

BIBLE SUBJECTS FOR THE HOUSEHOLD OF FAITH VOLUME

by Unknown

A collection of articles and writings from Bible Subjects for the Household of Faith Volume, covering various biblical topics and Christian teaching.

23 Chapters

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Bible Subjects for the Household of Faith Volume

A Short Meditation on the Moral Glory of the Lord Jesus Christ

“And when any will offer a meat-offering unto the Lord, his offering shall be of fine flour; and he shall pour oil upon it, and put frankincense thereon; and he shall bring it to Aaron’s sons the priests; and he shall take thereout his handful of the flour thereof, and of the oil thereof, with all the frankincense thereof; and the priest shall burn the memorial of it upon the altar, to be an offering made by fire, of a sweet savor unto the Lord.”— Leviticus 2:1, 2.

Introduction

It is the moral glory, or, as we speak, the character of the Lord Jesus, on which I meditate in these pages. All went up to God as a sacrifice of sweet savor. Every expression of himself in every measure, however small, and in whatever relationship it was rendered, was incense. In his person (but surely there only) man was reconciled to God. In him God recovered his complacency in man, and that too with unspeakable gain; for in Jesus man is more to God than he would have been in an eternity of Adam's innocency.

But in this meditation on the moral glory of the Lord Jesus, it is most surely but a small part of that wondrous subject I affect to have reached. I may give occasion to fruitful thoughts in the souls of others, and that will be good.

The Lord's person I assume—God and man in one Christ. His work I also assume; that suffering service, or blood-shedding, accomplished on the Cross, whereby reconciliation is perfected, and wherein it is preached for the acceptance and joy of faith.

The glories of the Lord Jesus are threefold—personal, official, and moral. His personal glory he veiled, save where faith discovered it, or an occasion demanded it. His official glory he veiled likewise: he did not walk through the land as either the Divine Son from the bosom of the Father, or as the authoritative Son of David. Such glories were commonly hid, as he passed on in the circumstances of life day by day. But his moral glory could not be hid, he could not be less than perfect in everything—it belonged to him, it was himself. From its intense excellency, it was too bright for the eye of man; and man was under constant exposure and rebuke from it. But there it shone, whether Man could bear it or not. It now illuminates every page of the four evangelists, as it once did every path which the Lord himself trodden this earth of ours.

It has been said of the Lord— “His humanity was perfectly natural in its development.” This is very beautiful and true. Luke 2: 52 would verify this. There was an ailing a unnatural progress in him: all was orderly increase. His wisdom kept pace with his stature, or age. He was the child first, and then the man. By and by, as a man (God's man in the world), he will testify of the world that its works are evil, and be hated by it; but as a child (a child after God's heart, as I may say), he will be subject to his parents, and under the law, and as one perfect: in such conditions he grew in favor with God and man.

But though there was progress in him, as we thus see, there was no cloud, or perversion, or mistake: in this he distinguishes himself from all. His mother pondered things in her heart; the cloud and indistinctness, nay, darkness itself, beset her mind, and the Lord had to say to her, “How is it that ye sought me?” But with him progress was but one form of moral beauty—his growth was orderly and seasonable; and, I may add, that as “his humanity OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST was perfectly natural in its development,” so was his character entirely human in its expressions: all that displayed it was common to man, as I may say.

He was the tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth its season (Psalms 1); and all things are only beautiful in its season. The moral glory of “the child Jesus shines in its season and generation; and when he became a man, the same glory only gets other seasonable expressions. He knew when to own the claims of his mother, when she made them; when to resist them, though she made them; when to recognize them unsought. (Luke 2:51;8. 21; John 19:27.) And, as we afterward track him, it is the same. He knew Gethsemane in season, or according to its character; and the Holy Mount in its season, winter and summer, to his spirit. He knew the well of Sychar, and the road, which led him to Jerusalem for the last time. He trod each path, or filled each spot, in that mind that was according to the character it bore under God’s eye. And so, oil occasions which called for still more energy. If it be the defilement of his Father’s house, he will let zeal consume him; if it be his own wrong at the hand of some Samaritan villagers, he will suffer it, and pass on.

And all was perfect in its combinations, as well as in its season. He wept as he was reaching the grave of Lazarus, though he knew that he carried life for the dead. He who had just said, “I am the resurrection and the life,” wept. Divine power would leave human sympathies free to take their full course.

And it is assemblage, or combination of virtues, which forms moral glory. He knew, as the apostle speaks, “how to abound, and how to be abased;” how to use moments of prosperity, so to call them, and also times of depression: For, in his passage through life, he was introduced to each of these.

Thus, he was introduced, for a moment, to his glory; and a very bright moment it was. I allude to the transfiguration. He was high in his honors there. As the Sun, the source of all brightness, there he shone; and such eminent ones as Moses and Elias were there, taking of his glory from him, and in it shining with him. But as he descended the hill, he charged those who had been with him, “the eyewitnesses of his majesty,” not to speak of it. And when the people, on his reaching the foot of the hill, ran to salute him (Mark 9:15)—his person still reflecting, I believe, though faintly, the glory which it had lately borne—he does not linger among them to receive their homage, but at once addresses himself to his common service; for he knew “how to abound.” He was not exalted by his prosperity. He sought not a place among men, but emptied himself, made himself of no reputation, quickly veiled the glory that he might be the servant; the girded, not the arrayed One.

And it was thus with him a second time, after he had become the risen Jesus, as we may see in John 20 He is there in the midst of his disciples, in such a glorious character as man had never borne or witnessed, and never could. He is there as the conqueror of death, and the spoiler of the grave. But he is not there—though in such glories—to receive the congratulations of his people, as we speak, and as one naturally would, who was finding himself returned to the bosom of friends and kinsfolk, after toil, and danger, and victory. Not that he was indifferent to sympathy: he sought it in season, and felt the want of it when he did not get it. But he is now, risen from the dead, in the midst of his disciples, rather as a visitor for a day, than as in a triumph. He is rather teaching them their interest, and not displaying his own, in the great things which had just been accomplished.

This was using a victory indeed, as Abraham knew how to use his victory over the confederate kings—a harder thing, as some have said, than to gain it.

This, again, was knowing “how to abound,” how “to be full.”

But he knew “how to be abased” also. Look at him with the Samaritan villagers in Luke 9. At the outset of that action, in the sense of his personal glory, he anticipates his being “raised up;” and in the common, well known style of one who would have it known that a person of distinction was coming that way, he sends messengers before his face. But the unbelief of the Samaritans changes the scene.

They would not receive him. They refused to cast up a highway for the feet of this glorious one, but forced him to find out for himself the best path he could, as the rejected One. But he accepts this place at once, without a murmur in his heart. He becomes again (borrowing the word from Matthew 2) the Nazarene, seeing he was refused as the Bethlehemite, and he fills this new chapter on this side of the Samaritan village, as perfectly as he had filled the other character on the opposite side of it.

Thus he knew “how to be abased,” and just so do we again see him in Matthew 21 He enters the city as son of David. All that could set him off in that dignity surrounds and accompanies him. He is in his earthly honor now, as he had been in his heavenly glory on the holy hill. It was his without robbery; and when the moment demanded it, he can wear it. But the unbelief of Jerusalem now, as the unbelief of Samaria before, changes the scene, and he who had entered the city as her king, has to leave it to seek a night’s lodging, so to speak, where best he could find it. But there he is, outside Jerusalem, as before he had been outside the Samaritan village, knowing “how to be abased.”

What perfections! If the darkness comprehends not the light of his personal or official glory, his moral glory shall only find occasion to shine the brighter. For there is nothing in morals or in human character finer than this combination of willing degradation in the midst of men, and the consciousness of intrinsic glory before God. We see it in some of the saint’s beautifully. Abraham was a willing stranger in the midst of the Canaanites of land, nor seeking to have it; but when occasion served, he would take headship even of kings, conscious of his dignities in God’s sight, according to God’s own counsel. Jacob would speak of his pilgrimage, of his few and evil days, making himself nothing in the reckoning of the world; but he would at the same moment bless him who, at that time, was the greatest man on the earth, conscious that, under God and before him, he was “the better,” the greater man of the two.

David would ask for a loaf of bread, and ask for it without shame. But, with all that, he would accept the homage due to a king, receiving the tribute of his subjects, as in the person of Abigail. Paul was bound with a chain, a prisoner in the palace, and would speak of his bonds; but at the same moment he would let the whole court, and high estate of the Roman world, know that he knew himself to be the blest man, the only blest man, in the midst of them.

It is this combination of willing degradation before man, and conscious glory before God, that gets its highest, brightest, nay (when I consider who he was), its infinite illustration in our Lord.

And there is still further moral beauty in this knowing how to abound, and how to be abased, how to be full, and how to suffer need; for it tells us that the heart of him who has learned that lesson is upon the end of the journey, rather than upon the journey itself. If the heart be on the journey, we shall not like these accidents and difficulties, the rough places and the hilly places; but if it be on the end, it will in proportion overlook such things. It is surely a secret rebuke to some of us to trace

all this.

A Short Meditation on the Moral Glory of Our Lord Jesus Christ

But there are other combinations in the Lord's character that we must look at. Another has said of him, "He was the most gracious and accessible of men." We observe in his ways a tenderness and a kindness never seen in man, yet we always feel that he was "a stranger." how true this is! He was "a stranger here"—a stranger as far as revolted man was, filling the place, but intimately near as far as misery or need demanded him. The distance he took, and the intimacy he expressed, were perfect. He did more than look on the misery that was around him, he entered into it with a sympathy that was all his own; and he did more than refuse the pollution that was around him,—he kept the very distance of holiness itself from every touch or stain of it. See him as exhibiting this combination of distance and intimacy in Mark 6 it is an affecting scene. The disciples return to him after a long day's service. He cares for them. He brings their weariness very near to him. He takes account of it, and provides for it at once, saying to them, "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest awhile." But, the multitude following him, he turns with the same readiness to them, acquainting himself with their condition; and having taken knowledge of them, as sheep that had no shepherd, he began to teach them. In all this we see him very near to the rising, varied need of the scene around him, whether that need be the fatigue of the disciples, or the hunger and ignorance of the multitude. But the disciples soon resent his attention to the multitude, and move him to send them away. This, however, will in no wise do for him. There is immediate estrangement between him and them, which shortly afterward expresses itself by his telling them to get into the ship while he sent the multitude away, but this separation from him only works fresh trouble for them. Winds and waves are against them on the lake; and then, in their distress, he is again near at hand to succor and secure them How consistent in the combination of holiness and grace is all this. He is near in our weariness, our hunger, or our danger. He is apart from our tempers and our selfishness. His holiness made him an utter stranger in such a polluted world; his grace kept him ever active. in such a needy and afflicted world. And this sets off his life, I may say, in great moral glory; that though forced, by the quality of the scene around him, to be a lonely One, yet was he, drawn forth by the need and sorrow of it to be the active One. And then activities were spent on all kinds of persons, and had therefore to assume all kinds of forms. Adversaries, —the people, a company of disciples who followed him (the twelve), and individuals; these kept him not only in constant, but in very various activity; and he had to know, as surely, he did to perfection, how to answer every man. And beside all this, we see him at times at the table of others; but it is only that we may still notice further various perfection. At the table of the Pharisees, as we see him occasionally; he is not adopting or sanctioning the family scene, but being invited in the character which he had already acquired and sustained outside, he is there to act in that character. He is not a guest simply, under the Courtesy and hospitality of the master of the house, but he has entered in his own character, and therefore he can rebuke or teach. He is still the Light, and will act as the Light; and tints he exposes darkness within doors as he did abroad. (See Luke 7. 11.)

But if he thus entered the house of the Pharisee, again and again, in the character of a teacher, and would then, acting as such, rebuke the moral condition of things which he found there, he

entered the house of the publican as a Savior. Levi made him a feast in his own house, and set publicans and sinners in his company. This is, of course, objected to. The religious rulers find fault, and then the Lord reveals himself as a Savior, saying to them, "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick; but go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice; for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Very simple, but very striking, and full of meaning, this is. Simon the Pharisee objected that a sinner should enter his house and approach the Lord Jesus; Levi the publican provided such as these to be the fellow-guests of the Lord Jesus. And according to this, the Lord in the one house acts as a reprover, in the other discloses himself in the rich grace of a Savior.

But we are to see him at other tables still. We may visit him in Jericho and at Emmaus. (See Luke 6 and 24.) It was desire that received him on each of these occasions; but desire differently awakened, —awakened, I mean, under different influences, Zaccheus had been but a sinner, a child of nature, which is, as we know, corrupt in its springs and in its activities. But he had been, just at that moment, under the drawings of the Father, and his soul was making Jesus its object. He wished to see him, and that desire being commanding he had pressed his way through the crowd and climbed up into a sycamore tree, if he might but just see him as he passed by. The Lord looked up, and at once invited himself into his house. This is very peculiar—Jesus is an uninvited, self-invited guest in the house of that publican at Jericho!

The earliest strivings of life in a poor sinner, the desire which had been awakened by the drawings of the Father, were there in that house ready to welcome him; but sweetly and significantly he anticipates the welcome, and goes in—goes in in full, consistent, responsive character to kindle and strengthen the freshly-quickened life, till it break forth in some of its precious virtue, and yield some of its own good fruit. "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold." At Emmaus, desire had been again quickened, but under different conditions. It was not the desire of a, freshly-drawn soul, but of restored saints. These two disciples had been unbelieving. They were returning home under a sorrow that Jesus had disappointed them. The Lord rebukes them shortly after he joined them on the road, but so orders his words as to kindle their hearts. When their walk together ends at the gate of their dwelling, the Lord makes as though he would go further. He would not invite himself as he had done at Jericho. They were not in the moral state which suggested this, as Zacchaeus had been; but, when invited, he goes in—goes in just to kindle further the desire which had here invited him—to gratify it to the full. And so he does; and they are constrained by their joy to return to the city that night, late as it was, to communicate it to their fellows.

How full of various beauty all these cases are! The guest in the house of Pharisees, the guest in the house of publicans, the guest in the house of disciples, —the invited and the uninvited guest, in the person of Jesus, sits in his place, in all perfection and beauty. I might instance him as a guest, at other tables; but I will now look only at one more. At Bethany we see him adopting a family scene.

Had Jesus disallowed the idea of a Christian family, he could not have been at Bethany, as we see he was. And yet, when we get him there, it is only some new phase of moral beauty we trace in him. He is a friend of the family, finding, as we find to this day among ourselves, a home in the midst of them. "Now Jesus loved Martha, and Mary, and Lazarus," are words which bespeak this.

His love to them was not that of a Savior, or a shepherd, though we know well he was each of these to them. It was the love of a family friend. But though a friend, an intimate friend, who might, whenever he pleased, find a welcome there; yet he did not interfere with the arrangements of the house. Martha was the housekeeper, the busy one of the family, useful and important in her place; and Jesus will surely leave her where he finds her. It was not for him to alter or settle such matters. Lazarus may sit by the side of the guests at the family table, Mary may be abstracted and withdrawn as in her own kingdom, or into the kingdom of God within her, and Martha be busy and serving. Be it so Jesus leaves all this just as he finds it. He who would not enter the house of another unbidden, when entered into the house of those sisters and brother, will not meddle with its order and arrangements, and in full moral comeliness this is. But if one of the family, instead of carrying herself in her family place, step out of it to be a teacher in his presence, he must and will resume his higher character, and set things right divinely, though he would not interfere with them or touch them domestically. (Luke 10.)

What various and exquisite beauty Who can trace all his paths? The vulture will have to say, it is beyond even the reach of his eye. And if no human eye can fully see the whole of this one object, where is the human character that does not aid in setting off its light by its own shadows and imperfections? We none of us think of John, or of Peter, or of the rest of them, as hard-hearted or unkind.

Quite otherwise. We feel that we could have entrusted them with our griefs or our necessities. But that little narrative in Mark 6, to which I referred, shows us that they are all at fault, all in the distance, when the hunger of the multitude appealed to them, threatening to break up their ease; but, on the contrary, that was the very moment, the very occasion, when Jesus drew near. All this tells us of him, beloved. "I know no one," says another, "so kind, so condescending, who is come down to poor sinners, as he. I trust his love more than I do Mary's or any saint's; not merely his power as God, but the tenderness of his heart as man. No one ever showed such, or had such or proved it so well—none has inspired me with such, confidence. Let others go to saints, or angels, if they will; I trust Jesus kindness more." Surely, again I say, this is so—and this occasion in Mark 6, betraying the narrow-heartedness of the best of us, such as Peter and John, but manifesting the full, unwearied, saving grace of Jesus, verifies it. But further there are in him combinations of characters, as well as of virtues or graces. His relationship to the world, when he was here, exhibits this. He was at once a conqueror, a sufferer, and a benefactor. What moral glories shine in such an assemblage! He overcame the world, refusing all its attractions and offers, he suffered from it, witnessing for God against its whole course and spirit; he blessed it, dispensing his love and power continually, returning good for evil. Its temptations only made him a conqueror; its pollutions and enmities only a sufferer; its miseries only a benefactor. What a combination! What moral glories shine in each other's company there!

The Lord illustrated that word that is among "in the world, but not of the world"—a form of words which, I suppose, has been derived from what he himself says in John 17:15: "I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil." He illustrates this condition all through his life; for he was ever in the world, active in the midst of its ignorance and misery, but never of it, as one that shared its hopes or projects, or breathed its spirit. But in John 7, I believe he is eminently seen in this character. It was the time of the feast of tabernacles, the crowning, joyous time in Israel, the past of the coming kingdom, the season of ingathering,

when the people had only to remember that they had been, in other days, wanderers in a wilderness and dwellers in a camp. His brethren propose to him to take, advantage of such a moment, when “all the world,”

as we speak, was at Jerusalem. They would have him make himself important, make himself, as we again speak, “a man of the world.” “If thou do these things,” they say, “show thyself to the world.” He refused. His time had not then come to keep the feast of tabernacles. He will have his kingdom in the world, and be great to the end of the earth, when his day comes; but as yet he was on his way to the altar, and not to the throne. He will not go to the feast to be of the feast, though he will be in it; therefore, when he reaches the city at this time, we see him in service there, not in honor, not working miracles as his brethren would have had him, that he might gain the notice of men; but teaching others, and then hiding himself under this, “My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me.”

Very peculiar and characteristic indeed all this is. And all this was sonic of the moral glory of the man, the perfect man, Jesus, in his relation to the world. He was a conqueror, a sufferer, and a benefactor—in the world, but not of it. But with equal perfectness do we see him at times distinguishing things, as well as exhibiting these beautiful combinations. Thus, in dealing with sorrow which lay outside, as I may express it, we see tenderness, the power that relieved; but in dealing with the trouble of disciples, we see faithfulness as well as tenderness. The leper, in Matthew 8, is a stranger. He brings his sorrow to Christ, and gets healing at once disciples, in the same chapter, bring their sorrow also, their fears in the storm; but they get rebuke as well as relief. “Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?” he says to them. And yet the leper had but little faith, as well as the disciples. If they said, “Lord save us, we perish;” he said, “Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.” But they are rebuked, while he is not. Just because there was a different thing before the mind of the Lord, and justly so. It was simply sorrow in the one case; it was the soul as well as the sorrow in the other. Tenderness, unmixed tenderness, was, therefore, his answer to the one; faithfulness must form part of the other. The different relationship to him, of disciples and strangers, at once accounts for this, and may strew us how perfectly he distinguished things that came very near each other, but still were not the same. But further, as to this perfection. Though he himself rebuke, he will not allow others lightly to do it. As in earlier days, Moses may be humbled by the Lord, but the Lord will not allow Miriam and Aaron to, reproach him. (Numbers 11. 12.) Israel in the wilderness will be chastened again and again’ by the hand of God, but in the face of Balaam, or any other adversary, he will be as one that has not seen iniquity in his people, and will not suffer any enchantment to prevail against them. So the Lord Jesus will beautifully, and strikingly step in between the two disciples and the rebuking ten (Matthew 20), and though he send a word of warning and admonition to John the Baptist, as in secret (such a word as John’s conscience alone might understand), he turns to the multitude to speak of John only with commendation and delight. And still further, as to this grace in distinguishing things that differ. Even in dealing with his disciples, there did come a moment when faithfulness can be observed no longer, and tenderness alone is to be exercised. I mean in the hour of parting, as we see in John 14:16. It was then “too late to be faithful.” The moment would not have admitted it: It was a time which the heart claimed as entirely belonging to itself. The education of the soul could not go on then. He opens fresh secrets to them, it is true, secrets of the dearest and most intimate relationships, as between them and the Father but there is nothing that is to be called rebuke.

There is no such word as, "O ye of little faith," or "How is it that ye do not understand?" A word that may sound somewhat like that is only the discharging of a wound which the heart had suffered, that they might know the love he had for them. This was the sacredness of the sorrow of a moment of parting, in the perfect mind and affection of Jesus; and we practice it ourselves in some poor manner, so that we are, at least, able to enjoy and admire the full expression of it in him. "There is a time to embrace," says the preacher, "and there is a time to refrain from embracing." This is a law in the statute—book of love, and Jesus observed it.

But again, He was not to be drawn into softness; when the occasion demanded faithfulness, and yet he passed by many circumstances which human sensibilities would have resented, and which the human moral sense would have judged it well to resent. He would not gain his disciples after the poor way of amiable nature. Honey was excluded from the offerings made by lire, as well as leaven. The meat offering had none of it (Leviticus 2:11); neither had Jesus the true meat offering. It was not the merely civil, amiable thing that the disciples got from their Master. It was not the courtesy that consorts for the ease of another. He did not gratify, and yet he bound them to him very closely; and this is power. There is always moral power when the confidence of another, is gained without its being sought; for the heart has then become conscious of the reality of love. "We all know," writes one, "how to distinguish between love and attention, and that there may be a great deal of the latter without any of the former. Some might say, attention must win our confidence; but we know ourselves that nothing but love does." This is so true attention, if it be mere attention, is honey, and how much of this poor material is found with us! And we are disposed to think that it is all well, and perhaps we aim no higher than to purge out leaven, and fill the lump with honey. Let us be amiable, perform our part well in the civil, courteous, well-ordered social scene, pleasing others, and doing what we can to keep people on good terms with themselves, then we are satisfied with ourselves, and others with us also. But is this service to God? Is this a meat offering? Is this found as part of the moral glory of perfect man? Indeed, it is not we may naturally judge, I grant, that nothing could do it better or more effectually; but still it is one of the secrets of the sanctuary, that honey was not used to give a sweet savor to the offering.

Thus, in progress, in seasonableness, in combinations, and in distinctions, how perfect in moral glory and beauty were all the ways of this Son of Man! J. G. B.

This Present Evil World

“In time past ‘ye walked according to the course of this’ world.”—Ephesians 2: 2.

“But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom (whereby) the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.”—Galatians 6: 14.

“He was in the world..... and the world knew him not.”—John 1:10.

“The world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.”—1 John 3:1.

“They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.”—John 17:16.

“I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.”—John 17:15.

“Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father, is this.....to keep himself unspotted from the world.”—James 1:27. “As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.”—John 9:5.

“Ye are the light of the world.”—Matthew 5:14.

“The sons of God.... in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine—as lights in the world.”—Philippians 2: 15.

“Marvel not.....if the world hate you.”—1 John 3:13.

“If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.”—John 15:18.

“Be not conformed to this world.”—Romans 12:2. “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world.”—1 John 2:15.

“If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”—1 John 2:15.

“All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.”—1 John 2:16.

“The world passeth away, and the lust thereof.”—1 John 2:17.

“Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?”—James 4: 4.

“Whosoever.... will be a friend of the world, is the enemy of God.”—James 4: 4.

“Denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ.”—Titus 2:12,13.

(Continued from vol. 2)

On the Gospel by St. John

1. 1-18. I read these verses as a kind of preface, serving to introduce this Gospel in its due character, as the Gospel of the Son of God, the Son of the Father; and the Baptist's testimony is here summarily appended, as serving the same end.

And here I remark, that the place which our blessed Lord immediately takes, on His appearing upon earth, is that which I have already observed belongs to— him as the Son of God, and to the Church with him, that is, the place of a stranger. He is here shown to us at once in this character. He is as light in the midst of darkness—the Maker of the world, and yet not known of the world—coming to his own, and yet not received of his own—made flesh, and yet only tabernacling for awhile among us. All this shows him to be the Stranger here: it is thus that this Gospel introduces him; and accordingly, at the beginning, it assumes that his question with the world, and with his earthly people Israel, were both determined. (See ver. 11, 12.) The Spirit of God in our Evangelist at once shuts up the world under the condemnation of being “without God,” and concludes Israel in unbelief; and upon this brings out an elect family, not registered in the earth, or born of flesh, but born of God, for whom “grace and truth,” the fullness of the Father in the Son, were now provided.

The book of Genesis, as one has remarked, opens with creation; but the Gospel by John opens with him who was before creation and above creation. It is to him that we are immediately taken. Creation is passed by, and we get to “the Word,” who was with God, and was God.

This is the opening of our Gospel, defining it to be the Gospel of the Son of God, —the Creator of all things—the Declarer of the Father—the Fountain and the Channel of grace and truth to sinners. And, according to this, the glory which St. John tells us we have beheld, is that “of the only-begotten of the Father,”—that is, a personal glory; while the glory which the other Evangelists record as having been beheld, was the glory on the holy mount, —that is, an official glory merely. And this again characteristically marks the end and bearing of this Gospel.

Very blessed, as well as very elevating and divine, are the thoughts suggested by these introductory verses. They tell us, beside what I have observed above, that the light, the living light, shined in darkness ere the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us—yea, ere his harbinger, the Baptist, was sent forth by God. Just as in the old creation, light was the first element under the forming power of God. It went before the sun. The sun was the creature of the fourth day, but light was the prime creature of the first. The first three days, therefore, walked in the light of light merely, without the presence of that which afterward ruled the day. And so has it been, as these verses tell us, in the history of the living Light. Christ was the earliest thought from God that rose upon the moral darkness and chaos of apostate man. In the promise, “It shall bruise thy head,” the living Light sprang forth. Days or dispensations succeeded. The first three days again, as it were, took their course. The ages of the patriarchs and of Moses spent themselves. But the light of life had gone abroad, though as yet the word had not been made flesh. The light shined before the sun was set in the heavens. And this is a happy thought. The Christ of God was the earliest

revelation that arose upon the ruins and darkness of Adam; and though for a season that divine depository of all light, that great source of all vivifying beams, remained unmanifested, yet effulgence's worthy of him, and which belonged to him, came forth to cheer and guide preceding ages, the first, the second, and the third day.

But heat as well as light is ours, I might say; for this same wondrous scripture tells us, that "the bosom of the Father" has been disclosed to us. "The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." There is nothing like that. The deep, unspeakable, unfathomable love that dwells in that bosom is the love that has visited us, in the warmth of which we have been addressed. We are—loved with the love which rests ineffably on him who lay there. (See ch. 17: 26.) And how surpassing all. knowledge is such a thought as that! Well may we ask to be strengthened with might by the Spirit to comprehend it. (Ephesians 3:16-19.) It is the heaven of the heart to be still and silent, and in simple faith to let such a revelation tell out its tale upon us.

19-28. These verses are also somewhat introductory; the action can scarcely be said to have commenced; for they give us, by way of recital, the Baptist's testimony to the Jews, before the Lord Jesus had been manifested to him as the Son of God. For so little had the Spirit of God in John to do with Jewish testimony, that all this is given here by way of recital, telling us what had been the Baptist's confession to the messengers of the Jews: 29-42. Here, however, the action fully opens. And this is with the Baptist's direct testimony to Jesus, after the manifestation of him as Son of God. But having borne witness to him, the Baptist appears as one who had consciously fulfilled his course. In the 35th verse, he is as one who had retired from his ministry, and was simply enjoying that in which it had all resulted—the manifestation of the Lamb of God. He is heard uttering the hidden satisfaction of his soul, when he said, "Behold the Lamb of God!". For he does not appear to have addressed these words to his disciples; but they, hearing him thus in holy, happy contemplation of Jesus, follow Jesus. And, beloved, it is this which gets the same honor now, our power in drawing others after the Lord mainly rests in our joy and communion with him ourselves. John had done with himself, and was lost in thoughts of the Lamb of God, and his disciples seem to catch his mind; for they leave him and follow Jesus.

This was real ministry, ministry in power over the affections of those who heard. As the apostle speaks in 1 Thessalonians 1:5,6. But where, I ask, do John's disciples follow Jesus? We are not told. In all grace the Lord encouraged them to follow, and they came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day: but where it was we know not. They follow him along some untold path, and were with himself; but that is all we learn. For the Son of God was but a stranger on the earth; and they, if with him, must be strangers too, without place or name here. And so is it here signified. This little gathering was to the Son of God, and to the Lamb of God; but in principle it was not here—in principle the earth did not own the place; for this was the first handful of wheat for the heavenly granary, the first-fruits of the heavenly family unto God and the Lamb.

The Baptist speaks of Jesus being really before him, though coming after him; and he repeats this (verses 15, 27, 30). And Paul, referring to John's ministry, alludes to this feature of it. (Acts 19:4.) But this is very blessed; for in this the Holy Ghost, who spake by John, honors Jesus as the great Subject of all the divine counsels, the great Ordinance of God, to whom all other ordinances pointed. And therefore, though he came after them, he was before them; and John, as if speaking the mind of all ordinances and ministries, says, "He that cometh after me is preferred before me:

for he was before me.” For it was the Son alone that had been set up from everlasting (Proverbs 8:23), the great first object in all the divine counsels; and every prophet and ordinance was but his servant, for a testimony to him.

And again I observe, that John and the Lord had no knowledge of each other, till Jesus came forth in Ministry. John had been brought up in Judea; our Lord in Galilee. But on the Lord’s approaching John to be baptized, John at once acknowledged him—acknowledged him without any introduction. There seems to have been in his soul some consciousness that this was he. (Matthew 3:14.) He had, indeed, acknowledged him even before he was born. (Luke 1:44.) The world knew him not, but John knows him, and thus condemns the world. But he does not know him so as to bear witness to him as the Son of God, till the Spirit descends and abides on him; for that, as John was admonished, was to be his divine attestation.

And further I must observe, that this Gospel, in full consistency with its general character, gives us, in these verses, what I may term the personal call of Andrew and Peter; while Matthew, not noticing this, gives us their official call. But this is in beautiful order with the mind of the Spirit in the two Evangelists; with such thankfulness and delight should we mark the perfection of the divine testimonies. (Matthew 4:18.)

43-51. In these verses, we have the action of a subsequent period, called “the day following.” This action is the ministry of Jesus himself, and the fruit of that ministry in the persons of Philip and Nathanael.

This is a new thing. This was not a gathering to Him as “the Lamb of God,” as the former had been, but a gathering to him as the One “of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write.” And, therefore, this is a sample, riot as the former was, of the Church or heavenly family, but of the Israel of God that is to be saved in the latter day after the Church has come in. And this Israel of the latter day will be known to him in grace, in the midst of the Jewish nation, as Nathanael here is known to him while under the fig-tree—the standing symbol of the Jewish nation. (Matthew 21:19.) And they will make the same confession to him as Nathanael does. They will own him and receive him as the Son of God and the king of Israel; and, when this comes to pass, all will be ready for the display of the glory of which the Lord here speaks, and a sight of which, in due season, he promises to Nathanael the representative, as we have seen, of his Israel.

All this is very significant, and will be found to be confirmed by the opening of the following chapter.

11: 1-12. We have just had the Church and Israel severally manifested in the two gatherings to Christ in the previous chapter. Accordingly, we here get “the third day,” or the marriage, the wine for which Jesus himself provided.

Now these circumstances give notice of the mystic import of the scene. For the “third day (which is the same as the resurrection-day), the marriage, and the wine of the Lord’s own providing, are things which stand allied with the kingdom, in the thoughts of those who are familiar with Scripture. And thus, I doubt not that this marriage sets forth the coming kingdom of the Lord, where he is to appear both king and bridegroom.

To this marriage in Cana the Lord had been bidden as a guest; but at the close of it he becomes the host, providing and dispensing the wine. So, by and by, when we have tasted of the inferior joy which our skill or diligence may have provided, he himself will prepare the joy of the kingdom, and drink anew with us there of the fruit of the vine. And by this easy gracious action he transforms the mere marriage-feast of Cana into a mystery, and makes it the occasion of “manifesting his glory,” setting forth in it that kingdom of which he had just been speaking to Nathanael. He becomes himself the host or bridegroom. The governor sends to the bridegroom who had bidden them, as though he were the one; but it was Jesus who provided the joy of the place, and who is still keeping “the good wine” for his people till the last—till all other joy is over. Jesus was the true bridegroom. This was the feast where he turned the water into wine; as he will in the kingdom again pass by all our resources of joy, and give what eye hath not seen, nor the heart of man conceived.

And from this let me take occasion to say, that we should deeply cherish the assurance that joy is our portion, the ordained or necessary element—in which our eternity is to move. For our hearts are wont “to entertain joy with suspicion.” But we must deny that tendency and urge and keep the heart in another direction. “Joy is that which is primary; toil, danger, and sorrow are only subservient,” as another has said. And that is a truth full of comfort. When the counsels of old were taken, and the order of creation planned, that was a scene and season of divine joy. The Lord delighted in Wisdom then, and Wisdom or Christ delighted in the sons of men, and in the habitable parts of the earth. (Proverbs 8) And this joy of God himself was communicated. The angels felt and owned it. (Job 38:7.)

And, of course, creation, in that day of its birth, smiled also. And the ruin of this system, through the apostasy of man, has not hindered joy, but only changed its character. Redemption becomes another source of gladness, enhanced and enlarged, and of deeper tone. The new creation will be the occasion of a still richer joy than the old had been. What meat has the eater yielded What savory meat which the soul of Jesus himself loveth! What sweetness out of the strong one even unto God! What springs have been opened in the barren sands of this ruined world for the refreshing even of heavenly regions!

All scripture gives us this witness, and we need, not further rehearse it. But upon the verses now before us, I cannot refuse adding (so sweet are these notices of the saints’ interest in these things), that it is the servants, and they only, who are thrown into connection with the Lord. They are in his secrets, while even the governor knows nothing about them. And the mother also (kindred with him in the flesh) is thrown at a distance from him (ver. 4). It was the servants who were brought the nearest to him in—the whole scene. And so with us, beloved Jesus, the Lord of glory, the heir of all things, was a servant, here; he came “not to be ministered unto, but to minister;” and those who are humblest in service are still cast the nearest to him. And in the day when he will provide the true wine of the kingdom, his servants that have served him shall, as here, be dispensers of the joy under him, and be distinguished as in the secret—of his glory. “If any man serve me, him will my Father honor.”

13-22. After all this, we see our Lord at Jerusalem, with authority cleansing the temple, and thus asserting the royal prerogatives of the Son of David. (See Matthew 21:12.)

To this authority he is challenged for his title, and he simply pleads his death, and resurrection.*

“Destroy this temple,” says he, “and in three days I will raise it up.” And so it is. This is his title. His rights and honors as Creator of the world and Lord of Israel were, as we saw, denied him. (See 1:10, 11.) His title to them was disallowed. And we know that he has acquired all power in heaven and earth by another title, death and resurrection, which has displaced the usurper, and regained for man the forfeited inheritance. This gives him sure unquestionable right to everything. The apostles constantly interpret the Lord’s death and resurrection as establishing and sealing his title to his many crowns and glories. The preaching of Peter in Acts 2 is a testimony to this. He tells the people of Israel that with wicked hands they had put him to death, but that God had raised him, and made him Lord and Christ. The teaching of Paul in Philippians 2, among other scriptures, tells us the same. And in this place, in answer to the challenge of the Jews, the blessed Jesus himself pleads his death and resurrection as his title to his highest, functions, and the exercise of royal and priestly authority. Because he humbled himself, God has given him a name which is above every name. The Son of David, according to Paul’s gospel, was raised from the dead.

(2 Timothy 2:8.) The crown of Jesus rested on his cross—in the sight of all the world, Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. (Luke 23:38.) All the testimony thus, publishes, as Jesus himself pleads here, that his sufferings lead to his glories (1 Peter 1: 2.), that death, and resurrection is his title.

23.—3. 21. Thus the joy of the kingdom was exhibited, the power of the kingdom exercised, and the Lord’s title to it set forth and pleaded. Now, in due course the title of others to enter into the same kingdom with him, becomes the question; and this question accordingly is here discussed. And deeply affecting to us all is this holy and solemn matter.

Man is a creature whom the Lord the Creator cannot trust. Adam’s breach of allegiance in the garden made him so. Man did all he could to sell God’s glory into the hand of another. The dispensation of the law has proved him to be still unworthy of the confidence of God, and this character is here stamped on him by the Lord himself. “Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men.”, He knew what was in man. What a sentence! Nay, more than this. Man, as he is, can never be so improved as to be trusted again by God; man’s affections may be stirred, man’s intelligence informed, man’s conscience convicted; but still God cannot trust him. Thus we read, that “many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles that he did, but Jesus did not commit himself unto them.” Man in this was putting forth his best; he was moved by the things which Jesus did; but still the Lord could not trust him. Hence, “ye must be born again.”

The necessity of being born again or from above, or, as it is commonly expressed, of regeneration, is well understood and most surely allowed among the—saints. But is there not a more simple and distinct character in the new birth than is generally apprehended? I judge there is, for the doctrine commonly raises in the mind a sense of something strange and indefinite. But this need not be.

Nicodemus had come as a pupil to Jesus. “We know that thou art a teacher come from God,” he says; upon which the Lord tells him at once, that he must be born again. But he does not end his words with him till he directs him to the brazen serpent, teaching him that it is there he must go in order, as it were, to gather up the seeds of this needed new life.

In what character, then, must he take his place there, and look at the Son of Man lifted up on the cross? Simply as a sinner, a conscious sinner, carrying, like the bitten Israelite, the sentence of death in himself. Such a one Nicodemus had still to know himself to be, for as such a one he had

not now come to Jesus, and therefore he must, begin his journey afresh, he “must be born again,” he must reach Jesus by a new path and in a new character. He judged himself to be a pupil, and Jews a teacher come from God, but himself as a dead sinner, or a man bitten by the old serpent, and the Son of God as a quickening Spirit, a justifying Redeemer, he did not yet understand; and so the ground of his heart had never yet received the seed of life.

The character of this life, this eternal life, this divine nature in us, is thus as simply defined as its necessity. The secret of it lies in learning Jesus, the Son of God, as a Savior, in coming to him as a poor convicted sinner, looking at him in that virtue which the brazen serpent carried for the bitten Israelite. And as suggested by other parts of this Gospel, it is very sweet to trace the onward path of Nicodemus from this stage of it. He had, as we have seen, hitherto mistaken his road; but though that may give him a longer journey, it proves, from the direction which Jesus here gives him, in the end a right and a safe one; for in the next stage of it we see him standing for Jesus in the presence of the council, and meeting there something of the reproach of the rejected Galilean. (ch. 7) And at the close he stands where the Lord at this outset directed him, at the place of the brazen serpent. He looks at the Son of Man lifted up on the cross. He goes to Jesus, not as a pupil to a teacher, but he goes to him, and owns him, and honors him, no longer by night, nor in the presence of the council merely, but in the broad daylight, and in the presence of the world, as the wounded, Smitten, and bruised Lamb of God. (ch. 19.)

Thus, we discern the character as simply as we learn the need of this new life. We find out the seed that produces it. The Divine power, the Holy Ghost, who presides over all this in his own energy, works after a manner beyond our thoughts. Whether the wind or the Spirit, we know not the path thereof; but the nature of the seed he uses, and of the soil in which he casts it, are thus made known to us. The one is the word of salvation, the other the soul of a poor convicted sinner.

And this life which flows through the family of God is spirit, because Jesus, the second man, the head of it, is “a quickening Spirit,” and “that which is born. of the Spirit is spirit,” as our Lord here teaches. This is our new and glorious life; it is eternal, infallible life, standing, whether in the head or members of the body where it moves, in victory over all the power of death. And our divine Teacher further says, “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” There is no entrance there for any but new-born ones, and such new-born ones, as we have seen, sinners justified or quickened by the word of salvation. There are no righteous ones, no wise or rich ones, in that kingdom, none who stand in such confidence in the flesh. This truth is thus established. Blessedly, for our joy and stability of heart. For while this is very decisive, it is very comforting. It is very comforting to see that the word which says, “Except ye be born again, ye cannot see the kingdom,” thereby clearly lets us know that if be born again, we shall see it—no fraud or force of men or devils shall prevail to keep it outside of it. If we will take (drawn doubtless by the drawing of the Father, in the secret power of the Holy Ghost) the place of poor convicted sinners, and receive the word of salvation from the Son of God—if we but look as bitten Israelites to the uplifted serpent, then the kingdom is already entered, life is now enjoyed, and glory shall be. The song that we then sing is but echoed through the eternity of heaven. The sight that we then get of Jesus and his salvation is but enlarged in the sphere of coming glory. We have eternal life, and the principles of heaven in us.

But to return for another moment to Nicodemus, I may say that when the Lord had thus disclosed the seed of this new life to him, he seeks to sow it in him,—to sow it (where it ever must be sowed, if unto fruit) in his conscience: for Nicodemus had come to the Lord by night, as though his deeds could not bear the light; and the Lord aiming, as it would seem, to reach his conscience, just on their parting, says, “Every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.”

Thus, our Lord teaches the need of the new birth through the word of salvation. Without it man cannot be trusted of God; and without it the kingdom of God could not, as our Lord here further teaches us, be either seen or entered. What association, for instance, had the elder brother with that which was the characteristic joy of the Father’s house? None! He never had so much as a kid to make merry with his friends: none but a returned prodigal could draw forth the ring, the best robe, and the fatted calf. And so the kingdom is such a kingdom, as none but redeemed sinners can apprehend its joys, or have any place in it. All there are “new creatures,” persons of an order not found in the first creation. Adam was made upright; but all in the kingdom are blood-bought sinners. Everything in it is reconciled by blood; as it is written, “And having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say; whether things in earth, or things in heaven.”

22-36. After the Lord had thus discussed with Nicodemus the question of man’s entrance into the kingdom; he is seen for a little moment pursuing his ministry as minister of the circumcision in Judea (ver. 22). But we see this only for a moment; for to detain such things before us would not have been within the general scope of this Gospel, which takes the Lord, as we have seen, out of Jewish connection.

And in the next passage we may notice the same (vers. 23, 24); for the Baptist is seen in connection with Israel; but it is, in like manner, only for a passing moment; and in order, too, as it would seem, to give him occasion, under the Holy Ghost, to bear a testimony, to Jesus, not at all in his Jewish glory, but in higher honors and sweeter joys than Jesus could have ever known as Son of David. (See verses 27-36.)

I would, however; linger here a little, for this appears to me to be an occasion of great moral value. John is called into the same trial as Moses in Numbers 11, and as Paul in 1 Corinthians 3.

Joshua, who was Moses’s minister, envied for his master’s sake, when Eldad and Medad prophesied in the camp. But Moses rebuked him, and that too, not with a word only, but also by an act; for he goes at once into the camp, evidently (as a brother once suggested to me) for the purpose of enjoying and profiting by the gift and ministrations of those two on whom the Spirit had just fallen.

This was a noble way in this dear man of God. No grudging or jealousy soiled the fair form of his heart, or disturbed the even flow of his soul; but, endowed vessel as he was, rich and large in the gifts of the Spirit himself, he would still receive through any other vessel, though of smaller quantity, and receive with thankfulness and readiness of heart.

Paul, in his day, was summoned to the like trial. In the midst of the saints at Corinth rivalries had risen. Some were saying, “I am of Paul, and I of Apollos.” Arid how does Paul meet this? Does he triumph in this day of the tempter, as Moses had triumphed? Yes, only with a different weapon.

'With strong hand and fervent heart he breaks every vessel to pieces, that he who fills all vessels, and he only, might have all the praise. "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos?" says he— "neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase." This was victory in a like evil hour, but only in a different form, or with another weapon. But how are we to contemplate John? On this occasion he meets the same way of the tempter. His disciples are envious of Jesus for his sake. But, like Moses and Paul, he stands in the evil day, though somewhat in a different attitude. He cannot, with Paul, break to pieces his companion-vessel. He cannot say, "Who then is John, and who is Jesus?"—as Paul says, "Who then is Paul, or who is Apollos?" He could not deal with the name of Jesus as Paul deals with the name of Apollos. But he breaks one of these rival vessels, that is, himself, in pieces, under the eyes of his fond disciples, and glorifies Jesus whom they were envying for his sake, with glories beyond all their thought, and such as no other vessel could hold.

How perfect was all this! How beautiful a witness is all this method of John in handling such an occasion to the guiding and keeping of the Spirit of wisdom! Jesus, it is true, was, in one sense, a vessel of God's house, like prophets and apostles. He was a minister of the Circumcision. Like John, he preached the coming of the kingdom. He piped; and John lamented. God spake by him, as by any prophet. And thus he was, most surely, a vessel in God's house, as others. But he was of a peculiar order. The material and the molding of that vessel were peculiar. And if occasion bring him into question with any other Vessel, as in this place of our Gospel, the peculiar honor which attaches to him must be made known. John delights to be the instrument for this. He delights, as under the Holy Ghost, and as in full concord with the mind of God, to bring out the budding rod of the true Aaron, blooming with its fruit and flowers, and to expose every rival rod in its native dead and withered state, that the murmurings of Israel, the fond and partial thoughts of even his own disciples, may be silenced forever. (Numbers 17) He acknowledges that all his joy was fulfilled in that which was thus provoking the displeasure of his disciples. He was but the bridegroom's friend. He had waited for such a day as this. His course was now therefore run, and he was willing to retire and be forgotten. Like his fellow-servants, the prophets, he had held up a light to guide his generation to Christ, to lead the bride to the bridegroom, and now he had only to retire. He stands here, as at the end of the line of prophets, and, in his own name and theirs, leaves all in the hand of the Son of God. And when he gets on this theme (the glories of him who was greater than he), how gladly does he go on with it, The Spirit leads him from one ray of this glory to another; and blessed is it when Jesus is the theme that thus awakens all our intelligence and desire. Blessed, when we can, each of us, be thus willingly nothing, that he alone may fill all things. Be it so with thy saints, Lord, through thy heavenly grace, more and more!

4. Thus John is gone, and with him everything but the ministry of the Son of God. All now lies in his hand alone, and accordingly he here goes forth simply as the Son of God—the Savior of the world. He appears before us in love (4:1) as one that was rejected of Israel, and is now leaving Judea, the place of righteousness, simply as the Savior of sinners. And going forth in this character, he must needs go through an unclean place, and find his journeying among us to cost him bitter pain and weariness; the sample of which we get here.

It was quite in consistent righteousness, that the Jews refused all commerce with the Samaritans. It was according to their calling to say, "It is an unlawful thing, for a man that is a Jew, to keep company, or come unto one of another nation;" for this was a testimony against evil; and such

testimony was the very trust which Jehovah had committed to Israel. They were to be God's witnesses against the world; they were the clean separated from, the unclean, for a testimony to the righteousness of God against a corrupted earth. But Jesus was now standing aloof from Israel. He had left Judea, the place of righteousness, and was standing in defiled Samaria as Son of God, the Savior of sinners. He had already gone to Judea, looking for righteousness, the proper fruit of that country, but had not found it; he is not now to look for it in Samaria. Here he must be in another way altogether—in the way of grace only; and in the consciousness that he was so, that he was here only in grace, as the Savior of sinners, he addresses himself to a woman who had come to draw water at the well at Sychar.

(To be continued.)

Luke 12:35-36

Is the thought of the Lord's nearness welcome, or ungrateful to the soul? Is the expectation of being with Him, without notice, or delay, pleasant to the heart?

The true practical walk of a believer gives a right answer to these inquiries. "Let your moderation be known unto all men, —the Lord is at hand." "Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned; behold, the Judge standeth before the door." Moderation, or holy restraint in the use of present things, and gracious, liberal consideration of others, here approved as among the right ways of a saint, are such as would stand the light of the Lord, if he were at the moment to appear. Are our ways, then, such as suit the thought of his nearness, and would abide the light of his presence? Have they, or have they not this voice in them, "Come, Lord Jesus?" Could vanity, could uncleanness, could the desire of gain, could the lust of distinction? Has the haughty look that voice in it? Has carnal levity, or spiritual sloth? We know that these cannot desire the day of the Lord, for it is to them "a day of darkness, and not of light." Our behavior should be such as would introduce us to His presence without disturbance; for he comes, not to regulate, but to gladden us, —not to put us in a right path, but to close a right path in glory.,

J. G. B.

A Short Meditation on the Moral Glory of Our Lord Jesus Christ

The life of Jesus was the bright shining of a candle. It was such a lamp in the house of God as needed no golden tongs or snuff-dishes. It was ordered before the Lord continually, burning as from pure beaten oil. It was making manifest all that was around, exposing and reproofing; but it ever held its own place unconcerned.

Whether challenged by disciples or by adversaries, as the Lord was again arid again, there is never an excusing of himself. On one occasion disciples complain, "Master, carest thou not that we perish?" But he does not think of vindicating the sleep out of which this challenge awakes him. On another occasion they object to him, "The multitude throne, thee, and press thee, and sayest thou, who touched but he does not recall this inquiry, but acts upon the satisfaction of it. At another time Martha says to him, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." But he does not excuse his not having been there, nor his delaying for two days in the place where lie was; but instructs Martha in the wondrous character which his delay had given, to that hour.

What a glorious vindication of his delay that was! And thus it was on every like occasion; whether challenged or rebuked, there is never the recalling of a word, nor the retracing of a step. Every tongue that rises in judgment against him, he condemns. The mother rebukes him in Luke 2; but instead of making good her charge, she has to listen to him convicting the darkness and error of her thoughts. Peter takes upon him to admonish him: "This be far from thee, Lord; this shall not be unto thee." But Peter has to learn, that it was Satan himself that in Peter prompted the admonition. The officer in the palace of the High Priest goes still further, correcting him, and smiting him on the cheek. But he is convicted of breaking the rules of judgment in the very face and place of

judgment.

All this tells us of the way of the perfect Master. Appearances might have been against him at times. Why did he sleep in the boat when winds and waves were raging? Why did he loiter on the road when Jairus' daughter was dying? or why did he tarry where he was when his friend Lazarus was sick in the distant village of Bethany? But all this is but appearance, and that for a moment. We have heard of these ways of Jesus, this sleep, this loitering, and this tarrying, but we also see the end of Jesus, that all is perfect. Appearances were against the God of Job in patriarchal days. Messenger after messenger seemed too much, unrelenting, and inexorable; but the God of Job had not to excuse himself, nor has the Jesus of the evangelists.

Therefore, when we look at the Lord Jesus as the lamp of the sanctuary, the light in the house of God, we find at once that the tongs and snuff-dishes cannot be used. They are discovered to have no counterpart in him. Consequently, they who undertook to challenge or rebuke him when he was here, had to go back rebuked and put to shame themselves. They were using the tongs or snuffers with a lamp which did not need them, and they only betrayed their folly; and the light of this lamp shone the brighter, not because the tongs had been used, but because it was able to give forth some fresh witness (which it did on every occasion) that it did not need them.

And from all these instances we have the happy lesson, that we had better stand by, and let Jesus go on with his business. We may look and worship, but not meddle or interrupt, as all these were doing in their day, enemies, kinsfolk, and even disciples. They could not improve this light that was shining; they had only to be gladdened by it, and walk in it, and not attempt to trim or order it. Let our eye be single, and we may be sure the candle of the Lord, set on the candlestick, will make the whole body full of light.

But I pass on and I may further observe, that as he did not excuse himself to the judgment of man in the course of his ministry, as we have now seen, so in the hour of his weakness, when the powers of darkness were all against him, he did not cast himself on the pity of man. When he became the prisoner of the Jews and of the Gentiles, he did not entreat them or sue to them. No appeal to compassion, no pleading for life is heard. He had prayed to the Father in Gethsemane, but there is no seeking to move the Jewish high priest or the Roman governor. All that he says to man in that hour, is to expose the sin with which man, whether Jew or Gentile, was going through that hour.

What a picture! Who could have conceived such an object! It must have been exhibited ere it was described, as has been long since observed by others. It was the perfect man, who once walked here in the fullness of moral glory, and whose reflections have been left by the Holy Ghost on the pages of the evangelists. And next to the simple, happy, earnest assurance of his personal love to ourselves, (the Lord increase it in our hearts!) nothing more helps us to desire to be with him than this discovery of himself. I have heard of one who, observing his bright and blessed ways in the four gospels, was filled with tears and affections, and was heard to cry out, "O that I were with him!"

If one may speak for others, beloved, it is this we want, and it is this we covet. We know our need, but we can say, the Lord knows our desire.

The same preacher whom we quoted before, says, "There is a time to keep, and a time, to cast away." (Ecclesiastes 3: 6.) The Lord Jesus both kept and cast away, in the due season.

There is no waste in the services of the heart or the hand that worships God, be they as prodigal as they may. "All things come of thee," says David to the Lord, "and of thine own have we given thee."

The cattle on a thousand hills are his, and the fullness of the earth. But Pharaoh treated Israel's proposal to worship God as idleness, and the disciples challenge the spending of 300 pence on the body of Jesus as waste. But to give the Lord his own, the honor or the sacrifice, the love of the heart, the labor of the hands, —or the substance of the house, is neither idleness nor waste. It is chief work to render to God.

But here I would linger for a moment or two.

Renouncing Egypt is not idleness, nor is the breaking of a box of Ointment on the head of Christ waste; though we thus see, that a certain kind of reckoning among the children of men, and even at times (and that too frequent) among the saints of God, would charge these things as such. Advantages in life are surrendered, opportunities of worldly promise are not used, because the heart has understood the path of companionship with a rejected Lord.

But this is "idleness" and "waste," many will say; the advantages might have been retained by the possessor, or the opportunities might have been sought and reached, and then used for the Lord. But such persons know not. Station, and the human, earthly influence that attaches to it, is commended by them, and treated almost as "a gift to be used for profit, and edification, and blessing." But a rejected Christ, a Christ cast out by men, if known spiritually. by the soul; would teach another lesson.

This station in life, these worldly advantages, these opportunities so commended, are the very Egypt which Moses renounced. He refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter.

The treasures of Egypt were not riches in his esteem, because he could not use them for the Lord. And he went outside of them, and the Lord met him there, and used him afterward, not to accredit Egypt and its treasures, but to deliver his people out of it.

I follow this a little here, for it is, I feel, important to us.

All this renunciation, however, must be made in the understanding and faith of a rejected Lord; it will otherwise want all its fine, and genuine, and proper character. If it be made on a mere religious principle, as that of working out a righteousness or a title for ourselves, it may well be said to be something worse than idleness or waste. It then betrays an advantage which Satan has got over us, rather than any advantage we have got over the world. But if it be indeed made in the faith and love of a rejected Master, and in the sense and intelligence of his relation to this present evil world, it is worship.

To serve man at the expense of God's truth and principles is not Christianity, though persons who do so will be called "benefactors." Christianity considers the glory of God, as well as the blessing of man; but as far as we lose sight of this, we shall be so far tempted to call many things waste and idleness which are really holy, intelligent, consistent, and devoted service to Jesus. Indeed, it

is so. The Lord's vindication of the woman who poured her treasure on the head of Jesus tells me so. (Matthew 26) We are to own God's glory in what we do, though man may refuse to sanction what does not advance the good order of the world, or provide for the good of our neighbor. But Jesus would know God's claims in this self-seeking world, while he recognized (very surely, as we may know) his neighbor's claim upon himself.

He knew when to cast away, and when to keep.

"Let her alone," he said of the woman who had been upbraided for breaking the box of spikenard on him; "she hath wrought a good work on me." But after feeding the multitudes he would say, "Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost."

This was observing the Divine rule, "There is a time to keep, and a time to cast away." If the prodigal service of the heart or hand in worship be no waste, the very crumbs of human food are sacred, and must not be cast away. He who vindicated the spending of 300 pence on one of these occasions, on the other would not let the fragments of three loaves be left on the ground. In his eyes such fragments were sacred. They were the food of life, the herb of the field, which God had given to man for his life. And life is a sacred thing. God is the God of the living. "To you it shall be for meat," God had said of it, and therefore Jesus would hallow it. "The tree of the field is man's life," the law had said, and accordingly had thus prescribed to them that were under the law—"When thou shalt besiege a city a long time, in making war against it to take it, thou shalt not destroy the trees thereof by forcing an ax against them: for thou mayest eat of them, and thou shalt not cut them down to employ them in the siege: only the trees that thou knowest are riot trees for meat, thou shalt destroy and cut them down." (Deuteronomy 20) It would have been waste, it would have been profaneness, to have thug abused the food of life, which was God's gift; and Jesus in like purity, in the perfectness of God's living ordinance, would not let the fragments lie on the ground. "Gather up the fragments that remain," he said, "that nothing be lost."

These are but small incidents; but all the circumstances of human life, as he passes through them, change as they may, or be they as minute as they may, are thus adorned by something of the moral glory that was ever brightening the path of his sacred, wearied feet. The eye of man was incapable of tracking it; but to God it was all incense, a sacrifice of sweet savor, a sacrifice of rest, the meat offering of the sanctuary.

But again. The Lord did not judge of persons in 1 relation to himself, —a common fault with us all. We naturally judge of others according as they treat ourselves, and we make our interest in them the measure of their character and worth. But this was not the Lord. God is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed. He understands every action fully. In all its moral meaning he understands it, and according to that he weighs it. And, as the image of the God of knowledge, we see our Lord Jesus Christ, in the days of his ministry here, again and again. I may refer to Luke 11. There was the air of courtesy and good feeling towards him in the Pharisee that invited him to dine. But the Lord was "the God of knowledge," and, as such, weighed this action in its full moral character.

The honey of courtesy, which is the best ingredient in social life in this world, should not pervert his taste or judgment. He approved things that are excellent. The civility which invited him to dinner was not to determine the judgment of him who carried the weights and measures of the sanctuary

of God. It is the God of knowledge this civility on this occasion has to confront, and it does not stand, it will not do. O how the tracing of this may rebuke us: The invitation covered a purpose. As soon as the Lord entered the house, the host acts the Pharisee, and not the host. He marvels that his guest had not washed before dinner. And the character he thus assumes at the beginning shows itself in full force at the end. And the Lord deals with the whole scene accordingly; for he weighed it as the God of knowledge. Some may say, that the courtesy he had received might have kept him silent. But he could not look on this man simply as in relation to himself. He was not to be flattered out of a just judgment. He exposes and rebukes, and the end of the scene justifies him. "And as he said these things unto them, the scribes and Pharisees began to urge him vehemently, and to provoke him to speak of many things, laying wait for him, and seeking to catch something out of his mouth, that they might accuse him."

Very different, however, was his way in the house of another Pharisee, who, in like manner, had asked him to dine. (See Luke 7) For Simon had no covered purpose in the invitation. Quite otherwise He seemed to act the Pharisee too, silently accusing the poor sinner of the city, and his guest for admitting her approach. But appearances are not the ground of righteous judgments. Often the very same words, on different lips, have a very different mind in them. And therefore, the Lord, the perfect weigh master, according to God, though he may rebuke Simon, and expose him to himself, knows him by name, and leaves his house as a guest should leave it. He distinguishes the Pharisee of Luke 7 from the Pharisee of Luke 11, though he dined with both of them. So, we may look at the Lord with Peter in Matthew 16. Peter expresses fond and considerate attachment to his master: "This be far from thee, Lord; this shall not be unto thee." But Jesus judged Peter's words only in their moral place. Hard "indeed we find it to do this when we are personally gratified. "Get thee behind me, Satan," was not the answer which a merely amiable nature would have suggested to such words. But again, I say, our Lord did not listen to Peter's words simply as they expressed personal kindness and goodwill to himself. He judged them, he weighed them as in the presence of God, and at once found that the enemy had moved them; for he that can transform himself into an angel of light, is very often lurking in words of courtesy and kindness. And in the same way the Lord dealt with Thomas in John 20 Thomas had just worshipped him. "My Lord and my God," he had said. But Jesus has not to be drawn from the high moral elevation that he filled, and from whence he heard and saw everything, even by words like these. They were genuine words, words of a mind which, enlightened of God, had repented towards the risen Savior, and, instead of doubting any longer, worshipped. But Thomas had stood out as long as he could. He had exceeded. They had all been unbelieving as to the resurrection, but he had insisted that he would be still in unbelief till sense and sight came to deliver him. All this had been his moral condition; and Jesus has this before him, and puts Thomas in his right moral place, as he had put Peter. "Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed." "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." Our hearts, in such cases as these, would have been taken by surprise. They could not have kept their ground in the face of these assaults, which the goodwill of Peter, and the worship of Thomas, would have made upon them. But our perfect Master stood for God and his truth, and not for himself. The Ark of old was not to be flattered. Israel may honor it, and bring it down to the battle, telling it, as it were, that now in its presence all must be well with them. But this will not do for the God of Israel. Israel falls before the Philistines, though the Ark be thus in the battle; and Peter and Thomas shall be rebuked, though Jesus, still the God of Israel, be honored by them.

Angels have their joy over the repentance of sinners. "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." It is happy to have this secret of heaven disclosed to us, and to read one illustration of it after another, as we do in Luke 15.

But there is something beyond this. The joy there, though in heaven, is public. It utters itself, and has companionship. Very proper that it should be so; very proper that the whole house should share it, and find it a common joy. But there is something beyond this. There is the joy of the Divine bosom, as well as this joy of heaven. John 4:27-32 gives it to us, as Luke 15 gives us the public joy in heaven. And this joy of the Divine bosom, I need not say, is the deeper thing. It is full, silent, and personal. It asks not to be raised or sustained by others. "I have meat to eat that ye know not of," is the language of the heart of Christ, as he tasted this joy. The glory was, filling the house, so that the ministers of the house must stand by for a time. The Shepherd had but just brought home the stray one of the flock, having laid it on his shoulders rejoicing, and as yet the joy was all his own. The household had not been called to rejoice with him, when the woman left him a saved and happy sinner. Disciples felt the character of the moment. They would not trespass. The fat reserved for the altar, the richest portion of the feast, "the food of God," was spread, and the disciples were silent, and stood apart. This was a wondrous moment—not many like it. The deep, unuttered joy of the Divine bosom is known here, as the public ecstatic joy of heaven is known in Luke 15.

But he that could be thus feasted was weary betimes, and hungry, and thirsting. This is seen in the same Chapter, John 4 as again in Mark 4. But there is this difference in the two cases: he finds sleep for his relief and restoration, in Mark 4. He is independent of it, in John 4. And why was this? In Mark 4, he had gone through a day of toil, and in the evening, he was weary, as nature will be after labor. "Man, goeth forth to his work and to his labor until the evening." (Psalms 104) Sleep is then provided for him, to restore him to his service when the morning returns. Jesus proved all this. He was asleep on the pillow in the boat. In John 4, he is weary again, hungry and thirsty too. He sits at the well, like a tired traveler, waiting till the disciples came from the neighboring village with food. But when they come, they find him feasted and rested, and that, too, without food, or drink, or sleep. His weariness had had another refreshment than what sleep would have brought him. He had been made happy by fruit to his labor in the soul of a poor sinner. The woman had been sent away in the liberty of the salvation of God. But there had been no woman of Samaria. in Mark 4, and he had therefore to use the pillow in his weariness.

But how true all this is to the sensibilities of our common humanity! We all understand it. The Lord's heart was merry, as I may say, in John 4; but there was nothing to make it merry in Mark 4. And we are taught to know, (and our experience sets to its seal that the word is true,) "that a merry heart/ doeth good like a medicine, but a broken spirit, drieth the bones." (Proverbs 17:22.) So that the Master can say, in the one case, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of," while in the other, he will use the pillow which care for his weariness had provided.

How perfect in all its sympathies was the humanity the Son had assumed surely, indeed, it was the common humanity, apart from sin.

"Touched with a sympathy within, I He knows our feeble frame."

But again. There is a temptation in a time of confusion, to cast up all as hopeless and gone; —and to say, it is endless and needless to be still distinguishing—all is in disorder and apostacy; why then attempt to distinguish?

But this was not the Lord. He was in the confusion, but not of it, as he was in the world, but not of it, as we said before of him. He met all sorts of people, in all sorts of conditions, heaps upon heaps, where all should have been compact together; but he held his even, narrow, unsoiled, and undistracted way through it all. The pretension of the Pharisee, the worldliness of the Herodian, the philosophy of the Sadducee, the fickleness of the multitude, the attempts of adversaries, and the ignorance and infirmities of disciples, were moral materials which he had to meet and answer everyday.

And then the condition of things, as well as the characters of persons, exercised him; the coin of Caesar circulating in Immanuel's land; partition-walls all but in ruins; Jew, Gentile, clean and unclean, confounded, save as religious arrogance might still retain them—after its own manner. But his one golden rule expressed the perfectness of his passage through all— “Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesars, and unto God the things that are God's.” The remnant in the day of captivity, a like day of confusion, carried themselves beautifully, distinguishing things that differed, and not hopelessly casting all up. Daniel would advise the king, but not eat his meat: Nehemiah would serve in the palace, but not suffer the Moabite or the Ammonite in the house of the Lord: Mordecai would guard the king's life, but would not bow to the Amalekite: Ezra and Zerubbabel would accept favors from the Persian, but not Samaritan help, nor Gentile marriages: and the captives would pray for the peace of Babylon, but would not sing Zion's songs there. All this was beautiful; and the Lord, in his day, was perfect in this remnant—character. And all this has a voice for us; for ours is a day, in its character of confusion, —not inferior to these days of the captives or of Jesus. And we, like them, are not to act on the hopelessness of the scene, but know still how to render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.

