

EMMANUEL, OR TITLES OF CHRIST

by Octavius Winslow

Winslow's devotional exploration of the various titles given to Christ in Scripture, meditating on names like Emmanuel, Redeemer, Shepherd, and King to reveal the fullness of Christ's person and work for His people.

11 Chapters

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a Preface

PREFACE.

The personal and official titles of our Lord Jesus, unlike the names and designations of the world, are real and substantial things- each one possessing profound significance and unfading glory. They have not been inaptly denominated, by a divine of the sixteenth century, a "cabinet of jewels." With them our Lord is completely invested Himself the divinest, the most costly and precious one of all. They emblazon His person, shed luster upon His work, and will sparkle upon brow when in His Second Coming, "upon His head shall be many crowns." Each title embodies a distinct meaning and illustrates a particular truth, the significance and preciousness of which the Holy Spirit can alone unfold and the believing heart alone appreciate. Like His twofold nature, the titles of our Lord are wonderful, and, like His infinite resources, they are exhaustless. The present volume is an attempt to explore, in a limited degree, this costly treasure. The author is painfully conscious that he has scarcely opened the sacred casket, and that even the few precious gems he has exposed to view, he fears are placed in a light so dim, and are arranged with a hand so inartistic, as greatly to obscure their luster and to veil their worth. With his readers he is prepared to exclaim, "The half has not been told us!" And yet so essential is it to know the Lord Jesus, so important to believe in, admire, and love Him, the author is consoled by the thought that the dimmest presentation, the feeblest uplifting of the Savior, may win to Him a soul and plant a new jewel in His crown. May this be the happy result of these pages!

There is, perhaps, no name belonging to our Lord with which the believer is in more practical and constant communion than the one selected as the distinctive title of this volume- "Emmanuel, God with us." How blessed to know that our daily life is a daily realization and experience of its truth, power, and preciousness. God in Christ is with us in all places, in all circumstances, and at all times. In all our "adversities of mind, body, and estate," "in all times of our tribulation; in all times of our wealth; in the hour of death and in the day of judgment, "Christ is "Emmanuel, God with us!" If the present volume but serve to keep this glorious name of our divine Redeemer, and the precious truth it expresses, prominently and constantly before the Christian Church, it will have served its mission; and to the Triune Jehovah shall be ascribed all the praise.

Christ, Emmanuel, or God with Us

Christ- Emmanuel, or God with Us

"They shall call His name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us."- Matthew 1:23.

"All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel— which means, 'God with us.'" Matthew 1:22-23

The titles of the Lord Jesus were not like those of the world, empty and vain sounding things. Each one possessed an impressive meaning, significant either of some distinguished trait of His personal character, or illustrative of some important aspect of His official work. There is no study of our Lord more precious and instructive to those who love Him than the varied and expressive names He wears. A single title is to them often as a volume replete with divine truth, as a mine of untold wealth, as a box of most precious ointment, as a tower of impregnable strength.

We are about to consider a few of Christ's more familiar and prominent titles; and, as introductory to the series, have selected, perhaps, the most significant and impressive one of all. This remarkable title is the fulfillment of a prophecy, and the confirmation of our faith in the truth of His Messiahship; the unfolding of a twofold nature- it brings before our view at once His Deity and humanity. The narrative is in this way- "All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: 'The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel"— which means, God with us.'" Matthew 1:22-23

As I have remarked, we have here a famous prophecy fulfilled, and a wondrous person revealed. The former view of the subject would alone supply us with ample material for reflection. It is no light thing in the present day to maintain the integrity of God's word. On every hand, and from

every quarter it is malignantly and fiercely assailed. Men deeply erudite, religious in profession, and eminent in their relation to the Church, are devoting all the power and influence their learning and position can command, to the destruction of the Bible. I speak advisedly- the destruction of the Bible! The Word of God is wholly divine; and as a volume thus wholly divine, it must, in faith, humility, and love, be received. Impugn the integrity of any one part, and you have impugned the integrity of every other. Loosen one stone of the sacred fabric, and you have loosened all. Tamper with the integrity of this book, or question the veracity of that narrative; reject the inspiration of this gospel, or doubt the canonical integrity of that epistle, and you have taken away my Bible, and what have I left?

The God dishonoring theories, therefore, which several modern writers have advanced, the refined and subtle shades of inspiration which many have drawn, all converge to one point- the virtual denial of inspiration entirely; and all tend to one solemn and inevitable result- the overthrow of God's Word. A"ept, then, with gratitude every fulfilled prophecy as evidencing the truth of the Bible, and as establishing your individual faith in the inspiration, integrity, and preciousness of that Divine

Word, which is all that you have to guide you through the sins and snares and sorrows of this life to the happiness and the glories of the life that is to come. Hold fast to the integrity of these two witnesses- the Old and the New Testament. They confirm and establish each other. The Old Testament predicts the New, and the New Testament fulfils the Old; and thus both unitedly testify, "Your Word Is Truth."

In entering upon a consideration of the present title of our Lord, we are in the very outset confronted by the most marvellous and glorious doctrine of the Christian faith- the DEITY of the Son of God. This is an essential doctrine of revelation, not accepted by any one particular branch of the Christian Church, but is the received tenet of the whole. Even in the creed of the most corrupt of all religious communions, the Church of Rome, it is found to exist, though blended with so much that is erroneous in doctrine, and overlaid with so much that is superstitious in worship, as entirely to neutralize its power and utterly to veil its luster. Perhaps, the most lucid and earnest embodiment of this essential truth of the gospel is found in the doctrinal formula of the English Church. The article to which we refer runs thus- "The Son, who is the Word of the Father, begotten from everlasting of the Father, the very and eternal God, and of one substance of the Father, took man's nature in the womb of the blessed virgin, of her substance; so that two whole and perfect natures, that is to say, the Godhead and Manhood, were joined together in one person, never to be divided, whereof is one Christ, Very God and Very Man, who truly suffered, was crucified, dead, and buried, to reconcile His Father to us, and to be a sacrifice, not only for original guilt, but also for all actual sins of men." But this fundamental doctrine of our faith- the Deity of Christ- rests not upon human testimony alone. It appeals to a high and divine authority in support of its truth- it rests upon the revelation and teaching of God's inspired word. To this let us turn.

The title of our Lord under consideration distinctly affirms His Deity- "GOD with us." The proof we advance confirmatory of this doctrine must, in our limited space, be but a summary. The title itself would seem to carry to every ingenuous and earnest mind desiring to know what is truth touching this doctrine, sufficient evidence of its veracity. The presence of God with man has, in all dispensations of the Church, been an acknowledged fact. The Jews, as God's peculiar people, had the more immediate token of His presence by an appearance of glory enshrouding with its divine effulgence the holy tabernacle. This they termed the Shechinah, or, the Divine Presence. God was with them in that "cloud by day and pillar of fire by night." But this symbolic and extraordinary manifestation of the Divine presence was to cease with the first temple. A new and more spiritual dispensation was to supersede the old, and another and more wonderful temple was to enshrine the Deity! God would still be with His people and dwell amid His Church, but it would be "GOD manifest in the flesh," and this is the name by which He should be known- "EMMANUEL, GOD with us." And what is the line of proof? Briefly this. All that belongs to Deity is ascribed to our Lord. For example- The names and titles of Deity belong to Him. He is emphatically called the "First and the Last " "Who was, and is, and is to come" "The Almighty" "The Everlasting Father" " The Lord of Glory " "The Lord God of the holy prophets"

"The only begotten Son of God" "The brightness of His glory, the express image of His person." These, as I have remarked, are not vain-sounding titles, but embody and express His GODHEAD. Had he not a preexistence before He touched the horizon of our earth, had He not subsisted eternally in the divine essence and glorious majesty of the Supreme God, could it with any propriety have been said to Him, "Your throne, O GOD, is forever and ever" "We give You thanks,

O Lord God Almighty, who is, and was, and is to come" "You are the same, Your years shall not fail" "The same yesterday, today, and forever."

But not the titles only, but the works of Deity, are ascribed to Him. It is said, that "all things were made by Him, and without him was not anything made that was made" that, "by Him all things were created that are in heaven, and that are in the earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by Him, and for Him, and He is before all things, and by Him all things are held together." "He upholds all things by the word of His power" that, "His throne is forever and ever." Surely He who is before the created, must Himself be uncreated; He who is before all beings, must be pre-existent; He who can create, sustain, and govern all worlds and all beings and all things must be the eternal, omnipotent, omnipresent, and everlasting Jehovah. And yet all this is ascribed to our blessed Lord.

The miracles of our Lord were equally confirmatory of His divinity. By the exercise of His divine and miraculous power. He healed the sick, restored sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, strength to the paralyzed, fed thousands with a few loaves and small fishes, controlled the tempest, and exhibited His power over death and the grave, despoiling their laurels, rescuing their prey, bringing back the spirit from Hades and the body from the grave to life and service again.

And did our Lord ever deny His essential deity? Never once! On the contrary, He invariably vindicated the doctrine, boldly acknowledging that He was one with God. Hence He said, "If I do not the works of any father, believe me not. But if I do, though you do not believe, believe the works, that you may know and believe that the Father is in me, and I in Him." "I and the Father are one." And then, when closing His ministry on earth, as if most fully and demonstratively to establish His union with the substance and incomprehensible nature of the Godhead, He commissioned His apostles to go forth and to "baptize all nations in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit." Had our Lord not been equal with the Father, how confused, inappropriate, and impious were this language, thus representing Himself as the joint and equal object of our faith, hope, and love. And how animating and sanctifying is the thought that, when thus dedicating ourselves to the Triune God, rendering to each divine person the most unquestioning faith, the warmest love, the divinest worship, and the most dutiful obedience, it is because we recognize three distinct people in the One Godhead, and look for rich and inestimable blessings flowing from, the love of God the Father, through the merits of God the Son, and by the power of God the Holy Spirit.

This suggests another view of the subject, equally confirmatory of the doctrine. I refer to THE NECESSITY OF CHRIST'S DEITY, AS IMPLIED IN THE WHOLE ECONOMY OF REDEMPTION. There could have been no salvation of sinners apart from the Three People of the Godhead. In accomplishing this, the master work of Jehovah, it was necessary that an ample satisfaction should be made to the moral government of God, in the shape of a full atonement for infinite transgression, that thereby the righteousness of the law might be fully vindicated, and the claims of justice be fully met. It was equally necessary that a provision should be made, not only for the pardon of sin and the justification of the sinner, but that, also (and without which neither of them could have availed to bring the sinner to heaven) provision should be made for the spiritual renovation of the soul. Hence the necessity of the Trinity. The Father is reputed as loving man; the Son, as dying for man; the Spirit, as regenerating man; and an equal Divine love binds its

threefold girdle around every believing saint. Do we need further proof? Behold Him setting the seal to the truth of his Deity, and manifesting to all that He was the King of kings and Lord of lords, by overcoming Satan, by vanquishing death, by bursting the barriers of the grave, and by ascending triumphantly to heaven, leading captivity captive, and from thence dispensing the blessings of His grace to men, even the rebellious, that God might dwell with them.

Before I venture upon the second part of this subject, let me bespeak, in behalf of the truth which has engaged our first thoughts, the most prayerful study, and the most implicit belief of all the Lord's people. The doctrine of the Incarnation is the chief corner-stone of our faith. Here reposes the entire fabric of our salvation. This is the key that unlocks the deep mystery of divine love; this the solution to every difficulty that presents itself to the soul in its struggle to be saved. Let your faith simply grasp this truth, and all is safe with your everlasting well-being. Do not pause to sound it with the poor plumb-line of your reason, before you believe it. Wait not to understand, before you receive it. Receive it with the simplicity of a little child, and it will make you happy. It is the great mystery of Godliness. How, then, can you, a finite being, a sinful finite being, be supposed fully to comprehend a truth which touches the very heights, and sounds the very depths of infinity itself; over which angels bend with humility, reverence, and awe? Lay down your reason at the feet of faith, and let faith take her place at the feet of Jesus, and, as I have said, receive the kingdom of God as a little child, and you shall be saved. Deem it not uncharitable when I say, that there is, there can be, no salvation apart from a belief in the doctrine of the Incarnation of God for the salvation of man. In the words of the evangelist, "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, by which we must be saved." This is the "Stone" which the deniers of the Deity and atonement of Christ set at nothing, rejecting which, they build the fabric of their future upon the quicksands of their own works, reposing upon which, shame and everlasting contempt must be their portion. Become, then, a humble worshiper at Bethlehem, a believing student at Calvary, a joyful saint at the tomb, and yours will be the divine benison of him "that believes, and yet has not seen." The path of the soul's travel to glory, commences at the manger, winds round the cross, sweeps past the grave, ascends to, and is lost in, the perfect sight of faith, and the full fruition of hope, and the boundless sea of love circling round the throne of heaven-

"Where sits our Savior, crowned with light,

Clothed in a body like our own."

But we approach that branch of our subject which brings it home more closely and blessedly to our individual selves. "Emmanuel, God WITH US. How wondrously and completely does this truth, the Incarnation, span the wide chasm between the Infinite and the finite- God and man! God is no longer to the believer's mind an incomprehensible and invisible abstraction. He is brought near, as it were- visible, tangible, real- in a word, He is WITH us. Let us illustrate in a few particulars this marvellous, and not less experimental and precious, truth.

In the first place, Emmanuel is GOD WITH US. We here ascend infinitely above the human. It is not merely an angel that is with us- a man that is with us; it is Deity who is with us, none less than Jehovah Himself, Israel's covenant God and Keeper. We cannot do with anything short of Deity. If Deity does not come to our aid, if Deity does not stoop to our low estate, if Deity does not save us, we are lost to all eternity. When we fell in the first Adam, our humanity lost all its original

righteousness and strength. If Deity did not interpose on our behalf, if God did not Himself embark in our rescue, the inevitable consequence must have been the shades of endless death. But a plan of deliverance had been conceived from everlasting. God, in the infinite counsels of His own mind, resolved upon the salvation of His eternally chosen and loved people. He saw that there was no eye to pity them, and no arm to save them. He resolved upon our salvation, embarked in it, accomplished it; and eternity, as it rolls upon its axis, will magnify His name, and show forth His praise.

And, O beloved! what an assuring and comforting truth is this- God with us! Now we feel equal to every service, prepared for every trial, armed for every assault. Deity is our shield, Deity is our arm, Deity is our Father and our Friend. We deal with the Divine. Deity has died for us, has atoned for us, has saved us, and will bring us safely to the realms of bliss. "This God is our God, forever and ever, and will be our Father even unto death." Oh, see, my reader, that your hope is built upon nothing more and upon nothing less than Christ. The "Rock of Ages" must be your only foundation if saved. If you stand not in the "righteousness of God" when you appear in His presence, He will say to you, "How did you get in here, not having on the wedding garment?" Speechless will then be the tongue now so fluent and ingenious in its many and vain excuses, or so loud and earnest in its heartless responses in religious worship. I solemnly repeat that, if you have no better righteousness to appear before God in than your religious duties, or rites, or doings, when summoned to His dread tribunal, it had been better for you never to have been born. Oh, cast from you the leprous garment you so long and so fondly have clutched, as though it were a white and beautiful robe fit to appear in the presence of the holy, holy, holy Lord God; and accept in penitence and faith the "righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all those who believe." Deadly doings are deadly things, sinking you as a nether millstone down to the shades of the bottomless pit. But one believing look at the crucified Savior is life and immortality, raising you above the curse, above your sins, out of the horrible pit and the miry clay of your present condemnation, into the sun-lit regions of forgiveness, peace, and hope.

Once more, let me remind my believing reader that "Emmanuel is God with us." Come, then, and lean upon His omnipotent arm. You have no need which from His infinite supplies cannot be met; no stone of difficulty in your pilgrimage which His might cannot remove; no burden which His arm of power cannot bear, no perplexity which His wisdom cannot guide: in a word, no condition to which Christ our ever present God is not equal. In faith and humility make practical use of your Savior's divinity; and when all that is merely human has failed, broken like a rope of sand, dissolved like a passing vapor; or has pierced your too fondly leaning hand like a shattered reed, then take hold of this precious truth, and say, "My Savior God is with me in all the boundless resources of His Godhead, why then should I fear?"

It follows from the preceding truth that Emmanuel is GOD WITH US REVEALED. The great object of Christ's mission to our world was to make God known to man in all the glory of His being and harmony of His perfection. Nature gives but a dim and imperfect reflection of God. That was all the knowledge of the Divine Being that Cain possessed, and he expressed his idea of God in the offering which he brought of the fruits of the earth. His was a natural conception of God, and he embodied that conception in a natural religion. But Abel's knowledge of God embraced His moral attributes- holiness, justice and truth; and his offering of a slain lamb presented as a sacrifice, embodied his conception of the moral character and government of Jehovah, and was at the same

moment a penitential confession of his sinfulness, and a believing apprehension of the Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world. Oh, let your knowledge of God embrace a wider range of His being, government, and glory than the sun, the stars, or the flowers afford you. Across yon azure sky no words are emblazoned assuring you of the pardon of sin, of salvation, of heaven. How you maybe saved from hell and prepared for heaven can only be learned as you behold "the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Christ reveals God as sin-forgiving and reconciled. Yes, more: where do we learn the parental character of our God but in Christ? At whose feet, and gazing up into

whose face do we learn to lip His endeared name as Father, but Christ's! Do we inquire, Show us the Father, and it suffices us? Jesus answers, "He that has seen Me has seen the Father." Thus our Emmanuel uplifts the awful veil, and shows us God as pardoning our sins, as justifying our person, and as enfolding us within the embrace of His paternal love. There is probably no versification extant embodying a more true and beautiful conception of this grand idea than that of the illustrious Watts, still leading the service of song on earth:

"Dearest of all the names above,

My Jesus and my God!

Who can resist Your heavenly love,

Or trifle with Your blood?

It is by the merits of Your death

The Father smiles again;

It is by Your interceding breath

The Spirit dwells with men.

"Until God in human flesh I see

My thoughts one comfort find,

The holy, just, and sacred Three

Are terror to my mind;

But if Emmanuel's face appear,

My hope, my joy begins;

His name forbids my slavish fear,

His grace removes my sins."

Emmanuel is GOD WITH US IN OUR HUMAN NATURE. How near are You, O Lord! clothed with my very flesh! What! did You stoop to my humanity? Did You take up into union with Your Deity my poor inferior nature? Were You bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh? Did this my nature, so diseased, paralyzed, and tortured, so nervous, weak, and trembling, and which oftentimes I sigh to lay down as a burden I cannot longer bear- did this same nature veil, as with a garment, Your

Deity, my Lord? How near have You brought Yourself to me! Truly You are God with me, for You are God in me. Thus the humanity of our incarnate God unseals a spring of ineffable sympathy. We need human sympathy because we are human. Angelic sympathy could not meet our case, neither Divine compassion alone. One loving, tender, sympathizing touch of the human, in the sorrows and sufferings of our humanity, oh, how soothing and pleasant it is! Emmanuel once craved and asked it, though denied; and He will not chide you, clinging child of suffering and grief, for craving and asking it too. "For we have not a High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, but without sin."

Emmanuel is GOD WITH US SAVINGLY, bearing our sins, expiating our crime, and "giving Himself for us as an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savor." He was with us presenting such an atonement to God in the way of obedience and death as met all the demands of the law, and as satisfied all the claims of justice, and as reconciled us forever unto God. "In whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins." It was the divine virtue of his Deity that imparted a sovereign efficacy to His active and passive mediation. It was thus: "He offered Himself without spot unto God," that we, who were defiled with sin, might receive a free and full forgiveness. Thus it is by the "blood of God" sin is cleansed; and by the "righteousness of God" we are justified; and by the "grace of God" we are saved. Thus upon the head of our Emmanuel the crown of Deity shall eternally flourish. Can you, then, O penitent, weeping sinner, doubt either the ability- or the willingness of Christ to save you? Or can you, O trembling believer, doubt that He will keep that redeemed soul you have committed to His care until that day when He shall present it to the Father as one of the many sparkling gems of His mediatorial diadem?

Emmanuel is GOD WITH US IN EACH EVENT AND CIRCUMSTANCE OF OUR EARTHLY HISTORY. That history is all foreknown to, and is all prearranged and shaped by, Himself. No uncertainty, nothing merely accidental, belongs to the most trivial incidents of our life. It is sustaining and consolatory, beloved, to bear this in mind. The crushing event may, at its first burst, stagger our faith in this truth. It is so unexpected and untoward, so strange and mysterious, we are compelled, at the moment of its occurrence, to exclaim, "Is God's hand in this? has this a place in the everlasting covenant? can this be among the all things that are working for my good?" and for the moment our feelings are stunned, and faith is staggered. But the Lord comes to our help. He leaves not His child long in doubt, either as to the source of the event, or the hand that has given it its mission, and that guides its outcome. Yes, beloved, all your individual history, from your first to your last breath, is in the everlasting covenant of grace. An invisible Hand- that Hand a Father's- holds the mystic thread interwoven with and knitting together the whole web of your present life. Oh, how assuring the faith, and soothing to the mind, to look at swelling billows, at darkling skies, at drooping clouds, and see our loving Father in all! We need more fixedness of faith on our divine and immovable Center. Everything out of God is changeable, and changes. Nothing here is stable, nothing permanent. God only is immutable. Heaven only is true. But in all the shifting scenes and passing events of this chequered, changeful life, the believer recognizes the Invisible Hand that moves the whole. He sees inscrutable wisdom where others see nothing but rashness; order where others see only confusion; the silver light where others see but unmitigated gloom.

And why? because the justified live by their faith. The man of the world is a man of 'sight', and by 'sensible' objects alone he lives; but the man of God walks by faith, deals with the objects of faith,

and by faith he stands. This is the clue by which he unravels the wonders of God's providence, this the key by which he unlocks the mystery of God's word. Looking through the wondrous telescope of faith, he beholds "the things that are unseen and eternal." Interpreting all events by this divine principle, he sees God in all.

"There is a light in yonder skies,
A light unseen by outward eyes;
But clear and bright to inward sense
It shines, the star of Providence.
The radiance of the central throne,
It comes from God, and God alone;
The ray that never yet grew pale,
The star 'that shines within the veil.'
And faith, unchecked by earthly fears,
Shall lift its eye, though filled with tears;
And while around 'tis dark as night,
Untired shall mark the heavenly light.
In vain they smite me- men but do
What God permits with different view
To outward sight they wield the rod,
But Faith proclaims it all of God.
Unmoved thus let me keep my way,
Supported by that cheering ray,
Which, shining distant, renders clear
The clouds and darkness thronging near."

But perhaps there is no part of a Christian's experience in which this title of our Lord is more expressive and precious than in the season of ADVERSITY, when passing through the discipline of trial, sorrow, and need. It is then, if ever, we feel that we need Christ with us; and it is then, if ever, that He is. He is Emmanuel- God with you in your affliction, O afflicted one; and the waters shall not overflow you; for He controls the winds and the waves. He is with you in your bereavement, O bereaved one; for when on earth His warmest tears were wept in sympathy with a grief like yours. He is with you, O tempted one; for He was in all points tempted like His brethren, and knows how to support those who are tempted. What is your present condition? Are disease and suffering slowly dissolving the earthly tabernacle? Does the wild tempest of adversity sweep

fiercely over you? Is the poisoned shaft of calumny leveled at you? Does the lying tongue of malice pierce you? Listen to the soothing invitation of Emmanuel, which bids you come and hide in the chambers of His love until these calamities be overpast. He would have you, in faith, spell the syllables of this precious title, and receive the strong consolation which distills from the assurance that God in Christ is a very present help in your time of trouble. The divine promises given to the Church of God are the precious legacy of the Church now. "Fear you not, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am My God. I will strengthen, yes, I will help you with the right hand of my righteousness." "When you pass through the waters I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you; when you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon you. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior."

Emmanuel is God with us in the solemn hour when heart and flesh are failing, and death, the appointed messenger of the everlasting covenant, comes to usher the freed spirit into the glorious presence of the Lord. In anticipation of that solemn hour, faith has need to strengthen itself with this precious truth. It is a solemn thing, even for the Christian, to die. And the renewed mind is often filled with dread at the prospect. But if Jesus is with His saints, it surely is at this trying and solemn hour. Was it ever known that Christ left one of His blood-ransomed saints to pass over Jordan alone? Did He ever guide their journey through the wilderness, and then desert them at the margin of the cold river? Never! I have known many a believer go doubting, and fearing, and trembling down to the river's brink, but I never knew one who did not leave all his doubts, fears, and tremblings upon its bank, and pass over in peace, or joy, or triumph. Then, when the Christian racer approaches, pantingly, the goal- when the weary and footsore pilgrim nears the end of his journey- when the voyager has weathered the last storm, and enters the harbor- when the warrior has fought his last fight, unclasps his armor, and sheaths his sword, oh, then shall we realize, as never realized before, how really, closely, blessedly, Emmanuel, God in Christ, was present, leading us gently down the shaded valley, and triumphantly up the celestial hills of everlasting light and glory. Oh, let death be to you a pleasant thought; for God will be with you then, and Emmanuel the title He will wear. God with us in life, God with us in death, God with us and we with God through eternity.

This surely must speak pointedly and powerfully to the unconverted. Your Godless life, my reader, is a constant ignoring of this truth- "God with us." The reverse of this truth is your experience, God from me. The fool has said in his heart, No God." That is, you want no God. Your life is a practical embodiment of the awful sentiment the poet has placed in the mouth of his Atheist- "Absence from You is best."

You are striving to live independently of God. You feel that you can do without Him. More than this, you are aware that death is the common lot of man, and therefore you know that you must die, but you prefer to die without Christ. Thus you are resolved to live independently of God, and to die independently of the Savior. What a miserable life, and what an appalling death is this! It is to live without one drop of true happiness, and to die without one ray of real hope. If this be your present and final condition, nothing is more certain, as nothing is more solemn, than that the hell of the Bible must be your doom. The "bottomless pit," the "cup of wrath without mixture," "everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord," the "worm that never dies, the fire that is never quenched," must be your awful, indescribable, changeless portion forever.

But has the Holy Spirit made you to feel your lost condition?- has He shown you the plague of your own heart?- has He made you to long for salvation? Do you hunger and thirst after Jesus? Then, accept believingly, accept unhesitatingly, accept now the overture of the Gospel. "Him that comes unto Me, I will in no way cast out." "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." "The blood of Jesus Christ, the Son, cleanses us from all sin;" and you shall know the "blessedness of the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered, unto whom the Lord shall not count iniquity."

Live in a realizing sense of the Lord's presence. Do not be satisfied with a religion of which this is not an essential element. Seek to live in this atmosphere, and in no other. Go nowhere, and indulge in no recreation from which your Lord will be absent. O be jealous of His presence! Let not worldliness, or levity, or coldness thrust Him from your arms. And should you walk in darkness, or wade through affliction, or battle with Satan, unconscious of the sustaining, cheering presence of Emmanuel, yet fear not. He is nearer to you than you imagine. Unseen, unheard, and unfelt, Christ is still at your side, "A very present help in time of need." He knows your sorrow, sees your difficulty, is acquainted with all your mental despondency and spiritual distress, and presently your tear-dimmed, cloud-veiled eye, shall be open, and you shall see Emmanuel at your side, in all the benignity of His love, and in all the might of His power. Soon we shall realize this presence in glory, unshaded by a cloud, unmingled with a tear. No more darkness, no more grief- no more sin, and no more separation- "Forever with the Lord." Walk in the sunshine of this blessed hope, and you shall walk in the light of life. Your present light affliction is not worthy to be compared with the glory so soon to be revealed. O how we shall marvel, when we plunge into this sea of love and glory, that we ever allowed present trials and disappointments and persecutions to affect us as they did! One breath of heaven, one refrain of its song, one sight of our glorified Emmanuel will obliterate all the sad memories of the past, and light up the endless joys and splendors of the future.

God with us! O glorious name!

Let it shine in endless fame;

God and man in Christ unite;

mysterious depths and height!

God with us! amazing love

Brought Him from His courts above

Now, you saints, His grace admire,

Swell the song with holy fire.

God with us! but tainted not

With the first transgressor's blot;

Yet He did our sins sustain,

Bear the guilt, the curse, the shame.

God with its! O wondrous grace!
May we see Him face to face,
That we may EMMANUEL sing,
As we ought, our God and King.

Christ, the Wonderful

"EMMANUEL, or Titles of Christ" by Octavius Winslow

"Christ, the Wonderful"

"His name shall be called Wonderful." Isaiah 9:6.

In the universe, where all is wonderful, itself the most wonderful of all, there yet exists a wonder which eclipses all. And when this beautiful world- beautiful still, though marred by sorrow and tainted by sin- shall have been dissolved in the fires of the last day, and its grandeur, glory, and history shall have become a thing of yesterday, this wonder will remain the object of admiring and adoring love, everlasting as eternity. Ask you who this Wonder is? It is the Son of God- Jesus, the Savior of men! "His name shall be Called wonderful." If, my reader, you have carefully and devoutly studied His name Emmanuel, God with us, you will be prepared for the exposition of a name which will unfold new wonders to our admiring and adoring souls at each step in the progress of our study.

God has implanted in the human heart a love of the wonderful. And not only has He inspired the sentiment, but in countless forms He has met it. He has clothed the universe with the wonderful. Turn the eye where we may, it lights upon some object of wonder, which, but for the blinding and stupifying power of sin, would awaken the exclamation from every lip, "How great is His beauty! how great is His power!" In sending His beloved Son into the world, in bestowing upon man His unspeakable gift, God has met the sentiment of wonder in man in a way- we say it with reverence- He Himself could not surpass. The Incarnation of God is the wonder of the universe. All other demonstrations of God's power and wisdom, goodness and glory, pale before the splendor of this marvellous event. In view of this profound stoop of Deity, this unique and costly exhibition of God's love to man, could our Savior wear a title more expressive or more appropriate than this- "His name shall be called wonderful"? We are about to attempt an unfolding in some faint measure of this wonder of wonders. To see it spiritually, to experience it savingly, is of more worth to us than to gaze upon and understand the greatest wonders in the material universe. What if the arcade of all natural and scientific marvel were opened to us, and we could understand all mysteries and all knowledge and all tongues, and yet saw nothing to awaken our astonishment in God's greatest wonder, nothing to inspire our admiration in God's greatest beauty, nothing to incite our love in God's most precious gift- even Him whose name is Wonderful- oh! it had been better for us to have lived and died with the idiot's stare and the madman's frenzy! But, so long as we remain rational and responsible, to see no beauty or loveliness or love in the Lord Jesus, and to die without one life-look at the Crucified One, is of all appalling events the most appalling. May the Holy Spirit of truth unveil to our minds the hidden wonders of the Son of God, while we attempt to study the deep significance of this His name.

In the first place, HIS ABSOLUTE DEITY justifies the name thus applied to Him by the Holy Spirit. God is wonderful, the most wonderful being in the universe, "Who alone does wondrous things."

What low conceptions do men in general form of God! What imperfect thoughts of His greatness! To what may we trace man's idolatry of man? – to his wrong thoughts of God. To what may we attribute man's light views of sin? – to his inadequate view of God's holiness. In a word, wrong and bedwarfed views of God lie at the root of all idolatry, disobedience, and sin. In proportion as the greatness of God unfolds to us, everything else becomes great. In the light of His great holiness, we see the great guilt of sin. In view of His great power, we see the great sin of unbelief. Low views of His law, and superficial views of sin, and imperfect feelings of trust, are all traceable to the low thoughts we have of God.

But our low sense of God cannot really affect His greatness. He is great and glorious, essentially and unchangeably so, whatever men's thoughts of Him may be. At best we know but little of God, so infinitely great is He. He reminded His servant that He could see only His "back parts," that is, parts or degrees of what He was; the whole of God no mortal possibly knowing." Can you by searching find out God? Can you find out the Almighty to perfection?" Impossible!

"The more of wonderful

In Him, the more we should assent.

Could we conceive Him, God He could not be;

Or, He not God, or we could not be men."

