

THINGS NEW AND OLD VOLUME 5

by C.H. Mackintosh

A collection of articles and writings by C.H. Mackintosh from Things New and Old Volume 5, covering various biblical topics and Christian teaching.

46 Chapters

Table of Contents

0. Things New and Old Volume 5
1. A Little While
2. Absent From the Body: Part 1
3. Absent From the Body: Part 2
4. And Then
5. The Basket of First Fruits
6. Be Still
7. The Bible: Its Sufficiency and Supremacy
8. The Brazen Sea
9. Christian Perfection: Part 1
10. Christian Perfection: Part 2
11. Christianity: the Christian's Standing, Object, and Hope
12. A Common Case
13. Confession of Sin
14. The Cruse That Faileth Not
15. Eternal Punishment
16. A Fervent Aspiration
17. Final Perseverance: Part 1
18. Final Perseverance: Part 2
19. Forgiveness of Sins: Part 1
20. Forgiveness of Sins: Part 2
21. The Gem
22. Glory - Glory
23. The Hand Divine
24. Have Ye Counted the Cost?
25. The Heart's Questions
26. The Jubilee
27. The Judgment Seat of Christ
28. Lines Written by a Covenantant on His Prison Walls on the Morning of His Executio...
29. The Living Stone
30. The Love of Christ
31. The Love of Christ Which Passeth Knowledge
32. Ministry
33. Nearing the Haven
34. Parables and Arguments
35. The Receipt
36. Relief for a Burdened Heart
37. Rest in Jesus
38. Resurrection

- 39.** The Sheltering Wing
- 40.** A Solemn Call
- 41.** Meditations on Song of Solomon
- 42.** Meditations on Song of Solomon: Chapter 1:1-3
- 43.** Meditations on Song of Solomon: Chapter 1:4
- 44.** The Vessel
- 45.** The Voice

Things New and Old Volume 5

A Little While

Beyond the smiling and the weeping,

I shall be soon.

Beyond the waking, and the sleeping,

Beyond the sowing, and the reaping,

I shall be soon.

Love, rest, and home,

Sweet hope!

Lord, tarry not, but come!

Beyond the blooming, and the fading.

I shall be soon.

Beyond the shining, and the shading,

Beyond the hoping, and the dreading,

I shall be soon.

Love, rest, and home,

Sweet hope!

Lord, tarry not, but come!

Beyond the rising, and the setting,

I shall be soon.

Beyond the soothing, and the fretting,

Beyond remembering, and forgetting,

I shall be soon.

Love, rest, and home,

Sweet hope!

Lord, tarry not, but come!

Beyond the gathering, and the straving,

I shall be soon.

Beyond the ebbing, and the flowing,

Beyond the coming, and the going,

I shall be soon.

Love, rest, and home,

Sweet hope!

Lord, tarry not, but come!

Beyond the parting, and the meeting,

I shall be soon.

Beyond the farewell, and the greeting,

Hearts fainting now, and now high beating,

I shall be soon.

Love, rest, and home,

Sweet hope!

Lord, tarry not, but come!

Beyond the frost-chain, and the fever,

I shall be soon.

Beyond the rock-waste, and the river.

Beyond the ever, and the never,

I shall be soon.

Love, rest, and home,

Sweet hope!

Lord, tarry not, but come!

Absent From the Body: Part 1

We are often, it may be, disposed to wonder at how little is said, in the New Testament, in reference to the state of the spirit, from the moment in which it leaves the body, until the morning of the resurrection. And yet, when we look more closely at it, we are struck with how much is said of it. True, there are but four passages which can properly be said to apply to that interesting interval; but oh! how much does any one of these four passages involve! If my reader will just turn with me, for a few moments, to the word, he will find this subject presented in its application to four distinct phases of the christian life. He will see the ransomed spirit passing into the presence of Christ from four distinct conditions. He will see one departing simply as a sinner saved by grace. He will see another making his exit as a martyr. He will hearken to the groanings of a burdened spirit desiring to be “absent from the body and present with the Lord.” Finally, he will mark the earnest breathings of a laborer longing to be at rest forever in the Master’s presence.

1. Our first reference shall be to Luke 23 “And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on Him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. But the other answering, rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in Paradise.” Ver. 36-43.

It is not my purpose, at present, to dwell upon this lovely passage, or to unfold, in detail, its rich evangelic teaching. I merely quote it in order that my reader may have the testimony of holy scripture fully and clearly before him.

We here see the case of one who entered Paradise in the simple character of a sinner saved by grace. He was a condemned malefactor, in the morning—a railing blasphemer, in the course of the day—a ransomed spirit in heaven, ere the day closed. “Today shalt thou be with me in Paradise.” He had been led to cast himself on Christ, as a justly-condemned sinner, and he went to heaven with Christ as a blood-bought saint. He was not called to wear a martyr’s crown. He was not permitted to bear any golden sheaves into the Master’s garner. His was not a long and checkered christian course. But he was a sinner saved by grace. And, what is more, he was enabled by grace to bear testimony to the sinless humanity of our blessed Lord, at a moment when the great religious leaders of the people had given Him up to the secular power as a malefactor. And further, he was led to own Him as Lord, and speak of His coming kingdom, at a moment when, to mortal vision, not a trace of lordship or royalty was discernible. These were good works. To confess Christ, and flatly contradict a Christ-rejecting world, are works of the very first order—works that shed forth the sweetest perfume, and shine with the brightest luster. One of our own poets has beautifully and strikingly said, “Talk they of morals? O thou bleeding Lamb, The great morality is love to thee.”

The dying thief exhibited this “great morality.” He owned Christ when a hostile world had cast Him out, and when terror-stricken disciples had forsaken Him. “Lord, remember me,” said he. “when

thou comest into thy kingdom.” Sweet were these words, as they fell upon the heart of the dying Savior; and sweeter still the response which fell upon the heart of the dying thief, “Today shalt thou be with me in paradise.” This went far beyond the thief’s expectations. The gracious Savior was about to do “exceeding abundantly, above all that” the thief “could ask or think.” The thief asked to be remembered in the time of the kingdom. The Savior said, “I shall have you with me today” And, hence, when the Roman soldiers, in the discharge of their brutal functions, came to break the legs of this dying saint, he could smile and say, “Ah! these men are just coming to send me straight to heaven!”