All his moral beauty becomes a pattern to us. But then we see him stand in God's relationship to evil also, and that is a place which, of course, we never could fill. He touched the leper, and he touched the bier, and yet he was undefiled. He had God's relationship to sin. He knew good and evil, but was in divine supremacy over it; knowing such things as God knows them. Had he been other than he was, these touches of the bier and of the leper would have defiled him. He must have been put outside the camp, and gone through the cleansing which the law prescribed. But nothing of this kind do we see in him. He was not an unclean Jew; he was not merely undefiled, he was undefilable; and yet, such was the mystery of his person, —such the perfection of the manhood in company with the Godhead in him, —that the temptation was as real in him as was the indefilableness.

But we pause our place towards much of this needed, though mysterious and deeply precious truth, is to receive it and worship, rather than to discuss and analyze it. It is happy, however, to one's own spirit, to mark the yearnings of sonic simple souls, who give you the impression that it is Himself that is before them. We oftentimes traffic with truths in such wise as, in the end, leaves with us a rebuking conviction that we did not reach himself, though so occupied. We find out that we had been loitering in the avenue.

The Lord was “poor, yet making rich,”— “having nothing, and yet possessing all things.” These high and wondrous conditions were exhibited in him, in ways that were and must have been peculiar altogether his own. He would receive ministry from some godly women out of their substance, and yet minister to the need of all around him out of the treasures of the fullness of the earth. He would feed thousands in desert places, and yet be himself a hungered, waiting for the return of his disciples with victuals from a neighboring village. This is “having nothing, and yet possessing all things.” But while thus poor, both needy and exposed, nothing that in the least savored of meanness is ever seen attaching to his condition. He never begs, though he have not a penny; for when he wanted to see one (not to use it for himself) he had to ask to be shown it. He never runs away, though exposed, and his life jeopardized, as we speak, in the place where he was. He withdraws himself, or passes by as hidden. And thus, again, I may say, nothing mean, nothing unbecomingly full, personal dignity attaches to him, though poverty and exposure were his lot every day.

Blessed and beautiful! Who could preserve under our eye such an object, so perfect, so unblemished, so exquisitely, delicately pure, in all the minute and most ordinary details of human life! Paul does not give us this. None could give it to us but Jesus, the God-man. The peculiarities of His virtues in the midst of the ordinariness of His circumstances tell us of his person. It must be a peculiar person, it must be the divine man, if I may so express him, that could give us such peculiarities in such commonplace conditions. Paul does not give us anything like it, again I say. There was great dignity and moral elevation about him, I know. If any one may be received as exhibiting that, let us agree that it was he. But his path is not that of Jesus; he is in danger of his life, and he uses his nephew to protect him. Again, his friends let him down the wall of the town in a basket. I do not say he begs or asks for it, but he acknowledges money sent to him. I say not how Paul avowed himself a Pharisee in the mixed assembly, in order to shelter himself; or how he spake evil of the High Priest that was judging him. Such conduct was morally wrong; and I am speaking here only of such cases as were, though not morally wrong, below the full personal and moral dignity that marks the way of Christ. Nor is the flight into Egypt, as it is called, an exception in this characteristic of the Lord; for that journey was taken to fulfill prophecy, and under the authority of a divine oracle.

But all this is really, not only moral glory, but it is a moral wonder—marvelous how the pen that was held by a human hand could ever have delineated such beauties. We are to account for it, as has been observed before; and by others, only by its being a truth, a living reality. We are shut up to that blessed necessity. Still further, as we go on with this blessed truth, it is written, “Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.” Our words should prove themselves as thus, always with grace, by ministering good to others, “grace to the hearers. This, however, will often be in the pungency of admonition or rebuke; and at times with decision or severity, even with indignation and zeal; and thus they will be “seasoned with salt,” as the scripture speaks. And having these fine qualities, being gracious and yet salted, they will bear witness that we know how to answer every man.

Among all other forms of it, the Lord Jesus illustrated this form of moral perfectness he knew how to answer every man, as with words which were always to the soul's profit, whether men would hear, or whether they would forbear; but at times seasoned, nay, at times seasoned highly with salt.

Thus, in answering inquiries, he did not so much purpose to satisfy them, as to reach the conscience or the condition of the inquirer.

In his silence, or refusal to answer at all, when he stood before the Jew or the Gentile at the end, before either the priests, or Pilate, or Herod, we can trace the same perfect fitness as we do in his words or answers; witnessing to God, that at least One among the sons of men knew “a time to keep silence, and at time to speak.”

Great variety in his very tone and manner also presents itself in all this; and all this variety, minute as it was, as well as great, was part of this fragrance before God. Sometimes his word was gentle, sometimes peremptory; sometimes he reasons; sometimes he rebukes at once; and sometimes conducts calm reasoning up to the heated point of solemn condemnation; for it is the moral of the occasion he always weighs.

Matthew 15 has struck me as a chapter in which this perfection, in much of its various beauty and excellency, may be seen. In the course of it the Lord is called to answer the Pharisee, the multitude, the poor afflicted stranger from the coasts of Tiro, and his own disciples, again and again, in their different exposure of either their stupidity or their selfishness; and we may notice his different style of rebuke and of reasoning, of calm, patient teaching, and of faithful, wise, and gracious training of the soul: and we cannot but feel how fitting all this variety was to the place or occasion that called it forth. And such was the beauty and the fitness of his neither teaching or learning, in Luke 2, but only hearing and asking questions. To have taught then would not have been in season, a child as he was in the midst of his elders. To have learned would not have been in full fidelity to the light, the eminent and bright light, which he knew he carried in himself; for we may surely say of him, “He was wiser than the ancients, and had more understanding than his teachers.” I do not mean as God, but as One “filled with wisdom,” as was then said of him. But he knew in the perfection of grace how to use this fullness of wisdom, and he is, therefore, not presented to us by the evangelist in the midst of the doctors in the temple, at the age of twelve, either teaching or learning; but it is simply said of him, that he was hearing and asking questions. Strong in spirit, filled with wisdom, and the grace of God upon him, is the description of him then, as he grew up in tender years; and when a man, conversing in the world, his speech was always with grace, seasoned with salt, as of one who knew how to answer every man. What perfection and beauty suited to the different seasons of childhood and manhood and further. We find him, besides this, also in various other conditions. At times he is slighted and scorned, watched and hated by adversaries, retiring, as it were, to save his life from their attempts and purposes. At times he is weak, followed only by the poorest of the people; wearied, too, and hungry and athirst, debtor to the services of some loving women, who felt as though they owed him everything. At times he is compassionating the multitude in all gentleness, or companying with his disciples in their repasts or in their journeying, conversing with them as a man would with his friends. At times he is in strength and honor before us, doing wonders, letting out some rays of glory; and though in his person and circumstances nothing and nobody in the world, a carpenter’s son as without learning or fortune, yet making a greater stir among men, and that, too, at times in the thoughts of the ruling ones on earth, than man ever made.

Childhood, and manhood, and human life in all its variousness, thus give him to us. Would that the heart could hold him! There is a perfection in some of the minute features that tell of the Divine

hand that was delineating them. Awkward work would any penman, unkept, unguided by the Spirit, have made of certain occasions where these strokes and touches are seen. As when the Lord wanted to comment on the current money of the land, he asks to be shown it, and does not find it about himself. Indeed, we may be sure he carried none of it. Thus, the moral beauties of the action flowed from the moral perfection of his condition within.

He asked his disciples in the hour of Gethsemane, to watch, with him; but he did not ask them to pray for him. He would claim sympathy. He prized it in the hour of weakness and pressure, and would have the hearts of his companions bound to him then. Such a desire was of the moral glory that formed the human perfection that was in him; but while he felt this and did this, he could not ask them to stand as in the Divine presence on his behalf. He would have them give themselves to him, but he could not seek them to give themselves to God for him. Thus, he asked them again, I say, to watch with him, but he did not ask them to pray for him. When shortly or immediately afterward he linked praying and watching together, it was of themselves and for themselves he spoke, saying, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." Paul could say to his fellow-saints, "Ye also helping together by prayer to God for us: pray for us, for we trust we have a good conscience." But such was not the language of Jesus. I need not say, it could not have been; but the pen that writes for us such a life, and delineates for us such a character, is held by the Spirit of God. None other than the Spirit could write thus.

He did good, and lent, hoping for nothing again. He gave, and his left hand did not know what his right hand was doing. Never, in one single instance, as I believe, did he claim either the person or the service of those whom he restored and delivered. He never made the deliverance he wrought a title to service. Jesus loved, and healed, and saved, looking for nothing again, He would not let Legion, the Gadarene, be with him. The child at the foot of the mount he delivered back to his father. The daughter of Jairus he left in the bosom of her family. The widow's son at Nain he restores to his mother. He claims none of them. Does Christ give, in order that he may receive again? Does he not (perfect Master!) illustrate his own principle— "Do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again." The nature of grace is to impart to others, not to enrich itself; and he came, that in him and his ways it might shine in all the exceeding riches and glory that belong to it. He found servants in this world; but he did not first heal them, and then claim them. He called them, and endowed them. They were the fruit of the energy of his Spirit, and of affections kindled in hearts constrained by his love. And sending them forth, he said to them, "Freely ye have received, freely give." Surely there is something beyond human conception in the delineation of such a character. One repeats that thought again and again. And very happy it is to add, that it is in the very simplest forms this moral glory of the Lord shines forth at times—such forms as are at once intelligible to all the perceptions and sympathies of the heart. Thus he never refused the feeblest faith, though he accepted and—answered, and that too with delight, the approaches and demands of the boldest.

The strong faith, which drew upon him without ceremony or apology, in full, immediate assurance, was ever welcome to him; while the timid soul, that approached him as one that was ashamed and would excuse itself, was encouraged and blest. His lips at once bore away from the heart of the poor leper the one only thing that hung over that heart as a cloud. "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean," said he. "I will; be thou clean," said Jesus. But immediately afterward the same lips uttered the fullness of the heart, when the clear, unquestioning faith of the Gentile centurion was witnessed, and when the bold, earnest faith of a family in Israel broke up the roof of the house

where he was, that they might let down their sick one before him.

When a weak faith appealed to the Lord, He granted the blessing it sought, but he rebuked the seeker. But even this rebuke is full of comfort to us; for it seems to say, “Why did you not make freer, fuller, happier use of me?” Did we value the giver as we do the gift, —the heart of Christ as well as his hand, this rebuke of weak faith would be just as welcome as the answer to it.

And if little faith be thus reproved, strong faith must be grateful. And therefore, we have reason to know what a fine sight was under the eye of the Lord, when, in that case already looked at, they broke up the roof of the house in order to reach him. It was, indeed, right sure I am, a grand spectacle for the eye of the divine and bounteous Jesus. His heart was entered by that action, as surely as the house in. Capernaum was entered by it.

We see glories and humilities in our Redeemer: we do indeed; for we need each.

The one who sat on the well in Sychar, is he who now sits on high’ in heaven. He that ascended is he that descended. Dignities and condescension’s are with him; —a seat at the right hand of God, and yet a stooping to wash the feet of his saints here. What a combination! No abatement of his honors, though suiting himself to our poverty: nothing wanting that can serve us, though glorious, and stainless; complete in himself.

Selfishness is wearied by trespass and importunity. “He will not rise because he is his friend, but because of his importunity he will rise and give him as much as he needeth.” Thus it is with man, or selfishness; it is otherwise with God, or love; for God, in Isaiah 7, is the contradiction of man in Luke 11.

It is the unbelief that would not draw on hire, that refused to ask a blessing, and get it with a seal and a witness, that wearied God—not importunity, but, as I may say, the absence of it. And all this divine blessedness and excellency, which is thus seen in the Jehovah of the house of David, in Isaiah 7, reappears in the Lord Jesus Christ of the evangelists, and in his different dealing with weak faith and full faith.

All these things that we are able to discover bespeak his perfections; but how small a part of them do we reach!

We are aware in how many different ways our fellow-disciples try and tempt us, as, no doubt, we do them. We see, or we fancy we see, some bad quality in them, and we find it hard to go on in further company with them. And yet in all this, or in much of it, the fault may be with ourselves, mistaking a want of conformity of taste or judgment with ourselves, for something to be condemned in them.

But the Lord could not be thus mistaken; and yet he was never “overcome of evil,” but was ever “overcoming evil with good,”—the evil that was in them with the good that was in himself. Vanity, ill-temper, indifference about others, and carefulness about themselves, ignorance after painstaking to instruct, were of the things in them which he had to suffer continually. His walk with them, in its way and measure, was a day of provocation, as the forty years in the wilderness had been. Israel again tempted the Lord, I may say, but again proved him. Blessed to tell it; they provoked him, but by this they proved hit. He suffered, but he took it patiently. He never gave them up. He warned and taught, rebuked and condemned them, but never gave them up. Nay; at the

end of their walk together, he is nearer to them than ever.

Perfect and excellent this is, and comforting to us. The Lord's dealing with the conscience never touches his heart. We lose nothing by his rebukes. And he who does not withdraw his heart from us when he is dealing with our conscience, is quick to restore our souls, that the conscience, so to express it, may be enabled soon to leave his school, and the heart find its happy freedom in his presence again. As sings that hymn, which sonic of us know—

“Still sweet 'tis to discover,

If clouds have dimm'd my sight;

When pass'd, Eternal Lover,

Towards me, as e'er, thou'rt bright.”

And I would further notice, that in the characters which, in the course of his ministry, he is called to take up (it may be for only an occasion, or a passing moment), we see the same perfection, the same moral glory, as in the path he treads daily. As, for instance, that of a Judge, as in Matthew 23, and that of an Advocate or Pleader in Matthew 22. But I only suggest this: the theme is too abundant. Every step, word, and action, carries with it a ray of this glory; and the eye of God had more to fill it in the life of Jesus, than it would have had in an eternity of Adam's innocency. It was in the midst of our moral ruins Jesus walked; and from such a region as that he has sent up to the throne on high a richer sacrifice of sweet-smelling savor than Eden, and the Adam of Eden, had it continued unsoiled forever, would, or could, have rendered. Time made no change in the Lord. Kindred instances of grace and character in him, before and after his resurrection, give us possession of this truth, which is of such importance to us. We know what he is this moment, and what he will be forever, from what he has already been—in character as in nature—in relationship to us, as well as in himself—“the same yesterday, today, and forever.” The very mention of this is blessed. Sometimes we may be grieved at changes, sometimes we may desire them. In different ways we all prove the fickle, uncertain nature of that which constitutes human life. Not only circumstances, which are changeful to a proverb, but associations, friendships, affections, characters, continually undergo variations which surprise and sadden us. We are hurried from stage to stage of life; but unchilled affections and unsullied principles are rarely borne along with us, either in ourselves or our companions. But Jesus was the same after his resurrection as he had been before, though late events had put him and his disciples at a greater distance than companions had ever known, or could ever know. They had betrayed their unfaithful hearts, forsaking him and fleeing in the hour of his weakness and need; while he, for their sakes, had gone through death—such a death as never could have been borne by another, as would have crushed the creature itself. They were still but poor feeble Galileans, —he was glorified with all power in heaven and on earth.

But these things worked no change; “nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature,” as the apostle speaks, could do that. Love defies them all, and he returns to them the Jesus whom they had known before. He is their companion in labor after his resurrection, nay, after his ascension, as he had been in the days of his ministry and sojourn with them. This we learn in the last verse of Mark. On the sea, in the day of Matthew 14, they thought that they saw a spirit, and cried out for fear; but the Lord gave them to know, that it was he himself that was there, near to them, and in grace,

though in Divine strength and sovereignty over nature. And so, in Luke 24, or after he was risen, he takes the honey comb and the fish, and eats before them, that with like certainty and ease of heart they might know that it was he himself. And he would have them handle him, and see; telling them, that a spirit had not flesh and bones, as they might then prove that he had.

In John 3, he led a slow-hearted Rabbi into the light and way of truth, bearing with him in all patient grace. And thus did he again in Luke 24, after that he was risen, with the two slow-hearted ones who were finding their way home to Emmaus.

In Mark 4, he allayed the fears of his people ere he rebuked their unbelief. He said to the winds and the waves, "Peace, be still," before he said to the disciples, "How is it that ye have no faith?" And thus, did he as the risen One, in John 21, he sits and dines with Peter, in full and free fellowship, as without a breach in the spirit, ere he challenges him and awakens his conscience by the words, "Simon, son of Jonas, lowest thou me?"

The risen Jesus who appeared to Mary Magdalene, the evangelist takes care to tell us, was he who in other days had cast seven devils out of her—and she herself knew the voice that then called her by her name, as a voice that her ear had long been familiar with. What identity between the humbled and the glorified One, the healer of sinners and the Lord of the world to come! How all tells us, that in character as in divine personal glory, he that descended is the same also that ascended. John, too, in company with his risen Lord, is recognized as the one who had leaned on his bosom at the supper. "I am Jesus," was the answer from the ascended place, the very highest place in heaven, the right hand of the throne of the majesty there, when Saul of Tarsus demanded, "Who art thou, Lord?" (Acts 9.) And all this is so individual and personal in its application to us. It is our own very selves that are interested in this. Peter, for himself, knows his master, the same to him before and after the resurrection. In Matthew 16 the Lord rebukes him; but shortly after takes him up to the hill with him, with as full freedom of heart as if nothing had happened. And so with the same Peter, —in John 21 he is again rebuked. He had been busy, as was his way, meddling with what was beyond him. "Lord, what shall this man do?" says he, looking at John, —and his master has again to rebuke him— "What is that to thee?" But again, as in the face of this rebuke, sharp and peremptory as it was, the Lord immediately afterward has him, together with John, in his train, or in his company up to heaven. It was a rebuked Peter who had once gone with the Lord to the holy mount, and it is a rebuked Peter, the same rebuked Peter, who now goes with the Lord to heaven; or, if we please, to the hill of glory, the mount of transfiguration, a second time.

Full, indeed, of strong consolation all this is. This is Jesus our Lord, the same yesterday, today, and forever; the same in the day of his ministry, after his resurrection, now in the ascended heavens, and so forever; and as he sustains the same character, and approves himself by the same grace after, as before the resurrection, so does he redeem all his pledges left with his disciples.

Whether it be on his own lips, or on the lips of his angels, it is still now as then, since he rose, as before he suffered, "Fear not;" he had spoken to his disciples before of giving them his peace; and we find he does this afterward in the most emphatic manner. He pronounces peace upon them in the day of John 20; and having done so, shows them his hands and his side; where, as in symbolic language, they might read their title to a peace wrought out and purchased for them by himself, his peace, entirely his own, as procured only by himself, and now theirs by indefeasible

unchallengeable title.

In earlier days the Lord said to them, "Because I live, ye shall live also;" and now in risen days, in the days of the risen Man, in possession of victorious life, he imparts that life to them in the most full and perfect measure of it, breathing on them, and saying, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost."

The world was not to see him again, as he had also said to them; but they were to see him. And so, it comes to pass. He was seen of them for forty days, and he spake to them of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. But this was all in secret: the world has not seen him since the hour of Calvary, nor will they till they see him in judgment.

As a humbler, lowlier witness of his full fidelity to all his pledges, we may observe he meets his people in Galilee, as he had promised them. As a larger expression of the same, I may also observe, he takes them to the Father in heaven, as he had also promised them, sending a message to them, that he was ascending to his Father and to their Father, to his God and to their God. And thus, whether it was in our Galilee on earth, or in his own home in heaven, that his presence had been pledged to them, both are alike made good to them. And well may we meditate on the condescending, the faithfulness, the fullness, the simplicity, the greatness, the elevation, of all that forms and marks his path before us. The Lord had very much to do with Peter, beyond any of the disciples, while he was ministering in the midst of them, and we find it the same after he rose from the dead. Peter is the one to occupy, as I may say, the whole of the last chapter in John. There the Lord carries on with him the gracious work he had begun ere he left him, and carries it on exactly from the point where he had left it. Peter had betrayed special self-confidence. Though all should be offended, yet would not he, he said; and though he should die with his Master, he would not deny him. But his Master had told him of the vanity of such boasts; but had told him also of his prayer for him, so that his faith should not fail. And when the boast was found to have been indeed a vanity, and Peter denied his Lord, even with an oath, his Lord looked on him, and this look had its blessed operation. The prayer and the look had availed. The prayer had kept his faith from failing, but the look had broken his heart. Peter did not "go away," but Peter wept, and "wept bitterly." At the opening of this chapter, we find Peter in this condition—in the condition in which the prayer and the look had put him. That his faith had not failed, he is enabled to give very sweet proof; for as soon as he learns that it was his Lord who was on the shore, he threw himself into the water to reach him; not, however, as a penitent, as though he had not already wept, but as one that could trust himself to his presence in full assurance of heart; and in that character his most blessed and gracious Lord accepts him, and they dine together on the shore. The prayer and the look had thus already done their work with Peter, and they are not to be repeated. The Lord simply goes on with his work thus begun, to conduct it to its perfection.

Accordingly, the prayer and the look are now followed by the word. Restoration follows conviction and tears. Peter is put into the place of strengthening his brethren, as his Lord had once said to him; and also into the place of glorifying God by his death, a privilege he had forfeited by his unbelief and denial.

This was the word of restoration, following the prayer which had already sustained Peter's faith, and the look which had already broken his heart. He had in the day of John 13 taught this same loved Peter, that a washed man need not be washed again, but only his feet; and exactly in this way he now deals with him. He does not put him again through the process of Luke 5, when the

draft of fishes overwhelmed him, and he found out that he was a sinner; but he does wash his soiled feet. He restores him, and puts himself in his due place again. (See John 21:15-17.)

Perfect Master! the same to us yesterday, today, and forever; the same in gracious, perfect skill of love, going on with the work he had already begun, resuming, as the risen Lord, the service which he had left unfinished when he was taken from them, and resuming it at the very point, knitting the past to the present service in the fullest grace and skill!

And a little further still, as to his redeeming his pledges and promises. There was a very distinguished one which he gave them after he had risen. I mean, what he calls "the promise of the Father," and "power from on high." This promise was made to them in the day of Luke 24, after he had risen, and it was fulfilled to them in the day of Acts 2, after he had ascended, and was glorified.

Surely this only continues the story and the testimony of his faithfulness. All witness for him, —his life ere he suffered, his resurrection intercourse with his disciples, and now what he has done since he ascended, —that no variableness neither shadow of turning is found in him.

And I would not pass another instance of this, which we get again in Luke 24 The risen Lord there recognizes the very place in which he had left his disciples in his earlier instructions. "These are the words," says he, "which I spake unto you when I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me." He thus reminds them that he had already told them, that Scripture was the great witness of the Divine mind, that all found written there must surely be accomplished here. And now what does he do? That which is the simple, consistent following out of this his previous teaching. "Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures." His power now knits itself with his instructions before. He is making good in them what he had already communicated in them.

But even further, in some sense, the very style and spirit of this intercourse with his disciples during that interval of forty days is still the same. He knows them then by name, as he had before. He manifests himself to them by the same methods. He was the host at the table, though bidden there only as a guest, a second time, or after, as before, his resurrection (John; Luke 24); and in the deep sense and apprehension of —their souls they treat his presence as the same. On returning to him at the well of Sychar, in John 4, they would not intrude, but tread softly. And so on their reaching him after the draft of fishes, in John 21, they tread softly again, judging a second time, from the character of the moment, that their words must be few, though their hearts were filled with wonder and joy.

What links, tender and yet strong, are thus formed between him who has been already known to us in the daily walks of human life, and him who is to be known to us forever! He came down first into our circumstances, and then he takes us into his. But in ours we have learned him, and learned him forever. This is a very happy truth. Peter witnesses it to us I— have looked at this scene already with another intent. I must now give it a second look.

At the draft of fishes, in Luke 5, or before the resurrection, Peter was convicted. The fisherman Peter, in his own eyes, became the sinner Peter. "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." The draft of fishes (giving proof that the stranger who had asked for the loan of his boat was the

Lord of the fullness of the sea) had brought Peter, in spirit, into the presence of God, and there he learned himself. We never, indeed, learn that lesson anywhere else.

But the Lord at that moment, as from the glory, spoke comfortably to him. He had said, "Fear not," and Peter was at ease. The glory or the presence of God had now a home for him as well as conviction, and Peter is in full quietness of heart before the Lord. And accordingly, at the second draft of fishes, in John 21, after the resurrection, Peter was still at ease, and had only to practice the lesson which he had already learned. And he does so. He experiences the presence of the Lord of glory to be a home for him. He proves in himself, and witnesses to us, that what he had learned of Jesus he had learned forever. He did not know the Stranger on the shore to be Jesus; but when John revealed that fact to him, the Stranger was a stranger to him no more, but the sooner and the nearer he could get to him the better.

What further consolation is this! If it be joy to know that he is the same, whether here or there, —whether in our world or in his own world, —in our ruined circumstances, or in his own glorious circumstances, —what further joy is it to see one of ourselves, as Peter was, experiencing the blessedness of such a fact in his own spirit!

Jesus—the same, indeed—faithful and true! All the pledges he had given them ere he suffered, he makes good after he rose: all the character he had sustained in the midst of them then, he sustains now.

The Lord was continually giving, but he was rarely assenting. He made great communications where he found but little communion. This magnifies or illustrates his goodness. There was, as it were, nothing to draw, him forth, and yet he was ever imparting. He was as the Father in heaven, of whom he himself spoke, making his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sending his rain on the just and on the unjust. This tells us what he is, to his praise—what we are, to our shame.

But he was not only thus, as the Father in heaven, the reflection of such a one in his doings, but he was also in this world as "the unknown God," as Paul speaks. The darkness did not comprehend him; the world, neither by its religion nor its wisdom, knew him. The rich aboundings of his grace, the purity of his kingdom, the foundation and title upon which the glory he sought in such a world as this alone could rest, were all strangers to the thoughts of the children of men. All this is seen in the deep moral mistakes they were continually making. When, for instance, the multitude were exceedingly hailing the King and the kingdom in his person, in Luke 19, "Master, rebuke thy disciples;" the Pharisees say. They would not brook the thought of the throne belonging to such a one. It was presumption in him, Jesus of Nazareth as he was, to allow the royal joy to surround him. They knew not—they had not learned—the secret of true honor in this false, fallen world of ours. They had not learned the mystery of "a root out of a dry ground," nor had they in spirit perceived "the arm of the Lord." (Isaiah 53.)

It was where his own Spirit led, that discoveries were made of him, and such are very sweet, —various, too, in their measures.

In Mark 1 his ministry, in its grace and power, is used by many. People under all kinds of diseases come to him, congregations listen to him, and own the authority with which he spake. A leper brings his leprosy to him, thereby apprehending him as the God of Israel. In different measures, there was then some knowledge of him, either who he was, or what he had; but when we enter

chapter 2, we get knowledge of him expressing itself in a brighter, richer way: we get samples of the faith that understood him; and this is the deeper thing.

The company at Capernaum, who bring their palsied friend to him, understand him, as well as use, him; understand him, I mean, in himself, in his character, in the habits and tastes of his mind. The very style in which they reach him to get at him tells us this. It was not approaching as though they were reserved, and doubtful, and overawed. It was more: "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me"—a thing more welcome to him, more according to the way that love would have us take. They ask no leave, they use no ceremony, but they break up the roof of the house, that they may reach him; all this telling us that they knew him as well as used him; knew that he delighted in his grace trusted and his power used by our necessities without reserve. So Levi, shortly afterward, in the same chapter. He makes a feast, and seats publicans and others at it, in company with Jesus. And this, in like manner, tells us that Levi knew him. He knew whom he entertained, as Paul tells us he knew whom he believed.

This knowledge of the Lord is truly blessed! It is divine! Flesh and blood does not give it, his kinsfolk had it not. They said of him, when he was spending himself in service, "He is beside himself." But faith makes great discoveries of him, and acts upon such discoveries. It may seem to carry us beyond due bounds at times, beyond the things that are orderly and well measured; but in God's esteem it never does. The multitude tell Bartimeus to hold his peace, but he will not, for he knows Jesus as Levi knows him.

It is his full work that we are not prepared for, and yet therein is its glory. He meets us in all our need, but, at the same time, he brings God in. He healed the sick, but he preached the kingdom also. This, however, did not suit man. Strange this may appear, for man knows full well how to value his own advantages. He knows the joy of the restored nature. But such is the enmity of the carnal mind against God, that if blessing come in company with the presence of God, it will not receive a welcome. And, from Christ, it could not come in any other way. He will glorify God as well as relieve the sinner. God has been dishonored in this world, as man has been ruined in itself—ruined; and the Lord, the: repairer of. the breach, is doing a perfect work—vindicating the name and truth of God, declaring his kingdom and its rights, and manifesting his glory, just as much as he is redeeming and quickening the lost, dead sinner.

This will not do for man. He would be well taken care of himself, and let the glory of God fare as it may. Such is man. But when, through faith, any poor sinner is otherwise minded, and can indeed rejoice in the glory of God; very beautiful the sight is. And we see such a one in the Syro-Phoenician. The glory of the ministry of Christ addressed itself to her soul brightly and powerfully. Apparently, in spite of her grief, the Lord Jesus asserts God's principles, and, as a stranger, passes her by. "I am not sent," he says, "but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to the dogs." But she bows, she owns the Lord as the steward of the truth of God; and would not for a moment suppose that he would surrender that trust (the truth and principles of God) to her and her necessities. She would have God be glorified according to his own counsels, and Jesus continue the faithful witness of those counsels, and the servant of the divine good pleasure, be it to herself as it may. "Truth, Lord," she answers, vindicating all that he had said; but, in full consistency with it, she adds, "Yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs."

All this is lovely; the fruit of divine light in her soul. The mother in Luke 2 is quite below this Gentile woman in Mark 7. She did not know that Jesus was to be about his Father's business, but this stranger knew that that was the very business he was always to be about. She would let God's way, in the faithful hand of Christ, be exalted, though she herself were thereby set aside, even in her sorrows.

This was knowledge of him indeed; this was accepting him in his full work, as one who stood for God in a world that had rebelled against him, as well as for the poor worthless sinner that had destroyed himself.

It is not well to be always understood. Our ways and habits should be those of strangers, citizens of a foreign country, whose language, and laws, and customs are but poorly known here. Flesh and blood cannot appreciate them, and therefore it is not well with the saints of God when the world understands them.

His kinsfolk were ignorant of Jesus. Did the mother know him when she wanted him to display his power, and provide wine for the feast? Did his brethren know him when they said to him, "If thou do these things, show thyself to the world." What a thought! an endeavor to lead the Lord Jesus to make himself, as we say, "a man of the world!" Could there have been knowledge of him in hearts which indited such a thought as that? Most distant, indeed, from such knowledge they were, and therefore it is immediately added by the evangelist, "for neither did his brethren believe in him." (John 7.) They understood his power, but not his principles; for, after the manner of men, they connect the possession of power, or talents, with the serving of a man's interests in the world.

But Jesus was the contradiction of this, as I need not say; and the worldly-minded kindred in the flesh could not understand him. His principles were foreign to such a world. They were despised, as was David's dancing the ark in the thoughts of a daughter of king Saul.

But what attractiveness there would have been in him for any eye or heart that had been opened by the Spirit. This is witnessed to us by the apostles. They knew but little about him doctrinally, and they got nothing by remaining with him—I mean, nothing in this world. Their condition in the world was anything but improved by their walking with him; and it cannot be said that they availed themselves of his miraculous power. Indeed, they questioned it rather than used it and yet they clung to him. They did not company with him because they eyed him as the full and ready store-house of all provisions for them. On no one occasion, I believe we may say, did they use the power that was in him for themselves. And yet, there they were with him,—troubled when he talked of leaving, and found weeping when they thought they had indeed lost him.

Surely, we may again say, What attractiveness there must have been in him, for any eye or heart that had been opened by the Spirit, or drawn by the Father! And with what authority one look or one word from him would enter at times 1 We see this in Matthew. That one word on the Lord's lips, "Follow me!" was enough. And this authority and this attractiveness were felt by men of the most opposite temperaments. The slow-hearted, reasoning Thomas, and the ardent, uncalculating Peter, were alike kept near and around this wondrous center. Even Thomas would breathe, in that presence, the spirit of the earnest Peter, and say, under force of this attraction, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."

Shall we not say, what will it be to see and feel all this by-and-by in its perfection! when all, gathered from every clime, and color, and character, of the wide-spread human family—all nations, kindreds, people, and tongues, are with him and around him in a world worthy of him! We may dwell, in memory, on these samples of his preciousness to hearts like our own, and welcome them as pledges of that which, in hope, is ours as well as theirs.

The light of God shines at times before us, leaving us, as we may have power, to discern it, to enjoy it, to use it, to follow it. It does not so much challenge us, or exact of us; but, as I said, it shines before us, that we may reflect it, if we have grace. We see it doing its work “after this manner in the early church at Jerusalem. The light of God there exacted nothing. It shone brightly and powerfully; but that was all. Peter spoke the language of that light, when he said to Ananias, “While it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold; was it not in thy power?” It had made no demands upon Ananias, it simply shone in its beauty beside him, or before him, that he might walk in it according to his measure. And such, in a great sense, is the moral glory of the Lord Jesus. Our first duty to that light is to learn from it what he is. We are not to begin by anxiously and painfully measuring ourselves by it, but by calmly, and happily, and thankfully learning him in all his perfect moral humanity. And surely this glory is departed! There is no living image of it here. We have its record in the evangelists, but not its reflection, anywhere.

But having its record, we may say, as one of our own poets has said,

“There has one object been disclosed on earth,

That might commend the place; but now 'tis gone:

Jesus is with the Father.”

But though not here beloved, he is just what he was. We are to know him as it were by memory; and memory has no capacity to weave fictions; memory can only turn over living truthful pages. And thus we know him for his own eternity. In an eminent sense, the disciples knew him personally. It was his person, his presence, himself, that was their attraction. And if one may speak for others, it is more of this we need. We may be busy in acquainting ourselves with truths about him, and we may make proficiency that way; but with all our knowledge, and with all the disciples' ignorance, they may leave us far behind in the power of a commanding affection towards himself. And surely, beloved, we will not refuse to say, that it is well when the heart is drawn by him, beyond what the knowledge we have of him may account for. It tells us that he himself has been rightly apprehended. And there are simple souls still that exhibit this; but generally it is not so. Now-a-days, our light, our acquaintance with truth, is beyond the measure of the answer of our heart to himself. And it is painful to us, if we have any just sensibilities at all, to discover this.

“The prerogative of our Christian faith,” says one, “the secret of its strength is this, that all which it has, and all which it offers, is laid up in a person. This is what has made it strong, which so much else has proved weak; that it has a Christ as its middle point, that it has not a circumference without a center; that it has not merely deliverance, but a deliverer; not redemption only, but a redeemer as well. This is what makes it fit for wayfaring men. This is what makes it sunlight, and all else, when compared with it, but as moonlight, fair it may be, but cold and ineffectual, while here the light and the life are one.” And again he says, “And, oh, how great the difference between submitting ourselves to a complex of rules, and casting ourselves upon a beating heart, between

accepting a system, and cleaving to a person. Our blessedness—and let us not miss it—is, that our treasures are treasured in a person; who is not for one generation a present teacher and a living Lord, and then for all succeeding generations a past and a dead one, but who is present and living for all.” Good words, and seasonable words, I judge indeed, I may say these are.

(Continued from p. 10.)

(To be continued.)

On the Gospel by St. John

There had been, from the beginning, a secret with God beyond and behind all the revealed requisitions and order of righteousness which had been established in Judea. There was “grace, and the gift by grace.” The Jew might have had committed to him a testimony to righteousness against the world, but the Son of God was the gift of God to the world, entrusted with life for it. “The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ;” and in the blessed consciousness that he carried with him this secret of grace for sinners, he says to the woman, “Give me to drink.” She wonders, as well she might, that he did not keep his distance as a Jew. But she did not yet know that the secret of God was with him. This, however, was soon to be disclosed. The glory that excelleth was about to fill this unclean place. The Lord God is now taking his stand, not on the burning mount in righteousness, but at the head of the river of life, as its Lord, ready to dispense its waters.

What blessing is thus preparing for this poor outcast none other than an outcast could know it. But such must also know that the source of this blessing is not in themselves. And this the Samaritan learns. She is made to know herself, to look well around on all things that ever she did, and to see that it left her only a wilderness and land of darkness. Her conscience is dismayed. “He whom thou hast is not thy husband.” But wilderness and land of darkness as it was, the Son of God was there with her. This was blessing, such blessing as an outcast in a wilderness could know. It was to outcast Jacob, who had only the stones of the place for his pillow, that heaven was opened, and God in fullest grace and glory was revealed. So here with this daughter of Jacob. The Lord was again opening the rock in the desert. The ark of God was now again planted with the camp in the midst of the wilderness. The unclean Samaritan is spoken to by the Lord of the well of life; and this was joy and the power of love to her. It separates her from her pitcher, and fills her spirit and her lips with a testimony to his name. Beloved, this is Divine! A poor Samaritan, whom righteousness had bidden to stand by in an unclean place, is made the pattern of the workmanship of Jesus, and taken into the secrets and intimacies of the Son of God. It was her very place and character of sinner which throws her in his way. It is only the sinner that lies in the Savior’s path. And, brethren, whatever of sorrow or of trial the entrance of sin may have caused us, or may have still to cause us, yet without it we could not have had our God, as we now have him, opening his own bosom, the treasure—house of love, and from thence giving us forth the Son.

The disciples, on their return, wonder, like the woman, that Jesus had not kept his Jewish distance. But still they are conscious of the presence of a glory that was above them; for “no man said, What seekest thou? or, Why talkest thou with her?” They did not as yet know the secret which the Son of God carried; and he then shows them, as white already for harvest, fields which their faith had never surveyed. They knew of no fields, but such as of old had been parted among

the tribes. In their esteem, God's husbandry must be confined to that sacred enclosure; and Samaria, they judged, was now outside that, and but an unclean place. But there was, as we have already seen, a secret with God. It was the Son of God, the Savior of sinners, who had now gone forth with seed, and his toil had prepared a harvest for the reapers in the defiled plains of Samaria.

He shows his disciples a company just coming out from Sychar, who were soon to say, "This is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world." And thus were they ready for the sickle. The harvest in Judea was plenteous (Matthew 9:37); but in Samaria it was ripe for the reapers. The Lord had borne the toil of the sower; had talked, weary and faint, with the woman; but he would now share with his disciples the joy of the harvest; and in pledge of this, he abides for two days with this little gathering out of Sychar, believed on and owned as the Savior of the world.

The nearness to himself to which the Lord invites the soul, the intimacy with which he seeks to invest the heart of a believing sinner, it is most blessed to know. He does not deal with us in the style of patron or benefactor. The world is full of that principle. "They that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors." (Luke 22: 25.) Man will be ready enough to confer benefits in the character of a patron, occupying all the while the distant place of both conscious and confessed superiority. But this is not Jesus. He can say, "Not as the world giveth give I unto you." He brings his dependent one very near to him. He lets him know and feel that he is dealing with him as a kinsman rather than as a patron. But that makes all the difference. I am bold to say, that heaven depends on this difference. The expected heaven of the soul, and which in spirit it tastes now, depends on the Lord Jesus not acting with us on the principle of a patron. Heaven would then be only a well-ordered world of human principles and benevolences. And what a thing that would be! Is it the condescending of a great one that we see in Christ? "I am among you as one that serveth," says he. Every case, I may say, tells me so. His was never the style of a mere benefactor—the distance and elevation of a patron. "He bore our sicknesses, and carried our sorrows."

Just look at him at this well, with this Samaritan. She had, at that moment, the most exalted thoughts of him "I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things." This was her high and just sense of the Messiah, not knowing that he to whom she was then speaking face to face could say immediately in answer to her, "I that speak unto thee am he."

But where was he, the exalted Christ, all this time? Sitting on the well, talking with her, as they had—met together, by the side of a well, where (in order to give her ease in his presence) he had asked her for a drink of water was this patronage after the manner of men? Was this the distance and condescension of a superior? Was this heaven or the world, man or God? Condescension or the world will confer what favor you please, but will have the elevation of a superior and the reserve of a dependent kept and honored. But heaven or love acts not thus. Blessed, blessed be God! Jesus, "God manifest in the flesh," was kinsman, to them he befriended. And as a kinsman he acted, not as a patron. He seeks to bring us near, to invest our hearts with ease and confidence. He visits us nay, he comes to us upon our invitation—as he went and dwelt two days with the Samaritans who came out and sought his company on the report of the woman. He asks for a favor at our hand, that we may take a favor from his without reserve. He will drink out of our pitcher, to encourage us to drink of his fountains, and eat of our kid at the tent door, while

revealing eternal secrets to us. (Genesis 18; John 4.)

Surely our hearts may rejoice over this. The heart of the Lord rejoices in this his own way of love. For these two days at Sychar were to him a little of the joy of harvest. They were some of the most refreshing which the wearied Son of God ever tasted on this earth of ours. For he found here some of the brightest faith he ever met with; and it was only the faith of sinners that could ever have refreshed him here. Nothing in man could ever have done this—nothing but that faith which takes man out of himself.

But this joy was only for two days. He is quickly called down to a lower region; for after these two days he goes on to Galilee, thus getting into Jewish connection again: but he goes with this sad foreboding, “A prophet has no honor in his own country.” And with increased trial of heart must he feel this now, from the liberty which he had just been knowing among the poor sinners in Samaria. And his foreboding was found to be true. He finds faith in Galilee, it is true, but faith of an inferior order. The Galileans receive him, but it is “because they had seen all things that he did at Jerusalem.” The nobleman and his house believed, but not until they had carefully verified him by their own witnesses. The gathering at Sychar had believed himself, the Galileans now believe him for his works’ sake (see 14: 11); the Samaritans knew him as in himself, the Jews were now, as it were, asking a sign again. The one accordingly came into communion with the Son of God, the other receive health from the Physician of Israel. Defiled Samaria is, in blessing, before righteous Judah.

Here the first section of our Gospel closes. It has led us in the paths of the Son of God, the Son of the Father, along this evil world of ours. At the opening of it we saw his glory, and found that the moment it shone out upon the world, it proved the darkness of the world. It met no answer from man. The world that was made by him knew him not.

But he carried with him a secret, the secret of the grace of God to sinners, deeper than all the thoughts of men. A stranger he was on the earth; but the revealing of his secret to poor sinners had virtue to make them strangers with him.

(Continued from page 27.)

Part 2

CHAPTERS 5.-12.

Having followed our Lord through chapters 1-4 of this Gospel, I desire now, in God's grace, to track his further way; —and may he, through the Spirit, make this work the occasion of holy and thankful delight!

In chapters 5-10 we see our Lord in intercourse with the Jews. But to exhibit his public life and ministry is not the great purpose of the Spirit in this Gospel. He is not seen here, as in the other Gospels, going about the cities and villages of Israel preaching the kingdom, if haply they would repent; but the departure from God of that world through which he was passing seems to be ever on his mind, and he is seen coining forth only at times to act in power or in grace on all around him, as Son of God—the Stranger from heaven.

And so towards his disciples. They are not the companions of his ministry in this Gospel, as they are in the others. He does not appoint the twelve, and then the seventy; but ministry is left in his own hand the apostles are seen but little with, him till the 13th chapter, when his public ministry has closed. And when they are with him, it is with some reserve. (See 4: 32; 6: 5; 11: 9.)

But, on the other hand, in no Gospel is he seen so near the sinner. He is alone with the Samaritan, alone with the adulteress, alone with the outcast beggar. And this gives its highest interest to this precious portion of the word of God. The joy and security of being alone with the Son of God, as is here exhibited, is beyond everything to the soul. The sinner thus learns his title to the Savior, and ON THE discovers the blessed truth that they were made for one another. The moment we learn that we are sinners, we may look in the face of the Son of God, and claim him as our own. And what a moment in the very days of heaven that is! He came to seek and to save sinners: and he walked as a solitary man on the earth, save when he met a poor sinner. Such alone had title, or even power, to interrupt the solitudes of this heavenly Stranger. The world knew him not His paths were lonely among us, save when he and the sinner found their way to each other. The leper outside the camp met him, but none else.

And let me say, this being alone with Jesus is the sinner's first position. It is the beginning of his joy; and no one has a right to meddle with it. That which has called itself the Church, in every age of Christendom, has sought to break in upon the privacy of the Savior and the sinner, and to make itself a party in the settlement of the question that there is between them. But in this it has been an intruder. Sin casts us upon God alone.

And indeed, beloved, in the variety of judgment now a days, it is needful to our peace to know this. Others may require of us to join them in particular lines of service, or in particular forms and order of worship; and may count us disobedient if we do not. But however, we may listen to them in those things, we dare not give up, in fear of them, God's prerogative to deal with us as sinners himself alone. We must not surrender to any the right of God to talk with us alone about our sins. Nor should our anxiety on a thousand questions which may arise, righteous as that anxiety may

be, be allowed to lead us for a moment to forget, that as sinners we have been already alone with Jesus; and that he has once and forever, in the riches of his grace, pardoned and accepted us.

This solitude of Christ and the sinner our Gospel most comfortingly presents to us. But as to all others Jesus is here, but at a distance, and in reserve. And so as to places as well as persons. The Son of God had nothing to do specially with any place; —the wide wilderness of the world, where sinners were to be found, was the only scene for him.

But I will continue now to follow the chapters in order.

(To be continued)

A Fold Where None Can Stray

THERE is a fold where none can stray,
And pastures ever green,
Where sultry sun, or stormy day,
Or night, are never seen.
Far up the everlasting hills,
In God's own light it lies,
His smile its vast dimension fills
With joy that never dies.
There is a Shepherd living there,
The first-born from the dead,
Who tends, with sweet, unwearied care,
The flock for which he bled.
There, the deep streams of joy that flow,
Proceed from God's right hand;
He made them, and he bids them go
To feed that happy land.
There congregate the sons of light,
Fair as the morning sky,
And taste of infinite delight,
Beneath their Savior's eye.
Where'er he turns, they willing turn;
In unity they move;
Their seraph spirits nobly burn
In harmony of love.
There, in the power of heavenly sight,
They gaze upon the throne,

And scan perfection's utmost height,
And know as they are known.
Their joy bursts forth in strains of love,
And clear, symphonious song,
And all the azure heights above
The echoes roll along.
O may our faith take up that sound,
Though toiling here below;
'Midst trial may our joys abound,
And songs amid our woe;
Until we reach that happy shore,
And join to swell their strain,
And from our God go out no more,
And never weep again.

A Short Meditation on the Moral Glory of Our Lord Jesus Christ

A great combination of like moral glories in the Lord's ministry may be traced, as well as in his character. And in ministry we may look at him in relation to God, to Satan, and to man. As to God, the Lord Jesus, in his own person and ways, was always representing man to God, as God would have him. He was rendering back human nature as a sacrifice of rest, or of sweet savor, as incense pure and fragrant, as a sheaf of untainted first fruits, out of the human soil. He restored to God his complacency in man, which sin or Adam had taken from him. God's repentance that he had made man (Genesis 6:6,) was exchanged for delight and glory in man again. And this offering was made to God in the midst of all contradictions, all opposing circumstances, sorrows, fatigues, necessities, and heartbreaking disappointments. Wondrous altar wondrous offering A richer sacrifice it infinitely was, than an eternity of Adam's innocency would have been. And as he was thus representing man to God, so was he representing God to man.

Through Adam's apostasy God had been left without an image here; but now he gets a fuller, brighter image of himself than Adam could ever have presented. Jesus was leaving, not a fair creation, but a ruined, worthless world—knowing what God was, representing him in grace, and saying, "He that hath seen me, bath seen the Father." He declared God. All that is of God, all that can be known of "the light" which no man can approach unto, has now passed before us in Jesus: And again, in the ministry of Christ, looked at in relation to God, we find him ever mindful—of God's rights, ever faithful to God's truth and principles, while in the daily, unwearied actions of relieving man's necessities. Let human sorrow address him with what appeal it may, he never sacrificed or surrendered anything that was God's to it. "Glory to God in the highest," was heard over him at his birth, as well as, "on earth good-will to man;" and, according to this, God's glory, all

through his ministry, was as jealously consulted, as the sinner's need and blessing were diligently served. The echo, of those voices, "Glory to God," and "Peace on earth," was, as I may express it, heard on 'every occasion. The Syro-phoenician's case, already noticed, is a vivid sample of this. Till, she took her place in relation to God's purposes and dispensations he could do nothing for her; but then, everything.

Surely these are glories in the ministry of the Lord Jesus, in the relations of that ministry to God.

Then as to Satan. In the first place, and seasonably and properly so, the Lord meets him as a tempter. Satan sought, in the wilderness, to impregnate him with those, moral corruptions which he had succeeded in implanting in Adam and the human nature. This victory over the tempter was the needed righteous introduction to all his works and doings touching him. It was, therefore, the Spirit that led him up touching this action. As we read, "Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil." Ere the Son of God could go forth and spoil the house of the strong man, he must bind him. (Matthew 12:29.) Ere he could "reprove" the works of darkness, he must show that he had no fellowship with them. (Ephesians 5: 11.) He must withstand the enemy; and keep him outside himself, ere he could enter his kingdom to destroy his works.

Jesus thus silenced Satan. He bound him. Satan had to withdraw as a thoroughly defeated tempter. He could not get anything of his into him; he rather found that all that was there was of God. Christ kept outside all that which Adam, under a like temptation, had let inside; and having thus stood the clean thing, he can go, under a perfect moral title, to reprove the unclean.

"Skin for skin," the accuser may have to say of another, and like words that charge and challenge the common corrupted nature; but he had nothing to do, as an accuser of Jesus, before the throne of God. He was silenced.

Thus, his relationship to Satan begins. Upon this, he enters his house and spoils his goods. This world is that house, and there the Lord, in his ministry, is seen effacing various and deep expressions of the enemy's strength. Every deaf or blind one healed, every leper cleansed, every work under his repairing hand, of whatsoever sort it was, was this. It was a spoiling of the goods of the strong man in his own house. Having already bound him, he now spoiled his goods. At last he yields to him as the One that had "the power of death." Calvary was the hour of the power of darkness. All Satan's resources were brought up there, and all his subtlety put forth; but he was overthrown. His captive was his conqueror. By death he destroyed him that had the power of it. He put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. The head of the serpent was bruised; as another has said, that "death and not man was without strength."

Thus, Jesus the Son of God was the bruiser of Satan, as before he had been his binder and his spoiler. But "there is another moral glory that is seen to shine in the ministry of Christ, in the relation it bears to Satan. I mean this, He never allows him to bear witness to him. The testimony may be true, and, as we say, flattering, good words and fair words, such as, "I know thee who thou art; the holy One of God," but Jesus suffered him not to speak. For his ministry was as pure as it was gracious. He would not be helped in his ministry by that which he came to destroy. He could have no fellowship with darkness in his service, any more than in his nature. He could not act on expediency, therefore rebuke and silencing of him was the answer he got to his testimony. Then as to man, the moral glories which show themselves in the ministry of the Lord Jesus are bright

and excellent indeed.

He was constantly relieving and serving man in all variety of his misery; but he was as surely exposing him, showing him to be a nature fully departed from God in revolt and apostasy. But further; he was exercising him. This is much to be considered, though perhaps not so commonly noticed. In his teaching he exercised people in whatever relation to himself they stood; disciples, or the multitude, or those who brought their sorrows to him, or those who were friendly, as I may call them, or those who as enemies were withstanding him. The disciples he was continually putting through exercises of heart or conscience, as he walked with them, and taught them. This is so common that it need not be instanced.

The multitude who followed him he would treat likewise. "Hear and understand," he would say to them; thus, exercising their own minds, as he was teaching them.

To, some who brought their sorrows to him he would say, "Believe ye that I can do this?" or such like words. The Syrophenician is an eminent witness to us how he exercised this class of persons.

Addressing the friendly Simon in Luke 7, after telling him the story of the man who had two debtors, "Tell me," says he, "therefore, which of them will love him most?"

The Pharisees, his unwearied opposers, he was, in like manner, constantly calling into exercise. And there is such a voice in this, such a witness of what he is. It tells us that he was not performing summary judgment for them, but would fain lead them to repentance: and so, in calling disciples into exercise, he tells us that we learn his lessons only in a due manner, as far as we are drawn out, in some activity of understanding, heart or conscience, over them. This exercising of those he was either leading or teaching is surely another of the moral glories which marked his ministry. But further: in his ministry towards man we see him frequently as a reprovor, needful so, in the midst of such a thing as the human family; but his way in reprovor shines with excellency that we may well admire. When he was rebuking the Pharisees, whom worldliness had set in opposition to him, he uses a very solemn form of words: "He that is not with me is against me." But when he is alluding to those who owned him and loved him, but who needed further strength of faith or measure of light, so as to be in full company with him, he spake in other terms: "He that is not against us is for us."

We notice him again in this character in Matthew 20, in the case of the ten and the two brethren. How does he temper his rebuke because of the good and the right that were in those whom he had to rebuke? And in this he takes a place apart from his heated disciples, who would not have had their two brethren spared in any measure. He patiently sits over the whole material, and separates the precious from the vile that was in it.

So, he is heard again as a reprovor in the case of John, forbidding any to cast out devils in his name, if they would not walk with them. But at that moment John's spirit had been under chastening.

In the light of the Lord's preceding word's, he had been making discovery of the mistake he had committed, and he refers to that mistake, though the Lord himself had in no way alluded to it. But this being so, John having already a sense of his mistake, and artlessly letting it tell itself out, the

Lord deals with it in the greatest gentleness. (See Luke 9:46-50.)

So as to the Baptist: The Lord rebukes him with marked consideration. He was in prison then. What a fact that must have been in the esteem of the Lord at that moment! But he was to be rebuked for having sent a Message to his Lord that reproached him. But the delicacy of the rebuke is beautiful. He returns a message to John, which none but John himself could estimate: "Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me." Even John's disciples, who carried the message between him and the Lord, could not have understood this. Jesus would expose John to himself, but neither to his disciples nor to the world.

So further, his rebuke of the two of Emmaus, and of Thomas after the resurrection, each has its own excellency. Peter—both in Matthew 16 and 17— has to meet rebuke; but the rebuke is very differently ministered on each occasion.

But all this variety is full of moral beauty; and we may surely say, whether his style be peremptory or gentle, sharp or considerate; whether rebuke, on his lips, be so reduced as to be scarcely rebuke at all; or so heightened as almost to be the language of repulse and disclaimer; still, when the occasion is weighed, all this variety will be found to be but various perfections; All these his reproofs were "earrings of gold, and ornaments of fine gold," whether hung or not upon "obedient ears." (Proverbs 25:12.) "Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil which shall not break my head." (Psalms 141:5.) Surely the Lord gave his disciples to prove this.

Conclusion

I have now traced some of the features of the moral glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. He represented man to God, man as he ought to be, and God rested in him.

This moral perfectness of the man Christ Jesus, and God's acceptance of him, was signified by the meat-offering, that cake of fine flour, which was baked either in oven pan or frying-pan, with its oil and its frankincense. (Leviticus 2)

When the Lord Jesus was here, and thus manifested as man to God, God's delight in him was ever expressing itself. He grew up before him in human nature, and in the exhibition of all human virtues; and he needed nothing at any one moment to commend him but himself, just as he was. In his person and ways man was morally glorified, so that when the end or perfection of his course came, he could go "straightway" to God, as the sheaf of first-fruits of old was taken directly and immediately, just as it was, out of the field, needing no process to fit it for the presence and acceptance of God. (Leviticus 23: 10.) The title of Jesus to glory was a moral one. He had a moral right to be glorified; his title was in himself. John 13:21,32 is the blessed setting forth of this in its due connection. "Now is the Son of Man glorified," the Lord there says, just as Judas had left the table; for that action of Judas was the sure precursor of the Lord's being taken by the Jews, and that was the sure precursor of his being put to death by the Gentiles. And the cross being the completeness and perfection of the full form of moral glory in him, it was at this moment he utters these words, "Now is the Son of Man glorified." Then he adds, "And God is glorified in him."

God was as perfectly glorified then as the Son of Man was, though the glory was another glory. The Son of Man was glorified then, by his completing that full form of moral beauty which had been shining in him all through his life. Nothing of it was then to be wanting, as nothing from the beginning up to that late hour had ever mingled with it that was unworthy of it. The hour was then at hand when it was to shine out in the very last ray that was to give it its full brightness: But God was also glorified then, because all that was of him was either maintained or displayed. His rights were maintained, his goodness displayed. Mercy and truth, righteousness and peace, were alike and equally either satisfied or gratified. God's truth, holiness, love; majesty, and all besides, were magnified in a way, and illustrated in a light, beyond all that could ever have been known of them elsewhere. The cross, as one has said, is the moral wonder of the universe.

But then again, the Lord adds, "If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself; and shall straightway glorify him." This is his recognition of his own title to personal glory. He had already perfected the full form of moral glory through life and in death. He had also vindicated God's glory, as we have seen. Therefore, it was but a righteous thing that he should now enter on his own, personal glory. And this he did when he took his place in heaven, at the right hand of the majesty there, as in company with God himself, and all that at once, or "straightway."

God's work—as Creator had been quickly soiled in man's hand. Man had ruined himself; so that it is written, "God repented that he had made him"(Genesis 6) A terrible change in the Divine mind,

since the day when God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good! (Genesis 1) But in the Lord Jesus, the Divine complacency in man was restored.

This was blessed and the more acceptable, as we may say, from the previous repentance. It was more than first enjoyments, it was recovery after loss and disappointment; and that, too, in a way exceeding the first. And as the first man, upon his sin, had been put outside creation, as I may say, this second man (being, as he also was, "the Lord from heaven"), upon his glorifying of God, was seated at the head of creation, as at the right hand of the majesty on high. Jesus is in heaven as a glorified man, because here on earth God had been glorified in him as the obedient One in life and death. He is there indeed in other characters. Surely, we know that. He is there as a Conqueror, as an Expectant, as the High Priest in the tabernacle which God has pitched, as our Forerunner, and as the Purger of our sins. But he is there also, in the highest heavens glorified, because in him God had been here on earth glorified.

Life and glory were his by personal right, and by moral title. One delights to dwell on such a truth, to repeat it again and again. He never forfeited the garden of Eden. Truly indeed did he walk outside it all his days, or amid the thorns and briars, the sorrows and privations, of a ruined world. But this he did in grace. He took such a condition upon him; but he was not exposed to it. He was not, like Adam, like us all, on one side of the cherubim, and the flaming sword, and the tree of life, and the garden of Eden, on the other. In his history, instead of angels keeping him outside or beyond the gate, when he had gone through his temptation they come and minister to him. For he stood where Adam failed and fell. Therefore, man as he was, verily and simply man, he was this distinguished man. God was glorified in him, as in all beside he had been dishonored and disappointed.

In one sense, this perfectness of the Son of man, this moral perfectness, is all for us. It lends its savor to the blood which atones for our sins. It was as the cloud of incense, which went in to the presence of God, together with the blood, on the day of atonement. (Leviticus 16)

But, in another sense, this perfection is too much for us. It is high; we cannot attain to it. It overwhelms the moral sense, as far as we look at it in the recollection of what we ourselves are, while it fills us with admiration; as far as we look at it as telling us what he is. The personal judicial glory, when displayed of old, was overwhelming. The most favored of the children of men could not stand before it, as Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel; and Peter and John experienced the same. And this moral glory, in like manner exposing us, is overwhelming.

Faith, however, is at home in the presence of it. The god of this world blinds the mind to the apprehension and joy of it; but faith welcomes it. Such are the histories of it here among men. In the presence of it, Pharisees and Sadducees together asked for a sign from heaven. The mother, through vanity, mistakes it, and the brethren of the Lord through worldliness. (John 2:7.) Disciples themselves are under constant rebuke from it. The oil olive beaten for this light was too pure for any; but it was ever burning in the sanctuary, or "before the Lord." The synagogue at Nazareth strikingly lets us learn the unpreparedness of man for it. They owned the gracious words which proceeded out of the Lord's lips; they felt the power of them. But quickly a strong current of nature's corruption set in, and withstood this movement in their hearts, and overcame it. God's humbled, self-emptied witness, in the midst of a proud, revolted world, was discovered; and this would not do for them. Let "Joseph's son" speak as he may, good words and comfortable words,

he will not be accepted—he is a carpenter’s son. (Luke 4) It is wonderful—wonderful witness of the deep inlaid corruption. Man has his amiabilities, his taste, his virtues, his sensibilities, as this scene at Nazareth, in Luke 4, may tell us. The gracious words of Jesus,, raised a current of good feeling’ for a moment; but what was it all, and where was it all, when God tested it? Ah! beloved, we may still say, in spite of this, our amiability and respectability, our taste and emotions, that in us—that is, in our flesh “dwelleth no good thing.”

But again, I say, faith is at home with Jesus. Can we, I ask, treat such a one with fear or suspicion? Can we doubt him? Could we have taken a distant place from him who sat at the well with the woman of Sychar? Did she herself take such a place? Surely, beloved, we should seek intimacy with him. The disciples, who companied with him, have to learn their lessons again and again. We know something of this. They had to make discovery of him afresh, instead of enjoying him as already discovered. In the 14th of Matthew they had to cry out, “Of a truth, thou art the Son of God.” This was discovering him afresh. Had their faith been simple, they would have slept in the boat with him. What a scene it was, to their shame and his glory! They spoke insultingly or reproachfully to the Lord, as though he were indifferent to their danger, “ Master, carest thou not that we perish?” He awoke at the sound of their voice, and at once not them in safety. But then, he rebukes them, not however for the injustice their hard words had done him, but for their want of faith.

How perfect was this! How perfect, surely, was everything; and each in its generation! —the human virtues, the fruits of the anointing that was on him, and his Divine glories. The natures in the One Person are unconfused; but the effulgence of the Divine is chastened, the homeliness of the human is elevated. There is nothing like this, there could be nothing like this, in the whole creation. And yet the human was human, and the divine was divine. Jesus slept in the boat: he was man. Jesus quelled the winds and the waves: he was God.

This moral glory must shine. Other glories must give place till this is done. The Greeks, who had come to worship in Jerusalem at the feast, inquire after Jesus, desiring to see him. This savored of the kingdom, or of the royal glory of the Messiah. It was a sample of that day, when the nations shall come up to the city of the Jews, to keep holy day; and when, as King in Zion, he shall be Lord of all, and God of the whole earth.

But there was a secret deeper than this. It needs a juster sense of God’s way, then simply to be expecting a kingdom. The Pharisees needed that, when in Luke 17 they asked the Lord when the kingdom should appear. He had to tell them of another kingdom, which they did not apprehend—a kingdom within, a present kingdom, which had to be entered and known, ere the glorious manifested kingdom could appear. The disciples needed it in Acts 1, when they asked their Lord if he would at that time restore the kingdom to Israel. He had to tell them also of another thing, ere the restoration could take place; that they were to be gifted by the Spirit, for testimony to him all the world over.

So here in John 12 The Lord lets us know that moral glory must precede the kingdom. He will surely shine in the glory of the throne by-and-by, and the Gentiles shall then come to Zion, and see the King in his beauty; but ere that could be, the moral glory must be displayed in all its fullness and unsulliedness. And this was his thought now, when the Gentiles had inquired after him. “The hour is come, that the Son of Man should be glorified.” This was his moral glory, as we

have said before, in John 13:31,32. It had been shining all through his ways, from his birth hitherto; his death was to be the completeness of it; and therefore, the hour was then at hand, when it was to shine out in the last ray that was to form it, and give it perfection. The Lord thus supplies or introduces on this occasion, as he did, as we have seen, in Luke 17 and in Acts 1, the truth, the additional truth, which needs the richer, juster sense of God's ways to apprehend. The moral glory must be fully displayed, and Messiah can show himself in royal glory to the ends of the earth.

It is, however, his, and his only. How infinitely distant from one's heart is any other thought When the heavens opened, in Acts 10, the sheet was seen descending ere Peter was commanded to have fellowship with it, or ere it ascended and was lost or hid again on high. The contents of it had to be cleansed or sanctified. But when the heaven was opened in Matthew 3, Jesus on earth needed not to be taken up to be approved there, but voices and visions from on high sealed and attested him just as he was. "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

And when the heavens were opened again, as in Matthew 27, that is, when the veil of the temple was rent in twain, all was finished, nothing more was needed, the work of Jesus was sealed and attested just as it then was. All opened heaven at the beginning shone out in the full acceptance of his person—an opened heaven at the end shone out in full acceptance of his work.

And let me close in saying, that it is blessed and happy, as well as part of our worship, to mark the characteristics of the Lord's way and ministry here on the earth, as I have been seeking in measure to do in this paper; for all that he did and said, all his service, whether in the substance or the style of it, is the witness of what he was, and he is the witness to us of what God is. And thus, we reach God, the blessed One, through the paths of the Lord Jesus, in the pages of the evangelists. Every step of that way becomes important to us. All that he did and said was a real, truthful expression of himself, as he himself was a real, truthful expression of God. And if we can understand the character of his ministry, or read the moral glory that attaches to each moment and each particular of his walk and service here on earth, so learn what he is, and thus learn what God is, we reach God, in certain and unclouded knowledge of him, through the ordinary paths and activities of the life of this Divine Son of man.

(Continued from p. 64.)

On the Gospel by John

I have already shown, from various instances, that there was, through all the stages of the history of Israel, the occasional putting forth of a special energy of the Spirit, by which, and not by the resources of their own system, the Lord was sustaining Israel, and teaching them to know where their final hope lay. From the call of Abraham to the throne of David, we saw this.

Now I judge that Bethesda was a witness of the same thing. Bethesda was not that which the system itself provided. It was opened in Jerusalem, as a fountain of healing, by the sovereign grace of Jehovah (as indeed, its name imports). Neither was it an abiding, but only an occasional relief, as the judges and prophets had been. Like them, it was a testimony to the grace and power which were in God himself for Israel, and had, perhaps, yielded this. its testimony at certain seasons all through the dark age which had passed since the days of the last of their prophets. But it must now be set aside. Its waters are to be no more troubled. He to whom all these witnesses of grace pointed had appeared. As the true fountain of health, the Son of God had now come to the daughter of Zion, and was showing himself to her.