What a view of our Lord Jesus does this present to the believing mind! All this divine glory, all this unsearchable greatness, belongs essentially to Him, and all justify His name as "Wonderful." When the angel of the covenant appeared to Manoah, Manoah asked Him, "What is Your name?" The angel of the Lord said unto Him, "Why do you ask my name, seeing it is wonderful." It is the same word in the original which our translators have rendered in Isaiah, "Wonderful;" thus identifying the "Angel of the Lord" who appeared so wondrously to Manoah, with Him of whom the evangelical prophet wrote, "His name shall be called wonderful." Oh, how sad the spectacle of men calling themselves Christians, yet, while thus wearing outwardly that honored name, practically denying it by their refusal of divine honor to Christ! It has ever been one of the master efforts of Satan to rob our Lord of His Divinity. Among the many crowns He wears, this is the crown of all; and to pluck it from His kingly head, and thus degrade Him to the level of a mere creature, has been one of the earliest and latest efforts of the 'great serpent, the devil.' What is this but the conflict predicted in Eden- "He, (the seed of the woman, that is Christ,) shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel." Satan, we are told, believes and trembles. Well does he know that the foundation-stone of the whole fabric of man's salvation is the Deity that wrought it. Well is he assured that none but God could save. And although there is not a solitary instance on record, in the life of our Lord, of Satan's denial of His essential Deity, (on the contrary, several in which Satan acknowledged it,) yet it has ever been his master effort to lead men to the commission of a crime of which it would seem as if he himself were guiltless- the crime of rejecting the Godhead, and thus denouncing the personal glory of the Son of God! I would exhort you, my reader, to listen to no reasoning, and to harbor no doubt whatever, tending to shake your faith in this fundamental truth of Christianity, this foundation stone of your salvation. In proportion to the strength of your faith in the essential Deity of the Savior, will be the firmness and stability of your hope, resting on the blood that, from its divine virtue, "cleanses from all sin," and on the

righteousness that, because it is the "righteousness of God," justifies from all things.

Christ is Wonderful in THE CONSTITUTION OF HIS PERSON, AS GOD AND MAN UNITED. Wonderful that the Son of God should take upon Himself our nature, that He should be "made flesh," and dwell as man among men. The expression is a strong one, "made flesh." It implies His pre-existent nature, and His assumption of one inferior to His own. He was not always flesh. He was 'made flesh' when He was 'born of a woman,' and 'made under the law.' Let it be borne in mind that our Lord's wondrous stoop was not the exchange of one finite nature for another. It was not a mere lowering of Himself in the scale of creation. It was not the finite taking an inferior position among finite beings. Far from this. It was Deity allying itself with humanity. It was the Godhead emptying, humbling itself, to a nature infinitely more beneath itself than the human is beneath the angelic. And what was the condition of the nature our Lord assumed? It was fallen, degraded, tainted, sunk in the lowest depths of sin and wretchedness and woe. And yet He stooped to it! And yet He assumed it! And what was most wonderful of all, He still remained "without sin" "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners! He wrapped the leprous garments of sin about Him, and yet "knew no sin!" He took upon Him our sins, bore them, suffered, died, and atoned for them, and yet He was sinless. Is not this wonderful? Sin made Him sorrowful, but could not make Him guilty. It touched Him, but could not taint Him. It made Him die, but could not make Him sin. Satan came to Him, tempted Him, probed Him, sifted Him as wheat, but, Christ tells us Himself, "found nothing in Him." Here, beloved reader, is our hope as poor, sinful, guilty, lost sinners. In Christ we have a holy Redeemer; in His atonement a sinless offering; in the Lamb of God a Victim "without spot or blemish;" in His sacrifice, a peace-offering for sin of a "sweet-smelling savor unto God" How full of encouragement and consolation is this truth to those who feel sin dwelling in them, tainting and destroying all they do- who see the need of confessing their very confessions, of weeping over their very tears, of renouncing their best and holiest doings as grounds of merit and acceptance with God, and of standing only and fully in Christ! Behold in faith a spotless Victim, a sinless offering, a pure sacrifice, an atonement, that cancels all your guilt, a righteousness that hides all your deformity. Be no more cast down because you find nothing but the defiling, defacing touch of sin and imperfection in your best and holiest and most lovely doings. Jesus presents Himself before God in your behalf, and God sees you only in Him. Jesus wraps around you, in exchange for the leprous garment of your sins, the white robe of His divine, unsullied righteousness, which presents you to God without spot or wrinkle; and God, thus beholding you only in the Son of His love, sees in you no perverseness, and traces in you no sin. Why, then, should you yield to a moment's despondency, or despair because of the indwelling sin that defiles the fountain, and because of the outward taint that mars the beauty of

all that you are, and of all that you do? Oh what a mercy that, when we go to God in prayer, in confession, in supplication, these poor trembling, unclean hands can repose upon the Head of a sinless Victim, and lift up a holy sacrifice, and present a sin-offering in which the holy, searching eye of God can see no sin. Here is a chain which fathoms the lowest depths of our sinfulness and unworthiness, and if taken hold of by faith, will uplift the desponding, despairing soul out of the horrible pit and the miry clay of its vileness, wretchedness, and woe, and place its feet upon the Rock, and plant a new song of salvation upon its tongue. Well does Jesus deserve the name of "Wonderful!"

But wonderful is THE UNION OF THESE TWO NATURES in our Lord. When God created man out of the dust of the earth, endowing him with intelligence, and arraying him with the beauty of holiness, there issued from His hands the masterpiece of creation, wisdom, goodness, and power. Angels must have gazed upon the glorious creature with astonishment and praise, receiving from that pure reflection of Deity new lessons of the character of God. But there remained a display of God's wisdom and praise, holiness and love, which should as far transcend this as the Infinite towered above the finite, as the Uncreated distanced the created. The union of the Infinite with the finite, of the Divine with the human, in the Person of Him whose name is "Wonderful," was that eclipsing display of Deity, before whose strange, marvellous manifestation and splendor, every other paled into insignificance. God is the greatest wonder in the universe. But that He should, in His essential and undiminished glory, dwell in that young man, that poor and despised man, often, perhaps, seen plying industriously the implements of the carpenter- for He was, as man, the son of a carpenter, and doubtless, as subject unto His father, aided him in his humble but honorable craft- oh, this must have been a wonder to those who recognized His Deity, yet saw with their bodily sense nothing but His poor

exterior! Yes, He was" God over all, blessed for evermore." The Deity, unimpaired, untouched, dwelt in that mysteriously constituted Person of our Lord. How wonderful the union! Never, except in the Old Testament anticipations of the Incarnation, which now and then threw a trembling beam upon those dark shadows, has so wonderful a spectacle been beheld. In Christ we see the union of Deity and humanity; of the Creator and the creature; of Omnipotence and weakness, of Majesty and lowliness; of wealth and poverty; of joy and sorrow. Yes, beloved, the Lord Jesus allied Himself to all that is human, to all that belongs essentially to your nature. Are you feeble? Christ was weak. Are you poor? Christ battled with poverty. Are you lowly? Christ was esteemed a root out of the dry ground. Are you tempted? Christ was set up as a target for Satan's fiery darts, and the archer sorely grieved Him, and shot at Him, and hated Him. Are you a child of sorrow? He

was a man of grief. Are you without means, friendless, solitary, homeless? All this was Jesus, and all this He was that He might show His wonderful union with His saints in all that belonged to them, that the Head might be one with the Body, and all the members of that Body be conformed to Him their Head. Behold a continuous, never ceasing stream of sympathy from Jesus, with all His people, in all their individual and collective circumstances, meandering like a pure, silvery stream throughout this fallen world, reaching, penetrating, soothing the remotest and most obscure place of gloom and sorrow where dwells a sinner ransomed with His precious blood. Lose not sight of this wonderful union of Him who is the Wonderful. Keep firm hold of it. Other ties may weaken, other bonds be severed, other unions be dissolved, but this one never! Nor does it depend even upon your realization of its existence. Like the electric cable submerged in the deep ocean, it is there intact, though you see it not. Your peace, and comfort, and joy will be increased in proportion as you know it; but its existence depends, not upon your love or faith, faithfulness, or fruitfulness, but upon the immutable nature and unchangeable love of your Lord.

CHRIST IS WONDERFUL IN HIS WORK. The works of God are manifold, and all are perfect. But His great, His greatest, His master-work, is the salvation of His people. If before He has unveiled His whole Being; all His divine attributes are revealed, harmonized, and glorified in this wondrous scheme of saving sinners. Look at this work in its several parts. Wonderful was His perfect obedience to the law. Never before was that law so illustrated, honored, and magnified, as by the

obedience of Christ, the Lawgiver. Had the whole human race through eternity kept perfectly every precept; their obedience had not shed such luster on the law as one act of our Lord's obedience did. Was it not wonderful to see Him who was above the law, made under it, who was the Lawgiver, become the law-fulfiller, that He might yield such an obedience— the obedience of the righteous One- as would fully justify, and thus place in a state of righteousness all who should believe in Him! Thus we are "made the righteousness of God in Him."

Behold your present standing, believer in Christ! Turn your eye away from all your failures in obedience- the flaws and imperfections that mark your sincere endeavors to serve Christ and to glorify God- and see where your true acceptance is, even in the Beloved of the Father, "The Lord our righteousness." "Accepted in the Beloved," is the record that will raise you above all the fears and despondencies arising from your shortcomings and failures, and fill you with peace, and joy, and assurance.

Wonderful, too, is Christ in His death. This was the second part of His atoning work. Wonderful the spectacle of Essential Life condescending to die! To see Him who had given life to all living beings, and from whom at the very moment that He yielded up the spirit, a stream of vital power was flowing into every creature that had breath, now paling and stiffening in death! Oh, it was a sight of wonder to the universe! Never was a death attended by such wondrous results. It touched sin, and it was cleansed. It touched the curse, and it became a blessing. It touched itself, and it died. It touched the grave, and it yielded back its prisoner. It touched the gate of paradise, and the kingdom of heaven was opened to all believers. This was the "grain of wheat which fell into the ground and died," and which, in virtue of that death, brought forth much fruit. Oh, wonderful that Jesus should die that death for us, poor sinners, who, not He, deserved to die. Wonderful, that that one death should have given so perfect satisfaction to Divine justice as to have emancipated countless millions from its eternal punishment.

Penitent sinners! humble believers! that death was for you. For you the crimson blood, for you the dying agony, for you the expiring convulsion, for you the yielding up the spirit. Come and gather the sacred, precious fruit that grows upon the Cross of Calvary. Lift your believing hand, tremulous though it be, and pluck the bending clusters of pardon, and peace, and joy, and hope, and triumph. Jesus, the Wonderful, died for you, died in your stead, died that you might never die. Christ died for our sins; and accepting in faith this wondrous fact, you shall pass from death unto life, and never see death. Oh! the wonders that spring from this wonderful death of Jesus! Never shall we come to the end of them. All is peace with God now. Truly is Christ our spiritual Jonah. As the tempestuous sea became a perfect calm the moment the prophet was cast into its angry billows, so the moment our blessed Lord plunged into the sea of God's wrath, yielded Himself up to death, that wrath was appeased, and all was peace. And now that a most sure atonement has been made by His suffering and death for sinners, comfort flows into the troubled conscience, and all is peace between God and the believing soul. Tremble not, then, O believer, at the prospect of death. Christ will not allow the deepening shadows that drape the margin of the cold, dark river to hide Him from your view. He who died for you will meet you there; and taking your hand of faith in His hand of love, will gently lead you over, and all the shining ones that line the shore will welcome you on the other side.

Not less wonderful is Christ's resurrection. This was the headstone of the sacred edifice of our redemption. For this reason, after His resurrection, the apostles went forth preaching, not so much the fact of their Lord's death, as the fact of His resurrection. "And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus." Now, the death of Jesus quickens into life. The Victim becomes the Victor. Death itself dies. Jesus is risen indeed; and from that empty tomb goes forth throughout the Church on earth and in heaven, as with electric power, a new-born life, quickening all whom it touches with immortality. Behold, then, your grave, O Christian, radiant with the light of your Savior's wondrous resurrection! It is no longer cold, nor dark, nor lonely. Jesus has made it the resting place of those who sleep in Him. It is the sacred urn in which the Lord has deposited the ransomed dust of the ruined temple of the Spirit, there to repose beneath His watchful eye until the trump of the archangel shall bid it rise. "Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of those who slept."

Oh, what comfort distills from this truth to the bereaved, who sorrow not as those who have no hope. The grave has closed over all that gave to life its charm, and to your heart its bliss. But oh, let faith, and hope, and love entwine in the garland you lay upon that cold breast; "for this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality. Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory? Thanks be unto God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

"Why do we mourn departed friends,

Or shake at death's alarm?

It is but the voice that Jesus sends,

To call them to His arms.

Why should we tremble to convey

Their bodies to the tomb?

There the dear flesh of Jesus lay,

And left a long perfume.

The grave of all His saints He blessed,

And softened every bed;

Where should the dying members rest,

But with the dying Head?

Thence He arose, ascending high,

And showed our feet the way;

Up to the Lord our flesh shall fly,

At the great rising day."

Christ is wonderful in His love. Shall I say it? this wonder seems to transcend and eclipse all others. It was the first and eternal link in the golden chain lowered from the highest throne in heaven down to the lowest depth of earth. That Christ should love us was the beginning of wonders. When we endeavor to comprehend that love, measure it, fathom it, scale it, and learn that it has heights we cannot reach, depths we cannot sound, lengths and breadths we cannot measure, we are prepared for every wonder belonging to and springing from Him who is Wonderful. Such love, such Infinite love, such Divine love, such everlasting love, such redeeming, dying love, is an Ocean whose eternal waves waft into our fallen world every wonder of God and of heaven.

"Let all the world fall down and know,

That none but God such love could show."

That Jesus should love such beings as we; that He should love us while we were yet sinners; that He should set his heart upon us, choose us, die for us, call us, and finally bring us to glory, knowing what we were, and what we should prove, Oh, this is wondrous love indeed! Plunge into this fathomless, boundless ocean of love, O you sin-burdened one! It will cover all your sins, it will efface all your guilt; it will flood over all your unworthiness; and, floating upon its golden waves, it will gently waft you to the shore of eternal blessedness. How often have you wondered how Christ should set His heart upon such an one as you! It was because His name was "Wonderful." And is it not a wonder that, amid all your fickleness, backslidings, cold, base returns, this love of God towards you has not chilled or changed? But do not rest, do not be satisfied with your present limited experience of Christ's wonderful love. It is so marvelously great, the Ocean is so fathomless, boundless, and inexhaustible, you may plunge, with all your infirmities, sin, and sorrow, into its fulness, exclaiming, "O the depth!" "The well is deep," drink abundantly, O beloved!

But, perhaps, to some, whose penitent, weeping eye, moistens these pages, the greatest wonder in Christ of all is, that He saves sinners- still greater, that He will save them! And truly this is wonderful; but it is just like Christ. It harmonizes with our highest conception of His character, and with every perfection of His being, and with every sentence of His Word. You have, perhaps, thought that it would be too Wonderful an act of grace on the part of Jesus to save you. That it would be one of the greatest moral wonders in a world so wonderful, that you should become a saint, a child of God, an heir of glory. Admit it. Yet, considering what Christ is, what He has undertaken to do, what He has done, and what He has promised to do, it would be a greater wonder if He did not save you. That it would be a marvellous manifestation of His grace to save you, I acknowledge; but this is no argument against, but rather for your salvation. Jesus deals with wonders. He has enriched the universe with the wonders of nature- the world teems with the wonders of His providence, and the Church is illustrious with the wonders of His grace. Thus, the very greatness of your salvation is an argument for its accomplishment. Because it would be a wonderful, marvellous display of electing love and sovereign mercy, that Christ should convert you by His grace, change you by His regenerating Spirit from a rebel to a child, from an heir of hell to an heir of heaven- therefore you have every encouragement to hope in Christ's salvation. Thus, your case is met by the very name the Savior bears. Faith, however weak, and hope, however faint, and love, however feeble, may expect a present salvation in Christ. So wonderful is His love to sinners, so wonderful the freeness of His grace, so wonderful the boundlessness of His power,

so wonderful the cases of conversion which the history of His grace records, you have every encouragement and warrant to cast yourself upon the Lord Jesus. Dreadful as may have been your rebellion against God, dreadful your life of sin, dreadful the lengths to which in iniquity, and crime, and resistance of the Savior you have gone; yet, if the Holy Spirit has now convinced you of sin, laying you in the dust, humbled, penitent, and heart-broken, yet more wonderful is the efficacy of Christ's blood, the greatness of His love, the freeness of His grace, and the illimitable power to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him.

Hesitate not, then, O penitent, to approach the Savior! He never rejected one true penitent- He will not reject you. The only suitor that He was ever known to refuse is the man who seeks to purchase, by His own merits, rather than receive it as an act of free grace, the salvation that cost Him His heart's life-blood. Come with an empty hand, come without a plea springing from yourself- come sincerely, unworthy as you are, and you shall read His name, "Wonderful," in a light you never read before.

How wonderful, too, is Christ's sympathy and compassion. Wonderful that, from One so divine as He- clothed with all the attributes, and performing all the works of Deity- there should flow such a stream of human feeling; that, He should be so Divine to help, yet so human to support; so God-like to deliver, yet so man-like to sympathize. There, then, let us take our griefs, and woes, and sufferings. So wonderful is His sympathy, He will bow down His ear to your faintest whisper, will enter into your deepest sorrow, will heed your smallest need.

Yes, all that belongs to Christ is wonderful. Wonderful is the grace that He incessantly and immeasurably metes out to His people. Wonderful is the intercessory work He is carrying on in heaven on their behalf. Wonderful His knowledge of His people, their names, and their needs, so that not one, the poorest and most obscure of the flock, escapes His eye or fails of His love.

Wonderful will He appear in His second coming! O the wonders of that day! When the trump shall sound, and the graves will open, and the sea give up its dead, and the heavens will be rolled up as a scroll, and the earth will melt with fervent heat, and all, yes, all, shall stand around the judgment seat! Reader, are you anticipating that event! Are you prepared for its solemn issues? Are you living with death, eternity, and judgment before you? Lose not a moment in determining these questions. Make sure work for eternity by flying immediately to Christ. His name is "Wonderful," and wonderful is His grace and love to poor sinners.

But how fearful must be the final condition of those who prefer sin and self, lusts and pleasures, the creature and the world, to this wonderful Christ. The final, indescribable and eternal sufferings of the lost will be in proportion to their rejection of this wonderful Savior. Nothing can either keep you out or mitigate the torments of hell, if you die in your present persistent course of sin against God and your own soul. Hell is astonishing! Astonishing that it should exist- astonishing that it should be peopled by such countless souls- astonishing that its worm never dies nor its fires ever extinguished- astonishing that it should be forever and ever! But the righteousness of God provides it, the justice of God demands it, the immortality of God perpetuates it, and are all astonishing; and thus the appalling wonder involved in the existence and intensity and eternity of future punishment finds its true and solemn solution. Oh risk not, I implore you, the precious, the undying well-being of your soul! Think what it must be to be lost! Forever lost! Do not be carried away by the modern heresy that denies the eternity of future punishment, and do not be deceived

by the equally false notion of the eternal unconsciousness of the soul. Both ideas are contradicted by the Word of God, which, in a matter of such infinite importance to you, must be your sole guide. Go to Jesus, sit at His feet, learn of Him, believe in Him, embrace Him, and you are saved!

Live preparedly for, and in daily anticipation of, the full and glorified vision of this wonderful Savior, when we shall see Him as He is, be completely like, and forever with Him. This vision of glory constantly floating before the eye of your faith, will tend to draw off your thoughts, affections, and desires from this poor world; dim its luster, weaken its attraction, and deaden its power. We become worldly, as we have much to do with the world; we grow heavenly, as we have much to do with heaven. Think that, in one hour, yes, in one moment of time, you may leave all your wealth, and learning, and honors, and creature loves, and find yourself a disembodied spirit rushing through space, past suns and moons and stars- where? Ah! where? Bound for heaven or for hell! Borne by angels to the one, or dragged by demons to the other! But if you believe in the Savior, and have seen the wonders of His person, grace, and love; if you are trusting only in His blood and righteousness for salvation, and are living and longing for His appearing, then soon, oh, how soon! the curtain will be drawn, and you shall see Jesus in all His unveiled wonder! Oh, what wonders await our astonished view! Could we realize this fact more, how should we rise superior to present trial and sorrow, suffering and loss; and, soaring upon the wing of faith and hope, be more with Him we love within the veil. How should we pray for holiness, pant for holiness, strive for holiness, knowing that, without holiness no man shall see the Lord! Oh, let us keep fast by the cross, sheltered close by the Savior's side, washing daily in His blood, confessing Him before the world for the Lord living, and unto the Lord dying.

"Jesus, Lord, I lie before You,

Low in dust I worship You!

Brightness of God's awful glory,

You can stoop to worthless me,

And 'mid seraph songs on high,

Bend to catch my breathed sigh

Jesus, Savior, You are mine!

"Son of God! Your Father's treasure!

He yet gives You all to me

Angels vainly toil to measure

What I have in having Thee.

Grace so vast bewilders heaven;

God to me His Christ has given

Jesus, Savior, You are mine!

"Let life's hours of joy or sadness

Come and go as You shall please
Earthly grief, or earthly gladness
What have I to do with these?
Creature comforts all may flee;
You Lord, are enough for me
Jesus, Savior, You are mine!
"A soul more lost never lay before You;
Guilt has never louder cried
Just the more in You I'll glory,
Who for one so vile have died;
Kissed me, cleansed me, made me whole,
Wrapped your skirt around my soul
Jesus, Savior, You are mine!
"Not in heaven alone I deem You,
Lord, I feel Your presence near!
Yes, Your Spirit dwells within me,
joins in grace's wondrous tie;
Join us so- that Yours is mine,
join us so- that mine is Your
Jesus, Savior, You are mine.
"Lamb of God! I'm lost in wonder,
When I search Your searchless love;
Praises fit I sincerely would render,
Sincerely would sing like saints above
Here, full hearts can only weep,
Drowned in mercy's glorious deep
Jesus, Savior, You are mine!

Christ, the Counselor

"EMMANUEL, or Titles of Christ" by Octavius Winslow

"Christ, the Counselor"

"His name shall be called... Counselor." Isaiah 9:6.

How marvelously adapted to the varied and ever-changing necessities of His people are the titles of our Lord. They can find themselves in no new or peculiar position in their daily history, but the Spirit, the Comforter, testifying of Christ, unveils a Name among the many that He wears which exactly harmonizes with it. It is thus we learn in each day's experience that, all fulness dwells in Jesus; and thus, too, we are more deeply instructed in the blessed mystery of that life of faith on Christ, so touchingly and poetically portrayed by the sacred penman in his description of the Church- "Who is this that comes up from the wilderness, leaning upon her Beloved?"

We now consider a title of Christ strikingly confirmatory of this remark. Who of us has not, at some period of his life, and at some critical stage of his eventful journey, stood in need of guidance and counsel infinitely beyond the human? Our path must necessarily be one of constant and great perplexity. We are often involved in a maze, entangled in a labyrinth, enclosed within the meshes of a web, to extricate ourselves from which we are utterly powerless. Sin has done this. Before Adam fell, to use a nautical phrase, it was plain sailing for the gallant barque God had just launched upon the bright, smooth sea of life. Not a cloud shaded the sky, not a storm disturbed the atmosphere, not a wavelet ruffled the sea. Its course was straight and radiant to the haven of endless bliss. But our journey now to eternity, whether we cross a desert or plough an ocean, is broken and tempestuous. It is a winding, stormy way to heaven. God leads His people about in the wilderness. The place is often rough and the path is crooked, the valley dangerous and the hill difficult, demanding the skillful guidance and upholding of a Power with whom there is no perplexity, and with whom nothing is impossible. Let two or three examples of this suffice.

The Christian path, just because it is that of the Christian and not the worldling, is a difficult and perplexing one. Our Lord to forearm, forewarned us of this. "Narrow is the gate and narrow is the way, which leads unto life, and few there be that find it." The way itself is a broad way, a high way, a royal way, a large place- a place in which the saints walk in holy liberty, going in and out and finding pasture. But indwelling sin makes it difficult, and encircles it with hardship. It is not an easy thing to walk with God. It is the most blessed, yet the most difficult walk of the believer. Were there no indwelling sin, how easy and how sunny would it be! But when we would do good- earnestly desiring, "whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do, to do all to the glory of God"- evil is present with us, thwarting and neutralizing the good. But to walk closely and holily and humbly with God, as it is the highest, so is it the most difficult walk of the Christian in his homeward travel.

The path of truth, too, is a difficult and perplexing one. It is no easy matter to walk in the truth-keeping the strait, narrow, central path, turning neither to the right hand nor to the left, lest we fall into error. It is a great thing to hold the doctrines of grace in their right position; to exalt free grace

on the one hand, and to avoid its abuse on the other; to maintain the liberty of the disciple of Christ, and yet to set the face as a flint against licentiousness. Oh how many sincere, anxious minds are pressing the inquiry— "What is truth!" They long, they pant, they pray for a satisfactory reply. Perplexed by the conflicting opinions of men, agitated by books, and excited by sermons, tossed thus from billow to billow in the rough, broken sea of polemical theology, they are perplexed to know what doctrine to believe, what system to adopt. Oh, how much we here need a Divine Counselor!

The path of Church polity, too, is encompassed with perplexity. Amid the many Christian communions throwing wide their portals for the convert- each one possessing some essential feature of Christ's true Church, and holding forth distinctively and prominently some important doctrine or institution of the gospel- the question is often most embarrassing to the earnest Christian- With which branch of the Church of God shall I unite? With a heart expanding with love to Christ, and thus expanded, embracing in its affection and sympathy the one and indivisible Body, yet feeling it right to attach his interests and his influence to a particular branch, it is often a question of painful perplexity- which? Need we not, in this particular, counsel higher than our own?

The path of providence, too, is often paved with difficulties, and beset with perplexities with which we can ill cope. Our way to heaven is through an intricate wilderness and across a circuitous desert. To many even of the Lord's people this is literally the case. Visit their abodes, and ponder the struggle passing within! All is poverty and discomfort. Penury of bread, scantiness of clothing, pining sickness, loathsome disease, excruciating suffering, with no human friends, no soothing alleviation, no earthly comforts. And yet not entirely unrelieved is this dark picture. Christ dwells in that obscure abode. God's eye is watching over it. The angels of God, ministering spirits sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation, hover around that Christian home, that tried, suffering saint. There is gnawing poverty, and yet boundless wealth; deep need, and yet a rich supply; acute suffering, and yet exquisite pleasure; keen sorrow, and yet unspeakable joy. And why these paradoxes? How are we to understand these strange contradictions? The apostle gives us a clue in a page of his own history. "As unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing all things." This unravels the mystery. The possession of Christ explains it. He who has Christ in him, and Christ with him, and the hope of being forever with Christ in glory, is not a poor, nor a sorrowful, nor a suffering, nor a lone man. He can say, "I am not alone, for my Father is with me. I am not poor, for all things are mine. My body is diseased, but my soul is in health. I have all and abound."

But apart from this extreme case, how entangled and perplexing are often the dispensations of God's providence in the history of all believers, demanding counsel from God alone. How often are we brought to our wits' end in some mysterious and intricate turn of our affairs, and we know not to what human counselor to repair for the wisdom that shall aid us in our difficulty. It is in this school we learn the need of a Counselor higher than man. And learning thus this lesson, the Lord is but preparing us for a closer acquaintance with Himself, the Divine Counselor of His Church. We would know but little of Christ, our transactions with Him would be few and distant, could we find anything in the creature that would in any degree be a substitute for Him. So carnal are we, could we find one foothold upon earth upon which we could take our stand, how seldom should we rise to heaven! Alas! what a humiliating confession to make! But it is not less true than painful. Thus,

then, God is teaching us our need of a Divine Counselor by all the mysteries and perplexities of our individual history. He will have us love and reverence His Son. Despised and rejected by the world, He will have His people honor and love Him, even as they honor and love Himself. And when His dealings are dark and mysterious, His footsteps in the great deep, and His ways past finding out, overwhelming the human mind with embarrassment and dismay, He is thus but preparing us to take our place at the feet of Jesus, who is

wonderful in counsel and excellent in working.

But, perhaps, it is around the all-important matter of our salvation, that our profoundest and most painful perplexity gathers. As this, of all questions, is the most momentous, so the perplexities and difficulties which attach to it are often most embarrassing and insurmountable. "What must I do to be saved?" would seem a simple question, though the most momentous that man ever propounded; and yet how bewildering and dark every answer but the gospel's! This,

no reader, may be your present and all-absorbing perplexity. Blessed perplexity! May I not state it thus? for what were all the questions of human science and philosophy compared with this one, "What must I do to be saved?" when death stares us in the face? To be awakened, then, to this vital inquiry— to come in contact with the doubts, and perplexities, and difficulties connected with it— to be brought to the conviction that the Gospel only can answer the question, and that Christianity can alone solve the difficulty and bestow the blessing— is a far more blessed and enviable state than could you have squared the circle, or have penetrated the source of the Nile. Upon this subject, then, you are perplexed. You cannot clearly understand how God can pardon the guilty, or justify the ungodly. You cannot distinctly see how Christ offered Himself as a substitutionary sacrifice for man. You are embarrassed to understand why a God so merciful should not, without the intervention of an Atonement so costly, pardon the sin and save the sinner. The strange and marvellous union of judgment and mercy, of justice and love, of holiness and grace in the cross of Christ, perplexes you. But if the plan of redemption presents no difficulty to your mind, your own sinfulness perchance does? Here, probably, is your great stumbling-block. You can see Jesus to be the Savior, and faith in Him the way by which you are saved; but your great, your apparently insurmountable difficulty is— the number and vastness of your sins. The question with you is, not that Jesus is the Savior, but "is He my Savior!" Not that He saves sinners, but, "will He save me?" Not that faith is the instrument of salvation, but, "have I faith?" Truly, if ever a poor perplexed soul needed divine counsel, it is you; and if ever a counselor in all respects equal to this and every case of difficulty were provided, that Counselor is Christ. "His name shall be called Counselor." To this part of our subject let us now bend our devout study.

Our Lord's fulness in every respect as the Counselor of His people is found in the existence of His twofold nature as God and man. As God he possesses all the essential qualifications for the office. He could not be the true Counselor of His Church were He not God. The counsel His people demands is superhuman, super-angelic; it is Divine. It must possess no infirmity, no uncertainty, no blindness. It must be incapable of erring. It must not be warped by prejudice, nor perverted by gift. It must be so divine that no difficulty shall embarrass it; so righteous that no bribe shall purchase it; so perfect that no case shall baffle it. It must be capable of seeing the end from the beginning; in its eye every event must be as transparent as ten thousand suns, and as easy of solution and guidance as the most self-evident problem could possibly be. Moreover, it must

embrace as its clients an infinite number of people, living in all ages, dwelling in all lands, in every place, and at the same instant of time. There must be Omnipresence, Omniscience, and Omnipotence. What, I ask, but absolute Deity could be equal to this? And yet Christ by the voice of prophecy is declared to be the Counselor of His Church. Possessing all these divine and essential attributes, it follows that He is equal to Jehovah, yes, that He is Jehovah, and hence another and indisputable argument in favor of His glorious divinity.

In view of this fact, can we reasonably hesitate for a moment in bringing our case to Christ for adjudication and adjustment? It is, perhaps, a case beyond the grasp of all others to solve. It is too profound for man, too high for angels; Deity alone can compass, Deity alone solve and unravel it. To Deity, then, you bring your perplexity when you bring it to Christ the Counselor. Oh, say not that the doctrine of our Lord's divinity is a dry, abstract truth! It is so experimental and so practical a truth that it is interlaced with the everyday life of the believer. There is not, beloved, a circumstance, or event, or incident in the minutiae of your daily walk, but in its occurrence you are encompassed with the divine nature and resources of Jesus. You cannot proceed a step without Deity! Walking with Jesus, in God you live and move and have your being. Mere created knowledge could not have anticipated that event, mere created intelligence could not have shaped it, mere created wisdom could not have guided it, mere created power could not have controlled it; God alone could meet its need. How often apparently does the most simple question in our life baffle the wisdom of the most astute. And on what trivial matters frequently do we find the most wise and intelligent at fault. Well did our Lord say to His disciples, "Without Me you can do nothing."