Yes, my reader, the thief went to heaven to be with that very One who had hung beside him on the cursed tree, and spoken words of soothing power to his stricken heart. There was nothing dark, vague, or uncertain about this. The thief had never met such a friend as Jesus. No one had ever loved him like Jesus, or comforted his heart like Jesus. The grace of Jesus had poured a flood of heavenly light around that awful cross to which the thief was nailed for his crimes, and now he was going to heaven to be with that gracious One forever. This was a blessed reality. Heaven would be no strange place to him, seeing that Jesus was there.

“There no stranger—God shall meet thee—Stranger thou in courts above; He who to His rest shall greet thee, Greet thee with a well-known love.”

It is happy to think of this. Heaven is much nearer, much more familiar, than we, at times, suppose. Moreover, it is the very home of that love which sheds its bright and blessed beams upon this dreary scene through which we are passing. To be with Jesus secures everything. To be in the company of the “one who loved me and gave himself for me” will make me feel quite at home in heaven. “We need not ask where is heaven? What kind of a place is it? What are its occupations? “With Jesus,” answers all these, and many more such like questions. Where the tender affections of a Father’s heart flow forth in divine purity and never-varying strength—where the love of a Bridegroom glows with unabating intensity—where the fellowship of a Brother’s heart, and the sympathy of a Friend are tasted in all their divine freshness and power, there is heaven, thither went the thief from his cross. “Today shalt thou be with me in paradise.” Well may we say, “What must it be to be there?” True, the thief left his poor body behind him, until the bright morning of the resurrection, when it will be raised in incorruption, immortality, glory, and power. True it is that he, in company with all those who have fallen asleep in Jesus, waits for that happy moment. Yet it is equally true that Christ said unto him, “Today shalt thou be with me in Paradise.” What a thought! To pass from the cross—the ignominious cross of a malefactor, into the paradise of God—from a scene of blasphemy, mockery, and cruelty, into the presence of Jesus. Such was the happy lot of the dying thief, not for any merit of his own, but simply through the precious sacrifice of Christ, who “entered in once into the holy place, by his own blood,” and took the thief along with Him.

2. I shall now quote for my reader, the second passage in the New Testament, which bears upon our subject. It occurs in the Acts of the Apostles. “And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit! And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.” Chap. 7:59, 60.

Here we have the case of a martyr—the very first of that “noble army” who have yielded up their lives for the name of Jesus. Stephen was not merely a sinner saved by grace, but also a sufferer

for the cause of Christ—a sufferer even unto death. He passed from amid the stones of his murderers into the presence of his Lord, who had so recently gone before, and now stood ready to receive the spirit of His martyred servant. What an exchange! What a contrast! And be it observed that Stephen was favored with a very vivid view of the scene into which he was about to enter. “He being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God. And he said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.” Wondrous sight! Heaven would be no strange place to Stephen. “The Son of man” was there, so that he should feel quite at home there. He did not, like the thief, see Jesus hanging beside him; but he saw Him up in heaven before him. He did not, like the thief, see Him dying; but he saw Him risen and glorified—crowned with glory and honor, at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens.

Thus, then, if the thief could think of heaven as the home of that blessed One who was nailed to the cross, Stephen could look at it as the home of that One who had gone before him into glory. It was the same heaven and the same Jesus to both the one and the other. It was no vague or far off region to either. It was the happy home of the crucified and glorified Jesus. The dying malefactor might look at it from one point of view, and the dying martyr might look at it from another; but it was the same attractive, happy home to both. True it is that the martyr as well as the malefactor had to leave his poor body behind him, to sleep in the dust until the morning of the resurrection. True it is that he, too, waits for that long-expected, blissful moment. Still his spirit has been with Jesus ever since. Yes; the malefactor and the martyr have both been up yonder with their Lord, for the last eighteen hundred years. What a happy eighteen hundred years it has been to them! Not a cloud, not a ripple, not a single interruption to their communion. Their condition is one of expectancy; but it is also one of perfect repose. No conflict, no sin, no sorrow, no change. All these things are over forever with them; so that, although they are not “more secure,” they are far “more happy,” than we. There is something peculiarly attractive in the thought of the unbroken repose which the spirit enjoys in the presence of the crucified and glorified Jesus. To be done with a world of sin, selfishness, and sorrow - done with the ceaseless tossings and heavings of a corrupt nature—done with the ten thousand snares and devices of a subtle foe, to be forever at rest in the bosom of Jesus! What deep unutterable blessedness! Well may the spirit long to taste it.

(To be continued.)

Absent From the Body: Part 2

This leads us, naturally enough, to our third reference, which occurs in the second epistle to the Corinthians, “For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened; not that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. Now he that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord. (For we walk by faith not by sight.) We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.” Chap. 5:4-8.

Here, then, we have the case of any poor, groaning, burdened saint, looking forth from a crumbling, dissolving tabernacle, and sighing to get away. Not that the unclothed state is the proper object of hope. Let no one imagine this. The believer looks to the moment in which he shall be clothed upon with a glorified body like the body of Jesus. In other words, he waits for the glorious appearing of the Son from heaven. Still, it would be happy, at any moment, to lay aside a body of death, and be present with the Lord. It is far happier to wait for the day of glory, in the bosom of our loving Lord, than in this dark and dreary world. Hence, the apostle says, “We are willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.” That moment which, to an unconverted man, is death, with all its terrors, is, to the saint, simply a laying aside of all that hinders his communion with Christ. It is just getting rid of all that is mortal. What very different work the Roman soldiers did for the two thieves! They sent one to be with Jesus, and the other to that place where hope never comes. How deeply important it is for each of us to possess the confidence that, in our case, to be “absent from the body,” is to be “present with the Lord!” How truly appalling—how unspeakably dreadful—the condition of those who, when absent from the body, must be present with the devil and his angels!