It was a feast time, we are told (verse 1). All was going on at Jerusalem, as though all were right before God. The feasts were duly observed; the time was one of exact religious services. But Bethesda alone might have told the daughter of Zion that she needed a physician, and was not in that rest which faithfulness to Jehovah would have preserved to her. And the Lord would now tell her the same truth. He

heals the impotent man, thus taking the place of Bethesda; but he does so in a way that tells Israel of their loss of the Sabbath—the loss of their own proper glory. “The same day was the Sabbath.”

The nation is at once sensitive of this. It touched the place of their pride; for the Sabbath was the sign of all their national distinction; and they resent it—” they sought to slay him, because he had done these things on the Sabbath-day.”

The Lord answered them, “ My Father worketh hitherto, and I work;”—words which again told them of their loss of this Sabbath in which they boasted, yea, that they had long lost it, lost it from the beginning; for that in every stage of their history God had been working in grace among them, working as “his Father,” of which this Bethesda was the sign, and that he himself had now come, just in the same way, to work in grace among them, of which this poor restored cripple was the sign. This was the voice of these words, “My Father worketh hitherto, and I work;” referring to the act of grace all through Israel’s history, which I have noticed. But on this the Jews resent him the more; and not being in the secret of his glory, they charge him’ with blasphemy, for calling God his father.

To this he again answers (still, as before, speaking of himself as Son, but taking a place of subjection also), “Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself.”

(*Without the knowledge of the divine dignity of his person, we cannot discover the place which the Lord here takes to be the place of willing subjection, as it was. For it would not have been such in any mere creature, however exalted, to have said, "I can of mine own self do nothing." But in this the Son was subjection.)

But all this is most blessed. One who came into this world on behalf of God and his honor could take no other place. It was the only place of righteousness here. "He that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true, and there is no unrighteousness in him." Man had, through pride, dishonored God. Man did an affront to the Majesty of God, when he listened to the words, "Ye shall be as God." And the Son, who came to honor God, must humble himself. Though in the form of God; he must empty himself here. God's praise, in a world that had departed from him in pride, must have this sacrifice. And this sacrifice the Son offered. But this did not suit man; this was not according to man; and man could not receive or sanction such a one. "I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not; if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive."

This is a deep and holy matter, beloved. By his humiliation and subjection, the Son was at once honoring God and testing man; giving the "only Potentate" his due right in, this world, but thus becoming himself a sign for the making manifest the thoughts, of the heart. And the Jew, the favored Jew, was found in this common atheism of man; for to disclose this hidden spring of unbelief in Israel, our Lord's discourse this chapter was tending. It was not for want of light and testimony. They had the works of Christ, the Father's voice, their own scriptures, and the testimony of John. But withal they had the love of the world in them, and not the love of God; and were thus unprepared for the Son of God.

"How can ye believe who receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor that cometh from God only" (ver. 44). Surely this has a voice for our ears, beloved! Does it not tell us that the heart and its hidden motions have to be watched? "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life." There may strong and dangerous currents running under the surface. Job was a godly man: None like him in his generation. But in his soul, there was flowing a rapid current. He valued his character and his circumstances. Not that he was, in the common way, either self-righteous or worldly. He was truly a believer, and a generous friend and benefactor. But he valued his circumstances in life, and his estimation among men. In the hidden exercises of his heart, he was wont to survey his goodly condition with complacency. (chapter 29.) That was a strong under-current. His neighbors had not traced the course of that stream; but his heavenly Father had; and because he loved him, and would have him partaker of his holiness, with which all this was inconsistent, he put him into his own school to exercise him.

What a gracious warning does this afford us, to keep the ebbings and flowings of the heart under watch. "What are we thinking of?" we may ask ourselves again and again through the day. Whereon are we spending our diligence? What are the secret calculations of our minds in moments of relaxation? Is it the spirit or the flesh that is providing food for us? Do our affections which stir within savor of heaven or of hell?

These are healthful inquiries for us, and suggested by the strong moral thought of the Lord here, "How can ye believe, which receive honor one of another?"

How could man, apostate in pride, brook the lowly Son of man, the emptied Son of God? This was the source whence their unbelief took its rise. There was no association between them and the one who stood for God's honor before men. His form of humiliation was now disallowed, as his work and grace at Bethesda had before been refused. His brethren should have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them; but they understood not; they believed not Moses, and were thus, in principle, still in Egypt, still in the flesh, still unredeemed. Had they believed Moses, they would have believed Christ, and been led out by him, as at this time, from under the hand of Pharaoh, the power of the flesh and the world. But under all that, through unbelief, this chapter finds them and leaves them.

A new scene opens here—it was the Passover; but God's mercy, which that season celebrated, Israel had slighted. They had still to learn the lesson of Egypt and the wilderness; and in patient love, after so many provocations, the Lord would even now teach them.

Accordingly, he feeds the multitude in a desert place thus showing the grace and power of him who for forty years had fed their fathers in another desert. The disciples, like Moses, wonder through unbelief, and say, as it were, "Shall the flocks and the herds be slain for them to suffice them?" But his hand is not shortened. He feeds them; and this awakens zeal in the multitude, and they would fain come and by force make him a king. But the Lord could not take the kingdom from zeal like this. This could not be the source of the kingdom of the Son of man. The beasts may, take their kingdoms from the winds striving upon the great sea; but Jesus cannot. (Dan. 7:25.) This was not his mother crowning him in the day of his espousals. (Cant. 3.) This was not, in his ear, the shouting of the people bringing in the head-stone of the corner; nor the symptom of his people made willing in the day of his power. This would have been an appointment to the throne of Israel, on scarcely better principles than those on which Saul had been appointed of old. His kingdom would have been the fruit of a heated desire of the people, as Saul's had been the fruit of their revolted heart. But this could not be. And beside this, ere the Lord could take his seat on mount Zion, he must ascend the solitary mount; and ere the people could enter the kingdom, they must go down to the stormy sea. And these things we see reflected here, as in a glass. The Lord is seen on high for a while, and they are buffeting the winds and waves; but in due season he descends from his elevation, makes the storm a calm, and brings them to their desired haven. And so, it will be by and by. He will come down in the power of the heaven to which he has now ascended, for the deliverance of his afflicted ones. Then shall they see his wonders, as in the deep, and praise him for his goodness, for the works that he doeth for the children of men. (Psalms 107:23-32.)

The Lord therefore has only to retire from all this popular awakening in his favor. How must the mind of the heavenly Stranger have felt entire dissociation from it all He retires from it, and on the following day enters on other work altogether. Reopens the mystery of the true Passover and the manna of the wilderness, which they had still to learn. They had still to learn the virtue of the Cross, the true Passover which delivers from Egypt, from the bondage of the flesh, and the judgment of the law; enabling the sinner to say, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live." The wages of sin is death; and sin in the Cross had its wages. Death had its sway, and the law can return to the throne of God with its own vindication; for it has executed its commission. Christ has died, and died for us. This is the true Passover—the power of redemption; in the grace of which we leave Egypt, or the place of bondage, and come forth with the Son of God into the wilderness, there to feed on manna, there to live by every word that has proceeded out of the mouth of God.

And though thus in some sense distinct, the Lord in this discourse seems to combine the mysteries of the Passover and the manna. It was in the time of the Passover that he thus preached to them on the manna; for both pertained to the same Israel, the same life. The Paschal blood was upon the lintels for redemption, while the Lamb was fed upon Within the house. The Israelite was in living communion with that which gave him security. And this was the beginning of life to him, in the strength of which he came forth to feed on the manna in the wilderness.

But Israel, as we here find, had not as yet so come forth out of the bondage of Egypt into God's pastures in the wilderness. They prove that as yet they knew not this life; that as yet they had never really kept the Passover, or fed on the manna. They murmured at him. Their thoughts were too full of Moses: "He gave them bread from heaven to eat," said they. But ere, they could indeed eat of the manna, they must fall into the paths of love, into thoughts of the Father, and not of Moses; for it is love that leads us to the Cross. Moses never gave that bread. The law never spread the feast. It is love that does that; and love must be apprehended as we sit at it. And this is the reason why so few guests are there; for man has hard thoughts of God, and proud thoughts of himself. But to keep the feast, we must have happy thoughts of God, and humblest self-renouncing thoughts of ourselves— communion with the Father and with the Son, on the ground of the great salvation of sinners. Communion with God in love is life.

But Israel was not in this communion. They "go back," they thrust him from them, and in their hearts turn back again into Egypt: their carcasses fall in the wilderness, and a remnant only feed on "the words of eternal life," and live—a remnant who look round on all as a barren waste yielding no bread without him, as "a dry and thirsty land" from one end to the other, save for the Rock that follows them; and they say, "To whom shall we go?"

And whence this remnant? "According to the election of grace," as the Lord here further teaches, showing us the acts of the Father in the mystery of our life, —that it is he who gives to the Son, and draws to the Son, all who come to him; that his teachings and drawings are the hidden channels through which this life is reaching us. "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life; and we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." This is the faith and utterance of that elect remnant, who, coming out of Egypt, live by faith on the Son of God; but only in the Son of God as crucified; for our life lies in his death, and through the faith which feeds on that death. No acceptance of Christ but as crucified avails for life. It is not his virtues, his instructions, his example, or the like; but his death, his flesh and blood, that must be fed upon. His death accomplished, singly and alone, what all together and beside never did and never could. The blessed Lord died, gave up the ghost, or surrendered the life which he had, and which none had title to take from him. But the moment that was done, results broke forth which all his previous life had never produced. It was then, but not till then, that the veil of the temple was rent, the rocks were riven, the graves opened. Heaven, earth, and hell felt a power they had never owned before. The life of Jesus, his charities to man, his subjection to God, the savor of his spotless human nature, the holiness of that which had been born of the Virgin, —none of these, nor all of them together, nor everything in him and about him, by him or through him, short of the surrender of life, would ever have rent the vail or broken up the graves. God would still have been at a distance, hell been still unconquered, and he that has the power of death still undestroyed. The blood of the dear Son has done what all beside never did, never could do. And over him thus preached and set forth it is still to be said, "He that bath the Son bath life."

This leads me to pause for a little over a subject connected with our life, of which this chapter treats: I mean the eating of blood. Here our Lord commands us to eat blood, even his own blood; but under the law blood was forbidden. Under the law all slain beasts were to be brought to the door of the tabernacle, and their blood offered on the altar, and by no means to be eaten. (Leviticus 17) This was a confession that the life had reverted to God, and was not in man's power. To eat blood under the law would have been an attempt to regain life in our own strength; —an attempt by man to reach that which he had forfeited. But now under the Gospel the ordinance is changed. Blood must be eaten” Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, there is no life in you.” For the life that had reverted to God, God has given to make atonement. The blood of the New Testament has been shed for the remission of sins, and life, through that blood, is now given to sinners in the Son of God. “In him was life.” He came from God with the life for us. “He that hath the Son bath life.” And we are commanded, as well as besought, to take life from him. And truly we may say, our God has thus perfected our comfort and our assurance before him, making it to be as simple disobedience in us not to take life from him as his gift, as it would be simple pride and arrogancy of heart to assume to take it by our own works. What a pleading of love is this with our souls! We are disobedient if we are not saved! Death is God's enemy as well as ours.; and if we do not take life from the Son, we join the enemy of God. “Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life,” says the aggrieved Son of God.” And when asked by certain persons in this very chapter, “What shall we do that we may work the works of God?” he has but to reply, “This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.” To believe, and take life as the gift of God through his Son, is the only act of obedience that the blessed God claims from a ‘sinner—the only thing that a sinner, till he is reconciled, can do to please him.

This is grace wondrously and blessedly revealed. This ordinance, that forbad the eating of blood, was as the flaming sword of the cherubim in the garden. Both that sword and this ordinance told the sinner that there was no recovery of forfeited life by any effort of his own.” And Adam's faith most sweetly displays itself here. He did not seek to put back that sword, as though he could regain the tree of life himself. But what did he? He took life from God, through grace, and the gift by grace. He believed the promise about the woman's seed; and in that faith called the woman “the mother of all living.” He took life as the gift of God through Christ, and sought it not by works of the law, nor through the flaming sword.

All this mystery in the sinner's life was thus illustrated from the very beginning, even in the faith of Adam, and is blessedly unfolded in our Lord's discourse to the people in this chapter. That life begins in the power of redemption by the paschal Lamb slain in Egypt, and by the manna of the wilderness. But our chapter shows us that Israel was still a stranger to it; that they had not learned the lesson of Egypt and the wilderness, in the knowledge of the redemption and life that is in Christ Jesus.

7. A new scene again opens here. It was the time of the Feast of Tabernacles; as the preceding scene had been laid in the time of the Passover.

This was the most joyous season in the Jewish year. It was the great annual festival at Jerusalem; the grand commemoration of Israel's past sojourn in the wilderness, and of their present rest in Canaan; the type also of Messiah's coming glory and joy as king of Israel. His brethren urge the Lord to take advantage 'of this season; to leave Galilee and go up to Jerusalem, there to exhibit

his power, and get himself a name in the world. But they did not understand him. They were of the world; he was not of the world. The Son of God was a stranger here; but they were at home. They might go up and meet the world at the feast, but he was for God against the world. He, to whom it bore witness, could not go up and claim his own there, because the world was there, because the god of this world had usurped and was corrupting the scene of his glory and joy.

But how fallen was Israel when this was so! And what was their boasted festival, when the spring of its joy and the heir of its glory must stand estranged from it!

The gold had become dim. The ways to Zion were still solitary; none were really coming to the solemn feast. In spirit the prophet was still weeping. (Lam. 1:4.) The Lord goes up, it is true, but not in his glory. He does not go as his brethren would have had him; but in obedience merely, to take the place of the humbled, and not of the great one of the earth. And when arrived at the city of solemnities, we see him only in the same character, for he goes to the temple and teaches; but when this attracts notice, he hides himself, saying, "My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me." He hides himself, that not he, but the Father who had sent him, might be seen. Like the one who had emptied himself, and taken the form of a servant, he is willing to be nothing. They who were at the feast manifested their utter apostasy from the principle of the feast, and say, "How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?" In their pride, they acknowledged no source of knowledge or wisdom above man. They would have the creature in honor; but the feast celebrated Jehovah, and was for the setting forth the honors of him who now in righteousness had to hide his glory, and separate himself from it all. Israel and the feast, Israel and the Son of God, were utterly dissociated. They had nothing in each other. And thus, whether we listen to the Jews, or to the men of Jerusalem, or to the Pharisees, in this chapter, all tell us of their rejection of him: and he has in the end to say to them, "Where I am, thither ye cannot come."

Jesus thus refuses to sanction the Feast. He tells Israel that they had now no title to the rest and glory which it pledged to them—that they were not really in Canaan, and had never yet drawn water out of the wells of salvation; that their land, instead of being watered by the river of God, was but a barren and thirsty portion of the accursed earth; that they had forsaken the fountain of living waters, and all their own cisterns were but broken. And accordingly, as the Feast was closing, Jesus puts the living water into other vessels, and dries up the wells which were in Jerusalem. He turns the fruitful land into barrenness for the wickedness of them that dwelt therein, and opens the river of God in other places. "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, if any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink: he that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water."

And in connection with this, I would shortly trace "the river of God" through scripture; and we shall see it flowing in different channels according to different dispensations.

In Eden it took its rise in the earth to water the garden, and from thence to wander in divers streams over the earth. For the dispensation was one of earthly good. Man knew no source of blessing or streams of joy than such as were connected with creation. In the wilderness the smitten rock was its source, and every path of the camp of God its channel. It followed them; for at that time they only were the redeemed of the Lord whom his eye rested on in the World. In Canaan, afterward, the waters of Shiloah flowed softly; Jehovah watered the land from his own buckets, and made it to drink of the rain of heaven; and for the souls of the people every feast and

every sacrifice was as a well of this water; and the current of the yearly service of the sanctuary was its constant channel. For Israel was, then, the people of the Lord, and their land his dwelling-place. But the time had now come, as we have just seen, for leaving Canaan a dry land, and for opening the river of God elsewhere. It was now to take its rise, as the Lord here teaches us, in the glorified Son of man in heaven; and the channels, through which it was to flow, were to be the bellies of his members on earth. The dispensation was to be one of "spiritual blessings in heavenly places;" the earth was not for the present to be watered, but only the Church of God. But, by and by, in the kingdom, when the present age, like others, has fulfilled its course, and other dispensations arise, this same river will own other channels and springs. It will rise in the throne of God and the Lamb, and flow through the golden street of the city, for the gladdening of the multitude before the throne (Revelation 7:17;22: 1, 2); and it will also rise under the sanctuary in the earthly Zion, for the watering of Jerusalem and the whole earth. (Ezekiel 47; Joel 3; Zechariah 14) For then will be the time of the two-fold blessing, the time of the heavenly and the earthly glory. All things will have the grace and power of God dispensed among Them, all will then be visited by "the river of God, which is full of water." The Feast of Tabernacles will then be duly kept in Jerusalem, and that nation of the earth which will not go up to keep it there shall have no gracious visitation of this fruitful river of God, but shall be left to know the sterility of that soul that refuses to drink of the water which the Son of God giveth.

Upon all this, I would only further notice the connection that there is between our thirst and the outflow of this living water (see verses 37, 38). The saint thirsts, then goes to Jesus for the water that he has to give, and afterward comes with the river of God, the water of life, the flowing of the Spirit, in him, for his own refreshing and that of the weary. His thirst receives the abounding presence of the Holy Ghost, and opens in him a channel for the river of life, which now rises in the ascended head of the church, to flow through him to others. O that we panted more after God, as the hart after the water-brooks! that we longed more for the courts of the Lord! Then would the Spirit fill our souls, and we should Comfort and refresh one another. And this is indeed the power of all ministry. Ministry is but the out-flowing of this living water, the expression of this hidden abounding presence of the Spirit within us. The head has received the gifts for us; and from the head, all the body, by joints and bands having nourishment ministered and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God. And this is our only Feast of Tabernacles, till we celebrate a still happier one with the palmy multitude before the throne. For this feast cannot now be kept in Jerusalem; the saints must have it in its only present form, by walking together in the liberty and refreshing of the Holy Ghost.

This feast, this "joy in the Holy Ghost," is something more than either the Passover of Egypt, or the manna of the wilderness. Those were for redemption and life, but this is for joy and the foretaste of glory; those were of the flesh and blood of the Son of man, broken and shed here; but this is of the Son of man glorified in heaven. It savors more of Canaan than of the wilderness, though for comfort in the wilderness: as the Feast of Tabernacles was not a wilderness feast, but a feast in Canaan, the land of rest and glory after the wilderness.

But Israel, as yet, knew nothing of these things, as is here shown to us. In the fifth chapter, the Lord had met them, as in Egypt, with redeeming grace and power: witness the restored cripple, which was like, Moses casting down his rod in the sight of Israel in proof of his embassy. But it only ended in proving that they would remain in Egypt; for they refuse to believe Moses, believing

not him of whom Moses wrote; and what redemption from Egypt was there for Israel, if Moses were refused? In the sixth, he had met them, as in the wilderness, with the manna; but only in like manner to prove that they were not feeding there, as the camp of God, upon the bread of God. In this chapter, he had met them as in Canaan; but all had shown that Canaan was still the land of the uncircumcised, the land of drought, and not of the river of God. He, therefore, now stands outside the city of solemnities, and in spirit ascends to heaven, as head of his body the church; to feed the thirsty from thence. He says, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." The Jews may reason about him among themselves, and then go every man "to his own house;" but he, owning his present estrangement from Israel, and consequent homeless condition, on the earth, goes to the Mount of Olives.

8. Thus was it with Israel now. They knew not that they were still in bonds, and needed his hand to dead them out and feed them again. They knew not that they had still to reach the true Canaan, Immanuel's land. They had been rejecting the grace of the Son of God, and were making their boast of the law; and now, in the confidence that it was theirs, and that they could use it, and by it entangle the Lord, they bring forward the adulteress.

They had, to be sure, noticed his grace to sinners. All his ways must have told them that. And they judge it, of course, an easy matter to show him to be the enemy of Moses and the law. But he gains a holy and glorious victory. Grace is made to shout a triumph over sin, and the sinner over every accuser. The Lord does not impugn the law. He could not; for it was holy; and he had come, not to destroy, but to fulfill it. He does not acquit the guilty. He could not; for he had come into the world, with full certainty as to the sinner's guilt. It was that which had brought him among us; and, therefore, in the present case, he does not pretend to raise such questions. The sinner is convicted, and the law righteously lies against her. But who—can execute it? Who can cast the stone? That question he may and does—raise. Satan may accuse, the sinner may be guilty, and the law may condemn: but where is the executioner? Who can handle the fiery power of the law? None but himself. None can avenge the quarrel of divine righteousness upon the sinner; none have hands clean enough to take up the stone and cast it, but Jesus himself; and he refuses. He refuses to act. He refuses to entertain the case. He stooped down and wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not. He was not presiding in any court for the trying of such matters. He came not to judge. But they persist and then the Lord, in effect, replies, that if they will have Mount Sinai they shall; if, like Israel of old, they will challenge the law, and undertake the terms of the fiery hill, why they shall have the law, and again hear the voice of that hill; and, accordingly, he lets out something of the genuine heat of that place, and they soon find that it reaches them, as well as the poor convicted one, and the place becomes too hot for them.

They had not reckoned on this. They had not thought that the thunders of that hill would have made them to quake, or its horrible darkness have enwrapped them as completely as the open and shamed sinner, whom their own hand had dragged there. But as they had chosen the fiery hill, they must take it for better or worse, and just as they find it.

The Lord, however, in giving the law this character, in causing it to reach the judges as well as their prisoner, proved that he was the Lord of that hill. He let, as I said, some of its genuine heat out. He marshalled its thunder, and directed its lightning, and spread out its horrible darkness, as the Lord of it. He made the hosts of that hill take their march, and address themselves to their

proper work; and then, on this being done, exactly as of old at the same place, this is found to be intolerable. "Let not God speak to us," said Israel then (Exodus 20); as now these Pharisees, "being convicted by their own conscience, go out one by one." They can no more stand under that place, which they themselves had challenged, than Israel of old, when that mount let them know what it really was.

All this has a very great character in it. The Lord is greatly glorified. They designed to expose him as Moses' enemy, but he displays himself as Moses' Lord, or the conductor of that lightning which had once made the heart of even that stoutest Israelite exceedingly to fear and quake. I read all this as something very excellent indeed. But further if this be his glory, it is equally our blessing. If the Lord Jesus be honored as the conductor of the fiery power of the law, we find that he does this for us. He lets this poor sinner know this. While the Pharisees accuse her, he is deaf to all they were saying; and when they still urge him, he gives her to see him turning the hot thunderbolt on the head of her accusers, so that they are forced to leave her alone with him who had proved himself the Lord of Sinai and her deliverer.

Could she desire more? Could she leave the place where she now found herself? Impossible. She was as able to stand it as the very Lord of the hill himself. Sinai had no more terror for her than for him. Not a bit. Need she leave that place? She was free to do so, if she pleased. They who had forced her there were gone. The passage was open. She had nothing to do but to go out after the rest, if she desired it. If she would fain hide her shame, and make the best of her case, she may. Now is the time. Let her go out. The Lord knows her sin in all its magnitude, and she need not think of remaining where she is, and be accounted guiltless. If this be her hope, let her follow her convicted accusers, and hide her shame outside. But no; she had learned the tale of delivering grace from the words and the acts of Jesus, and she need not go out. Nature would have retired; flesh and blood, or the mere moral principles of man, would have sent her after the rest. But the faith which had read the story of redemption acts above nature, or the judgment of the moral man. She remains where she was. This mount Sinai (as her accusers had made that place) was not too much for her. The still small voice of mercy which once answered Moses, and again answered Elijah there, had now answered her. The pledges of salvation were there exposed to her, as of old time to the fathers, and the spot was green and fresh and sunny to her spirit. It had become "the gate of heaven" to her. The darkness of death had been turned into "the light of life." She need not go—she would not go—she could not go. She will not leave the presence of Jesus, who had so gloriously approved himself the Lord of Sinai, and yet her deliverer. She was a sinner. Yes—and she knew it, and he knew it before whom in solitude she now stood. And so was Adam, as he came forth naked from the trees of the garden. But she is willing and able to stand naked or detected before him. She could no more retire to a thicket than Adam could continue in a thicket, or wear his apron of fig-leaves, after such a voice. Jesus had confounded all her accusers. They had roared of the evil she had done, but he had deeply and forever silenced them. In the light of life she now walked. Her conscience, in a little moment, had taken a long and eventful journey. She had passed from the region of darkness and death into the realms of liberty, safety, and joy, led by the light of the Lord of life.

This is the triumph of grace; and this is the joy of the sinner. This is the song of victory on the banks of the Red Sea, the enemy lying dead on its shores. She has but to call him "Lord;" and he has but to say, "Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more."

This was full deliverance. And the same deliverance awaits every sinner who, like the poor adulteress here, will come and be alone with Jesus. As sinners (as I have observed before), we have to do only with God. We may do offense or wrong to others, and they may complain and challenge us; but as sinners, God must deal with us alone, and the discovery of this is the way of blessing. David discovered it, and got blessing at once. His act, it is true, had been a wrong to another. He had taken the poor man's one little ewe lamb; but he had in all this sinned against God also. And in the discovery and sense of this he says, "I have sinned against the Lord." But the effect of this was, to leave him alone with God. As a wrong-doer, Uriah might have to do with him; but as a sinner, he had not. God must deal with him alone; and the moment his sin thus casts him alone with God, he, like the poor adulteress here, listens to the voice of mercy: "The Lord hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die." He suffers chastening for the wrong he had done, but the wages of sin are remitted.

It is ever the sinner's victory, when he can thus by faith claim to be alone with Jesus. The priest and the Levite have then passed by; for what could they do? What heart or ability had the law to meet the sinner's case? It is grace—the Stranger from heaven—that must help. The poor wounded sinner is lying in the way, and the good Samaritan must meet him. And truly blessed is it, when all through its further way, the soul still remembers how it thus began in solitude with Jesus the Savior.

And he is glorified in all this, as surely as we are comforted; glorified with his brightest glory, his glory as the Savior of the guilty. A vial is prepared for redeemed sinners, which is to bear an incense, the like to which can be found nowhere else. (Exodus 30:37.) Even the vials of angels do not carry such perfume. They praise the Lamb, it is true; but not in such lofty strains as the Church of redeemed sinners. They ascribe to him "power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing;" but the Church has a song before the throne, and sings, "Thou art worthy, for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation."

All this blessing for the sinner, and this glory for the Savior, we see here. The sinner is hid from her accuser, and the Savior silences him. The officers had been lately disarmed by the holy attraction of his words, and now the Scribes are rebuked by the convicting light of his words. (7:46; 8:9.) These were not carnal weapons, but weapons of heavenly temper. Their enmity had exhausted all its resources. They had assayed the force of the lion, and the guile of the serpent; and, all having passed, the Son of God at once takes his elevation, and shows himself in his place of entire separation and distance from them. He raises the pillar of light and darkness in the present wilderness of Canaan, and puts Israel, like the Egyptians of old, on the dark side of it. "I am the light of the world," says Jesus; "he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness."

Such was Israel now, spiritually called Egypt. They had no association with Abraham or with God, though they boasted in them; for they had no faculty to discern Abraham's joy, or the sent of God. They must take their place of atheistic darkness and alienation. The Lord gives them the place of Ishmael, the very place which Paul afterward put them in. (See v. 35; Galatians 4) As the child of the bondwoman Israel still is and will be, till "they turn to the Lord," till "they know the truth, and the truth make them free," make them as Isaac. The Jews assert that they had never been in bondage. (v. 33.) Jesus might have called for a penny, and by its image and superscription have

proved their falsehood. But, according to the high and divine thoughts of this Gospel, he takes other ground with them, and convicts them of deadlier bondage than that to Rome, a bondage to flesh and to sin.

Mark also their low and mistaken thoughts about him and his plainest words. He had said, "Abraham rejoiced to see my day;" but they reply as though he had said, he had seen Abraham. The difference, however, was infinite, though they perceived it not. By the words he had used, the Lord was challenging the highest glories for himself. He was making himself the great object from the beginning, the One who had been filling the thoughts, engaging the hopes, and answering the need of all the elect of God in all ages. It was not he that had seen Abraham, but it was Abraham that had seen him: and without contradiction I may say, the better is seen of the less. "Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." That is Christ's place. He was Adam's object as he went forth from Eden. He was the confidence of Abel, and of Noah. He was seen and rejoiced in by Abraham and the Patriarchs. He Was the substance of the shadows, and the end of the law. He was the Lamb and the light under the eye of the Baptist. He is now the confidence of every saved sinner, and he will be through eternity the praise and the center of the creation of God.

All this is a strong discovery of the state of Israel through this chapter. And this was a solemn moment for them. In Matthew the Lord tested the Jews by his Messiahship, and in the end convicted them of rejecting him in that character. But in this Gospel, he tests them by other and higher proposals of himself—as the light, the truth, the doer of the works and the speaker of the words of God, as the Son of the Father; and thus convicts them, not of mere unbelief in Messiah, but of the common atheism of man. In this character Israel is here made to stand, Cain-like, in the land of Nod, in the place of the common departure of man from God. He had spoken the words of the Father; but they understood not, they believed not. As the sent of the Father he had come (as such an one must have come) in grace to them; but they refused him. And so is it among men to this day. The Gospel is a message of goodness; but man receives it not. Man will not think well of God. This is the secret of unbelief. The Gospel is "goodness" (Romans 11:22); and man still asks, Is it from God? for man has, hard thoughts of God, and Satan is persuading him still to have them. He does what he can to obscure the sinner's title to God, that the sinner may look for some inheritance elsewhere.

So here with Israel. Jesus judged no man, but spake the word of the Father, which was freedom and life to them. But they understood not his speech, as he says to them. Their minds were formed by their father, who was a liar and a murderer; and "grace and truth," which came to them by Jesus Christ, they had no ears to hear. And now, as the disallowed witness of the Father, as the hated light of the world, he has no place in the land, no certain paths of this earth, to go forth into. He "passes by," as knowing no spot or person here; but still, as the light of the world, shining, wherever his beams may reach, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death.

9. 10. Accordingly, in this character, he is separated from Israel. Israel is left in darkness, and the pillar of God moves onward. Jesus, "the light of the world," goes forth and meets one who had been blind from his birth; and in such a one his works could well be manifested.

The Lord God, it is most true, is a great King, and acts as a Sovereign. He is the potter that has power over the clay. "Who hath made the seeing or the blind? Have not I the Lord?" But the Son

came not from the throne of the king, but from the bosom of the Father. He came to manifest the Father. The blind may be in the world; but the Son came only as the light of the world; and accordingly, as such alone, he applies himself to his blessed labor of grace and power, and opens the eyes of this blind beggar.

But what was this to Jerusalem? There was darkness there, and the light may shine; but it will not be comprehended. Instead of that, as we read here, “they brought to the Pharisees him that aforetime was blind.” There was a high court of inquisition at Jerusalem, and it must try the ways of the Son of God. Instead of welcoming him as of old, when the pillar of God was raised, and saying, “Rise, Lord, let thine enemies be scattered,” they love their own darkness, and will walk in it.

At first, they question the man himself; but not finding him quite to their purpose, they commit the case to witnesses, who, they judge, were in their own power. They call his parents; but again, they fail. The fact that the light had shone among them cannot be gainsaid. They then seek to divert the whole matter into such a channel as would leave untouched their own pride and worldliness; and they say, “Give God the glory; we know that this man is a sinner.” But this will not do either. The poor soul maintains his integrity, and then they alarm him by separating him from all acknowledged ground of safety. “Thou art his disciple,” say they; “but we are Moses’ disciples.” But he is kept still; and not only kept, but led on from strength to strength. He hath, and more is given him He follows as the light leads, till at length it so shines as to reprove the darkness of the Pharisees; and they hurl against him the thunders of the Church, and cast him forth without the camp.

But where do they cast him? Just where every lonely outcast sinner may find himself, where the unclean Samaritan and convicted adulteress had before found themselves—into the presence and across the solitudes of the Son of God, which is the very gate of heaven; for the Lord had gone without the camp before him. This sheep of the flock was now “put forth;” but it was only to meet the shepherd, who had “gone before.” In that place of shame and exposure they embrace each other. “There was he found by one who had himself been shot by the archers.” The meeting there was a meeting indeed. This poor Israelite, while he was within the camp, had met Jesus as his healer; but now that he is put without, he meets him as the Son of God. He meets him to know him as the One who, when he was blind, had opened his eyes, and now that he is cast out talks with him. And, beloved, this is ever the way of our meeting Jesus—as sinners and as outcasts—in the unclean place. If he takes us up there, it must be in the full grace of the Son of God, the Savior.

And thus, our character as sinners leads us into the sweetest and dearest intimacies of the Lord of life and glory. As creatures, we know the strength of his hand, his Godhead, and wisdom, and goodness; but as sinners, we know the love of his heart, and all the treasures of his grace and glory.

And I notice the changed tone of this poor beggar in the presence of the Pharisees he was firm and unbending. He does not abate the tone of conscious righteousness and truth all through. He set his face as a flint, and endured hardness. But the moment he comes into the presence of the Lord, he is all humility and gentleness. He melts, as it were, at the feet of Jesus. Oh, what a sweet sample is this of the workmanship of the Spirit of God! courage before man, but the meltings of love, and the bowings of worship, before the Lord who has loved and redeemed us.

But this unclean place without the camp, where the Lord of heaven and earth now stood with this poor sinner, was not only the place of liberty and joy to the sinner, but the wide field of observation to the Lord. From this place he surveys himself, the beggar, and the whole camp of Israel, outside of which he had gone with his elect one; and in the parable of “the good shepherd” he draws the moral of it all. In the scene of the ninth chapter, he had shown that he had entered by the door into the sheepfold; for he had come, working the works of the Father, and had in that way approved himself to be in the confidence of the owner of the fold, the sanctioned Shepherd of his flock. He was estranged from Israel; but, like Moses in such a case, he was to keep the flock of his Father in other pastures, near the mount of God. The Pharisees, because they were resisting him, must therefore needs be “thieves and robbers,” climbing into the fold some other way. And the poor blind beggar was a sample of the ‘flock, who, while they refuse the voice of strangers, hear and know the voice of him that had entered by the door; and, entering by him, “the door of the sheep,” find safety, rest, and pasture.

All this had been set out in the scene before us, and is expressed in the parable. The parable thus passes a blessed commentary on the present condition of this poor outcast. The Jews, no doubt, judged (and would have had him judge so likewise) that he had now been cut off from safety, being cut off from themselves. But Jesus shows, that not until now was he in safety; that had he been left where he was, he would have become a prey to those who were stealing, and killing, and destroying; but that now he was found and taken up of One who, to give him life, would lay down his own.

All this we have, both in the narrative and in the parable. And it is at this point in our Gospel that the Lord and the remnant meet together; “the poor of the flock” are here manifested, their own shepherds pitying them not; and the Shepherd from heaven takes them up as all his care, to guard and to feed them. (Zechariah 11)

But the love and care of him who said to him, “Feed the flock of slaughter” (Zechariah 11:4), is also seen here most blessedly. It is, perhaps, the sweetest thing in the parable. We learn the mind of the Father towards the flock. For the Lord says, “As the Father knoweth me, so know I the Father, and I lay down my life for the sheep;” letting us know that one of the deepest secrets of the Father’s heart was his love and care for the Church. The flock, indeed, was the Father’s before it was committed to Christ the Shepherd. “Thine they were, and thou gavest them me.” They lay in the Father’s hand, before they were put into Christ’s hand. They were the Father’s by election before the world was, and became Christ’s by the gift of the Father, and by purchase of blood. And all the tenderness and diligent care of the Shepherd do but express the mind of the Owner towards his flock. The Shepherd and the owner of the flock are one. As the Lord says, “I and my Father are one.” One, it is true, in glory, but one also in their love and carefulness about their poor flock of redeemed sinners. Christ met the Father’s mind, when he loved the Church and gave himself for it; and they rest forever one in that love, as surely as they rest one in their own glory. This is truth of precious comfort to us. “Our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.” We learn, indeed, that God is love; and the moment we discover this, we get our rest in God; for the wearied broken heart of the sinner may rest in love, though nowhere else. “God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.”

Here, then, “the poor of the flock” feed and he down. But Beauty and Bands are to be broken. The shepherd’s staves, that would have led and kept Israel, must now be cast away. It was only a remnant that knew his voice. Who can hear the voice of a Savior, but a sinner? The whole need not the physician. And thus, in this place our Lord’s dealings with Israel close. He refuses to feed them any more: “That that dieth, let it die; and that that is to be cut off, let it be cut off” (Zechariah 11:9.)

And I may notice that his dealing with Israel closes here, in a way fully characteristic of this Gospel by John. They seek to stone him, as we read, because that “he being a man had made himself God.” In the other Gospels, the soul of Israel loathes him (as Zechariah speaks) for other reasons; because, for instance, he received sinners, or impugned their traditions, or touched their sabbath. But, in this Gospel, it is his assertion of Sonship of the Father, the assertion of the divine honors of his person, which chiefly raises the conflict. (See chapters 5 and 8) In this place, we observe that the Lord, in answer to the Jews, pleads the manifestation which he had now given of himself, as others had done in Israel before him. Others, set in authority, had been called “gods,” because they had manifested God in his place of authority and judgment, and were the powers whom God had ordained. And he, in like manner, had now manifested the Father. The judges and kings could have shown that the word of God had come to them, committing to them the sword of God. And Jesus had shown himself the sent of the Father, full of grace and truth, working among them now, as the Father had hitherto worked, in the exercise of grace, restoring, and healing, and blessing poor sinners. Thus, had he shown that the Father was in him, and he in the Father. But their hearts were hardened. The darkness could not comprehend the light, and he has but to escape out of their hands, and take up again a position in the earth apart from the revolted nation.

Here the second section of our Gospel ends. It has presented to us our Lord’s controversies with the Jews, in the course of which he set aside one Jewish thing after another, and brought in himself in the place of it. In the 5th chapter, he set aside Bethesda, the last witness of the Father’s working in Israel, and took its place, as minister of grace. In the 6th and 7th chapters, he set aside the feasts; the passover and the tabernacles (the first of which opened the Jewish year with the life of the nation, while the second closed it with their glory), taking the place of these ordinances himself, sliming that he was the only source of life and glory. In the 8th, after exposing the utter unsuitableness of the law to man, because of the evil and weakness of man, he takes his place as “the light of the world,” as the One by whom alone, and not by the law, sinners were to find their way into truth and liberty, and home to God. And then, in the 9th chapter, in this character of the light of the World, he goes out from Israel. He had been casting his beams on that people, but they comprehended him not. He goes forth, therefore, and draws the poor of the flock after him; and, in the 10th, exhibits himself and them outside the camp, leaving the land of Israel, as the prophet had spoken, a chaos without form and void. The Word of the Lord, that would have called it into beauty and order, was refused; and now the place of Jehovah’s ancient husbandry, on which his eyes rested from one end of the year to the other, and which he watered with the rain of his own heavens, is given over to become the wilderness and the shadow of death.

11. 12. Thus, was it with Israel. They were left in unbelief and darkness, having refused the proposals of the Son of God. But these chapters show, that though Israel may delay their mercy, they shall not disappoint it. God’s purpose—is to bless, and he will bless. In the way of his own covenant, that is, in resurrection—power and grace, he will bring the blessing to Israel. It was as

the quickener of the dead that too had of old entered into covenant with their father Abraham. It was thus that he appeared to Moses, as the hope of the nation at Horeb. (Exodus 3; Luke 20:37.) It was by resurrection that he was to give to Israel the promised prophet, like unto Moses. (Deuteronomy 18; Acts 3) It is in this character that all the prophets speak of him, as acting for the seed of Abraham in the latter day. And our own apostle tells us, that the resurrection of Jesus is the pledge of all the blessing promised to the fathers. (Acts 33.) Jehovah will restore life and glory to Israel in resurrection-power and grace. When all their own strength is gone, he will himself arise for their help. He will plant glory in the land of the living. The barren woman shall keep house. The Lord will call them from their graves, and make the dry bones live. And that he will accomplish all this for Israel is here, in these two chapters, pledged and foreshown. The previous chapters had shown Israel to be in ruins and distance from God; but here, ere the Lord entirely hides himself from them, he gives them, in the raising of Lazarus and its results, full pledges of final life and glory.

This, I doubt not, is the general bearing of these two chapters; and thus, they form a kind of appendix to the previous section, rather than a distinct portion of the Gospel.

The Lord had left Judea, and was in retirement beyond Jordan, when a message came to him that one in Judea whom he loved was sick. He abides in the place where he was, till this sickness had taken its course and ended in death. Then he addresses himself to his journey; for he could then take it as the Son of God, the quickener of the dead: and in the full consciousness that he was about to act as such, he sets forward, saying, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go that I may awake him out of sleep." He also consciously bore the day along with him; for "the life is the light of men;"—and thus he, says also, in answer to the fears of his disciples, "Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world." He not only saw the light, but he was the light, of the world—not merely a child of light, but the fountain of light. His disciples, however, are dull of hearing. They neither discern the voice of the Son of God, nor see the path of the light of life. They judge that death to himself, rather than life to others, was before him, and they say, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."

There might have been human affection in this, but there was sad ignorance of his glory. The disciples now, like the women afterward, would fain take their spices to the Savior's tomb; but both should have known that he was not there.

Onward he goes, the Son of God, the quickener of the dead; and his path lies to the grave of Lazarus, his friend, in Judea. There he stands in the full vision of the triumphs of sin; for "sin hath reigned unto death;" and, had all ended here, Satan had prevailed. Jesus wept. The Son of the living God wept over the vision of death. In another Gospel, he had wept, as the Son of David, over the city which he had chosen to put his name there, because she had refused him. But here, as the Son of God who had life in himself, he weeps over the vision of death. But he groaned in himself also; and he that searcheth the hearts knew that groan; and Jesus, in full assurance that it was heard, had only to acknowledge the answer with thanksgiving, and, in the power of that answer, to say, "Lazarus, come forth;"—and he that was dead did come forth, the witness that "as the Father hath life in himself, so had he given to the Son to have life in himself."

Here did the path of the Son, of God end. He had met the power of sin at its height, and had shown. that he was above it—the resurrection and the life. But this was not the destruction of him

that had the power of death; for it was not the death and resurrection of the Captain of salvation himself nor was it properly a pledge to the saints of their resurrection in glorious bodies; for Lazarus came forth, bound hand and foot with grave-clothes, to walk again in flesh and blood. It was rather a pledge to Israel of the quickening power of the Son of God on their behalf, showing them that the promised resurrection or revival of the nation rested on him, and that he would in due, time accomplish it.

But Israel had no eyes to read this sign of their mercy, nor heart to understand it. Instead of it becoming the ground of their faith, it is made the occasion of the working of full enmity. "From that day forth they took counsel together, to put him to death." The husbandmen set themselves to cast out the heir of the vineyard. And their entire departure from their father Abraham, their complete apostasy from God, is manifested. Israel had been separated out of the nation's unto God; but they now deliberate, and take their place among the nations again. Unlike Abraham, they take riches from the king of Sodom, instead of blessing from the hand of Melchisedek. They choose the patronage of Rome, rather than know the resurrection-power of the Son of God. "If we let him thus alone," say they, "all will believe on him, and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation."

(Continued from page 72.)

Operations of the Spirit of God

I would desire to say a few words on the operations of the Spirit of God—the connection of his working in us with Christ; and the separateness too of the operation of the Spirit in us, from the work of Christ as wrought and perfected for us already.

I do not assume, by any means, to give a full or adequate view of the operations of the Spirit,—“Who is sufficient for these things?” I see enough, indeed, to see the paucity and dimness of what has appeared to my mind, compared with the glory of what is still shown to be Onward. Blessed that it is so—most blessed—eternal blessings! Still I would speak of that which the Scripture seems to make clear. If others have learned more, they can be led forth to communicate it; if less, they will not begrudge what I do; what I hope is, that it may lead into more searching and attainment of the power of these things. Christians, and real ones, are too apt (though this may seem a strange assertion) to separate, and too apt to confound Christ and the Spirit—that is, they separate Christ and the Spirit in operation in us too much; and they confound the work of Christ for us too much with the Spirit. The consequence of both is, uncertainty, meagerness of judgment, and doubt.

The work of the Spirit of God in me, in the power of life, produces conflict, labor, discoveries of sin, and need of mortifying my members which are on the earth; and the more what “Christ is” is revealed in my soul, in comparison with the discovery of what I am, the more do I find cause of humiliation—the more do I find, by the contrast of Christ looked at as in the flesh here sinless, God condemning this evil root of sin in the flesh in me. And much more, by the discovery of what my blessed Lord is, as glorified, do I see, through the Spirit, how short I am of “attaining,” though I may be still changed into the same likeness, from glory to glory. Hence, though at peace, hope, perhaps animating hope, and joy betimes filling the soul, yet there will be exercised self-judgment and sorrow of heart at the discovery of how every feeling we have towards God, and every object spiritually known, is short of the just effects they should produce and call out; and hence, too, in case of any allowance or indulgence of evil, deep self-abasement and utter abhorrence. Hence, when the fullness and finishedness of our acceptance in Christ is not known, anxiety and spiritual despondency arise, and doubt, sometimes issuing in a very mistaken and evil reference to the law,—a sort of consecrating the principle of unbelief, putting the soul (on the discovery, by the Spirit, of sin working in it) under the law and its condemnation; and not “in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free.”

We hear of God hiding his face from us, and the like language, which faith never could use; for faith knows that God ever looks on his Anointed, never hides his face; and if we have such thoughts, they are to be treated as pure unbelief, and dealt with accordingly: every believer must acknowledge that it is not true, if he believe the full and perfect acceptance of the saints in Christ; and therefore to account it true is the lie of his own heart, and unbelief. The Spirit of God judges sin in me; but it makes me know that I am not judged for it, because Christ has borne that judgment for me. This is no cloak of licentiousness. The flesh would indeed always turn it to

this—it would pervert everything. But the truth is, that same Spirit which reveals the Lord, who bore my sins, as having purged them, at the right hand of God, and which therefore gives me perfect assurance of their —being put away, and the infiniteness of my acceptance in Him,—that same Spirit, I say, judges the sin by virtue of its character as seen in the light of that very glory; and when this is not done, the Father, into whose hands the Son has committed those whom the Father has given Him to keep, as a Holy Father chastises, and corrects, and purges—as a husbandman the branches. Here, moreover, the discipline of the Church of God, as having the Spirit, comes in:—the disuse and neglect of which has much ministered to the distrust of the full and happy assurance of the believer; for the body of the Church, as such, might necessarily to assume itself (for such is the portion of the Church according to the word) as a sacred people—a manifested sacred people—and then, through the Spirit dwelling in it, to exercise all godly and gracious discipline for the maintenance of the manifested holiness of that sacred people. The Church is the dwelling-place of the Spirit. The Spirit reveals the condition of the Church in Christ, and of the individuals who compose it, (“In that day ye shall know that I am in the Father, and ye in me, and I in you,”) and effects, maintains, and guards the character of Christ in the Church in grace and holiness: “Ye are the epistle of Christ written by the Spirit of the living God.” If my soul rests entirely on the work of Christ and his acceptance, as the One who appears in the presence of God for me,—that is a finished work, and a perfect infinite acceptance,— “as He is, so am I in this world:” so that “herein is love made perfect with me, that I should have boldness in the day of judgment” Now, what men substitute for this, is the examination of the effects of the Spirit in me;—the effects of regeneration are put as the ground of rest in lieu of ‘redemption: whence I sometimes hope when I see those effects, sometimes despond when I see the flesh working; and having put the work of the Spirit in the place of the work of Christ, the confidence I am commanded to hold fast never exists, and I doubt whether I am in the faith at all. All this results from substituting the work of the Spirit of God in me, for the work, victory, resurrection, and ascension of Christ actually accomplished: the sure (because finished) resting-place of faith, which never alters, never varies, and is always the same before God. If it be said, “Yes, but I cannot see it as plain, because of the flesh and unbelief,”—this does not alter the truth; and to whatever extent this dimness proceeds, treat it as unbelief and sin, —not as the state of a Christian, or as God hiding his face. The discovery of sin in you hateful and detestable as it is, is no ground for doubting, because it was by reason of this, to atone for this, because you were this, that Christ died, and Christ is risen; and there is an end of that question.

But it will be said, “I fully believe that Christ is the very true Son of God, one with the Father, and all his work and grace, but I do not know that I have an interest in Him: —this is the question, and this is quite a different question.” Not so: but the subtlety of Satan, and bad teaching, which would still throw you back off Christ. God; for our comfort, has identified the two things, by stating “that by Him all that believe are justified from all things” in a word, to say, “ I believe, but I do not know whether I have an interest,” is a delusion of the devil; for God says, it is those who believe who have the interest:—that is his way of dealing. I have no more right to believe that I am a sinner, as —God views it, in myself, than that I am righteous in Christ. The same testimony declares that none is righteous, and that believers are justified.

I may have a natural consciousness of sin, and a Spirit-taught consciousness of sin and what it is. If I rest in tins, I cannot have peace: in Christ’s work about it I have perfect peace. But am I not

desired to examine myself, whether I am in the faith? No. What, then, says 2 Corinthians 13:5: "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith," &c. Why, that if they sought a proof of Christ speaking in Paul, they were to examine themselves, and by the certainty of their own Christianity, which they did not doubt, be assured of his apostleship? The apostle's argument was of no value whatever, but on the ground of the sanctioned certainty that they were Christians. But I have dwelt longer on this than I had any purpose; but the comfort of souls may justify it. It is connected with man's seeking, from the work of the Spirit of God in him, that which is to be looked for only from the work of Christ.

If my assurance, and comfort, or hope, be drawn from the experience of what passes within me, though it may be verified against cavils thereby, as in the first Epistle of John, then it is not the righteousness of God by faith; for the experience of what passes in my soul is not faith. I repeat—that by looking to the work of Christ the standard of holiness is exalted; because, instead of looking into the muddled image of Christ in my soul, I view Him in the Spirit, in the perfectness of that glory into the fellowship of which I am called; and therefore, to walk worthy of God, who hath called me to his own kingdom and glory.

I forget the things behind, and press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus; and my self-examination becomes, not an unhappy inquiry whether or not I am in the faith, never honoring God in confidence after all that He has done, but whether my walk is worthy of one who is called into his kingdom and glory.

But the disconnection of Christ from the operations of the Spirit is an evil, and tends to the same point, though the application be not so immediate.

In the teaching of ordinary evangelicalism, a man is said to be "born of the Spirit,"—its need perhaps shown from what we are, and its fruits shown, and the inquiry stated—Are you this? —for then you will go to heaven. These things have a measure of truth in them. But are they thus presented in Scripture? There I find these things continually and fully connected with Christ, and involving our being in that blessed One, and He in us; and consequently not merely an evidence, by fruits, that I am born of the Spirit of God, but a participation in all of which He is the Heir, as the risen Man (in the sure title of his own Sonship), as quickened together with Him—a union of life and inheritance, of which the Holy Ghost is the power and witness.

It is thus expressed in the Epistle to the Ephesians,— "And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at his own right hand in the heavenly places. And you hath He quickened, even when we were dead in sins, bath quickened us together with Christ, and bath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ." So in Colossians 2:13: "And you hath He quickened together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses." "If ye then be risen with Christ."

The operation of the Spirit of God, while acting in divine power, it to bring us into living association with Christ. His operation in us is to make good in us, to connect us with, to reveal to us, and to bring us into the power of, all that is verified in Christ, as the second Adam, the risen Man in life, office and glory, — "he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit." We are "heirs together," "suffering together that we may be glorified together," and this finally "conformed to the image" of God's

Son, in that God “hath quickened us together,” and “hath raised us up together, and made us sit together,” &c (Ephesians 2:5,6); and the Spirit of God works in us thus in life, and in service, and suffering; and lastly in glory, in the resurrection of our bodies also.

I would trace, briefly, the testimony of this through Scripture. It may be seen there both individually, and, besides that, also corporately, as in the Church. The Spirit is spoken of first as quickening, and secondly as indwelling. We are born of the Spirit. As regards individuals So quickened, as indwelling, it associates them with the glory of Christ, as it sheds abroad also God’s love in the heart, and with the power of Christ’s life as having eternal life—life in Himself as Son of God; and it also reveals and makes them, according to his good pleasure, instruments of the revelation of his glory as Son of Man; —this consequent upon ascension, as the former is declared and witnessed in resurrection.

The special subject of which He is witness in the Church corporately, constituting the Church the present faithful witness, is, that Jesus Christ is Lord, which is immediately connected with the glory, “to the glory of God the Father.”

The 3rd chapter of John first brings the subject of the operations of the Spirit before us at large. “A man must be born again,” born of water and of the Spirit. But while this is generally taken simply that he must be regenerate to be saved, the passage states much more. He cannot see nor enter into the kingdom of God, a kingdom composed of earthly things and heavenly things, of which a Jew must be born again, to be partaker, (however much he fancied himself a child of the kingdom,) even in its earthly things, which Nicodemus, as a teacher of Israel, ought to have known,’ as from Ezekiel 36:21-38; and to the heavenly things of which the Lord could not direct them then, save as shelving the door, even the cross, a door which opened into better and higher things: wherein (as, in the Spirit’s work, being prerogative power, “so was every one that was born of the Spirit,” and Gentiles therefore might be partakers of it; for it made, not found, men what it would have them) the Lord declared that God loved not the Jew only, but the world. In this passage itself, then, we have not merely the individual renewed, and fit for heaven, but the estimate of the Jew, a kingdom revealed, embracing earthly and heavenly things, which the regenerate alone saw, and into which they entered —to the heavenly things, of which the cross, as yet as unintelligible as the heavenly things themselves, formed the only door, wherein was exhibited the Son of man lifted up, and the Son of God given in God’s love to the world. “In the regeneration,” of which the Spirit’s quickening operation in the heart was the first-fruits, as his presence was the earnest of the heavenly part, “this Son of man would sit on the throne of his glory.”

The principle, then, on which men dwell, is true; but the revelation of this chapter is much wider and more definite than they suppose. It is not merely that the man is changed or saved; but he sees and enters a kingdom the world knows nothing of, till it comes in power; and moreover, that such a one receives a life as true and real, and much more important and blessed than any natural life in the flesh. It is not merely changing a man by acting on his faculties, but the giving a life which may act indeed now, through these faculties, on objects far beyond them, as the old and depraved life on objects within its or their reach; but in which he is made partaker of the divine nature, in which not merely the faculties of his soul have new objects, but as in this he was partner with the first Adam, the living soul, so in that with the second Adam, the quickening Spirit. And we

must add, that the Church, in order to its assimilation with Him in it, is made partaker of this, consequent upon his resurrection, and therefore is made partaker of the, life according to the power of it thus exhibited; and has its existence consequent upon, yea as the witness of, the passing away (blessed be God!) of all the judgment of its sins; for it has its life from, and consequent upon, the resurrection of Christ out of that grave in which, so to speak, He buried them all. It exists, and has not its existence but consequent upon the absolute accomplishment and passing away of its judgment.

This, then, is the real character of our regeneration into the kingdom, where the charge of sin is not, nor can be, upon us, being introduced there by the power of that in which all is put away. The life of the Church is identified with the resurrection of Christ, and therefore the unqualified forgiveness of all its flesh could do, for it was borne, and borne away. The justification of the Church is identified with living grace; for it has it, because quickened together with Him, as out of the grave, where He buried all its sins. Thus are necessarily connected regeneration and justification; and the operation of the Spirit is not a mere acting on the faculties, a work quite separate from Christ and to be known by its fruits, while the death of Christ is something left to reason about; but it is a quickening together with Christ out of my trespasses and sins, in which I find myself indeed morally dead, but Him judicially dead for me, and therefore forgiven, and justified necessarily, as so quickened. The resurrection of Christ proves that there will be a judgment, says the apostle. (Acts 17.) It proves that there will be none for me, says the Spirit by the same blessed apostle; for He was raised for my justification. He was dead under my sins; God has raised Him, and where are they? The Church is quickened out of Jesus' grave, where the sins were left.

Then, as to the power of this life and the other operations of the Spirit, I find, in the Lord's account of his own testimony, the statement of communion and displayed glory. "We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen." He testified that which He knew in oneness with the Father, which He had seen in the glory which He had with the Father before the world was.

The operations of the Spirit, in giving us life in the Son, and revealing the glory (ours therefore withal) into which He has brought his manhood, and which consequently is revealed in it, answer just to this statement of the Lord concerning Himself. Our communion—living communion with Him and with the Father—and our apprehension and expression of the glory which is his, —of these two the 4th and 7th chapters of John speak. In these chapters and elsewhere we have to remark, that we are taught, not of the Spirit's operating on, but dwelling in us. The Spirit of God does operate on, (whether in mere testimony, for the reception of which we are responsible, as in the case of the rulers of the Jews and St. Stephen—if Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye;" of which I do not speak now at large or efficiently,) in convincing, renewing, and quickening us. This being done by the Word, it is by faith wherein (that is, in the reception of the Word) we are quickened; that is, the revelation of Christ. "We are all the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ." "Of his own will begat He us by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures." These are sufficient to show the manner of the operation; how, being a testimony, the natural man rejects it, though guilty for so doing; for it is God's testimony: and how it is effectual, in the quickening power of the Spirit; but is by faith, in consequence of the instrument employed. The power of it I have already spoken of whence we see, while they that believe not make God a liar, they that believe have the witness in themselves; for they are made livingly partakers, in

communion, of what they believe.

But the work in virtue of which they are thus made partakers of life and fellowship with God, being; a perfect work, the Spirit, who takes up his abode in the believer, is a spirit of peace and joy, a spirit of witness of all that Christ is and has done, and, we must add, of the Father's perfect acceptance of both.

That the natural man rejects these things, and receives them not, we shall see; but the conscience being awakened, and peace made, the Spirit is witness to the renewed soul of them.

Now, in the 5th chapter of John, we have the Spirit's operation, wherein, as to the manner, the dead hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear live; and though, by the Spirit, it is still: the Son speaking from heaven, as before on earth, i.e., on Mount Sinai, which was by angels, as far as mediately, not by the Spirit.

As to the manner and character of the testimony, I would speak more when I come to the 7th chapter of John, where it is the witness of the glory of the Son of man, as thus given and present among believers.

(To be continued.)

On the Gospel by St. John

And the judgment then comes upon them, "Hear ye indeed, but understand not, and see ye indeed, but perceive not." For now, having the voice of the Spirit in their High Priest, there is no ear to hear it aright; and having the doings of the Son of God among them, there is no eye to perceive him aright.

But still he was the quickener of Israel; and in the latter day, the dry bones shall hear the word of the Lord and live; of which, as I have observed, Lazarus is the pledge. And the remnant in Israel in that day is also illustrated in the family at Bethany. Into the midst of this well-loved family the Lord comes, and finds refreshment, and fellowship, and the acknowledgment of his glory; as he will find these things in his remnant in the latter day.

There he sits as "the Lord of life," the witness of His quickening power being seated beside him; and there too he sits as "the King of glory," the homage of his willing people being laid at his feet. In these two holy dignities is He now received by this faithful household. "While the King sitteth at his table," (says Mary now, as the remnant will say by and by), "my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof." (Cant. 1: 12.)

It is thus he here sits; one family in the apostate land owning him Lord of life and King—of glory. But the city itself and the strangers there were soon to see him as well as this house at Bethany; as, by and by, the nation and the whole earth will own him after the remnant.

Accordingly, "on the next day," as we read, much people, moved by the report of his having raised Lazarus from the dead, meet him on his coming to Jerusalem, and lead him into the royal city, as the Son of David, the king of Israel.

The time was the time of the Passover; but the people are moved as with the joy of the Feast of Tabernacles, and take branches of palm-trees to gladden their King. And the nations, as it were,

come up to keep the feast also; for 'certain Greeks come to Philip, and say, "Sir, we would see Jesus." Glory shines for a moment in the land of the living. Here was Lazarus raised from the dead, the city receiving her King, and the nations worshipping there. The great materials of the kingdom in which, as the Son of man, he is to be glorified, had now passed before the Lord. The joy of Jerusalem and the gathering of the nations he had now witnessed; and, entering in spirit for a moment into the kingdom, he says, "the hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified." But it was but for a moment. This was but a passing taste of his cup of salvation. This season was really to be the Passover, and not the Tabernacles to Jesus; and his soul passes, for another moment, through his paschal trouble. But the Father again acknowledges him. He had glorified him as Son of God, quickener of the dead, at the grave of Lazarus; and now he glorifies him as Son of man, Judge of the world and of the prince of the world, by the voice from heaven.

And here did his path as the Son of man end; as his path as the Son of God had before ended at the grave of Lazarus. The Son of God and Son of man had now been fully displayed before his unbelieving Israel. He was glorified among them, as the Prince of life, and the holder of all authority and power. The things now accomplished and displayed in these two chapters, were the fulfilling of his words to them at the beginning: these were "the greater works" at which they should "marvel." They had now witnessed his quickening power as Son of God, and had his judicial glory as Son of man pledged to them by the voice from heaven. They should have honored him as they honored the Father. But instead of this, they were soon to kill him. They were soon to disown the Lord of life and the King of glory, on whom all their hopes of life and the kingdom hung. He had tested them by the promised "greater works:" but there was no response from Israel. The harvest was past, the summer ended, and they were not saved. The lamentation of the prophet was now to be uttered, "Who bath believed our report?" It was not that his works had not manifested him as the hope of Israel. Many even of the chief rulers felt and owned them in their consciences, as we here read. But they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God, as he had said unto them. (5: 44; 43.) All that remained was judgment on Israel, and the heavenly glory of this earth-rejected Jesus. (40, 41.) So, does our Evangelist himself tell us, drawing the awful moral of the whole scene: "He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart, that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them. These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him." All closed in judgment upon Israel, and in glory, heavenly glory, glory within the veil, for the blessed Jesus. (Isaiah 6:1,2.)

Thus, our Gospel seats the Son of God in heaven again. His way ends there, as it had begun there. The Gospel by Matthew ushers him forth as the Son of David from Bethlehem, and closes with him (as far as his ministry was concerned) on the Mount of Olives. (Matthew 1:24) But this Gospel opened with his descent from the bosom of the Father, and here closes (as far as his ministry is concerned) by his return to heaven. There he still dwells in the high and holy place, and the humble and brokenhearted are there with him. He speaks from heaven; and his voice must be in the power of all that finished work which has taken him there. He has forced his way into the holiest, through the outer courts, throwing down all enmities, all middle walls and partitions, and has again come forth from thence in the virtue of his blood, and in the power of the Holy Ghost, to preach peace to all. (Ephesians 2:12-22.) He cannot but speak of all that is there, and not of what is here. He cannot but speak, by his Spirit, of the peace, and gladness, and glory, which are there, and not of the accusings with which our sins still committed here would till our hearts.

All through his divine ministry in this Gospel, as I have before observed, the Lord had been acting in grace, “as the Son of the Father,” and as “the light of the world.” His presence was “daytime” in the land of Israel. He had been shining there, if haply the darkness might comprehend him. And here, at the close of that ministry (12: 35, 36), we see him still as the light casting forth his last beams upon the land and people. He can but shine, whether they will comprehend him or not. While his presence is there it is still day-time. The night cannot come till he is gone. “As long as—I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” But here, “he departs and hides himself,” and then God, by his prophet, brings the night upon the land. (ver. 40.) It was not that the light had imperfectly shone. Their own consciences told them otherwise. (5: 42, 43.) The light had done its service and ruled the day, but the darkness had not comprehended it. And then this ruler of the day sets in Judea, only to rise in other spheres. For his cry in these closing verses (44-50) is not addressed to Israel merely, but to the whole earth. It is but the same “light of the world,” which had lately run his race in Judea, coming forth out of his chamber to run a longer race. And this race he is running still. “The day of Salvation” is still with us. The night of judgment on the Gentiles has not yet come. We may still walk without stumbling; we may still know whither we are going. The light still says, “Awake thou that sleepest and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.” Such are thy ways, blessed Savior, Lamb of God, Son of the Father.

(Continued from page 116.)

Part 3. Chapters 13-17

I have followed the Lord through chapters 1.-12. of this Gospel, noticing his ways as the Son of God, the Stranger from heaven, and also his intercourses and controversies with Israel. The one was a path of grace to sinners, but of loneliness to himself—the other lay much in the track of the prophet Jeremiah. Like Jeremiah, the Lord had witnessed the backslidings of the daughter of Zion. Like him, he had warned her, and taught her, and would fain have healed her. But, like him, he had seen the stubbornness of her heart, had suffered rebuke and rejection from her, and had now only to weep for her. He had, as in the words of Jeremiah, said to her, even to the end of his ministry (see chap. 12: 35), “Give glory to the Lord your God; before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and, while ye look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness. But if ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride.” (Jeremiah 13:16,17.)

Jesus had thus wept over Jerusalem; for she had not repented. The boar had now again left his woods to devour her; the “Destroyer of the Gentiles” was again on his way, as in the prophet’s day. The captivity in Babylon had no more purged away the dross of Zion, than the waters of Noah had sanctified the earth; ‘and all was again ripe for another judgment. But as, in the midst of all this, Jeremiah of old had his Baruch, the companion of his temptations (Jeremiah 36. and 43.), to whom from the Lord he pledges present life (chap. 45.), and with whom he deposits the sure evidence of final rest and restoration (chap. 32.), so now Jesus has his saints, the companions of his rejection, to whom he gives the present certainty of life, and the sure promise of future rest and honor.

With these we now get our Lord in secret. We have now done with his public ministry: and we have him now with his own, — telling them, as their Prophet, the secrets of God.