But we take another step in the consideration of our Lord's qualification to be the Counselor of His Church, when we contemplate His fitness as man. It was in reference to this part of His nature that the prophet spoke these words- "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots; and the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord." Thus was our blessed Lord, as man, filled with the "Spirit of counsel and wisdom," qualifying Him as the perfect Counselor of His people. His human judgment knew no infirmity. His wisdom as man was perfect. In Him dwelt "all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." Was not this tested to the utmost by His enemies? How eagerly they sought by argument to silence, and by sophistry to ensnare Him. With what impiety and hostility they sought to entrap Him into lawlessness and treason; while Satan himself for forty days and forty nights brought all his power to bear upon our Lord's perpetration of sin. But all in vain. They were not able to resist the wisdom, the power, and the holiness, with which He battled, foiled, and overcame them. Such is our wonderful Counselor. Can we for a moment doubt His perfect power to undertake all the cares, to cope with all the difficulties, and to solve all the doubts, and to disentangle all the perplexities brought to Him by His saints in all places and at all times!

The consideration of our Lord's first EXERCISE OF HIS OFFICE AS COUNSELOR takes us back to eternity past. We there find Him as the Second Person in the ever blessed Trinity, acting in consort with the Father and the Spirit in the creation of the world, but more especially in the higher work of its redemption. I would commend to my reader's careful and devout study the eighth chapter of the book of Proverbs, from the twelfth verse to the close. There are few portions of God's word in which the pre-existence of Christ is more fully or strikingly set forth than in these

remarkable passages. In the creation of the world, our Lord, privy to the purposes, decrees, and thoughts of the Godhead, was present and essentially concerned as counseling and consulting with the Father and the Spirit. If language has any meaning, this is clearly the case, from the terms employed to describe it, "And God said, Let us make man in Our image, after Our likeness." And again we find the same terms, denoting a plurality in the Godhead, employed when Jehovah resolved to confound the builders of Babel. "And the Lord said, let us go down there and confound their language." But, as we have remarked, it was in the great work of salvation that the office of Christ as His Church's Counselor the most conspicuously and gloriously appears. The prophet Zechariah says, "And the counsel of peace shall be between them both."

In this divine and eternal counsel the plan of redemption was devised, the Redeemer appointed, and the redeemed chosen; the assumption of flesh by the Son of God, His sufferings and death, his burial and resurrection, were all thus planned and settled "By the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God." What a glorious view does this present of the everlasting love and overflowing grace of the Triune-Jehovah towards His people. How assuring and refreshing thus to travel back to the eternal source from where flows every sweet and holy spring that quickens, fertilizes and gladdens the believing soul here below. And although the Eternity and self-existence of God will ever remain an unsearchable and profound mystery of grace and love, yet ever supplying new material for study and for song, still to this infinite source we may trace the streams of that river which makes glad the city of God. Doubt not, then, O Christian, the unchangeableness of God's love to you in Christ Jesus. An essential part of His nature, it is from everlasting to everlasting the same. Your love, like the ocean's tide, may ebb and flow. Sometimes like a flood inundating your whole being; at other times so ebb as to expose to view all the aridness and unloveliness of your soul, as the receding tide reveals the shallows and unsightliness of the shore.

Nevertheless, no dispensation of God, however threatening, and no fluctuations of Christian experience, however painful, can reach the source from where this river of love flows down to your soul, or divert from you a single stream. Do not stay away, then, from Jesus, and restrain not prayer and praise before God, because your spiritual frames are low, and your soul untuned. Since God did not set His heart upon you because He foresaw anything of worthiness in you, so He will not withdraw His heart from you because of any unworthiness He may now observe in you. Thus are we instructed to regard Christ as Jehovah's Counselor, and as such equal to God Himself; for, in the language of the apostle, "Who has known the mind of the Lord? Who has been His Counselor." If, then, with Christ God took counsel in the great matters of creation, providence, and grace, it follows that He must be equal with the Father, since God could not seek counsel, nor needed it, from any creature- man, though the most perfect and splendid production of His creative power.

I ask not a stronger evidence of the essential Deity of my Redeemer than this single, naked fact that, He was a party in the great council of Jehovah when redemption was conceived, and when the foundations of the earth and the heavens were laid. Truly may Jesus say, "I am God, and there is none like me; declaring the end from the beginning, and from the ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure."

But let us now consider this expressive name of our Lord in its relation to His people. If Christ is Jehovah's Counselor, equally is He the Counselor of His Church. And in the first place, Jesus

Christ is the Counselor for His people. "If any man sin, we have all Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." He is the Great Pleader on our behalf. He espoused our cause in eternity, as we have seen, when He became a party to the eternal covenant of grace between the three people of the Godhead on behalf of the Church. From that moment- if, indeed, a transaction stretching into the unknown and illimitable depths of a past eternity may be so termed- He has ever appeared the Counselor and Advocate "that pleads the cause of His people."

Our circumstances require just such a Counselor as Christ is, ever to appear on our behalf in the high court of heaven. We have a cause of infinite moment, interests at stake of deathless value, lodged in that Court, and entrusted to His hands. The believer is involved in ceaseless litigation. Sin, and Satan, and the world, and his own corrupt and deceitful heart, and an ever wakeful and accusing conscience, are perpetually dragging him into court, and witnessing against him. But in that court this Great Counselor ever stands, "now to appear in the presence of God for us." He confronts every indictment, meets every charge, and silences every accusation by the appearance of Himself. He exhibits His blood, presents His merits, pleads His resurrection, and demands, on the ground of what He is, and of what He has done, the full acquittal and immediate discharge of every saint against whom sin and Satan and the world bring their accusation and urge their testimony. Thus the accuser of the brethren is foiled, the accusation falls, and the accused acquitted. What vast comfort flows from this view of the advocacy and intercession of Christ for us within the veil! Had He not pleaded, as David expresses it, "the causes of our soul"- for we have many causes to entrust to His advocacy- how quickly and triumphantly would our enemies have prevailed. You are, perhaps, now in a position demanding just such an Advocate as Jesus. You have a cause for Him to plead. It is an anxious, baffling, urgent one. It demands the best and the most skillful and powerful advocacy. Behold your Counselor! In the prayer of faith commit your cause, entrust your case to Christ, and doubt not the successful and happy issue. Does sin grieve you? does conscience condemn you? does Satan accuse you? does man oppress you? Enlist your Advocate in heaven in your behalf, place it confidently in His hands, for "He ever lives to make intercession for us."

But not only is Christ a counselor for His people, but He is also a counselor to His people. He gives them counsel. Many are the doubts and perplexities in the course of the believer's life, which his own skill fails to meet. In a single day, some unexpected and untoward event has plunged us in a sea of difficulty, baffling all human wisdom to guide, and distancing all human power to control. At such a moment how helpful and soothing to realize the presence and have the guidance of One who sees the end from the beginning, who can be surprised by nothing unforeseen, and who can

Many are the doubts and perplexities in the course of the believer's life, which his own skill fails to meet. In a single day, some unexpected and untoward event has plunged us in a sea of difficulty, baffling all human wisdom to guide, and distancing all human power to control. At such a moment how helpful and soothing to realize the presence and have the guidance of One who sees the end from the beginning, who can be surprised by nothing unforeseen, and who can

be baffled by nothing present. This was the joy of the Psalmist. "I will bless the Lord, who has given me Counsel: my heart also instructs me in the night season." Such, my reader, may be your present case. You are, perhaps, perplexed to know the path of duty. Some event has transpired, some stone of difficulty has landed upon your path, which baffles your wisdom to guide, and exceeds your power to remove, and you are brought to your wits' end. Do you remember the

command of Moses to the judges whom he appointed to adjust the difficulties of the Israelites? "Bring me any cases that are too difficult for you, and I will handle them." A greater than Moses is your judge and Counselor. Listen to His words— "I will instruct and teach you in the way which you shall go; I will guide you with my eye." Listen yet again to His command addressed to the distressed and baffled parent whose child the disciples were powerless to relieve— "Bring him to Me." Now, act faith in Christ, your Divine, unerring Counselor. The cause which has proved too hard for the wisdom, experience, and skill of man- the perplexity which has baffled your utmost intelligence and ingenuity to guide- bring to Christ. Why should you sit down beneath your difficulty, discouraged and despairing? In the language of the prophet would I ask, 'Has your Counselor perished? No! this cannot be, for Jesus ever lives as your Advocate. Then why yield to despondency or despair? Why succumb to your difficulty, and sink beneath your load? Your perplexity is nothing with Christ. What is all dark to you, is all light to Him. What to you is an entangled skein, is to Him a perfect mosaic. He can bring you out of all your difficulties, opening a way for your escape from all your troubles, make the crooked path straight and the rough place smooth. "Commit your way to Him, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass."

But, perhaps, your greatest perplexity is the salvation of your soul. "What must I do to be saved?" is the great question which, in its present and far reaching importance, absorbs every other. But who can counsel you in this great difficulty as Christ can? Your salvation is a matter in which He is personally and deeply concerned. He undertook it, embarked in it, accomplished it, and is prepared to guide you by His Spirit, and teach you through His truth how you may be saved. Since Jesus is personally interested and concerned as no other being in the universe can be, not excepting your own self, in the great matter of your soul's salvation, bring your doubts, difficulties, and anxieties to Him. The everlasting happiness of your awakened and anxious soul is a matter bound up with every purpose of His eternal counsel, every thought of His mind, and feeling of His heart. He embarked His whole being, gave Himself body, soul, and spirit to save you from endless woe. He sorrowed in Gethsemane even unto death; suffered unknown agonies on the Cross; poured out His last drop of blood; and breathed His last breath to save you from going down into the pit. Then, in the face of all this love, grace, and mercy to poor sinners, hesitate not to bring the difficulties, perplexities, and anxieties respecting your soul's salvation to Jesus for instruction and adjustment. He will remove every impediment. By one drop of His blood the mountain of sin will dissolve; by one touch of His hand the huge difficulty shall vanish; by one word of His mouth the perplexing doubts and agitating fears which throng and assail your anxious soul will disappear, and you shall exclaim, "I have found it! I have found it! I have found salvation, and pardon, and peace in Christ, and my soul expands with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

And if there is one on earth to whose difficulties, perplexities, and anxieties Christ is prepared to give counsel and help, it is he who, through sin, and doubt, and darkness, is working and struggling to find his way to Himself. To such an one He says, "Poor soul! do you inquire after me? Am I the object of your desire, your search, your love? Are you perplexed with doubts, trembling with fears, struggling with difficulties, and yet through all, though faint, still pursuing the one great object of your soul- salvation? then I will help you, I will strengthen you, yes, I will guide you, and bring you into my kingdom of grace here, and finally into my kingdom of glory hereafter." And what, as such, is the counsel Christ gives to all anxious, sin-burdened, Jesus-seeking souls? Oh, it is counsel like Himself, loving, gracious, free. "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden,

and I will give you rest." "I counsel you to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that you may be rich, and white clothing that you may be clothed." Oh, heed then His gracious counsels; approach Him, though with burthened mind, and anxious heart, and trembling faith, for He has promised, " Him that comes unto Me, I will in no wise cast out."

What a precious Counselor is Christ in seasons of deep affliction! If, in the course of the Christian's life, he feels the need of one to feel for him, to think for him, to act for him, it is when the hand of God is heavy and sore upon him. Your calamity has, perhaps, stunned, paralyzed, crushed you. Your mind seems to have lost the faculty of thought, your heart the power of feeling. You find yourself, through overwhelming grief and sin, totally incapacitated to think, to decide, to act for yourself. Oh, uplift that eye, swimming with tears; that heart crushed with woe, to Jesus, your promised, faithful, present Counselor! Place your case in His hands; He will undertake and accomplish all for you now. He sees your affliction, and in it He is afflicted. He knows your sorrow, and by it is touched. He is acquainted with the difficulties and embarrassments with which this calamity has surrounded you, and stands prepared, gently, skillfully, and safely, to lead you through them all. What though death has smitten the loved one of your heart; or the sweeping storm of adversity has scattered the treasure and earnings of years; or chilled affection and changed friendship has left your heart to bleed, unstanch'd by human hand, your grief to weep in secret, unsoothed by human sympathy? Yet you are not alone; for Christ, your Counselor and Friend, is at your side, and bids you unveil your sorrow, and commit your way, and make known your need to Him, and He will hide you under the shadow of His wings until the calamity be overpast. Nor is it less the office of Christ, as His people's Counselor, to defeat with His wisdom the plots of ungodly and designing men, who, like Ahithophel, seek by wicked counsel to injure the righteous, to pervert the truth, and to dishonor God. Who but such a divine Counselor as Christ could thus thwart the stratagems, foil the arts, and disappoint the purposes of Satan and his emissaries, turning to foolishness the wisdom, and bringing to nothing the subtlety of the enemies of Christ and the foes of His faith? Let the persecutors of the saints, and the emissaries of evil "take counsel together against the Lord and against His Anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us, He that sits in the heavens shall laugh, the Lord shall have them in derision." Do not be afraid, then, Christian, of those who, by fraud and falsehood, by malice and rage, seek to injure you, and through you, wound the Savior and His cause. They shall fall by their own counsels, and in the pit they have dug for you they shall themselves be entombed; for Christ is your Counselor, and "the Counsel of the Lord, that shall stand."

Oh, you who are walking after the devices of your own hearts, beware lest God give you up to your own Counsel, and you perish in your folly and your sin! "Destruction is certain for those who try to hide their plans from the Lord, who try to keep him in the dark concerning what they do! 'The Lord can't see us,' you say to yourselves. 'He doesn't know what is going on!'" Remember, you have interests at stake more precious and undying than the universe. An eternal heaven or hell tremble in the balance. Away, then, to Christ, and engage His counsel on your behalf. Entrust your soul to His advocacy, commit its eternal safety to His hands. Jesus only can save you. But He will not save you in your sins, but from your sins- their power, guilt, and condemnation. Thus saved, thus cleansed by His blood and robed with His righteousness, you will go and sin no more as once you sinned. You will live for God, and testify for Christ, and labor for man, and strive after that holiness without which no man can see the Lord.

Child of God, yield yourself- the affairs of your family and the perplexities of your calling in life- to the supreme government and guidance of your heavenly Counselor. Commit yourself unto Him, acknowledge Him in all your ways, and seek light to know, and strength to do, and grace to suffer His will in everything. Let your heart and Christ's heart, your will and God's will, be one. And whatever mystery and darkness may shroud from your view the path by which your heavenly Father is leading you, let the filial trust and the cheerful hope of the Psalmist be yours—
"Nevertheless, I am continually with You; You hold me by my right hand. You shall guide me with Your Counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory."

"Wherever I go, whatever my task,
The counsel of my God I ask,
Who all things has and can;
Unless He give both thought and deed,
The utmost pains can never succeed,
And vain the wisest plan.

"For what can all my toil avail?
My care, my watching, all must fail,
Unless my Savior's there;
Then let Him order all for me,
As He in wisdom shall decree;
On Him I cast my care.

"For nothing can come, as nothing has been,
But what my Father has foreseen,
And what shall work my good;
Whatever He gives me I will take,
Whatever He chooses I will make
My choice with thankful mood.

"I lean upon His mighty arm,
It shields me well from every harm,
All evil shall avert;
If by His precepts still I live,
Whatever is useful He will give,
And nothing shall do me hurt.

"But only may He of His grace,
The record of my guilt efface,
And wipe out all my debt;
Though I have sinned He will not straight
Pronounce His judgment, He will wait,
Have patience with me yet.
"When late at night my rest I take,
When early in the morn I wake,
Halting, or on my way,
In hours of weakness or in bonds,
When vexed with fears my heart desponds,
His promise is my stay.
"To those I love will He be near,
With His consoling light appear,
Who is my shield and theirs;
And He will grant beyond our thought
What they and I alike have sought
With many tearful prayers.
"Then, O my soul, be never afraid,
On Him who you and all things made
Do you all calmly rest;
Whatever may come, wherever we go,
Our Father in the heavens must know
In all things what is best."

Let me, in conclusion, exhort you not to lose sight of the accessibility of your Heavenly Counselor. In a moment you may place your case in His hands, and in a moment find a solution to all your difficulties. The divine promise is, "If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him." Seek in uprightness of heart to know only the Lord's mind and will in the matter, and He will teach you His truth, and lead you in His paths. "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright 'in heart." Thus divinely guided and upheld, none of your steps shall slide; and when traveling days are over, He who thus guided you with His counsel will bring you into His glory.

"Your counsels, Lord, shall guide my feet,
Through this dark wilderness;
Your hand conduct me near Your seat,
To dwell before Your face."

Christ, the Mighty God

"EMMANUEL, or Titles of Christ" by Octavius Winslow

"Christ, the Mighty God"

"His name shall be called... the mighty God." Isaiah 9:6.

How richly accumulative and conclusive, as we proceed in our study of the titles of Christ, are the evidences which they afford, to the cardinal doctrine of the Christian faith

-His essential deity. So true is that doctrine, and so interwoven with the entire structure of the Bible, it confronts us at every turn, and crosses our path at every step in our research into the untold wealth of this sacred volume, each new evidence yet stronger than the last, and all combining to confirm our faith in a truth, apart from which we cannot possibly be saved. This remark may fall with a startling effect on the ears of those who reject the evangelical scheme of the Bible, and who may deem it as savoring both of bigotry and uncharitableness. But the premises in the case force us to this conclusion. If an architect rear an edifice upon an inadequate basis, or if a drowning man repels the spar that floats at his side, or refuses to enter the life-boat launched for his rescue, surely it were no violation either of reason or of charity to affirm that disaster and death will be the natural and inevitable result of so infatuated and suicidal a course. The application of this illustration to the subject before us is perfectly true and simple. There is- there can be- but one way of salvation for lost sinners. If we have not found, and are not walking in that way, where is then the possibility of being saved? If there is but one road to the great metropolis, and we diverge from it into another and an opposite one, it is no marvel that we never reach it. These simple illustrations of the greatest, the profoundest, the most momentous truth that ever engaged the thoughts of men, address themselves to the simplest understanding.

To present a summary of the essential points involved in the premises- there is but one channel of pardon- the atoning blood of Christ; there is but one way of justification- the imputed righteousness of Christ; there is but one instrument of salvation- faith in Christ. If as a guilty sinner needing forgiveness, if as a condemned sinner needing righteousness, if as a lost sinner needing salvation, I unbelievably, wilfully, and persistently despise and reject the only Name given under heaven whereby I must be saved, surely to say, in the solemn words of Scripture, "...there is no other sacrifice that will cover these sins. There will be nothing to look forward to but the terrible expectation of God's judgment and the raging fire that will consume his enemies." -is but to speak the words of truth and soberness, and to enunciate a truth than which none more true and solemn was ever uttered.

But the title ascribed by the prophet to Christ, now to be considered, must annihilate the doubt of every candid and ingenuous mind touching this doctrine, so essential to be believed. "His name shall be called... the mighty God." Beyond this title of Deity He could not go. A stronger declaration of His divine nature could not be given. Nor is this the only place in which it occurs. Isaiah, in another part of his evangelical prophecy, has these remarkable words uttered by God- "All the

world will know that I, the Lord, am your Savior and Redeemer, the Mighty One of Israel." In the words of the Psalmist, we have the same title ascribed to Christ- "Your throne, O God, endures forever and ever. Your royal power is expressed in justice." In the first chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, eighth verse, these identical words are transferred and applied to Christ. Turning to the Book of the Revelation, we find our Lord Jesus appropriating to Himself the same title- "I am the Alpha and the Omega—the beginning and the end," says the Lord God. "I am the one who is, who always was, and who is still to come, the Almighty One." Let us close these passages with one which may justly claim to be regarded the crowning one of all- "Without question, this is the great mystery of our faith: God made manifest in the flesh." I invite the reader, skeptical on this great doctrine of our faith, to a devout and earnest study of these declarations. So forcible and conclusive are they in their bearings upon a tenet which all must believe who are saved, and disbelieving which none can be saved, he who rejects them will be found inexcusable at the Great Day when we must give account to God as much for what we believe as for what we say or do.

There are those who hold themselves irresponsible for their religious creed- but God does not. They reason that they are no more accountable for this than for the hue of their skin or the color of their coat. I trust this flippant argument, popular with a certain class of sceptics at one time, has become too obsolete and exploded to be disinterred from the grave of the past. And yet we meet with much bearing a strong resemblance to it in the skeptical reasoning of the present day. God has given us a divine revelation of Himself, His mind and will, and of our duty to Him; and, as responsible beings hastening to the great tribunal, we are bound to believe it. And for our relation to this revelation- whether we receive or reject it- every one of us must give account of himself to God. Oh, deal with this doctrine of Christ's Divinity as one who is to stand in the judgment. It is essential to your eternal happiness that you should so regard it. Your hope of heaven must stand upon a basis equal to its greatness- the atonement of Christ is that basis. The Atonement must, in its turn, stand upon a foundation equal to its stupendousness- the Deity of Christ is that foundation. "And whoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder." Let us devote the remainder of these pages to a few illustrations of Christ's Almightyness, as we find them scattered and glowing like gems upon every page of the New Testament writings.

The first which arrests our attention is our Lord's ALMIGHTINESS IN CREATION. Creation is the highest work of Almightyness. He that creates must be before and above the thing created, and must therefore be uncreated and divine. Now, to create a world, yes, countless worlds- of which this is the least in magnitude, though the most illustrious in history- out of nothing, must have demanded resources that were infinite, and therefore almighty. And yet creation is ascribed to our Savior. Thus- "All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made." Again- "God, who created all things by Jesus Christ." Thus everything that exists, all material worlds, and all beings, rational and irrational, who inhabit them, are included in this vast creation of Christ. "You, Lord, in the beginning have laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of Your hands." I have remarked that there is no stronger proof of Omnipotence than the power of creation. Hence we find Jehovah so frequently appealing to the creation of the heavens and the earth as distinguishing Him, the only true God, in opposition to the Gods of man's invention and creation. "The Lord is the true God, He is the living God, and an everlasting king: the Gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish

front bite earth." But this creative power is everywhere in the Bible ascribed to Christ, and is an irrefutable evidence of His essential Almightyness. If any one doubts it, and flippantly affirms that creation were an easy task, within the range of creature power, and is therefore no conclusive evidence of Deity, I challenge the vaunting objector to a practical proof of his argument. Bid him form a blade of grass, pencil a flower, or create an insect, and how blank and confounded will he appear? And yet he dares to pluck this divine pearl from the brow of Jesus, and to trample His crown and trail His glory in the dust. Surely the conclusion which we draw from this statement ought to be sufficiently logical and conclusive to satisfy every inquiring mind that He who bears the title of "The Almighty," is, and must be, essentially Divine.

But a yet greater exercise of the almighty power of the Lord is seen in THE NEW CREATION OF THE SOUL. The creation of this universe, with its countless worlds, were as nothing in comparison with the new birth of the creature man. "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation;" or a new creation. What an essential and glorious work is this! In what terms can we describe it? The pen of inspiration shall draw the portrait. It is a dead soul made alive, an enemy against God transformed into a son, a slave of Satan translated into a subject of Christ, a child of darkness changed into a child of the light, a guilty and polluted sinner washed whiter than snow. Surely these emblems will suffice to inspire the mind with a conviction of the necessity, reality, and blessedness of the new creation, the spiritual regeneration of the soul, of which Christ is the divine author. "I have come," says the Savior, "that they might have life." "The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear shall live." What a conclusive proof, and what a transcendent display, have we here of the Almightyness of Jesus! His divine image restored, a living temple made, a spiritual house reared, a sinful heart renewed, a new nature implanted, a lost soul saved! If Almightyness were required to make a world out of nothing, surely to make a new creature, or a new creation, all divine and holy, instinct with life and radiant with beauty, sharing the nature and reflecting the image of God, out of materials all wrecked and ruined, polluted and debased, were a manifestation of Almightyness infinitely distancing and totally eclipsing every other exercise of its creative power. My reader, are you a living witness to the almighty power of Jesus in the new and spiritual creation of your being? Are you born again? Momentous question! Upon its decision is suspended the future destiny of your soul- its endless prosperity or its endless woe, its everlasting bliss or its everlasting punishment. With interests at stake so precious, with a destiny before you so solemn, postpone not your decision for a single day. One day may decide your future forever. In one moment you may be in eternity! Once lost, is to be forever lost. What words are adequate to describe the importance, to enforce the necessity, or to urge the immediate consideration of seeking a saving knowledge of Christ? True religion is the only thing of vital importance, of real and pressing consequence.

Everything else- the pleasures that delight, the studies that attract, the engagements that absorb, the loves that chain, and the friendships that charm us- are but as the evening shadows dancing upon the wall. True religion is everything. To be prepared to die, to be ready for eternity, to have

made sure of heaven, are the only things worthy the serious and absorbing consideration of a responsible, accountable, and immortal being. How faint and imperfect the idea we form of the appalling agonies of the body and the insufferable anguish of the soul in its state of unceasing woe! Indeed, I believe that it is not possible to approach anything like a perfect conception of the appalling reality. Around the actuality of the awful condition itself there gathers not the shadow of a

shade of doubt. So that while the Bible lifts, as with a reluctant and guarded hand, the awful veil that discloses the terrible and endless sufferings of a lost soul, it makes no concealment whatever of the reality and eternity of the dread fact. The terms employed by the Holy Spirit in the description of the final and endless state of the ungodly, are significantly few, but appallingly impressive.

"For the Lord holds a cup in his hand;

it is full of foaming wine mixed with spices.

He pours the wine out in judgment,

and all the wicked must drink it,

draining it to the dregs." Psalms 75:8.

"Topheth—the place of burning—has long been ready.... it has been piled high with wood. The breath of the Lord, like fire from a volcano, will set it ablaze." Isaiah 30:33.

The sinners among my people shake with fear. "Which one of us," they cry, "can live here in the presence of this all-consuming fire?" Isaiah 33:14.

Turning to the New Testament revelations on this awful subject, we find the terms are singularly measured but appallingly significant- "The worm that never dies." The punishment is eternal- "And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever." Revelation 20:10. "Then they will go away to eternal punishment." Matthew 25:46. "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.'" Matthew 25:41.

The body suffers- "It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell." Matthew 5:29.

The soul suffers- "Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell. Matthew 10:28.

What need we more? Will not these clear and emphatic statements, on the authority of God's revelation, suffice to explode every false view of hell, and answer the argument of the modern errorist alleged against the Scripture doctrine of the existence and eternity of future punishment?

But the next view of our Lord's Almighty will immensely relieve this dark and terrible picture of future, endless punishment. "MIGHTY TO SAVE," was His own prophetic and gracious announcement. "Who is this who comes from Edom, from the city of Bozrah, with his clothing stained red? Who is this in royal robes, marching in the greatness of his strength? It is I, the Lord, announcing your salvation! It is I, the Lord, who is mighty to save!" Isaiah 63:1. It will be thus seen that the power of Christ is on the side of saving mercy. That, magnificent as is His creative power; His redemptive, saving power- His power to redeem, and freely to save- saving even to the uttermost- is greater and more magnificent still. The work of our salvation was a great, a stupendous work, demanding the utmost resources of Infinity. None but Jehovah could save: "Salvation is of the Lord." If there is any work of God which demonstrates His Deity, it is the work

of saving lost man. None but God could or would have embarked in this mighty, this perilous undertaking, of rescuing the sinner, self-destroyed, guilty, and inevitably doomed to everlasting punishment. But Jesus undertook and girded Himself for the work. It involved the relinquishment of heaven, with all its bliss, its glory, its joy, and His advent to earth, amid all its sin, its suffering, and its woe. No, more, it demanded His personal surrender and sacrifice- the offering up of Himself as an oblation for man to God on the altar of Divine justice. "Christ also has loved us, and has given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor."

If the creation of the world demanded the power of the Almighty God, much more its redemption. What was essentially required in the case? The harmony of the Divine attributes, the honor of the Divine government, the vindication of the Divine law, the satisfaction of Divine justice- in a word, the endurance of the wrath of God, and the penalty of a death the most ignominious and painful. But more even than this. There was involved in the accomplishment of the salvation of the Church, the bearing of her sins, the bringing in of a new and an everlasting righteousness, the endurance of the curse, and the full payment of the great debt due to God. All this demanded the utmost resources of the Deity. There must be Divine wisdom, Divine power, and Divine love. But Jesus was equal to the undertaking, and accomplished it. To almighty God, the salvation of countless myriads, even at such a cost, and by such a sacrifice, was not an impossible thing. To any other and finite being, it would, it must have been, an impossibility. If the Almighty God had not undertaken it, the entire universe of fallen beings must have perished forever. But here was a work worthy of Jesus, worthy of His divine love and infinite power.

It is a glorious work, even for a created being, to save. The highest benefactor, and the truest philanthropist, is he who instrumentally saves a soul from death. To plant a single gem in the Savior's crown; to heighten, by one songster, the hallelujah of the Lamb; to occupy a solitary mansion in the Father's house with a ransomed tenant, oh, it were worth the toil and suffering of a life! What, then, must have been the joy that was set before Him of saving myriads from endless death- of studding the 'many crowns' worn at His appearing with countless jewels- of peopling heaven with the redeemed of earth, and of securing an eternal revenue of glory to His Father, He willingly endured the cross, despising the shame!

Who but the Almighty God could have sustained the burden of all the sins of the elect? have exhausted the curse, have borne the condemnation, and have suffered the penalty, and yet have risen again from the grave? Oh yes, salvation was a mighty work; but Jesus was Almighty to achieve it. God placed our salvation on One that was mighty, strong to deliver, mighty to save. One single sin would have sunk the Church to the bottomless abyss; but Jesus bore all the sins of the whole elect of God; and although the tremendous load crushed His humanity to the death, His Godhead bore Him up, carried Him successfully through, and landed Him safe in heaven, amid the acclaim of angels and the hallelujahs of saints- the suffering and slain VICTIM now the triumphant and enthroned VICTOR over hell, death, and the grave!

In view of this truth, can you for a moment doubt His ability to save you? His power, strange in judgement, is at home in mercy. He loves to exercise it- not to wound, but to heal; not to crush, but to lift up; not to condemn, but to save; not to consign to hell, but to raise the soul from its lowest depths of sin to the highest heaven. Oh, had not love to poor sinners stirred within His breast, He had left them forever to perish. As the Almighty God, He had power to condemn or to save. In

exercising that power against the sinner, He had been immaculately holy, unimpeachably just.

But He loved man, He loved His Church; devised and embarked in an expedient by which He could exercise His power on the side of mercy, and yet in harmony with truth; in the interests of grace, and yet in unison with righteousness; for the salvation of sinners, and yet for the glory of God. His power was to save sinners to the uttermost- to save the vilest, the very chief! He is able to save you, O guilt-distressed, sin-burdened soul. He is able to cleanse you from the guilt, to free you from the tyranny, and to save you from the condemnation of all your sins- sins the oldest and the stubbornest- sins of the greatest magnitude and of the deepest dye. This may be just the perfection of the Savior in which your trembling faith longs to find repose. Your doubt is not concerning His willingness, because you infer that a Savior who could pass through a life of suffering so fearful, and to die a death so ignominious, must be willing to save sinners; but the question with which your hesitating faith grapples is- "Is Jesus able to save so great a sinner as I am? Is His strength equal to His love, His power commensurate with His will?" Read the answer in the name which He bears- "the almighty God," and doubt no longer. Oh, can your faith, for a moment, stagger at His power to save you, who was wounded for our transgressions, and was bruised for our iniquities; who bore the wrath of God, made a full atonement for our sins, and upon whom God laid the weight of our transgressions, and the burden of His glory? Doubt no longer. Were your sins and guilt ten thousand times heavier and darker than they are, the power of Christ would be Almighty to save you. "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" is the only question He asks, as He stretches forth His hand to uplift your burden, to efface your guilt, and set your sin-bound soul free, and saying to you, "Go in peace, your sins are forgiven."