4. Let us, in conclusion, look at our fourth and last quotation, which we shall find in that lovely epistle to the Philippians: “For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better.” (Chap. 1. 23.) Here, a laborious workman looks up from amid his golden fields of labor, and breathes forth his ardent desire to get away into his Master’s presence. He is in a strait. His spirit longs to depart, but he casts his affectionate eye upon those who would so sorely feel his loss, and the thought of them checks his desire. “Nevertheless, to abide in the flesh,” he says to his beloved Philippians, “is more needful for you. And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all, for your furtherance and joy of faith.” What thorough devotedness! He longs to be in heaven, but he is needed on earth, and therefore he is ready to remain. So far as he is concerned, it was “far better” to depart; but so far as others were concerned, it was “more needful” to remain; and hence, he, being full of the spirit of Christ, was ready to sacrifice himself for their profit.

Now, if my reader will just group these four scriptures together, he will not only have before his mind all that is given in the New Testament in reference to the souls of those who have departed in the faith of Christ; but he will also see that the Holy Ghost has presented the subject in such a way

as to meet every possible condition in which a Christian can be found—every aspect in which he can be contemplated. In Luke 23 we see one just saved and forthwith taken to heaven. In Acts 7 we see one who was permitted to suffer martyrdom for the name of Jesus. In 2 Cor. 5 we see a groaning, burdened Christian, longing to lay aside his poor crumbling tabernacle, and be present with the Lord. In Phil. 1. we see a laborious workman, with many precious sheaves around him, looking up and sighing to find his place at his Master's feet.

This gives great fullness, completeness, and beauty to this most interesting theme. And let my reader note, distinctly, that there is not a shadow of foundation for the idea entertained by some, that the soul is in a state of sleep while the body is in the grave. Indeed, one might reasonably suppose that, even though we had not such an overwhelming body of scripture evidence on the point, this strange idea would carry with it its own refutation. Who could admit aught so monstrous as the notion of a spirit asleep? Ah! no; the Lord Jesus did not say to the thief, "Today shalt thou be asleep." Stephen did not commit his spirit to sleep, but into the hands of his Lord. The apostle does not say, "We are willing rather to be asleep;" or, "Having a desire to be asleep, which is far better." One can only wonder how such an idea could have found a place in any rational mind. Blessed be God, His word teaches us, most clearly, that, should it be His holy will that we leave this world previous to the glorious advent of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, our place will be with Himself, in that bright and blessed world above, where sin and sorrow are unknown, there to enjoy uninterrupted communion with the One who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and there to await that moment when "the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."

And Then

A young man came to an aged Professor of a distinguished Continental University, with a face beaming with delight, and informed him that the long and fondly cherished desire of his heart was at length fulfilled,—his parents having given their consent to his studying the profession of the Law. As the University presided over by his friend was a distinguished one, he had repaired to its Law school, and was resolved to spare no labor or expense in getting through his studies as quickly and ably as possible. In this strain he continued for some time; and when he paused, the old man, who had been listening to him with great patience and kindness, gently said, “Well! and when you have finished your career of study, what do you mean to do then?”

“Then I shall take my degree,” answered the young man “And then?” asked his venerable friend. “And then,” continued the youth, “I shall have a number of difficult and knotty cases to manage: shall attract notice by my eloquence, and wit, and acuteness, and win a great reputation.” “And then?” repeated the holy man. “And then!” replied the youth, “Why then there cannot be a question I shall be promoted to some high office in the state, and I shall become rich.” “And then?” “And then,” pursued the young lawyer, “then I shall live comfortably and honorably in wealth and respect, and look forward to a quiet and happy old age.” “And then?” repeated the old man. “And then,” said the youth, “and then—and then—and then I shall die.” Here his venerable listener lifted up his voice and again asked with solemnity and emphasis, “And then?” Whereupon the aspiring student made no answer, but cast down his head, and in silence and thoughtfulness retired. The last “And then?” had pierced his heart like a sword—had darted like a flash of lightning into his soul, and he could not dislodge the impression. The result was, the entire change of his mind and course of his life. Abandoning the study of the Law, he entered upon that of Divinity, and expended the remainder of his days in the labors of a minister of Christ.

The Basket of First Fruits

In this most interesting ordinance, we see three distinct practical results flowing out of the Israelite's possession of the land of Canaan: namely, worship, active benevolence, and personal holiness. It was when the hand of Jehovah had conducted His people into the promised land, that the fruits of that land could be presented. It was necessary to be in Canaan, ere Canaan's fruits could be offered in worship. The worshipper was able to say, "I profess this day unto the Lord thy God, that I am come unto the country which the Lord sware unto our fathers for to give us." ver. 3.

Here was the root of the matter. "I am come" He does not say, "I am coming, or hoping to come, or longing to come." No; but "I am come." Thus it must ever be. We must know ourselves saved, ere we can offer the fruits of a known salvation. We may be most sincere in our desires after salvation, most earnest in our efforts to be saved. But then we cannot but see that efforts to be saved and the fruits of salvation are wholly different. The Israelite did not offer the basket of first fruits in order to get into the land, but because he was actually in it. "I profess this day, that I am come." There is no mistake about it. I am in the land, and here is the fruit of it.

"And thou shalt speak, and say before the Lord thy God, A Syrian ready to perish was my father; and he went down into Egypt, and sojourned there with a few, and became there a nation, great, mighty, and populous. And the Egyptians evil entreated us, and afflicted us, and laid upon us hard bondage. And when we cried unto the Lord God of our fathers, the Lord heard our voice, and looked on our affliction, and our labor, and our oppression. And the Lord brought us forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm, and with great terribleness, and with signs and with wonders. And he hath brought us into this place, and hath given us this land, even a land that floweth with milk and honey. And now, behold, I have brought the first fruits of the land, which thou, O lord, hast given me. And thou shalt set it before the Lord thy God, and worship before the Lord thy God. And thou shalt rejoice in every good thing which the Lord thy God hath given unto thee, and unto thine house, thou, and the Levite, and the stranger that is among you."