And being about to listen to him as the Prophet of the Church, I would observe, that what the Lord gives us as our Prophet is our present riches. It is not with us, as with Israel of old, “blessings of the basket and of the store,” nor is it with us now, as it will be by and by, “authority over cities,”—but “we have the mind of Christ.” Treasures of wisdom and knowledge hid in Christ are our present treasures. (Colossians 2:3.) Arid accordingly, having now turned away from Israel towards his elect, and looking at them apart from the world, he makes known to them all things that he had heard of the Father. By and by, as the King of glory, he will share his dominion with the saints; but now he has only the tongue of the learned for them, that he may teach them the secrets of God. It is only as their Prophet that he now enriches them. As to other riches, they may count themselves poor, as one of them of old said (and said it, beloved, without shame), “Silver and gold have I none.”

Our Lord Jesus is the Prophet like unto Moses, who had been promised of old. God saw Moses face to face. He spake with him, as a man speaketh unto his friend, saying of him, “With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the Lord shall he behold.” In all this high prerogative, Moses was the shadow of the Son of God. Moses had

access to God. He was on the heights of the hill with him, beyond the region of thunder and tempest; then, within the cloud of glory, as it stood at the door of the temporary tabernacle; and lastly, in the very holy, of holies, when the tabernacle itself was reared. (Exodus 24: 33; 25: 22.) And he stood in all that nearness to God, whenever he pleased, and without blood—though even Aaron, we know, could be there only once a year, and that not without blood—all this telling us, in affecting and intelligible language, of the divine personal worthiness of our prophet—of the God—head glory of him, whose shadow Moses was, who was then in the bosom of the Father, and has now spoken to us. (Hebrews 1:1,2.)

And what Moses learned on the top of the hill, or within the cloud of glory, or from off the Mercy Seat in the holiest, was the secret which the Son has now brought out from the bosom of the Father. Moses learned there the grace of God, and saw “the glory of goodness.” (Exodus 33:19.) Blessed vision! And the only-begotten Son was among us, “full of grace and truth.”

But the services which the Lord renders us as our Prophet are various; and in this variety we shall find the special character of this Gospel by John fully maintained. In the opening of Matthew, the Lord, as the Prophet, revealed the mind of God, touching the conduct of his people, interpreting the law in its extent and purity, thus determining the divine standard, and applying it to the conscience. He prescribed the order and ways of the saints, so as to make them worthy of the regeneration and the kingdom, calling the soul into exercise towards God, and giving it its due ends and objects. (See Matthew 5-7) But in our Gospel, he is the Prophet in a higher character. He declares “the Father,” and reveals the “heavenly” things. He speaks as the One who had “ascended into heaven,” and was “from above.” (John 3:13,31.) It is not so much our conduct as God’s thoughts, that he tells us of. He tells us of the mysteries of life and judgment. He declares the love of the Father, the works and glories of the Son, and the place and actings of the Holy Ghost in and for the Church of God. He is, in this Gospel, the Prophet of the secrets of the Father’s bosom, disclosing the most hidden ways of the Sanctuary. He speaks as the Word, who was with God, and was God, giving us such knowledge as a mere walk on the earth in righteousness and service would not have needed, but such as makes us nothing less than “friends” (John 15:15), and gives us communion, in knowledge, with the ways of “the Father of glory.” (Ephesians 1:17.)

Such is the variousness of the Lord’s exercise of his prophetic office, and such, I judge, the peculiar exercise of it which we have in this Gospel, the exercise of it in its highest department, again making the Gospel so peculiarly precious to the saint. And when the gathering of the Church in this present “day of salvation” is over, and all have come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, we shall not lose our Lord as our prophet. We shall listen to him as such, even in the kingdom. His lessons will feed us forever. Solomon was a prophet as well as a priest and a king. His servants stood continually before him, and all kings of the earth sought his presence to hear him. The queen of Sheba came to prove him with hard questions, and he answered her in all her desire. When she beheld all his ways—the king’s magnificence, the priest’s ascent to the house of God, and the prophet’s wisdom—these were altogether more than a match for her heart; the half had not been told her; “there was no more spirit in her.” And so, in the coming kingdom, we shall have that which shall fill the eye with glory, give the heart its satisfied affections, ever feed the still enlarging thoughts of our minds with the treasures of wisdom that are hid in our divine Prophet, and withal give our ears the music of his praise forever.

But let me say, for my own admonition as for my brethren, that we should constantly suspect and dread all mere effort of mind, while listening to the words of our Prophet, that is, while reading the Scriptures. The Spirit is a ready Teacher, as well as a ready Writer; and the light of the Spirit, though it may shine at times, through our darkness, but dimly, yet will it always evidence itself with more or less certainty. And let us remember also, that it is a Temple light—a light that suits the Sanctuary. It was in the holy place that the candlestick stood; and the intelligence that is awakened in the soul by the Holy Ghost is attended by the spirit of devotion and communion. It is a Temple light still.

I have already noticed the Lord's different exercise. of his prophetic office in Matthew's Gospel and in this. In his discourses with his elect,—after his public ministry is over, as given is by these two Evangelists, the same characteristic difference is still to be clearly discerned. In Matthew, he talks with them on the Mount of Olives about Jewish matters (24. 25.); but here, he leads them in spirit, into heaven, to open to them the sanctuary there, and to tell them of heavenly secrets. (13.-17.) The Lord takes his seat, not on the Mount of Olives to tell his Remnant of Israel's sorrows and final rest, but in heaven, to disclose to his saints the actings of their High Priest there, and their own peculiar sorrows and blessings as the Church of God, during the age of that heavenly Priesthood. The heavenly Priesthood is the great subject throughout these chapters, on which I would now somewhat more particularly meditate. They form one section of our Gospel; but I will consider them in distinct portions, as their contents seem to me to suggest.

13. Here, at the opening, the Lord's action—washing the disciples' feet—is an exhibition of one great branch of his heavenly service.

The washing of the feet was among the duties of hospitality. The Lord rebukes the neglect of it in his host in Luke 7 (See 1 Timothy 5: 10.) conveyed two benefits to the guest; I may say it cleansed the traveler after the soiling of the journey, and refreshed him after the fatigue of it.

Abraham, Lot, Laban, Joseph, and the old-man of Gibeah, are eminent among those who observed this duty. (Genesis 18, 19, 24, 43; Judges 19) And the Son of God, as receiving into the heavenly house, would give his elect the full sense of their welcome and their fitness, that they might take their place, with happy confidence, in any department of that royal sanctuary. It was a sanctuary, it is true. But this washing fitted them for such a place. The Son of God was doing for the disciples the duty and service of the Brazen Laver towards the priests, the sons of Aaron, in the Tabernacle. (Exodus 30) He was taking on himself the charge of having them fit for the divine presence. It is the common way of every well-ordered family, that the servants keep themselves clean, or leave the house. But such is the grace of the Son of God, the Master of the heavenly house, that he charges himself with the duty of keeping the household in even priestly sanctification and honor.

“Unfathomable wonder, and mystery divine.” All we need is the spirit of a simple, unquestioning faith, which rests in the reality of such surpassing grace but his service for us in the sanctuary, as the High Priest of our profession, his cleansing of our feet as the true Laver of God's house, Jesus did not enter on, till he had accomplished his passion on earth, and ascended into the heavens; and thus it was not, as we read here, till “after the supper was ended,” that he took a towel and girded himself to wash his disciples' feet; for the “supper” was the exhibition of his passion and death, as he had said, “Take, eat; this is my body.” And accordingly he seems to go through the

whole of this mystic scene, in the consciousness that he had now finished his sufferings, had ascended, and was looking back on his saints; for it is introduced in these words, “Having loved his Own which were in the world”—words that suggest the apprehension he had of his saints being still in the world, while he had left them for higher and holier regions. And in the sense of all this, though glorified again in and with the Father, as the gracious servant of their need and infirmities, he girds himself with a towel and washes their feet; giving them to know that he was abiding in the heavenly sanctuary, just to impart to them the constant virtue of the “holiness” which, as their High Priest, he ever carried for them on his forehead before the throne of God. (Exodus 28)

Thus, there is a difference between the mystic import of “the supper,” and of this subsequent “washing of the feet;” and the difference is the same as between “the day of atonement” and “the ashes of the Red Heifer,” under the law. The day of atonement, like the supper, sets forth the virtue of the blood of the Son of God, the ashes of the heifer, like this washing, the virtue of his intercession. The day of atonement was but one day in the Jewish year, a great annual day of reconciliation, on which the sin of Israel was put away once for all; the ashes of the heifer were provided for every day’s transgressions, for all the occasional defilements which any Israelite might contract, while passing through the year. So, with the blood-shedding first, and the priestly intercessions of the Son of God afterward: as a scripture says, “For 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.

And we have the same blessings in the same order in another form; viz., the paschal Lamb once and forever redeemed Israel out of Egypt, but in the wilderness, it was the intercession of Moses that turned away wrath from the occasional trespasses of the camp. And so the blood of Jesus our Passover, and the intercession of Jesus our Mediator—the supper first, and then the washing of the feet, the death here, and then the life in heaven for us. He that is once washed in the blood needeth not save to wash his feet; and that washing of his feet, that removal of the soil which the saint gathers in his walk along this earth day by day, the High Priest who is in heaven for him accomplishes by his presence and intercession there. He is the Mediator of the new covenant, as well as the Blood of it.

Thus, the love of the Son of God for the elect, as it had been front everlasting, so, must it be to everlasting; as it—is here written, “Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.” Every age and scene must witness the same love in some of its services, and in its abiding fervor and truth. No change of time could affect it the dreariness of this world and the glories of heaven found it in his heart the same. Neither sorrow nor joy, suffering nor glory, could touch it for a moment. His death here and his life in heaven alike declare it. Nay, much more He had served her in this love before the world was, when he said, “Lo, I come—and in the kingdom after the world he will serve her still in the same love, making his saints to sit down to meat, while he waits on their joy. (Luke 12:37.)

Such was the Lord, such is the Lord, and such will be the Lord, in his unceasing service of love towards his saints; and he tells them to be his imitators. “If I, then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another’s feet.” He expects to see, among us on earth, the copy of that which he is doing for us in heaven. He is there daily washing our feet, bearing our need and meeting our defilements before the throne; and he would have us daily

washing one another's feet, bearing one another's infirmities, and helping one another's joy, here on the footstool.

This action and teaching of the Lord was thus a taking of the church, like Moses before, up into the mount to show her the patterns, according to which the things on earth were to be made. Moses then stood above the law, —beyond the region of fire and tempest, and so the church here. The disciples are called up in spirit into the heavenly sanctuary, and there shown the ways of the High Priest in his daily love and care of them; and they are told to go down and do likewise. As was said to Moses, "See thou make all things according to the pattern showed to thee in the Mount." The time for the taking of Moses into the Mount to abide there had not then come. He was only to visit it, that he might see the patterns, and receive orders. And so here the church was not yet ready for the glory, and for the Father's house. "Whither I go," says the Lord to the disciples, "thither ye cannot come." They shall follow afterward as the Lord further promises; but for the present there was to be only a sight of the patterns on the mount; that they might copy them on the earth. But love alone can fashion those copies; for love is the artificer of the originals in heaven. As the Lord again says, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." It is, not, as of old, the skill of such as "work in brass" that will do now; but the skill of such as "walk in love." The fashioning of any kind thought in the heart toward a brother, the arming of the mind with power to bear and forbear in love, the goings forth of the soul in sympathies, and the molding off or softening down of any hard or selfish affection, —these are the copies of the heavenly patterns. It is only as "dear children" we can be "imitators of God." (Ephesians 5:1.) And what comfort is this! When the Lord would appoint on earth the witness of his own ways in heaven, he tells us to love one another, to wash one another's feet. What a sight of him, though within the veil, does this give us! "He shows his thoughts how kind they be." What manner of daily occupation of our Priest in his sanctuary on high is here disclosed to us!

And, beloved, let me admonish myself and you, to seek to walk more amid these witnesses of the Lord than we do; for this would be our assurance before him, and our joy among ourselves. If our ways were steady, unwavering ways of love, we should be ever walking in the midst of the shadows and emblems of Christ; We should have the Lord's thoughts in all their kindness and constancy ever before us; and what joy and assurance would that give us! No suspicions of his love, no cloudings of doubt and fear, could then gather on the soul; but we should hear him with our ears, and see him with our eyes, and handle him with our hands; for all that ear, or eye, or hand met from one another would witness, as well as savor, of his love. This, indeed, would be a sweet dwelling "in the house of the Lord," a blessed beholding of "the beauty of the Lord." But all this display of glorious love the poor heart of man is not prepared for. Peter expresses this common ignorance. He does not yet understand this connection between glory and service. He follows his human thoughts, and says, "Thou shalt never wash my feet." But Peter was to know all this by-and-by, as his Lord promises; for Peter and his Lord were one. But Judas must be separated. "I speak not of you all," said the Lord. The presence of the traitor in the midst of the saints up to this solemn moment was needed; for the Scripture had said, "He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me." Man, in this dispensation of ours, has despised love, and thus matured his sin—as the Lord afterward says, "If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin." (15: 24.) But having now despised the love of the Gospel, Man has "gone his way:" as Judas here, having received the sop, "went out" to betray him

who had given it. And our Evangelist adds— “it was night.” Solemn words! —night in man, and night for Jesus.

But he at once looks beyond this night; for dark as it was to be to him, it was to open into the perfect day Jesus would be glorified in God at once; for God was glorified in him; the only Son of Man in whom he ever was glorified. He had kept the nature without spot, and was now about to present it to God a sheaf of untainted human fruit fitted for God’s garner. Man, in Jesus had been glorified; for all that had proceeded froth him, all that had been drawn out of him, was according to God. (14: 30, 31.) Not one speck sullied the moral beauty there. Man, in Jesus had not come short of the glory of God. And God, who had thus been glorified in him, would therefore glorify him in himself. But as to all besides, it was altogether otherwise Jesus could go at once to God, by virtue of all this moral glory; but as to all beside, it matters not, whether saints or unbelievers, whether Peters or Pharisees, there could not be this. A place with God must be prepared ere even the saints could be gathered into, it (14: 1); and therefore, the Lord says to them, “Ye, shall seek Me; and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go ye cannot come, so now I say to you.” This day of his own glory in God, Jesus here anticipates, saying, as soon as the traitor was gone out, “Now is the Son of Man glorified.” And so, by and by, there will be room again for the display of the glory, when the Son of Man shall have gathered out of his kingdom all things that offend, and all that do iniquity; when the traitor shall again “go out,” then shall the glory be witnessed, and the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their righteous The floor once purged, the sheaves of glory will be gathered into the garner.

14.-16.—Having thus passed, in spirit, through the night, and taken his place in the day that lay beyond it, the Lord turns to his disciples, and in these chapters, as the prophet of the heavenly things, instructs and comforts them, telling them of the mystery of his own heavenly Priesthood, and of their calling, and duties, and blessings, as the church of God still sojourning on earth during that Priesthood.

The Priesthood of the Son of God, or the present dispensation, during which He is on the Father’s throne, and we in “the kingdom of God’s dear Son,” was a secret with God laid from the thoughts of Israel altogether. “The little while” was a stage in the divine procedure, of which both the Jews and the disciples were equally ignorant. (John 7:33; 16: 17.) They had all thought that Christ was to abide forever (chap. 12: 34); for their prophets had spoken of Him in connection with earthly dominion. There were, however, many intimations, both from prophecy and from history, which might have prepared them for this Joseph’s residence and glory in Egypt, and during that time, his forgetfulness of his kindred in Canaan till stress of famine brought them to him, had typified this mystery. So had Moses’ sojourn in Midian. (See Acts 7) We may judge, no doubt, that both Joseph and Moses had constant recollections of their own people, and many a desire towards them, while separated from them—but it was an untold desire. So, we know that the Lord is now mindful of Jerusalem, her walls are continually before him, engraven on the palms of his hand. But, apparently, he is to them as a man astonied, as a mighty man that cannot save.

And beside those typical histories, the Prophets had spoken directly of this mystery. They had foretold Jerusalem’s widowhood, which was to continue for a season. Moses at the beginning had left a standing testimony with Israel, that the Lord for a time would hide his face from them, and provoke them to jealousy by those who were “no people.” (Deuteronomy 32) David had said that

Messiah, as his Lord, should for a while sit at the right hand of God. (Psalms 110) Isaiah had a vision of Christ in the heavenly glory during a season of judgment on Israel. (Isaiah Ezekiel saw the glory leave the city, and then, after a, season,, return to it. And the Lord had said, by Hosea, "I will go and return unto my place, till they acknowledge their offense and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me early." In his own ministry the Lord Jesus had already referred to the same mystery. In Matthew, he corrects the thought that Christ was to abide forever, by a recital of those scriptures which spoke of the rejection of the stone by the builders. In St. Luke, he had shown, by the parable of the nobleman going into a far country, that there was to be an interval between the first appearing of Messiah, and his appearing in his kingdom. But now, in our gospel, he treats of this matter more fully, showing the character. of this interval, or of his session for a while at the right hand of God in heaven.

Having, therefore, closed his public ministry, and being in retirement with the disciples, he occupies himself with this subject. In the action of the 13th chapter, in the teaching of these 14th, 15th, and 16th chapters, and again in the action of the 17th, it is the heavenly Priesthood that he is variously either exhibiting or teaching; thus showing that in his present interval of separation from Israel, he is blessedly occupying himself for the church. In sympathies and intercessions, in the diligence and wakefulness of one whose eye is over them, he is all action towards his saints now. He is separated from his brethren according to the flesh, it is true, but he is, the while, like Moses, tending the flock of his Father at the Mount of 'God, far away both from Egypt's pollutions and Israel's unbelief, tasting the comforts of a beloved home and family, in holy retirement.

An impression of a very happy character lies on my mind from reading the opening of the 14th chapter it is this. Our Lord assumes that his ministry had brought the Father so near to them, that his disciples ought to have concluded that his house was their home. There is great consolation in this.

The Lord's ministry had been such a revelation of the Father's love to them, that it would have been strange indeed, had this not been the case. Such a thing would have been an exception, and therefore to have been noticed. But that there were mansions for them, as well as for him, in the Father's house, was so fully in character with all his previous works and words, that such a fact, such a truth, needed no mention at all. It was a necessary conclusion. All family privileges were theirs, and, of course, the family mansion was their home.

What a conclusion for faith to be entitled to draw, without direct instruction: Not, that we should be chargeable with spiritual dullness, if we did not draw it. How could such a ministry as that of Jesus, "the Son from the bosom," tell of anything less than this, that the Father's own house was to be our home forever.

"Unfathomable wonder and mystery divine," I may again say. All we need, is that spirit of childlike faith which rests in the reality of such surpassing grace.

Would that his family were refreshing the solitudes of the Son of God better than they do. Would that there were a more "beautiful flock" for his care and tendency at the Mount of God! a more joyous scene to compensate him for his present loss of Israel! But he has laid down his life for them, he has given himself for the sheep, and in his love he abideth faithful.

And these chapters, I may further say, show us that the ministry of the Son had done nothing that was effectual upon the hearts of his disciples. For so the divine order ran—the Father had worked hitherto, the Son was now working, but the Holy Ghost had also to work, ere the church could be set in her place. And thus, it is not until now we get the name of God fully revealed. The revelation of it shines gradually brighter and brighter as dispensations advance.

In Genesis 1 it is simply “God” that we see and hear. It is “God” who goes through the six days’ work, and then rests on the seventh. But in Genesis 2 it is “the Lord God” that we see and hear. And these are two stages in God’s revelation of himself. In the 1st chapter we see him coming forth, as God simply, for his own delight and glory. He takes his full delight in the work, beholding it all to be very good; and he glorifies himself by the work, setting over it one in his own image, the representative of himself. But in the 2nd, we see “the Lord God,” that is, God in a covenanted character, God entered upon purposes and plans for the blessing of his creature. And therefore, much of the previous detail of the work, as it proceeded under the hand of “God,” is omitted, and many things are brought into view which had no place before. Thus we have in strong relief, and which we had not at all in the 1st chapter, the Garden and the River, the manner of creating the Man, of investing him with dominion, of forming the Woman, and of instituting their union—and we have also the mystic Trees, and the Commandment with its penalty—for all these concerned the place and blessing of the creature in covenant with “the Lord God.”

Thus did he begin to unfold his name to us; and after these first notices of “God” and “the Lord God,” we get the name “God, Almighty” published to Abram. This was a further revelation of himself. And this was done when Abram was “past age,” and had nothing to lean upon but the almightiness, or all-sufficiency, of God. (Genesis 17:1.) In this name, which declared this needed sufficiency, God led him, and Isaac, and Jacob, after him; for they were all strangers and pilgrims on the earth, having nothing but the promise of an Almighty Friend for their stay and staff. (Genesis 28. 35. 48.) In process of time, however, God was known to his children by another name. Bringing them into the covenant, into the promised inheritance, he calls himself “Jehovah;” that is, the covenant’ God of Israel. (Exodus 6:1-6.) And under God as Jehovah, Israel take their seat in Canaan.

But still, all this did not communicate God in the full glory of his name. There was grace in God, and gifts by grace, which these ways of his did not fully unfold. But this is done in the name which is now published to us—the name of the “Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.” This is the full name or glory of our God, and grace, and the gifts of grace, are effectually brought to us by that dispensation which publishes it.

Thus, it was not until the present age, that the full name and glory of our God was published. The Father had been working, it is true, (as was observed under chapter 5.) in all ages of the Jewish times; but still Israel was put nationally under God, simply as “Jehovah.” The revelation of “the Father” had to wait for the ministry of the Son, and certain dispensations had to finish their course, ere the Son could come forth. The Son could not have been the minister of the law; such ministry would not have been worthy of him who dwelt in the bosom of the Father. It was committed to angels. And the Son did not come forth in the ministry, till the “great salvation” was ready to be published. (Hebrews 2:1-3.) So, the manifestation of the Holy Ghost waited for its due time. The Holy Ghost could not wait on the ministry of the law any more than the Son. Smoke and lightning

and the voice of thunder were there (Exodus 19), but the Holy Ghost came forth with his gifts and powers to wait on the ministry of the Son, on the publication of the great salvation. (Hebrews 2:4.) The Spirit of God could not be a spirit of bondage gendering fear; the law may do that, but the Holy Ghost must gender confidence. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."

Till the Son of God had finished his work, the Holy Ghost could not come forth. The heart must first be purged from an evil conscience, so that the temple might be sanctified for the indwelling Spirit, and the holy furniture (that is, the spirit of liberty and adoption, and the knowledge of glory) must be prepared for this temple; and all this could be done only by the death, resurrection, and ascension of the Son. The revelation of the Holy Ghost waited for these things. He had been, it is true, the holy power in all, from the beginning. He had spoken by the prophets. He was the strength of judges and of kings. He was the power of faith, of service, and of suffering, in all the people of God. But all this was below the place which he now takes in the church. His indwelling in us, as in his temple, had not been of old; but now he does so dwell, spreading out a kingdom of righteousness, peace, and joy. As the Spirit of wisdom, he gives us "the mind of Christ," spiritual senses for the discerning of good and evil. As the Spirit of worship, he enables us to call God "Father," and Jesus "Lord," and makes intercessions in us with groanings that cannot be uttered. He sheds abroad in the heart "the love of God," and causes us "to abound in hope." He is in us a well of water springing up into everlasting life, and he is the source also of "rivers of living waters," flowing forth from us to refresh the weary. And he forms the saints together as "a spiritual house," where "spiritual sacrifices" are offered, no longer admitting "a worldly sanctuary" and "carnal ordinances;" for they are builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit, and gifts, causing them all to grow up into Christ in all things, are dispensed among them.

These are some of the ways of the Holy Ghost in his kingdom within the saint: these are his works which shine in the place of his dominion. He is there an Earnest, an Unction, and a Witness. He tells us "plainly of the Father," and "takes of the things of Christ," to "show them to us." His presence in us is so pure, that there is no evil he does not resent and grieve over (Ephesians 4:30); and yet so tender and sympathizing, that there is nothing of godly sorrow that he does not feel and groan over. (Romans 8:23.) He causes hope to abound; he imparts the sense of full divine favor; he reads to our conscience a title to calm and entire assurance. There is nothing of feebleness, or narrowness, or uncertainty in the place of his power. His operations savor of a kingdom, and a kingdom of God too, full of beauty and strength. We have to own how little we live in the virtue and sunshine of it; but still, this is what it is in itself, though our narrow and hindered hearts so poorly possess themselves of it. And his handiwork is to have its praise from us, and his glory in his temples is to be declared. It is well to be humbled at times, by testing ourselves in reference to such an indwelling kingdom, but the kingdom itself is not to be so measured.

Precious, I need not say, beloved, all this mystery is. The whole order of things to which we are introduced tells us (and this is full of richest comfort), that it is God and not ourselves we have now immediately to do with. In the law it was otherwise. The law dealt with us immediately, saying, "Thou shalt," and "Thou shalt not." But now it is God we have first to do with. We are absolutely summoned away from ourselves, and are not to remember whether we were Jews or Greeks. We have God to look to, God to hear, God to do with. And this is the highest possible point of blessing for a poor sinner to apprehend—so blessed is it, that Satan does what he can to keep us short of

it, to make the ear heavy to the voice of God, and the eye dim to the ways and works of God, and the heart irresponsive to the love of God. He would fain busy us with anything, that the light of the glory of the gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, may not shine in. He makes some busy with thoughts of their righteousness, and others busy with thoughts of their sins, that he may keep' them, either through vain glory or fear, apart from God himself.

(To be continued.)

Operations of the Spirit of God

I turn now to the instruction which the 4th chapter supplies, where it is compared to the living water; and we see at once the stupidity and incapability of the flesh to receive the things of the Spirit, in the repeated replies of the woman to the statements of the Lord, which, one would have supposed, must have awakened her to something beyond her ordinary thoughts. It is not the capacity of the flesh to receive it, but the revelation of the Lord concerning it, that I now refer to. It is not as a quickening agent he now speaks of it, but as a gift—that which was given by Him. Here, we must remark, Christ is the giver, not the gift. “He that drinketh of the water that I shall give him” (it is spoken of as indwelling), “it shall be in him a well of water.” Given as the energy of indwelling life—divinely given—the gift of God (as afterward) that I shall give him—it springs up into everlasting life. It is divine life from the Son, enjoyed by the power of the Holy Ghost dwelling in us. Not as the Spirit of God revealing his glory; but the power of life, having its communion and result in the eternal source from which it flows. Whether Jesus were in humiliation, or whether Jesus were glorified, this power was in Him; and though the expression of the power may be different, still it was the same power. He had life in Himself, as the Son of God. He might raise to natural life, or He might raise in resurrection life, and hence the difference; for now, it is in the latter, being, in ultimate purpose, that in which power conforming to Himself is, that tie might be the first-born among many brethren. It is life more abundantly, even if they were alive before.

With this new life withal, specially the Spirit dwells and bears witness. He might communicate the life then; but it could not be in the revelation or character which belonged to Christ as risen, or as the Head of the body. It was this great truth that was breaking through the clouds all through the Lord's discourse to his disciples; while He was affording to the nation to which He came, not only this, but the most ample evidence of every prophecy fulfilled, and power exercised, which left them without excuse as to his actual reception, whether we regard his character or person. Through this operation of the Spirit, so indwelling, with our new man, it is that God is specially known and enjoyed; but being the Spirit of the Son, in that we are quickened of the Son, God specially enjoyed and worshipped as the Father. This is the great result of the revelation of the Son, and our life in and by Him. And herein is eternal life. (John 17:2.) God was known in a measure to a godly Jew; but if He were sought in an especial manner of relationship, it was as Jehovah. To us the special manner of relationship is, “My Father and your Father, my God and your God.”

We know Him as sons; but it is God who is known and enjoyed. This we find hinted at in this 4th chapter of John. “God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship in spirit and in truth.” But it is said, just before, “shall worship the Father; for the Father seeketh such to worship Him.” This communion with and knowledge of God is matter of exceeding joy—I mean, knowing Him and enjoying Him as God. There is a depth in it which, in that we do it in the peace and communion which is the result of all question of sin being laid aside, is, perhaps (it is hard to compare things in

these subjects), beyond all other of our thoughts, and lasts through and beyond the actual covenant blessings which are our portion to enjoy as children. These, chastenings may remove for our need,— “If needs be, we may be in heaviness through manifold temptations.” But, though the joy may be weakened, the spring of righteous confidence in God is there; and, indeed, we are thrown ‘more abstractedly and essentially upon God. We should joy in God at all times; but we are apt to turn to the blessings conferred, and in a measure forget the Blessor. (See Psalms 63) Hence the deprivation, that we may remember Him. But properly, this well of water springing up into everlasting life, is that partaking of the divine nature in which (“ having escaped”) we joy in God, repose in Him, delight in Him, are filled into his fullness, know Him indeed in the blessedness of actual revelation; but still in the nature of God, as such, the power of this communion is conveyed, being rooted and grounded in love, knowing God and known of Him, it supposes all the rest of truth, and it is found in Christ. “He hath given us an understanding that we should know Him that is true; and we are in Him that is true—that is, in his Son, Jesus Christ—He is the true God and eternal life.” Of this the unrieved Spirit is the power, and blessed it is when it is so with us. It is based on the plainest truth,” He suffered, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.” Of this we have the perfect exhibition in Jesus, in spite of all trial; for how should the Spirit, which dwelt in all fullness in Him, even as a man, be grieved with divine perfectness? “Our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ.” “That the love (says the Lord, speaking of the converse, and therefore the power of this) Wherewith thou hast loved me, may be in them, and I in them;” and so, as to the form of it, as it were with us,— “In that day, ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.” But now we speak of it as specially knowing God. I think, if the psalms be studied, what Christ’s Spirit passed through and teaches us, will be deeply learned in this—there, of course, among Jews it is Jehovah, when He speaks of covenant-blessings, as we have more specially to say, “Father:”—but not resting here on this distinction:—if the psalms, and parts of psalms, in which Jehovah is used, and in which God is used, be referred to, and compared and studied, the deepest practical instruction will be derived as to this power of communion from the Spirit of Christ itself: only we must remember, that for us it is founded on an accomplished work, and that which He passed through, as accomplishing it, is to us the fellowship of his sufferings or loving chastisement. We may look to the 42nd and 43rd Psalms as an example of this. But, further, if we turn to our Lord’s personal history, and note the difference between that word, “ Father, let this cup pass from me, but not my will, but thine be done”—and, “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?”—we shall see the deepening entrance into another character of communion, in which the whole power and character of God were called out, borne indeed by Jesus our most glorious and blessed Head; that to us in that day, that power and character might become infinite and eternal joy; and is now to us all as to sons, through the consequent gift of God. by virtue of his resurrection; for such is the power of eternal life to us consequent on Christ’s death.

O that the Church more entered into these things —walked more in the power of unseen communion with God I say not this, as though I did.; but I say it only as so knowing the blessedness of it in Him, as to pray and desire it for the Church, in the sense of the lack of it often.

Hitherto I have spoken, either of the quickening power of the Spirit of God, as introducing us into the kingdom; or, as dwelling in the individual, as the power of eternal life, through which his communion with God. is carried on: this there must be where there is life according to Christ

Jesus. There remains a wide field to treat of, on which I feel almost deterred from entering; not because I fear there is not boundless joy in passing, over, and learning it in one's own soul—entering into it; but because it is boundless, and that I feel deeply my inadequacy to do so properly, even to satisfy my own mind: and I will add, especially when one considers the responsibility of being a communicator, and, as it were, teacher of these things to others. The deep interest and importance of the subject is my excuse: I would not have done it, if it had not been pressed on my own mind. It is the largeness of the subject which deters me.

There is one thing I feel it important to notice ere I pass on:—though the Spirit is life, and he that is joined to the Lord one spirit, and Christ as quickening Spirit is our life, yet the Holy Ghost is also spoken of as personally acting in power on our souls—acting in blessing; for He is God; and while we are made partakers of the divine nature, and have this life of God in us as born of Him, yet this is not the Holy Ghost; for the Holy Ghost is God. Therefore, we read, “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirits that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs;” and therefore, the Scripture speaks of the inner spiritual man being strengthened, renewed, as—” strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man.” Though our outward man perish, our “inner man is renewed day by day;” so “the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior.”

The next point, before I pass on to its character and operation, is to advert to the fact of the special indwelling of the Holy Ghost: I mean in individual believers. I do not speak of this as if it were new to many who read this paper, but because I daily find it is new to many who inquire; and it puts the subject in entirely a different light. We shall see that it is connected with, and consequent upon, the ascension and glorifying of Christ; but we must remember, that while the coming down of the Holy Ghost is witness of ascension—glory and divine righteousness, and that our association in it was consequent (in the necessary course or the divine ministrations) upon Christ's entering into the glory, yet was it withal the power to us of all that whence it came, and into which, and association with which, it brings us; and so we shall see in the texts to which I shall refer, closing with the one which more especially introduces me into my present subject;— “In whom,” (we read in the Ephesians) “ after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession.” I know that this has been referred to gifts merely. To these I hope to refer before I finish this subject: but that it is not confined to these is manifest, however these may display it, because, in that case, where there were no gifts, there would be no earnest of the inheritance: but the Comforter Himself was to abide forever. Besides, gifts are not spoken of here, but the Holy Spirit itself as the earnest; and to confound them, is to confound the giver and the gift; for the Spirit distributes of these to every man severally as He will, and they are only the manifestation of the Spirit given for profit; and confounding them (unconsciously perhaps) undermines the personality and deity of the Holy Ghost, and confounds the power of witnessing to others (which may be with no vital or sanctifying power) with the blessed and sanctifying communion with, and anticipation of, things hoped for and treasured up in Christ as ours, and to be displayed in that day. In a word, the Spirit which distributes the gift is not the gift He, distributes, though He be displayed in the gift; nor are the things in which the given power is displayed, necessarily, any earnest of the inheritance at all; as in the gift of prophecy as in Balaam's case, and as Paul states the possibility that a man might preach to others, and he himself be a castaway. And though their characters in some instances

are indicative of the dispensation, and their number and circumstances may be different, yet the existence of extraordinary powers and acts in themselves were not characteristic of this indwelling and earnest of the Spirit. Many and remarkable miracles were wrought, and great power exhibited in service, before this came, before the Son of man was glorified. But these did not constitute the indwelling of the Spirit in the Church, for there was none such; nor in the individual, as an earnest of the inheritance; for they might be there, as in the case of Balaam, already adverted to, and the individual not be an heir: the Spirit, in them might search, and find the things they ministered were not unto themselves. I propose to return a little to this, and would now pursue my more immediate subject.

In the Galatians we find—having shown that they were sons through faith in Christ Jesus, not servants, “And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father;” clearly distinguishing between the regenerating power and indwelling of the Holy Ghost, and speaking of one as a consequence of the other,—that it dwelt in an individual who was (and because he was) a son of God: we also see its distinction from a gift, for it is put in the heart to cry, Abba, Father. Further, we see that, as in such sort there, it is proper to, and characteristic of, the dispensation. For it is not the portion of the heir when an infant, and as a servant, under tutors and governors, which they, even if heirs, were previously, not in immediate communion with the Father personally. They had not the mind needful for it, not having the Holy Ghost thus. But it is their portion when they take properly the place of sons, which they do in this dispensation; and though they do not as yet enter upon the inheritance, yet are they to have the mind renewed in knowledge concerning it, and enter into the full interests of the Father’s house.

Again, says Peter, “We are witnesses of these things, and so also is the Holy Ghost, which is given to them that believe.” We find it in similar language in Ephesians, and Romans 8, — “If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his; and if Christ be in you,” &c.; and in Ephesians—” That ye may be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith.” These are connected with communion, and mark it as an individual thing in which the heart has its portion by faith.

Again, —where the connection of things hoped for, and the power of communion in which they are enjoyed in the certainty of God’s love, are brought together, “hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost given unto us.” Again, in 2 Corinthians “For all the promises of God in Him are Yea, and. in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us. Now He which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; who also hath sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.” A very full and blessed passage God, the great Author of it all, and Power by which it is wrought, establishing us in Christ, our glorious and blessed Head, in the communion of all like glory with Him: in the communion of that in which, by the fulfillment of all the promises in their amazing blessedness in Christ Himself as his, God is glorified,—and this while we are assumed in grace into a portion with Him, we being the very subjects of the blessing, not merely in consequence, but in association, and therefore having all the consequences. It is ours, the promises being in Christ, to the glory of God by us. Now God stablishes us in this portion: how do we know it? how is it marked? —how enjoyed, and the earnest possessed, while we have it not, when the glory is not yet come? God hath established us in it: that is the assurance and security. He hath anointed us with that unction from Himself—the Holy One, whereby we know all things (compare the whole of the 2nd of 1 Corinthians from verse

7 to the end, where this is fully explained): but then the having the Spirit is the seal or mark whereby we are significantly denoted as belonging to God, as his heirs,— “If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his;” but being given us to dwell in us, in that we are heirs, we have it as an earnest in our hearts, abounding in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost, knowing that we are sons, and delighting in the thought of the inheritance, and of being like Him who is “ the first-born among many brethren:” and in this joy of the Holy Ghost, filled (it may be in the midst of much affliction) with all joy and peace in believing, the soul entering, as associated with Christ (and in this lies much, and that of the very kernel of the joy, though not all), into all the glory in which the promises of God are fulfilled in Him. I say, not all the joy; because it is not only, (with what riches are we endowed, yea, beyond all thought!) “As my Father hath loved me, so have I loved you,”—a blessing known, had communion with by the Spirit, as our portion, of which the glory is the display, as enjoyed along with Him,—but “that the world may know that thou hast loved them as thou hast loved me;” and therefore they are not only companions with the Son of man in the glory, but in adoption—sons of God, as brethren, being brought into this joy, as in the Father’s kingdom, more properly the Father’s house, where ‘the place is prepared for us by the great First-born. Thus the Son’s rich and unjealous love (for it is divine), in giving us the glory which was given to Him, displays us in the glory which approves before the world that the Father has loved us as He loved Him. Was ever anything like this in love? Does it not, in its very conception, prove it altogether divine? None could deal, act, or know in such sort but God; and the very possession of these things in our hearts, is the witness that God is there, if they be known in love, holy love; for he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him: and these things we have now, not in possession indeed, but in (the earnest of the) Spirit; as the same Spirit by the apostle speaks,— “These things write I unto you, that your joy may be full, that ye may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.” This is a very holy place to dwell one that. becometh saints—one, that nothing but the blood of Jesus could purchase—none but God, by his wondrous work in Christ, present us faultless in the presence of. Yet, blessed be his grace (and the more blessed, because it is holy and enjoyed), in that we have the Holy Spirit revealing it, giving us a divine spiritual communion with it, sealing us as heirs of all of it, and the power of our joy in it. This is our Place our portion: —O my soul, dwell there in joy, joy with Christ. You will note, He says, “His Son Jesus Christ;” which is not only the expression of faith, but presenting our blessed Lord in that character—the Savior, the anointed Man—in which He has brought us into fellowship, and associated us with Him in this Sonship, and given us fellowship moreover with the Father as sons; ourselves sons, though in Him. And the converse of this is met in that expression, “I say not, that I will pray the Father for you as if the Father did not Himself love you);’for the Father Himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and believed that I came out from God.” This they had believed, but knew not yet in its fullness, known thus by the Holy Ghost (the Spirit of sonship given), namely, that He came forth from the Father. In this they were dull, it is the life of the saints: and this it is that makes the notion of sonship in Christ only when incarnate so destructive to the very elementary joy of the Church, and abhorrent to those who have communion by the Spirit in the truth.

But the joy and blessedness of which I speak, leads me at once to the statement, “He that believed’ on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.” Here again you will remark, it is an individual matter—the believer’s portion, however it may be ministered. “This spake He of the Spirit which they that believe on Him should receive; for the Holy

Ghost was not yet (given), because that Jesus was not yet glorified.” Now this statement (as I think we shall see) is one of extreme importance, and connected with the whole character and state of the dispensation, as being that of God’s blessings, which are beyond all dispensation, except the fact of giving the Spirit as the power of divine life and worship, inasmuch as they lead into communion with Himself. The 4th chapter of John, of which I have already spoken, though it involves, does not rest on dispensation; but that, on the passing away of “this mountain,” or even of that on which Jerusalem stood, the living power of communion with the Father everywhere, even with God as a Spirit, should take place. Hence it was a quickening power, shown in humiliation, as well as in glory; yea, according to love in gift proved in humiliation: and the hour then was, as well as was coming. Not so, though they may include these things, the 3rd and 7th chapters. The 3rd, as we have seen, contains the kingdom; and shows what must belong to a Jew to enter into its earthly portion, the quickening, which alone could bring even the nominal children into the kingdom, because it was God’s kingdom.

But here, in the 7th, we have the gift of the Spirit consequent upon the ascension—glory, —on the glorifying of Jesus his brethren, representing in their unbelief the Jews, had proposed at the feast of tabernacles that Jesus should spew Himself to the world. Jesus’ reply was, their time was always ready, His time was not yet come. On the eighth day of that feast, and peculiar to it (the day of resurrection, the feast of the new week, the beginning of another scene), the great day of it, Jesus stood and cried. And as the water out of the rock (and that rock was Christ) followed and supplied the children of Israel through the wilderness till they came to keep the feast of tabernacles as at rest in the land, so Jesus, his people being united to Him their glorified Head, would so fill them with the Spirit, that out of them should flow—not merely out of Him to them, but out of them should flow rivers of living water, even of the Spirit which believers should receive. But it is said— “out of his belly;”—now this is to me a blessed expression: the use of it for the thoughts, feelings, condition of the inner man, is familiar in Scripture —on this the peculiar blessing all rests; and herein the essential difference of the Spirit, the Holy Ghost as now, and when operating on prophets before. The possession of the Holy Ghost rested now on union, and consequently was a constant thing, and an earnest to the person in whom it dwelt of his own interest in the things it communicated. He was brought into, communion, as united to the Head, in all the things in which that Head was revealed; and he had the Spirit by virtue of his being so united—the necessary witness therefore of his interest in them. And as this union was connected with a divine nature communicated, the mind, thoughts, feelings, joys, sorrows, interests, consolations, fears, hopes, and streams of love which that nature entered into, were now the portion of the saint, and that, withal, according to the power of the energy of the Spirit, which, though indwelling, still acted independently (i. e. as regards us), though, according to the order and revelations of the dispensation of which He was the power, speaking what he heard. I am not now speaking of the conflict, still, and therefore, —existing with the flesh (and, I must add, with the world, for both are the consequence of this very thing), but of the thing itself. This earnest of the Spirit is in connection with the glory of Jesus, therefore full of victory and full of hope. And yet, as it was the glory of the man witnessed, and the Holy Ghost dwelling in those not yet glorified, though sanctified to God, it became, on the one hand, the complete witness of the highest possible assurance of understanding, because Jesus was on the throne who had entered into the whole conflict, and of the Father’s acceptance of Him in divine righteousness: yet withal, on the other hand, it entered into all the circumstances through which that righteous man did pass; so giving the pattern and

formation of knowledge, the tongue of the learned, in all the trial through which the saints as led of the Spirit had to (and must) pass; their portion—and therefore a Spirit of perfect sympathy, the sympathy of the Spirit of Christ, as knowing the glory, and therefore sensible, according to God, of the extreme misery, and sorrow, and degradation, into which, as to circumstance, those in whom (as the witness of Jesus) He dwelt were plunged and what their trial on the way to that glory and the path of patience towards it. Also was it witness of the Father's love as shown in the glory; and hence it passed, as the river of that divine refreshment in the wilderness, through them, as flowing in their hearts, for they were united to Jesus, to refresh all to whom its heavenly and blessed streams came; that drinking in this as the parched ground, a desert land, they might spring forth in green and refreshing fruits, which the great Head of the Church might find delight and joy in; while their joy was full in communion with that from which it flowed. For wherever the river is received, it is the river still, Father by Jesus glorified, and becomes the witness of all the acceptance, which the glorifying of Jesus, the great responsible man under our sins, declares,—and of all the glory to which He is entitled, and all that is displayed in his person as there sat down (which is our hope, for we shall see Him as He is, and be like Him),—and, moreover, of communion with Him, not according to that glory in which He will appear to earth (for I know not that that will need the Holy Ghost, though communion vitally with Him in any way does and will, but of this in the previous chapter); but according to the glory in which He sits on the Father's throne, in which we who are sons shall know Him in that day, and the church knows Him now as sitting on the Father's throne. There is a glory which He will take—his own glory as visible Lord and Son of Man, in which every eye shall see Him: but there is a glory in which the Spirit now reveals Him, in which the church knows Him, in which, though Son of Man, He is one with the Father; a glory which He has taken as man, a glory with the Father, “*παρ■ σεαυτ■*,” and which in itself He had with the Father before the world was, but which He has now taken as man, and which the Spirit communicates to us who are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones, and gives us communion with it; and which forms the power and object of hope to our minds. As it is written, “We through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness through faith.” That righteousness is established for us in Christ upon the throne; for He who bore our sins is gone to the Father in glory. The reward and end of that righteousness is this glory; hence we see that this is our portion in hope, for the righteousness is ours: and as, in Christ, the glory is ours too, although the oneness with the Father (which gives Him the place in which the glory is now) is his only, yet is not this without its blessing, for the church knows it in Him; and the full divine source of the glory is manifested. As now Christ is in the Father, and we in Him, and He in us; so, in the day of his appearing, shall it be Christ in us and the Father in Him, that we may be made perfect in one, although the oneness with the Father (which gives Him the place in which the glory is now) is his only, yet is not this without its blessing, for the church knows it in Him; and the full divine source of the glory is manifested. As now Christ is in the Father, and we in Him, and He in us; so, in the day of his appearing, shall it be Christ in us and the Father in Him, that we may be made perfect in one.

But this is not all of these streams of living water, though it may be the great source and fountain, the glory of the Man on the Father's throne. For as the feast of tabernacles was, on the accomplishment of the promises, held in the land,—and as Solomon spoke it on the great typical celebration of it, “The Lord bath performed with his hand all that He spoke to David my father with his mouth:” so to Christ Himself all the promises are made, as heir of all things, as Son of God, as Son of Man, and Son of David; as many as are the promises of God, in Him are they yea, and in

Him amen, to the glory of God by us. Now as that which we have spoken of is for the glory of God manifested in Him, so, as it is by us, He takes the promises as man, that, having purged and sanctified them by his blood, He might introduce the children in witness of the Father's love as co-heirs. Hence as to them also, that which he is heir of as the glorified man (in title as Son of God) is, in knowledge and communion by the Spirit, part of these living streams. Therefore it, is there added, "Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ is God, who bath also anointed us, and also hath sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts." It not only then reveals the glory of Jesus as now on the throne of God as man, but also that which He takes when He appears in glory, when all shall be blessing, we being called to inherit a blessing; and therefore, the moment the earth comes into blessing, it becomes a portion of our inheritance in Christ. "The Lord shall hear the heavens," &c. whatever there is promised to Christ as the seed and great purpose of God (see Galatians 3), whatever things there are in which the glory of God is displayed, and is the furniture, and reflection, and exhibition of that glory by Christ, and all things are for Him, is to that glory by us. Of this—in its wide and fullest blessedness as second Adam, Lord from heaven withal, the witness in blessing, evil being conquered, of all the Father's love unfolded in and on the creature taken into the inheritance—of this, I say, the Spirit is the joy to us in hope. And, as the promises are to us in Christ, and we see Christ, though all things be not yet put under Him, crowned with the glory and honor, in which He is the securer of them all-sustaining all things—the first-born of every creature, as well as first-born from the dead, and Head of the Church—we, being in Christ and partakers of the Spirit, have all these as abounding in hope; for they are witness of the Father's love and blessing, contributing to these rivers of living waters, that is, the knowledge of the glory of Christ as in them, enjoyed within by the Spirit; and, where so enjoyed, flowing over; for no human heart ever, when so enjoyed, could contain them.

And this surely is a joyous thought—for now we must take the promises in the widest sense—all things in heaven and in earth, all are Christ's as heir; for indeed He made them all, and all are to be reconciled in Him; and if reconciled to God, how full the blessing Well may the streams flow through the desert when Israel is there passing, for desert it shall be no longer when Israel is owned; the streams were not indeed thence, but they were there for the firstborn when the first-born were there. A most blessed picture this of divine favor and exalting hope; the wilderness shall flourish and blossom as the rose, when in divine favor Israel obtains its inheritance; so, when Israel passes through it, for Israel (though the wilderness be unchanged by it) the streams which would renew and gladden it flow—refresh Israel blessedly through it. Thus, beautifully does the song of Moses, when he would as his God prepare Him a habitation, and as his father's God exalt Him, declare, on his emergence from the Red Sea, — "Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou hast redeemed: Thou hast guided them in thy strength unto thy holy habitation." To God they were already brought, so we. Afterward— "Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance, in the place which Thou hast, made for thee to dwell in, in the sanctuary, O Lord, which thy hands have established. The Lord shall reign forever and ever." The place of Israel, as the redeemed tribes in hope, was Canaan—and Canaan strictly within Jordan; so that Moses diode with the two and a half when proposing to stay without—and the rest only are then called the children of Israel. So of the Church, but the promises to Abraham were all from the river of Egypt to the great river; and there was a day coming when the wilderness and the solitary place would be glad for them, and the desert would rejoice and blossom as the rose, and see the glory of the Lord and the excellency of their God; yet still the sanctuary which God had prepared

for Himself to dwell in, was the place where they were to be brought in. Blessed portion' So with the saints now, —they have their place in heaven, and they know it now in spirit and in hope; know it as theirs, though evil spirits may yet for a very little season be to be resisted there, and have their hold till the great conflict comes, which shall exclude them forever. Thus they have their place, their seat in the heavenlies beyond Jordan; blessed inheritance, where to them Christ has set the glory, —the glory of the Father, and His own. Yet though it be thus, the world and all things are theirs, though it be a wilderness and they strangers in it; the moment they are redeemed, though they be not in the rest of Egypt, nor have the leeks, and cucumbers, and the onions, and the bondage, and though the world be a wilderness to them, a dry and barren land where no water is, they are called out into it as theirs—theirs, yet only as a wilderness,—but called out to hold a feast to the Lord there. And be it so, that they have holden a feast to the golden calf, while Moses is in the mount to receive the given law,—it does not alter what it is to the heart of faith; they have been led forth, and not only do they know in spirit that they have been brought to God, so in spirit to be in the heavenlies, but they find, and it is because they find, Jesus there, and finding Him they find all things theirs, even where they are; and they can be fed only from heaven, guided only by what is heavenly, drink only thus from the rock, or rather have the river of God flowing in themselves; but in Jesus they know their inheritance;—"All things are theirs, and they are Christ's, and Christ is God's." The wilderness is now only to pass through, there is nothing in it for them, yet all is theirs; but when Israel is in the wilderness, when the Church is thus passing through the world, which is its inheritance, the river is there, yea, is in their hearts; and they sing (for the redemption-work is complete in title, though not accomplished as to the creature in power), "But you path He redeemed, reconciled;" "Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people which Thou hast redeemed: Thou hast guided them in thy strength to thy holy habitation." When the water revives the wilderness itself—when the Son of man actually takes the world as his inheritance, and the Spirit is poured out, shall it not then be glad, and rejoice, and blossom? Well, it fills the heart of God's people, of him that believeth in Jesus now, and does so because he is in the wilderness: and shall he not rejoice and blossom? Yea, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water; and though often the heartless sand may drink it in and give no return, but be parched, and arid, and fruitless as before, yet—wherever the earth of God's hand, and the seeds of God's planting are, there shall they also be refreshed and spring up through it.

I feel it very important to remark here, the individual character noticed before, because it is the saving principle in the midst of desolations and evil, whatever common good it may produce; it is not, They shall drink of the river from the rock, or drink of some common river, but, "Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water;" it is the personal possession and indwelling of the Holy Ghost. So the gospel of John, which gives what is essential and uniting and not consequences, continually treats of it.

There is another point of view in which this indwelling of the Spirit has its peculiar feature and character in this dispensation. It results from the exaltation of Christ. The position in which He is, is the witness of all things being accomplished; and He Himself is personally in possession of the result of that accomplishment, and We united to Him in it, He being there continually. Consequently, it is as different as possible from any previous testimony of what was to be, let it be ever so blessed—as indeed the mystery was not fully revealed, nor, as I have already remarked as to the fact, had the testimony they had, any necessary connection with enjoyment of the things

witnessed, not even where the witnesses were saints, as 1 Peter 1 shows. It was as different also as possible from any operation of the Spirit producing fruits, even as the living Spirit of Christ, (though this was ever surely saving,) because it never witnessed, and never could witness, a living Christ and glorified man in the heavens, with whom they were one, who had accomplished all the things they were to enjoy, and which gave the title to, and ground of, their enjoyment of them. This could only exist when Jesus had accomplished them, was in the glory, and thence sent down the Holy Ghost, the power of communion to those united to Him. The thing itself did not exist—the work was not accomplished—and Jesus, as a man, was not in the glory; therefore we read, “the Holy Ghost was not yet given,” οὐκ ἔστιν ἔτι δοθέν, because that Jesus was not yet glorified. The fact is, the union of the Church with Him as one body was not yet even revealed, but was a mystery hid in God, as Christ now is, known therefore and enjoyed only by the Holy Ghost given to them which believe. It was not, of course, that there was any different work by which man could be saved (a believer knows this is impossible), nor another Spirit, for there is but one. But that Spirit could not then testify that the believer (to whom He witnessed and whom He influenced) was then in union with the risen Jesus, with the man who was actually glorified as a present thing, as He does now to a believer’s soul; for the thing did not exist to be testified of. If it be said, it was true to faith; I answer, it was not as true to faith that they were in union then, and knew Jesus as now glorified; for Jesus was not glorified, and therefore the Holy Ghost had not, on the footing of this union, taken up His abode in a believer’s heart, “was not yet,” in the sense of dwelling as the witness of the glorified man, in those who were united to Him. This made all the difference between being free, and hoping to be free on the certainty of a faithful man’s word, who never lied, and was able to perform. Both were certain; but they were not the same thing: “If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed;” this was the better thing reserved for us, that they without us should not be made perfect; this is that which made the least in the kingdom of heaven greater than the greatest born of woman; this presence of the Holy Ghost with and in believers, as the result of the accomplishment of Christ’s work and the witness of their union with Him. This, too, I apprehend, is the difference between the general assembly and church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven, and the spirits of just men made perfect. The children of Israel might have believed the Lord’s promise, and did, as Jacob showed—as Joseph showed, when he gave commandment concerning his bones (Genesis 1. 24): but however surely this faith was exercised, they could not say, “Thou, Lord, in thy mercy hast led forth the people which Thou hast redeemed: Thou hast guided them in thy strength to thy holy habitation;” for the work of their redemption was not accomplished:—they could sing that when they were brought out of Egypt through the Red Sea, though they were only brought into the wilderness where there was no way, nor food, nor water; for they were redeemed. I now take in the whole course, not any particular type.

I dwell thus much upon this, because many find it very difficult to understand how, if the way of being saved is the same, the state of those that are so can be different; whereas “the heir so long as he is a child differed, nothing from a servant, though he be lord of but is under tutors and governors,” having no free and immediate intercourse with the father’s mind, nor understanding of the father’s interests.

Known sonship with the Father, and union with Christ, seeing what Christ’s title is, are primary characteristics of this indwelling of the Spirit; and though we see not yet all things put under Christ, yet we see Him crowned with the glory and honor, so that we rejoice in the prospective title,

knowing that “He is not ashamed to call us brethren.”

Thus, in the 8th of Romans, where this presence of the Spirit, as the very character of this dispensation, is much brought out, after shelving His moral operations (i.e., as life in the soul), and the quickening of the body, then spoken of as personally dwelling in present witness with us; He bears witness that we are children, therefore heirs, “heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ, if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be glorified together.” Now, in this we have the whole case; —children, the assembly of the first-born, put, as Israel was, in the wilderness. Israel is my first-born. Next Canaan before us, heirs of God; for that was his land, and his title in Israel reached from river to river—Canaan and the wilderness, heaven and earth. “Joint-heirs with Christ,” as they of Immanuel’s land; and “if so be that we suffer,” they must pass through this world, as a wilderness simply. Now the Holy Ghost takes up all this, and in its two great characters—the glory and the suffering; the glory belonging to as children and co-heirs, and this we have in hope. When our prospect is dimmed, we become careless about it, and profane in our minds; when bright, we need naught but manna, and the water, and patience for the wilderness, longing for the rest, submitting to the will of God concerning it. And when our souls are really dwelling as in the glory, when the grapes of Eshcol really fill our souls, there is deadness to all, save the savor and brightness of, the hope: what is heavenly is heavenly to us; for we are heavenly-minded, we see the glory of the Lord, and it is in a place where his eyes are continually—a land not watered by foot, but by rivers that run among hills and valleys, the very dwelling-place of the Father’s kingdom. The Spirit in the revelation of God (for it is God) causes us thus to dwell in the fullness of God; and from hence we estimate the inheritance, the fellowship with Christ in it, and the glory; we dwell in it in the sweet savor of divine delight in Jesus, who fills all things, and will in very deed do so, and is now revealed so to us by the Spirit. His presence, as actually taking it, shall fill and gladden heaven and earth, banishing evil. But then, now it is, “if so be we suffer,” for the very dwelling in this glory, and seeing in spirit the whole creation reconciled, brought into the liberty of the glory of the children of God—it cannot be of their grace—waiting for the manifestation of these sons,—makes us the more and distinctly sensible how it groans and travails together in bondage until now; and our body, too, being part of this, it becomes sensitive and sympathetic groaning. Now we know this groaning of the creation by our dwelling in the glory, but it becomes sympathetic because we are connected with it in our body, and that as unredeemed. But then it is not merely the selfish feeling of evil. The intercession of the Spirit in us is according to God. The Spirit, as dwelling in us, estimates the evil not according to mere human pain in it, but in the divine estimate of it, as interested in and dwelling in them who are in the midst of the evil, and partakers of it as to their bodies; and all their groans which take up the known groanings of the creation (for it is as to the body which is of it) are not from selfish pain, but the Spirit’s sense of the evil, as dwelling in us; and though we, as to mind and intelligence, cannot tell what to ask for, yet He who searcheth the heart knows what the mind of the Spirit that dwells there is; for He makes intercession according to God. Thus the Spirit, that other Comforter, in and through our hearts, feeling, in the non-adoption of the body, that it dwells in a world groaning under the bondage of corruption, not only teaches from the glory, so that we say, “We know,” but expresses (in sense of it all, yet according to God) the need according to God, to be met in the saints now by more enlarged and deeper communion, and that glory in hope which shall put it all away.

As regards our own exercise on these things, I would say a very few words. As in the Spirit, our joy is full, the savor of heavenly things is fresh, our path easy; "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty," there is communion which makes all light, and we walking and dwelling in it, and everything shines in it. The Holy Ghost is the communicating power of all fullness: but when we come to the wilderness there is exercise, difficulty, the heart is proved; all is opposite, it is a wilderness; and rest in a wilderness only keeps us in a wilderness still, and, indeed, will be found going back soon in heart after Egypt. For rest, we shall find it a wilderness, and bring the chastenings of the Lord of faithfulness upon us. Now even where trouble is, if the heart be right in the sight of God, God is known through it all; it is not that the trouble will not be felt, far from it; the more perfect the faith, the more it will be felt: the more I know, the more my heart and thought is in Canaan, the more I shall understand what the wilderness is: yea, the very worship of God, blessed as it may be, will be and savor of the wilderness; my mercies are mercies of the wilderness; my food, food for the wilderness; the clouds may guide me to Canaan, but in Canaan I shall need no cloud for the way, still, where the spirit is bright through grace, though it feels all this, it has rich and deep experience of God, which works hope which maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost given unto us. In that patience of spirit which is learned only in the wilderness (what patience shall we need in Canaan?) the deeper parts of God's character are learned. If faith had to bear six hundred thousand rebellious ones, as if it had begotten them, how would it learn, through cultivated communion, the depth of God's patience, the wisdom of his purposes, the extreme perfectness of his love, uncaused by anything it found, bent upon blessing, how He knew the end from the beginning, and while we were travailing in heart about present circumstances, God was using them for bringing forth to that heart the certainty of future hopes, or forming it for the enjoyment of them. And how in us would the molding of heart in this intimacy of God's ways, intrinsically form us for the estimate of the glory in breaking the links (which seemed strange to those occupied with present things) which tied us to those things, that the life in us might grow up into unhindered association with whatever was heavenly! It requires the wilderness (not to give a title which would bring us to God, but) practically to put God instead of Egypt within us; I do not say it ought, and that we ought not to be as Caleb and Joshua, ready at once to go up, and the grapes of Eshcol be our encouragement in going onward, rather than the sons of Anak our fear; for they bear the stamp of the beneficence and power of Him who called us there,—they were the grapes of his land, and this Lord was well able to bring us in. But it is God's way habitually with us. But when our faith tastes those grapes, when our hearts are thus, we can rise over trouble, however felt; and when we are spiritual, all trouble is the instrument of the blessed experience of God.

God's purposes are not ours; and He always works for his own, which are our perfect blessing, the making of us conformed to the image of his Son, co-heirs, "the glory of God by us." Now in our blessed Master, as learning obedience by the things which He suffered, we see this path in the wilderness in perfectness, feeling as none else felt, but seeing (even then in perfect submission) the divine perfectness of the Father's ways, and the end too they led to, His glory, enjoyed as joy set before Him, as a river of sure and blessed water too, thus to give rest and refreshment. "Then began He to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not:" here was true grief, and thoroughly felt as grief there is no true grief but where there is no resource around; and around Jesus had none. "Rachel weeping for her children, refused to be comforted, because they were not;" the word to her was "There is no hope in thine end." But let

us look to Jesus. "In the same hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that 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." "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." How did the rivers of water flow forth here from this heart-smitten rock! There was none indeed without: but how did they flow from the revealed depths within! The waters gushed forth, his own soul full, "All things are delivered,"—I can reveal the Father,— "Come to me." How did his pent soul burst forth from the "Then have I labored in vain, and spent my strength for naught I" and in vain, as to present circumstances, to spread these living streams in the wilderness, which have, blessed Lord Jesus! refreshed the church, and shall refresh it through the wilderness, till it need nothing but thyself in Canaan. And are we not sons; poor indeed, but still; in exaltation of his fullness, "He that believeth on me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." And where the Spirit of God really is, there is no breaking, no smiting, no operation of patience through the word, but brings forth more of them; for we are associated with infinite fullness now in Jesus. Because all perfectness was there, it all burst forth at once, and "I thank thee" was in one hour with "Woe unto thee." In us often, that these streams may flow and flow pure, there is much process; and when the flesh is at work, and our will is at work, then, till laid low, there is no perception of the brightness and fullness before us, yea, with which we are in communion; for the flesh hath no communion with it, the will no part or portion in it: and till we are brought to say, "I thank thee," "I glory in my tribulations," there is no "All things are delivered," as they are ours in Jesus,—no real "Come to me," though in our mere judgment we may say, There is the place where it is to be found: and this is deep work; but it is God's work. Thus, much for the flowing of these living streams in us: they are all heavenly; and only as we are simply heavenly will they run. Wretched we, that we should need so much to make God's blessed refreshing streams flow! Wondrous love, that He should patiently do so much! May we be enabled to say always, though not callous, "I thank thee!" Still, in all this bondage of corruption, though the will by which it came in was in man, not in the creature without (therefore Jesus' was pure sorrow, because it was all according to God—ours not), though this will yet working in us must be subdued; yet, where the Spirit is, God, seeing it, in love, i.e., towards us, and putting in action the special process in love, that this will may be broken, every groan which does come (when ye know not what to ask for, nor how) is the perfect intercession of the Spirit whose mind is known to Him who searcheth the hearts, so that we may be comforted: and, resting in God, God will show us the brightness beyond. A true groan to God, however deep the misery, however prostrate the spirit, however unconscious that we are heard, is always received above as the intercession of the Spirit, and answered according to the perfectness of God's purpose concerning us in Christ; therefore the charge is, "Ye have not cried unto me, when ye have howled upon your beds:" and there is no consequence of sin which is beyond the reach of this groaning to God, nothing, indeed but the self-will which will not groan to Him at all. This is a blessed thought! Such is our intercourse with God in joy and in sorrow; and I doubt not that in us poor, but blessed creatures, the truest, the most blessed (what will shine most when all things shine before God), are these groans to Him: they cannot, indeed, be, in their fullness, but where the knowledge of the glory of blessing is I can see them precede the greatest works and words of Jesus. The sense of

the wilderness, taken into his heart, made but the streams which could refresh it, flow forth in the sympathy of the Spirit which it called forth; and now the Spirit is in us. I believe I must for the present close these thoughts. This has touched but upon one point (and O how narrowly and poorly! what muddy water!)—the presence of the blessed and heavenly Spirit in the desert, as in our hearts, with joy for the things it gives in union with our Head, and refreshing for the scene it passes through, where God's poor pilgrims are; the messenger of all their sorrow according to his estimate of it, who knows, loves, and effects the blessing of the portion of Christ in his people, as dwelling in them—their blessed Paraclete. "Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity."

Hitherto we have seen the blessed Spirit generally, in His characteristic living operations, and not so much ecclesiastically, if I may so speak. The third, fourth, and seventh chapters of St. John's Gospel have given us clear instruction in this: —

Firstly, as quickening or giving life.

Secondly, as given; and thus a well of water in us springing up into everlasting life: thus, too, as manifesting, or connected with, the riches of grace—making us know the Father as seeking such to worship, the God of love—and enabling us to worship Him in spirit and in truth, as thus known in the grace that has sought us—brought in by faith to fellowship with Him, fellowship with the Father and the Son, out of every nation—in a word, the dispensation of the manifested Son; manifested to faith as one with whom we are in union through the Spirit: this by the gift of grace.

Thirdly, as flowing forth from us, a river of refreshings—and this in connection with the glory of the Son of man; and therefore not so much the power of worship, as the earnest of glory, and the power of refreshing, and glorious testimony that man in Him prevails and has the glory; though yet he must wait for it till He be manifested to the world, set right indeed by his presence, in that great feast of tabernacles.