Because Jesus is the Almighty God, His saints have AN ALMIGHTY BURDEN-BEARER. We are a burdened people; every believer carries a burden peculiar to himself. "Your burden," is the language addressed to each child of God. What is your burden, O believer? Is it indwelling sin, or some natural infirmity of the flesh? Is it a constitutional weakness, or some domestic trial? Is it a personal or relative trial? Is it the loss of property, the decay of health, soul-anxiety, or mental despondency? Come, oppressed and burdened believer, ready to give up all and sink! Behold Jesus, the Almighty God, omnipotent to transfer your burden to Himself, and give you rest. It is well that you are sensible of the pressure, that you feel your weakness and insufficiency, and that you are brought to the end of all your own power. Now turn to your Almighty Friend, who is the Creator of the ends of the earth, even the everlasting God, who does not faint, neither is weary. How precious is the promise addressed to you! "He gives power to those who are tired and worn out; he offers strength to the weak. Even youths will become exhausted, and young men will give up. But those who wait on the Lord will find new strength. They will fly high on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint." Isaiah 40:29-31

Oh, what strength there is in Jesus for the weak, and faint, and drooping of His flock! You are ready to succumb to your foes, and you think the battle of faith is lost. Cheer up! Jesus, your Savior, friend, and brother, is "the Almighty God," and will perfect His strength in your weakness. The battle is not yours but His, and you have no need to fight, but to stand still and see the salvation of God!

As the Almighty God, Christ is able to PRESERVE to eternal salvation all His saints. His power is engaged, as His promise is given, to bring to glory every soul redeemed by His most precious

blood. All whom the Father has given to Him, shall come to Him, and not one shall perish. And truly, no power but an Almighty one could keep a single saint from final falling. The best and holiest saint would perish but for the upholding, preserving power of Christ. "Hold me up," is one of the wisest, and should be one of the constant prayers of a saint of God. David fell, and Solomon fell, and Peter fell, as if to teach the Church in all future ages, that no child of God could keep himself; but that, left to himself, the best of

saints would fall into the worst of sins. But not one shall finally perish. They may stumble and fall- fall to the breaking of their bones, and go limping and halting to the grave- nevertheless, the almightiness of Jesus is pledged to restore and finally to bring them safely into the realms of eternal bliss.

How replete with the richest comfort and encouragement are His precious words respecting the sheep of His pasture- "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand." John 10:27-29. Will not these divine assurances suffice to dissipate every fear and suspicion you may have as to your final and eternal glory? You sometimes fear you will one day perish by your enemies, or that, just as your barque nears the port, it will strike upon some quicksand or sunken rock at the bottom of the harbor, and become a stranded and a total wreck. But why reason you thus, and forget that your Redeemer is the Almighty God, and that, by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for Him to lie, His oath is pledged, His promise is given, and His power is engaged, to pilot you safely through, and to give you "an abundant entrance Into the everlasting kingdom of your Lord and Savior Jesus Christ?" "Kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation," the feeblest lamb given to Christ by the Father, and by Him ransomed with atoning blood, and inhabited by the Spirit, shall be

brought safe to glory. Having begun the work of grace in your soul, He has power to complete it. Its beginnings may be small, and its progress slow- but a thought, a sigh, a tear, a prayer only, marked by all the symptoms of extreme feebleness and doubt; nevertheless, it is the first pulse of life, and the first ray of light, and the first spark of love, and the first beam of glory in the soul; and the same Power that called it into being will quicken that pulse, and deepen that ray, and fan that spark, and brighten that beam, until the soul, ready for its ascent, shall hear a voice from the excellent glory, saying, "Come up here;" and then the embryo saint of earth shall become more glorious, and take his place nearer the throne, than the mightiest angel in heaven.

How many and precious the EVIDENCES OF CHRIST'S ALMIGHTINESS which traced His brief but eventful life on earth. What were His works of beneficence, what His miracles of love, what His words of life, what His acts of grace, but proofs of His being the "Almighty God"? "My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working." "Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves." Thus He appealed to His works of power as the credentials of His divinity. And still it is His delight to exercise this power in behalf of His people. Not, indeed, as then, in miraculous agency, but as then in healing our sicknesses, in sustaining our infirmities, in bearing our burdens, in supplying our needs, and in encircling us with the shield of His Almightyness amid the persecutions and assaults of our foes.

What a Divine spring of consolation and strength to the tired and afflicted saint is the Almightyness of Jesus. Your sorrow is too deep, your affliction too heavy, your difficulty too great for any human to resolve. It distances in its intensity and magnitude the sympathy and the power of man. Come, you tossed with tempest and not comforted- come, you whose spirit is wounded, whose heart is broken, whose mind is bowed down to the dust, and hide for a little while within Christ's sheltering Almightyness. Jesus is equal to your condition. His strength is almighty, His love is almighty, His grace is almighty, His sympathy is almighty, His arm is almighty; His resources infinite, fathomless, measureless; and all this Almightyness is on your side, and will bring you through the fire and through the water into a wealthy

place.

BLENDED WITH THIS DIVINE ALMIGHTINESS IS THE DEEPEST COMPASSION of His sinless and perfect manhood. Omnipotent to help, He is human to succour; Almighty to rescue, He is your Brother and Friend to sympathize. And while His Divine arm encircles, upholds, and keeps you, His human soul, touched with the feeling of your infirmities, yearns over you with all the deep intensity of its compassionate tenderness. As man, He is mighty; as God, He is Almighty.

"His heart is made of tenderness,

His affections melt with love."

But let not THE UNCONVERTED forget that the power of Christ is on the side of holiness, and against sin. And that, while mercy is its appropriate and delightful exercise, judgment is equally its righteous and appropriate display. As the Almighty God, He saves; as the Almighty God, He condemns. Beware then rousing the ire of His power, lest He punish your persistent rebellion, impenitence, and sin, exclaiming, "when I sharpen my flashing sword and begin to carry out justice, I will bring vengeance on my enemies and repay those who hate me." Oh, it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, even though He bear the form of a Savior! The wrath of the Lamb is more fierce and terrible than the wrath of the most malignant foe, since it is the wrath of injured love, of despised mercy, of rejected grace. Your only salvation now, as it will be your only hope then, is to lay down the weapons of rebellion, to receive the Savior, and to hide by faith beneath His sheltering cross, yes, within the wounds of His pierced side. Oh to feel embraced- within the arms, and enfolded to the bosom of this Divine, this gracious, this Almighty Redeemer!

"Jesus, lover of my soul,

Let me to Your bosom fly!"

The PRACTICAL BEARINGS of this subject are varied and important. Whether we look at the Church of God, or at the gospel of Christ, the POWER of the Savior finds its appropriate and full scope. It is the great palladium of the Church. Hence, when Jesus was about to invest the apostles with their Great Commission, He prefaced it with these remarkable words, "All Power is given unto Me in heaven

and in earth. Go you therefore and teach all nations." They were to go forth relying upon His illimitable POWER as the Divine Head and Mediator of His Church, for the strength that should sustain, and for the blessing that should crown their labors. And, oh, how fully and faithfully He

made good to the letter His exceeding great and precious promise! Clothed with this panoply, they traversed the world, everywhere preaching Christ crucified and Christ risen, "The Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following." Such is the power upon which we are now to rely in the work of propagating Christ's truth, extending His kingdom, stemming and arresting the flood of error and superstition rushing and surging through the land. The secret of our great strength is not in the orthodoxy of articles, nor in denominational organization, nor in prelatical interference, nor in ecclesiastical courts, nor in human legislation, nor in the learning, or gifts, or piety of Christ's ministers- these are alone but ropes of sand with which to bind the great leviathan of the day. The secret of our strength is- the power of Christ, the almighty God. Oh, let us take hold of this power in prayer and faith, and we may gaze upon the ark tossed amid the broken waves without a solitary fear. We want stronger faith in, and more incessant dealing with, the almighty power of Jesus. The Lord may have permitted the rapid and alarming progress of the false doctrine and idolatrous worship of the present time, just to teach us how powerless is the human arm to cope with and avert it. And when we hear the cry raised, "We must seek more political power," we lift our voice to Jesus the Almighty God, and earnestly cry, "With God's help we will do mighty things, for He will trample down our foes." "Arise, O Lord, and plead Your own cause."

One way by which the Lord brings us into closer alliance with His power is to REDUCE OUR OWN STRENGTH. He reduced Gideon's great army to three hundred men; removed Saul's ponderous armor from the stripling David; brought Jehoshaphat into great straits; planted a thorn in Paul's flesh- all, all to teach them their own nothingness, and then to perfect His strength in their weakness, and to prove that His grace was sufficient for them. Oh, it is a great though a humbling lesson, against which the flesh resolutely rebels, that of our own weakness, folly, and nothingness. But this lesson must be learned if ever we are brought to realize what the strength and all-sufficiency of Christ is. The noble and great apostle was willing to learn it in just the self-abasing, self-emptying way the Lord chose. "Three different times I begged the Lord to take it away. Each time he said, My gracious favor is all you need. My power works best in your weakness. So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may work through me." Oh let Jesus be exalted and His name magnified, though it be upon the wreck and ruin of our own might, importance, and fame.

And truly, if ever He is exalted and glorified in us, it will be in our nothingness, weakness, and poverty. He will empty us from vessel to vessel if He ever intends to fill us with His grace and power, and use us as instruments in vindicating His honor, in advancing His kingdom, and in defending valiantly and successfully His truth upon the earth. Accept, then, all your self-acquaintance, however humbling; all the discipline of trial and sorrow, however painful; all your frustrated purposes and deranged plans and disappointed hopes, however they may seem to go against you; as the teaching of God designed but to arm you with a power, to clothe you with a strength infinitely above and beyond your own; thus rendering you, a worm of the dust, equal to the accomplishment of any work, and invincible to the assaults of every foe. "As your day, so shall your strength be."

There is one truth connected with our subject fraught with the richest encouragement to God's people. It is this- Christ is so Almighty that He knows how to stoop to, and to sympathize with, the weakest strength of His saints. Listen to His recognition of this- "You have a little strength." Who

speaks thus? The almighty God, the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last. What! does the Almighty One, the Creator of the heavens and the earth, take cognizance of my little strength? Yes, beloved, He despises not the day of small things, and overlooks not the little strength of His saints, yes, even those who have no might. How should this encourage you to use the little that you have in working out your own salvation, in making your calling and your election sure, and in laborings to bring souls to Christ! Jesus regards with ineffable delight your little faith and love, your little knowledge and experience, your feeble endeavors to serve and honor Him, since that little is the divine fruit of His Spirit, and the free gift of His grace. But do not be content to remain where you are. "Let the weak say I am strong." "Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus."

All your real power is in Christ. In His strength you can do great things for God, and suffer great things for Jesus. Bring your strong corruptions to His grace, and your little strength to His omnipotence, and your very weakness shall turn to your account by drawing you into a closer alliance with the Lord in whom you have righteousness and strength. Thus you will be taught to understand the apostle's sacred paradox- "When I am weak, then am I strong."

Come, you of fearful heart, of sorrowful spirit, burdened and wounded, and hide beneath the outspread wing of this Almighty Savior. His Omnipotence is engaged to uphold you through the wilderness, to guide you with its counsel, and afterwards to receive you to glory. Consecrate your noblest powers to Him who spreads the shield of His omnipotent power around you. Battle with sin, mortify the flesh, resist Satan, overcome the world, fight the good fight of faith, and before long you will wear the victor's crown, wave his palm, and chant his song forever! "And now, all glory to God, who is able to keep you from stumbling, and who will bring you into his glorious presence innocent of sin and with great joy. All glory to him, who alone is God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Yes, glory, majesty, power, and authority belong to him, in the beginning, now, and forevermore. Amen."

"Though here the storms of sorrow roar,
And raise in cares a troubled sea;
Yet when I land on yonder shore,
There shall he calm enough for me.
Why then for tempests need I care,
Since they but drive me sooner there."

Christ, the Everlasting Father

"EMMANUEL, or Titles of Christ" by Octavius Winslow

"Christ, the Everlasting Father"

"His name shall be called.... the Everlasting Father." Isaiah 9:6

It is not to the First Person of the blessed Trinity that these words primarily refer. In that case our theme would properly be, the Fatherhood of God. This prophecy- a portion of which we have already considered- clearly belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is to Him the evangelical prophet thus gives witness. This interpretation may at first sight perplex the minds of some readers of the Bible. They will be embarrassed by the application to the Second Person, of a title which they have been wont, and properly so, to ascribe to the First Person of the Trinity- in other words that, to the Son of God should be given a designation which would seem by the concurrent testimony of Scripture to belong exclusively to the Father. This title of our Lord will, perhaps, involve, in view of some minds, an insuperable difficulty. They will be disposed to ask, "How can a child just born be a father? How can an 'infant of days' be the 'Ancient of days?' You ask me to believe a doctrine which carries upon its very face an absurdity and a contradiction." But, suppose I were to answer your questions by putting to you one which the Savior once addressed to the caviling Pharisees, "How can David's son be David's Lord?" With your view of a mere created Savior you could not answer this question, neither can any one who does not believe that Christ was God and man united. But, believing this doctrine- the Deity and the Humanity of the Son of God- the difficulty vanishes. As God, Christ was David's Lord; as man, He was David's son, because He was born of the house and lineage of David. By reasoning, we find a solution of the mystery before us. As man, our blessed Lord was "a child born;" as God, He was the "everlasting Father." As born of a woman, He was the "holy child Jesus;" as uncreated and from everlasting, He was the Father of eternity. With the utmost propriety, therefore, was He entitled "the everlasting Father." But we trust that, in our present exposition, all difficulty will be removed, and that this expressive title of Christ- "the everlasting Father"- will be found not less applicable, instructive, and endearing than any we have as yet considered.

Every view of the Lord Jesus is significant and precious to the believing mind. He is a wonderful being, composed of a complex nature, combining an infinite variety of perfections, human and divine. Study him from what stand-point we may, some new trait of excellence and beauty is unveiled, heightening His glory and deepening our love. We cannot find His parallel in nature. There are some works of art which, whatever the genius they display or the beauty they embody, can only be seen to perfection in one kind or degree of light. Viewed in any other, and there appears such a commingling of color and confusion of design as entirely to destroy the effect of the picture.

And there are some characters which can only be thus studied. View them as patriots, or as philanthropists, or as heroes, or as thinkers, and they appear to perfection- in any other character

they are lost. But not so our blessed Lord Jesus. Contemplate Him in every light, view Him from any stand-point, study Him in every office and relation and act, and whether you view parts or the whole of His character, He appears in perfect symmetry, fairer than the children of men, the chief among ten thousand, the altogether lovely. But let us now view Him under a new and impressive title as the "everlasting Father." How are we to understand this? May the Divine Spirit teach us!

We have already reminded the reader that we must keep the Three Persons of the Godhead in their distinct relation— the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Properly speaking, the First Person of the Trinity is the Father, and must be regarded as distinct from the Son. On every suitable occasion our dear Lord asserted His divine Sonship. He hesitated not to speak of Himself as distinct from the Father, as with the Father from eternity, as the only-begotten and beloved Son of the Father; and as anointed of the Father, to whom the Father had committed all judgment. And yet our Lord is styled the "everlasting Father." In what sense are we to understand this?

In the first place, HE IS DIVINELY ONE WITH THE FATHER. Distinct in person, yet one in essence; separate in relation, yet one in nature, He is of the same substance with the Father. In this sense we are to understand His remarkable declaration, "I and the Father are one." One, not as we have intimated, in person- for the Father is a distinct person- the Son is a distinct person- and the Holy Spirit is a distinct person- but one in nature and essence. The verb is plural, and the passage may be rendered, "I and my Father, we are one." They are one in mind and heart, one in purpose and counsel, one in will and affection. Now in this sense we may read this title of Christ, "the everlasting Father," and how significantly it appears! So essentially is He one with God- yes, so truly and absolutely God, that, without losing His personal relation, He may be justly styled the "everlasting Father." Perhaps, there is not another title of our Lord more truly descriptive of His divine nature than this. So essentially is He the same with the Father, that He is, even without intending any confusion of people, called the "Father." Thus, though He do not be the Father, touching His personality in the Godhead, yet is He properly and justly so denominated.

Moreover, He is called the "everlasting Father," because He alone makes the Father known to us. There was but One being in the universe who could fully reveal the Father. It is thus declared, "No man has seen God at any time; the only- begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him." Listen to the Savior Himself. "No man knows the Son but the Father; neither knows any man the Father, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal Him." In this light, too, we interpret the meaning of those remarkable words, couched in the form of a gentle, yet searching rebuke, addressed to Philip, "Philip, don't you even yet know who I am, even after all the time I have been with you? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father! So why are you asking to see him? Don't you believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words I say are not my own, (that is, not of myself separate from the mind of the Father,) but my Father who lives in me does his work through me. Just believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me. Or at least believe because of what you have seen me do." Oh, glorious revelation of God! Groping in the darkness of nature, amid stars and flowers and rocks, men search for God and find Him not: for who by searching amid "the things that are made" can learn God's moral character and relations? Nowhere is the glorious fact written in flaming letters across the heavens- nowhere does it glow in the sunbeams, or is breathed by the wind, or is echoed by the sea, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. But men pass by the only true revelation of God in Christ Jesus. A veil is on their hearts, the shadow of death is upon their souls, and they know not and see

not God. But this veil is done away in Christ. Uplifted and removed by Him, lo! the Father stands before us in full-orbed majesty, every perfection and attribute of His nature, every thought of His mind and affection of His heart revealed- a just God and a Savior. Oh that men would learn that their only true, saving knowledge of God is through Christ- "This is life eternal, that they might know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent." What a precious truth is this to you who know just enough of your heart's plague to take you to Christ, and just enough of Christ to be assured that you are saved.

It is in the light of this title of Christ that we learn the parental relation in which God stands to us. Christ is the "everlasting Father," because He makes His Father known to us as Our Father. We could have known nothing of God as sustaining this close relation, and as wearing this endearing character, but as Jesus taught us it. And how outspoken was He on this point. With what unreserve He admitted us to this truth. He taught us to pray: "Our Father Who is in heaven." And after His resurrection, and on the eve of His ascension, He reminded His disciples that He was about to "go to His Father and to our Father." Who but the eternal Son could reveal the parental relation and portray the paternal character of God? Until He thus uplifted the veil, how profound the ignorance of the world and even of the Church respecting it. Listen to His emphatic declarations- "Oh righteous Father, the world has not known You." "No man knows the Father but the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him." "I have manifested Your name unto the men whom You gave me out of the world." O what a precious treasure the only-begotten of the Father now possessed, and with what a glorious mission was He charged- that of revealing the great Jehovah to man in the light and glory of a reconciled Father. Such is the relation as embodied in the title of our Lord- the "everlasting Father."

Christ, as the "everlasting Father," reveals the paternal love of God. The love of God to us must be a divine revelation. The fall of man obliterated from the human mind all consciousness of the love of God. To the sin-obscured eye of man, God appeared no longer a Father, but a judge; no longer a loving friend, but a relentless foe. "The carnal mind is enmity against God;" and why? Because all vestiges of His character are effaced from the mind, and through the distorting medium of guilt, man looks upon God in any and every relation than as a Father, and as clothed with any and every attribute but love. But Christ has come to vindicate the character, and reveal the relation of God. "God is love." And the only-begotten Son of God, who was in the bosom of the Father, left that bosom, His heart all glowing with the love within whose infinite depths He had eternally dwelt. He came to make known, what He only could, the marvellous fact, that God still loved us. Within the compass of one declaration, He embodies a truth, the dimensions of which were as vast and glorious as His being- "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Sin had not annihilated the love of God. Rebellion had not alienated the heart of the Father. From the moment the fatal fruit was plucked, the love of God ceased to flow, as once it did, when the unsinning creature trod the sylvan walks of paradise in holy converse with God. But although restrained, it had not ceased; although hidden, it was not lost. God was still love, and still loved man. And what expedient would He adopt, in order to assure man of this great fact, that, while sin had changed his views of God, it had not touched God's love to him? He adopted the only one adequate to meet the case. Love must become incarnate; and in the person of the only-begotten Son of God proclaim, "God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the

world through Him might be saved." Behold, child of God, the precious truth Christ, as the "everlasting Father," makes known to you. God loves you, loves you as Father, loves as no earthly father possibly could. He came to show us that

God's love was parental. Passing by all other relations, He selected that which He knew entwined the closest and the dearest around the human heart- the relation of a parent- and taught us to approach God in prayer, and faith, and love, in the endearing appellation of Father. And shall we not open our hearts to this paternal love of God without a single feeling of distrust? If Christ has taught us this truth, it were base unbelief to doubt, still more base ingratitude to reject it. Shall this truth, the knowledge of which Christ, the "everlasting Father," came from heaven to impart, remain in our possession a dead and useless thing? Shall we first distrust it, then sport with it, and at last put it away from us as a matter of no concern of ours? God forbid! You earthly parents, look into your hearts, and see if there exists a passion half so deep, a sentiment half so tender, a feeling half so deathless, as the love you cherish for your offspring. But what is the love, what the pity, what the self-denying, all-absorbing, life-sacrificing affection reposing in every cloister of your heart, compared with the ocean of love that dwells in the heart of your heavenly Parent for you? And yet how prone to doubt it! how ready to question it! how faintly we realize it! how little we practically employ and personally experience it in our hearts! But, beloved, keep yourselves in this paternal love of God. Abide in it, live in its enjoyment, walk in its light, be constrained by its influence; in a word, be filled with it, let it be your guiding star, the robe you wear, the atmosphere you breathe, the goal that allures your spirit to immortality!

In the light of this paternal love of God, the fountain of which Christ, the "everlasting Father," came to unseal, we are to read all the dealings of God. If God's dispensations are dark and mysterious, His footsteps in the sea, and His thoughts a great deep; if His providences are painful, trying to faith and patience, let faith interpret them of love. The Father's love, that gave you the Son of His love, will withhold no blessing, and will send no trial, but what shall eventually terminate in a deeper, wider unfolding of the great love with which, as a Father, He loves you.

As the "everlasting Father," our blessed Lord Jesus equally unfolds to us the unity of the Father in His atoning work. A more important truth is not taught us by the Great Teacher than this. There exists in the minds of some a latent suspicion, touching the part the Father took in the redemption of the Church, highly detrimental to His glory. The idea is, that the Atonement is the cause rather than , the result of God's love; that the death of the Son inspired the love of the Father. But nothing could be more contrary to the real fact. When our Lord Jesus declared, "My Father is in Me, and I in Him," "I and My Father are One," the great truth He thus sought to enunciate was, the essential and perfect unity of the Father and the Son in the great Atonement He offered once for all for the sins of His people. In fact, there is a sense in which- only short of identity- the obedience of the Son was equally the obedience of the Father, and the sufferings of the Son were equally the sufferings of the Father, and the Atonement of the Son was equally the Atonement of the Father. In this wondrous scheme of saving sinners, they were essentially, indivisibly, and eternally one. Two persons, but one heart, one mind, and one will. What encouragement you have here to approach God in the character and with the petition of a sinner. Your warrant to come is what Christ is, and what He has done, in perfect harmony with the Father. He is the "everlasting Father," because He represents His Father and our Father, His God and our God. "He that has seen Me has seen the Father," is an emphatic declaration of Christ we cannot, when treating of

this subject, too frequently repeat. Oh for more faith to give a reality and a present actuality to this truth! Oh to feel that when my faith entwines around my Savior, and when my love enfolds Him in its embrace, I include the eternal God as made flesh in the person of Christ, the "everlasting Father." What substance and reality does this unity of the Father and the Son in redemption give! What augmentation of love, what increase of power, what stronger attraction of the cross, when we remember that every step Christ took in redemption, every pang He endured, every groan He uttered, every sigh He breathed, every tear He wept, all the throes and agonies and pulsations of His soul-travail in the garden- supplied us with a line enabling us to fathom the Father's love, grace, and compassion to an infinite depth, yet leaving that depth immeasurably deeper still! "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and gave His Son to be a propitiation for our sins." "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!"

This expressive title is also intended to remind us that Christ leads us to the Father. How emphatic His words bearing upon this truth- "No man comes unto the Father but by Me." Christ is the "everlasting Father," because He introduces us to the Father; presents us for pardon, for acceptance, for adoption. Thus in coming believingly to Christ we come filially to the Father, and the Father receives us graciously, because He is well pleased with His beloved Son. What sweet encouragement is this never to hesitate approaching God! If our eyes rest not upon Jesus, but are looking exclusively within ourselves, and at our sins, backslidings, and unworthiness- at the trials, and difficulties, and discouragements which would impede our approach- then we shall never find our way to God. We shall weep in secret, pine in solitude, and carry our load of sin, care, and need alone, unsoothed, uncheered, unsustained by the comfort, sympathy, and power we should have found in drawing near unto God. But Jesus leads us to Him just as we are, gives us access by His own blood into the Divine presence, and lays us as His children upon the paternal heart of God. Hence is He styled the "everlasting Father." In drawing us to Himself, he draws us to the Father, and in conducting us into the immediate presence of the Father, He leads us up to the Divine and infinite spring-head from where flowed the love that gave Him to us, the Friend and Savior of sinners. This, my reader, opens to you the sweetest and holiest privilege this side of heaven- access to the Father, through the merits and blood-shedding of Jesus. I repeat, what great encouragement to a close and filial walk with God! With such an open door to God as Christ, the "everlasting Father"- a door open in the lowest depths of soul-sorrow, open in our deepest valley of suffering, in our gloomiest day of adversity, in our darkest night of sorrow- why should we hesitate coming to our heavenly Father in the name of Christ, the "everlasting Father," the Son of His love? Oh, faintly do we realize the reality and freeness of this privilege of sweetest and free access into the presence of God by prayer, through the atoning blood of Jesus. There is everything in yourself to keep you at a distance; there is everything in Christ to bring you near. Having put away your sins- broken down every barrier- cancelled all your great debt- rising from the grave, and ascending into heaven to represent your person and present your petitions- having done all this, we are invited to "draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water."

Avail yourself, my reader, of this sacred and precious privilege. The angels in heaven are not so favored. They are near to God as unfallen creatures, standing in their own righteousness; but you are nearer to God than they, standing as a sinner in the imputed righteousness of God Himself.

They approach the throne of glory in the atmosphere of their own holiness; you, who were far off by wicked works, are brought near by the blood of Christ, and commune with God, as angels cannot, as the objects of His electing love, as the children of His adopting grace, as partakers of His Divine nature. Arise, then, and with boldness enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus; for your heavenly Father extends to you, in Him, the golden scepter, the symbol of approach, and bids you present your every petition, and make known your every request. And what are your petitions? Ah! how many and varied, how urgent and touching, the needs of the Lord's people are! "Blessed Lord, I am oppressed with anxiety and care; undertake for me!" "My Father, I am smitten with adversity; hide me under the shadow of Your wings." "My God, I am mentally depressed, and am walking in great darkness; let the light of Your countenance shine upon me!" "Lord, my heart is broken with sorrow, my soul is bowed down with grief, all Your waves and Your billows are gone over me; lead me to the Rock that is higher than I." "Jesus, Savior, I come tainted with sin, and burdened with guilt; my transgressions are as crimson, and my sins as the sands for multitude: purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." "O Lord, I fear I am deceived, have committed the unpardonable sin, and shall be a poor castaway, and never reach heaven at last. Dissipate my fears, and remove my doubts; lighten my burden, confirm my hope, and say unto my soul, I am your salvation." Coming thus, my reader, to God, in the name of Christ the "everlasting Father," you may unveil every sorrow, make known every request, acknowledge every sin, and lose yourself, with all your needs and woes, in the fathomless depths of His unchanged, unchangeable love.

It is greatly encouraging, too, to consider our Lord Jesus as the "everlasting Father." Our thoughts are thus carried back to the past of His being, are concentrated upon the present of His existence, and are carried onward to the future of His coming. We need this doctrine of Christ's everlasting being; for all around and within us is changeful and passing away. Nothing earthly, nothing human abides; change is visibly and indelibly written upon all. It is the cankerworm embosomed in the heart of earth's loveliest flower, and feeds at the root of time's most refreshing gourd. But the most frequent and painful changes are those we

find in our spiritual life. What fluctuations of experience, what fickleness of love, what variations of faith, what ebb and flow of our religious feeling! And then, how changing the events of Divine providence!- how many dissolving views, lights and shadows, joys and sorrows, smiles and tears, are often crowded into the history of a single day! How sad and painful, too, the separations in life!- distance parting us from one, death sundering the link that bound us to another! Truly all here is changing; but here is One who changes not- even Christ, "the everlasting Father." Other relations will cease, other friends will relocate, other joys will fade, other hopes will die, and other ties will break; but Jesus Christ is "the same yesterday, today, and forever." Christ is essentially immutable; He is the Surety and Mediator of the everlasting covenant, Himself the "everlasting Father." And because He has an unchangeable priesthood, He ever lives to make intercession for His people, and saves to the uttermost extent of sin, and to the latest period of time.

How comforting is the assurance which this truth gives us of the everlasting love of Christ! It never veers, never chills, and knows not the shadow of a change. Measuring Christ's love to us by our love to Him, we often imagine that it must necessarily be affected by the cold, chilling atmosphere of our hearts; that when our love to Him ebbs, His love to us also ebbs; that when ours proves fickle and treacherous, wandering after some creature idol, then His love, exacting reprisals, in like

manner starts off, and quits us for another and perhaps more faithful object. No! the love of Jesus to His saints, of our Joseph to His brethren, of Christ the "everlasting Father" to His children, is eternal as His being, is as unchangeable as His nature. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" It has separated us from all others for itself, and it will never separate, or allow anything else to separate us from itself. "Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them unto the end." Yield not, then, to despondency, beloved, when you discover the mercury of your love sink, even though it be to freezing-point. There may be times when you can scarcely detect its existence, so faint its beating pulse, so congealed its warm current. But since Christ's love is not the effect, but the cause of ours to Him, and is an everlasting love, glowing in His heart ages that cannot be numbered or measured before one pulse throbbed in ours, we may take comfort in the assurance that no variation of affection in us towards the Savior can in the slightest degree affect the tenderness, depth, or immutability of the great love with which He has loved us.

Look, then, to Christ's love to you, and not to your love to Christ. Go and lay your icy heart upon His flaming heart of love; go to His cross, and there muse upon the love that bore your sins, that suffered and bled, that wept, and groaned, and died for you, paying the death-penalty of your transgressions; and, while you thus muse, the flame will kindle, the fire will burn, and your tongue will break forth into singing-

"Oh for this Love, let rock and hills

Their lasting silence break,

And all harmonious human tongues,

The Savior's praises speak.

"Were the whole realm of Nature mine,

That were a present far too small-

Love so amazing, so divine,

Demands my life, my soul, my all."

If our Lord Jesus, though our elder brother, yet stands to us in so close and endearing a relation as the "everlasting Father," should there not be in our hearts the responsive spirit of filial love? If God in Christ is our Father, surely it behooves us to know our adoption by grace, and to obey and serve, and come to Him, not as slaves and aliens, but as children and brethren, whom His own free love constrains to an unreserved obedience and to a holy walk. "Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying Abba, Father." Rest not short of this

attainment; sink not below your adoption; see in Christ the reflection of your heavenly Father's relation to and love for you; and walk in the holy liberty of sons and daughters, upheld by His "free Spirit;" and, thus upheld, bringing forth the "fruits of the Spirit, love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance."

Thus realizing our adoption, we shall know more what it is to have power with God in prayer. There is no petition like that of a child, no language that goes so directly to a parent's heart as a son's. "Abba, Father," has more power with God than all other appeals the most eloquent in

diction, persuasive in argument, or protracted in length. As Luther observes, "This feeble crying is a mighty voice in the ear of God, and so fills heaven and earth that God hears nothing else; for it drowns the cries of all other things whatever." Let this encourage you to come like a little helpless child with your simple cry to Him, your "everlasting Father." Speak out all you need, or if your language is broken, lisp it again and again; the Lord will not send you empty away. The shortest prayer and the most simple cry has shot past all other more elaborate and lengthened prayers, and has reached heaven the first. The eloquence of groans, the voice of tears, the language of desire, the utterances of the heart- these are things which have power with God, and prevail. Oh, then, arise and give yourself to prayer, and though the answer tarry- wait, it will surely come.

