 12; but he never speaks there of their being dead, though he connects all their blessings with resurrection. St. James speaks of the world being a vapor which passeth away; and St. Peter dwells largely on the present heaven and earth being dissolved, and argues there from what manner of persons ought we to be? Finally — St. John, in the Revelation, judges, afflicts, and by terrible strokes, crushes the whole of the present (κ■σμος,) order of things, so that there is not a shred left for nature to cling to — the wrath of God devouring it all.

“What Must I Do?”

John 6:28, 29.

This oft-repeated question,

O what, what must I do?

Each work I've tried is wanting,

Then tell me something new.

The very fact of trying

Reveals how vain the thought,

That aught could for God's presence fit

Which by these hands were wrought.

Why dost thou ask the question

Since Jesus answerest thee,

The work of God, poor sinner,

Is to believe in Me.

For thee I have all finished,

My Father is well pleased,

And thou hast but to trust Me,

For justice is appeased.

And trusting, thou art one with Me,

My righteousness, thine own,

Thou sharest all My Father's love,

My kingdom, and My throne.

And I have drained the cup of death,

There's not a dreg for thee,

Now hast thou only but to yield

Thy ransomed soul to Me.

And now, believer, 'tis secured

To thee My endless love,
And I would have thee living
As raised with Me above;
That souls may see My image,
My glory all thine aim,
And long to share the perfect rest
In My all-soothing name.

A. M. C

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