(Continued from page 127.)

(To be continued.)

On the Gospel by St. John

Now, to draw the disciples from a mere Jewish place into this elevation of the Church of God, and by this to comfort them under a sense of His absence, is the Lord's great purpose in the discourse which he holds with them in these chapters—the like to which never passed between the sons of men—the heart and mind of God had never before so largely and blessedly communicated their treasures to the desires and thoughts of his people, as now the Lord was doing. Most sacred moments of communion between heaven and earth were these!

At the beginning the Lord says, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me." This at once gives them notice of another object of faith than what they as yet had. God, in the sense of these words, had been already known to Israel. The disciples, in their Jewish place, were already believers in God. The Lord here allows that, as he had before asserted, speaking to the woman of Samaria; "We (i.e. Jews) know what we worship." The Jews had God; their faith was not wrong, but only defective, and the Lord would now fill it out. He would now have them to know the Father through the Son—and the whole of this discourse with his disciples furthers this design.

He speaks particularly of the Father, and promises the Comforter to make these things (the things of the Father and the Son) known to them.

This was the character of grace which this Gospel at the beginning intimated, when St. John wrote "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God." And this early notice of the value and power of the Son's ministry is, in these chapters, largely unfolded. But while this is doing, we have several forms of Jewish ignorance brought out—necessarily so, I may say; for Israel did not stand in this knowledge, into which the Lord was now leading them. Thomas is ignorant of Christ's departure and separation from this earth, and says, "Lord, we know not whither thou goest;" for Israel had been taught to say that Christ was to abide forever. Philip betrays his unacquaintedness with the Father; for it was not the knowledge of the Father in the Son that Israel had been led into. Judas wonders at any glory, but the manifested worldly glory of Messiah; for such was Israel's hope. And they all stand amazed at the mystery of "the little while." But out of these thoughts, the heavenly prophet is leading them. They had been already drawn out from the apostate nation, as God's remnant accepting Jesus as Messiah come from God, but they had still to know the Son as come from the Father, who, while he was with them, had been showing them the Father, was now about to return to the Father, and would come again to take them home to the Father. These were the great things of His love which their divine prophet here reveals to them; but these were as yet strange things unto them. Truths however, they are, upon which all that is peculiar to the Church rests.

But the course of our Lord's own thoughts through this conversation is only for a while interrupted by these defective Jewish thoughts of his disciples. His purpose was to elevate them to the sense of their calling as the Church of God, and thus to comfort them; and that purpose he steadily follows, however he may for a time have to rebuke their slowness of heart. Thus, in the interruption occasioned by Peter, (13: 33; 14: 1,) the Lord, in answering Peter, is called to contemplate and foretell his faithlessness, and denial of Him; but this does not turn out of their course the thoughts of kindness about him, and the rest of them, which the Lord was pursuing. "Let not your hearts be troubled," says the gracious Master, immediately after forewarning Peter of his baseness. So, at the close of the conversation, he had to tell his too confident disciples, that the hour was then at hand when every one of them would go "to his own, and leave him alone;" and yet, without allowing an interruption of his flow of love towards them for a single moment, he at once resumes his own thoughts, saying to them, "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace—in the world ye shall have tribulation; but, be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

And so, beloved, with his saints ever since. We may, through our own folly, have to listen to the "cock crowing"—to receive rebuke, go out, and weep; but the heart of Jesus does not repent of his purposed kindness toward us. His purpose is to save, and he will save; his purpose is to bless, and who shall hinder? He has not beheld iniquity in them. They are to have peace accomplished for them by his death, life brought to them by his resurrection, and glory to be hereafter theirs at his return. These are their blessings, and of these he tells them, in spite of all slowness of heart or unworthiness, for their comfort under the sense of his going away.

The works that Jesus did, in Matthew's gospel, are owned to be those of the Son of David. (12: 23.) They are there as the seals of his Messiahship. But here the Lord offers them to his disciples as the seals of his Sonship of the Father. He would have them looked upon, not merely as tokens

that he could order the kingdom of Israel, according to the promises of the prophets, (Isaiah 35:5,6,) but as witnesses that he was the dispenser of the Father's grace and power; for he says, "Believe me, that I am in the Father, and the Father in me, or else believe me for the very works' sake." And this is in full consistency with our gospel. And the "greater works," which he immediately afterward promises that believers in him should do, were to be, as I judge, works of the same character, works that were to savor of the Father's grace, such as the bringing poor condemned sinners into the liberty of the children of God. As Paul says, "In Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel." And so is it still sinners are still brought into the liberty of dear children. "I will not leave you orphans," says the Lord in this place, "I will come to you; because I live, ye shall live also." No orphanage for them, no lamentation from them as there was from Israel, that they were fatherless. (14: 18, Gr. Lamentations 5: 3.) The adoption of the saints during the orphanage of Israel, is here brought out by the Lord, in terms of deep and wondrous meaning. They were to know that "he was in the Father, and they in him, and he in them." The Father is the holy burthen here.

And there is a little action of the Lord's that I must notice. At the close of the 14th chapter he says, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you;" by this telling them, that ere he left this world he would leave his peace behind him—peace for them as sinners accomplished by his death. And after thus telling them of peace, he says, "Arise, let us go hence." Upon which we may assume that they all rise from the paschal table, and walk forth toward the Mount of Olives; and then it is that he at once presents himself to them, as in resurrection, their life, the source of quickening power, saying, "I am the vine, and ye are the branches."

There is a beautiful significance in the whole of this action. He sits at the paschal table till peace had been pronounced, for on that table the pledges of their peace were at that moment spread; but as he rises from it, he tells them of the resurrection-life—life that they were, to know as in him, risen above the power of death, the true vine. And he tells them that there is no other life but this, saying, "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered." And having thus disclosed to them the only root of life, he shows them the joys and holy prerogatives of this life, teaching them that they were to have his own joy, the joy of the Son, fulfilled in them, and were also to enter into the dignity and grace of friendship with their Lord, and to assure themselves that his glory and their blessing were now but one interest; and moreover, that the Father's great purpose was, to glorify the Son as this vine or head of life; that having planted it as the only witness of life in the earth, which is the scene of death, the Father would watch over it with the care and diligence of a husbandman. This the Lord here speaks to be the Father's present care, to have the vine in beauty and fruitfulness, to glorify Jesus as the HEAD OF LIFE, as by-and-by he will glorify him on the throne of glory as HEIR OF ALL THINGS. In old times, God's eye, as her husbandman, was upon the land of Israel (Deuteronomy 11: 12), but now it is watching over this vine, which his own hand has planted.

All this told the disciples of exceeding riches of grace. But withal he tells them, that this union with him was to separate them from the world, this friendship with him was to expose them to the world's hatred. The world was soon to express its full enmity to God, and then to them. The revelation of God in love, the revelation of the Father in and by the Son, was soon about to be fully refused by the world. This was hatred indeed, hatred "without a cause," hatred for love. The cross of Christ was soon to present man's fullest hatred, meeting God's fullest love. Ignorant of the

Father, it might be still zealous for God, and think to do God service by killing the children of the Father. For there may be zeal for the synagogue, yea, and for the God of the synagogue, with entire separation from the spirit of that dispensation which publishes riches of grace, and reveals the Father in the Son.

But this view of the sorrows which his saints might endure from the world, leads the Lord to exhibit the services of the promised Comforter in them and for them, still more blessedly. He tells them that the Comforter would stand for them against the world, convicting it of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment; but at the same time dwelling in them, the witness of their Father's love and their Lord's glory. This comfort he provides for them against the day of the world's hatred.

And here let me observe, that the Spirit was now to be received of the Father. God had approved Jesus of Nazareth (Acts 2:22); but it was of the Father that the Holy Ghost was to be received, and he would approve his presence according to this. Look at the character of his presence in the church, immediately on his being given. (Acts 2) What an oil of gladness, what a spirit of liberty and largeness of heart, is he in the saints there! Jesus had received him in the ascended place, where he himself had been made full of joy with God's countenance, and, giving him forth from such a place, he manifests himself here accordingly, imparting at once something of that joy of God's countenance into which their Lord had entered. They gladly received the word, ate their bread with gladness, and praised God. And this joy could easily dry up other sources. They parted with what might have secured human delights and provided for natural desires. The Holy Ghost in them was joy, and liberty, and largeness of heart. It was the Spirit "of the Father." It was the reflection on the saints here of that light which had fallen on Jesus in the holiest. The oil had run down from the beard to the skirts of the clothing.

Indeed, we can form but a poor idea of the value of such a dispensation as this, which the Comforter was now to bring, to a soul that had been under the spirit of bondage, and of fear gendered by the law. What thoughts of judgment to come were now bidden to depart! What fears of death were now to yield to the consciousness of present life in the Son of God! And what would all this be but anointing with an oil of gladness? And the disciples, by this discourse, were under training for this joy and liberty.

The schoolmaster was soon to give up his charge—his rod and his book of elements were now to be dispensed with, —and in this discourse the Son is leading the children on their way home to their Father from under such tutors and governors, and they are soon to reach the Father, that they might know, through the Holy Ghost, the liberty and joy of adoption.

Such was this interesting hour to the Church. The Holy Ghost, the witness of the Father and the Son, and thus the Spirit of adoption, was soon to be imparted, and they were now led forth from the school of the law to wait for it. With thoughts of the Father and of the Son, and of the Church's interests in all their love, the Holy Ghost was now to fill the saints. And this accordingly he does in our dispensation. He tells us, as the Lord here promises he should, of the delight that the Father has in the Son, of his purpose to glorify him, and of our place in that delight and that glory. He takes of these things and the like, and shows them unto us.

Look at Genesis 24—a well-known and much enjoyed scripture. It sets forth the election of a Bride for the Son by the Father, but the place which the servant occupies in it is just the place of the Holy

Ghost in the Church, ministering (as in divine grace) to the joys of the Son and the Church, in perfecting the purposes of the Father's love. In that scene, the servant of Abraham tells Rebecca of the way in which God had prospered his master, what a favored and beloved one Isaac was, how he had been, "the child of old age," and how Abraham had made him "the heir of all his possessions." He discloses to her the counsels which Abraham had taken touching a wife for this much-loved son of his, and lets her see clearly her own election of God to fill that holy and honored place. And at last he puts upon her the pledges of this election and of Isaac's love.

Nothing could be more touching and significant than the whole scene. Would that our hearts knew more of the power of all this, under the Holy Ghost, as Rebecca knew it under the hand of Abraham's servant! It was because he had filled her with thoughts of Abraham and of Isaac, and of her own interest in them, that she was ready to go with this Stranger all alone across the desert. Her mind was formed by these thoughts; and she was prepared to say to her country, her kindred, and her father's house, "I will go." And the thoughts of our heavenly Father's love, and our Isaac's delight in us, can still give us holy separation from this defiled place where we dwell. Communion with the Father and the Son, through the Comforter, is the holy way of distinguishing the Church from the world. There may be the fear of a coming judgment working something of actual separation from it, or the pride of the Pharisee working religious separation from it; but the present knowledge of the Father's love, and the hope of the coming glories of the Son, can alone work a divine separation from its course and its spirit.

The Father's love, of which the Comforter testifies, is an immediate love. It is the love of God that has visited the world in the gift of his Son (see 3:16); but the moment this love of God is believed, and the message of reconciliation which it has sent forth is received, then are believers entitled, through riches of grace, to know the Father's love, a love that is an immediate love, as the Lord here tells us (16: 26, 27). It is of this love of the Father, as the glory of the Son, that the Comforter tells us by the way homeward. He is our companion for all the journey, and this is his discourse with us. How did the servant, I doubt not (to return to the same chapter, Genesis 24), as he accompanied Rebecca across the desert, tell her further of his master, adding many things to what he had already told her in Mesopotamia; for he had been the confidant of his master, and had known him from the beginning. He knew his desire for a son, and God's promise and God's faithfulness. He knew of Abraham's victory over the kings, of his rescue of Lot, and meeting with Melchisedek. He knew of the covenant, the pledge of the inheritance. He knew of the dismissal of Ishmael from the house, and of Isaac's walk in it without a rival; —of the mystic journey up Mount Moriah; and of Isaac being thus alive from the dead. All this he knew, and all this doubtless he told her of, as they traveled on together, with these recollections and prospects delighting her, though her back was now turned, and turned forever, upon her country and her father's house. And, beloved were we more consciously "on the way" with the Comforter, the way would to us in like manner be beguiled by his many tales of love and glory, whispering of the Father and of the Son to our inmost souls. Be it so with us, thy poor people, blessed Lord, more and more!

17 —After thus comforting them with the knowledge of their standing, as the family of the Father, and, as it were, making gracious amends to them for his own present absence from them, and the hatred they were to suffer from the world, the Lord again exhibits, in this chapter, one of his priestly services, as he had done in the 13th. But the services are different; both, however, together constituting a full presentation of his ways as our Advocate in the heavenly temple. In the

13th chapter, he had as it were, laid one hand on the defiled feet of his saints, here he lays the other hand on the throne of the Father—forming, thus, a chain of marvelous workmanship, reaching from God to sinners. In the 13th chapter, his body was girt, and he was stooping down towards our feet—here, his eyes are lifted up, and he is looking in the face of the Father. What that is asked for us, by one who thus fills up the whole distance between the bright throne of God, and our defiled feet, can be denied? All must be granted—such an one is heard always.

Thus we get the sufficiency and acceptance of the Advocate, and we may notice the order in which he makes his requests, and lays his claims before the Father.

First. —He makes request in behalf of the Father's own glory. "Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee." His first thought was upon the Father's interest; as he had before taught his disciples, ere they presented their own desires and necessities, to say, "Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name."

Life eternal the Lord lays in the Father's hand; saying, "As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him." By this our Mediator bows to the truth of God, which Satan of old had traduced, and which man had questioned. (Genesis 3:4.) But He then adds, "and this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent,"—owning that life is now to be had only through redemption, that it is not the life of a creature merely, but of a ransomed creature, a life rescued for us from the power of death by the grace of the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ the Savior.

Secondly. —He claims his own glory. "Glorify me with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." And this claim he grounds upon his having finished the work that had been given him to do, saying, "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." For this was a work into which no blot had entered, in which, therefore, God could rest and be refreshed, as in his works of old; a work which the Father might behold and say of it, "it is all very good;" in which he might again find a Sabbath.

And this is the believer's comfort, that he sees his salvation depending on a finished work, in which God, "smells a savor of rest." At the beginning, on finishing the work of creation, God sanctified the seventh day, resting in full satisfaction in all that his hand had formed. But that rest man disturbed, so that God repented that he had made man on the earth. Again, in due time, the Lord provided for himself another rest, erecting a tabernacle in Canaan, and offering to Israel a place in that rest, giving them his Sabbath. (Ex. 31:13.) By the sword of Joshua, this rest in Canaan was first made good to Israel; (Joshua 21:44;23. 1;) and then under the throne of Solomon. (1 Chronicles 22:9.) But Israel, like Adam, disturbed this rest, the land did riot keep her Sabbath, for the wickedness of them that dwelt herein. (2 Chronicles 36:21.) The blessed God has now found another and a sure rest, a rest which can never be lost or disturbed. In the work finished by the Lord Jesus Christ (and which the Lord here Presents to him) God again rests, as in his works of old, with fullest complacency. This finished work is altogether according to his mind. By the resurrection of Christ, the Father bath said of it, "Behold, it is very good." It is his rest forever; lie has an abiding delight in it; his eyes and his heart are upon it continually. The work of Christ accomplished for sinners has given, God a rest. That is a thought full of blessing to the soul. And when faith sets a right value, that is, God's value, on the blood, there is rest, God's own rest, for the soul. But it is then that a saint or believing sinner begins his toil. The moment I rest as a sinner I begin my labor as a saint.

The rest for the saint is a rest that remaineth; and therefore it is written, "Let us labor therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of 'unbelief.'" The sinner rests now, the saint labors still, and will till the kingdom come.

Thirdly. —He prays for his people. He asks that they might be kept through the Father's name, and sanctified through the Father's truth, so that they might be one in the communion of the Son's joy now; and he asks that they might be with him where he is, and there behold his glory, and be one with him in his glory hereafter. These are large requests. The divine Advocate would have all his saints one. (See ver. 11, 21.) But this oneness is not such, I judge, as it is commonly interpreted to be—a manifested ecclesiastical oneness. It is a oneness in personal knowledge of, and fellowship with, the Father and the Son—oneness in spirit, in the spirit of their minds, each of them having the spirit of adoption, which was the peculiar grace and power of that dispensation which he, the Son, was about to introduce. The desire is, that such a spirit might have its course in the hearts of each and all of the elect now to be gathered.

Has this failed? That could not be; and all the epistles witness to us that it has not. For there we find the saints in every place, whether Jew or Gentile, considered as kept by the Father in his own name; kept' as sons, as "accepted in the Beloved," as having the "spirit of adoption," as being brought together "into the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God." All such statements are assertions, that this desire of the great Advocate had been answered, each believer having the joy of the Son fulfilled in himself, and thus all of them one in the spirit of their minds. This desire does not, I assuredly judge, respect any ecclesiastical condition of things. That thought has led to many a human effort among the saints. They have condemned themselves for not realizing this prayer of the Lord by a manifestation of unity, and then taken means to bring this about. But I ask; is this prayer of the Lord made contingent on the energies of the saints? Is it not rather addressed to the Father, for what rested simply in the good pleasure and power and gift of the Father? Surely. It appealed to the Father, that he would keep the elect in his name, sanctify them by his truth, and impart to them the joy of the Son, so that each might have that joy fulfilled in himself.

This desire has been realized. The spirit of the Son is equally for each and all of the saints, and they are one in that spirit and in that joy. When the due season comes, we shall see the other desires of this chapter also made good. All who are to receive the testimony have not yet been called, nor has the glory yet shone out and been imparted to them, so that as yet the world has neither believed or known that the Father has sent the Son. (See ver. 21, 23.) The world as yet knows them not. (1 John 3:1.) But in their season these requests will be answered. And so, in like manner, the vision of glory. (See ver. 24.) As far as we have gone in divine dispensations, the desires have been answered; the rest only wait for their season.

To us, however, beloved, it is most comforting to find that all these glorious desires for the saints our Lord grounds simply on this, that they had received the Son's testimony about the Father, and had believed surely in the Father's love. "I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me."

But how full of blessing it is, to see that we are presented before God simply as believing that love! How surely does it tell us that the pleasure of our God is this, that we should know him in love,

know him as the Father, know him according to the words of him who has come from his bosom. This is joy and liberty. And it is indeed only as having seen God in love, seen the Father and heard the Father in Jesus, that makes us the family. It is not the graces that adorn us, or the services that we render, but simply that we know the Father. It is this which distinguishes the saint from the world, and gives him his standing, as here, in the presence of the Father. It is simply this, (as the Mediator here tells the Father about us,) that we have received His word, received the Son's testimony of love brought from the Father's bosom.

Thus, does the divine Advocate plead before the Throne. The Father's glory, his own, and his peoples are all provided for and secured. And having thus poured forth the desires of his soul, he commits "the world," the great enemy, to the notice of the righteous Father. "O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee." For it had now proved itself to be a world that indeed knew not the Father, that hated him whom the Father had sent, and out of which the Lord was now sanctifying himself, and drawing his people. He does not, however, call for judgment upon it; but leaves it (as something with which, as our Advocate, he had nothing to do) simply under the notice of the "righteous Father," to whose judgment it belonged.

And it is merely as being ignorant of the Father that the Lord presents the world. He does not arraign her sins before the throne, but simply presents her as ignorant of the Father; as before, when presenting the Church, he did not speak of her graces or services, as we saw, but simply this, that she knew the Father. For as the knowledge of the Father makes the Church what she is, so this ignorance of the Father is that which makes the world what it is. The world is that which refuses to know God in love, so as to rejoice in him. It will make up its own pleasures, and draw from its own resources; it will have anything but the music, and the ring, and the fatted calf of the Father's house. The world was formed by Satan in the garden of Eden. There the serpent beguiled the woman, and, being listened to and spoken with, he formed the human mind according to his own pattern. We have the history and character of this evil work in Genesis 3. God's love and God's word were traduced by the enemy—man believed the slander, and made God a liar. The lust of the flesh; the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, were planted in the soul as master-powers (ver. 6); and then conscience, and fear, and avoidance of God, became the condition into which man was cast. The man and the woman began to know that they were naked, and they hid themselves among the trees, retreating from the voice of God; and then from the covert, where they lay, they send forth excuses for themselves, and challenges of God. "The Serpent beguiled me, and I did eat," says Eve: "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat," says Adam.

Such was man then, and such has the world been ever since. Man's own lusts are ruling him, with fear of God, and desired distance from him; and the secret whisper of his soul is this, that all this mischief must lie at God's own door.

From such a world the saints are in spirit and in calling delivered, and the world itself left, as here, for judgment. "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." The world had no place in Jesus. The prince of it came, and only drew from him the full witness of this, that he loved the Father, and would do as he had commanded. (14: 30, 31.) So the saints have left it they have come forth from their covert at the voice of the Son; they have heard of the Father's love towards them; they have believed it, and have walked forth in the sunshine of it. The promise that the seed

of the woman should bruise the serpent's head drew Adam forth from behind the trees of the garden; though dead in sins, he believed this promise of life, and came forth accordingly, calling his wife "the mother of all living." And so, as we have seen in this chapter, it is just the believing the message of love which the Son has brought to us from the bosom of the Father—it is just this, that makes the saints what they are—an election out of the dark and distant regions where the world dwells, and where the spirit of the world breathes. And it is, as we have also seen, the refusal to listen to this message of love that keeps the world still the world. "O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee." For men have only to receive God's word of reconciliation, to believe his love in the gift of his Son, and then to take their happy place in his family as his chosen ones, "accepted in the Beloved."

Here the third section of our Gospel ends. It has shown us Jesus the Son of the Father, as our Advocate, doing his constant services for us: it has shown us also Jesus the Son of the Father, revealing the Father to the children. The blessed God had got himself a name, the name of "Jehovah," by his signs and wonders in Egypt and in Israel (Jeremiah 32: 20); but now was he getting himself another name, a name of still richer grace, the name of "Father." This name he gets in the person and by the work of the Son of his love; and the power of it is now made effectual in the hearts of the children by the Holy Ghost.

Lo, these are parts of thy ways, our God and Father; but how little a portion of Thee do our narrow souls understand and enjoy!

Part 4. Chapters 18-21

I have followed this Gospel in its order, down to the close of the 17th chapter, having distributed it so far into three principal sections;—the first, introducing our Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God, the Stranger from heaven, and giving us his action and reception in the world; the second, exhibiting him in his intercourses and controversies with Israel; the third, giving him to us in the bosom of his elect, instructing them in the mysteries of the heavenly Priesthood, and in their standing as the children of the Father. And now we have to consider the fourth and closing section, which gives us all that attended on his death and resurrection. May the entrance of the Lord's words still give light, and bear with them to our souls a savor of that blessed One of whom they speak!

But while in labors like these, beloved, we seek to discover the order of the divine word, and are led to wonder at its depths, or admire its beauty, we should remember that it is the truth of the divine word we must chiefly consider. It is when the word comes with "much assurance" that it works "effectually" in us. It will not profit if not mixed with faith. Its power to gladden and to purify will depend on its being received as truth; and as we trace out and present to one another the beauties, the depths, and the wonders of the word, we should oft-times pause and say to our souls, as the angel said to the overwhelmed apostle who had seen the lovely visions, and heard the marvelous revelations, "These are the true sayings of God."

The place in our gospel to which I have now arrived, presents our Lord Jesus Christ in his sufferings. But I may notice that it is not his sufferings that occupy him in this gospel. Throughout it, he appears to stand above the reproaches of the people, and the world's rejection of him. So that when the last passover was approaching, though in the other gospels we see him with his mind full upon his being the Lamb that was chosen for it, saying to his disciples, "Ye know that after two days is the feast of the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified," yet in our gospel it is not so. He goes up to Jerusalem at the time; but it is to seat himself in the midst of an elect household. (12: 1.) And so afterward; when he is alone with his disciples, he stands above his sorrows and the world still—he does not tell them of the Jews betraying him to the Gentiles, and of the Gentiles crucifying him—he does not speak of his being mocked, and scourged, and spit upon, as in the other gospels. All this is passed by the many things which the Son of man was to suffer at the hands of sinful men lie untold here. But, on the other hand, he assumes the hour of the power of darkness to be past; and as soon as we find him alone with his elect, he takes his place beyond that hour. (13: 1.) Gethsemane and Calvary are behind him, and he apprehends himself as having reached the hour, not of the garden, or of the cross, but of the Mount of Olives, the hour of his ascension; our evangelist saying, "Now when Jesus knew that his hour was come, that he should depart from this world unto the Father:" these words showing us plainly that his mind was not upon his suffering, but on the heaven of the Father that was beyond it. He spreads before them, not the memorials of his death here, but of his life in heaven, as we have seen; for he washes their feet after supper. And all his discourse with his beloved ones afterward (14-16) savored of this. It all assumed that his sorrow was past; that he had finished his course; that he

had stood against the Prince of this world, and had conquered; that he had continued in the Father's love, and that all was ripe for his being glorified. His words to them assumed this, and, on the ground of this, he strengthened them to conquer as he had conquered. Instead of telling them of his sorrows, his object is to comfort them in theirs. He gave them peace, and the promise of the Comforter, and of the glory that was to follow. And when, for a moment, as urged by their state of mind, he speaks of their all leaving him alone in the coming hour, it was not without this assurance, "And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me." And in like manner, when he was separating Judas from the rest, we read that "he was troubled in spirit;" but as soon as the traitor was gone, he rises at once to his own proper elevation, and says, "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him." Thus, if his soul pass through a groan or a trouble, it is but for a moment, and just to lead him into a fuller view of the glory that was beyond it all.

It is just the same as he descends into the deepest shades of his lonely way. Even here it is still strength that accompanies him throughout, and glory that appears before him throughout. And thus, whether in labor, in testimony, or in suffering, he is still in this gospel in his elevation as Son of God. He walks on in the consciousness of his dignity, he takes the cup as from the Father's hand, and lays down his life of himself.

17, 19. —We may remember that in the 17 chapter we saw our Lord as the Advocate in the heavenly temple making his requests. From that place he now comes down to meet the hour of the power of darkness. In that chapter his heart and his eye had been full of his Father's glory, of his own glory, and of the Church's; and forth from all this, thus in spirit set before him, he comes out to endure the cross.

In the other gospels, he meets the cross after the strengthening that he had received from the angel in Gethsemane; but we have nothing of that scene here, for that was the passage of the Son of man through the anticipation of his agony, his soul being exceeding sorrowful even unto death, with the strength of God by an angel ministered to him. But here it is the Son of God descending as from heaven to meet the cross; and his passage through the whole of the hour of the power of darkness is taken in the strength of the Son of God. He seeks no companionship. In the other gospels we see him leading aside Peter, James, and John, if haply he might engage their sympathy to watch with him for an hour. But here there is none of this. He passes all along through the sorrow. The disciples, it is true, go with him into the garden, but he knows them there only as needing his protection, and not as yielding him any desired sympathy. "If ye seek me, let these go their way." As the angel does not strengthen him in the garden, neither do his disciples stand with him there for any cause of his. He comes down as the Son of God from his own place on high, to walk (as far as man was concerned) alone to Calvary. Though his present path lay to the cross, it was still a path of none less than the Son of God. The lowliness of the Stranger from heaven is marked here as it had been all through this gospel.

And let me add, (a reflection that has occurred to me with much comfort,) that there is a greatness in God, in the sense of which we should much exercise our hearts. There is no straitness in him. The Psalmist appears to give himself to this thought in the 36 Psalm. All that he there sees in God, he sees in its proper divine greatness and excellency. His mercy is in the heavens, his faithfulness unto the clouds; His righteousness is like the great mountains, and his judgments like the deep; His preserving care so perfect, that the beasts as well as men are the objects of it; his

lovingkindness so excellent, that the children of men hide themselves as under the shadow of his wings; his house is so stored with all good, that his people are abundantly satisfied with its fatness, and his pleasure for them so full, that they drink of them as of a river. All this is the greatness and magnificence of God, not only in himself, but in his ways and dealings with us. And, beloved, this is blessed truth to us. For our sins should be judged in the sense of this greatness. It is true, indeed, that sin is exceeding sinful. The least soil or stain upon God's fair workmanship is full of horrid shapes in the eye of faith that calculates duly on God's glory. A little hole dug in the wall is enough to shew a prophet great abominations. But when brought to stand, side by side, with the greatness of the grace that is in God our Savior, how does it appear? Where was the crimson sin of the adulteress? where the sins that had, as it were, grown old in the Samaritan woman? They may be searched for, but they cannot be found. They disappear in the presence of the grace that was to shine beside them. The 'abounding grace rolled away the reproach forever. God, who taketh up the isles as a very little thing, and measures the waters in the hollow of his hand, takes away our sins far off "to a land of separation." (Leviticus 16:22.)

"I hear the accuser roar

Of ills that I have done;

I know them well, and thousands more—

Jehovah findeth none."

(Continued from p. 150.)

(To be continued.)

Operations of the Spirit of God

The first of these chapters (John 3) closed proper Jewish intercourse, showing that they must be born again to enter into the kingdom of God: and so was every one that was born of the Spirit, the cross, or the lifting up of the Son of man, closing all present earthly associations, and introducing heavenly things as yet unknown. In the second (John 4), the Lord, having thereon left Judea, going into Galilee, passes through Samaria, and there, with one of the most worthless of that reprobate race, spews the gift of God, and the consequence of the humiliation of the Son of God—thereon introducing the Father's name, and spiritual worship by grace. Thus, the gospel dispensation is introduced by it, and its worship, sonship, and joy. In the third (John 7) we find it flowing forth, from filled affections, to the world, the witness, though not the accomplishment, of that day when Jesus shall appear in the glory witnessed of, and it shall be as life from the dead:—and that, indeed, through his then unbelieving brethren here below. The fourth chapter—that is, the second of those alluded to—is more large and general, as the power of all living communion with God, and thus is specially the saint's place. It identifies itself more especially with the present prayer of the third of Ephesians, founded on the title, "Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," though that goes further. The seventh chapter—or the third here alluded to—identifies itself more especially with the former part of the prayer of the first of the Ephesians, the portion of the Church also, it is true, but more its hope than its communion, and founded on the title, "God of our Lord Jesus Christ," looking at the Lord as the head of the body—the first-born among many brethren, the first-born from the dead, the head of the body the Church, as is plainly seen in the testimony of the

Apostle which follows—not in the nearness of the divine nature as Son, but in appointed, though righteous, headship as man, the appointed heir of all things: both indeed hanging on his being the Son, but one connected with his nearness to God, even the Father, which is indeed oneness; the other his manifestation in glory, according to divine counsel, when He takes his place with the Church toward the world; though, of course (and necessarily) the Head of it—she the body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all.

That I may not omit the intervening chapters of John, but that we may see what a summary of divine theology it is, as a testimony to the person of the Lord Jesus in its height above all dispensation, I would here observe, that the 5th contrasts the entire incompetency of any restorative power connected with the law (because it required strength in the patient, which was just what the disease of sin had destroyed, as well as his righteousness which would not have needed it)—in a word, the entire futility of all remedial processes—with the absolute life-giving power of the Son of God in union with the Father; and shows, in addition, on his rejection (the rejection of his word, for so that power wrought), the judicial power put entirely into his hands as Son of man, to execute judgment on all that rejected Him, that all men might honor the Son, even as they honored the Father.

The 6th chapter shows what was proper to Him—his place and that of his disciples—as rejected. First, it showed Him (who fulfilled that word, Psalms 132:13 - 15, “He shall satisfy her poor with bread” —the Jehovah of Israel’s blessing in the latter days, when Zion shall be his “rest forever”) as Prophet, refusing to be king, and thereon going up to exercise his priesthood of intercession apart on high. In the meanwhile, the disciples were toiling alone on the sea, and the wind contrary, aiming but not attaining. Immediately on Jesus (who could all walk on in the difficulties) rejoining them, they were at the land whither they went. This blessed little picture of the order and circumstances of the dispensation having been given, the humiliation of Jesus, as the portion of the Church during his priesthood, is then shown, as affording its food and strength of life. First, his coming down and incarnation—the manna, the true bread that came down from heaven; next, as sacrificed and giving the life He had thus taken as man—believers thereon eating his flesh and drinking his blood, thus living by Him; then closing by the question, “that and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where He was before?” This, as we have seen, is followed by the instruction of the 7th chapter, where the time for the manifestation of the Son of man to the world was not yet come, and the gift of the Holy Ghost as the intermediate witness of his glory as Son of man is spoken of. This point has been spoken of in the former part of these remarks; I revert to it now, merely as spewing the beautiful order of the instruction of the Spirit in the Gospel of St. John.

There is another point connected with the operations of the Spirit of our God, which remains to be touched upon—his corporate operations, or his operations as acting in connection with the body of Christ, both as maintaining, and the very center of, its unity; and also as ministering in the diversity of His gifts; and also the distinction between this and His individual presence in the believer.

This last difference will be found to be important, and to flow from, and be connected with, the whole order of the economy of grace, of which the Spirit of God is the great agent in us, and, though not received there, still, in a certain sense in testimony, in the world.

This difference depends on the relative character which Christ stands in: first, with the Father, as Son, and us by adoption made sons with Him: and secondly, with God, as the Head of the body,

which is his fullness, the Church. We shall find the scriptures speak definitely of both, and distinctly. In one, the Lord Jesus holds a more properly divine relationship with the Father, and introduces us by adoption into something of the enjoyment of that nearness. In the other, a relationship (though all be divine) yet more connected with his human nature and his offices in that, and therefore God is spoken of as his God. The distinction and reality of these two things is expressed by the blessed Lord Himself going away. Having accomplished the redemption, which enabled Him to present his brethren along with Himself as sons to the Father, in his (the Father's) house, spotless, and sons by adoption, and to assume his place as the Head of the body, the Church, He did not yet allow Himself to be touched and worshipped as in bodily presence in his earthly kingdom; for He was not yet ascended to his Father, so that He could bring forth the fullness of his glory, and that kingdom should be manifestly of the Father, and have its root and source in that higher glory: but, putting his friends, and that for the first time, into the place of sons and brethren, He says them (thus setting the saints, and Himself for them, in their place), "Go, tell my brethren, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, to my God and your God;" thus establishing these two relationships, and his disciples along with Himself in them.

Then the Lord ascended up on high for the accomplishment, in power, of what He now spoke of, in the truth and efficacy of the work which He had accomplished, and the value of his presented person before the Father, as well as the blood by which sin was put away.

On this statement in John hangs, in fact, the distinction to which I have alluded, followed up in scripture by many other passages. It is the definite revelation of the characters in which Jesus Christ was going away, and which lie was to sustain in our behalf on high; placing us in fellowship with God and the Father in them. There was another point, however, connected with this, involved, in the position which Christ assumed: He is the, displayer of the divine glory—his Father's glory—"He that hath seen me hath seen the Father,"—He shall appear in the Father's glory. He was on earth "God manifest in the flesh," seen, too, of angels: again, "the brightness of God's glory, the express image of his person." His glory too was Sonship, as of the only begotten of the Father, **■**ς **■**μονογενε**■**ς **■**πατρ**■** **■**πατρ**■**ς: as again, "the only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." In Him all the fullness was pleased to dwell: and, as afterward stated, in fact, as in good pleasure, "In Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." Thus, we see the person of the Lord Jesus, the place in which divine glory is in every sense manifested. But He is now hid in God: that is the position which He has now taken; and thereon the Holy Ghost is sent down into the—world, to maintain the witness and manifestation of his glory (not brought out yet visibly on earth, but personally accomplished on high, "crowned with glory and honor"), and to be the earnest and testimony of his title to the earth. The Church on earth is the place and depository of this: "He shall take of mine and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father bath are mine, therefore said I, that He shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you."

Now the Holy Ghost, as thus sent down from heaven, is the witness of what Christ is there for us towards the Father; and what his title is as of God towards the world; and specially therein, what the power of the hope of the calling and inheritance of God in the saints is. The enjoyment and testimony of these things may be much blended in the operations of the present Spirit; but they are distinct. As for example—the display of my portion in Christ as the Son before the Father, may fill my heart and make me a witness and a testimony of it, to the blessing and comfort of the Church, if the Lord accompany it with the suitable gift of communication; and the power of it in my soul in

joy is intimately blended with the thing to be expressed; because so the Holy Ghost acts in this work. It is therefore said, "Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." Still they are quite distinct: for a man may have these things shown to his soul, and enjoy them, and yet not have the gift to communicate them to others; though they be the deep (possibly, I suppose, the deeper) joy of his own: so that, though connected when both are there, they are distinct things. I suppose that those who have gift of testimony, have often found as much (or more) joy in hearing the blessed things of Christ, as in uttering them; though the sense and joy of the blessed things may have ministered to their capacity of utterance. I would speak then distinctively of these two points, though their blending, if the Lord will, may be noticed.

In the earlier passages in John, and the remarks which were made upon them, the Holy Ghost, who is sent, was spoken of as the power of life; the power of communion; the power of communication. In the latter part of John and other places, the sending of the Spirit is specially spoken of, because the absence and going away of Christ was brought before their minds as a present fact; and hence the Spirit is shown as the sustainer of the relationships induced by the mystery of Christ being thus hid in God, and another Comforter sent. Life-communion with God the Father and the Son, communications concerning the glory of the Son of man, were all distinct and blessed things; but they were not the revelation of the dispensation in which they were ordered, nor the display of the relationships which those dispensations brought to light, though to the instructed soul they might imply them. This is taken up first in the close of John's gospel. We shall also find it brought out on other ground later in the close of Luke.

It is introduced in John by the statement made to his disciples, "As I said unto the Jews, so now I say unto you, Whither I go, ye cannot come." In the earlier part of the subsequent chapter, the Lord introduces their comfort: that He was to be the object of faith as God was; that He was not going to be alone in blessedness, and leave them here to themselves in misery, but going to prepare a place for them; and that He would come again and receive them to Himself; that where He was they might be—a far better thing than his being with them in the condition they were in. But meanwhile they knew where He was going, and the way. This resulted, as He explained to them, from their knowing the Father (to whom He was going), in knowing Him; for He was in the Father and the Father in Him. Thus, the great scene into which they were brought, in the knowledge of the person of the Lord Jesus, and his oneness with the Father—He in the Father and the Father in him was introduced: the scene of associated blessedness, into which the disciples were brought by the living knowledge which they had of Jesus, was declared: but the power in which it was known and enjoyed was not yet. But the knowledge of the Father, through the Son, as the object of faith, was now declared, and the subsequent display of his glory in the world, by reason of the exaltation of the Lord Jesus, spoken of. The Lord, then, urging obedience to Him as the way of receiving blessing, takes the place of Mediator to obtain the Comforter for them, —another Comforter, who should not leave them as He was doing, but was to abide with them forever. This it was that was the power of their association with that of which they had heard before—the fellowship of the Father and the Son: first, of the Father with the Son, and the Son with the Father, and then of them with both, in that it was by the Holy Ghost dwelling in them—the Comforter now sent. Thus, though they could not come there, they saw Jesus, and He came to them, and with the Father made his mansion with them, till He came and took them into the mansions of his Father's house.

This 14th chapter, then, gives us the blessedness—the knowledge of the Father and the Son, by the Son; the order of it, obedience to the Son; the power of it, the presence of the Comforter obtained through the mediation of Christ: but thereon (consequent on this presence) their knowledge that He was in the Father, they in Him and He in them—a blessing far beyond mere mediation, but consequent on the presence of the Spirit obtained, by mediation. This also is added as a consequence that the Father and the Son would come and make their abode with them. Still, in this chapter, whatever the effect of the mediation in their knowledge was, Christ does not go beyond the place of Mediator here, and therefore He tells them that the Father will send the Spirit in His name, and He (the Spirit) would recall all the Lord's words and instruction to them.

This chapter settles the ground of our present blessing on its basis, as to the place of the great objects of it—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

It is quite distinct from the subsequent chapters. The person of the Lord as the object of faith, and his mediation, are spoken of in it. In the 15th chapter we see that, even here below, Israel was not the true vine, but Christ. Of his life below, they were to be the personal witnesses, for they had seen it: of his exaltation as Head on high, the Holy Ghost, sent down, thereon, by Him.

Hence, in this passage, it is not the Father who is spoken of as sending the Holy Ghost in the Mediator's name, but the Lord Jesus who sends the Comforter from the Father, in connection with his glory, to testify of his glory, proceeding from the Father. It is to be remarked here, that, while much of this latter part connects itself very closely in detail with the operations of the Holy Ghost, given in connection with the Lord Jesus, as calling God his God as well as ours; as the man who, through grace, places Himself in association with us in need as in glory, yet He never, in this part of Scripture, puts Himself out of the place of Son paramount to all dispensation. Though He may take the lowest place in service and obedience, still, it is on a principle paramount to all dispensation; or, though the acts alluded to may have their place in connection with dispensed power (as the testimony of the Spirit will be found to have), yet still, Christ holds the place here, in which He sends Him for that purpose, as paramount to the associations revealed by the Spirit, so sent, in those acts. He testifies that all that the Father has are his, as Son (though the acts by which He may do it may be the witness and consequence of a union with Christ), putting, by grace, ourselves and Him, not merely as SONS' before THE FATHER individually, but as a body with its head before GOD.

This distinction will be found to be important; because the exercise of the dispensed power may depend on the condition of the body through which it is dispensed—the testimony of the sent Spirit to the glory of the Head, who sent it, never can.

And this is what is peculiar in the state of the Church. Its standing in Christ is above all dispensation; it is as sons along with Him with the Father. Its manifestation in time may be by dispensed service; and here it partakes of all the responsibility of a dispensation on earth, as of deeds done in the body. Thus, this gospel begins anterior to Genesis, which recounts the creation of the scene on which dispensations have been displayed: there, "In the beginning God created;" here, "In the beginning was the Word," by whom all things were created. And the Church derives its existence and heavenly fullness from this sovereign source: the purpose of it being effectuated consequent on the rejection of the Son of man, who would have been the righteous crown of all natural dispensation; but who, as risen, associates the redeemed Church with Himself, in a

position paramount to it all—even his own association of Sonship with the Father, in the privilege of the same love: and the Holy Ghost is here sent down of Him, the witness and power of this, and therefore in his own action paramount to all dispensation, but this only in the fact of his testimony to Him as so exalted; and this is the point John here takes up. Now the manifestation of his (Christ's) corporate Headship to the Church, in which He says, in our behalf, "My God," as He had said so in blessed title of righteousness when the Pattern of our place below, depends (and hence the present manifestation of the Church's glory as united to Him) on the obedience of the Church, and its suitableness to be made an instrument of display here; quite a distinct thing from the certainty of its union to and the known and infallible glory of its Head on high. This is a permanent revelation; not a responsible manifestation which partakes of the nature of a dispensation on earth, though the glory testified to in it may be above all mere dispensation, for its head and for itself. The joy, moreover, and sense of glory, may also depend on obedience and consistency, not the permanent fact that the Spirit testifies of his glory, in the Church. Thus, in John 15 it is written, "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love, as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love." There could clearly be no doubt of the Son's continuing in the Father's love, but the dispensation of this on earth hung on the obedience on earth, in Him infallibly perfect, and therefore so its consequences; in us continual failure and its consequences also.

We have seen that the testimony of the Spirit is to the glory of Jesus Christ. Sent by the Father in the Son's name, He is the power of union and communion with both; associating the disciples in the fullness of blessing with both, and the presence of both manifested thereby to the believer. Sent by the Son—the exalted man—from the Father, He is the witness of his glory, and that all that the Father has, is that Holy, but rejected, One's also.

From the remarks I have already made, it will be seen that in the 16th chapter of John, the Spirit and his testimony, as there presented to us, are the indefeasible portion of the saints, the necessary testimony of the glory of Christ. It forms and sustains the Church, instead of depending on the Church's obedience, although the extent of the Church's enjoyment of the blessing may hang upon that obedience. He is the witness of the acceptance by the Father of the obedience of Christ, the perfect Son of God, and of the glory of his person: thus, establishing our present standing with God, and our Father, and the place of the Church, owning this by his operation through grace, in contrast with the world, who rejected Jesus as the Son of God.

Hence, although the obedient disciples of the Lord Jesus were the instruments of the testimony, yet these are dropped as regards the testimony in the first instance; and the subject spoken of is, the Comforter's testimony in a conviction of the world. He is present as the witness of the glory of Christ; that is, as the abiding power of the dispensation, the necessary character of the testimony of his very presence in the world was this—that He was come in condemnation of the whole world before God; for it had rejected the Son whom the Father had sent in love to it. He had said, "I have yet one Son," and they had cast Him out—not merely Jews were in question, the world had done it—man had done it: "He was despised and rejected of men." Every grace of God, every righteousness of man, had been shown in the Son of God; they had seen no beauty in Him that they should desire Him. Nay more, as the Lord had distinctly shown of the world, they had both seen and hated both Him and the Father—hated Him, blessed and perfect in his ways, without a cause!

It is on this solemn ground the Lord appeals to his Father, in the 17th chapter. For the children, He had called for the Holy Father's care. As to the world, He appeals to his righteous Father's judgment.

He and the world now were entirely contrary the one to the other: "O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me." The presence of the Holy Ghost, sent down on the departure of the blessed Son of God, proved the world to be in irreparable sin in not having believed on Him. Nothing else was seen in the world. It lay in wickedness. Righteousness there was none. The only righteous One had been rejected, and cast out and slain. God had not interfered to prevent it, nor Jesus resisted it; for deeper purposes were in accomplishment. But the evidence of sin was complete, irrefutable, and in itself in the world irreparable, in the accomplishment of its highest act—an act showing hatred to the gracious presence of the Lord, as well as contradictory of the righteousness of man before Him. Righteousness thereon was not looked for on earth in man; for sin had been proved. It was found only in the reception of the righteous man—the Son of God, on the throne of God on high, and the condemnation of the world in seeing Him no more as so come. This also was testified by the presence of the Holy Ghost, sent down as a consequence of Jesus being there. The judgment (not now executed) was proved as against the world; because he who, in leading them against Christ, had been now demonstrated by the world to be its prince, was judged: the rest would follow in its day. Thus, the presence of the Holy Ghost, convicting the world in these things, formed the testimony to Christ's glory there his witness against the rejecting world.

To the disciples He was in blessing: in leading them into all truth, truth which they were unable to bear till He came, truth connected with Christ's glory, and the consequent breaking down of all they then knew and clung to; and not only leading them into all actual truth, but showing them things to come; the portion of the Church—their portion and God's future dealings with the world too. In this He would glorify Christ, taking of his and spewing it to them; and all that the Father had was his. This then the Holy Ghost did, as against the world and with the disciples, in the testimony of Christ's glory. If by grace a man received the testimony as against the world, and was subdued by it, and gave up the world and followed Christ with his disciples, he became the happy subject of that further service of the Holy Ghost; guiding, showing, glorifying Christ as the possessor of all the Father's. This is the office and service of the ever-abiding Comforter (in whatever degree enjoyed), for the need of Christ's glory, till the Church be caught up to enjoy it there, and the world be actually judged; so that there shall be no need of testimony to either on these points, though the Holy Ghost may be to the Church the perpetual power of enjoyment in them, and God's glory by them.

The presence of the Holy Ghost implies and involves this—the need, before God, of Christ's glory. In this He acts as a Servant, as it were, not speaking of Himself, but what He hears, that speaking. Whatever the means instrumentally used, this is the subject and the power. The Holy Ghost is faithful in this service. He must be so; for Christ is to be glorified. And this secures the witness of Christ's glory, in whatever measure, according to its faithfulness; this is the Church's delight.

In all this, the Holy Ghost is spoken of as being on earth, and being sent in lieu of Christ, who is gone on high, in distinctness of person: and the glory of the person of Christ, the great subject of the gospel, is still treated of in its aspect to the world who rejected Him, and the disciples who by

grace received Him.

It appears to me, that the communication of the Holy Ghost, as noticed in the 20th chapter of this gospel, is as to the place it holds there of the character already spoken of. The whole of that chapter is a sort of picture of the dispensation in brief. It is not the Head and the body, but Christ in his personal title to send, as the Father sent Him; and giving them, in His risen power, capacity to execute the mission, the abiding essential service of those now called to it, whatever measure of power it might be executed in. But Christ has not only gone to the Father, and been seated in the glory which he had with him before the world was, and sent the Comforter, the witness of that glory, and the assurance to the saints of their sonship and fellowship with him in it—his Father and their Father—but he takes a Place as head of the body (is its Lord indeed and source of supply, but also its head), and to receive for it that which he sends forth and ministers to it. Christ has a double character in this—Lord, and head of his body united to himself: But the Holy Ghost—is, in all operations, from creation downwards, the proper and immediate agent.

As head of the body, the Lord Jesus displays the Church with himself in a common glory; but in all this he is spoken of as the subject of God's power. (See Ephesians 1:19-23.) And even where spoken of as Lord, still as a recipient and as made so: though while this is true, because he humbled himself and became a man, so that God also bath highly exalted him, that he should have a name which is above every name, every believer finds the very basis of his faith in that he is the true God and eternal life.

The 2nd chapter of Philippians is the full statement of this great truth—this blessed truth (having all its value from his being truly and essentially God), that he humbled himself, that, as a man for our sakes, and as obedient to death, he might, as man, be exalted to the place of Lord, due to him in glory. As my subject is the presence of the Holy Ghost, I do not remark further on this passage, than that it seems to me a special contrast with the first Adam, who, being man, sought to exalt himself, and became disobedient unto death, or under death by disobedience; whereas the history of the second Adam is, that he made himself of no reputation in becoming a man, and death to him was the highest, fullest act of obedience and confidence, then, as man, in his Father: and therefore God highly exalted him such as sinful man was by his disobedience cast down, who sought to exalt himself and to be as Elohim. In this, then, we have the great doctrine of the exaltation of Jesus as the new man, the second Adam, the head of a new race—the depository of power; in whom man was, according to the 8th Psalm, “set over all things.”

The divine power in which he could sustain it, and the title of Sonship in which he held it—for, indeed, he was the Creator—is not now my immediate subject. This point may be seen in Colossians 1, and the double headship, resting on it, of creation and of the Church. At present, it is the connection of this with the gift of the Holy Ghost that we have to speak of. It is not, perhaps I need hardly say, as if there were two Holy Ghosts, or the Holy Ghost given were not so given at once, whatever the results: but that the place and power of the Spirit, so given, are distinct. In the one, he is the pledge and power of Sonship with the Father: in the other, the effectuator of the Lordship of Christ, and the animating energy of every member according to the measure of the gift of Christ, and the power of unity to the whole body. We do, however, see that Christ risen, but not yet glorified, could communicate the Holy Spirit to them; though, till glorified, he could not send it down as witness of his Lordship. We have seen, that while (as individually blessing us) he fits the

soul for the exercise of whatever gift is bestowed, he may bless in fullness of communion when no gift is in exercise—so that they are distinct; the former point, its connection with the apprehensions and enjoyment of the soul, being the difference of habitual Christian gift from the previous workings of the Holy Ghost: that, before it was put: “ thus saith the Lord,” and individually the prophet might find he ministered to another. In the exercise of it by a real Christian, though he might minister it without actually realizing it in communion at the moment—he ministers the things which were his own, and known as such through the earnest of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven.

I would now trace some of the scriptures connected with this point. In this the Holy Ghost is a Spirit of power, not a Spirit of Sonship; though, it may be, the sons, having the Holy Ghost, have the power, according to his will, by his presence working in them. This presence of the Holy Ghost is withal corporate presence, that is, his operation, though, as the body, it works by individuals, of course, but by them properly as members of the body, working in power, not in communion. Consequently we see, if the gift was not available for the body (where the edification of the body was the intent of the gift), it was to be suppressed in its exercise, even though confessedly the gift of the Holy Ghost: for the particular gift of the Spirit was to be subjected to the title and rule of the Holy Ghost in the whole, as the member to the mind of the whole body, for the glory of Christ (though power was entrusted to the individual for that use of the whole body, for that glory), and the glory of the body with him; for no power was rightly used out of the objects of the grace that gave it.

This train I have been led into by the first scripture I would refer to, Luke 24 There Christ is looked at as exalted in glory, and the world and all flesh alike here below. It is not there, “Go, disciple the Gentiles,” as in Matthew; but repentance and remission of sins to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem, merely the first place here below amongst them. This commission Peter was accomplishing in his early sermons in Acts, though Paul carried out farther, as regards the Gentiles, not beginning, however, at Jerusalem. The word of the Lord in Luke was first, “Ye are witnesses of these things;” then, “And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you; but tarry ye in Jerusalem, till ye be endued with power from on high;” and afterward he was parted from them and carried up into heaven.

In the first sermon of Peter, we have precisely this “This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.” He then quotes the testimony of the 110th Psalm, and says, “Therefore, let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.” The rejection of this testimony set aside the form of the commission in Matthew, in which Jerusalem was made the formal center of organized evangelization, according to her ancient standing, the Gentiles being treated as Gentiles.

But the Character in which the gift of the Spirit is here presented, as given to believers and forming the Church, is very distinct. Jesus sends the promise of the Father. It is the same great common truth. But in what character is it sent? It is to endue with power from on high. It displays itself in exhibition in the first instance—to the world, not in communion of sons with the Father—though, of course, the very same and only Holy Ghost which was the power of this. Its primary testimony is to

the Lordship of Christ.

We have seen the identity of the expressions in Luke 24 and Acts 2, let us observe the terms in which the Spirit, by the apostle, bears witness to Jesus.

“Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which God did by him. This Jesus bath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.... Therefore, let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made this same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.”

Now, in the whole of this passage, it is clear that our blessed and adorable Lord, who had humbled himself to become so, as we have seen from Philipians, is spoken of as man: As man he is made Lord and Christ. This we shall see to be directly connected with consequent operation and power of the Spirit, but yet not the whole of the principles connected with it. The corporate character of the scene of its operations was not yet developed. We have already, then, this first point distinctly brought out the testimony, through the medium of the disciples, as the Spirit gave them utterance, to the Lordship of Christ as man, before the world. But whatever the rumor occasioned by the facts, the word of preaching to the Jews is all of which the effect is related. They were to be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus for the remission of sins, and they would receive the gift of the Holy Ghost; for the promise was to them and their children, and to all afar off, even as many as the Lord their God should call. Whoever, then, received the word gladly, was baptized, and there were added about three thousand souls.

The assembly of God was now formed, and the Lord added to it daily such as should be saved.

The testimony had been given to the world—beginning at Jerusalem, by these witnesses, chosen of God, to the Lordship of the man Christ Jesus. The Church had been formed by it, and then the Lord added to the Church such as should be saved—the remnant of Israel.

In this we see the operation of the Spirit, founded on the exaltation and Lordship of Christ, by chosen witnesses; but antecedent to the Church, and forming it. Of this character is all preaching.

When the assembly is gathered, then the Lord adds to it daily such as should be saved. The highest privileges of the believer are then known, in the revealed portion of the believer brought home to his new man, by the Spirit of adoption—the Holy Ghost given to him, the seal of the faith wrought in his heart by God.

The work of the Holy Ghost is then pursued in abundant testimony of Christ's power, proposing (Acts 3) the return of Jesus, and the times of refreshing on the repentance of Israel, the opposition and rejection of the testimony by the rulers, the disciples confidence—his power, and blessing, and judgment within the Church—the determined opposition and rejection of the resurrection and exaltation of Jesus, and constant testimony thereto of the apostles as his witnesses: as is also, say they, the Holy Ghost which is given to them that obey him. We have, then, (Acts 6) the exhibition of the energy of the Holy Ghost providing for the circumstances even of partial failure in the Church. Then, on the renewed testimony, in his own prerogative power in Stephen, “full of the Holy Ghost,” the judgment of, the Jews' rejection, nationally, of the Spirit is pronounced, and the

Jewish history closed with that which introduced the Church, as so witnessing, into heaven, on its rejection, as full of the Spirit, in Jerusalem the center of God's earthly system; and actually the spirit of the saint in the intermediate state there. "They stoned Stephen, calling upon. God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit;" and with intercession for the unhappy people, as Jesus on his rejection, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." Thus the Spirit, so acting, recognized the Lord Jesus; as Jesus, as the Son had commended himself—his Spirit—on his rejection, to the Father.

This broke up, as has been frequently observed by those familiar with these truths, the earthly scheme and center of the Church. Matthew's commission, as has been remarked, in its original form dropped; for the Jewish people, by their rulers, having nationally rejected the testimony by the Spirit to the exaltation of Christ, as they had rejected the Son of God in his humiliation come amongst them as Messiah, Jerusalem ceased to be the center from which the gathering power thereto was to flow.

Thereupon accordingly, the Church was scattered, except the Apostles. I would remark, in passing, on the very distinct manner in which the personal presence of the Holy Ghost is presented to it in all this history. Ananias lies to the Holy Ghost—tempts the Spirit. The Apostles were witnesses of the resurrection and exaltation of Christ, and so also was the Holy Ghost which was given to them that obey him. "Filled with the Holy Ghost," as the Lord had promised, was the power and source of their speech, as we see on every occasion. Thus, the Holy Ghost as that other Comforter, present with them personally, was clearly before their minds. As the Son had been with them once, so, according to promise, the Holy Ghost was with them now. The Son had brought the love of the Father (now indeed yet more clearly apprehended by the holy Ghost as the Spirit of adoption), and the Spirit now fully revealed to them the Lordship of the man, Jesus; who had been slain and rejected by the world.

But another great frame-work and form of the dispensation was now to be introduced.

Saul, through the instrumentality of a simple disciple, Ananias, receives the Holy Ghost on his conversion, and begins to testify of Christ in Damascus.

The Gentiles then receive the Holy Ghost, and are admitted through the instrumentality of Peter. The reading of the 11th, 12th, and 13th chapters of Acts will distinctly show what prominence this presence and power of the Holy Ghost held. There is, in addition, the service of angels, in the Apostle of the circumcision; but the gift of the Holy Ghost is just the sign of acceptance.

But in the calling and conversion of Saul a new and blessed principle was presented, as identified with that, to his mind: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" In a word, the unity and identity of the Church with Christ, of which the apostle thus called—irregularly called, as one born out of due time—became the eminent witness and teacher. Indeed, though there may be kindred truths in the other epistolary writings, we never definitively read of "his body, the Church," save in those of Paul. He seems specially to call it his gospel. In this (the power, in whatever form, of the glory of Christ, the knowledge of or unity with him) the Holy Ghost is found to operate and unfold itself. Not, clearly, quitting the ground of the Lordship of Christ, but withal working as the power of unity in the whole body and diversity of operation in the particular members. In each, at the same time (for this highest and most blessed character of it, I need hardly say, was not lost), "the Spirit of adoption crying, Abba, Father;" but this was a distinct individual operation, though of the same

Spirit; a joy true to the individual saint, were there but one, though enhanced doubtless by communion, and which contemplated our joy with the Father, as sons along with the blessed Son of God, Jesus the first-born among many brethren.

The corporate witness of his Lordship and glory, and of the union of the Church with him as Head over all things, is a distinct subject. The ground of this, in union, as well as the Church's blessing and portion by virtue of that union, is specially found in the Ephesians, and is there therefore looked at as regards the blessing and profit of the Church. Its administration, and, therefore, the general order of it in its principles and exhibition before the world, is found in Corinthians, the epistle which affords the apostolic directions for the management of the Church in its internal economy here below.

But before I enter on the formal economy of the Spirit, as presented in these chapters, I would turn to the doctrine of the word relating to it, as the ordinary portion of the Church in general, as there are one or two passages of Scripture which speak definitely of it in this light. The resurrection had marked out Jesus to be the Son of God, according to the Spirit of holiness. He might be of the seed of David according to the flesh, but he was the Son of 'God according to entirely another life, spirit, and energy. Of this his resurrection was at once the proof and the glorious character; for it was triumph over death, of which, according to that life and holiness which was in him, it was not possible (though he might imputatively take sin) that he could be holden. In this resurrection and power of accomplished and triumphant liberty—liberty of perfectness and sanctification of man to God in a new state of life, in which man had never been he became the Head of a new family, the first-born from the dead, the Head of the body, the Church, having in all things the preeminence, and the Son, taking his place now, as such, in resurrection, Thus our justification became, in fact, identified with our position as sons, and as risen (i.e., with holiness, according to its character in resurrection) before God as children. Therefore it was that, if the apostle had known Christ Jesus after the flesh, henceforth he knew him no more; for he now knew him in this character in resurrection, the Head of the new creation—the new family of God—the Second Adam, and so to us the quickening Spirit, when our living souls had spiritually died in the first Adam in sin—the head of a new family of men, with whom, in the close, the tabernacle of God should be.

The justification of the Church having been first reasoned out by the Spirit, the apostle turns to this; first as regards death and resurrection, in the 6th of Romans; then, as regards the law, in the 7th; i.e., first, "nature" or "the flesh," in se: then the operation of the law on the question into which spiritual understanding and a new will brought the conscience:—and in the 8th he takes up the presence of the Spirit in moral operation and witness. Having stated the source of this mighty change and holy liberty, in "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" (the breath of life to our souls being the very same power in which Christ was raised from the dead, and our partaking in all the consequences of that resurrection; God having done what the law could not do, i.e., condemned sin in the flesh, and that in atonement, in grace to us), the apostle proceeds to instruct us what the power and the character of the Spirit in this new nature is.

It is the Spirit of God, as contrasted with man in the flesh. It is the Spirit of Christ, in respect of the form and character of this new man. It is the Spirit of Him that raised up Christ from the dead, according to the power and energy in which it works full deliverance in result. Thus, its moral character and operation were unfolded, as a Spirit of power, and deliverance, and character IN us;

in answer to the question, who shall deliver us from the body of this death?

(Continued from p. 178.)

(To be continued.)

On the Gospel by John

With these thoughts we may well encourage our hearts. Our God would have us know him in his own greatness. Set sin alone, and the least speck of it is a monster. Set it beside his grace, and it vanishes. And all this expression of the divine greatness breaks forth in Jesus throughout this gospel. There is everywhere the tone and bearing of the Son of God in him and about him, though we see him even in toil or in suffering.

But this only by the way. We have now followed our Lord over the brook Kedron, and the spot must have been one of sacred and affecting recollections to him; for here it was that David had once stopped with Ittai, his friend, and with Zadok and the ark, as he went forth from Jerusalem in the fear of Absalom. Over this very brook, and up this very ascent of Mount Olivet, the king of Israel had then gone weeping, his head covered and his feet bare, while Ahithophel (who, like Judas now, had once been his counselor) was betraying him to his enemies. (2 Samuel 15) Jesus, we read, oftentimes resorted hither; no doubt with these recollections. But it is the Son of God we have here, at the present time, rather than the Son of David. The brook is passed, and the garden is entered. Not with tears, and without the ark; but more than the ark, in all its glory and strength, are to be displayed now. The Lord comes forth to them, a band of cruel officers and soldiers as they were, with this word, "Whom seek ye?" Thus, addressing them as in the repose of heaven, which was his. And he comes forth in the power of heaven, as well as in its repose; for on his afterward saying to them, "I am he," they go backward, and fall to the ground. No man could take his life from him. He has even to show them their prey; for all their torches and lanterns would not otherwise have discovered him to them. Every stage in the way was his own. He laid down his life of himself. They that would eat up his flesh must stumble and fall; they that desired his hurt must be turned back and put to confusion. The fire was ready to consume this Roman captain and his fifty. Had the Son of God pleased, there on the ground the enemy would still have lain. But he came not to destroy men's lives, but to save, and therefore he would lay down his own. It was just seen, that the glory that might have confounded all the power of the adversary was hid within the pitcher; but he would fain hide it still.

And now it was that, in spirit, he sang the 27th Psalm. The Lord was his light and his salvation, whom should he fear? He had just seen God's glory in the sanctuary (as we saw in the 17th chap.), and according to this Psalm, his longing was to dwell in that house of the Lord forever. It was a time of trouble, it is true, but, in spirit, his head was lifted up above his enemies; and he was soon to offer in the tabernacle sacrifices of joy, and sing his praises unto the Lord. (Psalms 27:1-6.)

Thus, as Son of God, he stood in this hour, and could have stood against hosts of them; but he would take the cup from his Father's hand, and give his life for the Church. Those who were with him become now, in their willfulness, an offense to him. His kingdom was not as yet of this world; and therefore, his servants might not fight. Peter draws his sword, and would fain have changed the scene into a mere trial of human strength. But this must not be. It is true, the Son of God could

have stood. He might again have been the ark of God, with the power of the enemy falling before it; but how then should the Scripture be fulfilled? He rather leaves himself in the hands of enemies. "Then the band and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus, and bound him."

Thus, was it, so far, with the Lord. And as we still follow him, we still trace the way of the Son of God, the Lord from heaven. Whether we listen to him with the officers, or with the high priest, or before Pilate, it is still in the same tone of holy distance from all that was around him. They may do to him whatsoever they list—lie is as a stranger to it. He is not careful to answer them in their matters. He would pass through all in loneliness. The daughters of Jerusalem do not here either yield him their sympathy, or receive his; nor does a dying thief share that hour with him. He is the lonely One all through that dreary way. Peter is found in the way of the ungodly, warming himself among them, as one who had only the resources which they had. Another (perhaps John himself) takes his place as the acquaintance of the high priest, and gets his advantage as such. But all this was a sinking down into mere nature, and leaving the Son of God alone—as he had said to them, "Ye.... shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me."

And his path, I need not say, is without a stain. Let God be true, but every man a liar. So, Jesus is without fault, though all beside fail. He was "justified in the Spirit." He has no step to retrace, no word to recall. He could righteously vindicate himself in everything, and even reprove his accuser, and say, "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil, but if well, why smitest thou me?" But even Paul, in such a case, had to recall his word, and to say, "I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest."

From the hand of the high priest the Lord passes into the hand of the Roman governor. And here a scene opens full of solemn warning to us all, beloved, as well as preserving before us still the full character of our Gospel.