It is profitable to keep in remembrance the fact, that we are fruitful in holiness only as we live upon Him from whom our fruit is found. Holiness is a plant of paradise, a divine principle, a fruit of the Spirit, found only in the truly regenerate. Its Author, therefore, like its origin, must be supernatural and divine. To this end we must be looking to Jesus, be living upon Jesus, keeping close to Jesus, abiding in Jesus, without whom we can do nothing. Let me simply illustrate this thought. Gather from your vine a cluster of grapes. Mark how the fruit that stands the highest and is the nearest to the wood looks the largest, blossoms the richest, and tastes the sweetest, just because it hangs the closest to the vine and derives more largely of its vitality. So is it with the believing soul. Look at those saints who live the nearest to the cross, how much more fruitful are their souls, and how much more lovely their lives, adorned with the "beauties of holiness," than others, who, though equally grafted on Christ the vine, live at so remote a distance from Him, the source of their spiritual life, grace, and strength, as to appear sickly, unfruitful, and ready to die. Oh cease, then, to live upon spiritual frames and feelings, to look at your duties, service, and barrenness; but, like Mary and the other holy women, stand close by the cross of Jesus, draw largely from the fulness of Christ, take every taint of guilt, every shade of sorrow, every dart of Satan, every disappointment in the creature, every assault of the world, every wound of the saints, every want and trial and perplexity to Jesus; so shall you be a fruit-bearing branch of the Vine, fulfilling the desire of your Lord, "Herein is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit; so shall you be My disciples."

O Christian, have you learned these lessons? Then let your actions be Christ-like, and walk as you have Him for an example. He lived to teach you how to live, and He died to teach you how to die. He that will not follow the example of Christ's life shall never be saved by the merits of His death. As He is the root on which a saint grows, so He is the rule by which a saint squares. If He is not your soul's staff to guide you to heaven, He will never be your soul's ladder to mount up to heaven. We should be as willing to be ruled by Christ as we are willing to be saved by Christ. God made one Son like to all, that He might make all His sons like to one. If the life of Christ is not your portion, you are dead. God in Christ is a Father that stamps upon all His children the lovely image of Christ. They resemble Him to the very life. God will allow no man to wear the livery of Christ upon him who has not the likeness of Christ within him. "We all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

Viewed in the light of this divine and endearing relation, how parental appear the rebukes and corrections of Christ, the "everlasting Father." As a father pities His children, so the Lord pities those who fear Him, and those also whom He corrects, and whom He corrects because He loves

them. "For the Lord disciplines those he loves, he punishes those he accepts as his children." Are you a tried believer, an afflicted saint, a chastened child? Has adversity swept from you riches? Has disease robbed you of health? Has death bereaved you of the desire of your eyes? O misinterpret not these, the dealings of the "everlasting Father." Could you spy into His heart, not one thought or feeling of anger towards us would you see. There has been a holy and, perhaps, urgent need for this discipline. It has been sent either as a corrective or as a preventive; either as a rod to restore, or as a curb to restrain you. There may be divine mystery in it, but nothing unwise; severity, but nothing unkind; bitterness, but no wrath; a cloud of thick darkness, but not unrelieved by the softening luster of the rainbow which is round about the throne. He that sits upon that throne is Jesus, your Savior; Christ, your "everlasting Father;" and He judges righteously. Accept, then, your present affliction as the fruit of love, as the dictate of wisdom, and as a part, an indispensable part, of your education for heaven, your fitness for glory.

Jesus Himself trod the path you now tread. "Though He was a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered." And if He, your sinless, perfect Lord and Savior, was taught in this school, taught the holy lesson of obedience, shall we shrink from a like discipline, from being taught a like lesson, as among the many sons God our Father is bringing to glory? Be still then, O chastened child, and know that He is God, even your God. You are in His hands, and oh, how safe are you there! Better, far better, to fall into a Father's hands, though it hold a rod uplifted even to slay, than to be left in the hands of the dearest creature upon earth. A loving Father's frowns are better than the treacherous creature's smiles. "Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful." Give me the wounds, if I must have them, of my Heavenly Friend, and let who will take the world's caresses. Peace, then, troubled soul! You are in God's hands, and He can do nothing wrong. Give Him back kisses for His smittings- return Him smiles for His frowns- and let the accents of cheerful acquiescence respond to the voice that bids you resign your Benjamin, or slay your Isaac.

And what, my reader, if you have no part or lot in this matter? What if you cannot look upon the Lord Jesus as your "everlasting Father"? Then the children's inheritance is not yours, and, dying thus portionless, Christ will be your everlasting judge. Oh, that solemn, that significant word, "everlasting!" "Everlasting punishment!" "Everlasting

life!" If Christ is "everlasting" then the punishment which He will award to the impenitent, and the happiness which He will bestow upon the righteous, must be also everlasting; "for He is of one mind; and who can turn Him?" Annihilation! there is not such a thing in the universe. God Himself must be annihilated before one soul, saved or lost, can ever cease to be. "These shall go away into everlasting punishment but the righteous into life eternal." Oh, fly to Christ! There is no forgiveness of sin, no acceptance of the sinner, no salvation of the lost, no hope of glory, but in Christ Jesus. Simple, child-like faith in Christ will put you in happy possession of pardoning, justifying, adopting grace now; and that grace will put you in possession of the fulness of glory hereafter. The two are inseparable. Grace is glory militant, and glory is grace triumphant. Grace is glory begun, and glory is grace made perfect. Grace is the first degree of glory, glory is the highest degree of grace. Grace is the seed, glory is the flower. Grace is the ring, glory is the sparkling diamond in the ring. Grace is the growing infant, and glory is the perfect man of grace. Thus, however limited the degree, and imperfect the growth of your grace now, you have grasped by faith the last and lowest link of the golden chain let down from heaven, which before long will raise

you to the first and highest. "For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified."

Christ, the Prince of Peace

Christ, the Prince of Peace

"His name shall be called . . . the Prince of Peace." Isaiah 9:6

We live in a morally revolted world. Spiritual rebellion, anarchy, and lawlessness run riot throughout its vast empire. It has cast off its allegiance to God, has dethroned Him its Sovereign, has armed itself in resistance of His authority, and acknowledges the reign and obeys the laws of another and a usurping king. Such is the inevitable consequence of the fall, such the natural and melancholy effect of sin- that sin of rebellion of which our first and yet unsinned parents were guilty, when the woman "took of the fruit (which God had strictly forbidden) and ate, and gave also unto her husband with her, and he also ate." From that fatal moment to the present the standard of insurrection against God has floated over this mutinous world, flinging its dark, deadly shadow upon every fair and sunlight spot of this vast province. What is true of the whole race, it needs no argument to show, is equally true of each individual. "The carnal mind is enmity against God: and it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be, so then those who are in the flesh cannot please God." Thus we have the melancholy picture of the entire population of the earth, collectively and individually, traitors against God, living in opposition to His authority, trampling both His laws and their allegiance defiantly and ignobly beneath their feet.

But God will not thus be robbed of His glory. For that glory He made man- and man, redeemed, regenerated, restored, shall yet yield to every perfection of His nature, and to every enactment of His law, a revenue of glory and of obedience, worthy of His being, and lasting as eternity.

The expedient by which this glorious result is accomplished is of His conception. "Salvation is of the Lord." In the infinite depths of His own mind, in the eternal councils of the ever blessed Trinity, foreseeing man's apostasy and rebellion, Jehovah arranged the plan- the wondrous expedient- of overcoming man's rebellion, of dislodging his enmity, and of bringing back once more this sinful, disloyal world to its original and rightful fealty to Himself. And what was the expedient? It was nothing less than the descent of His only and beloved Son into this traitorous empire, clothed in the very nature of the rebel race He came to subdue, redeem, and save. "For when we were without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commends His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us."

The title belonging to our Lord Jesus we are now to consider is strikingly and impressively illustrative of His mission of love and reconciliation to our world. It was not on a mission of justly-deserved judgment that He came, but on an embassy of undeserved mercy. God would overcome man's evil with good. He might have blotted this apostate and rebellious world from the creation, assigning its place with the angels who kept not their estate, but are reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day. But, O everlasting love, and discriminating grace! He set His heart upon man, and resolved to become man- even the

God-man Mediator; that He might save man. It is in the light of an embassy of peace that we are now to contemplate the Advent of the Son of God to our world. He came an Ambassador of peace, plucked an olive-branch from the paradise of heaven, and sweeping across the dark waters of man's curse, bore that curse to the hill of Calvary, and dipping it in blood- His own heart's blood-waved it before the eyes of a sinful and rebellious world, and proclaimed, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace and good will to men!"

The subject of these pages, at all times instructive and suitable, was never more so than now. The agitated condition of the nation, the disturbed atmosphere of the Church, and the physical throes and changes through which the earth seems passing, all would point to the present state of society, the Church, and the world as a period in which a study of the peaceful Advent of our Lord as the Messenger of love, unity, and concord, would seem the most appropriate and welcome. Not less appropriate is it to the Holy Festival of the Christian Church, upon the threshold of which we stand, the birth of earth's Great Visitant, the Savior of the race, an event the celebration of which is at all times, but never more singularly so than now, calculated to heal the divisions and hush the strifes between man and man, knitting and cementing divided families, alienated brethren, and dissevered communities into one household and brotherhood. How expressive and suggestive, then, the title we now consider- "And His name shall be called the Prince of Peace."

The interest and importance of this subject in its bearings upon the present spiritual and future condition of the soul cannot possibly be exaggerated. Nor does its interest or importance lessen, as we have remarked, when viewed in its relation to the present religious state of the world and the disturbed and divided state of the Christian Church. It would seem as if the divine exhortation, "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem," was never more appropriate or urgent than now. The title of our Lord we have selected for our present meditation leads our thoughts directly to the true fountain of peace!— whether it be the peace of God in the soul of man, or whether it be the peace, unity, and concord of the Church, which the "Prince of Peace" purchased with His own blood. May the Holy Spirit, the glorifier of Jesus, open and unfold to us the deep, holy significance of this subject, and make His own truth quickening, comforting, and sanctifying to our souls.

The first feature of this title which arrests our attention is THE REGAL CHARACTER OF CHRIST. He is described as "The Prince of Peace." We have already in the consideration of preceding titles brought before the reader both the Prophetical and Priestly offices of Christ. The present one serves to complete the series by directing our attention to His Kingly office. His name shall be called "the Prince

Me Prince of Peace." This is not the only passage in which this royal title is applied to Christ. Thus in Ezekiel, "And the Lord will be their God, and my servant David (Christ) a Prince among them: and the Lord has spoken it." And in the next chapter, "My servant David (Christ) shall be their Prince forever." Yet more striking the prophecy in Daniel 9, "Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem, unto Messiah the Prince, shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks." Turning to the teaching of the New Testament, we find the same regal title assigned to Him. Thus in Acts 5 we read, "Him has God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." And in Rev. 1, "Jesus Christ, who is the faithful Witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth." We need not multiply these

Scripture proofs of our Lord's regal character. And yet it is of great importance, and closely concerns our obedience to Christ, that we fully believe in His Kingship, that we possess clear views of His sovereignty, and that by close, earnest study of His laws and commandments, we are found loyal to the dignity of His person, to the interests of His truth, and to the supremacy of His government and reign in the earth. This is a time in which the territory of Christ is insolently invaded by foreign foes, and His crown rights haughtily denied, and His very crown itself plucked daringly from His kingly brow. Surely this is the time when all who are His true subjects, all who wear His uniform, who follow His standard, and receive their pay at His hands, should be found loyal to His crown, and by "earnestly contending for the faith once delivered to the saints," prove themselves "good soldiers of Jesus Christ," valiant for His truth upon the earth. Let us proceed to consider IN WHAT SENSE THE LORD JESUS CHRIST IS WORTHY THE TITLE HE BEARS AS THE "PRINCE OF PEACE."

The subject, as previously remarked, is especially suitable to the sacred festival we are about to celebrate- the Holy nativity of the Son of God, His gracious and blessed advent to our world to set up a kingdom of peace. It was an Advent of love, an embassy of peace. He came to reconcile God to man, man to God, and man to his fellow-man. There was anarchy, discord, and disorder in the universe. Sin had disturbed its harmony. By dislodging man from his center, it had thrown confusion and turmoil throughout our entire humanity. Severing man from God, it severed man from himself, and man from his fellow-man. Oh, what imagination can conceive, or language describe, or pencil portray the disorder- physical, intellectual, and moral- which reigns throughout this fallen world consequent upon the Fall? Sin has convulsed the universe as by an earthquake, has smitten our humanity as with paralysis, has "set on fire the course of nature, and it is set on fire of hell." The whole matter resolves itself into a wide and terrible alienation between God and man. Man's distance from God is defined by his sinfulness. God's distance from man is defined by His holiness. If these two extremes of being- a holy God and an unholy man- could possibly meet without the intervention of an Atonement, then the Advent to our world of the Prince of Peace were a needless and wasteful expedient on the part of God. But there was not, and there could not possibly be, a reconciliation of these two contending and widely-seceded parties, God and the sinner, but as God Himself devised an expedient that would render it just and honorable to Himself. If reconciliation were to be effected, and peace made, and harmony restored, the first step must be on the part of Jehovah Himself. The plan must originate with Him, and by Him it must be effected. Thus we are introduced more immediately to the subject of these pages- the peace which God has accomplished through Christ between Himself and fallen man.

As the "Prince of Peace," our Lord Jesus PROCURES PEACE BETWEEN GOD AND MAN. The problem of effecting reconciliation could only be solved by the Prince of Peace. It had baffled the ingenuity of a synod of angels, composed of every celestial being in heaven. The thought of reconciling God and man, in a way that would uphold the rectitude and honor of the Divine government, would never have crossed a finite being's mind. It was the conception of one mind alone- the mind of the Eternal Lord God- and was lodged, eternally lodged, in that Mind myriads of ages before an angel was created. There are no second, no after-thoughts, of the Divine mind. If, then, God is eternal, never having had a beginning, then the thought of saving man by the Incarnation of Deity was as eternal as the Mind that conceived it. Thus, our Lord Jesus was the Peace-procurer of His Church. He was the true Levi of whom Jehovah said, "My covenant was

with Him of life and peace." None but He could have effected it. There was disruption and separation, dissension and discord, a terrible schism between the Creator and His creatures. The Prince of Peace alone had dignity, authority, and power to effect peace. As none but the express Image of God could restore the divine image to man's destroyed soul; as none but Essential Life could breathe life into man's dead soul; as none but perfect Holiness could restore the reign of holiness in man's sinful soul; as none but the Son of God could make us sons of God, and none but the Beloved of God could make us beloved to God, so none but the "Prince of Peace" could bring us into a covenant of peace with Jehovah. Thus the Lord Jesus became our Peace-procurer.

In love and mercy He undertook what He alone could undertake. Oh, it was a great, a marvellous work, the work of restoring unity and friendship between God and man! Hence the twofold nature of our Lord. Mediating between the two extremes of being, the Infinite and the finite, the Divine and the human, He must partake of the nature of both. Effecting peace on the part of God, He must be God; effecting reconciliation on the part of man, He must be man. Hence the glorious fact, which at this season of Advent we celebrate- "God manifest in the flesh." Let your faith, my readers, embrace this truth afresh. It will strengthen your confidence in the reality of the peace the Prince of Peace has secured for you. It was no mere resemblance of peace He procured, no unauthorized compact into which He entered; no reconciliation which either party in the agreement could not honorably accept- Oh, no! Because He was God, He was essentially fitted to mediate for God; and because He was Man, He was in all respects fitted to negotiate for man; and thus God has accepted His mediation, and so "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself."

THE PROCURER.

But our Lord Jesus was also our Peacemaker. He not only originated the scheme, but He personally embarked in its accomplishment. He not merely procured, but He effected it. Sin is the great bar between God and man. Nothing separates them but this. And if sin is not removed, it must remain forever an inseparable, impassible, eternal barrier between God and man, heaven and hell. But Christ, the Prince of Peace, undertook its removal. He girded Himself to the work of breaking down this middle wall of partition- sin. The covenant of peace was made between Him and God, made and signed, sealed and ratified. He undertook the office of Mediator; for "there is one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus." Thus, He is emphatically called "Our Peace." See how beautifully the apostle reasons out this precious truth! Addressing the converted Gentiles, He puts them in remembrance of their past unconverted state by nature, and then of their present state of reconciliation by grace "But now in Christ Jesus you who sometimes were far off are made near by the blood of Christ; for He is our peace."

And now the question rises, HOW did the Lord Jesus, the Prince of Peace, accomplish His great work? He could only accomplish it in one way- by Himself becoming the responsible party in the great controversy between God and man. On the part of God, He undertook to render a complete obedience to the law, to give a full satisfaction to justice, to harmonize all the Divine perfections, and not only to uphold in its perfect integrity the honor of the moral government of God, but to invest that Government with a luster in the eyes of all celestial intelligences, before unknown. And how was this done? By the Lawgiver becoming- O surpassing love! O wondrous grace! hear it, O heavens, and be astonished, O earth!- by the lawgiver becoming the law-fulfiller! And what did He on the part of man? He paid the great debt, the ten thousand talents, when man had nothing to

pay. He stood in the breach. He placed one hand, the hand of His Deity, on God; and He placed the other hand, the hand of His Humanity, on man- "so making peace."

But this was not all. He must die. It is by blood we are brought near to God, even "by the blood of Christ." Before He could become to us the Prince of Peace, He must be the Captain of our salvation, and He must gird on the armor for the great battle with sin, Satan, and the world. He must endure the wrath of God. He must drink the cup of woe. He must, in a word, sacrifice Himself. Oh, what arithmetic can compute the price of our peace with God? Who can ever estimate what it cost Jesus, the Prince of Peace, to heal the breach, to terminate the controversy, to make peace by the blood of His cross, between God and man? Never was reconciliation effected on such terms; never was peace purchased at such a price- even the incarnation and obedience, the death and resurrection of the Son of God, the Prince of Peace. And now God, through Christ, is reconciled, the way to His forgiving love opened through the pierced heart of Jesus, the Peace-maker. It is now honorable, on the part of God, to negotiate with the rebel man an eternal armistice; yes, to hold out His reconciling hand- yes, to make the first overture- yes, to take the very first step in advance in the way of reconciliation. How clearly the apostle states this truth- "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and path committed unto us the word of reconciliation."

Pause and consider what is your present position, my Christian reader, as one between whom and God perfect peace is restored. How dimly many of the Lord's dear people see this truth! How few fully realize it! The consequence is, they are, if we may thus speak, so shy of God, cultivate such distant transactions with Him, and love, and trust, and obey Him so imperfectly as a Father, all whose thoughts towards them are "thoughts of peace," and all whose feelings and dealings are love. But even this invalidates not the reality, and disturbs not the continuance of their peace with God through Christ, the perfect agreement which, through Christ, subsists between God and the weakest, obscurest saint.

Jesus, the Prince of Peace, by the putting away our sins, by the exhaustion of our curse by the full equivalent made, by the harmony created in the perfections of God, has made up the quarrel, has effected a reconciliation, has procured, effected, and ratified an "everlasting covenant of peace" between God and His Church; and it is utterly impossible now for God to conceive one thought of anger, or to cherish one feeling of alienation, or indulge one act of judgment towards the reconciled people of His love. Oh rise, beloved, to this purer, truer relation to God! Proclaim this as your present spiritual standing before Him. All is peace, secret peace, perfect peace, received peace, between God and your soul. There is not, on your part, the shadow of a shade of sin, nor, on God's part, the shadow of a shade of unpropitiated anger interposing itself between God and your soul. Jesus is our peace; His preceptive obedience has hushed the law's loud thunder. His sacrificial death has appeased the incensed anger of justice; His atoning blood has extinguished every spark of hell; and now every believing sinner is in reconciliation with God- is, through Christ's death, at-onement with the Triune Jehovah, and can walk with God in holy and perfect agreement.

But Christ, as the "Prince of Peace," is not only the Procurer, He is also the GIVER of peace. Before He ascended into heaven, He bequeathed to His Church this sacred legacy of peace. How precious and significant the terms of this bequest! "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto

you; not as the world gives, give I unto you." And when He would forearm by forewarning His disciples of the trials and privations they should find in the world, with what exquisite tenderness and love He seeks to smooth and prepare their minds for the tribulations that awaited them: "These things have I spoken, that in me you might have peace. In the world you shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

And truly the saints of God do experience the world to be the scene of varied and great tribulations. It is the battle-field of the Church, the scene of many a hard-fought conflict with the ungodliness and the ungodly of this ungodly world. Beloved, bear in mind that your dear Lord has lovingly forewarned you that tribulation is your pathway through the world home to Himself. Do not be, therefore, surprised at the trials, and the conflicts, and the woundings of the way. "In the world you shall have tribulation." It was the path your Lord and Leader traveled. And would you tread a smoother path than His? Do you desire an easier, nearer, shorter road to glory than that imprinted with His blessed feet, bedewed with His tears, and empurpled with His blood? Oh, no! But, behold your true peace- "In Me you shall have peace." In and from the world there is no peace. The world and the Christian are in deadly hate and antagonism. "Love not the world," is the apostolic command; and, "If the world hate you," is the Lord's warning.

The world, its enjoyments and pleasures, its riches and honors, can give no peace to the soul. It is itself "like the troubled sea, which casts up mire and dirt." With all its fleshly enjoyments, attractions of rank and affluence, of pomp and power, the worldling is an utter stranger to real, substantial, satisfying peace. "There is no peace, says any God, to the wicked." Poor worldling, think of this. How long will you seek this priceless, precious pearl, down in the dark mine of this fallen, rebellious, sin-tainted, and curse-blighted world? All is turmoil and change; all is sickening disappointment here. And when you have traversed every continent, and have sipped every spring, and have plucked every flower, and have eaten of every fruit, and have heard every claim of fame, of earth's good, your cry still is, "Who will show me any good?"

But, if the first Adam has bequeathed to his posterity a legacy of tribulation, the Second Adam has bequeathed to His Church a legacy of peace. "In the world you shall have tribulation; in Me you have peace." How instructive and emphatic the words, "In Me." Not in ourselves, not in our pious duties; not in our active doings; not in our religious forms and spiritual feelings, but in Christ. Blessed teaching, precious truth! We have not far to travel, nor impossibilities to accomplish. It is near to us, and without a doing of our own- it is in Jesus, all in Jesus. He is our peace, and in Him alone.

His Gospel is the gospel of peace. What is the literal signification of the word- "Glad tidings." And why is the Gospel glad tidings to poor sinners? Because it is a proclamation of peace with God in and through Christ. It is the Gospel of reconciliation, and our ministry is the "ministry of reconciliation." "All things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and has given to us the ministry of reconciliation." Oh yes, the Gospel publishes Peace to the troubled conscience, to the broken heart, and the contrite spirit. Peace to the rebel willing to ground his weapons and be reconciled to God. Peace- sweet, holy, assured peace- to the soul tossed with many a doubt, agitated with many a fear, and almost ready to despair. O glorious Gospel! The Gospel that proclaims a full and free reconciliation with God to every humble penitent. A Gospel breathing not one repelling word, uttering not one harsh sound, in the ear of a poor, humble sinner.

It is, in a word, the music of the grace of God, the sweetest refrain of which is, "that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and has committed unto us the word of reconciliation." What a noble office is the Christian minister's, and how charming His message! Not only is His voice music, but His feet are

beautiful. For thus says the evangelical Isaiah, "How beautiful upon the mountain are the feet of him who brings good tidings, that publish peace." Oh, that our preaching were a more full and clear unfolding of the ministry of peace!- peace, present and assured peace, through the applied blood of Jesus. Ambassador of Christ! let this be the staple of our ministrations. Thousands of our hearers are kept in bondage and fear for the lack of a more full and simpler statement of the message of peace. 'We do not sufficiently and simply direct their eyes to Jesus, the Prince of Peace. We clog the message of salvation with such legal conditions; we append to the proclamation of Peace such slavish terms, and we preach the doctrine of the Atonement with such cold reserve, as to foster in the minds of many of the Lord's people slavish dread rather than filial love; thus forging and riveting chains upon those whose peace Christ had purchased with His blood, and whose souls the truth has made free.

Let us, then, remember that we never preach the gospel of Christ unless we proclaim, broadly and boldly, the reconciliation the Prince of Peace has effected with God. It is the greatest, the most momentous and joyous announcement that can possibly be made, that peace is effected between heaven and earth; that, God is reconciled to sinners through Christ; that, "there is one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ, Jesus." And never shall we succeed in fully emancipating the saints of God from their legal fetters, and so promoting a healthy, vigorous Christianity, an evangelical, unreserved obedience, until we lead believers more entirely out of themselves, to see what their high and holy liberty, their Christian freedom, is in Christ Jesus. "Stand fast therefore in the liberty with which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with the yoke of bondage."

The kingdom of Christ is A PEACEFUL KINGDOM. He is the Prince of Peace. Zion's King is a peaceable King. He came to erect a sovereignty of peace in the very heart of a world of rebellion against God, and of war with itself. And wherever His kingdom of peace extends, civilization follows barbarism, hatred is supplanted by love, the feuds, and divisions, and wars of nations cease, and peace and good-will among men spread their loving influence; diffusing unity, harmony, and love. Oh, what a world will that be when the dominion of the Prince of Peace shall be universal. "In His days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance peace, so long as the moon endures. He shall have dominion, also, from sea to sea, and front the river unto the ends of the earth." Oh, aid the coming of this peaceful reign of Jesus, the Prince of Peace, by your personal efforts, by your consecrated wealth, but, above all, by your believing prayers. If ever there was a time when the Lord's people should be up and doing, it is the present. With trumpet voice the crisis summons us to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty. The Lord has a controversy with the land. A great struggle is passing between truth and error in the nation. We are well assured of the result- that, His truth must and will eventually and triumphantly prevail; but this circumstance releases us not from the obligation, no, the privilege, of doing all we can, and even of suffering all we may, in defense of His truth, in furtherance of His kingdom, and in vindicating the honor and glory of His great Name. And when, at this season, in adoring faith and love, we worship at the shrine of Bethlehem, let us afresh dedicate our ransomed and renewed being to the

service and kingdom of the Prince of Peace, seeking a deeper baptism of the Spirit of holiness, that we may be vessels of honor, sanctified and meet for the Master's use.

But an interesting and important question presents itself at this stage of our subject- How is it that all the Lord's true people, possessing, as they do, this precious grace of peace, yet know so little of its personal experience and power! We do not hesitate to trace the cause mainly to a failure in the

application of the blood of Christ to the conscience. The blood of Christ is called the "blood of sprinkling." It is also emphatically denominated "peace-speaking blood." Both of these terms imply a personal application. Now, where there is no personal application of the blood of Christ to the conscience, there can be no assured peace; an unapplied Atonement is, in a sense, an unblest Atonement. It was the sprinkling of the blood on the dwellings of the Israelites that gave them perfect peace while the angel of destruction swept by, bent on his work of death. In other words, it was the applied blood of the slain lamb that spoke peace and safety to the dwellers in that house. For this we plead- the blood of Christ sprinkled upon the conscience, speaking peace.

The conscience has been well termed God's deputy. Now, if we are, through Christ, at peace with God, conscience, God's deputy, must also be at peace, and can cause within us no enmity or dread. It is a precious truth, that the same blood that sprinkles the Mercy-seat in heaven, sprinkles the believer's conscience on earth. And as the blood speaks peace "within the veil," so it speaks peace to all believers who follow Christ "outside the camp." Let no sin-distressed saint doubt the sovereign efficacy, the peace-speaking power of the blood, as brought into personal contact with the conscience. Surely, if the blood of Christ has power to satisfy God, it should satisfy us. Where Infinite Holiness can raise no objection, the sin-distressed conscience need not. If the holy Lord God has accepted the blood as a full atonement, need we demur accepting it in faith, as the earnest of our pardon, and the ground of our hope? Truly, nothing will satisfy an enlightened, quickened conscience, but that which satisfies a holy God; and whatever satisfies God, may well satisfy us. If God is reconciled, surely we may be. This is the true foundation of peace, God at peace with us. It may not always be enjoyed- clouds may veil it, it may be bathed in no sunshine; still it is there, living and shining, like that sun, in its concealed grandeur, and, like that sun, will again burst through every veiling cloud, more effulgently and gloriously than ever.

Another cause of the little enjoyment of this peace, in the experience of many of the children of God, may be traced to their looking too exclusively within and at themselves, rather than looking simply at Jesus. Turning the eye within ourselves, we see nothing but darkness and confusion- every beast of prey, and every unclean bird. In a word, everything to depress, weaken, and discourage us. God can alone read His own superscription, and recognize; His own image in the renewed soul. Indwelling sin, and the heart's deep sorrow, often veils its features, and hides it from our view. What peace, then, do we find peering down into this deep, dark abyss of our own hearts? But, ascending from their depths, coming to the surface, and gazing upward upon the glorious Sun of Righteousness, the beauteous flower of peace will bloom and blossom in your heart, filling your whole soul with its heavenly sweetness.

Another cause for the interrupted peace of some may be traced to wilful disobedience of a known command. "Great peace have they who love My law, and nothing shall offend them." It was God's lament over His distressed people- "Oh that you had hearkened to my commandments! then had

your peace would have been as a river, and your righteousness as the sands of the sea." To how many disobedient children of God will this lament apply! They see a positive command of Christ, but, because it imposes a cross, or prescribes some self-denial, there is a sinful reserve in their obedience, and a consequent check in the flow of their peace. But if we would eat of the good of the land, we must be willing and obedient. Oh, let us, then, walk with Jesus as obedient children! How great will then be our peace! It will flow into our souls like a river, and our righteousness will be as the waves of the sea.

Nor must we forget how soon and how sensibly the peace of God in the soul may be affected by indulged sin and conformity to the world. No two things exert a more injurious influence upon this holy peace of the Spirit than these. "The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life," are all opposed to that holy peace of mind which it is the privilege of the believer always to experience. We cannot allow sin, nor sinfully conformity to the world, nor indulge in anything forbidden by the Word of God, and inconsistent with the religion of Jesus and our Christian profession, without seriously, fatally compromising the peace of God in our soul.

At peace with God through Christ, aspire to the benediction of the peace-maker. Imitate your blessed Master, the Prince of Peace, and be a mediator between those whom infirmity or misunderstanding have sundered. If yourself at variance with a brother or a sister, rest not until you are reconciled. Let the petition rise to God from a true and honest heart- "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those that trespass against us." Be a peace-maker in your family, in your church, in your circle, in your neighborhood. Be a promoter of peace, cost you what it may. "Overcome evil with good." Wait not for your offending or offended brother's coming to you, but, like your Lord and Savior, take the first step towards him. Go, in the meekness and gentleness of Christ, and tell him his fault, and honestly acknowledge your own, and you shall be a threefold conqueror- you shall conquer your brother, and shall conquer Satan, and shall conquer yourself.

"A peace is of the nature of a conquest;

For then both parties nobly are subdued,

And neither party loser."

"Blessed are the peace-makers; for they shall be called the children of God."

"The hand of peace is frank and warm,

And soft as ringdove's wing;

And he who quells an angry thought,

Is greater than a king."

Let us beware of a false peace. That such may be our fatal snare is clear from the solemn charge of God- "For they have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace." Such is the peace of the unregenerate, such the peace of the religious formalist, such the peace of the self-deceived hypocrite, and such the peace of the false professor. They cry, "Peace, peace," when God has not spoken peace. It is the peace, the still, unconscious, unbroken peace of death! Be well assured,

then, that your peace has been preceded by a spiritual arousing of the conscience, by a divine awakening of your soul, to a sight and examination of the plague of your own heart, your condemnation under the law, and your deep need of Christ. See that there has been the wounding before the healing, the storm before the calm, the conviction that you are a sinner lost by nature, before you cherish the hope of the sinner saved by grace. Ask the Holy Spirit to open up to you the deep, precious meaning of the apostle's words, "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Looking in faith only to Jesus for your acceptance with God, building alone on this divine and most sure foundation which God Himself has laid, bathing in the blood and clothing with the righteousness of the Prince of Peace, you need not question the genuineness of the peace which flows like a river in your soul.