This is a lovely sample of worship. "A Syrian ready to perish." Such was the origin. There is nothing to boast of, so far as nature is concerned. And as to the condition: what of it? "Hard bondage" in the land of Egypt. Toiling amid the brick kilns, beneath the cruel lash of Pharaoh's taskmasters. But then, "We cried unto Jehovah." Here was their resource. It was all they could do; but it was enough. That cry of helplessness went up directly to the throne of God, and brought God down into the very midst of the brick kilns of Egypt. Hear Jehovah's gracious words to Moses, "I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry, by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; and I am come down to deliver them out of the hands of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land, and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey....Now, therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me; and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them." Exod. 3:7-9.

Such was the immediate response of Jehovah to the cry of His people. "I am come down to deliver them." Yes; blessed be His name, He came down, in the exercise of His own free and sovereign grace, to deliver His people; and no power of men or devils, earth or hell, could hold them for one moment beyond the appointed time. Hence, in Deut. 26, we have the grand result as set forth in the language of the worshipper, and in the contents of his basket. "I am come unto the country which the Lord swore unto our fathers for to give us.... And now, behold, I have brought the first fruits of the land which thou, O Lord, hast given me." The Lord had accomplished all according to the love of His heart, and the faithfulness of His word. Not one jot or tittle had failed. "I am come? And I have brought the fruit." The fruit of what? Of Egypt? Nay: but "of the land which thou, O Lord, hast given me." The worshipper's lips proclaimed the completeness of Jehovah's work. The worshipper's basket contained the fruit of Jehovah's land. Nothing could be simpler—nothing more real. He had just to declare Jehovah's work and show the fruit. It was all of God, from first to last. He had brought them out of Egypt, and He had brought them into Canaan. He had filled their baskets with the mellow fruits of Canaan, and their hearts with the praises of the God of their salvation.

And now, my reader, let me ask thee, dost thou think it was presumption on the part of the Israelite to speak as he did? "Was it right, was it modest, was it humble of him to say, "I am come?" Would it have been more becoming in him merely to give expression to the faint hope that, at some future period, he might come? Would doubt and hesitation as to his position and his portion, have been more honoring to the God of Israel? What sayest thou? It may be that, anticipating my argument, you are ready to say, "There is no analogy." Why not? God's ancient people were our ensamples or types in many things; why not in this? If an Israelite could say, "I am come unto the country which the Lord swore unto our fathers for to give us," why cannot the believer now say, "I am come unto Jesus?" True, in the one case it was sight; in the other it is faith. But is the latter less real than the former? Does not the inspired apostle say to the Hebrews, "Ye are come unto Mount Zion?" And, again, "We receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear." If we are in doubt as to whether we have "come" or not, and as to whether we have "received the kingdom" or not, it is impossible to worship in truth, or serve with acceptance. It is when we are in peaceful possession of our place and portion in Christ, that true worship can ascend to the throne above, and effective service be rendered in the vineyard below.

For what, let me ask, is true worship? It is simply telling out, in the presence of God, what He is, and what He has done. Now, if I have no knowledge of God and no faith in what He has done, how can I worship Him? "He that cometh to God must believe that he is." But, then, to know God is life eternal. (John 17:3.) I cannot worship God if I do not know Him; and I cannot know Him without having eternal life. The Athenians had erected an altar "To the unknown God," and Paul told them that they were worshipping in ignorance, and proceeded to declare unto them the true God as presented in the Person and work of Jesus Christ.

It is deeply important to be clear as to this. I must know God ere I can worship Him. I may "feel after him if haply I may find him;" but feeling after One whom I have not found, and worshipping One whom I have found, are two totally different things. God has revealed Himself in the face of Jesus Christ. He has come near to us in the Person of that Blessed One, so that we may know Him, love Him, trust Him, and use Him, in all our weakness and in all our need. We have no longer

to grope for Him amid the darkness of nature, nor yet among the clouds and mists of spurious religion in its ten thousand forms. No; our God has made Himself known by a revelation so plain that the wayfaring man, though a fool in all beside, may not err therein. The Christian can say, "I know whom I have believed." This is the basis of all true worship. There may be a vast amount of fleshly pietism, mechanical religion, ceremonial routine, without a single atom of spiritual worship. This latter can only flow from the knowledge of God.

But our object is not to write a treatise on worship, but simply to unfold to our readers, in as few words as possible, the instructive and beautiful ordinance of the basket of first fruits. And having shown that worship was the first thing with an Israelite who found himself in possession of the land; and, further, that we, now, must know our place and privileges in Christ before we can truthfully and intelligently worship the Father, we shall, proceed to point out the second practical result illustrated in our subject, namely, active benevolence.

"When thou hast made an end of tithing all the tithes of thine increase the third year, which is the year of tithing, and hast given it unto the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless and the widow, that they may eat within thy gates, and be filled. Then thou shalt say before the Lord thy God, I have brought away the hallowed things out of mine house, and also have given them unto the Levite, and unto the stranger, to the fatherless, and to the widow, according to all thy commandments, which thou hast commanded me: I have not transgressed thy commandments neither have I forgotten them." Ver. 12,13.

Nothing can be more beautiful, morally, than the order of these things. It is precisely similar to what we have, in Heb. 13 "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name." Here is the worship. "But to do good and communicate, forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." Here is the active benevolence. Putting both together, we have what we may call the upper and the nether side of the Christian's character—praising God and doing good to men. Precious characteristics! May we exhibit them more faithfully! One thing is certain they will always go together. Show me a man whose heart is full of praise to God, and I will show you one whose heart is open to every form of human need. He may not be rich in this world's goods. He may be obliged to say, like one of old who was not ashamed to say it.