It is very evident that throughout this scene, Pilate was desirous to quiet the people, and deliver Jesus from the malice of the Jews. It appears, from the very first, that he was sensible of something peculiar in this prisoner of theirs. His silence had such a character in it, that, as we read, "the governor marveled greatly." And what divine attractions, we may observe, must every little passage of his life, every path that he took among men, have had about it, and what must the condition of the eye, and the ear, and the heart of man have been, that they did not discern and allow all this! The governor's first impression was strengthened by everything that happened as the scene proceeded; his wife's dream, the evident malice of the Jews, and, above all, this righteous, guiltless prisoner (though thus in shame and suffering) still persisting that he was the Son of God, all assailed his conscience. But the world in Pilate's heart was too strong for these convictions in his conscience. They made a noise, it is true, within him, but the voice of the world prevailed, and he went the way of the world, though thus convicted. Could he, however, have preserved the world for himself, he would willingly have preserved Jesus. He let the Jews fully understand that he was in no fear of Jesus, that he was not such an one as could create with him any alarm about the interests of his master the emperor. But they still insisted that he had been making himself a king, and that if he let this man go, he could not be Caesar's friend. And this prevailed.

How does all this lead us to see that there is no security for the soul but in the possession of that faith which overcomes the world! Pilate had no desire for the blood of Jesus, as the Jews had; but

the friendship of Caesar must not be hazarded. The rulers of Israel had once feared that, if they let this man alone, the Romans would come and take away both their place and nation (John 11:48); and Pilate now fears to lose the friendship of the same world in the person of the Roman emperor. And thus did the world bind him— and the Jews together in the act of crucifying the Lord of Glory, as it is written “For of a truth, against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together.”

Still, as I have observed, Pilate would have saved Jesus, could he at the same time have saved his own reputation as Caesar’s friend; and therefore, it was that he now entered the judgment hall, and put this inquiry to Jesus, “Art thou the King of the Jews?” For as the Jews had committed the Lord to him, upon a charge of having made himself a king (Luke 23:2), if he could but lead the Lord to retract his kingly claims, he might both save him, and keep himself unharmed. With the design of doing so, he seems at this time to enter the judgment hall. But the world in Pilate’s heart knew not Jesus, as it is written, “The world knew him not.” (John 1:10; 1 John 3:1.) Pilate was now to find that the god of this world had nothing in him. “Jesus answered, Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me?” Our Lord by this would learn from Pilate himself where the source of the accusation against him lay; whether his claim to be King of the Jews was challenged by Pilate as protector of the emperor’s right in Judaea, or merely upon a charge of the Jews.

Upon this hung, I may say, everything in the present juncture; and the wisdom and purpose of the Lord in giving the inquiry this direction is manifest. Should Pilate say that he had become apprehensive of the Roman interests, the Lord could at once have referred him to the whole course of his life and ministry to prove that, touching the king, innocency had been found in him. He had taught the rendering to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s. He had withdrawn himself, departing into a mountain alone, when he perceived that the multitude would have taken him by force to make him a king. His controversy was not with Rome. When he came he found Caesar in Judaea, and he never questioned his title to be there; lie rather at all times allowed his title and took the place of the nation, which, because of disobedience, had the image and superscription of Caesar engraven, as it were, on their very land. It is true that it was despite of the majesty of Jehovah that had made way for the Gentiles to enter Jerusalem; but Jerusalem was, for the present, the Gentile’s place, and the Lord had no controversy with them because of this. Nothing but the restored faith and allegiance of Israel to God could rightfully cancel this title of the Gentiles. The Lord’s controversy was therefore not with Rome, and Pilate would have had his answer according to all this had the challenge proceeded from himself as representative of the Roman power; but it did not. Pilate answered, “Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me. What hast thou done?”

Now this answer of Pilate conveyed the full proof of the guilt of Israel. In the mouth of him who represented the power of the world at that time, the thing was established, that Israel had disclaimed their King, and sold themselves into the hand of another. This for the present was everything with Jesus; this at once carried him beyond the earth and out of the world. Israel had rejected him, and his kingdom was therefore not from hence; for Zion is the appointed place for the King of the whole earth to sit and rule, and the unbelief of the daughter of Zion must keep the King of the earth away.

The Lord, then, as this rejected King, listening to this testimony from the lips of the Roman, could only recognize his present loss of his throne. "Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom's not from hence." He had no weapons for war if Israel refused him. There was no threshing for his floor now; for Israel is his instrument to thresh the mountains (Isaiah 41:15; Micah 4:13; Jeremiah 11:20), and Israel was refusing him. The house of Judah, and that only, is Messiah to make "his goodly horse in the battle" (Zechariah 10:4), and therefore, in this unbelief of Judah, he had nothing wherewith to break the arrows of the bow, the shield, the sword, and the battle. (Psalms 76) His kingdom could not be "of this world," it could not be "from hence;" he had no servants who could fight, that he should not be delivered to his enemies.

This present loss of his kingdom, however, does not annul his title to it; for the Lord, while allowing his present loss of it, yet allows this in such terms as fully express his title to it, and led Pilate at once to say, "Art thou a King, then?" And to this his good confession is witnessed. For Pilate would have had no cause to dread either the displeasure of his master or the tumult of the people; he might have fearlessly followed his will and delivered his prisoner, if the blessed Confessor would now alter the word that had gone out of his lips, and withdraw his claim to be a King. But Jesus answered, "Thou sayest that I am a King." From this his claim there could be no retiring. Here was "his good confession before Pontius Pilate." Though his own received him not, yet he was theirs; though the world knew him not, yet it was made by him. Though the husbandmen were casting him out, yet he was the heir of the vineyard. He was anointed to the throne in Sion, though his citizens were saying, they would not have him to reign over them; and he must by his "good confession" fully verify his claim to it, and stand to that claim before all the power of the world. It might arm all that power against him, but it must be made. Herod and all Jerusalem had once been moved at hearing that he was born who was King of the Jews, and sought to slay the child; but let the whole world be now moved, and arm its power against him, yet he must declare God's decree, "I have set my King upon my holy hill of Zion." His right must be witnessed, though in the presence of the usurper, and in the very hour of his power.

But now we are led into other and further revelations. This "good confession" being thus witnessed, the Lord was prepared to" unfold other parts of the divine counsels. When he had distinctly verified his title to the kingdom in the face of the world, he was prepared to testify his present character and ministry. "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth; every one that is of the truth heareth my voice." His possession of the kingdom was for a time hindered by the unbelief of his nation; but he skews that there had been no failure of the purpose of God by this, for he had come into the world for other present work than to take his throne in Zion. He had come to bear witness unto the truth, and our Gospel is especially the instrument for presenting the Lord in that ministry. As it is said of him, at the opening of it, "The only-begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." He had come into the world that he might say, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life." He had come that he might give us an understanding to know him that is true. (1 John 5:20.) He had been manifesting the Father's name to those who had been given him out of the world, and this was the same as bearing witness to the truth. (John 8:26,27.) Every one that was of the truth, as he here speaks to Pilate, had been hearing his voice. His sheep had heard it, while others had believed not, because they were not his sheep. He that was of God had heard it, while others had

heard it not, because they were not of God. (John 8:47.)

Such was the Lord's present ministry, while Israel was in unbelief. Though King of the Jews, and as such, King of the whole earth, he could not as yet take his kingdom, for his title had been denied by his nation. He must take up other ministry, and the character of that ministry he here reveals to Pilate, and had been presenting all through our Gospel.

Thus, this good confession before Pontius Pilate, recorded in this Gospel, still leads the Lord's thoughts quite in the current of this Gospel. While standing to it, consenting for a while to answer for himself, he still knows himself in highest and holiest ministry: yea, I may say his divine ministry, a ministry which none but the Only begotten of the Father, none but he who lay in the bosom of the Father, and who was full of grace and truth, could have fulfilled.

This is still striking; and as we follow him on to the cross, we have the Son of God still. We see his title to the kingdom verified with all authority. The enemy would have had it blotted out, but he cannot prevail. Pilate, who before had despised the claims of Jesus, saying to the Jews, "Behold your King," will now have them published in all the languages of the earth, and it is not in the power of the Jews to change his mind now, as before. The cross shall be the Lord's standard, and Jehovah will emblazon it with inscriptions of his royal dignity, be the earth never so angry.

But this is the only Gospel that gives us this conversation between Pilate and the Jews about the inscription on the cross; for it savored of the glory of Jesus. And so it is only our Evangelist who notices the woven coat, which was something that the soldiers would not rend—a little circumstance in itself, but helping still to keep in view (in full harmony with this Gospel generally) the holy dignity of him who was passing through this hour of darkness.

Here it is, also, that our Lord lays aside his human affections. He sees his mother and his beloved disciple near the cross; but it is only to commend them the one to the other, and thus to separate himself from the place which he had once filled among them. Sweet indeed is it to see how faithfully he owned the affection up to the latest moment that he could listen to it; no sorrow of his own (though that was bitter enough, as we know) could make him forget it. But he was not always to know it. The children of the resurrection neither marry, nor are given in marriage. They were not, henceforth, to know him "after the flesh." He must now form their knowledge of him by other thoughts, for they are henceforth to be joined to him as "one spirit:" for such are his blessed ways. If he takes his distance from us, as not knowing us in "the flesh," it is only that we may be united to him in nearer affections and closer interests.

And, to look deeper than the circumstances of this hour, if we mark the Lord's spirit on the cross, we shall still discern the Son, of God. He thirsted—he tasted death, it is true—he knew the drought of that land where the living God was not. But his sense of this is still expressed in his own tone. It does not come forth in the cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" That is given us in its proper place. But here there is no such cry recorded; there is no amazement of spirit, nor horror of great darkness for three hours, neither is there a commending of himself to the Father; but it is simply, "I thirst;" and when he had entered and passed through that thirst, he verifies the full accomplishment of all things, saying, "It is finished." He does not commend his work to the approval of God, but seals it with his own seal, attesting it as complete, and giving it the sufficient sanction of His own approval. And when he could thus sanction all as finished, he delivers up his

life himself.

These were strong touches of the mind in which he was passing through these hours; and these hours now end. The Son of God was made perfect, as the author of eternal salvation to all that obey him; and the fountain for sin and for uncleanness is opened. The water and the blood come forth to bear witness that God has given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. (1 John 5:8-12.) We have not here the Centurion's confession, "Truly, this was the Son of God;" we have not Pilate's wife, nor the convicted lips of Judas, bearing him witness: Jesus does not here receive witness from men, but from God. The water and the blood are God's witnesses to his Son, and to the life that sinners may find in him. It was sin that pierced him. The action of the soldier was just a sample of man's enmity. It was the sullen shot of the defeated foe after the battle, the more loudly telling out the deep-seated hatred that there, is in man's heart to God and his Christ. But it only sets off the riches of that grace that met it and abounded over it; for it was answered by the love of God. The point of the soldier's spear was touched by the blood. The crimson flood came forth to roll away the crimson sin. The blood and the water issue through the wounded side of the Son of God. Now was the day of atonement fully come, and the water of separation, the ashes of the red heifer, were now sprinkled. This was the Lamb which Abel had offered. This was the blood which Noah had shed, and which had awakened in God's heart thoughts of unmingled grace to sinners. (Genesis 8:21.) This was the rain of Mount Moriah, and this was the blood which daily flowed round the brazen altar in the temple. This was the blood which is the only ransom of the unnumbered thousands before the throne of God.

But though pierced, thus to be the fountain of the blood and the water, the Lord's body must not be broken. The paschal Lamb may be killed, but not a bone of it is to be broken. It shall do all the purpose of divine love in sheltering the first-born, but beyond that it is sacred—no rude hand must touch it. Jesus was to say, "All my bones shall say, LORD, who is like unto thee, which deliverest the poor from him that is too strong for him; yea, the poor and needy from him that spoileth him?" And the Church is his body. He is the head, and we the members; and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, and not a bone of that mystic body is to be wanting—all must come unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; for all, from of old, have been written in God's book, and are to be fashioned and curiously wrought together, even every one of them. (Psalms 139:16.1)

Thus was it with our Lord in our gospel, while he was yet on the cross. In every feature we see the Son of God; and as we follow him from thence to the grave, it is the Son of God still. We do not there see him numbered with the transgressors, and with the wicked in his death; but we do see his grave with the rich. Two honored sons of Israel come to own him, and charge themselves with his body, to spend their perfumes and their labor upon it.

But in all this we have again something to notice. When the Lord's body was pierced, it not only, as I have observed, allowed God's witnesses—the blood and the water—to be heard, but it gives occasion to that which was written, "They shall look on him whom they pierced." And this word, which tells of Israel's repentance in the, latter day, introduces the action of Joseph' and Nicodemus, and makes them the representatives of repentant Israel. They come last, it is true, in the order of faith; they had been afraid of their unbelieving nation, afraid of the thunder of the synagogue, and had not continued with the Lord in his temptations, but were only secretly his

disciples; they were slow of heart; but still, in the end, they do own the Lord, and are brought to look on him Whom they pierced. They take the body from the cross, fresh with the piercing of the soldier's spear; and as they lowered it from the tree, surely they must have looked, and looked well, upon the hands and feet and wounded side. And they must have mourned as they looked, for their hearts had been already softened to take some impression from the crucified one. And so will it be with Israel, they come last in the order of faith, and are slow of heart; but in the end they will look on him whom they have pierced, and mourn as one mourneth for his only son.

It was thus with Joseph and Nicodemus now, and thus will it be by and by with the inhabitants of Jerusalem. These two Israelites, as true children of Abraham, claim the body of the Lord, and consecrate it as with the faith of the patriarch (Genesis 1. 2, 26); and, as true subjects of the King of Israel, they also honor it with the honors of a Son of David. (2 Chronicles 16:14.) They spend large and costly perfumes upon it, and lay it up in the garden in a new untainted tomb, on which the smell of death had never yet passed.

Here all closes for the present; here, in the second garden, as I may call it, the second man is now laid in death. In the first, the first man had walked with access to the tree of life; but he had chosen death in the error of his way. Here, in the second garden, death, the penalty, is met. Jesus, without having touched the tree of knowledge, suffers the death. In the first garden, all manner of trees, good for food and pleasant to the eyes, were seen; but here, nothing appears but the tomb of Jesus. This was what man's sin ended in, as far as man was concerned. But let us wait a little. By all this the Son of God is soon to become the death of death, and hell's destruction, to bring life and immortality to light, and to plant again in the garden, for man, the tree of life. Let but the third morning arise, and this garden, which now witnesses only Jesus in death, shall see the Son of God in resurrection.

20. Accordingly, at the opening of this chapter, we so find it. Jesus has risen, the bruiser of the serpent being made, through death, the destroyer of him that had the power of death.

This was the third, the appointed day, —the day on which Abraham of old had received his son as from the dead, the day of promised revival to Israel (Hosea 6:2), the day, also, on which Jonah was on dry land again.

But the disciples do not as yet know their Lord in resurrection; they know him only "after the flesh;" and therefore Mary Magdalene is seen early at the sepulcher, seeking his body; and, in the same mind, Peter and his companion run to the sepulcher shortly after her, their bodily strength merely, and not the intelligence of faith, carrying them there. And there they behold, not their object, but the trophies of his victory over the power of death. There they see the gates of brass and the bars of iron cut in sunder. The linen clothes and the napkin which had been wrapped about the Lord's head, as though he were death's prisoner, were seen strewing the ground like the spoils of the vanquished. The very armor of the strong man was made a show of in his own house, and this telling loudly, that he who is the plague of death, and hell's destruction, had been lately in that place doing his glorious work. But, in spite of all this, the disciples understand not; they as yet know not the scripture, that he must rise from the dead; and they go away again to their own home.

Mary, however, lingers about the fond spot, refusing to be comforted because her Lord was not. She would fain have taken sackcloth, and, like another, spread it for her on the rock, could she but find his body to watch and to keep it. She wept and stooped down and looked into the sepulcher, and saw the angels. But what were the angels to her now? The sight of them does not terrify her, as it had the other women (Mark 16), for she was too much occupied with other, thoughts to be moved by them. They were, it is true, very illustrious, sitting there in white, and in heavenly state, too, one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. But what was all splendor to her now? The dead body of her Lord was what she sought and desired alone; and she has only to turn from these heavenly glories in further search of it; and then seeing, as she judged, the gardener, she says to him, “ Sir, if thou hast borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away.” She simply says: “ If thou have borne him; hence,” not naming Jesus; for, fond woman as she was, she supposes that everyone must be as full of her Lord as she was.

(Continued from p. 198.)

Operations of the Spirit of God

But there was also the doctrine of the relationship which we have in the new man, as well as moral character and power. As many as are led of it are sons; sons, and therefore heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together. Arid here the groaning is not on the question of what we are as to God's judgment of evil in us, a spirit of bondage to fear; but, our own judgment of it in, its effects because we are sons, and are certain that we are, and know that we are heirs. We take up the groaning of the whole creation, of which we are part, as in the body, and express it to God in sympathy, in the sense of the blessedness of the glorious inheritance when the creation shall be delivered; suffering with, Christ in the present sorrow by His Spirit, and express it in the Spirit to God, even though we have no intelligence to ask for any actual remedy. In this, then, the Spirit has a double office: the witness with us, for joy, that we are sons and heirs, and helping us in the infirmities lying on creation and on us in the body; and when lie, thus acting in us in sympathy, thus groans in us expressive of the sorrow, for who searches the hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because He maketh intercession for us ACCORDING to God.

The Epistle to the Galatians with less fullness teaches us the same truth, securing the foundation on which it rests. But we see, thus far, the sons joint-heirs—joint-heirs with Christ, and the Spirit at once the seal of the redemption which is accomplished, by which they have it; the witness of sonship in them, and the earnest of the inheritance which they have with Christ: known by the revelation of the glory of Christ and the things to come, connected with His person. Thus, we have it expressed in Ephesians 1:9-14.

There is another very interesting passage as instruction upon this point (2 Corinthians 1:20,22)—“All the promises” belonging to Christ as heir—“All God's promises are in Christ Yea, and in Christ Amen, unto the glory of God by us.” The promises are of God, and in Christ. God then establishes us in Christ; and then, for our knowledge, assurance, and enjoyment, we are anointed, sealed, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts; knowing it by the anointing, as in 1 John 2:20—sealed, as in Ephesians 1, and having the earnest in the heart so as to anticipatively enjoy the blessing known, and for which we are sealed.

Having spoken of this passage in a previous paper, I do not enlarge on it; but there is another collateral passage which I would not pass by, relative to the knowledge, communication, and reception of the revelations of the Spirit; showing our entire dependance on that blessed Comforter and power of God for all knowledge of these things (1 Corinthians 2)—“Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him; but God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit.” Man’s heart never conceived them, but God revealed them to His saints by His Spirit. They had received the Spirit which was of God, that they might know. They spoke by words which the Holy Ghost taught: communicating, as I should translate it, spiritual things by a spiritual medium: and they were, moreover, spiritually discerned; they were known, communicated, and received by the Spirit.

Having noticed these collateral passages, I pass on to the point of corporate operation of the Holy Ghost in the union of the body. The testimony to the Lordship of Christ, and that character of His exaltation, we have already seen in the addresses of Peter to Israel. This of course is never lost: but we have seen the additional truth of the identity of Christ and the Church—the very basis of Paul’s special ministry, brought out in the question to the apostle, “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?” just as the sin of the first Adam was brought out by the terrible question, “Where art thou?” It is upon this that the grace of the ministration of the Spirit, now, was to have its course. The Spirit had borne witness by certain disciples; and the Church thereby had been gathered. The Church now was to be the vehicle for the testimony and witness of the Spirit corporately. The distinct revelation of this position of the Church, and its establishment in it, in the intelligence and actuality of its standing, began by the scattering of the assembly at Jerusalem, and by the apostle (having been called, and enabled by the Lord, and having preached at once—and thus laid by in a measure for a time) recommencing the work from Antioch, as a center whence he was separated to the work to which Christ had called him, not by the appointment of Jesus after the flesh, but by the authoritative direction of the Holy Ghost in the disciples. Paul had no part in the testimony mentioned in John 15:27. It was only the Holy Ghost’s testimony, and seeing the glory of Christ, and hearing the words of His mouth. Hence it was not a testimony to the exaltation and Lordship of Him whose companions they had been on earth; that God had exalted Him to be Lord and Christ there; but starting from the point of His Lordship seen in glory, that He was the Son of God, and a testimony and, of course owning it, to the union of the whole body, Jew and Gentile, with Him so exalted to God’s right hand. Hence the operations of the Holy Ghost—always following the testimony concerning Christ, while still declaring and subservient to His Lordship—wrought in the unity of the whole body, according to the operations of God.

Hence, we read in 1 Corinthians 12, “Concerning spiritual things, brethren, I would not have you ignorant. Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led. Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say, Lord Jesus—or, call Jesus Lord—but by the Holy Ghost.” That is, whoever does so (i.e. in Spirit), does so by the Holy Ghost; for it was the Holy Spirit that testified that Jesus was Lord, not an evil one.

There were, along with this testimony, “diversities of gifts; yet not many spirits, but the same Spirit. And there were differences of administrations (ministries), but the same Lord (not ‘lords many’—Jesus was Lord); and “diversities of operations, but the same God (for the operations were truly divine) that worketh all in all;” there, were not “gods many”—all were the operation of the

one true God.

It is not the Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Ghost) which is here presented to us, though from other scriptures we may know its connection with it, but God, the Lord, and the Spirit, working in the Church upon earth; though, lest we should suppose He was not God, it is afterward said, "All these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will. For as the body is one, and hath many members and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we are 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."

We have here, then, these two points, —the Lordship of Christ—and that taking its place as to the services of which the gifts were the power; and the unity of the whole body—in which, as by its members, the Spirit wrought according to their diverse appropriate functions. The operation being all the while God's operation, but ordered according to the functions of the body, and the purport of the whole; for the members' service was for the good of the whole body.

From this, I think, we distinctly learn the order of the ministration of the Holy Ghost, as thus presented to us. What additional instruction the word may give us, we shall afterward see.

First, there was the primary testimony that Christ was Lord—more correctly, that Jesus was Lord: that formed the great basis-truth. All was subservient to this. The Holy Ghost as in operation, though Supreme to distribute, was subservient to this: this was the great testimony He blessedly rendered.

He bore it in gracious faithfulness now, as hereafter every tongue shall be obliged to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Upon this hangs consequently the responsibility of every gift. We are servants by them to the Lord Christ: "Ye serve the Lord Christ;" "Such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own bellies:" "Paul, the servant of Jesus Christ.," is the well-known glory and faithfulness of the apostle. It was to "the Lord, the righteous Judge," he looked. Thrice he besought "the Lord" that his thorn in the flesh might be removed: "I, that is called, being free, is Christ's servant."

These gifts of the Spirit, then, set them in ministries to the Lord, in which they were individually responsible for their exercise to Christ—talents with which they were to trade; but then they were responsible to exercise them within the body, according to the order in which they were set in the body, and in subjection to the mind of the Lord the Head of the body. This preserved entire the full personal responsibility and liberty; for no one was Lord but one, not even an apostle, and yet mutual dependance, healthful for all, even for an apostle; for the Lord's authority was great over the foot or over the hand, and as exclusive as over, the apostle himself. Nor would an apostle, having still the flesh to contend with, keep his place unless this were carefully held. Though by preeminence of gift he might guide, lead, direct, and, by revelation from the Lord, give a commandment to the Church, he could not, in the smallest degree or tittle, touch the direct responsibility of the least member to Christ the Lord Himself; he would have been setting up himself as the Vine, as lord over God's heritage, had he done so. The apostles were alone as helpers of joy, and that by authority entrusted for edification, but never as lords over their faith. Authority, however, as a gift from the Lord, increased responsibility; but of this more hereafter. If he, the apostle, counseled any member by the Spirit, woe be to that member if his counsel was

despised. Of course, if he revealed a commandment of the Lord, the believer became directly responsible to the Lord for obedience to that commandment. And though he specially, and the whole Church, might judge by the Spirit, still it was always with this remembrance— “another man’s servant.”

But it must be distinctly remembered, this was not for private right or title in the individual. I recognize no such thing as right in an individual. Right, in the human sense of it, is some title to exercise his own will in man, unimpeded by the interference of another. Now CHRISTIANITY ENTIRELY SETS THIS ASIDE. It may be very speciously maintained by dwelling only on the latter half of the definition, because grace does give a title against the interference of another; but that title is in and by virtue of responsibility to God. No man has a right to interfere with anything in which I am responsible to God. But the light which Christianity sheds on this is not my meddling with the will of that other, but my obligation to do the will of God at all cost: — “We ought to obey God rather than man.” And having first done the will of God, then to suffer it; for it is better, if the will of God be so, to suffer for well-doing than for evil-doing; for Christ, in the best sense, has once suffered for sins. If we do well, suffer for it, and take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. But this right in the individual, in the human and common force of it, Christianity cuts up by the root, because it pronounces the human will to be all wrong, and the assertion of its exercise to be the principle of sin; so that we “are sanctified unto obedience” as to “the blood of sprinkling.” Thus, the idea of all having a right to speak in the church could never enter into the Christian mind. It has no place in the scheme of Christianity, which begins its moral existence by the breaking down the human will as evil. The Holy Spirit has the right, which He exercises sovereignly, of distributing “to every man severally as He will;” and hence responsibility subject to the purpose of the Holy Ghost in all. For the manifestation of the Spirit (which gifts are—they are not the Holy Spirit itself) is given to every man to profit withal. There is purpose in it, to which the power of the Holy Ghost is to direct the use of these gifts for the good of all, as this epistle clearly shews us. The gifts to men or in man (both are used—one refers to Christ, the other to those to whom Christ gives them), are not the Holy Ghost, though they be by the Holy Ghost, and hence are guided by the mind of Christ, for the accomplishment of which they are given. Thus, to display the gift of tongues, or use it where there were none to whom they applied, is described by the apostle to be the folly of childhood; they were given to profit withal. So also, the spirits of the prophets—the highest desirable gift—were subject to the prophets. The not seeing this, and confounding these gifts of the Spirit in man with the Holy Ghost Himself, has led to much and mischievous confusion. And it has been thought impossible that they should ever be restrained, or subjected to even apostolic rule-turning, as every departure from Scripture does, to the license of the flesh and human will, or the even worse delusion of the enemy.

The Holy Ghost Himself dwelling in the individual, and especially also in the Church as such, guides, directs, and orders by the word, the use of these manifestations of His power in man, as He does everything else, I repeat by the word; just as the conduct of one led of the Spirit is ordered and guided by the Word, the power of the same Spirit directing and applying it. It is this that maintains responsibility whatever the power given, and, by that unity, through the Holy Ghost, in the whole body; for power being given, its exercise would be by man’s will else, or it would not be in man at all. This was true in the highest instance, where error or failure could not be. When the Son of God, in infinite grace and counsel of wisdom, became a man, it was not to destroy

responsibility, but to fulfill it all in absolute abstract perfection: "He became obedient." Even in working miracles would not depart from this. He would not make stones bread, without God His Father's will. It was precisely to this the enemy (Satan) sought to lead Him—to what might be called the innocent exercise of will, and using His power for this. But He was perfect, and the enemy confounded. He was content to do God's will. He kept His commandments, and abode in His love. And if therein He, a divine person, could show that He loved the Father, and in suffering there was a therefore that the Father loved Him, still He blessedly adds, and this was His perfectness, "And as my Father hath given me commandment, so I do." And thus closed His blessed and perfect career, with this true word to the Father, "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." Blessed Jesus! justly art thou glorified in all things—Our Lord!

This difference now, however, exists, that Jesus having taken the place of power— "all power given to Him in heaven and in earth"—His place is not merely the manifestation of perfect obedience in self-humiliation, but the manifestation of exaltation and power. But this, while it has altered the position of Jesus, and the place of His disciples, as vessels of this power, in the testimony of the Spirit of God, has in no way touched the principle of their responsibility, though its sphere may be enlarged by, it; nor has it let in the principle of human will in the smallest degree, because power has been increased; but it has merely introduced the principle of that responsibility into the exercise of the power entrusted, whatever it may be, and connected it with the Lordship of Christ, whose servants they are in it, that they may minister it to His glory, in love and testimony to the world, and in the edification of the Church. And the Word affords the rule for the order of its exercise, as of all things else.

It is a part of this responsibility and reference to the Head of the Church, not to "quench the Spirit," nor "despise prophesyings," be they the simplest, or by the humblest in the Church, as to mere circumstance, if God be pleased to use them.

The title and the right are God's, proving them divine, and therefore good: the responsibility man's, and the gift only the occasion of responsibility in that; the Lord Christ being He under Whom it was exercised; and by that responsibility necessarily independent of others; for no man could serve two masters: but within the Church exercised according to the mind of Christ, of which the Spirit is the power in the Church, and the written word the guide and standard. It is in this last point the Scriptures hold a place, which in many respects the apostles held, that is, of revealing the mind of Christ. They cannot have in themselves the place of power, but they do contain the wisdom of God, and, as to this in the New Testament, the mind of Christ. We must distinguish this point of revelation. The other points of apostolic office may be spoken of hereafter.

There are some other points to be noted in this 12th chapter of Corinthians.

Having spoken of the Spirit, and the Lord, and God; the two first sheaving the relationship and power of this service, the last making us understand that it was withal truly God's power and working; and then in the same language (that the divinity of the Spirit might be recognized, though in a certain sense taking the place of service, as acting in the subject-instrument of Christ's Lordship) ascribed the power and working to the Spirit: having cleared this point, the apostle takes up the subject in connection with the unity of the body. And here Christ, at least the body of Christ, becomes the subject of divine operations: first is rather the fruit of those operations; for we are by

one Spirit baptized into one body—thus is Christ. And the whole is spoken of as the subject of divine counsel; Christ only being the Head, and we in mutual dependence; but the whole sphere is looked at as a subject—scene of operations. It is not merely now, the Holy Ghost bearing witness by which the world was convicted, or individuals convinced, and the Church gathered; but “now hath God set the members, every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased Him.” “God hath tempered the body’ together.” “God hath set some in the Church, first apostles,” &c. They were “the body of Christ, and—members in particular.”

We have thus the operations of the Spirit of God formally established in the corporate unity of a body, in the various gifts of the different members, of which the Spirit itself formed the unity and the power; subservient to the Lordship of Christ, and therefore directing the Church by His mind, whether for its own edification in love or testimony to the world; God setting the members of this body as it pleased Him.

The control of the Spirit, as communicating the mind of Christ, over the exercise of these entrusted powers, is next brought forward—after stating the superior excellence of love to any gift. Love was, and witnessed, God, and was the bond of perfectness in essential blessing. These, the testimony of power; prevailing indeed over evil, but still ministered in the midst of it, and not to continue, therefore, but to pass away or cease. The use of these for the purpose of love this became the true test of grace and the mind of Christ in using them; otherwise, turned into personal display. The edifying of the Church was to be the rule of all used there, and no individual title, for they were to follow the mind of Christ.

This also gave rise to a distinction in the gifts, of those suited to the world, and those meant for the profit of the incumbent of the Church. Thus “tongues” were a sign to unbelievers, not to the Church; this was their use. One gifted with tongues was not therefore to speak in them, unless there were an interpreter; for the Church would not be edified: it would be the subject-matter, if there were an interpreter. So “signs,” or “miracles,” confirmed the word.

The gift of tongues was peculiar, and characteristically evangelical: overreaching the consequences of man’s sin and judgment in Babel, and setting aside manifestly the confining the testimony of God to the Jewish people; constituting an active ministry towards those without, which was distinctively essential to Christianity. It thus became, distinctively, manifestative of the Holy Ghost, on the Jews and on the Gentiles (the 120 and Cornelius), as sent down, the witness of this grace, and of glory and Headship in Christ. Miracles had been wrought among the Jews; even there, however, it was among it those departed from the covenant, or, when at first that national system was established. In Judea the prophets recalled to the law, and let their predictions verify themselves or be owned by faith. Their summons to the law required no verification; its obligation was acknowledged. But tongues were properly applicable to the Christian dispensation as acting on the world, and therefore became the characteristic manifestation of the Holy Ghost sent down as acting before the world that needed this.

“Tongues, miracles, healings,” then, might be exercised by those gifted thereto in the Church, but they were exercised as the witness of the beneficence of Christ’s Lordship to the world, and not towards the Church already alive in heaven by the deeper quickening power of that beneficence. This was their general character. The 11 proper character of the Church’s blessing was edification:— “Let all things be done unto edifying;” or, as expressed in the Ephesians, “ the

edifying itself in love.”

This appears to me the true distinction: signs to the world, and edification to the Church, not that usually made between miraculous, and not miraculous; as if God gave no positive gifts to the Church now, and as if miraculous were synonymous with supernatural, and that the Holy Ghost had ceased to act; and thus human powers are practically referred to as the sole agent in the Church. If miraculous be spoken of as meaning those which were signs to the world, I have no objection, provided the direct power and gift of the Holy Ghost be not set aside, in those which are not for signs but for edifying: otherwise great dishonor is done to the Holy Ghost.

There is this distinction given us in these gifts by the fact of some being for signs, some for edifying: the former are to act on the senses and mind as applicable to those without; the latter on conscience and spiritual understanding, and consequently the subject of intelligent judgment and reception. This remark is of importance. The Spirit of God acting in the force of responsibility in us is always paramount to any means of power and gift—even if real; for, thereby the authority of God is owned and set up over ourselves. The true use of gift in the Church is just to enforce this: wherever it departs from this it is clearly false in principle. “I must judge them which say they are apostles”— “let the rest judge”— “the spiritual man judgeth all things.” Self-will, which refuses the enforcement of responsibility by gift, or which would use gift to exalt itself, instead of enforcing it, are alike the: flesh set on by Satan to its own lawlessness. There is no remedy for this but grace, and the power and presence of the Holy Ghost condemning and mortifying the flesh in each. The want of this is recognized as possible, and to come, by the apostle: — “the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears.”

I should also remark, that the Holy-Ghost teaches us here, that while He distributes to every man severally as He will, and uses whom He will, so that all openness is to be maintained for His operations, there are distinct permanent gifts whereby men are constituted teachers, prophets, or the like, though their teaching and prophesying may still be in constant dependence on the action of the Holy Ghost Himself. These directions, in fine, as to tongues and interpretations—the number and manner of prophets speaking—women speaking—show the distinct control of the Holy Ghost Himself (thus in its order expressed in the word) over the exercise of all entrusted gifts in the Church, where the Holy Ghost habitually dwelt and guided for the end of edifying all. Liberty and guidance is characteristic of Christianity, and is distinctive of power making willing, and the wisdom of God for us.

This testimony to the world, and edifying of the Church, involves also another consideration, besides the signs wrought by the Church before the world—a principle of service a little modified by the position of the apostle Paul—that the operation of the Spirit in gift, though working in and by, precedes the formation of, the Church.

Gift of evangelizing, though it be in a member of the Church, yet is clearly antecedent in its own character to the existence of the Church; for it is by that the Church is gathered.

The highest form of this was shown in the apostles at Jerusalem, as we have already seen. And though the Evangelist may go forth from the Church, and be aided by the Church, it is a gift exercised not towards the Church, or to its conscience, and of which the Church, therefore, cannot be properly cognizable. It must be exercised on the possession of the gift, and bears its evidence

in its fruits by acting in the primary work of God's Spirit on the conscience of the unconverted; judging it, not judged by it; coming in the grace and truth of Jesus to it. Other gifts, as prophesying, may convince others in conscience, but its exercise is in the Church, and the Church having a conscience taught of the Spirit, is bound—it may be through other prophets efficiently—but is bound to judge but the Evangelist is to the world, and there is no competency of judgment, though there may be holy counsel and advice, as from the Lord. As aiding in grace, temporally, the Church, or rather each individual in it—be it a woman—is bound to have no fellowship with doctrine not according to the word, and the Church should take all needful notice of this, and not be partakers of this sin. The same would apply as to any evil practice; but the exercise of the gift, as such, in its nature, though it flow from the midst of the Church, goes forth out of it, and, not referring to its conscience, does not raise a throne of judgment there, which responsibility to God does, in what is addressed to the Church. The Evangelist is responsible to God for the exercise of his gift towards those without, and becomes manifest in their consciences in the sight of God.

The highest form of this was the apostles on the day of Pentecost. It was a direct authoritative address, as the apostles of Jesus, appointed by Him, and ratified in power by the Holy Ghost to the world, thereby forming the Church, and becoming, in a certain subordinate sense, heads of the Church, to guide, regulate, order, and direct those whom they so gathered, which gave the subsequent character to apostolic office.

(Continued from p. 222.) (To be continued.)

On the Gospel by St. John

To do this in all gentleness, he first answers her human affection, letting her once again hear her own name on his well-known voice. That was just the note which was in full unison with all that was then in her heart. It was the only note to which her soul could have responded. Had he appeared to her in heavenly glory, he would still have been a stranger to her; for as yet she knew him only as Jesus. But this must be the last time she was to apprehend him “after the flesh.” For he is now risen from the dead, and is on his way to the Father in heaven, and earth must no longer be the scene of their communion. “Touch me not,” says he to her, “for I am not yet ascended to my Father.”

I need not, perhaps, observe how fully characteristic of our gospel all this is. In Matthew, on the contrary, we see the women, on their return from the sepulcher, meeting the Lord, and the Lord allowing them to hold his feet, and to worship him: but here, it is to Mary, “Touch me not.” For this gospel tells us of the Son in the midst of the heavenly family, and not in his royalty in Israel and in his earthly glory. The resurrection, it is most true, pledges all that earthly glory and kingdom to him (Acts 13:34); but it was also one stage to the heavenly places, and that is the feature of it which our gospel gives us.

Mary, as we have seen, is entitled to be the first to learn these greater ways of his grace and love, and also to be the happy bearer of the same good tidings from this far and unknown country to the brethren. Jesus says to her, “Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.”

Thus, is she honored, and she goes to prepare the brethren for their Lord, while he prepares to meet them with a blessing beyond all which they had as yet attained. And her tidings seem to have

got them all in readiness for him; for on his seeing them, the evening of the same day, they are not amazed and in unbelief, as they are in Luke's Gospel, but seem all to be in waiting and expectation. They are no longer scattered as before (ver. 10), but folded together as the family of God, and the elder brother enters in, laden with the fruit of his holy travail for them.,

This was a meeting indeed. It was a visit to the family of the heavenly Father by the First-born. It was in a place that lay beyond death and outside the world. And such indeed is the place of appointed meeting with our Lord. Those who in spirit stay here, never meet him. For he is the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of strangers and pilgrims. The world is a defiled place, and we must meet him in resurrection, in the kingdom that is not of the world.

So was it here with the Lord and his brethren. He now, for the first time, really meets them, meets them in the appointed place outside the world, and meets them in no less character than his own brethren. Now it was that he began to pay his vows. He had made them on the cross. (Psalms 22) First, that he would declare the Father's name to the brethren: secondly, that in the midst of the Church he would sing his praise. The first of these he was now beginning to pay, and has been paying all through this present dispensation, making known to our souls the name of the Father through the Holy Ghost. And the second he will as certainly pay, when the congregation of all the brethren is gathered, and he leads their songs in resurrection—joy forever.

Now also is the promised life actually imparted. "Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me; because I live, ye shall live also." The Son of God, having life in himself, now conies with it to his saints. He breathes on them now, as of old into their nostrils. (Genesis 2) Only this was the breath of the second Adam, the quickening Spirit, who had a life to impart that was won from the power of death, and which was therefore beyond its utmost reach. The brethren are now given to know that Christ was in the Father, and they in him, and he in them. They know the full peace of the cross also. He spews them his hands and his side. Their sorrow is turned into joy, for they were glad "when they saw the Lord." He was revealing himself to them, as he does not unto the world. The world, in this little interview, was quite shut out; and the disciples, as hated of the world, are shut up within their own enclosure, just in the place to get a special manifestation of himself to them, as he had said unto them. (19: 22-24.) In the world they were knowing tribulation, but in him peace.

All this was theirs in this blessed little visit of "the First-born from the dead" to his brethren, imparting to them the blessing which belonged to them as children. And thus, this little intercourse was a sample of the communion which we enjoy in this dispensation. Our communion with Christ does not change our condition in the world, or make us happy in mere circumstances; it leaves us in a place of trial. But we are happy in Himself, in the full sense of his presence and favor. We are taught, as they here were, to know our oneness with Jesus; and, through Him, our adoption, and fellowship with the Father. As we lately saw the armor of the conquered enemy strewing the distant field of battle, so here do we see the fruit of victory brought home to gladden and assure the kindred of the conqueror.

And these fruits of the victory of the Son of God were now commanded to be carried about in holy triumph all the world over. "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you," says the Lord to his brethren. With a message, not of judgment, but of grace, had he himself come forth from the Father. And with a commission of the same grace are the brethren sent forth. They are sent forth

from the Lord of life and peace, and with such a ministry they test the condition of every living soul. The message they bear is from the Son of the Father, a message of peace and life secured in and by himself; and the word then was and still is, "He that hath the Son, bath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life"—and the Lord adds, making them, in this, the test of the condition of every one, as having the Son or not, "Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained."

Such was the Lord's first interview with his disciples after he had risen from the dead. It has set before us the saints as the children of the Father, and their ministry as such, and given us a sample or first-fruits of that harvest in the Holy Ghost, which they have been gathering ever since in this dispensation.

And though it may draw me aside for a little space, I cannot refuse noticing that the ministry committed to the disciples by the Lord, after he rose from the dead, takes a distinct character in each of the gospels. And as each of the gospels has a distinct purpose, — (according to which all the narratives are selected and recorded), so the various language used by the Lord in each of the gospels in committing this ministry to his disciples is to be accounted for, and interpreted by, the specific character of the gospel itself.

In Matthew this commission runs thus:— "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." Now this commission was strictly to the apostles, who had been already ordained by the Lord, and associated with him as minister of the circumcision. (Romans 15:8.) It contemplated them as in Jerusalem, and going forth from thence for the discipling of all nations, and for the keeping of them in the commandments and ordinances of the Lord. For it is the purpose of that gospel to present the Lord, in Jewish connection, as the hope of Israel, to whom the gathering of the nations was to be. And accordingly, the conversion of nations, and time settlement of the whole world around Jerusalem, as the center of worship, is assumed. A system of restored and obedient nations rejoicing with Israel will be exhibited by and by; and the risen Lord looks to that when committing ministry to his apostles in the gospel by Matthew.

But in Mark this prospect of national conversion is a good deal qualified. The terms of the commission are these:— "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature: he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." It is not the discipling of nations that is contemplated, but universal testimony with partial acceptance it for Mark presents the Lord in service or ministry; and the case of some receiving the word and some receiving it not is anticipated, because such are the results that have attended on all ministry of the word; as it is said in one place, " Some believed the things that were spoken, and some believed not."

In St. Luke, the Lord, after interpreting Moses, the prophets, and the Psalms, and opening the understanding of the disciples to understand them, delivers ministry to them in this way:— "Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things. And behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high." This commission does not appear to have been strictly to the eleven, but others were addressed by it.

(See Luke 24:33.) And their ministry was to begin with Jerusalem, and not from it. And they are not allowed to go forth in their ministry till they had received new power, thus allowing that what they had received from Jesus, while still on earth, was not sufficient. And all this was a breaking away from mere earthly or Jewish order. This was, therefore, the commission with something of an altered character, suitable to this gospel by Luke, which presents the Lord more abroad, and not strictly in Jewish association.

But now, in our gospel by John, we do not get this commission at all, nor any mention of the power from on high.”

We simply get, as I have been noticing, the life of the risen Man imparted, and then the disciples with that life in them sent out to test, by virtue of it, the condition of every living soul. The Lord gives them their ministry as from heaven, and not from the mountain in Galilee. He sends them forth from the Father, and not from Jerusalem. For, in our gospel, the Lord has left all recollections of Jerusalem behind, and has given up, for the present, all hope of restoring Israel, and gathering the nations.

This variety in the terms of this commission and ministry is very striking, and, considering the different purposes of each gospel, it is exquisite and perfect. The mere reasoner may stumble at it, and the man who honors the Scripture, and would fain preserve its fair reputation, may attempt many ways to show the literal consistency of these things. But the word of God, beloved, does not ask for protection from man. It seeks for no apologies to be made for it, however well intentioned. In all this there is no incongruity, but only variety, and that variety perfectly answering the divers purposes of the same Spirit. And though thus various, every thought and every word in each is equally and altogether divine, and we have only to bless our God for the sureness and comfort and sufficiency of his own most perfect testimonies.

But this, brethren, by the way, desiring that the Lord may keep our minds in all our meditations, and in all the counsels of our hearts.

We left the Lord in company with his brethren. He was putting them into their condition as children of the Father, and raising them to heavenly places. But he has purposes touching Israel as well as the Church. In the latter day, he will call them to repentance and faith, giving them their due standing and ministry also. And these things we shall have now in order unfolded before us.

Thomas, we read, was not with the brethren when the Lord visited them. He did not keep his first estate, but was absent while the little gathering were holding themselves in readiness for their risen Lord; and now he refuses to believe his brethren, without the further testimony of his own hands and eyes.

And the Jews to this day, like Thomas then, are refusing the gospel or good tidings of the risen Lord. All, however, was not to end thus. Thomas recovers his place, and “after eight days” is in company with the brethren again, and then Jesus presents himself to him. And the unbelieving disciple is led to own him as his Lord and his God. As by-and-by, “after eight days,” after a full week or dispensation has run its course, it will be said in the land of Israel, “Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for him; we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.” Israel will own Immanuel then; and as the Lord here accepts Thomas, so will he then say of Israel, “Thou art my people.”

But here we are to notice something further significant. The Lord accepts Thomas, it is most true, but at the same time says to him, "Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed." And so with Israel in the latter day. They shall know the peace of the cross, the full peace of the wounded hand and side of Jesus here shown to Thomas; but they shall take a blessing inferior to the Church. They shall get life from the Son of God; but they shall only walk on the footstool, while the saints are sitting on the throne.

Here the mystery of life, whether to the Church now, or to Israel by-and-by, closes, and our Evangelist, accordingly, for a moment pauses. This was the gospel of Jesus the Christ, the Son of God, which whosoever believeth has life in his name. Many other things might have been added, but these were enough to attest the Son, and thus to be the seed of life. The third witness from God had now been heard. The water and the blood had come forth from the crucified Son, and now the Spirit was given by the risen Son. The three that bear witness on earth had been heard, and the testimony from God, that he "hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son," was therefore complete; and our Evangelist just says, "These are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.

21. Thus have we seen life actually dispensed by the risen Lord to his brethren, and ministry committed to them as such; and we have seen life pledged to Israel in the person of Thomas. But this restored Thomas, or the Israel of God in the latter day, shall (like the Church now) get ministry as well as life, be used as well as quickened. And we get the pledge of this also now in due order.

In the opening of this chapter we see the apostles brought back to the condition in which the Lord at first met them. Peter and the sons of Zebedee are again at their fishing. Indeed, their former labor had come to nothing. Their nets had broken. The Lord had proposed to use them, but Israel in his hand had proved but a deceitful bow, a broken net. But now they are at their toil again, and the Lord appears again, and gives them a second draft. And on this, in company with the Lord himself, they feast; and their nets remain unbroken.

And thus, will it be with the Israel of God in the latter day. Like Thomas, as we have seen, they shall walk in the light of the Lord, and then, as here, the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto them. Waters shall issue from the house of the Lord at Jerusalem, and fishers shall there stand and spread their nets, and their fish shall be of "the great sea, exceeding many." (Ezekiel 47: 10.) "The great sea," the wide Mediterranean, as the prophet suggests, and not the narrow lake of Tiberias, shall then employ their nets, and the fish shall be "according to their kinds; "for Midian, and Ephah, and Kedar, and Nebaioth, and all lands shall yield their stores then. And the net shall still be ready for other drafts—the unbroken net. One generation shall tell his praise unto another, and shall declare his power.

Our evangelist notices that this was "the third time" that Jesus showed himself to his disciples after he was risen from the dead. At the first, as we saw, he met the brethren to give them, as the heavenly family, their fellowship and ministry. At the second, he restored Thomas, the representative of Israel's final conversion and life. And now, at the third, he gives the pledge of Israel's ministry and fruitfulness unto God.

These three distinct visits give us, after this manner, the full view of the Church and of Israel. But I must particularly notice another acting of the consciousness of love, which is very sweet. Peter knew, in spite of all that had happened, that there was a link between him and the Lord; and Peter therefore is not afraid to be alone with him. The last time they had been together, it is true, Peter had denied him; and the Lord had turned and looked upon him. But Peter knew that he loved his Lord notwithstanding; and now he is not afraid to cast himself into the sea, and reach Jesus alone before the rest of them. And there is something truly blessed in this. Law could never have brought this about, nor indeed have warranted it. The rod of the law would have beaten him off, and made him keep his distance. Nothing but grace could allow this: nothing but the cords of love could have drawn denying Peter the nearest to his slighted Lord after this manner. But there is more still.

(Continued from p. 236.) (To be continued.)

Operations of the Spirit of God

(Thus the evangelist becomes, in a certain sense, independent of the Church, though the man be always subject to it; and though the ministry of evangelization be in the Church, yet the Church is not properly missionary, nor the manager of missions. It is “a city set on a hill,” formed by missions from God.

The sense of this position of the Evangelist I believe to be most healthful to the Church, keeping it in its place, and from assuming the place of God, as if it were the sender. It is gathered, and does not send; God sends; though, in love, those whom He sends may go forth from its bosom. This was clear in the first apostles. “As my Father hath sent me, so send I you,” was the Lord’s word to them.

But this was true of ministers of this character, inferior in rank to the apostles, and of the whole body when under this character—a character assumedly this, as “scattered,” not “gathered;” as “going,” not “sending.” They that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the Word, and the hand of the Lord was with them, and many believed. Nay, before this, Stephen (of whom we may perhaps say, he had gotten to himself a good degree and great boldness in Christ Jesus), full of the Holy Ghost, was mighty in the Word. Philip in like manner was blessed in Samaria, which when the apostles heard they sent Peter and John to confirm the work; but the work was done before even they heard of it.

This is the character then attached to evangelizing in the Word. The weakening of it in individual energy will always weaken that, and the Church too; for God will be independent of man, though he cannot be of Him, nor of his neighbor, in love.

I said this was a little modified in Paul, yet withal clearly sustained in principle. But he went out as one born out of due time—after the body was formed, in a certain sense. This, therefore, was recognized; not in sending him, but in his going forth from it and returning to it, whence he had been commended to the grace of God.

The positive independence of his mission he is most careful to assert. “It was not of man, nor by man.” Immediately Christ was revealed in him that he might preach Him among the Gentiles, he conferred not with flesh and blood, but straightway preached Him in the synagogues. Thus, the character of this ministry was fully maintained.

But after a lapse of time Paul comes from Tarsus, brought to Antioch, and there for a year assembles himself with the Christian congregation, and teaches much people; and then “the Holy Ghost,” certain prophets being there, while they fasted and prayed, said, “Separate me Barnabas and Paul for the work whereunto I have called them.” Thus, while directly sent of the Holy Ghost, they went in obedience to Him, not to the Church; they went from the bosom of the Church, commended of them to the grace of God for the work whereunto He had called them, and returned to the bosom of the Church. Not returning any intermediate reports indeed as responsible to them, for the true apostolic office would thereby have been detracted from; but communicating, for the joy all, what God had done through them. Thus, though it was not a gift exercised in ministry in the Church, its union with the Church was maintained, and the comfort of all sustained therein. The apostle became—authoritatively sent amongst those whom he had himself thus gathered—the apostle of the Gentiles.

I have said thus much of evangelization because, though not a sign to the world, but a ministry flowing in the Church, it was still towards the world, and came in a special place in the distinction of gifts as for the world or the Church. It was, if I may so call it, a moral gift, i.e., a gift acting on conscience, but not as within, but as that of the natural man. It is not actually mentioned in the gifts God has set in the Church. It is amongst the gifts which Christ conferred, on ascending up on high, for profit and the work of the ministry, and the edifying of the body of Christ; as are pastors also; for the special subject of that epistle (Ephesians) is the love towards and blessedness of the body in its union with Christ, and consequent unity. Having completely redeemed it, and filled all things, it being His fullness, He ministers from on high the gifts necessary for its advancement in grace, security from being deceived and led astray, and its self-edifying till it grow up into Him. This was not what the Church was to the world in display of Him, but what it was to and for Himself; though in that, in the number who had that gift, the evangelizing minister of His love, as a helpmeet for Him in grace.

This is the real difference of this epistle to the Ephesians and the Corinthians. There the Spirit is looked at as present, and operating in the body generally, in the power of God— “as God hath set in the Church”—witness of, and subservient to, the Lordship of Christ, and therefore including that in which it was the witness of this to the world; and therefore the gift, in its exercise is dependent in many respects on the competency of the Church by its state to stand as a witness, or the wisdom of God in so using it. Here (in the Ephesians) the state of the Church is not adverted to. It is not its internal administration that is the subject, but Christ’s own love to His own body, His spouse; one He cherished and nourished as His own flesh, and thus cherished and nourished for Himself. Hence, we have Christ, who loved the Church, viewed as ascending up on high and filling all things, giving the gifts; and it is said—not the Spirit works as He will in power, but (while the same unity is spoken of, though more of blessing than of membership) “to everyone is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.”

This, then, is not the witness of the power of God above the flesh and its ruin, and the Lordship of Christ, but of the love of Christ and the ministration of that, and of the counsels of God, as to the place He has given the Church with Christ; it had, therefore, a more permanent character; for Christ’s love to the Church is permanent, not resting on the suitability of the medium to display power, but on the Church’s own need of that gracious and tender love. This love, therefore, we may reckon upon. I do not say that our faults may not hinder the manifestation of the love in plain

and happy favor. Surely, they may; still it is always exercise.

Perhaps it may be said that the evil state of the Corinthian Church shows it was not a ministration of gift dependent in any way on that state; for these, so evil, came “behind in no gift.”

It shows, indeed, that our patient God does not withdraw the honor conferred by His goodness at once on shortcoming but the principle is exactly shown by it. The church, still in unity, though having failed in practiced is corrected by the apostle in all points, sheaving the importance of the apostolic energy which still sustained it, that its safeguard was not mere primary position; but while it held its place, though falling into evil, it could be restored by that and all go right, —Satan not be allowed to get advantage after all. But still this was just the evidence, that the state and administration of the Church was in question, not the self-moved tender love of Christ to it, caring for it as His spouse; it stands in Corinth as the responsible witness of His glory, not the fullness of Him that filleth all in all. In Ephesians it is the blessed and holy privilege of grace, not the condition of the Church itself, which is in question as the ground and theater of the display of Christ towards the world. It is what Christ is towards the Church, not what the Church is for Him, or what God has set it, in its Head and body, towards the world around it is “till we all come.” Hence, as the special personal care and love of Christ for the Church, it is not “the Comforter whom the Father will send in my name”—nor, “whom I will send unto you from the Father”—nor even members which God has set in the body subservient to the Lordship of Christ—but gifts which He, ascending up on high, has given, on leading the adverse powers captive. He who fills all things has given these the tokens of the nearness of His love. “That he might fill all things,” and “He gave.”

This, then, is the portion of the Church in Christ’s love as caring for it, in the midst of His filling all things—as His body, the place of the manifestation of supreme grace. That which is given to the Church, not for His display of Lordship to the world, but the link of the Church as associated with Him, and to lift it up into heavenly places, and to form it in spirit into all His fullness; preserving it from being frittered away in mind into various and strange doctrines, and ministering to its direct growth into the heavenly character and fullness of Christ. This is the character of these gifts here—the link and association with the heavenly fullness of Christ.

The Church is “the fullness of him that filleth all in all.” But He is the head of the body also as exalted over all things to it. The anointed One is set in this place that He may, by immediate communion and gift to it, according to this anointing, associate it through the ministration of these gifts as His body into all this fullness. It is here, not merely the headship over all things to it, but the entrance into the understanding of His fullness as filling all things, as descended into death and ascended on high above all: and by the communication of the gifts as the anointed—the “Christ”—then entering into intelligently and spiritually as—though subordinately, yet really—associated and brought up into this fullness.

This is the portion of the Church. It is a step above and more intimate than the witness, or even partaking of Lordship; though the sphere in which that is held. For indeed this fullness in Christ involves divinity, though fellowship with it be communicated by the anointed man, or, at least, the ministration of that fullness in gift. He “filleth all in all,” and the Church is “His fullness;” but then this is spoken of one whom God— “the God of our Lord Jesus Christ”—has raised from the dead; and this is just the connection of the Church with it. He is in the Father, necessarily, therefore intrinsically, Divine. We are in Him, and He is in us. All the fullness was pleased to dwell in

Him—as afterward stated as to the fact, “In Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily;” and we are *πεπληρωμένοι* in Him.

But in the passage immediately preceding the one we are upon in Ephesians (that in the end of chap. 3.), this is pursued more directly as to power in us; because the Colossians treats more of the fullness of the Head for the Church; this of the Church as the fullness of Him that filleth all in all—the corporate fullness, as His body, of Him that is head over and fills all things. We read of “strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man—able to comprehend the length and breadth, and height, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge; that we may be filled with (ear) all the fullness of God.” Thus, the Holy Ghost becomes in us now the power and strength of this fullness. The second chapter had introduced—after stating access to the Father by the Spirit through Jesus for both Jew and Gentile—the additional truth that they were “builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.” This ground having been parenthetically unfolded in its fullness, in the third chapter, the fourth resumes the thread of the second, while taking up the unity mentioned in the first.

We, “strengthened with might by His Spirit,...that Christ may dwell in our hearts,” —thus “rooted and grounded in love,” “able to comprehend with all saints” the plenitude of blessedness and glory in divine counsel and fullness, and to know the love of Christ that we might be filled with the fullness. Thus, we find it in Christ; known by the Holy Ghost dwelling in us. Thus, this fullness of God is known, even in Christ, for so are we brought into it. And this is by power working in us, that we may enter into that into which we are brought. “Now unto Him... that worketh in us”—concludes the apostle—“be glory in the Church!” Now all this blessed fullness (of which the unity of the Church united to Christ is the center and scene of development, while it extends to the whole sphere of the display of God’s universal glory), in the love of Christ her head, is ministered to the growing up of the body by these gifts of Christ. They are the ministrations of Christ the head in the body. It is His gift—the edifying of His body—that they might grow up into Christ’s fullness, of which we have seen the character just now. This gives us the character of the gifts. Here there is actually no mention of the Spirit, though doubtless the Spirit was the medium of power, but they are given by Christ, who fills all things, that He may introduce the Church into His fullness; the Church in which the Spirit dwells. His fullness being the fullness of God—in Him all the fullness dwelling—and He filling all in all, and the Church His fullness.

It is then here, Christ according to this blessed fullness giving in love to His members, for the growing up into Him in all things who is the Head, till we all come to the measure of the fullness of Christ: not the display of His Lordship to the world (the Spirit acting as subservient to that display, divinely distributing, “God working all in all;”) it is Christ giving to the Church to minister on the ground of union—entrance into communion with His fullness!

I would now turn a little to the character of the gifts here spoken of; we shall see they are associated with this special character of giving to the Church, not witnessing by the Church. Having urged upon them, in individual lowliness, which the sense of the excellency of the calling would induce (a calling which had its existence in the unity of the Spirit, and therefore in the suppression of the flesh), to endeavor to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, the apostle proceeds to declare what gifts Christ gave (as gifts, nothing righteously to exalt) to man on His exaltation (that exaltation being of Him that first descended, and that into the lower parts of the

earth); as now far above all heavens, so that He filled all things, captivity being led captive;—that is, the powers of darkness having the Church captive were now led captive themselves, so that Christ could freely communicate to the Church, so delivered, communion with His fullness, who in this act displayed how He filled all things, and accordingly gave these gifts for this purpose—apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. These I would now notice. It is to be remarked that all gifts of sign to men as such are entirely omitted, all that dealt with nature, and all even that merely dealt with the flesh in the Church; those only are mentioned that are initiative, and that edify in the Church. Thus miracles, tongues, healings, helps, and governments are omitted: apostles and evangelists, prophets, pastors, and teachers are introduced.

As to apostles, what has been observed will partly lead us to some distinction in this office. Primarily they are no part of the body properly speaking—they gather it. The house is built on them. Thus, the twelve were sent as Jesus was sent of the Father. Paul was sent of the Lord directly. But in another character they had a place in it, in the continual exercise of their functions. In the former character they stood alone, save in one particular, which they possessed in common with prophets. But as authoritative regulators of the Church by revelation, they had a peculiar and definite place. In the one particular of revelation of the mind and will of Christ and of God, the prophets might be associated with them; but these had no authority delegated of the Lord in their office as sent forth. The holy beneficence of this arrangement, I think, is evident. Thus while the Church was regulated and ordered responsibly and authoritatively by an apostle, yet they had to say, “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets.” In this sense of revelation, as laying down the foundation, their work is complete and fulfilled. The word of God is written for us. The fruits of their authoritative regulation was left (as every dispensation had been), in the responsibility of man, and men have entirely failed. But the revelation of the will of God is complete, and is there for us to refer to by the Spirit, according to the light of the word in our present condition, not by imitation but by obedience: hence tradition disappears; for at best that is imitation not obedience; a very important distinction, as will soon be found in its application.

But, moreover, it is clear to me that, in a subordinate sense, apostles and prophets had a place beside this. That the apostles expected no continuance of their functions is clear, for the apostle Paul declares the evil that would come in after his decease, and commends them to God and the word of His grace, and Peter says he will take care that they have the things in remembrance; and, indeed, one familiar with the New Testament will see that the character of the Church’s responsibility is founded on the departure of direct apostolic authoritative care. The Church could not leave it to them as the complete competent authority, who had communicated the Lord’s will, and before whose departure the Lord began to act in judgment, if equally authorized communicators were constantly with the same authority present in the Church; the casting a dispensation on responsibility of a given deposit would have been entirely set aside, that is, the whole principle of God’s dealing to the end, and the assumptions clearly taken up by the apostles falsified, and the Bible set aside by a constant succession of equally authoritative communications: for the principle of the office of which we now speak is the authoritative revelation of the will of Christ.

We find then that, in one sense, apostolic ministry precedes the Church, the Church being gathered by it. Its character being, then, gathering by the authoritative revelation of the will of Christ, as the testimony to Christ in the power of the Spirit, whether by themselves or others draws

and quickens souls. Under this evangelists came, another testimony of their gift being of God, and that He could in His sovereignty communicate important parts of it to others; but apostolic service found its place also in the Church, where the participated evangelist's gift did not, i.e., the regulating authoritatively the gathered according to that revealed will.

But, as has been elsewhere stated, a new principle was introduced in and even before the apostolate of Paul, on the dispersion of the order of the Church at Jerusalem, individual agency according to the energy of the Spirit, according to its measure, the operation proving itself and its own efficacy. So even the apostle of this owns: "The signs of an apostle were wrought in me:" "Make full proof of thy ministry:" "Let no man despise thee." Hence, though subsisting not in authoritative revelation of the will of God, nor power in the Church, yet in a subordinate sense, it seems to me that the gift of apostle and prophet is not passed away. Barnabas was an apostle. Junius and Andronicus were of note among the apostles: and it was praise to a Church that they had tried certain whether they were apostles, and they were not, but liars. Doubtless, these pretenders set up for the highest form of apostolate. But the Church could not have been commended for trying them, if there had been question only of the twelve and Paul. In truth, the word apostle, though now of definite force, has it not properly; it just amounts to one sent, a missionary. The messenger of the Church is called "your apostle" in the original. That which seems to designate the character of apostle, is the being directly sent of Christ, raised up to act on his own personal responsibility to Christ: not merely a gift exercised on such or such occasion subject to Church rules, nor the going forth with good tidings to sinners: but one as sent by Christ, acting from Him on his own responsibility to Christ, having a given errand and sphere in which to exercise his commission. In this sense, while the authoritative primary revelation of God's will, gathering and regulating the Church, has clearly closed in the scriptural record to apostolic ministry, I do not see but that apostolic service may still subsist, and probably has been exercised, though the name may not have been attached; men raised up and sent by God for a certain mission, to effect a certain result in the Church or on sinners, though with no fresh revelation, but with a special energy in which to fulfill it, beyond the bounds of mere circumscribed gift as members within, but special in its relation to Christ. The faithfulness of its accomplishment, the mixing of other things with it, or the failure in clearly following in particular instances, does not, it seems to me, touch this question. In the same way, prophets, who were associated with apostles as the foundation, because they revealed the mind of God, may, it appears to me, in a subordinate sense, be believed to exist. It is not that they now reveal fresh truths not contained in the Word (or the foundation would not be completely laid—this, I hold, never can be touched), but that there may be those who not merely teach and explain ordinary and profitable doctrine—truths, and guide by the Spirit into present truth, but who by a special energy of the Spirit can unfold and communicate the mind of Christ to the Church, where it is ignorant of it—though that mind be treasured up in the Scripture—can bring truths hidden previously from the knowledge of the Church, in the power of the testimony of the Spirit of God, to bear on the present circumstances of the Church and future prospects of the world, showing the things to come, only that these things are all actually treasured up in Scripture, but they can give them present application and force according to the mind, intention, and power of God, and thus be practically prophets, though there be no new facts revealed, but all are really in the Word already: and thus be a direct blessing and gift of Christ to the Church for its emergency and need, though the Word be strictly adhered to, but without which the Church would not have had the power of that Word. This reference to that Word

I hold to be the essence of the Church's safety, accompanied by acknowledgment of, and dependence on, the Spirit of God, the Comforter. The plain written Word, that of which it could be said, including now, of course, the New Testament, that from a child—scorned by some as knowing it in the flesh—thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus. No tradition can in the smallest degree take the place of this: it is at best the certifying of men's minds as to the certainty of certain points. But see what the Apostle refers to in assuring them that they should see his face no more; clear evidence, as we have seen, he thought of no apostle or successor to supply his place. "I commend you to God," says the blessed witness of Christ—that is the first great point: it must always and in a special manner, now he was gone, be found in Him directly—"and the word of His grace, which is able to build 'you up.'" This was exactly what was needed. Let a teacher unfold, a pastor graciously guide by, or a prophet apply in power, this word. This was what was able to build up and give an inheritance. Now, no tradition, however guiding, is a word of God's grace. It may direct the forms of man, —it may order the rules of the Church, —it might even record a form of correct doctrine: it is not the word of His grace "able to build up." This makes, I trust, this point and the sense in which there may be, in a subordinate and inferior sense, apostles and (in a nearer sense to their original character) prophets, now clear. Revelation of new, unknown, and unrevealed truths being quite excluded, prophets, as expressing the mind of God, could speak, and did, to exhortation, and edification, and comfort, in thus applying the mind of God to the saints. So did the prophets of highest character of old.