"Now the Lord of peace Himself give you peace always, by all means. The Lord be with you all."

Christ, a Man of Sorrows

Christ, a Man of Sorrows

"A man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. Isaiah 53:3.

Of whom does the evangelical prophet speak these words but the Lord Jesus? It would seem impossible for the most learned Gentile, or the most prejudiced Jew, to find another being in the history of our race to whom the several particulars of this singular prophecy, this remarkable description, could properly apply. The portrait is too marked in its features, the character too life-like in its delineations, to be mistaken for any other being in a world where all are bowed with sorrow, than Him to whom alone it applies- the Suffering Messiah, the "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." Entering upon a season which more especially concentrates our meditations upon the passion of our Lord, could we select a portion better calculated to guide our reflections, or a picture more deeply to affect our hearts, awakening that feeling of penitence and sentiment of gratitude which the spectacle of our suffering Savior should ever inspire, than that which presents to us our blessed Lord Jesus as "a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief?" May the Divine Spirit, whose office in redemption it is to take of the things of Christ and show them unto us, bring our souls into close and believing contact with the cross of Jesus, that, as we gaze upon this, the most wonderful scene the universe ever beheld, we may "have fellowship with Him in His sufferings." Let us, in our present meditation, consider in their order, our Lord in His redeeming humanity- the nature of His sorrow- and then the blessings which flow from a believing sight of Him whom our sins thus pierced. "A man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief."

OUR LORD IN HIS REDEEMING HUMANITY-

"A man." Humanity was essential to His sufferings. He could only suffer as man. It was the only vehicle through which sin-atonement suffering could flow. Hence the doctrine of the Incarnation underlies the whole system of Christianity. "God manifest in the flesh," is the transcendent fact, the all in all, of the Christian religion. And he who denies this fact, who would extract this essential tenet from the Christian faith, exposes the fabric of his hope to utter and eternal ruin. Man redeeming man is a revealed truth, a doctrine of salvation resplendent upon every page of the sacred word. Such is the truth which meets us on the threshold of our subject. "A MAN of sorrows." Let us contemplate this truth in a few of its more important aspects.

In the first place, our Lord as man was real man, truly man, "very man of very man," as the Creed expresses it. "A body have you prepared me." "The Word was made flesh." Then we read, "Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy Him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." These are remarkable words. They set forth the great truth under consideration in points of light which no other passages of holy writ so impressively do. We too imperfectly realize this fact. Jealous- and properly so- of the Deity of Christ, we may too faintly regard His humanity. Hedging around the

great doctrine of His Godhead with every text and argument which the Bible furnishes and the mind suggests, we may lose sight of the fact that, equally essential to our salvation, indispensably so as an element of His atoning death, is the doctrine of the real manhood. In bearing then our sins to the sacrifice of Christ, our guilt to the blood of Christ, our infirmities to the succour of Christ, our grief to the compassion of Christ, we find ourselves confronting a Divine being clothed in our veritable nature, a man as we are men, human as we are human, "bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh." It is no mere hallucination of the mind, no mere shadowy, impersonal being, whom we face, but "God manifest in the flesh"- a truly human and personal Savior, in whose presence we find ourselves in sin and suffering and woe. Oh, precious truth to those who yearn for the human in close and perfect sympathy with their own bruised, tried, and crushed humanity. How near is the Son of God brought to us! How close the Deity! We seem to see God, to feel God, to hear God in the wondrous incarnation of His beloved Son.

The humanity of Christ brings Jehovah within reach of the shortest hand of faith, of the faintest breath of prayer, of the dimmest eye of love. Oh, deal personally and closely, my reader, with this great and experimental truth of the gospel- the "fulness of the Godhead bodily in Christ." Your faith in close contact with this wondrous mystery will give you such a realizing sense of the Divine nearness and fellowship as will, under all circumstances and in all places, make God to you a real and a felt presence. You will thus "acquaint yourself with Him," and this closer acquaintance will dislodge from your mind those distant and vague conceptions, those distrustful and distressing feelings which you may hitherto have cherished of God, replacing them with filial confidence, sweet affection, and holy fellowship. Thoughts of God will now be pleasant, to draw near to Him your holiest privilege, to obey and serve Him your sweetest liberty and highest delight.

The humanity of Christ was not only real, but it was voluntary. It was a self-assumed humanity. "He also Himself took part of the same." It was not a forced nature, a coerced humiliation, to which the Son of God subjected Himself. Not so was it with us. We did not voluntarily take upon us our nature, it was given to us; we did not assume, we received it independently of our own will. The choice was not given to us whether we should be made brutes, or men, or angels; but God gave us a body as it pleased Him. But our blessed Lord, left to His own will and choice, chose to be man that He might redeem man. Dwelling in a pre-existent state of essential life and glory, He had power over all existence- for all life flowed from Him, and it was competent in Him to select the nature He most loved, and He selected ours, for from everlasting "His delights were with the children of men." He had, too, an essential purpose, and a covenant engagement to accomplish in this. He had entered into covenant with His Father to ransom His elect Church, His eternally chosen and loved people. This He could only do- and still His will was left perfectly free- by assuming the very nature He was to redeem. Therefore we read that, "as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same." He was bound to take upon Him our nature, but He was self bound- bound by His own will, bound by His own law, bound by His own love "in all points to be made like unto His brethren," as truly flesh and blood as they. Oh, what a dignity has thus been put upon our nature! To what a scale of greatness and glory has this wondrous stoop of Deity raised it! The only true light in which to study the dignity and importance of our nature is the Incarnation of the Son of God. How raised, ennobled, and honored, would angels have deemed themselves had Divinity allied itself with their pure, seraphic forms! But, "He took not upon Him the nature of angels, but He took upon Him the seed of Abraham," and

by this wondrous alliance, this profound stoop, He has elevated our nature infinitely higher than angels, and so our redeemed humanity in heaven stands nearer the throne than they.

We approach a step closer to our subject when reminded by the passage upon which we are commenting that, our blessed Lord assumed our nature in order to die. "That through death," or, in order "that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." We naturally shrink from death. It is a terrible crisis, a fearful contingency of our nature, from which all our animal instincts recoil. But He who knew what death was, though He had not yet "tasted death," assumed a nature which He was well aware must pass through the throes and agonies of a mortal dissolution. Before He left the repose of His Father's bosom for the embrace of the cross, the entire scenes of Gethsemane and of Calvary passed vividly before His mind. And yet He chose a nature that must die, took a body in order to die; elected death- and of all deaths the most torturing and humiliating- as the consummation and the goal of His human existence. With this line, my reader, endeavor to comprehend something of the "height and depth, the length and breadth, of the love of Christ," "the Man of sorrows," which yet "passes knowledge." Into what else but love- infinite love, self-sacrificing love, unparalleled love- can we resolve this amazing step of Jesus? Before the eye of His omniscience, the whole scene of His humiliation and suffering passed. The cross, with all its sorrow and joy, its pain and pleasure, its ignominy and glory, its defeat and triumph, stood before His mind, as really and as truly as though it had been reared upon Calvary ages before He exchanged the abode of his glory for the scene of His shame. Herein is love, and nowhere else but here! Wonder, O heavens! be astonished, O earth! break forth into singing, O my soul! for the Lord has done great things for you. He took upon Him your nature, knowing that it would be smitten, and bruised, and scourged and spit upon, and His face marred more than the face of any man; and that, when all forms of indignity were exhausted, His foes would drag His sacred body to Golgotha, and impale it upon the accursed tree. Was ever love like this!

We are thus conducted to the last thought under this branch of the subject- the absolute necessity to His sorrow that Christ should be man. An absolute God of sorrow were a contradiction of terms, a moral impossibility. If the Son of God were to become personally acquainted with grief, He must become human. He could only sorrow as the "Man

of sorrows." Not that He divested Himself of His Deity for a moment. This were as utterly impossible as that His Deity could suffer. The Godhead and the Manhood of Christ were one and indivisible throughout His entire travail of soul. The one nature was as essential to His suffering as the other. Neither were independent of the ether in this great act of His life. As man He suffered; as God He atoned. As man He offered Himself an oblation for sin: as God He imparted to that oblation all its sacrificial virtue. His humanity was the vehicle of His divine offering; His Divinity gave to His humanity all its atoning efficacy and perfection. His Divinity was the altar upon which His Humanity was offered; and thus He made to Divine justice a full atonement for the "Church of God, which He purchased with His own blood."

What must be the sin-atoning nature, what the guilt-cleansing efficacy of that blood, which the Holy Spirit thus terms "God's own blood!" Shall we henceforth hesitate availing ourselves of its sovereign virtue? Shall we question its efficacy in our case? Shall we deem ourselves sinners too great, our transgressions too numerous, our guilt of too deep a hue, for the Savior to cleanse, for

God to forgive? Forbid it, Man of sorrows! forbid it, dying love of Christ! I will come to You, believe in You, receive You; wash me in Your blood, and robe me with Your righteousness, though my sins were red like crimson, and my transgressions were countless as the sands.

We now approach the subject more especially suggested by the impressive title of our Lord, "the Man of Sorrows." The spectacle upon which we gaze is a marvellous one- the ground upon which we stand is holy- the event we contemplate the most stupendous and momentous in the history of the universe. In what sense are we to regard our Lord Jesus as the " Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief"?

In the first place, He was a Man of Sorrows, because, as man, He was born under the curse. Sorrow was a consequence of the curse. God pronounced a curse upon the earth, and upon man in his passage through it, when His divine and holy law was broken. How awful its terms- "Cursed is the ground for your sake; in sorrow shall you eat of it all the days of your life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to you; and you shall eat the herb of the field; in the sweat of your face shall you eat bread, until you return unto the ground." Now our blessed Lord, in order to remove the curse, must first bear it; and in bearing it He became emphatically; and in a sense and to a degree as none other could, a "Man of sorrows." Behold, my soul, in the sorrow of the Savior, the pledge of the utter annihilation of your curse! His soul-grief, His bodily suffering, absolved you from it all. It fell upon Him in all its unmitigated, unmeasured force. There was no condoning the curse, no soothing or sweetening of its harshness and bitterness; but, standing in the place of His Church, He became a "curse for it;" and so was He a "Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief."

In this light interpret all the dispensations of your God which look so threatening, feel so crushing, and utter their pealing voice as from the "secret place of thunder." Christ has entirely rolled the curse from off His people, turning it into a blessing. Thus, those very trials and sorrows, which, in the case of the ungodly, are "thorns and thistles" of the curse, in the experience of God's saints are blossoms, and flowers, and fruit, the hallowed result of sorrow's discipline, in which no curse is found. What real, what pure blessings, then, must our Father's corrections be, since from them Christ has extracted every particle of the curse, every drop of wrath, every frown of anger, every spark of hell! But, oh my soul, forget not what an element of severity must this have been in the soul-sorrow of your Lord! What an embittering ingredient in that cup of woe which trembled in His hand, yet which, for the love He bears you, He drank to the very lees, exclaiming, "Your will be done!"

As the sin-bearer of His Church, Christ was a "Man of sorrows." Thus, the sufferings of our Lord were vicarious, the sorrow of His soul sin-atonement. No other rational solution of His sufferings and grief can be found than this. The prophecy from where this title of our Lord is taken- a prophecy of the sufferings of Christ- is so real and so life-like that it might well be taken for a chapter of one of the evangelists- completely vindicates the vicarious nature of our Lord's sorrow. In this part of God's word, the sin-bearing, sin-atonement character of His death is presented with a clearness so distinct, the seeing eye cannot possibly mistake, and with a force so commanding the candid mind cannot possibly resist. How simple, solemn, and irresistible the statement of the evangelical prophet!- "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray- we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the

iniquity of us all." "It pleased the Lord to bruise Him: He has put Him to grief: when You shall make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand." Such is the Old Testament key to the New Testament history of our Lord's sorrow.

How confirmatory of this prophetic statement of our Lord's sorrow, as the Sin-Bearer of His people, is the teaching of His evangelists and apostles! "Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures." "Christ has loved us, and has given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savor." It were not necessary to multiply proof in evidence of a fact so demonstrably true. No other fact provides the least satisfactory clue to the deep soul-sorrow of our Lord but this. If that sorrow was not the consequence of His bearing sin- if His sufferings were not expiatory, His death sacrificial, His blood sin-atonement, then there is a mystery in the whole transaction of the cross which must forever remain inexplicable.

Beloved, what penetrates your heart with the deepest grief- what imparts to your soul the bitterest sorrow? Is it not sin? Does not the consciousness of guilt, the thought of having grieved the Spirit, of having wounded Christ, fill your very soul, at times, with unutterable anguish, and bow you to the dust in the profoundest spirit of self-abasement? Think, then, what must have been the overwhelming soul-sorrow of our blessed Lord, standing, as He did, beneath all the sins of His whole elect Church, from the first sin of Adam to the sins of the last chosen vessel of mercy.

But what language can portray, what imagination conceive, the depth of the sorrow which afflicted the holy soul of Jesus! Listen to His words, "Now my soul is deeply troubled. Should I pray, 'Father, save me from what lies ahead'? But that is the very reason why I came!" "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death. . . . O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." Without the consciousness of personal guilt- for "He knew no sin"- He bore in His holy soul the fiery vengeance of Divine justice, endured the full tempest of Divine wrath, passed through the terrible darkness of the cross, when, in the unfathomable anguish of his soul, he exclaimed, "My God, my God, why have You forsaken me!" Oh, what a terrible eclipse of His soul was this! The hidings of God's face, the suspension of His sensible presence from His human soul, created a "horror of great darkness"- a darkness that truly might be felt. And had He not throughout all this sorrow, abandonment, and darkness been upheld by the power of His Deity, He must have succumbed, and His Church have perished forever. We shudder at the thought! But we suppose an impossibility. True, the humanity of our Lord was now passing through the deep baptism of suffering, but its union with His divinity sustained and bore it triumphantly through. The sacrifice was noble, as the sin which demanded it was great. An infinite justice was evoked, perfect law was broken, but an infinite Savior gave a full equivalent to the one, and made a full satisfaction to the other. The dignity of His Divinity conferred upon the sufferings of His humanity all the sin-atonement virtue and efficacy they possessed. Their sovereign value was as inseparable from His sufferings as His Divine nature was inseparable from the human. As Charnock remarks, "The union of His natures remained firm in all His passion; and, therefore, the efficacy of the Deity mingled itself with every groan in the agony, every pang and every cry upon the cross, as well as with the blood that was shed. The Divinity that could not suffer was joined to the suffering flesh, to render the sufferings salutary and saving." Such is the redemption view of the mysterious yet actual union of the two natures of Christ. Apart from this union there could have been no redemption- the manhood of our Lord was the seat of atoning suffering, His Godhead the fountain of atoning merit.

As man He sorrowed, as God He bore the man triumphantly through the sorrow, "and when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high."

Oh yes! our Lord was indeed a "Man of sorrows." Sorrow was His distinctive badge. He was "acquainted with grief;" or, as the Hebrew expresses it, He was known of grief. Sorrow and grief were His most familiar acquaintances, His constant companions. With them He was in unceasing converse. From His lowly cradle of the manger, to His ignominious death-bed of the cross, He ate of the bread of adversity and drank of the water of affliction, a full cup being wrung out to Him. And when we count the forms of sorrow through which He passed, the sources from where His afflictions flowed, the blood-thirsty persecution of man, the fiery assault of Satan, the treachery of false and the fickleness of true disciples, the insults and cruelty of His slayers; and, chief of all, the exceeding sorrow and blood-sweat of the garden, the mental anguish springing from the Divine wrath and justice, and the hidings of His Father's face in infinite displeasure for the sins of the people for whom He was Surety, oh, well might we put into His groaning lips the dolorous cry of Jerusalem, "Is it nothing to you all, all you that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like My sorrow with which the Lord has afflicted Me in the day of His fierce anger." Oh, great and wondrous love of God, that for us He should so smite, so put to grief the Son of His love. Herein is love, "not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and gave His Son to be a propitiation for our sins."

"Angels here may gaze and wonder

What the Lord of love could mean

When that heart was torn asunder,

Never once defiled by sin."

Let us briefly notice a few of THE SPECIAL BLESSINGS which flow from a believing view of Christ's sorrow.

And first, from this deep sorrow of our Lord springs our deepest joy. We see in His sorrow the putting away of all our sin. And is not this a matter of joy unspeakable? To be assured that our transgression is forgiven, our sin is covered; that the baptism of grief through which His holy soul passed- as no other baptism could- has "blotted out, as a thick cloud, our transgressions, and as a cloud our sins," surely this should make us patient in suffering, joyful in tribulation, and cause us to bear cheerfully every cross, and to gird ourselves willingly to every service our Lord- the Man of sorrows, sees fit to impose.

Alas! how few joyful believers there are, how few make the desert ring with their songs of gladness, and wake the echoes of praise in the strange land, simply because they deal so seldom and so faintly with the sorrow of the Savior's cross. Believer in Christ, do you know that that sorrow of your Lord has buried forever in its fathomless depths all your sins, past, present, and to come; and from His unknown agony, from His inconceivable grief, from His bitterest sorrow, you may extract the material of your richest joy, and wake the notes of your sweetest harmonies, marching to conflict and to conquest to the music of the victor's song. Oh, be joyful then! The joy of the Lord will strengthen your soul, your sacrifice of praise will glorify His name. You bring no honor to your Lord by indulging in a mournful and desponding spirit, in a doubting and fearful mind. His

sovereign grace has burst your chains, unloosed your yoke, and brought your soul out of prison, conferring upon you a dignity of which the angels cannot boast, even the divine adoption of a child; and you ought to go forth to service and to suffering with a jubilant and gladsome spirit. Up, then, you pardoned and justified adopted saints, from the ashes and shadows in which you too fondly love to grope, and pluck your harp from its willow, wake its wires to the highest praise of redeeming grace and dying love, for your home is in heaven. There is everything in Jesus to make you a happy and a joyful Christian; everything that the renewed soul requires, carrying within him a depraved and treacherous heart, bearing about a body of sin and death, and passing through an ungodly, ensnaring world- a world of unmixed pollution, ceaseless trial, and heartless disappointment.

We see also in this title of our Lord a shadowing forth of that assimilation to Him, of which all His saints must more or less partake. The members must be conformed to their divine Head, the brethren to their elder Brother. This was the ardent desire and prayer of the holy apostle, "I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death." Was our Lord a Man of sorrows? There must be no difference between us and Him. Shall He be a Man

of grief, and we men of pleasure? Shall He wear the thorn, and we only the rose? Shall the world, that frowned upon Him, smile upon us? Shall He endure its curse, and we receive its blessing? He its sting, and we its caress? Oh, no! We, too, must be acquainted with grief. We must be prepared to suffer with Christ, and to suffer for Christ. We must bear His cross, confess His name, and follow hard after Him, though the path we tread be rough and flinty. Shame for Him must not confound us; toil for Him must not weary us; suffering for Him must not daunt us; loss for Him must not make us afraid. "Unto you it is given, on the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake."

Oh, be you assured of this, that the discipline of sorrow through which you are now passing, is an evidence of your oneness with Christ, a seal of your adoption, and fitting of your soul for glory! Oh, seek rather its sanctification than its soothing; desire its fruit more than its removal! Let the sweet thought reconcile you to sorrow, and cheer you on in its lonely path, that Christ is your fellow-sufferer, and the cup you now drink, He drank, leaving the sweetness of His lips in undying fragrance upon its brim.

This conducts us to a third blessing- the compassion and love which flow from Christ's sorrows. As a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, He was educated for the suffering Church. He could not possibly have been a sympathizing High Priest, had He not been taught and trained in the school of sorrow: "Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered." What an ocean of sympathy is here! It is quite possible to overtask the sympathy even of God's saints. Human compassion must necessarily have its limit; and even where it exists in its truest and tenderest form, it may not have been trained in our peculiar school, nor have been molded to our especial form of sorrow. But Christ was a Man of sorrows- not of one sorrow, but of many. Is there one we have of which He did not partake? Is there one grief that shades our spirit that did not cast a deeper shadow upon His? His cup of woe was composed of many ingredients, His crown bristled with many thorns, His back was lacerated with many stripes, His body was pierced with many wounds, many sorrows bound their iron bands around His smitten, broken

heart. Thus is He prepared to share, and in sharing to soothe, and in soothing to bury, in His deepest sympathy, the many and varied afflictions of His people.

Yes, our Lord was "acquainted with grief." Expressive words! He knew it not merely from report, neither from observation, but from personal and intimate experience. And He is acquainted, beloved, with yours. "I know their sorrows," said God, when He looked down, and came down, from heaven, to deliver His people from the iron furnace of Egypt. Christ is intimately acquainted with your personal sorrow, has tasted your bereaved grief, knows your domestic trials, and has His eyes of paternal love and justice upon all the unholy accusations by which your "enemies, persecutors, and slanderers," falsely and cruelly assail you. Let this comfort your spirit and strengthen your hands in God. Acquaint yourself with Him in this, and sweet will be your peace.

This subject is not without its solemn relation to the unconverted. If such was the sorrow of the sinless One, bearing, as He did, the sins of His Church, what will be the sorrow, the unmitigated, endless sorrow of the soul passing into eternity hearing its own sins? The thought is overwhelming! All sin brings sorrow, either in this life or in the life that is to come. "Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment"- these are the sins of God's people, which have been repented of, confessed, and forgiven, having been judged and condemned in the person of Christ, their Surety- "and some men they follow after"- these are the sins of the unrepentant, unbelieving, and unpardoned, which follow them into eternity, and will confront them as witnesses in the great day of judgment, when the secrets of all hearts will be revealed. And then follows the remorse and anguish, the undying worm, and the unquenchable fire; even that "cup that is full mixture, the dregs thereof all the wicked of the earth shall wring out, and drink them."

O you trifler, and you scorner, and you procrastinator, and you despiser and rejecter of the "Man of Sorrows," you may laugh now, but the days of your sorrow are to come. Better, infinitely better, be a mourner for sin all your days, and go weeping tears of Godly sorrow to your grave, than be merry now with a carnal, worldly, sinful merriment, and hereafter gnaw your chains in bitter and eternal anguish! O Lord, give me a place among Your true mourners! Let me lament with them, sorrow with them, with them wet my couch with tears for sin, and go to my dying bed abhorring myself, and repenting in dust and ashes, crying, "God be merciful to me a sinner," than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, but to pass, when that joy is fled, to all the pangs and horrors of the "second death." Oh, what will these pangs and horrors be, to quench which not one drop of water will be given!

But has the Lord, my reader, given you a broken heart for sin? Are you a mourner at His feet, a weeper at the cross? Then, happy are you. Jesus has pronounced you so. "Blessed," happy, "are the poor in Spirit; blessed are those who mourn." And God has said, "I dwell in the high and holy place; with him, also, that is of a contrite and humble spirit, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." Bring your broken heart to the "Man of sorrows;" for it is His office to "preach good tidings unto the meek, to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives." The balsam that exuded from His heart of sorrow, that distilled from His pierced side, will heal your wounded spirit, bind up your broken heart, and turn your sorrow into joy, your tears into dancing.

If hell is a place of endless sorrow, heaven is a place of eternal joy. How glorious the description of the New Jerusalem saints! "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no

more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away." Look forward, then, you sorrowing ones, to that bright and holy world, where sin shall no more taint you, and temptation no more assail you, and sorrow no more shade you, and suffering no more distress you, and where "the days of your mourning shall be ended."

The last view we venture to present of the atoning sorrow of our Lord is that which constitutes the crowning truth of all- His finished work. When Jesus cried, "It is finished," all His sorrow was over- all His grief was at an end; for then He "made an end of sin, and brought in a new and everlasting righteousness." It is on the ground of His finished work the soul that believes in Him sees the entire putting away of all his transgressions, and complete acceptance of his person before God. "It Is Finished!" Wondrous words! Glorious declaration! The law is honored- justice is satisfied- the debt is paid; and now, whoever believes in Jesus shall not come into condemnation, but has everlasting life! Child of God! see your finished salvation! Mourning soul! dry your tears; look to Jesus and be saved. Sin-bound laboring sinner! cast your heavy burden and your deadly doings down at the foot of the Cross; Atonement is all made, the work is all done; trust in Jesus, and you shall find rest unto your soul. Oh, blessed announcement of the Gospel, that you have nothing to do but believe! That, freer than the water springing from the fount, freer than the light flowing from the sun- freer than the air laden with earth's scents, is the finished salvation Christ has provided for poor, lost sinners. How clear the teaching of God's word touching this precious truth! "Being justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood." Resting in this finished salvation of Christ, the vilest sinner shall be saved, the feeblest saint shall not be lost. They only will fail of the glorious blessings of this great charter of salvation- the finished work of Christ- who, refusing to accept it as it is, presumptuously dare to supplement it by their own work of human merit. Attempt, if you will, to add luster to the sun, beauty to the landscape, value to the pearl- but attempt not the profane, the criminal act, of adding anything of your own merit, worthiness, or doing, to the Finished Work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Despise and reject His finished salvation, and though you were the most scrupulously moral, and strictly religious, and profusely charitable, dying, robed in this your own righteousness, you will be lost forever. But, believe in Christ, accept in faith His finished work, and although you were the vilest sinner and the feeblest saint, you shall be forever saved.

"It is finished!"- You have said it,

What more can sinners need

It is finished; on this truth we lean

This glorious truth we plead.

It is finished!"- You have made an end

Of sin by Your own blood,

And in Your perfect righteousness

Does bring us unto God.

"It is finished!"- By Your Spirit's power

This precious truth apply,
To the hearts and consciences of those
Who still in darkness lie.
That all Your own beloved ones,
Rejoicingly be brought,
Into the glorious liberty
Your finished work has wrought.
"It is finished!"- Oh, we thank You, Lord,
And seek Your promised grace,
Sufficient for our every need,
Until we behold Your face.
Then, Jesus, fully satisfied,
Our longing hearts shall be,
When in Your likeness we awake,
And all Your glory see.

Christ, the Resurrection and the Life

Christ, the Resurrection and the Life

Jesus told her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die like everyone else, will live again." John 11:25

Words of Divine majesty and of sublime import! Who could in truth have spoken them but Essential Life? They were uttered at the grave, and rang in living, crushing tones through the dark domain and dungeon of death. The tomb was shaken, the grim tyrant relaxed his grasp, and "he who was dead came forth bound hand and foot with grave clothes." Jesus- Lazarus- and death- stand before us in the scene, types of people and of truths with which we have an individual, solemn, and eternal relation. One object, however, must alone engage our especial study- it is He who occupies the central position of the picture- Christ, the "Resurrection and the Life." We have, as yet, considered no title of our Lord which blends our thoughts with a scene of such sublime interest as the present. The resurrection of Christ as a fact of our religion, and the resurrection of the body as an event in our history, are obviously so essential to the truth of the one, and so entwined with the hopes of the other, it is impossible not to regard them as two of the most vital and glorious doctrines which can possibly challenge the belief and engage the study of the Christian mind. And as the Church of God, at the present season, irrespective of its different nationalities and denominational distinctions- is a devout and adoring worshiper at the Savior's tomb, it may be proper that these pages, in sympathy with the solemn yet joyous occasion, should aid in molding and animating its meditations upon "the hope of Israel"- Christ's resurrection for us, and our resurrection with Him. These words of Jesus are as a voice from the grave. They are uttered in tones of peculiar emphasis and solemnity. It was not likely that in a position of such solemnity, and surrounded by an audience of so unique and, in some respects, of so skeptical a character, Jesus would have given utterance to words not pregnant of the profoundest meaning, and capable of withstanding the severest test of truth. When, therefore, in response to the confession of Martha, who boldly asserted her belief in the doctrine of the resurrection at the last day, "Jesus said unto her, I am the Resurrection and the Life," we may be assured that He represented Himself as wearing a title the import of which was of the most vital and sublime character. Let us illustrate this magnificent title of our Lord, and then trace some of the precious blessings which result from it to the saint and the sinner. IN WHAT SENSE IS CHRIST THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE?

He is essentially so. When He says, "I am the Resurrection and the Life," He speaks as Jehovah, He speaks absolutely as God. He in effect says, "I am the infinite, eternal, self-existent Jehovah. I am uncreated, the fountain of life; all life flows originally and essentially from Me." To take a lower view of the Speaker than this, to give to His words an interpretation less important and divine, would at once be to compromise the entire subject of these pages. The magnificent superstructure of the Resurrection rests entirely upon the personal dignity of our Lord. If He is not divinely, essentially "the Life"- that is, ceasing to be God if He were not so- then there is no "resurrection to

eternal life." There would be a resurrection of the whole human race, but it would be the "resurrection of damnation." It is because Resurrection life in Christ is essential and divine- uncreated, independent, exhaustless, and, therefore, deathless- that the grave of those who sleep in Jesus is lighted up with the luster and glory of the first resurrection.

Oh, what majesty, what authority, what power beams forth from this declaration- "I am the Resurrection and the Life!" Never did our Lord utter words more worthy of Himself, or assume an attitude more dignified and sublime. Christ was the Resurrection and the Life infinite ages before a pulse of life beat in angel or human form. Dwelling in His own eternity, happy in His own existence, He was the Resurrection and the Life when there was no other intelligence to admire His glory but Himself. I pray, my reader, that your faith in this truth may be no vague, unsound thing. In proportion to your belief in the Godhead of the Savior will be your confidence in the truth and possibility of the resurrection. That there are mysteries in that truth I fully concede- mysteries which must ever elude the grasp and baffle the research of the most potent and sagacious inquirer; nevertheless, confronted with this doctrine of Christ's infinite nature, brought to the touch of His Divine and essential Omnipotence, they vanish like the dew of the morning, or the spray of the sea. If, then, our Lord is essentially the Resurrection and the Life, shall it be thought a thing incredible that He should raise the dead?

Our Lord is the "Resurrection and the Life," as it is by Him the doctrine of the resurrection and of eternal life is revealed. Until He uplifted the veil, the most dim and confused notions of a future state existed. The Jews, it is true, believed in the doctrine, but their traditions so neutralized and their corruptions so overlaid it, as almost entirely to veil its glory and to destroy its influence. But Christ revealed the truth. "Bringing life and immortality to light by the gospel," He uplifted the veil of the future, scattered the shadows of the tomb, and declared, "The hour is coming in the which all that are in the grave shall come forth; those who have done good unto the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation." Having thus revealed, He proceeded to illustrate the doctrine. Two examples shall suffice. The touching narrative of the first runs thus-

A funeral procession was coming out as he approached the village gate. The boy who had died was the only son of a widow, and many mourners from the village were with her. When the Lord saw her, his heart overflowed with compassion. "Don't cry!" he said. Then he walked over to the coffin and touched it, and the bearers stopped. "Young man," he said, "get up." Then the dead boy sat up and began to talk to those around him! And Jesus gave him back to his mother. Luke 7:12-15

Each feature of this remarkable incident is replete with the most tender instruction. We may note the compassionate love of Christ for the widow, His sympathy with the sorrow of her bereavement, and His power over death. It is this latter feature which presents Him before us at this moment encircled with the deepest interest. Who but "the Resurrection and the Life" could have stood between that corpse and the grave, and before the body had reached its home, summoned back its departed spirit, rekindling the inanimate clay with life, intelligence, and beauty?

This compassion of Jesus towards the mourning widow, bereft of her earthly prop, unveils an exquisite trait of His character. Of the many cases of human suffering which came under our Lord's notice, not one exceed this in its touching interest. She was a widow, a bereaved widow,

following her only son to the grave. What an appropriate occasion for the interposition of His sympathy as man and of His power as God! Every spring of His compassion was unveiled, every resource of His Deity employed. He stopped the coffin, awoke the dead, gave back the son, and made the widow's heart to sing for joy! Truly is He the "Resurrection and the Life."

Weeping widow! Christ can as easily awaken the dead soul as He did the lifeless body. Are you mourning over the spiritual death of your child? Are you following in tears, entreaties, and prayers your son, sinful and wayward, as to an early and dishonored grave? Weep not, then, afflicted parent! Christ, who is our life, passes by. And although spiritual death may hold its subject firm within its iron grasp, and unbelief would suggest, "Your son is dead, trouble not the master," yet He who once spoke the words, "Young man, I say unto you, Arise!" can speak the words of life, and your son lives! A Christian mother's prayers were never lost! Your son may be far from God, dead in trespasses and in sins, yet, though the child of many tears of anguish, he is the child of many prayers of faith, and those prayers shall come up through Christ as a memorial before God, your son given back to you again, by Him who is the Resurrection and the Life.