"Silver and gold have I none." But he will have the tear of sympathy, the kindly look, the soothing word, and these things tell far more powerfully upon a sensitive heart than the opening of the purse-strings and the jingling of silver and gold.

But let the reader mark the divine order laid down in Heb. 13 and illustrated in Deut. 26 Worship gets the first—the highest place. Let us never forget this. We are to offer the sacrifice of praise to God "continually." So also the Psalmist says. "I will bless the Lord at all times, his praise shall continually be in my mouth." It is not merely now and then, or when all is bright and cheery around us, when everything goes on smoothly and prosperously; no: but "at all times—continually" The stream of thanksgiving is to flow uninterruptedly. There is no interval for murmuring and complaining, fretfulness, or dissatisfaction, gloom or despondency. Praise and thanksgiving are to be our continual occupation. We are ever to cultivate the spirit of worship. This will be our happy and holy service while eternity rolls along its course of golden ages. When we shall have no further call "to communicate," no demand on our sympathies or resources, when we shall have bid an

eternal adieu to this scene of sorrow and need, then shall we praise our God forevermore, in the sanctuary of His own blessed presence above.

“But to do good and to communicate, forget not.” There is singular interest attaching to the mode in which this is put. He does not say, “But to offer the sacrifice of praise forget not.” No; but lest, in the happy enjoyment of our place and portion in Christ, we should “forget” that we are passing through a scene of sorrow and need, trial and pressure, the apostle adds the salutary admonition as to doing good and communicating. The spiritual Israelite is not only to rejoice in every good thing which the Lord his God has bestowed upon him, but he is also to remember the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow—that is, the one who has no earthly portion, no earthly home, no earthly protector, no earthly stay. It must ever be thus. The tide of grace rolls down from the bosom of God, fills our hearts to overflowing, and in its overflow, refreshes and gladdens the entire scene around us. If we were only living in the enjoyment of what is ours in God, our every movement, our every act, yea, our every look would do good. The Christian, according to the divine idea, is one who stands with one hand lifted up to God in the presentation of the sacrifice of praise, and the other hand filled with the fragrant fruits of genuine benevolence to meet every needy object.

And, now, one word as to our third point. We shall merely quote the passage. The Israelite, having presented his basket, and distributed his tithes, was further instructed to say, “I have not eaten thereof in my mourning, neither have I taken away aught thereof for any unclean use, nor given aught thereof for the dead.” Here we have personal holiness, entire separation from everything inconsistent with the holy and happy place of worship and service into which he was introduced. There must be no mourning, no uncleanness, no dead works. We have no room for any such things as these. We have just three things to do. We look up to God, and offer the sacrifice of praise. We look round at the world, and do good. We look in upon the circle of our own being—our inner life—and keep ourselves pure.

May these things be in us and abound!

Be Still

'Be still and know that I am God.'—Psalm 46:10.

'Be still—be still,' though all should seem

Like visions of a troubled dream;

'Be still—be still,' each murmuring thought,

For God is Love,—and changes not.

The hand that moves the shifting scene,

Plans what shall be—as what has been:

That hand is His—it holds thee still;

Calmly submit, and trust His will.

For He, the High and Holy One,

Who sits on Heaven's Eternal Throne,

All things ordains for good to those

Whom from eternity He chose.

'Be still'—nor doubt His faithful love,

Though He thy faith and patience prove;

He, while he tries thee, through the fire,

Will give the strength thou dost require.

Hot though the flame, it shall not burn,

But blessings purer thee return;

Oh! bow thee lowly to His will,

And bid each fearful thought be still.

'Be still'—for in 'a little while,'

Thou shalt upon past sorrows smile;

And each heart-aching pang shall cease

In endless joy—in endless peace.

'Be still'—thy cares are measured all

By Him who notes the sparrow's fall;
There's not a grief which rends thy breast,
But He can chase, or calm to rest.
Trust all to Him—thine every care,
Each burden cast on Him in prayer;
He will give peace, calm every storm,
And all things for His own perform.

The Bible: Its Sufficiency and Supremacy

It was in the month of January, 1858, that we were permitted to issue the first number of this little serial. From that time to the present, we have sought, according to our measure, to unfold some of the precious doctrines of the Bible, and to apply them to the various phases of Christian life and experience. We would, now, desire to furnish our readers with an article on the Bible itself. This we consider needful, just now, when not only are many doctrines of the Bible set aside, but even the divine authority and sufficiency of the Bible itself boldly called in question, and that, too, in quarters where we should least have expected such things. We therefore proceed to state, very simply, what we believe in reference to the Bible, and also what we feel with respect to those who presume to tamper with its sacred pages. We do not, by any means, undertake the task of silencing the skeptic or the infidel. We leave such work to abler hands; but we believe we ought to raise our voice in testimony to the incomparable excellencies of that book which our God has graciously given us to be "A lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our path," and which, as being a divine revelation, must needs be adapted to all ages, all conditions, and all climes.

Some, we are aware, would fain persuade us that things are so totally changed since the Bible was penned, that we need other guidance than that which its precious pages supply. They tell us that society is not what it was; that the human race has made progress; that there has been such a development of the powers of nature, the resources of science, and the appliances of philosophy, that to maintain the sufficiency and supremacy of the Bible, at such a point in the world's history as the nineteenth century of the Christian era, can only be regarded as childishness, ignorance, or imbecility.

Now, the men that tell us these things may be very clever and very learned; but we have no hesitation whatever in telling them that, in this matter, "they do greatly err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God." We certainly do desire to render all due respect to learning, genius, and talent, whenever we find them in their right place, and at their proper work; but when we find them lifting their proud heads above the word of God; when we find them sitting in judgment, and casting a slur upon that peerless revelation, we feel that we owe them no respect whatever; yea, we treat them as so many agents of the devil, in his efforts to shake those eternal pillars on which the faith of God's elect has ever rested. We cannot listen, for a moment, to men, however profound in their reading and thinking, who dare to treat God's book as though it were man's book, and speak of those pages that were penned by the All wise, Almighty, and Eternal God, as though they were the production of a shallow and short-sighted mortal.