These subordinate parts of the gift we see again participated by others, and diffused in the Church, that unity and deference for all might be maintained. He that exhorted was to wait on exhortation; and so one that taught—not necessarily a pastor—was to wait on his teaching, using his talent.

These might, in a certain sense (that is, apostolic and prophetic ministry), be called extraordinary, coming on special occasions and with special objects into the Church, though always witness of the goodness of God and for the glory of Christ. Evangelists were of another character, the natural and constant testimony to sinners of the grace that was revealed in their good news of God in what we call the Gospel. Any saint had to tell it, but there were those specially gifted to proclaim the glad tidings. Timothy is exhorted to do this, in the midst of his care of the Church, for the Apostle. It is always in such case healthful, and a good sign, that we labor in the sense of the grace of Christ, and generally an evil sign when we do not. None can so deeply understand the basis of love without it. An apostle wrought in this work. The bearing on souls is understood by it: specifically, grace is felt and understood in the heart; we are on the ground our own souls have felt the need of the medium of this. As to this, in its two-fold character, the preposition is changed, and the article omitted: —at with the word, are most closely united and identified; only pastorship includes guidance in holy wisdom and grace, and applying teaching to the state of the saints. We have seen the subordinate part of this distributed by itself—"he that teacheth on teaching"—but the gifts here is guiding as pastor; shepherding and feeding the flock, applying the word in wisdom, watching against intruding heresies, building up by the word, guarding and securing from evil, guiding the feet of the saints into straight paths; in a word, the care of the saints. It is not here, as was remarked, government controlling the flesh, but the ministration of grace nourishing and cherishing, guiding and feeding —some were pastors and teachers medium of this. As to this, in

its two-fold character, the preposition is changed, and the article omitted: —extraordinary; the last three (evangelists, pastors, and teachers), the ordinary abiding ministrations of the Church, to build them up in Christ's known, and thus ministered, fullness; that the body of Christ might be edified, "grow up into Him medium of this. As to this, in its two-fold character, the preposition is changed, and the article omitted: —he pattern of this fullness and into it; but there was a formal and instrumental object as the

medium of this. As to this, in its two-fold character, the preposition is changed, and the article omitted: —

“ πρὸς τὴν καταρτισμὸν τὴν ἑγῶν, εἰς ἔργον διακονίας, εἰς οἰκοδομὴν τοῦ σώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ,” for ministerial work, for edifying the body of Christ. This ministerial work was clearly merely ancillary, and the edifying the body of Christ, for the perfect enjoyment of the fullness by the saints, πρὸς τὴν καταρτισμὸν, is the direct and positive object; the other two were the service and form of blessing in which this object was carried on, and to which, therefore, these gifts were directed for the other, till we all come in the unity of the faith, and in the knowledge of the Son of God to full-grown men—to a perfect man—to the measure of the stature, in mind and in blessing, of the fullness of Christ, of which we have before spoken. That we be no more children, nor blown about by every wind of doctrine by the sleight of men, being preserved through these gifts of God.

This leads us to see the blessing and importance of these gifts, definitely committed by Christ, as He sees good in grace, for the good and communication of His blessed fullness to the Church; whereby, fed with what is good, it should be preserved and guarded against hankering after the false trash of deceivers. They are gifts to the Church, not to all, but for all. The development of these in full liberty and openness of ministry is most important. Nor can they be really or rightly developed otherwise. Hence God has commanded—made it a matter of command, and thus guarded the closing of the door by making it a matter of personal responsibility—that he that exhorteth should wait on exhortation, and he that teacheth on teaching; and, “as every man has received the gift, so minister the same as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.” So “Judas and Silas, being prophets also themselves, exhorted the people much at Antioch.” By this use of every gift in its place, as the apostle speaks, “the whole body is fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth,” and, “according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body to the edifying of itself in love.” Still observe, these ministrations are all to the edifying and increase of the body, not to the external testimony of Christ's lordship to the world. They are the fulfilling of His love to the Church in ministering to it of, and so building it up into, His fullness—not the verification of the assertion of His Lordship to the world.

The only other reference of importance, that I am aware of as to distinctness of subject, is in the book of Revelation, which I shall only briefly notice, because its character is quite different. In the first three chapters, the unity of the body ceases to be recognized, and the Spirit is not seen acting in the Church in the power of this unity, of which Christ is the corporate Head; but Christ is seen in a judicial though priestly character in the midst of the Churches, and the Spirit is a Spirit of address and prophetic warning to them, not of gift in them. “He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith to the Churches.” This might be gift in the apostle, but this is the character of the address; and hence every individual with an ear is called upon to hear for himself and judicial witness to the

Churches themselves, thenceforward only in heaven as regards the Church in acting on the earth, the Lamb's power, as the seven Spirits of God sent into all the earth, not as the power of communion and gift in the Church at all. Thence it is seen as in the Church, as the bride directing her aspirations and desires after one object, the coming of the bridegroom: "The Spirit and the bride say, Come:" and this closes the whole scene and judicial witness to the Churches themselves, thenceforward only in heaven as regards the Church in acting on the earth. us. Then as coming paramountly to convict and guide, as shown in John, as the comforter sent and judicial witness to the Churches themselves, thenceforward only in heaven as regards the Church in acting on the earth witness of Lordship in Christ, acting in the members of His body in witness; then as the ministration of his love to His body for its growth up into His fullness lastly, as a prophetic and judicial witness to the Churches themselves, thenceforward only in heaven as regards the Church in acting on the earth.

Such are the operations, as fully developed, of this blessed agent of divine power in us and towards the world. The chief topics, I believe, are noticed: I pretend to nothing more. Those who seek to search Him out, must do so by His own aid in the word itself; and may they, while dwelling on it here as a subject of thought, be led to refer to that Holy One Himself in His presence and personal power, as one who is with the Church—the Comforter sent—not merely resting in thoughts about Him, but led, actuated, directed by Him, and honoring Him as energized by Him in all things.

This is specially the Church's need.

Concluded from p. 2130.)

On the Gospel by John

(* Jesus knew all things, and that was Peter's comfort. Peter was sure that his Lord knew the depths as well as the surfaces of things, and thus that he knew what was in his poor servant's heart, though his lips had so transgressed.)

This was a moment of sweetest interest. We know that if we suffer with him, we shall reign with him; and if we follow him, where the Lord himself is, there his servant shall be. Now this call on Peter was a call to follow his Lord along the path of testimony and suffering, in the power of resurrection, to the rest in which that path ends, and to which that resurrection leads. Jesus had said to Peter before he left him, "Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now, but thou shalt follow me afterward." (chap. 13.) And the Lord, as we know, was then going to heaven and the Father through the cross. This present call was, in spirit, making good that promise to Peter. It was a call on him to follow his Lord through death up to the Father's house. And upon saying these words to him, the Lord rises from the place where they had been eating, and Peter, thus bidden, rises to follow him.

John listens to this call, as though it had been addressed to him also, and on seeing the Lord rise and Peter rise, he at once rises also; for he ever lay nearest the Lord. He leaned on his breast at supper, and was the disciple whom Jesus loved. He ever stood in the place of closest sympathy with him. His eye touched his Lord's eye, his mouth his mouth, his hand his hand. And thus, by a kind of necessity (blessed necessity!) on the Lord's rising, he rises, though unbidden.

In such an attitude we now see them. The Son of God has risen and is walking out of our sight, and Peter and John are following him. All this is lovely, and significant beyond expression. We do not see the end of their path, for while thus walking the Gospel closes. The cloud, as it were, receives them out of our sight. We gaze in vain after them, and the path of the disciples is just as far removed from us as that of their Lord. It was, in principle, the path that leads to the Father's house, which we know is prepared for the Lord and his brethren, the presence of God in heaven.

Surely, we may say, the bridegroom at our feast has kept the best wine until now. If our souls could enter into this, there is nothing like it. Mark, in his Gospel, tells us of the fact of the Lord being received up into heaven (16: 19), and Luke shews us the ascension itself, while the Lord was lifting up his hand and blessing his disciples (24: 51). But all that, sweet as it was, is not equal to what we get here. For all that left the disciples apart from their Lord. He was then going to heaven, but they were to return to Jerusalem; but here they are following him up to heaven. Their path does not stop short of the full end of his.

This is none other than "the gate of heaven" to which our Gospel conducts us, and whereat it leaves us. The Lord is in this place, in fullest grace to his chosen. The receiving of the brethren into the Father's house is here pledged to us. In this, Peter and John are the representatives of us all, beloved. Some, like Peter, may glorify God by death, and others, as is intimated here to John, will be alive and remain till Jesus comes; but all are to follow, whether Peter or John, Moses or Elias, whether asleep in Jesus or quick at his coming, all shall be caught up together to meet the Lord in the air, and be forever with him. It will be to them like the ascension of Enoch before the flood. And being received unto himself, they will go with him into the prepared mansions of the Father's house, as he has said unto us.

And I may observe, this is the only view of our Lord's ascension which our Gospel gives us. But it is that view of it which is strictly in character with the whole Gospel, which gives us, as has been observed, our Lord Jesus in connection with the church as the family of the Father, the heavenly household.

For this ascension is not so properly to the right hand of God, or place of power, where he abides alone, but to the Father's house, where the children are to dwell also. Their path in that direction reaches as far as his through his boundless grace; as here, as I have already noticed, wherever it was that Jesus went (some spot unknown and untold as to this earth), there did Peter and John follow him. He is here acting as though he had gone and prepared the promised mansions in the Father's house, and had come again, and was now receiving them unto himself, that where he is, there they might be also. And this will be really so at the resurrection of those who are Christ's at his coming, when the brethren meet their Lord in the air. The Son of God was now, at the end, as he had done in the beginning, showing his own where he dwelt (see chap. 1:33); only, at the beginning he was a stranger on earth, and they abode with him but one day; now he is returning to his proper heaven, and there they are to abide with him forever.

Our Evangelist, then, just lets us hear the full response of the believing hearts of all God's elect to those truths and wonders of grace which had now been told out. "We know that his testimony is true." They set to their seal that God is true. And all this is then closed with a simple note of admiration—for such, in principle, I judge the last verse to be. And, indeed, this is all he could do. Was it not beyond his praise? What heart could conceive the full excellence of his ways whose

name he had now been publishing?

Here the fourth section of our Gospel ends; and here the whole ends. And what a journey through it has that of the Son of God been? Made flesh at the beginning, he walked on earth as the Stranger from heaven, save as he was occupied in ministering grace and healing to sinners. The prince of this world at length came to him; but, finding nothing in him, he cast him out of the world. But this he could not do, until, as the Savior, the Son of God had accomplished the peace of all that trust in him. Then he triumphantly broke the power of death, and, as the risen Lord, imparted the life which he had won for his people: and, finally, by a significant action, pledged to them that where he was going, there they should follow him, that they might be with him where he was.

Our Gospel began with the descent of the Son, and closes with the ascent of the saints. And the time of this ascent, or being taken into the air, I judge is altogether uncertain. It may be tomorrow; and will be, when the fullness of the Gentiles shall have come in, when all the saints have been brought, in the unity of the faith, to a perfect man. It does not depend on a certain lapse of time. No prophecy which involves computation of time, I believe, belongs to it. Such belongs to the Lord's return to the earth, and not to the taking of the saints into the air to meet him. At that return of the Lord to the earth, the saints will be with him; and this earth will then be prepared to be their common kingdom and inheritance. And that return, I grant, must await its prescribed time, and the full spending out of the days and years announced by the prophets. But no days or years measure out the interval from the ascension of the Lord to that of his saints. The Holy Ghost, it is most true, has given us moral characters of certain times, thus defining "the latter times," and "the last days" (1 Timothy 4; 2 Timothy 3 &c.); but he tells us also, that even then "the last time" had already come. (1 John 2:18.) So that faith is entitled to look for her joy in meeting the Lord in the air every hour; with patience the while, to do the will of God. And the prophecies that compute time (as far as they are still future), will not (I merely give my own judgment) begin to be applied, or the times they notice begin to run, till this rapture into the air take place. Then indeed the suffering remnant in Israel may begin to number out the days for their comfort, and for food of hope; and in their deepest sorrow lift up their heads, as knowing that their salvation draweth nigh.

After all this, beloved, our God well may claim our confidence, and be our title to full holy liberty, and our sure and constant source of gladness. This is to honor him as the Father. And if we have a thought of him that leaves a sting behind it, it is the thought of foolishness and of unbelief. All is brightness to faith. Such is God our Father. And in the Son, of his love we are accepted. "He'll not live in glory, and leave us behind"—and the language of our hearts towards him abidingly should be, "Come, Lord Jesus." And this confidence of present adoption, and this joy of hope, we have through the Holy Ghost who dwelleth in us, our companion by the way, our "other Comforter," till the Bridegroom meets us.

To our gracious God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be glory forever and ever Amen.

(Concluded from p. 260.)

Modern Doctrine Opposed to Both the Law and the Gospel

As all men before conversion, in every age and country, are imagined to be equally under the law, the Gentile no less than the Jew, so the Christian is put under the same law, not (they say) for justification, but for a rule of life. Every whit of the system is false; the whole is a denial in principle both of Judaism and Christianity, of law and gospel, and even of sin and holiness, as taught in God's word. It is certain from Romans 2, 3 that the Jew is under law in contrast with the Gentile. It is certain from Romans 4, 5, that between the fall and Moses not one could be said to be under law. It is certain from Romans 6,7, that the Christian is not under law but under grace, and this not only for justification but for his walk; so that, even if he had been a Jew, he is become dead to the law and belongs to another, Christ risen: to be connected now with both is spiritual adultery, and leads to bad fruit. Romans 8 is distinct that God has wrought in Christ the mighty work of condemning sin and delivering ourselves who believe, in order that the δικαιοσύμη, or righteous sum, of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. And, in truth, (as we are shown in Galatians 5), walking in the Spirit is the true guard against the lusts of the flesh; and if we are led by the Spirit, we are not under law, and yet we love, in which one word the whole law is fulfilled. For the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, &c., against which there is assuredly no law. He that is under law does not love but breaks the law; while he that loves fulfills the law (Romans 13) without being under it (indeed, by being under grace and not law). For the law is the strength of sin, never of holiness (1 Corinthians 15), and applies not to a righteous man, but to the lawless and disobedient. (1 Timothy 1) Those who desire to be law-teachers in our day are evidently, therefore, equally unsound as to justification and the walk of the Christian, and, what is more serious still, virtually frustrate God's grace, and annul for righteousness the death of the Savior. "For" (says the Apostle) "I through law am dead to the law that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live, yet not I but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God (not who kept the law for me, but) who loved me and gave Himself for me. I do not frustrate the grace of God; for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain." Do you say Christ was only keeping the law in dying on the cross? Then you ignorantly blot out grace and debase the Savior's infinitely precious death to the mere doing of a man's duty; for the law is just the expression of man's duty to God, not of God's grace to the sinner, nor of the saint's devotedness to God, still less of all Christ did to glorify God in either life or death. But the notion is utterly false. "By the grace of God" (in contrast with His law) Christ tasted death for every man.

No More Conscience of Sins

The grace in which we stand, is, that we are sons of God, and priests to God. The true worshippers, as we are taught by our Lord in the fourth chapter of John, are those who in the spirit of sonship worship the Father. But there is another relation, besides that of sons, in which we stand to God—an official relation as being his constituted worshippers; taking up the place which Israel once occupied as the only worshipping people in the whole earth, but after an entirely different order. We could not indeed be priests unto God unless we were sons. To be sons of God is our real proper dignity, because we have thereby relationship with God in the highest sense; but this does not hinder our having an official standing before him; and it is this which we would now consider. The common standing of all saints is to be once purged worshippers before God.

The peculiar privilege of Israel was nearness unto God: “Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles’ wings, and brought you unto myself” (Exodus 19:4.) This placed Israel, comparatively with all the nations around them, in a priestly standing before God. Hence it is said, “And came and preached peace to you which were afar off (the Gentiles), and to them that were nigh.” (Ephesians 2: 17.) In the time of Israel’s declension, when they had become as the nations around them, both in their government and their worship, instead of standing in their original separateness,—the Lord says to them, “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge, because thou hast rejected knowledge: I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.” (Hosea 4:6.)

The grace of God had brought Israel unto himself, having led them all the way from Egypt to Sinai. But there they undertook to stand on their own obedience; and, on condition of doing so, were to be unto God “a kingdom of priests and an holy nation.”

(Exodus 19: 5,6.) They, however, failed immediately in obedience; and although relatively as a nation, they still had nearness to God: yet immediately on their failure under the law, a certain number are taken from among the nation to stand in peculiar nearness to God, and the people themselves were consequently thrown at a distance. Thus, it was ordered of the Lord unto Moses— “And take thou unto thee Aaron thy brother, and his sons with him, from among the children of Israel, that he may minister unto me in the priest’s office, even Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazer and Ithamar, Aaron’s sons.” (Exodus 28:1.) They were to “come near unto the altar to minister in the holy place.” (v. 43.) It was the privilege of one only to come nearer still, and that was the high priest, to go within the veil. But after the sin of Nadab and Abihu, this privilege was curtailed so far as the frequency of entering it was concerned. “And the Lord spake unto Moses, after the death of the two sons of Aaron, when they offered before the Lord and died; and the Lord said unto Moses, speak unto Aaron thy brother, that he come not at all times into the holy place within the veil, before the mercy-seat, which is upon the ark.”

To Israel indeed pertained the service of God (worship), but it was a worship of relative nearness to God. The high priest the nearest, the priests next—these were inside worshippers; the Levites next to them—they were attendants on the priests, and employed about the tabernacle; and then

the people, who were outside worshippers, as it is said, “the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense.” (Luke 1) But even there, even in the outer court, no Gentile could approach. (Acts 21:29.)

Sacrifice and priesthood are essential pre-requisites to worship. How fully was this taught to Jews under the law. They were habitually reminded that there was no acceptable worship but on the ground of the accepted sacrifice; and that they needed the intervention of the priest authoritatively to pronounce them cleansed for worship. Hence a Jew under the law rightly connected justification with worship. He could not worship, because guilt attached to him which needed expiation, or uncleanness which needed the intervention of the priest. The great act, however, which put Israel in the place of a worshipping people, was the sacrifice of the great day of atonement. This was an annual solemnity. “On that day shall the priest make an atonement for you, to cleanse you, that ye may be clean from all your sins before the Lord. Tins shall be an everlasting statute unto you, to make an atonement for the children of Israel for all their sins once a year.” (Leviticus 16:30,34.) Israel then stood on that day as the worshipping people of the Lord. But they stood not with a purged conscience. That was what their sacrifices never could give; for it is impossible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sin. It required other blood to do that, the blood of him who is presented to us in the epistle to the Hebrews as the SON.

But here comes in the great contrast between worship then and now. We need sacrifice and priest' hood in order to worship as much as Israel of old; but though worshipping thus on the same ground as they, our worship is of entirely a different order. I say different in its order, as well as essentially different in the dignity both of the sacrifice and the priest.

On this most important contrast between the worship of Israel under the law, and that of the Church now, we are not left to conjecture or inference. Blessed for us, we have the comment of the Holy Ghost in the tenth chapter of Hebrews, on the remarkable solemnity of the great day of atonement, given for the express purpose of showing that the standing of the true worshipper now is the very REVERSE of that of Israel under the law. Let us meditate awhile on it.

First, the sacrifices offered under the law never could put those who came to them in the place of constant worshippers (for so “perfect” clearly means in this passage); and this not only because of their intrinsic inefficiency, but also because of their repetition; for had they effected this, they need not be yearly offered, “because the worshippers once purged should have no more conscience of sins.” Now mark, to be perfected as a worshipper is to have no more conscience of sin. This is according to the aspect in which we are now considering worship, to be a true worshipper. Surely this exalts worship very highly. Because thus it is not in any wise the means of our justification, but that for which we are already justified. And how blessedly does the apostle show here, by way of contrast, that the corners unto Christ are made perfect: “By one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified.” Israel were perfected for a moment on the day of atonement; but even then not “as pertaining to the conscience;” the blood of their sacrifice could not touch that. (Hebrews 9:9.) Their worship, therefore, must have been in “the spirit of bondage unto fear.” (Romans 8:15.) There could have been no boldness, (liberty,) as we have by the blood of Jesus. (Heb. 10:19.) The unceasing repetition of the sacrifice had only the effect of as unceasingly bringing sin to remembrance. But Christ, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God—not as one expecting to offer sacrifice again, but waiting for his

enemies to be made his footstool. And to this we have to add the blessed testimony of the Holy Ghost, in the special promise of the New Covenant— “their, sins and iniquities will I remember no more.” And, therefore, there needs no more sacrifice for sin.

The one finished and accepted sacrifice of Christ is therefore of permanent efficacy. There is in it remission of sins to everyone that believeth; and he that believeth has not to look for any further sacrifice for sin (v. 17); for if he had, it would bring sin to remembrance, and charge the conscience with guilt. And this is always the case where there is not simple repose of soul on the one finished sacrifice of Christ. Faith sees that the one thing has been done in the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, “to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness.” And hence, the moment a Jew believed in “the precious blood of Christ,” he was in a condition to assert that these were his privileges; as it is written, “Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.” (1 Peter 2) Thus praise, the highest part of worship, can now be entered on: “I will extol thee, my God, O king, and I will bless thy name forever and ever. Every day will I bless thee, and I will praise thy name forever and ever.” (Psalms 145) While praise is silent for God in Zion, the mouth of the sinner, redeemed to God through the precious blood of the Lamb, is opened to show forth his praises. God himself has created the fruit of the lips, speaking peace to him that is far off, and him that is nigh.

But to return to our chapter. Liberty of conscience is of the very essence of true worship. Not what men call liberty of conscience, but the ability to approach God without any sense of guilt upon the conscience. This, be it observed, is not presuming on innocence; neither is it the profession of unconsciousness of sin—for if “I know nothing by myself, yet am I not here by justified”—but it is the fullest consciousness of and acknowledgment of sin, with the profession (let us hold it fast) that it has been forever put away by the one sacrifice of Christ offered once for all.

All the gifts and sacrifices offered by a worshipper under the law “could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience.” (Hebrews 9) He might have approached God strictly according to the ritual prescribed, but it must have been with a burdened conscience. No conscience can be at ease before God where anything depends on what the person himself is doing or has to do. Yea, I would say, not if it had now to depend on what Christ has to do, instead of resting on that which he has already done. The worshipper must be once and forever purged, or he must have conscience of sin. But only let him by faith follow Christ through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building, by which he hath entered into the holy place: only let him see that it is “not by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, that he hath entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption;” and where can be the conscience of sin? Christ has not to enter in again, he has no more sacrifice for sin to offer—no other blood to carry in; for where could any be found of like preciousness? All is done once, and once for all; hence the worshipper once purged, and purged by such blood (Hebrews 9:14), has no more conscience of sin. He can serve the living God. Nothing now depends on what the worshipper has to do; all hangs on the accomplished sacrifice, the precious blood and permanent priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

But again when God had to do with Israel, even before he could speak to them to bring them under the covenant, the injunction to Moses was, “ Go unto the people, and sanctify them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their clothes:” and Moses went down from the mount unto the people and sanctified the people;” and Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet God. (Exodus 19) The people must be sanctified in order to meet God; and sanctified in his own way, as God said when those came near to offer strange fire before him, “ I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me.” (Leviticus 10) Who, after that dread example, would dare to approach God, if he was not sanctified in the way of God’s appointment, so that God might be sanctified in him?

Now what do we learn concerning the true worshipper’s sanctification now? What concerning God’s appointment now for the once purged worshipper’s approach to Him? “It is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. 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 offerings 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 for all.” Thus, it is by God’s own ordinance that we are sanctified. God’s own will in this matter has been done; and thereby therefore are we able to meet him as once purged and sanctified worshippers, put in the place of the holy nation. Those alone who by faith rest in the one accepted, and never to be repeated, offering of the body of Jesus Christ, are constituted God’s worshipping people. This unchangeable place of blessing is given them by the express will of God.

Once more to look at the priest. How busy was Aaron! He had not only the yearly sacrifices on the great day of atonement but he had likewise much to do even daily, that the constituted worshippers might engage in worship. He had the morning and evening sacrifices, besides those which were occasional. He might be called on at any time to offer a trespass-offering, so that he never could have sat down as one who had finished his work and could look on it with satisfaction.

But what a blessed contrast is here. “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.” This is the position of one who had finished his work, and could look on it with satisfaction, and could present it before God continually. Not like Aaron, expecting to be called on to offer another sacrifice; but that having been done once for all, “expecting till his enemies be made his footstool;” “for by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified.”

Lastly. The new covenant not only promises the same high privileges as the old, but it secures the attainment of them by the grace of God, when it had been proved they could not be attained by the obedience of the people. “If ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people; for all the earth is mine: and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests and an holy nation.” This was the tenor of the old covenant—its promises being conditional on their obedience. But “the better covenant,” based upon “better promises,” speaks thus: “This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them.” Here all is done by God himself—and therefore the promises necessarily follow—they become a kingdom of priests and an holy nation. And there is added to that above, “Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.” Thus,

therefore, we have the testimony of the Holy Ghost to the truth, that “by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified, because, where remission of sin is, there is no more offering for sin.”

What amazing knowledge immediately results from the recognition of the one completed sacrifice of Christ; the dignity of his person giving to it its amazing value. Our blessed standing is as a spiritual house, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people, privileged in this, to the exclusion of all others, to be the worshipping people of God on the earth. The place in which God by his own will, Christ by his own work, and the Holy Ghost by his distinct testimony, have set us, is that of worshippers once and forever purged. Without any conscience of sin; able to approach the very God who can read our hearts without any suspicious fear, lest anything of guilt should yet be found on us, —any charge of sin riot thoroughly—purged away. “Blessed indeed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.”

Could an Israelite, coming to God according to the law, be without guile before him? I judge not. Lurking suspicion that God saw in him deeper sin than his offering could atone for, or that he himself might have neglected some prescribed duty, would make him anything but guileless. One, indeed, who came to God by faith, not in the ordered place, but under a fig-tree, might be found in holy confidence with God—an Israelite indeed in whom was no guile. Such was Nathanael, under divine teaching, immediately recognizing Jesus as Son of God and King Kin of Israel. Surely, he is a sample of Israel by and by, under the covenant, taking the place of nearness to God, as a kingdom of priests and an holy nation, by their recognition of Jesus as the Son—the sacrifice and the priest.

The worshipper once purged is a guileless worshipper. Be it known as our portion now, as it will be in glory. Amen.

The New and Living Way

In the former paper we have found that all believers in Jesus are constituted perpetual worshippers, by the will of God, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. We have now to consider the sphere of their worship.

In Israel, under the law, the high priest being nearer 'to God than the priests, the priests nearer than the Levites, and the Levites nearer than the people, the sphere of worship was the tabernacle on the earth. But now, not only is all this relative nearness to God done away with, but the once purged worshippers are introduced into "the sanctuary and true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man," because it is there that Jesus now ministereth. (Hebrews 8:2.)

Consequently, the pattern of our worship, and of the sphere of it, is not found in the people's worship under the law, but in the priest's service. (Hebrews 8:4,5.) We have properly no people's worship—all is priestly now. Even in the holy city itself, we have prophetically presented to us the outer court, where the people worshipped as cast out—those alone being owned by God who worshipped as priests in the holy or heavenly places. (Hebrews 11:2.) We are, indeed, a peculiar people—God's own special treasure; and our privilege as such is, that we worship not in the distance of the people, but in the nearness of the priests; not in the outer court, but in the temple itself.

We know, indeed, that there are in the church those who teach, and those who are taught—those who minister, and those ministered unto—those who rule, and those who obey—those who feed, and those who are fed; all this is most true, but this does not in the least degree interfere with the blessing, common to one as well as the other, that they are priests unto God. "And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father." (Revelation 1:6.) "Ye are a royal priesthood." (1 Peter 2:9.) The apostle Paul was a priest unto God, but not more so than any of the individuals he salutes in his epistles, or than the most uninstructed believer in the whole church. The diversities among the members, formed by the diverse gifts of the Spirit, must be carefully distinguished from their priestly equality. Our worship, then, is priestly worship, and consequently the heavenly courts are its sphere.

The fearful warning given by the apostle, which at one time or another has made every awakened soul tremble, (Hebrews 10:28,29,) is a warning against the fatal consequences of turning back to the old order of worship, as if it were to be the pattern of our worship, instead of the contrast unto it. To return, therefore, to the order of worship under the law, is to reject the heavenly order for a copy of the earthly. It marks the apostasy of worship. And is not this the peculiar mark of the professing church? It has followed the old pattern of the law, instead of the heavenly pattern. It has made again the difference in its priests and people, —a distinction unknown to the New Testament. Thus, has the professing church put its priests in a place of comparative nearness to God, and the people at a distance.

And what is this but to trample underfoot the Son of God? As if, after all that he has suffered and done, we were at as great a distance as before; and as if with his priestly ministration, we still needed the intervention of others in our approaches to God? God has cast out the outer court, and will not regard worship offered therein; but men have profanely sought to sanctify it, and in so doing have trodden underfoot the Son of God. We have already noticed the command given to Moses, to sanctify the people to meet God, and also that we, by the will of God, are sanctified by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all; but this return to the old form is characterized by the Apostle as accounting the blood of the covenant wherewith we have been sanctified as an unholy thing,—as that which would still keep us without, instead of that which entitles us to enter into the holiest of all. And what an insult to the Spirit of grace, who witnesses to the soul of the wondrous grace of God and of Christ, and who is himself in the once-purged worshipper the power of nearness of worship: for God is a Spirit, and they who worship him must worship him in Spirit. What an insult to that blessed Spirit to put ourselves back to the distance in which the flesh must ever stand before God. Hence, therefore, this solemn warning, take heed lest, after having received the knowledge of the truth with respect to your priestly standing and nearness to God, ye willfully sin. For to worship God as we think fit, is of the very essence of willfulness. God leaves nothing to our choice in the matter of worship; it is not allowed us to choose whether we will go back to the old pattern. God has set it aside, and to return to it is to choose the place of judgment. For nothing can await the outside worshippers but a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. There remaineth no more sacrifice for sin to bring you nearer, or to make you accepted. Jesus is not waiting to offer that—for he has done it once for all—but waiting till his enemies be made his footstool.

But even the priest's service in the holy place, near as it was, is but partially the pattern of the service of the saints now. For now, all relative nearness is done away with, and we must take the sphere of the ministry of the high priest himself to complete the pattern of our standing now.

While the first tabernacle was standing, the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest; i.e., laid open. (Hebrews 9: 8.) The priests, though able always to enter into the holy place, could proceed no further. The beautiful veil concealed from their eye the most holy place. The veil of the blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen, with its cunning work of cherubims, all open to their view, might indeed tell them of the glories concealed behind it; but the golden altar, the ark of the covenant overlaid with gold, with the golden pot of manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant, were all concealed from their sight. The immediate presence of him who dwelt between the cherubims on the mercy-seat was inaccessible by them. That was accessible to the high priest alone, and to him but once a year, and then not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the errors of the people. Mark: the high priest could not enter into the holiest of all at all times, as the priests could into the holy place; he could not enter there as a once purged worshipper, for he went there on the very ground of sin not being put away forever.

But now all is laid open. By the blood of Christ, the way is opened into the holiest of all. How significantly was this marked by the veil of the temple being rent in twain when Jesus hung upon the cross. Yea, Jesus himself is the way, the living way. If there be a veil, He is that veil; not to conceal anything of God behind it, but to bring out all that may be known of God to view. And here the worshippers once purged have constant liberty to enter.

“Having, therefore, brethren.” The Apostle does not take the stand of one in pre-eminent nearness himself to God, inviting others to draw nigh, as though he had been the priest and they the people—he on the inside and they without; but he classes himself with those whom he addresses, calling them brethren, and three times repeating, “Let us.” How different this to the order of old. Moses alone was to come near, the others were to worship afar off; but now it was equal nearness, equal liberty of access into the holiest of all.

What has the blood of Jesus left unaccomplished? In the shedding of it we have remission of sins. By the sprinkling of it we are pronounced clean, and sanctified as worshippers. It is ever on the mercy-seat, and before the mercy-seat; for by it Christ hath entered in, having obtained eternal redemption. His thus entering in is not an annual solemnity, nor one ever to be repeated. The blood of the sin-offering, carried within the veil by Aaron on the great day of atonement, was that he might “make an atonement for the holy place, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions in all their sins.” (Leviticus 16:16.) This has now been done once and forever. The atonement for the holy place is unto continuance—it is as much once and forever purged as is the worshipper himself. Yea, no worshipper entering there need fear lest he should bring defilement there, because that blood that cleanseth all sin away is there forever before God. Why are we so distant in our hearts from God? Is it not because we have so little sense of the real power of the blood within the veil as the gracious provision of God himself for our holy and unhindered communion with him? “Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus.”

But mark the way of access. At Mount Sinai all was distance. “Thou shalt set bounds unto the people round about, saying, Take heed to yourself, that ye go not up into the mount, nor touch the border of it: whosoever toucheth, the mount shall be surely put to death.” (Exodus 19) This distance ever characterized the worship under the law; there were constant bounds set, to pass which would have been death. Even Aaron himself could not pass the bounds of the veil at all times, “lest he die.” The outside worshipping Israelite could not pass the bounds of the curtains which hung at the door of the tabernacle, “lest he die.” To see God and live was impossible under the law; but now Jesus is the way, the living way, into God’s presence. To see him is to see God, and live. He is not the barrier between us and God, but the way to God. All the distance, and every bound, is done away by Jesus. Did an Israelite on the outside gaze on the beautiful curtain, and long to pass it—but death would have been his portion had he attempted it—let him look to Jesus, who says, “I am the door: by me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved.” Yes, the death of Jesus is become to us the living way into the holiest of all. But if, having proceeded within the curtains of the door, the veil seemed to forbid further entrance, let him again look to Jesus, and the veil, says the apostle, is his flesh. The very God with whom we have to do is thus brought before us as full of grace and truth. And if he perceived it rent, again let him look to Jesus and him crucified, and the holiness of God invited, instead of forbade an entrance. What words of blessing to the once purged worshipper! — “By a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, his flesh.”

But farther, not only the work of Jesus and his character inspire confidence, but he himself is the High Priest over the house of God. His ministry is never for a moment interrupted. He is in the holiest of all, on the very ground of atonement having been made both for the people and the place, and therefore the present is to us one continued season of worship. How needful is this

promise to give us confidence in entering into the holiest' The High Priest has not to go into the house; he is there constantly, and has taken a place which Aaron never could take in the tabernacle; he is over the house as his own; he is master of it; he openeth, and no man shutteth.

It is literally a great Priest over the house of God, or "great High Priest," as we have it in the fourth chapter. The worshippers themselves now enter into the privileged place of the High Priest, themselves taking the standing of High Priests in this respect, not simply of priests entering into the holy place. Hence, they need a great Priest—one who is over the house, even over them. (Hebrews 3: 6.) This must not be forgotten we are not priests, in our own right, neither are we free of the house in our own right— all hangs on the great Priest; and our entrance into the holiest of all, now by faith, and in due time actually, is that which declares to us how much we are debtors to his grace.

May we indeed, by these meditations, find fresh virtue in the blood of Jesus, and learn what its preciousness must be before God, when it can give us liberty to enter into the holiest of all!

And now pause for a moment to contemplate what has been done for us, —what has been done for every one whose eye has been turned away from the things which are visible, and with which he himself is conversant, to see Jesus now hidden in the heavens from the sight of the world, but revealed to faith as at the right hand of the throne of the majesty of heaven.

The worshippers have been once and forever purged by His sacrifice once offered. By the will of God, they have been sanctified by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. A living way has been opened for them through the blood of Jesus into the holiest of all. The place of worship is as much prepared for them to worship in by the blood, as they by the same blood are prepared to worship in it. The great Priest is abidingly in that place of worship; no ministration is wanting, He is the minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man. He, too, is over the house; and its gates are always opened—entrance is always to be had, —all things are ready without our having done anything. What then remains but for us to use our high privileges, and to listen to the word— "Let us draw near:" but this, the Lord permitting, shall be the subject of the next paper.

But is there no reason for deep humiliation on the part of Christians who own assuredly the preciousness of the blood of Jesus for remission of sins, but who do not regard its preciousness as having purged the place of worship for those whose sins are forgiven? An Israelite was taught two things by the blood of the sacrifice. "Almost all things are by the law purged with blood, and without shedding of blood is no remission." Many a soul which has been taught the value of the blood in the latter sense has never regarded it in the former. Many a christian who would be alarmed at anything which would imply that something was yet to be done by Jesus for justification, is quite unconscious of nullifying a most important part of the work of Jesus, that affecting worship, by the ritual to which he is subjected. The truth preached cheers his soul and leads into happy liberty—the ritual is submitted to as a point of decency, and in many instances tolerated only for the sake of the sermon. But what a fearful degradation of worship is this! What an undervaluing of the blood of Jesus. What a forgetfulness of our priestly place as worshippers once purged for the heavenly courts themselves!

The Lord pardon his saints for having so insulted his grace in the mode and character of their worship: and lead them by his Spirit into the only place of acceptable worship—the holiest of all.

Let Us Draw Near

It is indeed very blessed to be enabled to tell a poor awakened sinner, that in Jesus all things are ready which he needs for remission of sins, righteousness, and life. And it is not less blessed to be enabled to tell those who have so come to Jesus, that all things are ready for their worship in the holiest of all. That everything is there ordered by the blessed Jesus himself for their entrance therein, and that he himself has consecrated the way for their approach.

The time is coming when “many people shall go and say, come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths; for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.” (Isaiah 2:3.) But now is the time for believers to encourage one another to enter into the holiest of all—even into heaven itself, — because Jesus is there. Come ye, say they, and let us draw near with a true heart.

Under the law, much of the priestly ministry was outside the tabernacle, and open to the view therefore of the worshipper. If he brought a burnt sacrifice, he was to bring it to the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, where he was to kill it, and then the priests sprinkled the blood in his sight upon the altar that was by the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. This part of the priest’s work was visible to the outside worshippers. But he who could approach thus far was never satisfied as to his conscience. He came indeed to these sacrifices—he saw them offered—but they were utterly inefficacious as to the purging of the conscience. “For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sin.” But now all on the outside has been once and for all accomplished; the priestly ministry is all within and invisible, and therefore only known to faith by the revelation of God.

Let us put ourselves in the place of a Hebrew worshipper, by God’s grace taught to know Jesus as the one sacrifice for sin, and as the ever-abiding High Priest in the holiest of all. What a struggle must there often have been in his mind when approaching God, because he had no sacrifice to offer—nothing visible on which to lean—no victim to lay his hand upon. It must indeed have required real true heartedness to, Jesus to enable him to draw near—and to look at everything with which he had been formerly conversant as taken up in Jesus, so that all that he had seen before was now only to be discerned by faith as fulfilled in Christ. And are we not often false to Jesus in this matter? Do we not often harbor the thought that something yet remains to be done—either by ourselves or by him—in order to our drawing near? Do we not often thus become occupied with the circumstances of worship rather than with Jesus—the substance? Are we not often false to him in questioning our title to draw near, because we find distance in our own hearts, as if it was the warmth of our affections, instead of the blood of Jesus, which brought near?

But oh, beloved, how false to Jesus has the Church been! The worshippers are often pressed down by a burdensome ritual, and allowed neither to know that they are once and forever purged, nor that all is prepared for their entrance into the holiest. They are turned back again to that which is visible, and go through the daily routine of service, never getting farther than the door of the

tabernacle! They are set in the place of distant Jews, instead of that of priests sanctified for heavenly ministrations and worship!

And how continually do we see souls led to put the act of worship in the place of Jesus. Surely this is not to draw near with a true heart. A doubt harbored as to the all-sufficiency of his sacrifice, or the perfect efficiency of his priesthood, or his tender sympathy and compassion, is not to draw near with a true heart. If we shrink back into a distant place after all he has done, are we true-hearted to Jesus? But what positive treachery to Jesus is it to set up an order of men as in greater nearness to God than others—virtually putting them within, and virtually putting others without. To lean on priests, or ministers, in worship, as if they were needed to that end, is absolutely denying the virtue and the person and work of Christ. But such things are the necessary offspring of departure from the truth of a sinner's justification before God, by the one sacrifice of Christ. Distant worship necessarily follows imperfect justification. And if a sinner's justification before God by the blood of Jesus be not seen, much less will entrance into the holiest of all by the same blood for worship be allowed as the common portion of the saints. But even where the truth as to justification has been recovered and is preached, we still see a form and a ritual of worship altogether subversive of the truth. The access proclaimed in the gospel preached is not permitted to those who have believed that preaching. Thus, the saints are practically kept in a place of distance, and thus taught to be false-hearted to Jesus! Surely, we might say, if every church and chapel in the kingdom were closed, and all the ministers of the gospel shut up in prison, that true-heartedness to Jesus would lead his saints to assemble themselves together to worship, by faith, in the holiest of all-knowing that there the ministry of the Great High Priest can never for a moment be suspended. Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith.

As to this expression, "full assurance of faith," it by no means conveys the idea of a certain standard measure of faith as a matter of attainment. The reference is not to the measure of faith, but to its bearing on the right object. The faith may be the weakest possible, but let that, weak as it is, be in full bearing on its own proper object.

We have another form of the same word in the New Testament. It is said of Abraham, "he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith giving glory to God, and being fully persuaded, that what he had promised he was able also— to perform." So again—"Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind." The moment the soul has laid hold on Jesus it is delivered from itself, and ought to be fully persuaded that all it needs is presented to it in the object before it—even Jesus.

It is this single eye to Jesus which we need in worship. The very things which man in his wisdom has thought to be helps to devotion are really its hindrances. Which of the senses do not men seek to gratify in the circumstantials of worship? Now the very object of the apostle here is to turn away the worshipper from the things of sight and sense, to which he had been accustomed, in order to concentrate his soul on one single object, in which he was to find everything that he needed.

We can never look at our title to worship God, but we see our salvation. How blessedly has God linked these things together, and how perversely does man rend them asunder, either by calling on all to worship, believers and unbelievers, or by binding believers to a form, which negatives the sense of complete justification. What we need in order to happier and holier worship is more simple faith in Jesus. Are we fully persuaded that; Jesus has done all that is needed to make an

acceptable meeting-place between ourselves and God? —then let us draw near.

And what holy freedom and liberty attends this “having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience.” The leper to be cleansed, in order to restore him to the privilege of worship, needed to be sprinkled with blood. (Leviticus 14:7.) The Israelite, who had touched anything which made him unclean, needed to have the water of purification sprinkled on him, but it only sanctified to the purifying of the flesh. (Hebrews 9:13.) The priests at their consecration had the blood applied to them, that they might so draw near and minister before God. But what is all this compared with a heart sprinkled from an evil conscience by the blood of Jesus? It is no longer a purifying of the flesh, but a purifying of the heart by faith. The flesh purified for worship might co-exist with an evil conscience, but a sprinkled heart never could. How entirely is a good conscience alone maintained by that which is not of sight, even by the purging power of the blood of Jesus. Before Aaron could put on the holy linen coat he must wash his flesh in water (Leviticus 16:4); and so it is now— “Our bodies washed with pure water.” We cannot put on our white robe unless we know what communion with the death of Jesus really is. How needful for us in our approach to our place of worship, even the holiest of all, habitually to remember that we have died, and that we are alive in Jesus. We have to do with the living God—and he too a consuming fire. All that is contrary to life has been set aside by the death of Jesus. “Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.” And it is as alive from the dead that we alone can approach him.

“Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering.” It is literally “of our hope,” not faith, and has reference to the sixth chapter— “that we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us, which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil.” Our hope is that we shall be there actually, the holiest of all being our own proper place as priests unto God: but by faith we now worship there in spirit.

But it is hard indeed to maintain a profession contradicted, so far as sight goes, by everything in us and around us. Jesus witnessed the good confession before Pontius Pilate, that he was a king, without any mark of royalty about him. His confession seemed contradicted by his appearance. Timothy had confessed a good confession before many witnesses (1 Timothy 6:12), and he needed to be reminded of it. And so do we for how constantly do we forget that we are what we are in hope. We could not give satisfactory proof to another that we are what we confess to, be. We can indeed give the soundest reason of the hope that is in us, because the forerunner is for us already entered within the veil; but we cannot satisfy the restlessness of our minds, or the minds of others, by evidence. No; blessed be God, he has provided for our hope on surer ground than any evidences we could produce, even on the ground of his own immutability and faithfulness; for he is faithful that hath promised.

The word is of great force, “let us hold fast,”—let us tenaciously grasp. And why? Because our hope is that which Satan would try by all means to wrest from us. And has he not effectually done this in the Church at large by making that their hope, which is, in fact, the ground of their hope—even their justification. Present righteousness is the ground of Christian hope. The holiest of all is alone open to those who have been once and forever purged. If our hope springs not from that within the veil, where is our steadfastness? Everything short of that may be shaken—and will be shaken. If therefore we know not accomplished righteousness, fitting us now for the holiest of

all, the peace of our souls must be unsteady. An Israelite might approach the door of the tabernacle with a sacrifice to be offered, but that sacrifice had yet to be pronounced acceptable and to be accepted; but it was on the ground of an already offered and accepted sacrifice, that the holiest of all was entered by the high priest. Thus, it is with our title to enter within the veil—the one offering of Jesus has forever given us liberty to enter there. How amazing is the craft of Satan in his devices against the truth! When he could no longer keep out of sight the doctrine of justification by faith, he has contrived to rob it of its real power, even where received, by having practically put it as the object of hope instead of the present possession of all who have come to Jesus. The peace of the gospel is thus practically unknown, although the gospel itself is truly stated. And this hope of justification of faith always opens the door for distant worship. In how many real believers is the peace of the gospel hindered by their very acts of worship.

Let us therefore, beloved brethren, grasp and maintain this confession as our best treasure—Having present righteousness by faith, our hope is nothing short of the holiest of all; and there we worship in Spirit now. Our hope is independent of ourselves—it hangs on the immutable faithfulness of God—it is secured by the blood of Jesus, and it is already made fast within the veil; for Jesus is there, and there for us. Beware of mock humility, which is only the cover of unbelief and self-dependence. Look at yourselves and you are hopeless; yea, nothing is before you but a fearful looking for of judgment. Look at Jesus and know your hope; for where is he? In the holiest of all as the forerunner! Let this check all wavering, and answer every doubt and every difficulty. In spite of all appearances, hold fast the profession of the hope without wavering.

“And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works.” Here we are reminded that we have also to perform our priestly work. The priest had to consider, in cases of leprosy, —and so, as priests, we have to consider one another, not whether we are cleansed or not, for it has been authoritatively pronounced of us by the Great High Priest himself, “now ye are clean,”—but we are to consider one another to provoke unto love and good works. The expression is remarkable— “consider one another.” There is but one, even the Lord himself, who stands in the authoritative place of the priest to the church, therefore we are to consider one another. How entirely is this exercise of our common priestly function nullified by again setting up an order of priesthood to prescribe to us. What is the Confessional? What the Absolution? —but the priest again pronouncing the leper clean! And how effectually does such a thought hinder our considering one another. We can only do this as standing in grace ourselves and recognizing others as standing in the same grace and the same nearness to God. It is as together standing in the holiest of all that we are to consider one another. There we are thus to help each other to detect what is inconsistent with that our high and blessed standing. There is no room for rivalry now —all are priests; but abundant room for love; and our love for each other is to be measured by the love that has brought us where we stand. And as to good works, they also are to be judged by the same standard. No lower standard than the sanctuary itself must now be taken to determine what are good works. What becomes the holiest itself alone becomes those sanctified to worship therein. It is not what men call good works, but what God estimates as such, to which we have to provoke one another. The costly ointment poured on the feet of Jesus, wasteful and extravagant in the eyes of an ancient or modern utilitarian, was a good work in the eyes of Jesus. The two mites of the widow more costly than the splendid offering of the rich. How little of what men think good is really so before God; and how entirely what God esteems, as precious is despised among men.

Hence Christ was despised and rejected of men; and hence really Christian works are now despised of them. How needful then is it for us to be in spirit in the holiest of all, to prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

But not only is there to be this constant provocation to love and to good works, it is also added, “not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is.”

When Israel came into the land, they were not to offer their sacrifices, or to worship, at any place they might select, but at the place where the Lord should put his name only. Jerusalem was the place—whither the tribes went up. Put yourself in the position of a believing Hebrew on a solemn feast day in Jerusalem—one of the three thousand converted by the first sermon of Peter. Multitudes from all quarters might be assembled around him—Jerusalem filled with worshippers—while he would be apart from all that which attracted them. But would not his soul have many a struggle in keeping away from the festive and religious throng? Would he not have almost appeared an enemy to his country and to the temple? But was it really so? Think farther of the contrast he must in his own soul have seen between the upper chamber, or any other unpretending locality, and the splendid temple. Must it not have needed much simple faith in Jesus, to meet together to break bread and worship with a number as unaccredited as himself, without any visible priest to order their worship, any sacrifice, any incense, any altar, any laver? Would not the multitude keeping holy-day give as it were the lie to the worship he had been engaged in, as if it had been no worship at all? Surely there is great force in the words, “not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is.”

Yes; some drew back from acknowledging that as worship, which was without the outward form—some even who believed in Jesus. It cost too much to own Jesus as everything by disowning all the shadows. The assembling of themselves together thus was the great testimony against the religion of the world, and that Jesus was all. It was the profession that he was the substance of worship, and that worship must now be according to the place and power of his priesthood. The despised company in the upper chamber were feeding on the substance, while the religious world in their gorgeous temple were bowing before the shadows. That despised company had by faith access into the holiest of all; they knew that Jesus, as the forerunner, had entered there for them; and in this knowledge of him, they could meet at any time and at any place, for the name of the Lord was recorded in the place of their meeting. They were worshippers in the sanctuary, let the scene of their gathering on earth be where it may.

Hence, we find that “on the first day of the week the disciples came together to break bread.” (Acts 20:7.) They might or might not have someone to minister the word unto them—that was accidental; their coming together was for a positive and specific object. Paul came in among them and preached, but that was by the way. They came together as disciples. Arid if man puts a hindrance in the way of disciples coming together, is it not treading underfoot the Son of God, who has not only given them the liberty, but who has made their doing so the point of collective confession of his name? There is need of our exhorting one another as to this, for the danger is imminent of turning to the old order. And the Spirit of God clearly saw the tendency of things that way, and that this would increase. That as the day approached when the Lord Jesus would be revealed, worship would become more and more worldly—more and more after the ancient distant Jewish pattern. Hence the exhortation would in the progress of things be increasingly needed, to

stand fast as disciples in the simplicity of grace. Nothing can be more gracious than the provision which the Lord has made against the increasing evil. Just in proportion as the thought in the minds of Christians has prevailed of a progression unto blessing in the world, has worship adapted itself to the world. But when it has pleased God to open the eyes of many of his saints to see the steady progress in evil, and the great assumptions of the flesh, he has thrown them back more on Christian simplicity. And our exhortation the one to the other, as we see the day approaching, is to test everything by the light of that day, and to see that nothing will then really stand which is not of Christ. Surely the Lord intends to make his saints sensible of all that they have lost; but in doing so to make them as sensible of the value of what remains. If he had to say to his people of old, "Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory? and how do ye see it now? is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing?" This was not said to enfeeble, but to strengthen them. All the outward glory was gone, but still the Lord was there. And therefore, it is said, "Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, and work; for I am with you, saith the Lord of hosts: according to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so my Spirit remaineth among you: fear ye not." God remained unchangeably the same, and his original power in deliverance was real strength in the midst of weakness; so that out of weakness they became strong. And this is God's provision for the comfort and strength of the saints, as they see the day approaching, and everything unprepared to meet it, to exhort one another to the use of what remains unto them; and whilst Jesus abideth in the holiest of all, and now appears in the presence of God for them, they can always draw near. Yes, it is our privilege to do so, now that the dispensation has well-nigh run its course, equally as much as in the apostles' days. Men indeed have, by their perverseness, put many things between themselves and God, but that which giveth nearness still remaineth, even the blood of Jesus. Let us then draw near.

Beloved, how much is this exhortation needed at this day! Simple worship, although our high privilege, is despised! Believers need something more than the presence of the Lord to induce them to come together. Jesus is not really to them the great substantial ordinance of God. They are not glad when they assemble themselves together. Let us not forsake this, for if we do we are in danger of forgetting that we are once and forever purged worshippers, and that our place of worship is the golden sanctuary itself, also once and forever purged. (Hebrews 10:2,14.) There we have such an High Priest, one who can bring us in at once to the throne of the majesty on high, to us a throne of grace, although he who sits thereon is holy, holy, holy.

Beloved, it is your place of confession to contradict all assumptions of priesthood, all repetition of sacrifice, and all repeated absolutions, by drawing near. Your worship is to be characterized no less by confident nearness to God than by reverence to his name. The day is approaching. Its approach is marked by a return to ordinances. Hold fast your profession, and let it be Jesus against every pretension. For be assured that whatever is not of him is nothing better than a carnal ordinance, to be utterly disowned by the Lord when he appears.

If we look forward as to worship, what do we see there? All the shadows passed away, and only the substance presented. "I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it." So again—the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him (worship him): and they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign forever and ever." They shall serve and they shall reign at

the same time. They shall then be manifestly priests and kings. But now in the acknowledgment that grace has already made them so, it is their privilege to approach by faith that glorious place in which they will due time actually stand. Our best instruction is in. gathered by looking forward. It is the reality which. is to be our pattern now. Not things on earth the patterns of the heavenly, but the substance known by faith stamping its impress on that which is present. Let us draw near “unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and bath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”

The Power of Godliness

“For the kingdom of God is not in word but in power.”

1 CORINTHIANS 4:20.

The form of godliness is very common in these days of ours; but the power of it is very rare. How few persons shall we find in Christendom who live and act in the strength of God! Generally, men do whatever they do in their own strength; and that not only in human things, but in divine. How seldom do we see in Christians, in the discharge of their several duties, more than the power of men; the greatest part by far, not only of those who are called Christians, but also of forward professors, being ignorant of what it is to be strengthened with might in the inner man. How little is there, among all our plenty, of that preaching which is not in the plausible words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit, and of power! How few congregations among the many that are in this kingdom are gathered together in the spirit and power of our Lord Jesus Christ! How few of those Christians are there, in whom is the exceeding greatness of God's power, together with the effectual working of it! But the form of godliness is now become almost the covering of all flesh; and in these days of light and knowledge, it is accounted by all that are not downright Atheists, a great shame not “to seem to be religious.” And when men, and families, and congregations, are gotten into this form, they think themselves both safe and happy, as being near the suburbs of the kingdom of God, and close neighbors to the saints. And this form of godliness, as it is of very easy compliance with flesh and blood in this particular, in that according to this men only make their actions new, retaining still their old natures, so it is also of great credit and esteem with carnal preachers. “But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man;” and he, being partaker of the power of God himself, can in some measure discern both the presence and the want of it in others, both which he knows in his own experience.

Now this form of godliness is, when men appear godly without God, and anointed without Christ, and regenerate, not having the Spirit; that is, when they have a semblance of holiness, but not the thing itself—a semblance of grace, retaining their old natures.

And such Christians as these perform spiritual duties with natural strength; heavenly duties with earthly strength; the works of God with the power of men. In the religion of these men there is the outward duty done, and it may be very speciously and plausibly; but there is none of Christ nor the Spirit in the duty. There is their own working towards God, which is faint and faithless; but not God's own working in them towards himself, which is lively and mighty. And all the religious acts they do are only their own operations, and not the operations of God in them. (John 3:6; Romans 8.)

This form of godliness, how pleasing whosoever it be to a man's self, and of what reckoning whosoever with others who are like himself, yet is indeed of very evil and woeful consequence, whether we regard the doings or the sufferings unto which this form necessarily engages.

For first when men, by occasion of this form, are called forth to do the great works of God, and yet are destitute of the power of God, their duties are above their strength, and their strength bears no proportion to their duties. And so, sooner or later, meeting with difficulties, they faint and languish as a snail, their work being too high for their faculties; for nature, being strained above its power, by degrees grows weary, and returns to its old temper again, and he who sought that glory which was not his own, at last lies down in his own shame.

Again, the form, of godliness exposes a man to those evils that are incident to the faithful because of godliness. Now, when a man hath the same evils with the faithful, and not the same power to support him under those evils; when men have the same evils in the flesh, but not the same power in the spirit; the same burdens on their shoulders, but not the same Everlasting Arms underneath them, they fall sadly and desperately, to the great scandal of the ways of God. (Matthew 13:20,21.)

However, if men be not called forth to such eminent doings and sufferings, and so escape such manifest discoveries and downfalls, yet the form of godliness hath this evil in it, that it brings a man only to the troublesome part of religion, but not to the comfortable; it engages a man with the same duties with the godly, but supplies him not with the same strength; it involves him in the same bitterness of flesh, but doth not furnish him with the same joy of spirit. For as such a man's religion doth not reach above flesh and blood, no more doth his strength and comforts. And so he performs duties at a low rate; yea, and his bare and empty form casts a black vail upon religion, and utterly obscures its beauty and glory, and makes the world judge meanly of it, and to think it a matter only of singularity and humor, and not of "power;" whereas, when a Christian walks in the strength of the Spirit, doing and suffering the will of God beyond all strength and abilities of flesh and blood, the world oftentimes gazes at him, and many are provoked to "glorify God, who hath, given such power to men."

W. DELL, A.D. 1645.

The Priesthood and the Law Changed

Among the various aspects in which the Lord Jesus is presented to us, it is well oftentimes to distinguish between that which he is properly in his own Person, and that which he is as constituted of God.

It is most legitimate to trace him from the manger of Bethlehem, to his coming in the clouds of heaven in fully manifested glory. The Holy Spirit delights in this theme—in tracing the lowly rod of the stem of Jesse, growing up before the Lord as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground, to the stately BRANCH in manifested beauty. (Isaiah 11: 1; 53: 2; Jer. 33:15; Zechariah 3:8; 6:12; Luke 1:78.) So, again, it is now the special office of the Holy Ghost to glorify Jesus by testifying to us what he is, and is owned to be in heaven, whilst he is rejected on earth. In the reception of this testimony is found the great strength of the Church in its militant state here in the world.

But there is something before all this. There is the tracing him down from heaven to earth, as well as tracing him up from earth to heaven, to return thence in manifested glory. It is this character of testimony to Jesus which the Holy Ghost presents to us in the commencement of the epistle to the Hebrews. It is true that the prominent subject is the official dignity of the Lord Jesus Christ, as the Apostle, Captain, and High Priest of our profession, elevated far beyond Moses, or Aaron, or Joshua. But this elevation, whilst true of him officially, is far more true by reason of the essential dignity of his own person. God hath in these last days spoken to us by the SON. This is not an official title, it is his own real, proper, native standing, —belonging to him in a sense in which it belongs to no other.

And herein is the grand characteristic difference between the Lord Jesus and all others. Many indeed are those of old upon whom the Lord hath put honor, who would have been nothing but for the honor thus put upon them. They were constituted and appointed to various offices, and not to own them in those offices would be to reject God. So also God has made Jesus both Christ and Lord. But who is he who is thus constituted, or made, of God? He is the SON. These constituted dignities cannot excel his own real glory, that which he had with the Father before the world was. His offices, dignified though they be, cannot in this sense exalt him. But he can give, and does give, the power and character of his own divine person unto every office which he sustains, unto every work which he has done. If he could be stripped of all his official glories, His own personal excellency and glory must remain untouched and undiminished. It is this which makes him alone the fit one “to bear the glory” which God may put upon him. When God put various glories on others, as on Moses, or Aaron, or David, or Solomon, their failure to sustain the glory was marked in them all. And why? They were but men, having no power in themselves to stand at all. But Jesus is the SON, and “in him was LIFE.” And let it be remembered, in passing, that the only security for the saints bearing the glory which grace has made theirs, is that they are in union with him who is thus in his own person above all glory. “He who sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one.”

To have office conferred by God is indeed a solemn responsibility, both as it respects him who is so honored, and as it respects others to acknowledge the honor conferred of God. It is thus our responsibility to acknowledge office in magistrates, and not to speak evil of dignities. To resist the power is to resist God. Those who bear the dignity may be nothing, the vilest of men, but the honor is put on them of God, and is to be acknowledged by us. If this be so, how fearful in the sight of God must it be to refuse to acknowledge any of the offices, styles, dignities, which God has conferred on his own Son. How fearful in any wise to trench on them by arrogating in them to ourselves. This is the last form of manifested evil under the present dispensation, and that which will bring down the terrible judgment of God. It is the denial of "Jesus Christ, the only Lord God, and our Lord" (Jude); that is, the denial of him both in his own essential glory, and his conferred mediatorial glory. Let us then beware of anything which derogates from the honor due to Jesus, the Son of God. For how infinitely elevated is he above all others on whom official dignity has been conferred by God. God will strip men of all the glories he has conferred on them, and then what are they? Nothing. Man being in honor is like the beasts that perish. But when man is thus abased, in that day the Lord Jesus Christ alone shall be exalted. (Isaiah 2)

I desire, because of the importance of the subject, to refer to the eighty-second Psalm for illustration of the truth, that any honor conferred by God on men brings them out of obscurity, taken away it sinks them into their own proper nothingness. On the other hand, honor conferred on the Son adds nothing really to him: if it be taken from him or disowned by man, it only leads to his, exaltation by God to every office in which man has failed, "that in all things he might have the pre-eminence." "God standeth in the congregation of the mighty: he judgeth among the gods. How long will ye judge unjustly and accept the persons of the wicked? Defend the poor and fatherless; do justice to the afflicted and needy. Deliver the poor and needy: rid them out of the hand of the wicked. They know not, neither will they understand: they walk on in darkness; all the foundations of the earth are out of course. I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you children of the Most High: but ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes. Arise, O GOD, judge the earth, for thou shalt inherit all nations."

The reference of the Lord Jesus to this Psalm, in the tenth chapter of John, is very remarkable. He had asserted, in the most unequivocal manner, his own proper divinity, "I and my Father are one" (ver. 30). This, they said, was making himself God (ver. 33). Afterward in verse 38, Jesus again asserts this, and again they sought to take him (ver. 39). But he had previously (ver. 34, 35) referred to this Psalm, to prove that they ought at least to have owned him in his official authority and power, His works testified of him that he was the sent one of the Father. Not one "unto whom the word of God came," merely, but him whom the Father had sanctified and sent into the world; he could say, "I am the Son of God." They should have believed him for his works' sake, for he did the works of his Father, and he and the Father were one. To others the word of God has only come—"I have said, Ye are gods." They had no dignity at all in themselves, they were of the earth, earthy, raised in official dignity by God. But he was the SON; he had been "sanctified and sent into the world;" he was "the Lord from heaven." How infinitely contrasted is Jesus the Son of God to all those of whom God has said, "Ye are gods." The moment their conferred dignity was taken from them, they would die like the common herd of men. They had no essential, inherent power or dignity. But he was one with the Father, he was in the beginning with God; nothing therefore could really touch his dignity, for it was intrinsically divine. It was not the word coming to

him which made him what he was—though he had indeed been sanctified and sent into the world—it was what he ever was in himself, which enabled him to be so sent, and to sustain and give efficiency to all that was laid upon him. Hence, though in his humiliation his judgment was taken away, yet God would divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong. This shall be manifestly true when all official and delegated power shall be taken out of the hands to which God has entrusted it, and actually assumed by Jesus. Then shall that word be proved true of him— “Arise, O God, judge the earth; for thou shalt inherit all nations.”

The connection between the personal and the official glories of the Lord Jesus Christ, is indeed the prominent subject of the Epistle to the Hebrews. In the first chapter the Son is presented to us as both in person and office far above angels. And it is the Son who is also the apostle of our profession. In the second chapter he is presented to us as our High Priest; and then we are exhorted, in the third chapter, to “consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession Christ Jesus.” Moses indeed was great. God had magnified him before Pharaoh, yet he was but a servant—one to whom the word of God had come—although God humbled Miriam and Aaron before him. But, mark; Jesus was not only officially greater than Moses, but it was his personal greatness which gave him the infinite superiority. He was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he that hath builded the house hath more honor than the house; and every house is builded by some man, but he that built all things is God. Moses was faithful as a servant in another’s house, but Christ as a Son over his own house. So again as concerning the high priesthood. Aaron was the high priest, but Jesus is the Great High Priest, —higher thus indeed than Aaron even officially. But this is not all; it is “Jesus the Son of God,” infinitely higher personally than he is officially. “Seeing then that we have a Great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God.” (chap. 4.)