The second illustration our Lord gave of the doctrine He had come to reveal is that with which His present title especially stands connected. In introducing it the evangelist thus gives us the key-note to the thrilling narrative. "Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister Mary, and Lazarus." But Lazarus, the sick one whom He loved, was dead, and it was around his grave the group we are now depicting was gathered. And what a group! There were present the Jews who "came to Martha and Mary to comfort them concerning their brother." Still nearer to the grave stood the bereaved sisters, the one loud and impassioned in her grief, the other silent and thoughtful. In the center of the group stands Jesus, dignified and majestic, yet groaning in spirit and bathed in tears. Lifting His eyes to heaven, he prays, Father, I thank You that You have heard me. And I know that you hear me always." "And when He had thus spoken, He cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth! And he that was dead came forth bound hand and foot with grave clothes."

How resplendent the glory of Jesus now as the "Resurrection and the Life." He had revealed the fact of the resurrection; He now confirms it. He had brought life and immortality to light by His gospel; He now illustrates it. He had declared Himself the "Resurrection and the Life;" He now proves His right to the magnificent title by re-opening Hades and by unsealing the grave. Here let us pause and bid you thus reason- "Am I a disciple of Jesus, learning at His feet the mystery of the resurrection and the truth of my future and endless life? These subjects are vast. Their mystery baffles me, their solemnity awes me, their greatness overpowers me. Reason tells me, and conscience echoes the truth, there is a future state where I am to live forever. But I am perplexed, bewildered, and in darkness. Where can I turn? Where shall I find the light for which I yearn? the rest for which I sigh?" Come, you doubting and perplexed inquirer, and take your place as a true, lowly disciple at the feet of Him who is the "Resurrection and the Life," and learn of Him. He alone can solve your doubts, remove your perplexities, and quell your fears. Believe in Him, receive in humble faith His Word, trust in His salvation, and life and immortality will shed the luster of its hope upon your soul.

Our Lord Jesus not only reveals the doctrine, but IN HIM IS LODGED THE POWER OF BESTOWING THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE. Essentially, the blessing belongs to Him. As no other being could make it known, so no other could confer it. Martha, to whom the title was

originally declared, acknowledged her belief in the general fact of the resurrection, and also in its particular application to the case of her brother. "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day." But our Lord leads her farther than this. He draws her from the fact of a resurrection to Himself, the Resurrection- from a doctrine to a Person.

Jesus told her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die like everyone else, will live again. They are given eternal life for believing in me and will never perish. Do you believe this, Martha?" John 11:25-26 In other words- "I am essentially the Resurrection and the Life. I, by my own divine power, can raise your brother when and how I please. I hold in my hands the keys of hell (Hades) and of death, and by a word can recall the spirit and rekindle the dust." And then follows the glorious confession of her faith- "Yes, Lord," she told him. "I have always believed you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one who has come into the world from God." John 11:27

It is a glorious truth that the power by which the dead are raised belongs to Christ! That He will occupy a prominent place in the resurrection at the last day is evident from His own testimony. "Verily, verily I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and those who hear shall live." "No man can come to me, except the Father, who has sent me, draws him: and I will raise him up at the last day." Thrice these words are repeated in the course of this chapter- "I will raise him up at the last day." In this sense our Lord is emphatically the "Resurrection and the life." In that great day when the Lord shall descend from heaven, and the trumpet of the archangel shall sound, the divine power of Jesus will light up the dust of all the buried dead with life and immortality- some to honor and some to dishonor. "The dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear shall live."

Oh, sinner, if you do not hear the voice now uttered in tones of mercy and speaking words of salvation and of love, you will hear it then in tones of anger and speaking words of woe. You may now be as the deaf adder, wilfully closing your ears to the voice of the charmer, but the day is coming when you will, you must, you shall, hear the voice of Him who is the Resurrection and the Life, piercing the "dull, cold ear of death," reverberating through the silent mansions of the grave, quickening you with resurrection-life, and summoning you to the final and dread judgment. Oh, listen to the voice of Jesus! Turn not from it- it is for your life. Bend close a hearkening ear; fall low at His feet; hang intently upon His lips; catch every word of grace that proceeds out of His mouth, for "now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." Oh, Lamb of God! let me hear Your voice of love and mercy now that, when I hear Your resurrection-voice at the last day, exclaiming, "Arise, you dead, and come to judgment!" I may then recognize it as the same almighty voice that roused me from a death of sin and quickened me into a life of righteousness; that said unto me, "Live," and henceforth I lived to You.

But Christ, by His own resurrection, has ESTABLISHED HIS DIVINE AND EXCLUSIVE CLAIM TO THE TITLE He now wears as the "Resurrection and the Life." This fact in His history and this doctrine of our faith constitutes the central principle of both. It is a self-evident truth that had He not risen from the dead, all His pretensions to Messiahship, all His claims to be the Son of God and the Savior of sinners, must have fallen to the ground; and in that fall must have perished the salvation of the Church and the hope of the sinner. But no such event awaited Christ, and no such catastrophe awaits man. He arose from the dead exactly as types foreshadowed, and as prophets

predicted, as He Himself promised, and as evangelists and apostles testified and preached, and He was thus "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." Were it our present object to meet the cavil of the infidel, rather than confirm the faith and comfort the heart of the Christian, nothing were easier than to demonstrate, on Scripture grounds, the truth of Christ's resurrection; thus establishing His claim to the sublime title these pages assign to Him. The facts in His case were indisputable. He was brought before the tribunal of Pilate, He was tried, was sentenced to death, was crucified, was taken down from the cross, was laid in a new sepulcher, a stone was rolled against the door, it was sealed, and a watch set over it of Roman soldiers, to whom it was certain death had they slept. The victory of His foes seemed now certain and complete. But vain were their precautions, and still more vain their momentary triumph! A messenger from heaven, "his clothing white as snow, and his countenance like lightning," came and rolled back the stone from the door, and the Son of God rose triumphant! And when the holy women came in the gray twilight of morning to the tomb, lo! they were challenged by the inquiry, "Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, He has risen. Come, see the place where the Lord lay." And then, to meet all credulity and to set at rest all doubt, He appeared in His risen body among the twelve apostles as they were assembled in an upper room, exhibited the scars of His wounds, and with His own lips assured those who it was even He Himself, and said unto them, "Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day; and that repentance should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things." And thus instructed and confirmed, the apostles went forth preaching everywhere, "and with great power gave witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus and great grace was upon them all."

Now, what are some of the BLESSINGS which specially accrue to us from the fact of Christ's resurrection? The reply to this question will conclude this chapter, with an experimental and practical application of our subject. We have already presented as one illustration of this magnificent title of our Lord, the light which it throws upon the great and sublime fact of our eternal future. In His resurrection from the dead we have shown that Christ has emphatically "brought life and immortality to light." Until the bars of His prison were unloosed, and the door of His sepulcher was thrown open, a dense and impervious haze enveloped the doctrine of a future state. The Pentateuch, it is true, threw some rays of light upon the dark cloud; they were, however, but faint and few. The heathen, also, were not without some dim conceptions of the existence of a future state of the soul, as their pagan idea of Tartarus as a place of torment, and of Elysium as one of happiness testifies. But it was reserved for the Resurrection of Christ fully to uplift the veil and bring to light the glorious fact which would at once set at rest all doubt and dissipate all speculation, supplying scepticism with its fullest answer, and Christianity with its richest triumph. Blessed Redeemer! You did come from heaven, Your robes streaming with glory, that in its light we might see light upon our mysterious and endless future. Thanks be unto You for so emptying and irradiating Your grave that through it we might look into eternity, and behold the "kingdom of heaven opened to all believers." By Your impurpled cross we travel to Your tomb, and through Your tomb we follow You to Your glory; and, bathed in its ineffable effulgence, we take our place in the heavenlies, the risen members exalted with their enthroned Head, "far above all principality and power, and might and dominion." Thus we pass through the vestibule of Christ's empty grave into heaven itself, where He, our risen and glorified Redeemer, now is.

Another essential blessing resulting from Christ's resurrection is the spiritual life which it confers upon all believers. Had our Lord continued a prisoner of the grave- a dead Christ still- there had been no spiritual life. The true life of the Church springs from the resurrection life of her Lord. Mystically one with Him, we share each stage He traveled in working out our salvation. We have "fellowship with Christ in His sufferings," we are "dead with Christ," we are "risen with Christ," and we ascend with Christ into heaven, and we shall come with Him in His glory, and shall reign with Him in the New Jerusalem forever and ever. Thus, in its fullest and most emphatic sense, "Christ is our life." "I have come," He says, "that you might have life, and that you might have it more abundantly." We have spiritual life from Christ as He is Essential Life, but we have a more abundant supply of this precious blessing when we more fully know "the power of His resurrection." Oh, there is a spiritual power in the resurrection of Christ which His Church, in union with Himself, feels throughout the entire body, the extremest and lowliest member pulsating with its divine and deathless vitality. It raises the believing soul from a death of sin, out of a grave of corruption, and above a hell of condemnation. The saints went to the cross of Christ when He was "delivered for our offences," and they passed through the grave of Christ when He "rose again for our justification." How blessedly the apostles experienced the power of Christ's resurrection! Listen to the testimony of the chief of them- "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me." Again, "Always bearing about in our body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body." They bore about with them the dying of the Lord Jesus in the persecutions and losses, in the sufferings and death which they endured for His sake; but the life also of Jesus was made manifest in their mortal flesh in the vitality and strength, the succouring and sympathy which, flowing from a risen, living Savior, enabled them to endure this daily dying for Christ, sustained by the daily life of Christ. The grand evidence to them that Christ was alive was the support and consolation they experienced in the service and suffering for Christ. There was a daily dying, and yet a daily living- both bound up in Christ. He had told them on the one hand, and He tells us, "You shall be hated by all men for my name's sake;" and He told them on the other, "Because I live, you shall live also." All this transpired in their experience. They were persecuted, as He predicted; and they were comforted, as He promised. They died daily, and daily they lived through the manifestation of Christ's life in their mortal body.

Nor were they alone in this experience. In a measure it is substantially ours. We bear about the dying of the Lord Jesus when we mortify the flesh, crucify the world, endure hardness, pass through trial, and suffer persecution; and we bear about the life also of Jesus in His power keeping us, in His grace sustaining us, in His sympathy soothing us, in His love animating us. The "great tribulation" is to come, times of fiery persecution are at hand, when the followers and confessors of Christ will find the words of one of the earliest and noblest Christian martyrs more expressive of their experience than in these easy and silken days of religious profession- "We who live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh." But before those days of physical persecution and trial come, is there no spiritual dying with, and living by Christ? Most assuredly there is! Oh, it is a blessed death the believer daily dies! There may not be the shattered earthly tabernacle, the "marks of the Lord Jesus" in our wounded and mutilated forms, nevertheless, there is a moral and spiritual crucifixion of the flesh in its affections and lusts, the body offered up as a living sacrifice unto God on the altar of a holy obedience. There is the crucifixion of the old man with Christ, that the body of sin might be destroyed, even when the sword is not drawn, and the faggots are not kindled, and the cross is not

reared- that deadly apparatus of torture and suffering so familiar in the history of the "noble army of martyrs."

What is your daily history, beloved, but a daily and a living testimony to the truth that Christ is risen and is alive? How is it that you are borne through a single day of your earthly history? And when you rise in the morning, and think of what you have to pass through in that one day, and when at night you place your head upon the pillow and reflect how God carried you through it, what a witness you are to the power of Christ's risen life! You tried Him in that trial, you proved Him in that necessity, you looked up to Him in that difficulty, you fled to Him in that temptation, you trusted Him with that burden, and you never found in a single particular His promise falsified, "Lo! I am with you always." He showed you your emptiness, taught you your nothingness, impressed upon you the sentence of death that you should not trust in yourself; and when He had thus reduced your strength, humbled you in your own eyes, emptying you from vessel to vessel, He then put forth His all-sustaining, all-comforting, all-shielding life in your soul; and so you had the most conclusive and convincing of all evidences that Christ was risen and alive, and that He lived to succour, shield, and comfort His saints, serving and suffering for Him here below.

How wonderful, too, is the "power of Christ's resurrection " in the spiritual elevation it imparts to the believing soul. The life of the believer is a resurrection-life; it is the resurrection-life of Christ. And if we are partakers of Christ's risen life, we share also its earth-receding and its heaven-attracting power. Thus exhorts the apostle, "If you then are risen with Christ, seek these things which are above, where Christ sits on the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above, and not on things on the earth. For you are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." Are we manifesting the power of the risen life of Christ in an unearthly, heavenly life? When Christ rose from the grave, He rose above earth, above corruption, above the world, and ascended up into the heavenlies. If, then, we have union with Christ in His resurrection, we are seeking after

heavenly things, are cultivating a heavenly mind, are transferring our affections from things below to things above, are even now sitting with Christ at the right hand of God! What a high and heavenly calling is ours! Oh, to know more of Christ and the power of His resurrection! Oh, for more of the sanctifying; elevating life of Jesus in our souls! We would then rise, where we now grovel; ascend, where we now droop; fly, where we now walk. The world will lose its charm, the creature its power, the flesh its thralldom, and we shall feel that we have left death behind us and a grave beneath us, while we "press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

Remember, oh believer, that yours is a risen life, emerging from a new tomb into a new and higher region of purity, thought, and love. Debase it not. Beware of unholy alliances, of worldly conformity, of sin's contamination, of the "garment spotted by the flesh." Never forget that you are risen with Christ, are one with Him in His new and resurrection-life. Let your daily walk be a daily resurrection- a perpetual renewal of your spiritual and heavenly calling. You will confront trial and temptation, conflict and toil; but, realizing the power of Christ's resurrection in your soul, you will be so energized and stimulated as to rise superior to the things that are seen and temporal, in wrapped communion with the things that are unseen and eternal. Oh, to what a high, holy elevation will you attain in constant fellowship with the living Savior! Emerging from the dust that entombs, and throwing off the grave-clothes that bind, you will move in an inner spiritual world,

breathe a higher life, and hold fellowship with beings of another and holier sphere.

But where is Christ? Alas! how we seek the living among the dead! Like the holy women of old, we are searching for a dead Christ in the grave, forgetting that He who is all our salvation and all our desire, and whom we often seek in tears, is not here, but is RISEN and ascended up on high, and is at the right hand of God, making intercession for us. What, then, is the lesson the Lord would teach us by this? Even the lesson of dealing less with His grave and more with His throne; looking up rather than looking down. We are not to seek life where there is only death. Never shall we find spiritual quickening from lifeless doings, duties, and ceremonies. This is seeking the living among the dead. Our spiritual life is in and from a risen Savior; and in proportion as we get the power of His resurrection in our souls, and live a life of daily faith upon a living, interceding, ever-present Christ, we shall live the higher life of a soul that lives for God in all the minutiae of daily life, living to Him in little as in great things, so that, whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do, we do all to His glory!

Child of sorrow! take your sorrows and afflictions to a living Christ. He is alive to all your troubles, griefs, and needs. He lives to succour you with His grace, to strengthen you with His might, to soothe you with His sympathy, to comfort you with His love, and to bear you on His interceding heart moment by moment. You are bereaved! Death has shaded your home, and has broken its strongest and most beautiful staff. The grave entombs your heart's treasure, and with it your loving heart. But what if earthly friends are gone, and life's joys are fled; Jesus lives! and one glance of His loving eye, one word of His gentle voice, one touch of His living hand, will raise you superior to your deepest sorrow, and will more than compensate you for your greatest loss.

When I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. But he laid his right hand on me and said, "Don't be afraid! I am the First and the Last. I am the living one who died. Look, I am alive forever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and the grave." Only realize what a Treasure, and Portion, and Friend you have in Christ- in Christ ascended- in Christ alive- in Christ making intercession for you- and your widowed heart will again sing, and your orphan spirit will yet rejoice, and life's landscape will yet throw off its wintry dress, and once more quicken into life, and bloom into beauty, and burst forth into song, and this will be its anthem- "He has done all things well!"

Christ is the "Resurrection and the Life" of all who sleep in Him. "But the fact is that Christ has been raised from the dead. He has become the first of a great harvest of those who will be raised to life again." Need we explain this expression? At the time of harvest the Jews were required to bring a single sheaf, first threshed in the outer court, and then taken by the priest, waved in the four winds of heaven, and presented before the Lord as the first-fruits of the harvest, now to be sickled and gathered in. Thus, "Christ has been raised from the dead. He has become the first of a great harvest of those who will be raised to life again." He is a pledge and earnest of a like glorious resurrection of all those who sleep in Him. If, therefore, we deny the resurrection of Christ, we must deny the resurrection of the saints. Listen to the sublime argument of the apostles,

"For if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised either. And if Christ was not raised, then all our preaching is useless, and your trust in God is useless. And we apostles would all be lying about God, for we have said that God raised Christ from the grave, but that can't be true if there is no resurrection of the dead. If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, then your faith is useless, and you

are still under condemnation for your sins. In that case, all who have died believing in Christ have perished! And if we have hope in Christ only for this life, we are the most miserable people in the world.

But the fact is that Christ has been raised from the dead. He has become the first of a great harvest of those who will be raised to life again." 1 Corinthians 15:13-20

Oh, what a halo surrounds the grave of a sleeping saint! It is the halo of Christian hope, the day-dawn of the "first resurrection." "On the cold cheek of death smiles and roses are blending, And beauty immortal awakes from the tomb!"

They may have died in distant climates- no friend to wipe the cold dew from their brow, answer their last look of love, or receive their last confession of faith, and then close their eyes in death. Their sacred ashes may repose in foreign soil, or beneath the rolling surges of the deep- no mound or stone to tell where. But, He upon whose tomb angels sat and watched, Himself sits upon and watches theirs- the Resurrection and the Life.

"The mourners came at break of day,
Unto the garden sepulcher,
With saddened hearts to weep and pray,
For Him, the loved One, buried there.
What radiant light dispels the gloom?
An angel sits upon the tomb.
"Then mourn we not, beloved dead,
Even while we weep and pray,
The happy spirit has but fled
To brighter realms of heavenly day.
Immortal hope dispels the gloom,
For Jesus sits upon the tomb."

The comforting apostle says, "And now, brothers and sisters, I want you to know what will happen to the Christians who have died so you will not be full of sorrow like people who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and was raised to life again, we also believe that when Jesus comes, God will bring back with Jesus all the Christians who have died." "The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first." Oh yes! the "Resurrection and the Life" was with them in their departing hour, and still He watches their sleeping dust, a ruined temple of the Holy Spirit, and precious in His sight; and when He comes in person, and in great glory, with all His saints with Him, then at His voice the sea shall give up its holy dead, and death and Hades the holy dead that are in them, and so those who sleep in Him shall rise first. "Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection; on them the second death has no power." And then, when this

"corruption shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality," from the sunny plains of India, from the lonely glens of Africa, from the distant wilds of China, from Asia's blood-stained heights, from every spot consecrated by the ashes of the holy dead, will ascend the shout, "O death! where is your sting? O grave! where is your victory?" What a divine religion is Christ's!- what a sublime hope is the Christian's! With such a religion, and such a hope, who would not be the lowliest believer in Jesus?

What will be your resurrection, unconverted reader? There will be but two- the first is the "resurrection unto life;" the second, the "resurrection unto damnation." "Those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." Fall down at His feet, penitent and believing, and let your prayer be, "O Lord, raise me by Your Spirit from a death of sin into a life of righteousness; that at Your second coming to judge the living and the dead, I may be found numbered among those who shall have their part in the First Resurrection, upon whom the Second Death shall have no power. "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die like everyone else, will live again." John 11:25

Christ, Our Righteousness

Christ, Our Righteousness

"Behold, the days come, says the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, the Lord Our Righteousness." Jeremiah 23:5-6

"For the time is coming," says the Lord, "when I will place a righteous Branch on King David's throne. He will be a King who rules with wisdom. He will do what is just and right throughout the land. And this is his name: 'The Lord Is Our Righteousness.' In that day Judah will be saved, and Israel will live in safety." Jeremiah 23:5-6

There is but one being to whom this remarkable prophecy can properly apply. But one has ever appeared on the earth to fulfil it. And if no other ever appears, then it strictly follows that either that one is He, or else this prophecy shall never be fulfilled. We address this argument, in the outset of our present exposition, with confidence to the intelligent Jew, to the candid Gentile, and to all who believe prophecy to be the Word of God; and, as such, must sooner or later be literally and inevitably fulfilled. All the expressions of this prophecy refer to Christ, the Messiah. In Him and by Him it has received its full, personal accomplishment; and by no torture of criticism, ingenuity of argument, or sophistry of reasoning can it be properly interpreted of any other than Jesus of Nazareth. Let us group and examine briefly the several points in the description.

He was to be of the lineage of David. This was literally so. Christ was born of a virgin, "of the house and lineage of David." He was to be righteous. To Christ this particular exactly and exclusively applies. He was holy, the holy One; "He did no sin, neither was deceit found in His mouth." He was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners;" and when tried by Satan-who, had there been anything in Christ congenial to his nature, would have discovered and proclaimed it- he found nothing in Him. He was to be "a King" This also belonged to Christ. He was "king of the Jews." He disguised but never ignored His regal character. When interrogated by Pontius Pilate, "Are you a king, then?" He affirmatively replied, "You say that I am a king. To this end was I born- and for this end came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth." Deny the kingship of Christ in His own proper person, and you render ambiguous and unintelligible a great portion of the New Testament writings. It is predicted in this prophecy that He should "reign and prosper." Spiritually this was fulfilled in Christ when upon earth; but there awaits a literal and universal fulfilment, when He shall come in the glory of His kingdom, and take to Him His great power and reign. He now reigns on the throne with His Father, and will so reign until His enemies be made His footstool.

It is said that He should "prosper." This He does in the progress of His truth and in the extension of His kingdom, going forth by His Spirit with the gospel conquering and to conquer; in subduing His enemies and calling in His saints, the pleasure of the Lord prospers in His hands. Moreover, He

was to "execute justice and judgment on the earth." This He did in the administration of His laws, and in defending His people from their enemies, and in "rendering unto Caesar the things that were Caesar's, and unto God the things that were God's." In His reign it is predicted that "Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely." So shall it be with all the elect of God. All shall believe in and confess Him. They shall be saved from the guilt and power of their sins; from the law, its curse and condemnation; from all their enemies, and from the wrath which is to come. And beneath this victorious standard, and surrounded by Him as with a wall of fire, His Church shall dwell safely, the gates of hell unable to prevail against it.

In view of this spiritual and literal exposition of these several particulars of the prophecy, I again confidently challenge- Has any individual ever lived, either before or since the days of Christ, in this or in any land, other than Christ Himself, to whom this description could apply; or, applying it to whom, would not be absolute and unmitigated blasphemy! But we are now conducted in the course of our rapid examination to the very gist of the whole passage- the title which it

ascribes to Christ. "And this is the name by which He shall be called, the Lord Our Righteousness." In endeavoring to open up this title of our Lord, we shall show in what sense Christ is our righteousness- how His righteousness becomes ours- and then the blessings which flow from its possession.

IN WHAT SENSE CHRIST IS OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS- This title of our Lord at once points to His essential dignity as God. The construction is remarkable. The prophet does not designate Him as the righteous One, using the concrete, but righteousness itself, using the abstract term. Thus God is said not to be loving, but love- the abstract form in both texts is thus employed to show that these perfections- righteousness and love- are essentially and absolutely God's. Would it not be a fraudulent invasion of the divine dignity, a robbing God of His honor, to have denominated a mere creature, were he the holiest and purest even of the species, abstract and essential righteousness? Could this title be grounded in anything but essential Deity? A mere creature may be righteous through the possession of a righteousness imputed, a righteousness imparted, a righteousness given.

Every act of human obedience must necessarily partake of the moral taint of the being by whom it is offered. Just as under the law the touch of the leper rendered ceremonially unclean the person or the thing he came in contact with, so everything to which sinful man puts his hand must partake of the taint of his sinful and corrupt nature. As water cannot rise above its level, so no nation can rise above its religion, no individual can rise above his nature, and no act can rise above its motive. The moral leprosy sin, of which all by nature are partakers, inoculates with its virus, and taints with its malaria all our religious doings- thus corrupting and neutralizing every attempt of man to render obedience and honor to the commandments and precepts of God's holy law. It follows from this that, seeing the sinner can only be saved on the footing of a law obeyed in every enactment, kept in every precept, magnified and honored in the dignity of its character and in the holiness of its nature, it must be by another obedience and infinitely beyond his own. This train of thought conducts us to the truth we seek to establish.

The divine dignity and personal holiness of Christ provided all the moral fitness and qualification which the case demanded. As the sinner could only stand with divine acceptance in a Divine righteousness, the "Lord our righteousness" fully met the case. Hence the strong language of

God's Word. "The Righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all and upon all those who believe." And again, "He has made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the Righteousness of God in Him." Magnificent truth! precious announcement! The believing sinner stands before God in the righteousness of God Himself! He is as righteous- not essentially so, but legally- as God is righteous. If he is "made the righteousness of God in Christ," this must emphatically be so. And since no other righteousness could justify him before God, this must unquestionably be so. To what dignity does this righteousness raise the believer here, and to what super-angelic glory will it raise him hereafter? In your righteousness shall they be exalted."

The justified sinner therefore stands the closest to God of any created being in the universe. Nearer to the throne of the Eternal he cannot stand. What marvellous love! Who will dare assert that salvation is not, from first to last, of free, discriminating grace! Let your eye pierce the veil that falls between earth and heaven. Behold that shining, warbling being, standing so near to the throne of glory, bathed in the overpowering effulgence of its rays. Who is he? He was once a sinner upon earth, the vilest of his race, the dishonored of his generation, forsaken by man and abhorred of God. But Jesus met him, and divine love drew him, and sovereign grace rescued, pardoned, and saved him. And now washed from all his guilt by the blood, freed from all condemnation by the righteousness of Christ, he stands before the throne "without fault," a "king and a priest unto God." Such is the great love of Jesus! "He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap; he seats them with princes and has them inherit a throne of honor." And all this grace, and all this glory, and all this bliss flows from the "Lord our righteousness."

Reader, here let me pause and once more remind you of a truth essential to your everlasting well-being. Nothing short of the righteousness of Jehovah Himself can free you from endless condemnation. You must appear before God- if you stand with acceptance- in a divine righteousness. You must, if saved, be saved upon the footing of a law every requirement of which has been met. Its demands are holy, its restrictions are inexorable. It exacts full submission, insists upon perfect holiness, enters beneath the surface, penetrates every cell of the mind, and grapples with every fibre of the heart; it analyses every volition of the will, sifts every desire of the soul, and weighs in its unerring scale every motive and every action of the man. In a word, it is "the candle of the Lord, searching all the innermost parts of the belly." "Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, just, and good." It is on these stern and inflexible grounds that the law is so fearfully terrible to all offenders- and all are so. To look, then, for salvation by the works of the law, it were better to meet the lion rushing wild and hungry from his lair, than thus to expect "help from this destroyer, which rends the center of the heart" in pieces, and from whom none can rescue us. The law is the "minister of death" to every transgressor, and opens the gates of hell to all impenitent and unbelieving sinners! We have adverted to its inflexible rule. Nothing can abate, nothing soften, nothing arrest it. It sifts every motive, shakes every confidence, storms every citadel, and breaks up every hope not founded upon the Rock of Ages- the Lord our Righteousness. It meets the sinner like "a lion by the way and slays him." As says the apostle, "sin revived, and I died."

Confronted thus by God's holy law, the momentous question is raised- "How can man be just (or justified) with God?" "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" The gospel alone can supply the answer, and that answer is contained in the significant and impressive title of Christ- "His name shall be called, the Lord Our Righteousness." And now we pass from the region of sin,

death, and hell, into that of

holiness, life, and heaven; standing, as it were, amid the splendor of the "great white throne," with the "rainbow round about it," the emblem and the pledge that, for us there is no condemnation," since we stand before God in "the Lord our righteousness." We are thus conducted to the question-

IN WHAT WAY DOES CHRIST BECOME THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF HIS PEOPLE? How are we to understand that the righteousness of one individual becomes in reality the righteousness of another, yes, of countless myriads of beings? The reply to these questions will bring us to the practical issues of this great subject.

In the first place, Christ becomes our righteousness by personal substitution. This was the first step in the wonderful process, and must be kept prominently before us. The law of substitution is fully recognized in the affairs of men. It is shadowed forth in various instances recorded in the Scriptures of truth. We remind the reader of Reuben becoming surety to his father for Benjamin; and of the apostle Paul discharging a like obligation to Philemon on behalf of Onesimus. In this sense, yet infinitely higher, the Son-Surety, stood in your place, did all, and endured all, and paid all for you. By a substitutionary act He made your sins His sins, your obedience His obedience, your curse His curse, your debt His debt- He took it all upon Himself, His Father accepting and sealing His suretyship by raising Him from the dead. "Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." Oh, love and admire, serve and glorify this precious Savior, who has so freely, so willingly, so fully done all this for you. You cannot love Him too intensely, nor serve Him too self-denyingly, nor exalt Him too highly; who threw Himself in the breach and exclaimed, "Father, lay all their sins and transgressions upon me. Charge their debt to my account. Upon me let their punishment fall. Let my life be for their life, my death for their death, my condemnation for their condemnation, my heaven for their hell!"

Christ becomes our righteousness by His personal obedience. Not less clear are the Scriptures of truth touching this essential doctrine of our salvation. Thus we read, "By the obedience of One shall many be made righteous." Who is this "One" of whom the apostle speaks, but the "Lord our righteousness?" But, you ask, how could the Law-giver become the Law-fulfiller? We again answer in the language of God's Word- "When the fulness of time was come, God sent forth His Son made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." Could any answer be more explicit? It tells us that, in assuming our humanity, the Son of God necessarily became submissive to the law, since He took upon Him a nature born under its obligation and exposed to its penalty. As man, therefore, He was as much under the law, and was as personally and as strictly bound to obey the law, and in default of obedience as much exposed to its penalty, as any individual of the human race. Keeping in view the doctrine we have just insisted upon- the substitution of Christ for us- we shall experience no difficulty in understanding, still less in receiving, the doctrine of Christ's personal obedience to the precepts of the law in our stead. It follows that creature-merit, or man's own righteousness, can avail nothing in the great matter of his justification. Jehovah must keep, Jehovah must honor, Jehovah must magnify His own law, if, on the basis of a law inviolate, a law upheld and preserved in its most stringent precept, the sinner is saved. Rob Christ of His divinity, and you rob His obedience of its efficacy, and the sinner of his hope.

We learn from this part of our subject, the utter inadequacy of a human righteousness to justify the sinner before God. If it required the merit of Deity, if no other than Jehovah Himself could supply an obedience to the law man had broken, on the ground of which God could, with honor to Himself, justify the guilty, then the inference is as strictly logical as the fact is tremendously solemn that, in the language of Scripture, "By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." Again, "As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, Cursed is every one that continues not in all things which are written in

the book of the law to do them." What a fatal blow do these words aim at the Babel of self-righteousness which multitudes are raising up, from the summit of which they vainly hope to leap into heaven! "Under the curse!" No repeal of its tremendous anathemas, no possible avenue of escape- while still under it- from its fiery and eternal condemnation! "Under the curse!" The very law you are striving to keep, cursing your every effort to keep it! The law cursing your soul, cursing your religion, cursing your duties, cursing your engagements- yes, turning your every blessing into a curse. This may be thought strong language, but the word of God justifies it. "As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse." What language could be stronger- what declaration more impressive? Oh that the Holy Spirit might use it to the rousing to a conviction of his state and danger every mere notionalist, every proud pharisee, every self-deceived professor, every soul dead in trespasses and sins, whose eye may light upon this page!