It is important that the reader should see clearly that men must either deny that the Bible is the Word of God, or admit its sufficiency and supremacy in all ages, and in all countries - in all stages and conditions of the human race. Grant us but this, that God has written a book for man's guidance, and we argue that that book must be amply sufficient for man, no matter when, where, or how we find him. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God.....that the man of God may be perfect (αρτιος) thoroughly furnished unto all good works." (2 Tim. 3:16, 17.) This, surely, is

enough. To be perfect, and thoroughly furnished, must needs render a man independent of all the boasted powers of science and philosophy, falsely so called.

We are quite aware that, in writing thus, we expose ourselves to the sneer of the learned rationalist, and the polished and cultivated philosopher. But we are not very careful about this. We greatly admire the answer of a pious, but, no doubt, very ignorant woman to some very learned man who was endeavoring to show her that the inspired writer had made a mistake in asserting that Jonah was in the whale's belly. He assured her that such a thing could not possibly be, inasmuch as the natural history of the whale proved that it could not swallow anything so large. "Well," said the poor woman, "I do not know much about natural history; but this I know, that if the Bible were to tell me that Jonah swallowed the whale, I would believe it." Now, it is quite possible that many would pronounce this poor woman to have been under the influence of ignorance and blind credulity; but, for our part, we should rather be the ignorant woman, confiding in God's Word than the learned rationalist picking holes in it. We have no doubt as to who was in the safer position.

But, let it not be supposed that we prefer ignorance to learning. Let none imagine that we despise the discoveries of science, or treat with contempt the achievements of sound philosophy, Far from it. We honor them highly in their proper sphere. We could not say how much we prize the labors of those learned men who have consecrated their energies to the work of clearing the sacred text of the various errors and corruptions which, from age to age, had crept into it, through the carelessness or infirmity of copyists, taken advantage of by a crafty and malignant foe. Every effort put forth to preserve, to unfold, to illustrate, and to enforce the precious truth of scripture, we most highly esteem; but, on the other hand, when we find men making use of their learning, their science, and their philosophy, for the purpose of undermining the sacred edifice of divine revelation, we deem it our duty, as the conductors of a Magazine, to raise our voice, in the clearest and strongest way, against them, and to warn our readers, most solemnly, against their baneful influence.

We believe that the Bible, as written in the original Hebrew and Greek languages, is the very word of the only wise and the only true God, with whom one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day, who saw the end from the beginning, and not only the end, but every stage of the way. We therefore hold it to be nothing short of positive blasphemy to assert that we have arrived at a stage of our career in which the Bible is not sufficient, or that we are compelled to travel outside its covers to find ample guidance and instruction for the present moment, and for every moment of our earthly pilgrimage. The Bible is a perfect chart in which every exigency of the Christian mariner has been anticipated. Every rock, every sand-hank, every shoal, every strand, every island, has been carefully noted down. All the need of the Church of God, its members, and its ministers, has been most fully provided for. How could it be otherwise, if we admit the Bible to be the word of God? Could the mind of God have devised, or His finger sketched an imperfect chart? Impossible. We must either deny the divinity or admit the sufficiency of THE Book. We are absolutely shut up to this alternative. There is not so much as a single point between these two positions. If the book is incomplete, it cannot be of God; if it be of God, it must be perfect. But if we are compelled to betake ourselves to other sources for guidance and instruction, as to the path of the Church of God, its members or its ministers, then is the Bible incomplete, and, being such, it cannot be of God at all.

What then, dear reader, are we to do? Whither can we betake ourselves? If the Bible be not a divine and therefore all-sufficient guide-book, what remains? Some will tell us to have recourse to tradition. Alas! what a miserable guide. No sooner have we launched out into the wide field of tradition than our ears are assailed by ten thousand strange and conflicting sounds. We meet, it may be, with a tradition which seems very authentic, very venerable, well-worthy of respect and confidence, and we commit ourselves to its guidance; but, directly we have done so, another tradition crosses our path, putting forth quite as strong claims on our confidence, and leading us in quite an opposite direction. Thus it is with tradition. The mind is bewildered, and one is reminded of the assembly at Ephesus concerning which we read that, "Some cried one thing, and some another; for the assembly was confused." The fact is, we want a perfect standard, and this can only be found in a divine revelation, which, as we believe, is to be found within the covers of our most precious Bible. What a book! What a treasure! How we should bless God for it! How we should praise His name for His mercy in that He hath not left His Church dependent upon the ignis fatuus of human tradition, but upon the steady light of divine revelation! We do not want tradition to assist revelation, but we use revelation as the test of tradition. We should just as soon think of bringing out a rushlight to assist the sun's meridian beams, as of calling in human tradition to aid divine revelation.

But there is another very ensnaring and dangerous resource presented by the enemy of the Bible, and alas! accepted by too many of the people of God, and that is expediency, or the very attractive plea of doing all the good we can, without due attention to the way in which that good is done. The tree of expediency is a wide-spreading one, and yields most tempting clusters. But ah! beloved reader, remember its clusters will prove bitter as wormwood, in the end. It is, no doubt, well to do all the good we can; but let us look well to the way in which we do it. Let us not deceive ourselves by the vain imagination that God will ever accept of services based upon positive disobedience to His word. "It is a gift," said the elders, as they boldly walked over the plain commandment of God, as if He would be pleased with a gift presented on such a principle. There is an intimate connection between the ancient "corban" and the modern "expediency," for, "there is nothing new under the sun." The solemn responsibility of obeying the word of God was got rid of under the plausible pretext of "corban," or "It is a gift." Thus it was of old. The "corban" of the ancients justified, or sought to justify, many a bold transgression of the law of God; and the "expediency" of our times allures many to outstep the boundary line laid down by divine revelation.