But yet further it pleased God to constitute one individual a perfect type of the Lord Jesus Christ; that individual was Melchizedec. He stands before us typical of Jesus, both in person and office. The mystery with which God has so remarkably surrounded Melchizedec, makes him a fit type of the Person of the Son; for “no man knoweth the Son, but the Father;” and so, no man knoweth Melchizedec but God. And his being thus presented to us without genealogy, “having neither beginning of days, nor end of life,” shows us also how truly he is “made like unto the Son of God.” Thus, Melchizedec is so brought before us in the word of God, as to be made a most wonderful type of the divine and eternal Son of God—he is thus the personal type. “Abideth a priest continually;” for we know not when Melchisedec’s priesthood began or ended; he had not as Aaron an official life— “beginning of days and end of life,”—in this he is the official type. Melchizedec is indeed the only individual mentioned in the scriptures, as one whose own person qualifies him for office. And in this respect how apt a type is he of Jesus.

With this general opening, let us meditate on the contrasts presented to us in the seventh chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews; that we may be able to draw the character of the worship from the order of the priesthood.

Most prominently do we here find the Person of the Priest set before us— “the Son of God,” (chapter 7: 3,) in contrast with every office-bearing person. This might have been enough; but there are contrasts immediately resulting from the Person of the Priest, which must also be noticed. After the order of Aaron, they were men that die; but after the order of Melchizedec, it is

he that liveth—liveth because he is the Son—because he has life in himself. True, he has laid it down and taken it again, that he might enter on his priesthood, having first by himself purged our sins.

Again the order of Aaron was continued by succession. It was necessarily so. Aaron was a man in the flesh, and provision was made in case of his death for his son, that should minister in his stead; as it is written, “And the priest whom he shall anoint, and whom he shall consecrate to minister in the priest’s office in his father’s stead, shall make the atonement, and shall put on the linen clothes, even the holy garments.” (Leviticus 16:32.) This was the carnal “commandment,” by which the priesthood of the Aaronic order was to be perpetuated. Succession is the only mode which man knows of perpetuating anything; this is necessary human order. The king cannot die, we are told why? Because his last king is the placing his successor on the throne; so that the functions of royalty may never for a moment be suspended. Succession is necessarily after the law of a carnal commandment. We need not wonder, therefore, that men should have turned back to this order, as being that which is most natural and human. But God has made other provision for his Church; his Church knows no successional priesthood. The Son is made Priest, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life. It is still what he is in himself that gives the character to his priesthood. And that which is characteristic of this priesthood, is equally so of the whole order of priesthood in the Church—it is unsuccessional. The Church’s position in this dispensation is in life and in power. There is no room for a carnal commandment in the matter of priesthood or worship either, because Christ’s Priesthood in heaven is perpetuated in himself. No one succeeds to him them; he is “a High Priest forever;” and none is needed to succeed the Holy Ghost in the Church on earth; “he shall abide with you forever.” If man were to succeed man as the head of authority in the Church, a carnal commandment is necessitated—the order cannot be maintained without it. And this is what man has introduced into the Church; thus putting the Church under human headship and carnally appointed authority.

But how awful is this, when God’s order for his Church is the presence of the Holy Ghost dispensing gifts according to his will. Where, under this divine order, is there room for a carnal commandment?

I no longer marvel at the strength of the language of the preceding chapter, relative to the certain consequences of turning back from the proper order and hope of the Church. It must be subversive of the whole order of the dispensation. It must be virtually putting Jesus out of his priesthood, crucifying him afresh, and putting him to an open shame. Once admit succession, and, as a necessary consequence, union with Jesus in the power of an endless life is denied; for such union must be utterly incompatible with the law of a carnal commandment.

And let the contrast be distinctly marked; it is not after the law of an endless life, but after the power of an endless life. The kingdom of God is in power; the Spirit we have received is the Spirit of power; the peril against which we are warned is the form of godliness, but the denial of its power. It is not now form against form, carnal order against carnal order, place against place; but it is power, that is life, against everything. “We are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.” Such are the Israel of God, who have power with God and man, and prevail.

But to pursue the contrast. The priests after the order of Aaron were called indeed of God; but Jesus was constituted by an oath. "The Lord swore and will not' repent, thou art a Priest forever after the order of Melchizedec." The priesthood in Israel under the law, like all with which it was connected, stood on the ground of the competence of the priests to maintain their place in faithfulness to God. It was based upon a carnal commandment—it was conditional. The word of the Lord to Eli was, "I said indeed that thy house, and the house of thy father, should walk before me forever: but now the Lord saith, be it far from me; for them that honor me I will honor, and those that despise me shall be lightly esteemed." And the oath to Eli was an oath of irreversible judgment on his house. (1 Samuel 3:14.) And this setting aside of the house of Eli was to raise up a faithful Priest, (1 Samuel 2:35; Hebrews 17,) to do according to all that was in the heart and mind of God, even the Priest who is made with an oath.

And how blessedly in keeping is the New Covenant with this new order of priesthood. it is a covenant of promise, of promise made sure by God's having engaged his own power to render it effectual; and, therefore, to show the immutability of his counsel, he has confirmed it with an oath. (Hebrews 6:17.) The New Covenant, therefore, belongs to the Melchizedec priesthood, and both are with an oath. And it is here written, "And inasmuch as not without an oath he was made Priest.... by so much was Jesus made a surety of a better' covenant."

Once more; although it has been somewhat anticipated. Under the order of Aaron there were "many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death."

The high priesthood passed from one to another; there was succession. God in judgment had indeed set aside one family of Aaron, and brought in another; still, there was a succession of men through whom the high priesthood descended. This alone was enough to destroy all dependence on that priesthood; for though there might be a merciful arid faithful priest, still he would die, and he might be succeeded by one who would make the offering of the Lord to be abhorred, as did Eli's sons, using their office for exaction of their dues, and more than dues, but not aiding the worshipper. This must always attend the connection of office with a succession of men appointed after a carnal commandment. "But Jesus, because he continueth, ever, bath a priesthood that passeth not from one to another. Wherefore he is able to save to the uttermost; i.e., from the beginning of their career unto the end; those who come to God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." This necessarily, and most simply, perpetuates the perfectness of High Priesthood after the order of Melchizedec; one divinely perfect is for evermore consecrated thereunto.

How marked is it, that in everything which came under the law of a carnal commandment, there wanted perpetuity; it was so, whether we look at the persons, the sacrifice, or the intercession. But now that there is perpetuity in the Person, the like character attaches to the priesthood, the sacrifice, and the intercession.

Surely, the priesthood being changed, there must of necessity be a change in the whole law and order of worship. To go back to the old pattern now, what is it but virtually to deny the personal glory of the Son, as giving efficacy to his work and office? It is, as has been before noticed, to tread underfoot the Son of God. It must necessarily transfer the thought from his order of priesthood to another order. It must introduce human copies of patterns and shadows once given by God, claiming for such things the value due only to the heavenly things themselves. It must sink

the place of worship from heaven to earth. It must consecrate that which God has left out as profane. It must establish form, instead of leaving room for power: producing uniformity, to which the flesh can bend, but to the utter denial of unity in the Spirit, of which the flesh must be ignorant.

Let us then most seriously consider what Christian worship really is. Whether we look at our own standing, or at the change which has taken place in priesthood, there is necessitated an entire change in the order of worship. We have seen Aaron's priesthood adapted to the law, and Christ's to the new covenant. Aaron's priesthood was intercessional, so, also is Christ's. The Church is alone sustained by the constant intercession of Christ. It is what our necessities require, beautifully and graciously adapted to them. But whilst this is most blessedly true, is there not another and very different sense in which it is said, "such a High Priest became us." The intercession of the Great High Priest for us, is only for us whilst the Church needs it, —it has, so far as the Church is in question, a termination, and it may well be said to be an Aaronic service carried on after the Melchizedec order. But if we take a larger thought of the priesthood of Jesus, comprehending his Person and the whole Melchizedec order, do we not find his priesthood adapted to us, not only because of our infirmities and necessities, but likewise because of that high standing which we by his grace have received—that we might hold fast our profession?

Surely when the Church needs not a priesthood of intercession, as it will not in glory, it will enjoy all the peculiar privileges proper to the Melchizedec order—a constant reciprocation of blessing and praise. But our standing is really as high now as then— "now are we the sons of God"—and the saints are now to know the High Priest suitable to their greatness. We are "holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling,"—to such Aaron's priesthood is not suitable. "For such an High Priest became us." What is it that has constituted us holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling? Surely these two things—that the Son has by himself purged our sins, and that he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one, for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren. If there is not the same life in them as in himself, he could not call them brethren. "Because I live," says he, "ye shall live also." Is he anointed with the Holy Ghost? they too, in virtue of having been cleansed by his blood, and united with him as risen, are anointed with the same. He indeed above his fellows, but they with the same blessed Spirit; for he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit. Now the High Priest suitable to such a standing as this must not only be holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, but also "made higher than the heavens."

The old order would necessarily keep the holy brethren out of the holy place, making those who are partakers of the heavenly calling mere earthly worshippers. And is not this present fact? Worship should so elevate the soul of the worshipper that nothing should be known between him and God, save the Great High Priest; but instead of this the ritual to which many saints are subjected causes them to bow the head like a bulrush.

But to proceed. Such an High Priest became us, "who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself. For the law maketh men high priests, which have infirmity; but the word of the oath which was since the law—the Son, who is consecrated for evermore."

How unlike Aaron is Jesus our Great High Priest! All his present priestly ministration is based upon the one accomplished sacrifice of himself. This entirely affects the order of worship and changes it; for our worship is just as truly based upon the already accomplished sacrifice as is his Priesthood.

It is our starting point as worshippers. We are only in the profane place, if we approach not God on the ground of our sins having been forever purged by Jesus; we cannot avail ourselves of his priesthood until this be acknowledged. The Great Priesthood is alone suitable for those who have come to God through him. Into what an elevated place then has that one sacrifice brought us! No place under heaven is suitable for his ministry or our worship. Both are properly heavenly. Worship therefore should ever lift us up to where Jesus is—the Great High Priest who is passed into the heavens. Aaron was called of God to his priesthood in the tabernacle made with hands, but Jesus has been called of God to his priesthood in the heavens, the true tabernacle, and we are made partakers of the heavenly calling. The dignity of his Person, the groundwork of his priestly ministry, and the place of its exercise, all alike proclaim the necessity of a change in the law and order of worship. The law with its ritual and worship all hang consistently together, but it made nothing perfect—it bore on its front plain marks of infirmity. There is great strength of contrast in the last verse; it is not merely men contrasted with the Son, but men having infirmity. And so the word of the oath has its priesthood and order in beautiful harmony; but to attempt to blend the two, as the Church has done and is doing, is to introduce the worst confusion. Jesus has not his honor, and the saints have not their privilege.

Let us remember that under the Levitical priesthood there was no provision made for any, either priest or people, to follow Aaron within the veil. Aaron in this respect had no fellows. Now the Son also takes this place of Aaron's. He has no fellows in any of his sacrificial work, or in offering the incense. But he has fellows within the place of his ministry. Under the Levitical priesthood there was no fellowship even as to place between the people and the priests, they worshipped in distinct places; but now all is changed, for that order is now introduced of which it is said, "He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one." "We are one in life, and therefore identified as to position with Christ Jesus. He can say in heaven itself, "Behold I and the children which God hath given me." There was indeed the great principle of representation in the Levitical priesthood,—Aaron bore the names of the tribes of Israel on his shoulders and on his heart,—but there was not the truth of union. There could not be; or even on the supposition that there could have been, what would it have availed—union with a man having infirmity. But now that we have such an High Priest as the Son, in the power of an endless life; and that he who sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one; to have such an one not only as our representative, but as him with whom we are united, what an entire change must this effect as to the whole order of worship.

Aaron bore the names of the tribes as something apart from himself, but our High Priest as completely identified with himself. How far all typical representation falls short of the reality! Just as in the sacrifices, one might see the innocent suffering for the guilty; but the reality—the Holy Lamb of God suffering for sin, feeling the shame of it as his own, and enduring the wrath of God—was incapable of being represented. So there might be some faint shadow of identity between the priest and the people; but the reality of living union with the Son, was incapable of being typically expressed. It is the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus which is now the great order of God. It is not only through him that we come, but "now in Christ Jesus ye who were far off are brought nigh by the blood of Jesus." There is now therefore the anointed High Priest, even Jesus, but he has fellows anointed also; those who worship through him are not the people who stand without, but priests sanctified for the immediate presence of God. The law of worship now is entirely priestly.

“By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.”

Can we find language so suitable to describe the danger of returning to ordinances, or the setting up again a priesthood on the earth between the Great High Priest and his fellows, as that found in the sixth and tenth chapters of the Epistle to the Hebrews? May not these passages well make the ear that hears them, in these our days, to tingle? And can we find any occupation so blessed whilst journeying through the wilderness, —any so fitted to raise our souls out of the dust, and make us tread in spirit the heavenly courts, —as to consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession Christ Jesus?

Holy brethren, does it appear to you that this paper is not strictly on the subject of worship? You will find it only so in appearance; for our power of real acceptable worship is in allowing nothing to come in between our souls and our Great High Priest. It is what he is, not what we are, that we have to consider. And are we ever so truly exalted as when magnifying—him? Is it not most practically true in this sense also, that he which humbleth himself shall be exalted?

A Minister of the Sanctuary

HEBREWS 8:1

It is profitable to seek to place ourselves in the circumstances of those to whom the New Testament scriptures were immediately addressed. Not that the same scriptures are not immediately applicable to ourselves; they are so because applying to that which is essential and characteristic; but by placing ourselves among those first addressed, we shall the better discern the way in which the Holy Ghost regards and uses the circumstances of the saints in communicating truth unto them. Indeed, when circumstances are thus duly regarded, we shall find perspicuity given to many statements which otherwise might be general or vague; and this will be found especially the case, when any direct contrast with the habit of thought and tone of feeling of those addressed is intended.

A Hebrew under the law moved in a religious atmosphere. From his childhood he had been accustomed to look with veneration on the goodly buildings of the temple. He was instructed concerning sacrifice and incense. He was brought up to revere the consecrated priesthood. The priest in his consecrated garments, coming forth to bless the worshipping people, must have been an impressive though familiar object to him. He must necessarily have attached the most solemn importance to the unseen work of that priest within the holy place.

Now suppose such an one as this, taught of God, and so receiving his testimony concerning Christ; —he believes on Jesus, owning him as the Son of God, the Christ of God, and the Lamb of God. He finds peace in his soul unknown before; and he has confidence with God through Jesus Christ, by whom he has now received the reconciliation.

We know that thousands of Hebrews were thus brought into light and peace through faith in Jesus; to such was the Epistle to the Hebrews primarily addressed.

But how would such believers stand in relation to their former associations? Having peace of conscience through the blood of Jesus, would they continue worshippers according to the order of that economy, in which they had been brought up? No. That which gave them peace would destroy every old association. Having learned the preciousness of the blood, by finding through it remission of sins, they would have to learn it as equally precious, because by it they were redeemed from the “vain conversation received by tradition from their fathers.” They would have access as worshippers to heaven itself—and that too as a holy priesthood—there to “worship the Father in spirit and in truth.”

The consequence must be that in the city of solemnities itself such an one finds himself in the wilderness. He can no longer have fellowship with the multitude who keep holy-day. His temple and his High Priest are now in heaven; and if he went up to the temple in Jerusalem at the hour of prayer, he there has to testify that Israel are blindly groping amidst the shadows, and that all the promises of God are yea and amen in him whom they had slain, but whom God had exalted to his own right hand. But though thus full of heavenly communion and intelligence, such an one would

appear to the eyes of those around him, as though he had been cut off from Israel; yea, he might actually have been put out of the synagogue. (John 16:2.) If he would speak of worshipping God, he would have it cast in his teeth, that he had neither sanctuary, nor altar, nor sacrifice, nor priest! Hard indeed must it have been to have maintained that he had all these, when apparently he could not point to one of them. Hard indeed to hold fast the confidence and rejoicing of the hope steadfast unto the end with a single eye to JESUS all this was possible. Yea there ought to have been a confidence and rejoicing in the assertion of what he had found, as far superior to all that he had left. All he had left was visible and present indeed—things which were palpable to sense—and all he had found was known only to faith; but still he could say what he had. He could testify that the only value of all that God once established amidst Israel, was found in its representing that which he now in substance knew in heaven. And he could therefore say, “Taste and see that the Lord is gracious.”

But how strange and irregular must it have appeared to such to assemble for worship without any single visible essential of worship; no prescribed or consecrated place; no sacrifice; no ministering priest. But here came in the profession—that all these they had. “We have,” says the apostle, “such an High Priest, who is set on the right hand of the majesty in the heavens, a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.” Throughout this Epistle, the apostle takes most lofty ground. He takes his place as one with us—i.e. one of the Church—and tells out what we have. He will not allow any pretension to interfere with ours. And he seeks to stir us up to the holding fast of our profession. But has there not been sad declension here? We have been false witnesses of the grace of God; as though he had not blessed us already so abundantly that we can, to the glory of his grace, challenge every pretension and assert our profession to be yet higher. Oh, that the Lord would lead our souls consciously to take this standing, that by it we might be able to contradict every pretension of the world and of the flesh, whether religious or otherwise! We have a great High Priest that is passed into the heavens.” “We have an hope as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil.” “We have an altar whereof those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat.” And, we have “a minister of the sanctuary.”

Let us now turn to the consideration of the Lord Jesus, as this “Minister of the Sanctuary.”

The apostle Paul was not a minister of the sanctuary; he worshipped there through the ministry of another. He had as much need of this ministry as any of his converts. He stood on the same level with them, in relation to ministry in the sanctuary. He had indeed a most blessed ministry, in a peculiar sense his own, the ministry of reconciliation among the Gentiles. He had received the reconciliation through Jesus Christ himself, and by his preaching, others likewise received it; he could speak of it as special grace, that he should have been put into the ministry: “I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, who was before a blasphemer and persecutor and injurious.” But he was not called out from the multitude of believers, as the priest was from the multitude of Israel, to minister for them, before the Lord (Hebrews 5); though he surely was a chosen vessel to bear the Lord’s name to the Gentiles, and though he had a certain place of authority and eminence in the Church itself. But however distinct may have been his ministry—or even ministries—he was one of a common priesthood. He well knew that there were but two ranks in Christian priesthood; the Great High Priest and the priests. He was one of the priests; and therefore, though he could magnify his office

as an apostle of the Gentiles, he could not magnify his priesthood. Hence, he writes authoritatively as the apostle, while before the Great High Priest he is but a brother among brethren. The great subject of priesthood, which lie so largely discusses in the Epistle to the Hebrews, demanded that the apostle should himself take the place of a worshipper; that thus his own peculiar office might sink into nothing before the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus. Thus, does the apostle acknowledge and declare that Jesus, the Son of God, alone, is the representative priest on the earth. Would that in this Paul had had more successors.

The apostle Paul then was a minister of the Gospel to every creature under heaven, and a minister too of Christ's body the Church, on earth (Colossians 1:23-25); but it was not by the intervention of his ministry that any worshipped. The disciples needed his instruction and guidance, and were to know that he had authority; but they were enabled to worship as well in the absence as in the presence of the apostle. He might have led their worship, or he might have followed others in it. his office was lost, so to speak, when they stood together in the attitude of worshippers before the Great High Priest: he might have prayed with the disciples, (as Acts 20:36,) or they with him (as Acts 21:5). It is indeed most important clearly to distinguish between the common standing of all regenerate persons as priests unto God, and diversities of ministry. Paul and Barnabas were set apart (Acts 13) for a distinct ministry to the Gentiles; but this was not setting them apart as ministers of the sanctuary. They could be ministers of the sanctuary in no other sense than that in which all saints minister there. If they presume to more than this, they must deny either the proper standing of the saints of God, or the alone place of the Son of God. For in the sense of being "ordained for men in things pertaining to God," Jesus is the ONLY minister of the sanctuary. It is therefore no light matter to set up such a pretension as that which an ordered priesthood certainly does. It interferes with the prerogative of Jesus. It is a fearful instance therefore of human presumption or ignorance.

The sanctuary in which Jesus ministers is not on earth, as that was in which Aaron ministered, but in heaven itself. Even there he is pre-eminent; "anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows;" but all the redeemed saints of God worship there, through him, as equal one with another. But it is nevertheless true that God has now a ministry on earth as well as a ministry in heaven. But these ministries differ most essentially. The ministry on earth goes forth from God to bring sinners to himself, upon the ground of his manifested love in the gift and sacrifice of his Son. The ministry of the sanctuary is a ministry on behalf of those already brought nigh unto God by the blood of Jesus. In the former there is nothing positively priestly. The minister of the Gospel does nothing for the sinner—for we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord—but he proclaims what the Son of God has done; what God has wrought, and what God declares. On the other hand, the minister of the sanctuary is actually occupied with doing something for the worshipper; for those who have come to God through Jesus, and who have free access into the holiest of all. The minister of the Gospel has to tell sinners of the work of sacrifice; a work done on earth, a finished work, never to be repeated: but the work of the priest is continuous; it is a work on behalf of believers alone; a work for the true worshippers, and which they still need. To confound these ministries is sad confusion indeed. To make the ministry of the Gospel priestly in its character is to deceive sinners into the thought that they are worshippers; and it is at the same time entirely to obscure the blessed ministry of reconciliation. Nor is that error less dangerous which has confounded the ministry of the Spirit, by gift, in the Church, with the true service of the one minister

of the sanctuary. It is an awful invasion of his office to suppose that any in the Church are peculiarly priests.

Now if this great truth has been sufficiently cleared, that there may be many ministers of the gospel, and many specially gifted to minister in the Church, but only one minister of the sanctuary, it remains for us to consider the Lord Jesus in this office. And there are three points on which I would rest. 1st. —The minister himself. 2nd. —The place of his ministry. 3rd. —The character of his service and our special interest in it.

1. “We have such an High Priest.” The person of our Great High Priest, and the connection between his person and his office, having been already rested on in a previous paper, I would now only say, that this language is in its character boasting. And it is rightly so; for we may glory in the Lord. It is right to challenge any comparison with him; and to leave who will to draw the conclusion. But this is not all said of him here: it is added, “who is set down at the right hand of the majesty in the heavens.” It has been noticed already, that the attitude of sitting down, contrasted with the standing of Aaron, shows that the one has completed the work of sacrifice, which the other never did. But there is this also to be noticed—the place in which he is seated, “on the right hand of the throne of the majesty in the heavens.” How every expression of honor and dignity seems to be collected together here. What a seat is this! There is our High Priest seated and there is this other blessed truth; —he has taken his seat there at the call of God. “The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou at my right hand till I make thy enemies thy footstool.” Aaron was called of God, but he was never called upon to sit down even in the worldly sanctuary. He was never even spoken with as Moses, face to face by God. He was not up in the Mount with God in the glory as was Moses, he was below with the people. But what a value was stamped by God on the sacrificial work of Christ when he was thus called of him. The exaltation of Jesus to the seat on which he now sits proves most abundantly the value of the blood he has shed. How precious that blood must be to God—how perfect its efficacy in his sight? Let us often meditate on the dignity of our High Priest as shown, not only by his person, but also by the seat unto which he has been called of God; remembering that he has taken that seat in consequence of his having “by himself purged our sins.”

The word here rendered “minister” is not the word ordinarily applied to the ministry of the gospel. The apostle Paul does indeed once apply it to himself (Romans 15)— “the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles;” but in that instance the apostle is not speaking of ordinary Gospel ministry, but of his own special ministry as the apostle of the uncircumcision. This instance therefore only serves to mark the peculiar force of the term. It properly means one who sustains some distinct and onerous office for the public good; and, in some instances, at his own cost: such, for example, as the sheriff among ourselves.

The word has been transferred to our language in liturgy; the public service of God. It might therefore be rendered—” as soon as the days of his ministration (liturgy) were accomplished.” (Luke 1:23.) Zacharias, as a priest, performed divine service for the people. So it is said of the Lord a little below in this eighth chapter, “but now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry” (liturgy); more excellent than that of Zacharias or the Jewish priests. He alone performs divine service for others. He does this, as the great public minister of the Church in heaven. Any number among the saints might minister and fast before the Lord on earth (Acts 13), but they did not stand

in such a relation to God as is involved in performing a service for others which they could not undertake. No saint stands towards God in such a relation to any other saint; —if any assume it, they in this assume the exclusive prerogative of the Son of God.

I believe that our souls are little aware of the deadening effect of looking to any set of men to perform public service for us to God. It must necessarily take away the soul from immediate dependence on the great public minister, and his divine service in heaven. It is not that everyone is qualified to lead the public worship of the saints, any more than that everyone is qualified to teach the saints or to preach the gospel; but there are none who stand in the same relation to the Church that Zacharias did to the Jews. (Luke 1) None who are called to perform service for them, so that if such a person was wanting, the saints could not worship. Let the saints ever remember this, and guard against any intrusion on that office solely belonging to the Great High Priest. Divine service is now performed in heaven by the one Great High Priest, and he is jealous of the intrusion of any into this his office; as he was, when Korah and his company intruded into the office of those whom he once ordained to perform divine service on the earth.

Divine service, then, is only performed for us in heaven. We may, i.e., all Christians may, perform it on earth before the Lord, as did they of Antioch. (Acts 13) I do not at all doubt the antiquity of liturgies, nor raise any question as to their spirituality; but this I may safely affirm, that not a vestige is to be found in the New Testament of an ordered ritual; and that a liturgy could have had no place in the Church, till it had lost the sense of the One who performs divine service in heaven, by going back to the pattern of an earthly priesthood; and how all the systems, with which we now see liturgies connected, show that such declension there has been. That such was the tendency even in the apostle's days, the epistle to the Hebrews abundantly proves. That some had drawn back and neglected the assembling of themselves together is distinctly stated. And as the Spirit of God in this epistle expressly meets such a condition of things, this epistle becomes of peculiar value to the saints in days like the present, when Satan is so plainly working in the same way.

Remember, it is no question between the comparative advantage of one ritual above another; or whether there may not be evangelical truth and spiritual breathing in a liturgy; it is a much more solemn question. It is a question concerning the assumption by men of an office belonging alone to the Son of God. Korah and his company might have intended to adhere ever so strictly to the directions for priestly service; but that was not the question; it was one of personal intrusion into an office unto which God had not called them. Indeed, they perished with censers and incense in their hands; the controversy of God was with them. And just so is it of all false assumption of office in the Church but is not a question of what may or may not be done in the office; it is the intrusion into it which is so fearful a sin; for is not reproach cast upon the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ in heaven—is he not trodden under foot, if the thought is allowed of the necessity of any one person, or any order of persons, to perform divine service for us on earth? “WE HAVE”—blessed be his name! — “a minister of the sanctuary” always performing divine service for us above. Be it our souls' joy to know it more and more.

2. We must now glance at the place of his ministry; his “more excellent ministry.” “A minister of the sanctuary, and of ‘the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.”

Moses was indeed faithful; he did everything, “as the Lord commanded Moses,” unto the most Minute detail. Everything was made according to the direction of God; all the vessels of ministry

were arranged in the order prescribed. "And he reared up the court round about the tabernacle, and the altar, and set up the hanging of the court gate. So Moses finished the work. Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord tilled the tabernacle; and Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle." This was the tabernacle which man had pitched; beautiful indeed and glorious, yet not the true tabernacle; it was only the shadow of that. And now the shadow is past; as it is said, "A shadow of good things to come, but the body is of Christ." But still, do not our minds linger around the earthly shadows, and become occupied with the things made with hands, instead of those which are made without hands?

In the true tabernacle there is no human instrumentality whatever; all is of God. The furniture and the vessels, all so curiously wrought, are now only to be found in the various graces and several offices of the Lord Jesus Christ— "the body is of Christ." And all these are now displayed and exercised in heaven for us; he can stand in the immediate presence of God, there presenting for us his own fullness of excellency. Moses, the servant, could not bear the glory conferred on the tabernacle he had pitched; he was much inferior to that which his own hands had reared; but Christ, as a Son, is over his own house, and is himself its furniture and its glory.

What a solemn lesson are we taught here concerning earthly and human things. Human instrumentality—that which is "made with hands"— "of this building" (creation)—whether respect to place, persons, or things, ever fails, and is all disowned of God. Nothing will stand but that which is "made without hands," i.e., of God. Men may think they honor God by rearing magnificent buildings, and dignifying them with the name of temple, or house of God; but they cannot be the true, because man and not God has founded them. Their device and their order all show them to be of the earth. It is well indeed if the very appearance of our worship here testifies that it is not of the worldly order and pattern. And this will be so, the more we realize that the place of worship is now changed from earth to heaven. There it is that the minister of the sanctuary exercises his most blessed office. The Lord Jesus Christ exercised no such ministry on earth; "for if he were on earth, he should not be a priest;" and therefore our place of worship must be heaven, because there are no accredited priests of God on earth to offer gifts or to perform divine service. (v. 4.)

III. And now briefly as to the ministry itself. For the Lord Jesus Christ ministers unto God in the priest's office; ministering for us in it," we have such an High Priest."

The ministry of Aaron before God was in one of its parts representative; he bore the names of the children of Israel on his shoulders and on his heart, "when he went into the holy place, for a memorial before the Lord continually." This blessed ministry the Lord Jesus sustains for us. But not occasionally, as Aaron when he went in, but constantly; he appears in the presence of God for us. He ever presents the saints before God as associated with all his own fullness of excellency and glory. And this in the presence of God within the veil, as it is said, "whither the forerunner is for us entered." And again, "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." How blessed is this: our names written in heaven, not in precious stones, but as "a seal upon his heart, and as a seal upon his arm." In manifesting his own perfectness and glory in the presence of God, Jesus appears for us! The real identification of the Church with Christ was but faintly shadowed by the garments of glory and beauty worn by Aaron: Then there was also the ministry of incense. This

was a most precious ministry, because it was the medium of the worship of the people. But the offering of incense—all variously compounded as it was—was only occasional, and it might be interrupted. The fragrance of it was not perpetually before God. The plague had begun among the people, destructive judgment had come forth, when Moses bid Aaron take “a censer and put fire therein from off the altar, and put on incense;” all this had to be done before Aaron could run into the congregation and stand between the dead and the living. “Behold, the plague was begun among the people; and he put on incense, and made an atonement for the people and the plague was stayed.” (Numbers 16) But now the ministry of incense is perpetual: “He ever liveth to make intercession for us.” Hence, he is able to save right through, from the beginning to the end. No plague of destructive judgment can come forth against the Church because of this. It is constantly upheld in perfectness by the power of the intercession of Jesus. It is this whichever keeps it in its right place before God, however infirm or erring here.

The blessedness of the ministry of him who ministers for us in the true tabernacle, is, that it is entirely independent of us. It is by him for us. Our conscious enjoyment of it will depend indeed on our walk, on our humbleness, on our self-judgment, on many things; but the ministry itself depends alone on our unfailing High Priest. He is a faithful minister, ever performing his functions in a manner well-pleasing to God; whether our souls are realizing the value of what he is doing or not. Every saint is upheld by the intercession of Jesus even in his most thoughtless mood. Priesthood is part of the work of grace—grace that provides for the putting away our every sin, and aiding our every infirmity, and bearing our every waywardness, in order that we may never be out of the presence of God. Hence, the moment the conscience of a careless saint is reawakened, he may find full and instant access to God, because, though he has failed, the minister of the sanctuary has not. Long before he is alive to his failure, he is debtor to the ministry of Jesus for having been kept from falling. Little did Simon think of the sifting power of Satan, but the Lord, who had prayed that his faith might not fail, could point out to him his danger. And so with us oftentimes. We see our failures, or the might and craft of our enemies, and then how precious is the thought that the intercession of Jesus for us has been over all. We are led to value the intercession of Jesus—after failure or danger is discovered—as surely Peter was; but its real value is, that it is perpetually offered, and perpetually prevalent. However, we may fail, therefore, the resources of faith can never fail; for faith reaches out to God, and God’s provisions of grace in Jesus, over every failure. If there be one deeper anguish of soul than another, it surely must be for a saint to become conscious of sin, but to be without faith to look to God’s gracious provision to meet it; but Jesus prays that our faith may not fail.

We are apt to regard the intercession of Christ only as occasionally exercised on our behalf, and exercised because we have applied to it; yea, we know that men have gone so far as to make it appear that the intercession of Jesus was only to be called out by a secondary intercession of others, such as the Virgin, or departed saints, or the Church. But how false is all this! No; his ministry is marked by the same grace now as when on earth. “I have prayed for thee” was his word to Simon Peter. And so, when he saw the multitudes fainting, he well knew what he would do, and do without being asked. And so now, his intercession is of the same grace; it is according to his own divine and gracious estimate of our many needs. He knows how, in our practical danger, weakness, and foolishness, we look in the eye of God, and he ever makes intercession for us accordingly; maintaining us thus in his own fragrant perfectness. In the challenge of the apostle as

to where a charge can be brought against God's elect, he winds up all with this, as though he could go no higher, "Who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."

In another aspect the present ministry of Jesus is one of offering; as it is said, "wherefore it is of necessity that this man has somewhat also to offer." Or, as it is subsequently said, "in which were offered gifts that could not make him that did the service perfect as pertaining to the conscience."

Under the law, the worshipper might bring his offering to the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, but then the priestly ministration began. The priest must lay it on the altar, where alone it could be accepted of the Lord. The worshipper himself could not offer immediately to the Lord. It was only through the priestly ministration that it was an offering made by fire, a sweet savor unto the Lord. But now it is by the offering of Jesus himself, once for all, that we are sanctified as worshippers. Jesus gave himself an offering and a sacrifice unto God of a sweet-smelling savor; and now whatever comes up to God through him has the value of his own offering attached to it, and is of a sweet-smelling savor also. Thus God perpetually attests his own value of the offering of Jesus; even by accepting as precious, through him, all done or offered in his name. To ask in the name of Jesus is therefore of unfailing efficacy, because God is always well-pleased in him. We know, as priests, the divine estimate of him through whom we draw near to offer. What a comfort then it is to be assured that our persons, our prayers, our thanksgivings, and our services, have all of them, before God, the sweet savor of the name of Jesus set upon them. Everything we desire or do, as having the Spirit of Christ Jesus, however mingled, or however feeble, is thus accepted for Jesus' sake.

And remember he is a perpetual offerer, as well as a perpetual interceder. He himself says of those who know not God in him and through him, "Their sorrows shall be multiplied that hasten after another god: their drink-offerings of blood will I not offer, nor tales up their names into my lips" But to us, because of this his ministry for us, the word is, "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks (making confession) in his name:"

It was the priest alone who knew how to appropriate the sacrifice; he only knew what was for God, what for himself, what for the worshipper, and what was refuse. It is indeed most blessed for us that there is a minister for us which separates the precious from the vile; and which orders all according to God. Our Great High Priest thus ministers for us. He takes up that which seems to us so clogged with infirmity and so mingled with impurity, that we can discern no preciousness in it; and, separating the precious from the vile, he offers what is really of the Spirit in the full value of his own offering. If any soul is awakened to the desire of serving the Lord, what sorrow have they found in having to learn the wretched imperfectness of all that which they attempt. But if thus we are oftentimes dispirited and ready to grow weary in well-doing, let us remember this present ministration of Jesus for us; such should know its value, for their labor is not in vain in the Lord. How will "Well done, good and faithful servant," gladden the heart of many by and by, who here have only deplored their constant failures. Think you, dear brethren, that the Philippians thought their trifling remembrance of the apostle Paul, would have found its way before God as an offering made by fire, of a sweet-smelling savor unto God? But it did. The apostle, in communion with the Great High Priest, could see him take it up and present it in his own name. (Philippians 4:18.) Thus, they were producing fruit, through Jesus, precious unto God; even as just before the apostle

had said to them, “being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ unto the praise and glory of God.” (1:11.) Yes, let the saints as priests judge themselves and their works, and if they find, as they assuredly will find, but little of the precious; let them know the one who judges above, and who delights to take out the precious and present it to God in his own perfectness. Oh! if it were not for this ministry on high, how could we read the word, “To do good and to communicate forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.”

A Worldly Sanctuary

We are often in danger of coming short of the truth of God, by attaching to the words of Scripture the technical meaning which they may have in the theology of our own days. The words “carnal,” “flesh,” “world,” and “worldly,” are known to us as expressive of that which is corrupt in itself, and which is disowned of God. But if we do not see that God has had long patience both with the flesh and the world, dealing with them both in a way of probation, previously to his finally giving them up, we shall fall greatly short in apprehending the truth of God. And not only so, but we shall also fail to perceive, that every effort which man is making now, is but the repetition of that which has been previously attempted under far more favorable circumstances, and which has issued in lamentable failure. “Is it not of the Lord of hosts that the people shall labor in the very fire, and the people shall weary themselves for very vanity.

Let us, then, remember that the time was when God said to the children of Israel, “Let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them.” This was “a worldly sanctuary.” A sanctuary suited for God’s dwelling-place in the world, and suitable also for the worship of a people of the world. God had instituted Israel to be his worldly people. He had fenced them off from the nations round about them by statutes, and judgments, and ordinances; and he had prescribed likewise “ordinances of divine service,” adapted to their sanctuary and to their standing. All here was consistent—all was worldly. Worldly worship, therefore, was then a holy thing in itself; for God had then appointed it. And it would be so now, also, if God had a worldly people and a worldly sanctuary; but seeing he now has neither the one nor the other, the attempt to approach God, even by ordinances of divine service which he himself originally prescribed, is most sinful. “He that killeth an ox, is as if he slew a man; he that offereth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog’s neck; he that offereth an oblation, as if he offered swine’s blood; he that burneth incense, as if he blessed an idol. Yea, they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their abominations. I also will choose their delusions, and will bring their fears upon them; because when I called, none did answer; when I spake, they did not hear: but they did evil before mine eyes, and chose that in which I delighted not.” This is a solemn word. The very act, which was once a religious act, acceptable to God, as the killing an ox for a sin-offering or a burnt-offering, is, when God delights not in it—but man chooses to do it—of moral guilt, it is as murder before God! The incense which God himself so minutely directed to be compounded, and without which Aaron himself could not appear before the Lord, lest he die; for one to burn that incense, is as if he blessed an idol!

Now, if such was God’s estimate of his own ordinances of worldly worship, when those to whom they were given used them corruptly and willfully, what must be the iniquity of introducing an order of things distinctly set aside by God? But has not this been done in the history of the Church, and is it not with renewed zeal being attempted in our own day? Forms and rituals of worship, suited only to a worldly sanctuary and a worldly people, are sanctioned and established on every hand. And this is most fearful sin. The prophet of old was commissioned to rebuke Israel for their corruption and abuse of the worldly sanctuary and its worldly ordinances; but the apostle rebukes the saints of God when tending to turn back to worldly elements. God was dishonored of old by

any neglect of the worldly sanctuary; he is dishonored now by any attempt to copy or re-establish it. This enables us to determine the character of things now done in the professing Church. Such things, for example, as an altar on the earth, repeated sacrifice, the burning of incense, the consecrating of buildings and of ground, and of persons also, by outward ceremonial. Such like rites and ceremonies were so early borrowed from the Jewish worldly ritual, and transferred into the Christian Church, as to have become almost universal shortly after the apostles' days. But where is their warrant in the New Testament? Nay, how can any read therein, and not see the introduction of such things prophesied of, and solemnly warned against? How searching, then, is such a word as this—"I also will choose their delusions, and will bring their fears upon them; because when I spake, they did not hear!" How needful is that recall to the only source of authority found in the word, "He that hath an ear let him hear;" "he that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit says to the Churches." This marks at once the place from whence our wisdom and guidance must be sought. Not in antiquity, or in the examples of Judaized Churches; but in the unquestioned teaching of the Holy Spirit himself to the Churches. This leads us away from all whose wisdom or authority can for a moment be questioned; it places the word of God itself before the conscience of every saint. Errors, however ancient, or venerable, or attractive, are thus detected, and the child of faith is forbidden to countenance them. This makes the path of faith at all times sure, though oftentimes very difficult; for nothing can be more sure than the steps of one guided by the Spirit of God and the word of God, and yet nothing more difficult than to have to walk in separation from all that exists around. It is, indeed, difficult to have to wind one's way through things so perplexing and so different as the religious systems of our own day. We have to avoid, on one hand, systems formed in imitation of things past; and on the other, systems more characterized by anticipations of things future. We have to allow that such things were once given by God, and that they will yet again be introduced by him, while invariably contending that they are positively opposed to his present workings.

There was a worldly sanctuary; —there is yet, in the coming dispensation, to be a worldly sanctuary; but now there is none. Existing systems are variously compounded of things proper to these three distinct periods. Some have drawn most from the past, some from the future, some, it may be, most from the present; but all involve sad confusion in the things of God. How many, who may in some measure have been emancipated from the ordinances of the ancient worldly sanctuary of the past dispensation, do not allow that there is a worldly sanctuary yet to come, have consequently chosen and instituted that in which God delighteth not, as much as others who are professedly imitating the ancient ordinances. Thus, while denouncing worldly elements, they themselves have invested themselves with that which can only properly belong to the worldly part of the dispensation to come. Thus, they are involved in the sin of mingling things heavenly and things earthly. And is not all this a work of the flesh? Is it not an admission of worldly principles into the Church of God? Do we not see this in the fond desire for official distinction, dedicated buildings, permanent institutions and ordinances, and attempts to attract worldly repute, so common to the systems around? For all this is not confined to the Church of Rome, or the Protestant establishments of Europe, but, with scarcely less prominence, characterizes the systems of Dissenters also. And surely all these things, under whatever form seen, must be alike offensive to God. We may go back to some ancient institutions of God, or forward to something he intends yet to introduce, or we may assert our own right to worship according to a pattern of our own devising; but in each and all these cases we subject ourselves to that word, "When I spake

they did not hear.”

It is important therefore to show that there yet will be a worldly sanctuary and worldly worship. This is very largely revealed in the prophets.

Their subject of hope is the restored nation, restored polity, and restored worship of Israel; but all, when so restored, under and in connection with the Lord Jesus Christ. Now the Christian Church has in a great measure applied these predictions to itself, and hence we have the thought of a Christian nation, instead of the holy nation now to be gathered from out of all nations—hence too the thought of the union of the Church and the State—a thought to be roost blessedly fulfilled when Christ as a King and Priest shall sit upon his throne;—hence too the antedating of the clay when the kings of the earth are to bring their glory and honor unto the holy city—hence the constant invitations which are given to the world to contribute its aid and patronage to the work of the Church. All this has secularized Christianity, and given a worldly character to its position and its worship.

In the prophet Isaiah we read, “Mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people.” That is, God would have an house on earth, a worldly sanctuary, but it should be open to all, it should not be confined to Israel. The Israel of that future day would have a standing higher than that which belonged to them as the natural seed of Abraham, and in that standing others should be associated with them, even those who were naturally sons of the stranger. Joined to the Lord, these should be brought to his holy mountain, and made joyful in his house of prayer. The Lord Jesus, the Master of the heavenly house now, and in due time the builder also of the earthly house and worldly sanctuary, adverts to this scripture in the sequel of his ministry. Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them that sold doves, and said unto them, “Is it not written, My house shall be called an house of prayer for all nations?” (Mark 11:17.) It never was this in its first standing. But when it is of another building, then many nations will come and say, “Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths; for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.” Here we have most clearly a worldly sanctuary, a metropolitan temple on the earth—the fountain of legislation and instruction for all who fear the Lord. Christians may perhaps think that to establish a cathedral on Mount Zion would be an approximation towards the fulfillment of this word. But if that were done the word would still be, “The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me, and where is the place of my rest? For all these things bath mine hand made, and all these things have been, saith the Lord: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.”

Ezekiel in his vision witnessed the departure of the glory of the Lord, first from the house and then from the earth (chapter 10. 11.); but in the forty-third chap he says, “And the glory of the Lord came into the house by the way of the—ate whose prospect is towards the east.... and behold the glory of the Lord filled the house.... And he said unto rue, Son of man, the place of my throne and the place of the soles of my feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel forever, and my holy name shall the house of Israel no more defile.” Here again we read of that worldly sanctuary yet to be set up.

But not to multiply quotations, let us only revert to two more, both of which lead us onward from the time of the rebuilding of the temple of Zerubbabel. "Thus, saith the Lord of hosts, yet once it is a little while and I will shake the heavens and the earth, and the sea and the dry land, and I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with my glory, saith the Lord of hosts.... The glory of this house shall be greater, the latter than the former, saith the Lord of hosts; and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts." Here we must note that this worldly sanctuary is set up after the heavens and the earth have been shaken, which, according to the testimony of the apostle in the twelfth chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews, has not yet taken place.

Again: we read in the prophet Zechariah (chap. 6: 12), "Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is the BRANCH; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall blind the temple of the Lord; even he shall build the temple of the Lord; and he shall bear the glory, and sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a Priest upon his throne; and the counsel of peace shall be between them both."

Now all these testimonies, and they might be greatly multiplied, tell us of a worldly sanctuary yet to be set up; but not after the old order. There God will be known as the God of peace, even where the real glory will be, where Jesus will sit as a Priest upon his throne. There will be ordinances of divine service there, and ministering priests, and a worshipping multitude. One of those ordinances is mentioned in the last prophet referred to: "All the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year, to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles."

The conclusion therefore from these Scriptures is, that there was a worldly sanctuary suited to a worshipping people in the flesh on the earth—and that there is yet to be a worldly sanctuary in connection with the New covenant, suitable for the true circumcision, the true spiritual seed, on the earth. (Isaiah 57) But there is no such sanctuary now. Now there is the heavenly sanctuary only. And this is the contrast so carefully drawn by the Holy Spirit in the ninth chapter of the Hebrews.

The first tabernacle in connection with the worldly sanctuary had its place for a while. During its continuance the way into the holiest of all was not yet laid open, nor could there be any purging of the conscience. Now the contrast to this first tabernacle is not a second, set up like that on the earth, and in which the worshippers are to be kept at a distance from the holiest, but one set up by God himself in heaven, in which those only can enter who are cleansed by the blood of Jesus and anointed with the Holy Spirit; but into which all such do now in spirit enter as alike accepted and equally priests. The first tabernacle is therefore in this chapter looked at in contrast with "the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building," in which the Church now worships. Such a sanctuary as this heavenly sanctuary alone befits the "holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling." Man, as man, can recognize the propriety of splendid buildings for the worship of God, and he has ever acted accordingly. But the spiritual house has nothing tangible in it. It is not adapted to the world, nor does it present attractions to the flesh. To one who only judged by appearances there might be some around for the slander, that Christians were Atheists; for there was no visible or imposing attraction in their worship. Their worship was in the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands. They did not attempt in their places of assembly to vie with the imposing architecture either of the temple at Jerusalem

or the heathen temples around them. They had not then heard of “Christian ecclesiastical architecture,” nor was the Church then the patron of the arts. Their temple was riot of this building.

And the ministry in the heavenly sanctuary corresponds with all this. It is complete and perfect, because performed by one who is divine and who is beyond the range of this world’s cognizance. Christ is entered once into the holiest, having obtained eternal redemption. The eye of man could scan the beautiful proportions of an earthly sanctuary, and mark the service of an earthly priesthood, but faith alone can enter into the heavenly sanctuary or delight in its glories. No one of its beauties or glories is displayed to the senses—it is the soul alone which has learned the preciousness of Jesus which is now able to say, “How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts.” The Lamb is the light and the glory of it. If he be not the object of faith, no wonder that men should again make the sanctuary worldly. But even when God had his worldly sanctuary here, how little of its beauty was displayed to the ordinary worshipper. He saw not the golden sanctuary, nor the cherubims and vessels of gold, —these things were most carefully hidden from his sight. The priests were charged to cover up the vessels of ministry, even from the sight of the Levites, who were to carry them. (Numbers 4:20.) The eyes of the priests alone were to rest on these holy things. Now it is the anti-types of those veiled and precious types with which we have to do. All believers now are priests unto God, and hence now all is open to faith; but open to faith alone. What eye hath not seen, God hath revealed to us by his Spirit. The Holy Ghost is specially come down from heaven in testimony of what he knoweth to be there. He could not witness of a heavenly temple and a heavenly priesthood, until the builder and sustainer of the temple, and the perpetual Priest, was in heaven.

All attempts to establish a worldly sanctuary now are therefore in direct opposition to the present testimony of the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost by His coming was the conviction of the world’s sin in having rejected Jesus, because testifying that God had exalted him; but that blessed Spirit is also, by his very presence in the Church, the conviction of the sin of every attempt now to set up a worldly sanctuary. He has to testify only of a High Priest now ministering in the heavens, “Jesus, the Son of God, who is passed into the heavens,” and consequently he can only lead the soul to him he glorifies. All who worship “in Spirit” must therefore worship in the heavenly sanctuary, for there alone does the Spirit lead.

But man, as man, knows not the Spirit of God; the world cannot receive him. (John 14) It is no part of his ministry to guide the flesh into the presence of God, or to teach it to worship. His very presence here is God’s most emphatic and solemn testimony of the entire ruin of man, and his utter incompetency for any good thing. Regeneration must therefore precede worship. The only true worshippers now, are those who are separated unto God through “sanctification of the Spirit.” These are now, “the holy priesthood,” “the royal nation.” And it is well for the saints themselves to bear constantly in mind this elementary truth. For it will enable them to test all that assumes to be worship. We may have the senses gratified, the imagination exercised, sentiment and feeling kindled, and we may mistake such things for worship; but they are fleshly things, and when found in saints they sadly grieve the Spirit of God. These are things against which the saints have to watch, and which they have to mortify; but these are the things which must be fostered and gratified by the willful introduction of a worldly sanctuary. What more fearful then than to confound such a work with the present work of the Spirit of God. Is not this to confound darkness with light, flesh with Spirit? The whole order of a worldly sanctuary must hinder the present testimony of the

Spirit of God. Now to do despite to the Spirit of grace, to insult the Spirit of God, is indeed fearful sin. But what has the Spirit of grace to do in the worldly sanctuary? There the great points are the service of the ministering priest, and the duties of the suppliant people. Grace is excluded in the whole order. Grace establishes the heart, but the worldly sanctuary leads it back again to meats.

Hence, then, we worship God in the Spirit. Not in sentiment, not in refinement of the imagination, not in fleshly wisdom or in fleshly power, but in the Spirit. And this we are able to do, because the resurrection of Jesus has set aside the order of the flesh and of the world, and introduced us into the heavenly things themselves, and because the Holy Ghost has come to dwell in the Church on earth, from Jesus its Head, exalted in heaven. Any return, therefore, to a worldly sanctuary now, must be as insulting to the Holy Spirit as it is contradictory of the finished work of Jesus.

But consider a moment longer how truly the Holy Ghost is the Spirit of grace. What is its blessed witness to us? Is it not to grace, accomplished in glory in heaven? Jesus by his own blood has entered in once into the holy place, "having obtained eternal redemption." This it is which the Holy Ghost has revealed to us. Christ is there—and there "having obtained eternal redemption;" and he "there appears in the presence of God for us." What need we more than this? Can we not by faith see here the witness of our own present acceptance, and the pledge of our own glory. There then is the scene of our worship; there is our sanctuary—our only sanctuary. And it is into this scene of accomplished and abundant blessedness that the Spirit of God has come to lead our souls. "Set your affection on things above," is his unceasing exhortation to us. May our hearts know more of the peace and glory of that heavenly sanctuary.

And what should be the characteristic of the worship of the heavenly sanctuary? Surely praise for accomplished redemption. And this sacrifice will not be wanting, if our souls realize our heavenly portion. None, indeed, can withhold their tribute of praise, who really worship in that sanctuary. Fullness of joy, and pleasures for evermore, are at God's right hand; and every heart led of the Spirit there, declares, "I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever." Eternal redemption is the solid basis on which all such joy rests. Eternal redemption, found in the perfect work of Jesus—that work which he himself ever presents on our behalf in heaven. "Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice ye righteous, and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart."

The worldly sanctuary knew nothing properly of praise. There was no ministry of song prescribed by Moses. He could sing with the children of Israel the song of redemption after passing the Red Sea (Exodus 15); but it was grace which had brought them over; they sung the triumph of grace. The worldly sanctuary had not then been ordered. In it there was nothing ever accomplished, and therefore no ground-work of praise. There was the constant repetition of the same services; the worshipper's conscience was unpurged, and hence he could never raise the voice of praise and thanksgiving. We speak of the tabernacle in the wilderness. But few even of the strains of the sweet Psalmist of Israel were adapted to the temple service—that temple was a worldly sanctuary, and its blessings earthly; but the ministry of song went beyond all this, anticipating the full and accomplished blessing. Faith could sing then, only because reaching beyond the then present sanctuary; but faith sings now because in its present sanctuary it finds the themes of everlasting praises. Grace and glory, deliverance and victory, the wondrous salvation of God himself, are there the subjects of unceasing praise, for their accomplishment is witnessed by the presence there in glory of our forerunner himself.

Can that heart be tuned to praise which is taught its need of a daily absolution from the lips of another? Can such a soul sing, in the Spirit and with the understanding, psalms and hymns and spiritual songs? Can an unpurged conscience praise? Such things are impossible. For is not the very act of worship regarded as a duty required by God, and so rendered under a sense of law, instead of a blessed privilege arising from the perception and enjoyment of mercy from everlasting to everlasting? The apostle teaches us to give “thanks to him who hath made ‘us meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.’” (Colossians 1) This shows the true ground of thanksgiving and praise to be what grace has accomplished for us in Christ. But if this is not seen and remembered, worship must become a burden instead of our highest privilege. And do we not see that Christians regard the teaching and preaching with which God blesses them far more highly than worship? This is a sure consequence of not remembering the sanctuary in which we worship. Let the soul realize this, and it will instantly perceive what are its grounds of praise, and what the character of its worship. But if a worldly sanctuary is established, or the order of a worldly sanctuary is introduced, our worship must be degraded, and our souls become lean. Such results must ensue if we take for our pattern the worldly sanctuary, instead of by faith and as led of the Spirit, entering into that which is heavenly. There all is done—there we have subject for praise only.

A High Priest of Good Things to Come

It would indeed tend greatly both to comfort and elevate our souls, if we realized the unclouded prospect before us. That which is before us is alone proper to us as redeemed to God by the blood of the Lamb, and as born of God. The present, whether sorrowful or pleasant, is only to be regarded as the times that pass over us, or through which we have to go as we are on the way to our entering into our rest. The present good things and evil things are alike to faith, old things which have passed away, because faith is the substance of things hoped for. And the things hoped for are alone substantial, permanent, unshaken, and satisfying. Every desire of good which man is seeking to realize now, the saint knows can alone be realized when Jesus is manifested in glory with his saints. He has to calculate on disappointment in all circumstances, while he most blessedly learns that hope in the Lord in the midst of all circumstances never disappoints. Often indeed, in his pilgrimage through present things, will he have to say, why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? But still, he knows in whom he has believed, and can say, "Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him who is the health of my countenance and my God." But whilst there is the cheering thought of God's commanding his loving-kindness in the day time, yet the soul is stayed by the prospect of the uninterrupted light of God's countenance—by the prospect, not of occasional, but of uninterrupted, praise.

The true spirit of worship would lead us on into this holy scene. Our present privileges are only ours now, because of what the grace of God has made us to be before him. God calleth things that are not as though they were. Sons before him in Christ, and predestinated to be conformed to the image of Christ, we have the spirit of sons now. Kings and priests unto God, because washed already in the blood of Jesus, we have the spirit of praise given to us now. Hence it is the things which are to come with which we have to do. If we speak of the world, it is the world to come of which we speak; that is, our world, the world subjected to us, and blessed by us. We know the present world as being given into other hands, and therefore it is only the scene of our trial. If we speak of man, and of God being well-pleased in men, we speak of him that is to come, of whom Adam was a type. (Romans 5:14.) If we speak of "good things," they are not the good things in this life, but good things to come. There is "the evil to come," out of which the righteous are taken; there are the good things to come, which the righteous enjoy. The rich man might remember, that he in his lifetime had his good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things. And there might have been even thankfulness for the good things; but there was no enjoyment of God—no real worship of him as far above all the blessings he had given. This is the real spirit of worship, even when in the actual possession of all that God can give; yea, when glorified ourselves, to be able to see in God, and own in him, something far more blessed than anything that we have or can have, and to find the knowledge of him, and the enjoyment of him, to be indeed the pleasures which are at his right hand for evermore.

We find the worship of Israel based upon God's accomplished faithfulness in their enjoyment of present good things. This was prescribed for them of God in the wilderness, but it only took effect in the land. Israel, as God's constituted worshipping people, had to do with the priest in questions

of sin, both in the wilderness and in the land; but the joy of worship was not known by them whilst they were in the wilderness. It was thus the ordinance ran: "And it shall be when thou art come in unto the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance, and possessest it, and dwellest therein, that thou shalt take of the first of all the fruit of the earth, which thou shalt bring of thy land that the Lord thy God giveth thee, and shalt put it in a basket, and shalt go unto the place which the Lord thy God shall choose to place his name there. And thou shalt go unto the priest that shall be in those days, and say unto him, I profess this day unto the Lord thy God, that I am come unto the country which the Lord sware unto our fathers for to give us. And the priest shall take the basket out of thine hand, and set it down before the altar of the Lord thy God."

Here we have Israel's profession—the profession of the grace which had brought him into the present possession of the land, and of the enjoyment of the fruits of it. We have also the priest of Israel's profession, not occupied about details of sin, but more happily occupied in presenting the thanksgiving of the worshipper in the basket of first-fruits, before the altar of the Lord. This must have been the priest's most blessed service. Next comes the confession of the worshipper, "And thou shalt speak and say before the Lord thy God, A Syrian ready to perish was my father, and he went down into Egypt... and the Lord hath brought us into this place, and given us this land, even a land that floweth with milk and honey. And now, behold, I have brought the first-fruits of the land, which thou, O Lord, hast given me. And thou shalt set it before the Lord thy God, and 'worship before the Lord thy God: and thou shalt rejoice in every good thing which the Lord thy God hath given thee." (Deuteronomy 26: 1-11.)

How blessedly was the soul led of God to worship and joy. There was no element of law here, but only the thought of grace. The sense of personal unworthiness only tending to the magnifying the grace of God which had regarded the affliction and oppression of the poor destitute. Redemption ascribed solely to the power of God, and not only known as deliverance from present misery, but as introduction into present blessing. And then the blessings actually enjoyed leading on still to the acknowledgment of God who had given them. "And now I have brought the first-fruits of the land, which thou, O Lord, hast given me." This is the true spirit of worship. The soul is led from the blessings enjoyed, to him who is blessed for evermore; from the gift to the Giver. The joy will not be less in the gift, because there is the acknowledgment of the Giver. "Thou shalt worship before the Lord thy God"—this is the first thing; and thou shalt rejoice in every good thing which the Lord thy God hath given thee. The spirit of false worship is to rejoice in the work of one's hands— "They made a calf in those days, and offered sacrifice unto the idol, and rejoiced in the work of their own hands." But in true worship, God himself is the glory of the worshipper—it is in him that the soul makes her boast. There could not be an ordinance of more joy to Israel than this of the basket of first-fruits: this profession was indeed a blessed one, and the coming to the priest on such an occasion must have expanded their hearts with thankfulness.

But now the great High Priest is passed into the heavens. And whilst his service there meets all our present necessities, his priesthood connects our souls with good things to come. And we coming to him by faith now are enabled to make our profession, and to present our basket of first-fruits, and to worship before the Lord, and to rejoice. It was a statute for Israel and a law of the God of Jacob, to sing aloud unto God their strength; and is it not equally our statute and the law of our God unto us, to "rejoice evermore?" But then we must worship before the Lord first. We must be in the attitude of worshippers, in order to be able to rejoice before the Lord, and rejoice in his

own blessings.

First, we have our profession connected with priesthood. Holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus. Our worship is based on our profession, and our profession is maintained by the priesthood of Jesus. "Seeing, then, we have a great High Priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession." It is indeed a lofty profession that we make. "Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion forever and ever Amen." This is our profession now. Glory will be the actual exercise of that which grace has made us to be. "By grace we are saved." Before God we stand as his own grace has made us; not as we know ourselves to be in our actual circumstances. We are even now blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. It is the Spirit alone which makes us to know, and gives us to enjoy, these blessings here, which are freely given us of God. We are not in the inheritance which God has made ours, but we have the Holy Spirit of promise as the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession. The Holy Spirit is the spirit of promise, and Jesus is the High Priest of good things to come. The Holy Spirit comforts now by shewing "things to come," such as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man to conceive. But when we look to Jesus, we see him already entered into the good things, and entered there for us. It is one of the good things to come, that the world to come is to be subject to Christ and his saints. We do not yet see all things subject to him, but we do see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, on account of suffering death, crowned with glory and honor. It is thus that his exaltation maintains us in the profession that five shall judge the world. "God commands all men to repent," upon the ground that he is about to judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given assurance to all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead." As risen, he is to judge the world in righteousness; but he has tasted death for us, and as risen too, we shall reign with him, and order this world in righteousness. What a solemn joy would the spirit of real worship afford to the soul, if it were thus connected with coming good things! It would exalt, it would sanctify, at the very time the soul was owning its absolute dependence on grace. "A Syrian ready to perish" would be the real expression of that soul. A sinner dead in trespasses and sins, quickened by God's grace, and brought into union with Christ, would never forget his own previous condition, and would gladly remember it, to ascribe worthiness to him alone to whom it is due. "Thou art worthy, for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, and made us kings and priests, and we shall reign on the earth."

To be actually in the sanctuary before God is one of the good things to come. But hope carries us there now; because Jesus the forerunner is there for us already entered. We are exhorted to hold fast "the profession of our hope without wavering." Our hope is actually to be where Jesus is for us now. But in spirit we can worship as being there, because Jesus is there for us—he is a High Priest of good things to come. It is that which we hope for which stamps our character on us. It is so in man—the object he aims at gives the mold to his character. And this is most blessedly true of the saint. "It hath not yet been manifested what we shall be, but this we know, that when he (Jesus) shall be manifested, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is; and every one that hath this hope in him (i.e. Jesus) purifieth himself, even as he is pure." If there be hesitation in our souls as to the accomplished work of Christ, that he has by himself purged our sins; if we consider

not the High Priest of our profession as exercising his ministry for us as already brought nigh to God by the blood he hath shed, so that our hope be pardon and acquittal rather than glory, it will stamp its character on our worship, and make it cold and distant. Neither shall we see the purification of the sanctuary as our purification, but shall be content with the standard of conventional righteousness. How deeply important is it to recognize our profession as a profession of hope, and to own the priesthood of Jesus, not only as meeting all present failure, but as enabling us to maintain our profession of things hoped for! We can, and we ought to, come before God as those who can now say, "The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup: thou maintainest my lot. The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places: yea, I have a goodly heritage." This is our basket of first-fruits; for faith is the substance of things hoped for. Jesus, as risen and ascended now, knows the path of life; he knows that in God's presence there is fullness of joy; he already knows the pleasures at God's right hand for evermore; for it is there he is exalted. But he knows them for us. He is a High Priest to us of these good things to come. Our blessing is to consider him.

Mansions in the Father's house is the most blessed portion of the saints' good things to come. They have not come unto them now; in this sense they are not come into the land. But Jesus, the Son, is in the Father's house, and he comforts us by telling us that there is room there for us as well as for him. He is preparing a place for us, and will come again and receive us to himself, that where he is we may also be. But the great High Priest, Jesus the Son of God, is passed into the heavens for us, and presents us as sons; and in the spirit of sons, because he is there, we worship him now. How blessed is this. God would not have us to wait till we are manifested sons, in order to enter on our happy worship of the Father; but whilst we are sons only in hope, by having the spirit of sons given to us, and having Jesus the—Son before God, we can cry, And, Father, even now. How truly are we saved by hope how needful is it now for our soul's strength and joy, to have Jesus for us in heaven, and the Holy Spirit in us here, that we might both hold fast our profession, and use it now in holy worship. We know what it is, because of having the first-fruits of the Spirit, to groan within ourselves, and these painful groanings would hinder the maintenance of our profession; but then Jesus is on high for us, and we only wait his coming forth to be manifested in all that which we profess already to have received. Then we shall have, not only the spirit of adoption, but the adoption itself—standing in our own proper place as sons, even in fully manifested heavenly glory. We anticipate this place now, because Jesus the Son of God is passed into the heavens, and when the good things to come are actually ours in possession and enjoyment, our worship will still be in him and through him. We know so painfully the need of Jesus as the High Priest that can have compassion on the ignorant and those that are out of the way, that our souls little reach forth to the good things to come, so as to give its high and cheering character to our worship. He stoops down to our necessities and washes our feet: but how little do we consider him as the High Priest of our profession, and all the good things to come which that profession involves. It is one sad mark of declension that this very word profession has become of such equivocal signification. It is often taken to imply that we are not in truth what we profess to be.—But it is a blessed word. All that God by his grace has made us to be in Christ, which will only be manifested in glory, we profess to be now; and the priesthood of Jesus enables us to maintain our profession. All the good things which he by his grace has given to us, God reveals to us by his Spirit now, and therefore we worship God in the spirit now, on the very ground of being already blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. We wait not to be blessed,

we are already blessed. All that God has made Christ to be unto us, unseen, unmanifested, and only taught the soul by God himself, we take up now, and say, Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift. Our profession involves all that we are in Christ, all that Christ is unto us, and all the good things that God has prepared for them that love him. Surely, we have a basket of first-fruits indeed to bring now to the Priest to present to the Lord. And is it not often so in the season when the soul first has known liberty? Has there not been the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness? and the soul has said, Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits. But we often forget them; and when the soul comes to be exercised in the truth before God, proving what sin really is, when it becomes acquainted with the deceitfulness as well as the desperate wickedness of the heart, the joy is frequently turned into mourning. But here it is that we find peculiarly the value of Christ as the High Priest of good things to come. Whilst the soul is learning experimentally the need of his present ministry— in meeting present failure, how blessedly is it led on through the priesthood of Jesus to the time of undisturbed worship and of unhindered praise before God. No sin will there be then to confess, but only praise for mercy and grace accomplished in glory. This is the value of his being the High Priest of good things to come, that even now it can be said to us, “By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, making confession in his name.” “I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth;” for in the midst of our changeableness, Jesus Christ —is the same, yesterday, today, and for even.

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