I have said there is no way of escape open to those who live and die in this condition. But to others whose eyes the Holy Spirit has opened to see their sin and danger, the righteousness of Christ provides a remedy. He was "made a curse for us," He was the "end of the law for righteousness to every one that believes," and so by His obedience and death, by His blood and righteousness, He emancipates us from the thralldom, cancels the curse, and delivers from the condemnation of the law, and thus we are "made the righteousness of God in Him."

What a "door of hope" is here set open to the soul, brought, after long and painful teaching, to despair of finding acceptance, pardon, and grace by its own works. Long and earnestly have you striven to work your way to heaven. Like the disciples on the sea, you have "toiled in rowing" against a contrary wind and a strong current, and are ready to give up all for lost. Like the poor diseased woman in the gospel, you are "nothing bettered, but rather grown worse." Oh, blessed extremity! Happy end of all hope springing from yourself! Your soul is now, if the expression may be used, ripe for Christ. You are just in the condition to accept Him, and He to accept you. You have reached that critical point in your spiritual history which decides your state for eternity. Like Paul's mariners, you are in danger of sinking; and like them, you are prepared to throw overboard everything that imperils your safety, exclaiming with the apostle on another occasion, and who doubtless recalled to mind his shipwreck when he wrote the words, "I once thought all these things were so very important, but now I consider them worthless because of what Christ has done. Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the priceless gain of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I may have Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ- the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith." And now having thus "lightened the ship," like the weary mariners, you "wish and wait for the dawn" of salvation. Lo! it is come! Jesus draws near and says to your soul, "I am your salvation without a work of your own. Look unto Me and be you saved; I am the Lord your righteousness. Only believe." What

joyful tidings are these! Saved without a work of human merit! Saved just as you are! Saved by free and sovereign grace! Saved by simple, childlike faith in Christ! Saved forever! Hope now dawns upon your path, heaven smiles down upon your soul, and henceforth your Christian life on earth becomes a sweet and holy psalm.

HOW DOES THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF CHRIST BECOME OURS? The righteousness of Christ, by which we are alone justified, becomes ours by imputation. What is meant by imputation? The literal idea is, the imputation of anything to an individual which did not originally belong to him. Now our justification strikingly illustrates this. The instance of Abraham is the first we quote. "Abraham believed in the Lord, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." James, alluding to the same event, says, "Abraham's faith was imputed unto him for righteousness." Paul confirms this idea when he says, noticing the case of Abraham, "And it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him, but for us also, unto whom it shall be imputed if we believe." We are clearly taught in these passages that the justification of Abraham, the friend of God, the father of all those who believe, the mirror of Old Testament piety, resulted not from a personal righteousness, but from an imputed righteousness. And that the divine dealing with Abraham is an example of God's dealing with us, the apostle says, "To him that works not, but believes in Him that justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted unto him for righteousness." Thus, written as with a sunbeam, the glorious truth shines upon the sacred page, that when any child of Adam is justified it is by the imputation of a righteousness not his own- even the righteousness of Him who is emphatically called "The Lord our Righteousness."

The righteousness of Christ becomes ours by faith. This truth has already appeared in the course of our discussion. Faith is the divine and holy principle which places us in a justified state. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith- and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God- not by works, so that no one can boast." Tell me that I must purchase my pardon, must merit no justification, must come to the Savior with a price in my hand, and you extinguish the last ray of hope. If these be the terms upon which I am to be saved, then I am lost to all eternity! But, tell me that I have nothing to pay, that I may come to the waters of salvation, to the milk and honey of the gospel, "without money and without price," that, if I present myself at the door of Divine mercy, as Naaman "covered with leprosy," as Lazarus "full of sores," as the prodigal "clothed with rags," as Paul the "chief of sinners," as the malefactor on the cross turning his last and final look at Jesus, that I may come as a bankrupt debtor, as a self-destroyed sinner, then you pencil the hue of hope in its brightest hues upon the dark thunder-cloud draping my soul." Oh, do words more inspiring, does music so enchanting breathe through this world of sin and woe than the divine announcement of a freely-given salvation to the vilest child of Adam's fallen race? Truly may the inspired apostle write- "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us." What are these words but a New Testament echo of an Old Testament voice- "Ho, every one that thirsts, come to the waters, and he that has no money: come, buy, and eat; yes, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price."

Thus the voice of free grace, which strikes its key-note in paradise, rolls throughout the inspired Scriptures, waxing stronger and growing sweeter until it reached its heightened note in the last and closing echoes of the Apocalypse. "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that hears say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

Come, then, my reader, just as you are, poor, penniless, naked, and receive in faith, and as the gratuitous bestowment of the God that justifies the ungodly, this divine and beautiful righteousness, "which is unto all and upon all those who believe." Are you a penitent prodigal, returning to your Father in rags and wretchedness and woe? Behold, He comes running to you.

Joy, too, is a fruit of justification. "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness." Oh, be joyful, you who stand in the Lord your righteousness! You maybe heavily afflicted, deeply tried, sorely tempted, yet, standing in righteousness of Christ you are exalted above the billows and clouds that gather around your pathway to heaven, eternal sunshine bathing all your glorious and endless future!

Then the hope of glory is the last blessing to which we refer. A present justification is the pledge of a future glorification. "Whom He justified, them He also glorified." Oh, how truly has Christ, the "Lord our righteousness," "opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers!"

When from the dust of death I rise,
To take my mansion in the skies,
Even then shall this be all my plea,
'Jesus has lived and died for me.'
"Bold shall I stand in that great day,
For who aught to my charge shall lay?
While through Your blood absolved I am
From sin's tremendous curse and shame."

Christ the Alpha and Omega

Christ the Alpha and Omega

"I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last." Revelation 1:11

"I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End." Revelation 22:13

What stately and impressive titles are these! Hitherto we have considered the names of our Lord as they came to us indirectly from the mouth of His inspired servants, the prophets, all of whom gave witness to Him. But we find ourselves now at the feet of Christ Himself, receiving from His own lips two of the most magnificent and instructive titles which He wears. "I am Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last." He who spoke these words is The Truth. Arrogating to Himself no false designation, assuming no distinction, and claiming no homage, that was not rightfully His own, we may safely, in the outset of our exposition, cherish the strongest faith in the veracity of His word, and open our hearts, as the flower to the sun, and receive the life-giving influence which these magnificent words are intended to impart.

The occasion on which they occurred illustrates their significance and heightens their grandeur. They were spoken to an honored disciple of Christ in deep trial. John, to whom they were originally addressed, was now in Patmos, for the word of God and for the testimony of Christ Jesus. He was in tribulation and exile. The blue waters of the Aegean Sea, as they washed the shores of his lonely island, chimed mournfully with the lonely sadness of his spirit. At this juncture Jesus drew near, and spoke to him words fraught with the tenderest love, made known to him revelations of the most sublime character, and unveiled to his eye visions of unsurpassed glory. All this was well calculated to instruct the mind, and to raise the spirit of the martyr superior to the malicious cruelty of Nero. It was on this occasion the words were uttered which we are about to consider. John, with his own peculiarly graphic and terse pen, thus narrates the remarkable scene: "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last." "And I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks, and in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man." We have no difficulty, then, in identifying Him who thus, speaking in a tone so authoritative, and in words so majestic and divine, exclaims, "I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last." It is the Lord Jesus Christ. And how true the portrait which He here presents of Himself! His beloved Evangelist was now suffering tribulation for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. Was He ignorant of, or indifferent to, the condition of His faithful servant? Far from it! That same Jesus who dwelt in the bush, and from the midst of its flames spoke to Moses and said, "I have surely seen the affliction of my people . . . and I have come down to deliver them," knew the sorrows of His servant John, and came down to instruct, sustain, and comfort him with these sublime revelations, which he was commanded to write in a book. How much we learn here of the Lord's tender love towards His saints. Exiled they may be by and from man; never can they be from Jesus. They may be imprisoned, banished, fettered; they may be separated from their

brethren, severed from the Church, removed far away from the saints and ordinances and privileges they love- yet there is Christ to strengthen their drooping faith, to revive their fainting spirit, and to sweeten and sanctify their solitude.

And how His manifested, gracious presence makes the prison ring with praises, irradiates the sick-room with brightness, and opens a door in heaven even amid the gloom and stillness of a desert island! We little surmise what thoughts of peace and purposes of mercy the Lord has in setting us so entirely apart from others. It is but to set us apart for Himself. From His presence we never can be banished, from His person we never can be separated. The time of our isolation and loneliness is the occasion when He draws near, and in the multitude of our thoughts within us His comforts delight our soul. "When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up." Especially are seasons of trial and persecution for His name and truth's sake occasions of His manifestation, sympathy, and love. The spiritual martyrdom of the Church still lives, even if the spirit of the martyr is "ready to die." The offence of the cross is not ceased. The great verities of our faith, the distinctive doctrines of grace, are still impugned, hated, and rejected by men of carnal reason and of corrupt hearts. The gospel is still an offence, and Christ is still despised and rejected of men. And they who conform to the simplicity of the gospel, preach it in its fulness, and live in its purity, shall suffer persecution. But let this thought solace and sustain you in all your trials, tribulations, and losses for the truth's sake- that, He who appeared to His suffering servant John in words of such touching tenderness and in visions of such resplendent glory, laying His right hand upon him and saying, "Fear not, I am the first and the last, I am He that lives, and was dead and buried, and am alive for evermore," will draw near and perfect His strength in your weakness, and prove His grace all-sufficient for your need.

But to return from this digression to the subject more immediately before us. Let us inquire IN WHAT POINTS OF VIEW THE LORD JESUS IS THE "ALPHA AND THE OMEGA, THE FIRST AND THE LAST." A few words will suffice to explain to the intelligent reader the literal meaning of these titles. It is well known that they are the first and the last letters of the Greek alphabet, denoting, properly, the first and the last. The Jews were wont to adopt this method of denoting a thing in its entirety. Thus, when they described Adam as transgressing the law, and Abraham as keeping it whole, it was their custom to say, they either broke or observed it from Aleph to Tau; that is, from the first to the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Interpreted in this light, these titles of our Lord possess a profound and comprehensive significance.

We have just entered upon a new period of time, and are yet standing within the solemn shadow of its vestibule. The misty twilight of its commencement enshrouds from our view all the future of the year, as we attempt to peer into its dark and mysterious unknown. How assuring, how soothing the truth these pages are about to unfold- Christ the Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last! Christ the beginning of the year, and Christ the end of the year. To commence the year aright is to commence it with a fresh act of faith in, and a renewed consecration of ourselves to, the Lord Jesus. Thus beginning the year with Christ, we shall close the year with Christ; and this beginning and closing with Christ involves the presence, and grace, and blessing of Christ all through its yet undeveloped history. (Written January 1)

These titles, in the first place, clearly define the essential Deity of our Lord. It would seem impossible for a candid, ingenuous mind to resist the conviction which the authority and majesty of

these words convey of the divine dignity and superior nature of the Speaker. "I AM the First and the Last!" Could this be predicated of an inferior, that is, a mere created being, if language is at all designed to convey intelligent ideas? Impossible! When Jehovah would assert His divine greatness, He employs precisely this language, "Thus says the Lord the King of Israel, and his Redeemer the Lord of hosts: I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God." Again, "Listen to me, O family of Jacob, Israel my chosen one! I alone am God, the First and the Last." The obvious interpretation, then, of these titles would apply to the proper Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. They set forth the glorious truth- a truth which we must ever maintain forms the basis of the Atonement, which in its turn constitutes the foundation of our hope- that the entire Godhead of Jehovah belongs to our Lord Jesus. He is the First of Deity- the Last of Deity, and so comprises the whole of Deity- "The Almighty," "God ever all, blessed for evermore." Knowing no beginning, He will know no ending; but is "from everlasting to everlasting," "Who is, and which was, and Who is to come, the Almighty." Such is the great fundamental doctrine of our Christian faith, such the teaching of the passage before us, and such must be the basis of our salvation and the groundwork of our hope. Receive it, my reader, with unquestioning and unquestionable belief. From first to last Jesus our Savior is God. "In Him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."

The First and the Last. He includes in His person all the essential perfections, the divine attributes, the eternal, infinite, and boundless resources of Deity. What an exalted view does this give us of Him upon whom our hope of endless glory hangs! Truly is He a "nail fastened in a sure place," upon which is suspended the glory of God, the salvation of sinners, and the fulness of grace the saints need in their homeward travel. Upon this sure support let your faith rest. Here where God the Father has nailed your sins, and suspended the honor of His name and the glory of His moral government, let your soul hang, and you are safe for eternity. Jesus is divine enough, and strong enough, and has room enough to bear you up- vile, worthless, the chief of sinners though you may seem to yourself to be- and none that hang upon Him, that hope in Him, that wait for Him, shall be ashamed.

There, too, O child of God, bring all your burdens. Has God laid your sins upon His beloved Son? Then surely you may in confidence lay upon Him the cares and anxieties, the trials and the sorrows, the difficulties and needs of your pilgrim life- casting all your care upon Him, seeing that He cares for you. This is done in the exercise of a simple faith, and in the utterance of a child's prayer. No long journey to make, no elaborate petition to prepare, no self-readiness to effect; but approaching the mercy-seat, all sprinkled as it is with the peace-speaking, intercessory blood of Jesus, you may in one moment place your petition at the foot of the throne in heaven; and while you are yet speaking, and before you rise from pouring out your heart before God, the response will come, and your peace will flow like a river, and your righteousness as the waves of the sea.

Christ is the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last of the inspired Scriptures of truth. He is the sum and substance both of the law and the gospel. He is the one great theme both of the Old Testament and the New. The whole Bible is designed to testify of Christ, "Search (or, as the word means, 'excavate, dig into') the Scriptures, for in them you think you have (or in them you have) eternal life. These Scriptures point to Me." In Christ the Messiah, in Jesus the Savior, in the Son of God the Redeemer, all the truths of the Bible center; to Him all the types and shadows point; of Him all the prophecies give witness; while all the glory of the Scriptures, from Genesis to Revelation, culminates at the cross of Christ. The Bible would be an inexplicable mystery from first

to last but for Christ, who unfolds and explains it all. He is the one, the golden Key which unlocks the divine arcade of revelation. Until He is seen, the Bible is, in a sense, a great Apochrypha; but when He is found, it is a glorious Apocalypse, every mystery opened, every enigma explained, every discrepancy harmonized, and every truth and page, sentence and word, quickened with a life and glowing with a light flowing down from the throne of the Eternal God.

Who, as he opens the 'typical' Scriptures, and reads of the applied blood of the Paschal Lamb, thinks not of the "blood of sprinkling," even the blood of "Christ our passover, sacrificed for us"? Who, as he beholds the scapegoat let go into the wilderness, thinks not of Christ "bearing our sins in His own body on the tree"? Who, as he studies the mystery of the "Tabernacle of Testimony in the wilderness"- its construction and its furniture: the showbread, the golden candlestick, the veil, the altar of burnt-offering, the pure olive oil, the laver, the incense-altar, the sacred fire, the priesthood, the holy garments- sees not the Lord Jesus as the significance, the beauty, and the glory of it all? When Jesus "spoke of the tabernacle of His body," He, as it were, pointed to Himself as the "Tabernacle of Witness," all whose mysteries find their full explanation and deep meaning in Him, the true Tabernacle of the Church. Who can read of the manna falling from heaven around the camp, thus daily, amply, and freely supplying the needs of the whole host of Israelites, and not recall the words of Jesus, "I am the Bread of life. Your fathers ate manna in the wilderness, and died. This is that bread which comes down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living Bread which came down from heaven: if a man eat of this bread he shall live forever." Who can read of the living bird dipped in the blood of the slain bird, and then set free, and not think of a risen, living Savior, bathed in His own blood upon the cross, and then rising from the grave, the hope and the resurrection of the Church, proclaiming to every humble, believing saint, "Because I live you shall live also"? And then, as we travel down the stream of prophecy, how sweet the music of the words which fall upon the ear as we float upon its silvery stream- "To Him give all the prophets witness." "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." And, as we revel in the narratives of the evangelists, and unfold the epistles of the apostles, and close our research with the sublime Apocalypse of the apostle John, we read these titles of our Lord in a light which renders divinely luminous and savingly intelligible every word and syllable- "I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last." Thus Christ is the sum and substance of the Scriptures. Speak we of the law? Christ fulfilled every precept, kept every command in behalf of His people, and thus He became the "end of the law for righteousness to every one that believes." Speak we of the gospel? Christ is the substance of the whole. All its divine doctrines, its holy precepts, its gracious instructions, its precious promises, its glorious hopes, meet, center, and fill up their entire compass in Jesus. He is the Alpha and the Omega of the Bible, from the first verse in Genesis to the last verse in Revelation. Oh, study the Scriptures of truth with a view of learning Christ. Do not study the Bible as a mere history; do not read it as a mere poem, do not search it as a book of science; it is all that, but infinitely more. The Bible is the Book of Jesus- it is a Revelation of Christ. Christ is the golden thread which runs through the whole. The law and the gospel are His divine, His living witnesses. They have been denied, maligned, and burned a thousand times over- but they live and witness for Him still! The Old Testament predicts the New, and the New fulfils the Old, and so both unite in testifying, "Truly, this is the Son of God!" Blessed Lord Jesus! I will read and study and dig into the Scriptures of truth to find and learn more of You! You, Immanuel, are the fragrance of this divine box of precious ointment. You are the beautiful gem sparkling in this divine cabinet. You are the Tree of life planted in the center of this divine garden. You are the Ocean whose stream

quickens and nourishes all who draw water out of this divine well of salvation. The Bible is all about You.

"Now let my soul, eternal King,
To You its grateful tribute bring;
My knees with humble homage bow,
My tongue perform its solemn vow!
"All nature sings Your boundless love,
In worlds below and worlds above;
But in Your blessed Word I trace,
Diviner wonders of Your grace.

"There, what delightful truths I read!
There I behold a Savior bleed;
His name salutes my listening ear,
Revives my heart, and checks my fear.

"There Jesus bids my sorrow cease,
And gives my burdened conscience peace,
Raises my grateful passions high,
And points to mansions in the sky."

"For love like this, O let my song
Through endless years Your praise prolong!
And distant climes Your name adore,
Until time and nature are no more."

Christ is Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, of our salvation. In nothing do these titles of our Lord receive more striking and impressive illustration. This view of Jesus comes home to every spiritually awakened heart, to every divinely enlightened mind. The moment the Holy Spirit shows the sinner the dark plague-spot of his soul, he is at once brought to despair of doing anything of himself in the matter of his salvation. He sees the commandment to be infinitely holy and exceeding broad, extending to the least sin, sweeping through the mind with the rapidity, and almost with the scathing, of the lightning's flash. The idea of finding any meritorious goodness, any self-worthiness in himself, vanishes from his thoughts, and he takes his place by the side of the publican, smiting on his breast, and exclaiming, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" And seeing the deep-rooted evil of his nature, the desperate wickedness of his heart, the utter worthlessness of his own doings, the plague-smitten righteousness he had so fondly embraced, he throws himself

at the feet of Jesus, his last, his final, his only refuge. And now, for the first time, he learns to spell, though with a stammering tongue, these wondrous, precious titles of Jesus, "I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last."

Let us see, then, HOW THIS TRUTH MEETS OUR CASE.

Jesus is the first and the last in the pardon of sin. That there is forgiveness with God, forgiveness of the greatest sins, is one of the sweetest refrains in the music of the gospel. "Who is a God like unto you, who pardons iniquity, and passes by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage. He retains not His anger forever, because He delights in mercy." But Jesus is the sum and substance of this pardon. It comes alone through His wounded body, His pierced and bleeding heart. There is no forgiveness of sin, no guilt-cleansing, no conscience purifying, but through the atoning blood of Jesus. "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission." "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin." To this blood, this blood alone, let me direct your eye, my sin-distressed, guilt-burdened reader. I ask not how many, nor how deep a dye, your sins are. Enough that you feel, and are sensible of them; that you deplore, and mourn over them. I meet you with the blood, the blood that can wash your sin-tainted, guilt-oppressed soul whiter than snow. And how, you ask, am I to avail myself of this full and free pardon of sin? I answer, simply and only by believing in Jesus. Listen to the proof: "For God sent Jesus to take the punishment for our sins and to satisfy God's anger against us. We are made right with God when we believe that Jesus shed his blood, sacrificing his life for us." Oh, what precious words are these! "What!" you respond, "is there pardon for me?- is there forgiveness for one so vile as I?" Yes; through the blood of Jesus, there is a complete, a free, a present pardon- a pardon which no unworthiness shall ever cancel, which no ingratitude shall ever revoke. Believing this truth- experiencing the blood of atonement upon the conscience- how sincere and earnest will be your desire never to presume upon this irrevocable, ineffaceable forgiveness of a sin-hating, yet a sin-forgiving God, but will only, and all the more, draw from it your strongest obligation to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live godly, righteously, and soberly in this evil world."

Christ is also the first and the last of our justification before God. As in our pardon, so in our justification, nothing of our own finds a place. Not a shred of our own doings is woven in the web of our righteousness. How luminously the apostle argues this truth! "For no one can ever be made right in God's sight by doing what his law commands. For the more we know God's law, the clearer it becomes that we aren't obeying it. But now God has shown us a different way of being right in his sight—not by obeying the law but by the way promised in the Scriptures long ago. We are made right in God's sight when we trust in Jesus Christ to take away our sins. And we all can be saved in this same way, no matter who we are or what we have done." Thus clear is it that, if we are ever justified, it must be by a righteousness entirely foreign to ourselves- by the righteousness of another. And who is He? Even Him who is entitled "The Lord our Righteousness." Of this justifying, this acquitting righteousness, this righteousness imputed to us who believe, and without a work of our own, Christ is the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last. It is all in His divine and full obedience to every precept of the law in our stead; so that every believing soul is "accepted in the Beloved," and is "complete in Him." The crowning of this great truth, is the declaration of the apostle- "For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ." Behold the method of our justification!

Let a few words suffice to place this great, cardinal truth in a simple form, seeing there exists so much crudeness, darkness, and error, even among professedly gospel teachers and writers touching this essential truth. The sinner can only be saved on the footing of law- he cannot be illegally saved. But, man has broken the law of God, and in spirit he breaks it every day. Here is the remedy. "The Son of God was made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." In our stead He kept every precept, obeyed every command, and by His divine obedience He "magnified the law, and made it honorable." Standing as our Surety, dying in our stead, His obedience becomes ours, and thus we are "made the righteousness of God in Him." Such is the simple statement of this doctrine of salvation. Beware of any and every other theory of justifying righteousness but this. If Christ is not our Law-fulfiller, we are lost to all eternity. Keep the law, I cannot myself; and yet I can only be justified by God on the footing of a perfect law, a law fulfilled and honored in its every precept. Where can I turn? to whom can I look? Lo! a voice from the sacred page breaks upon my ear: "As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." O heart-reviving, hope-inspiring words! Now I have found an obedience that compasses the law, and invests it with a new and surpassing luster, even the obedience of Christ-the Lawgiver becoming, as my Representative, the Law-fulfiller; and now I stand before God on the footing of the righteousness of the law, upheld, honored, and magnified by the obedience of Him who is the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last of my non-condemnation, and of my eternal standing with acceptance before the holy Lord God.

"No more, my God; I boast no more
Of all the duties I have done;
I quit the hopes I held before,
To trust the merits of Your Son.
"Now, for the love I bear His name,
What was my gain I count my loss
My former pride I call my shame,
And nail my glory to His cross.
"Yes, and I must and will esteem
All things but loss for Jesus' sake;
O may my soul be found in Him,
And of His righteousness partake."
"The best obedience of my hands
Dare not appear before Your throne;
But faith can answer Your demands,
BY pleading what my Lord has done."

Sincerely, my reader, would I shut you up to this one truth- Christ, the first and the last of your salvation; and, as Romaine quaintly expresses it, "and all that comes between." In a word, Christ the whole- the whole of our obedience to the law, the whole of our satisfaction to justice, the whole of our merit before God. Christ, the first and the last, and all that intervenes, of our personal, present, and eternal salvation; in a word, "Christ all and in all." Christ our only Priest, atoning for us. Christ our only Prophet, teaching us. Christ our only King, subjugating our entire will, conscience, and heart, yes, our whole being, to His own possession and supreme control.

The subject thus partially discussed is eminently COMFORTING AND PRACTICAL.

Let Christ be to us the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last of all created beings. As He stands at the head of creation, "the first-born of every creature," and in His Church "the first-born among many brethren," "that in all things He might have the pre-eminence," so let Him be the first and the last in our love, in our choice, and in our service. We need be jealous and watchful here. There are many beings and objects that compete for our heart. The world struggles for the supremacy; the creature strives for the ascendancy; sin in some of its endless forms would dethrone Him from our affections- but to none of these rivals must we give place, no, not for a moment. These glorious titles of Christ must be engraved by the pen of the Holy Spirit upon our whole being. "I am Alpha and Omega, and must be the first and the last of your whole soul. You are mine by the gift of my Father, by the purchase of my death, by the power of my resurrection, by the conquest of my grace, by the indwelling of my Spirit, by your own voluntary, solemn, and irrevocable surrender and consecration to my glory." Then, Lord, I am, and will be, Yours wholly, Yours only, forever and forever Yours.

"It is done, the great transaction's done,

I am my Lord's, and He is mine;

He drew me, and I followed on,

Charmed to confess the voice divine.

"High Heaven, that heard the solemn vow,

That vow renewed shall daily hear;

Fill in life's latest hour I bow,

And bless in death a bond so dear."

In the discipline of trial through which God may lead you, let your eye be intently fixed upon Christ as the first and the last in this part of your spiritual training for heaven. Christ is the Alpha and the Omega of all our afflictions. With Him they begin, with Him, and in Him, and to Him they will end. He begins our discipline of sorrow in infinite wisdom, righteousness, and love; and so great a blessing will His sanctifying grace make it to us, that it shall end in His own eternal glory and praise. Oh to see Jesus in the first gush of our grief, in the first shading of our cloud, in the first taste of the cup our Father gives us to drink. He but designs by the trial our closer acquaintance with Himself, and our more perfect assimilation to His image. Think not, O afflicted one! that some strange and condemning thing has happened to you; that God is angry, that Christ is withdrawn,

that you are not a child of God, and that your hope is perished from the Lord. Oh, no! far from this! God is now dealing with you as a Father- considerately, faithfully, lovingly; and He would have you in return deal with Him as a child- trustfully, obediently, submissively. A child you are, though you may have been a foolish, wayward, rebellious child, still a child, and God still a Father. As Christ was the Alpha of your affliction, so He will be the Omega; and as He is the first in this adversity that has befallen you, in this blow that crushes you, in this sorrow that wrings your heart, so will He be the last, the guide, the comforter, the sympathizer, all through this dark hour of suffering, of bereavement, and of tribulation, by which so skillfully, gently, and safely He is leading you home to Himself, where His own dear hand will wipe every tear from your eye.

As the Alpha and the Omega, what a pledge have we of the unchangeableness of His love! As we love Him because He first loved us, so we shall continue to love Him, because He will love us unto the end. As Christ is the first of our love, so He will be the last. And since no line can stretch back into the past eternity of His love, so no line can measure its everlasting future. Since the Lord's love to us had no beginning, it can have no ending. "Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them unto the end." Oh no, His love cannot change! Christ will love us to the end of all our sins, to the end of all our backslidings, to the end of all our base returns, to the end of all our trials, and sorrows, and sufferings, yes, to the end of life, and then on through an eternity of love that shall know no ending. "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever." Take heart, saint of God; for Jesus having loved you first, will love you last, and love you forever!

But, perhaps, we remark in conclusion, the most august and solemn exhibition of these impressive titles of our Lord awaits the period of His Second Coming, to perfect the Church and judge the world. There will then rest no obscurity upon their meaning, and there will then blend not a dissonant sound with the universal acclaim. Foes will then unite with friends, angels with men, the lost with the saved, in doing homage to Christ, as the "Alpha and Omega, the first and the last." At the "Name of Jesus every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess that He is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." No part of revelation is clearer, none sublimer, not one more solemn, than that which presents the Lord Jesus Christ as coming in His personal majesty and power, as the last and final end of all things- the world's history and the Church's full redemption. As all things began with Christ, so all will end in Christ. The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, He will then be the "Lamb standing on the Mount Zion, and with Him a hundred forty and four thousand, having His Father's name written in their foreheads." Then will He be the last, as He was the first, and will appear manifestly and gloriously, the end, as He was eternally and divinely the beginning. All the purposes of God, all the councils of eternity, all the revelations of truth, all the history of the redeemed Church, all the grandeur of redemption, all the honor, praise, and glory of a restored universe, will then find their fullest meaning, their deepest emphasis, their noblest expression, their sweetest, endless song, in Him as the "Alpha and Omega, the first and the last," that God may be all in all.

Oh to be one of that great multitude which no man can number, who shall have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb and though many will doubtless have come out of the great tribulation, yet will they be "purified, and made white, and tried," and all shall appear before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple; and He that sits on the throne shall dwell among them. "Shall I be there?" you silently ask. Yes, if feeling yourself a poor, lost, helpless sinner, you are trusting believingly, and simply, and only in Jesus; though your

faith may be but a touch, and your love but a spark, and your hope but a glimmer, you shall be there; and no tribute of thanksgiving and no song of praise will sound louder or sweeter than yours.

Closing this chapter with a reference to the coming of the Lord, let me remark that, distant as may seem this event- yet perhaps nearer than the most sagacious prophet or the most ardent expectant may imagine- it is one of the most deeply sanctifying truths of the Bible. Hence, when the apostles would urge upon the saints of God personal holiness and unreserved consecration, one of their most powerful and impressive arguments is, "the coming of the Lord." Hence, too, at the very close of the sacred canon, the Coming of the Savior forms the last, as, at the opening of the inspired Scriptures, it formed the first, truth divinely revealed. How impressive the Savior's announcement, how earnest the Church's response! "He who testifies these things with, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus." In view of this glorious fact, let our constant attitude be that of watchfulness, prayer, and hope. The coming of the Lord to purify us from all sin, to release us from all sorrow, and to reunite us in eternal love and fellowship to those who sleep in Him now, and whom He will bring with Him then, should be, and must be, an inseparable element of our holy religion, and a distinctive feature of our Christian character. Let us separate ourselves from the world, and crucify the flesh; that thus our daily life may be a daily dying to sin, and of holy living to the Lord- preparing for and hastening unto this glorious appearing of the great God our Savior. "Since you have been raised to new life with Christ, set your sights on the realities of heaven, where Christ sits at God's right hand in the place of honor and power. Let heaven fill your thoughts. Do not think only about things down here on earth. For you died when Christ died, and your real life is hidden with Christ in God. And when Christ, who is your real life, is revealed to the whole world, you will share in all his glory. So put to death the sinful, earthly things lurking within you. Have nothing to do with sexual sin, impurity, lust, and shameful desires. Don't be greedy for the good things of this life, for that is idolatry."

Oh, let us blend the blessed hope- the glorious appearing of the Lord- with every service done for God, with every cross borne for Jesus, with every mercy He sends, with every blessing He takes, with every sorrow that shades, and with every smile that brightens us- let all converge towards one glorious hope- the coming of Jesus in person to receive us to Himself, and our gathering together unto Him with all the elect and ransomed Church. Let the hope which dimly illumined the path of the patriarch, but which beams with brighter effulgence upon ours, cheer us traveling up the hill home to God- "But as for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, and that he will stand upon the earth at last. And after my body has decayed, yet in my body I will see God! I will see him for myself. Yes, I will see him with my own eyes. I am overwhelmed at the thought!" Job 19:25-27

"Thus sang the holy Job;

And the same hope still animates the saints

Of God on earth, whose bodies shall be raised

To meet the Lord. Then we shall see those hands

Once pierced for sins on Calvary's cross,

Holding the scepter of a universe;

Those feet once nailed to the accursed tree,
Standing, all glorious, on Mount Olivet.
And on that sacred head once crowned with thorns,
The crown of all dominion shall be seen.
Nor shall that glorious crown be His alone,
But shared with all His people in that day.
O glorious prospect of the Church of God,
To cheer her heart in this vast wilderness!"

"I am the Alpha and the Omega—the beginning and the end," says the Lord God. "I am the one who is, who always was, and who is still to come, the Almighty One." Revelation 1:8.

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