Now, we quite admit that expediency holds out most attractive inducements. It does seem so very delightful to be doing a great deal of good, to be gaining the ends of a large-hearted benevolence, to be reaching tangible results. It would not be an easy matter duly to estimate the ensnaring influence of such objects, or the immense difficulty of throwing them overboard. Have we never been tempted as we stood upon the narrow path of obedience, and looked forth upon the golden fields of expediency lying on either side, to exclaim, "Alas! I am sacrificing my usefulness for an idea?" Doubtless; but then what if it should turn out that we have the very same foundation for that "idea" as for the fundamental doctrines of salvation? The question is, What is the idea? Is it founded upon "Thus saith the Lord!" If so, let us tenaciously hold by it, though ten thousand advocates of expediency were hurling at us the grievous charge of narrow-mindedness.

There is immense power in Samuel's brief but pointed reply to Saul, "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord! Behold, to obey is

better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.” (1 Sam. 15:22.) Saul’s word was, “Sacrifice.” Samuel’s word was, “Obedience.” No doubt, the bleating of the sheep and the lowing of the oxen were most exciting. They would be looked upon as substantial proofs that something was being done; while on the other hand, the path of obedience seemed narrow, silent, lonely, and fruitless. But oh! those pungent words of Samuel! “To obey is better than sacrifice.” What a triumphant answer to the most eloquent advocates of expediency! They are most conclusive—most commanding words. They teach us that it is better, if it must be so, to stand, like a marble statue, on the pathway of obedience, than to reach the most desirable ends by transgressing a plain precept of the word of God.

But let none suppose that one must be like a statue on the path of obedience. Far from it. There are rare and precious services to be rendered by the obedient one—services which can only be rendered by such, and which owe all their preciousness to their being the fruit of simple obedience. True, they may not find a place in the public records of man’s bustling activity; but they are recorded on high, and they will be published at the right time. As a dear friend has often said to us, “Heaven will be the safest and happiest place to hear all about our work down here.” May we remember this, and pursue our way, in all simplicity, looking to Christ for guidance, power, and blessing. May His smile be enough for us. May we not be found looking askance to catch the approving look of a poor mortal whose breath is in his nostrils, nor sigh to find our names amid the glittering record of the great men of the age. The servant of Christ should look far beyond all such things. The grand business of the servant is to obey. His object should not be to do a great deal, but simply to do what he is told. This makes all plain, and, moreover, it will make the Bible precious as the depository of the Master’s will to which he must continually betake himself to know what he is to do, and how he is to do it. Neither tradition, nor expediency will do for the servant of Christ. The all-important inquiry is, “What saith the scripture?”

This settles everything. From the decision of the word of God there must be no appeal. When God speaks, man must hush. It is not by any means, a question of obstinate adherence to a man’s own notions. Quite the opposite. It is a reverent adherence to the word of God. Let the reader distinctly mark this. It often happens that, when one is determined, through grace, to abide by scripture, he will be pronounced dogmatic, intolerant and imperious, and, no doubt, one has to watch over his temper, spirit, and style, even when seeking to abide by the word of God. But, be it well remembered that obedience to Christ’s commandments is the very opposite of imperiousness, dogmatism, and intolerance. It is not a little strange that when a man tamely consents to place his conscience in the keeping of his fellow, and to bow down his understanding to the opinions of men, he is considered meek, modest, and liberal; but let him reverently bow to the authority of holy scripture, and he will be looked upon as self-confident, dogmatic, and narrow-minded. Be it so. The time is rapidly approaching when obedience shall be called by its right name, and meet its recognition and reward. For that moment the faithful must be content to wait, and, while waiting for it, be quite satisfied to let men call them whatever they please. “The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity.”

But we must draw to a close, and would merely add, in conclusion, that there is a third hostile influence against which the lover of the Bible will have to watch, and that is rationalism—or the supremacy of man’s reason. The faithful disciple of the word of God will have to withstand this audacious intruder, with the most unflinching decision. It presumes to sit in judgment upon the

word of God—to decide upon what is and what is not worthy of God—to prescribe boundaries to inspiration. Instead of humbly bowing to the authority of scripture, which continually soars into a region where poor blind reason can never follow, it proudly seeks to drag scripture down to its own level. If the Bible puts forth aught which, in the smallest degree, clashes with the conclusions of rationalism, then there must be some flaw. God shut out of His own book, if He says anything which poor blind, perverted reason cannot reconcile with her own conclusions—which conclusions, be it observed, are not infrequently the grossest absurdities.

Nor is this all. Rationalism deprives us of the only perfect standard of truth, and conducts us into a region of the most dreary uncertainty. It seeks to undermine the authority of a book in which we can believe everything, and carries us into a field of speculation in which we can be sure of nothing. Under the dominion of rationalism, the soul is like a vessel broken from its safe moorings in the haven of divine revelation, to be tossed like a cork upon the wild watery waste of universal skepticism.

Now we do not expect to convince a thorough rationalist, even if such an one should condescend to scan our unpretending pages, which is most unlikely. Neither could we expect to gain over to our way of thinking, the decided advocate of expediency, or the ardent admirer of tradition. We have neither the competency, the leisure, nor the space, to enter upon such a line of argument as would be required were we seeking to gain such ends as these. But we are most anxious that the Christian reader should rise up from the perusal of this paper with a deepened sense of the preciousness of his Bible. We earnestly desire that the heading of this article should be engraved, in deep and broad characters, upon the tablet of the reader's heart—"The Bible: its sufficiency and supremacy."

We feel that, as the conductors of a periodical, we have a solemn duty to perform, at a moment like the present, in the which Superstition, Expediency, and Rationalism are all at work, as so many agents of the devil, in his efforts to sap the foundations of our holy faith. We owe it to that blessed volume of inspiration, from which we have drank the streams of life and peace, to bear our feeble testimony to the divinity of its every page—to give expression, in this permanent form, to our profound reverence for its authority, and our conviction of its divine sufficiency for every need, whether of the believer individually, or the church collectively.

We owe it to our readers to exhort them earnestly to set a higher value than ever upon the Holy Scriptures, and to warn them, in most urgent terms, against every influence, whether of tradition, expediency, or rationalism, which might tend to shake their confidence in those heavenly oracles. There is a spirit abroad, and there are principles at work, which make it imperative upon us to keep close to scripture—to treasure it in our hearts—and to submit to its holy authority.

May God the Spirit—the Author of the Bible, produce, in the writer and reader of these lines, a more ardent love for that Bible! May He enlarge our experimental acquaintance with its contents, and lead us into more complete subjection to its teachings, in all things, that God may be more fully glorified in us, through Jesus Christ our Lord! Amen.

How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord,

Is laid up for faith in God's excellent word!

What more can He say, than to you He has said,—
You who to the Savior for refuge have tied?
In every condition,—in sickness, in health;
In poverty's vale, or abounding in wealth;
At home, or abroad; on the land, on the sea;
As need may demand, shall our strength ever be.

The Brazen Sea

(2 Chron. 4)

“And Solomon made a molten sea of ten cubits from brim to brim, round in compass, and five cubits the height thereof; and a line of thirty cubits did compass it round about. And under it was the similitude of oxen, which did compass it round about; ten in a cubit, compassing the sea round about. Two rows of oxen were cast, when it was cast. It stood upon twelve oxen, three looking toward the North, and three looking toward the West, and three looking toward the South, and three looking toward the East; and the sea was set above upon them, and all their hinder parts were inward. And the thickness of it was an handbreadth and the brim of it like the work of a brim of a cup, with flowers of lilies; and it received and held three thousand baths.....THE SEA WAS FOR THE PRIESTS TO WASH IN.” (2 Chron. 4:2-6.)

In order to a clear understanding of the doctrine taught us in this beautiful and significant figure, three things demand our attention, namely, the material, the contents, the object. May God the Spirit guide our thoughts and speak to our hearts as we dwell upon these things!

1. The Material. Solomon's molten sea was made of brass, which is the apt symbol of divine righteousness demanding judgment upon sin, as in the brazen altar; or demanding judgment upon uncleanness, as in the brazen sea. The Lord Jesus is spoken of, in the first chapter of Revelation, as having “His feet like unto fine brass as if they burned in a furnace.” It is thus He is seen walking amongst the candlesticks. He cannot tolerate evil, but must, in the exercise of judgment, trample it beneath His feet. This will explain the reason why the altar where sin was expiated, and the sea where defilement was washed away, were both made of brass. Everything in scripture has its meaning, and we should seek, in a spirit of prayer, to ascertain what that meaning is.

Now, it is most comforting and establishing to the heart to be assured of this, that the sin which God freely pardons, and the uncleanness which he freely removes, have been both fully and forever judged and condemned in the cross. Not a single jot or tittle of guilt—not a single trace of uncleanness has been passed over; all has been divinely judged. “Mercy rejoiceth against judgment;” and “Grace reigns through righteousness.” (Jas. 2:13; Rom. 5:21.) The believer is pardoned and cleansed; but his guilt and uncleanness were judged on the cross. The knowledge of this most precious truth works in a double way—it sets the heart and conscience perfectly free, while, at the same time, it causes us to abhor sin and uncleanness, with an ever-growing intensity. The altar of brass told forth, in mute yet impressive eloquence, its double story: guilt had been divinely condemned, and therefore could be divinely pardoned. The molten sea gave silent but clear testimony to the fact that uncleanness had been divinely judged, and, on that ground, could be divinely washed away.

“What deep consolation for the heart, in all this! And yet it is holy consolation. I cannot gaze upon the antitype of the altar and lightly commit sin. I cannot muse upon the antitype of the molten sea, and indifferently contract defilement. My consolation is deep and solid, because I know I am

pardoned and cleansed; but my consolation is holy, because I know that Jesus had to yield up His life to procure my pardon and cleansing. God has been perfectly glorified; sin and uncleanness have been perfectly condemned; I am set eternally free; but the death of Christ is the basis of all. Such is the consolatory yet holy lesson taught us in the material of the brazen altar and the molten sea. Nothing is passed over by God; and yet nothing is imputed to me, because Christ was judged for all.

2. Let us now consider, in the second place, the contents of Solomon's molten sea. "It received and held three thousand baths" of water. If at the altar I see brass in connection with blood, at the sea I find brass in connection with water. Both point to Christ. "This is he that came by water and blood, Jesus Christ; not by water only, but water and blood." (1 John 5:6.) "But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water." (John 19:34.) The blood that expiates, and the water that cleanses, both flow from a crucified Savior. Precious and solemn truth! Precious, because we have expiation and cleansing; solemn, because of the way in which we get them.

But the brazen sea contained water, not blood. Those who approached thereto had already proved the power of the blood, and therefore only needed the washing of water. Thus it was in the type, and thus it is in the antitype. A priest, under the law, whose hands and feet had become defiled, did not need to go back to the brazen altar; but forward to the brazen sea. He did not need again to apply the blood, in order to constitute him a priest, but only to wash with water, to enable him to discharge his priestly functions. So now, if a believer fails, if he commits sin, if he contracts defilement, he does not need to be again washed in the blood, as at the first, but simply the cleansing action of the word, whereby the Holy Ghost doth apply to the soul the remembrance of what Christ has done, so that the defilement is removed, the communion restored, and the spiritual priest fitted, afresh, to discharge his priestly functions. "He that is washed needeth not, save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit." (John 13:10.) "The worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins." (Heb. 10:2.) Does this make little of defilement? The very opposite. Did the provision of a molten sea, with its three thousand baths of water, make little of priestly defilement? Did it not rather prove how much was made of it—what a serious matter it was in the judgment of God—how impossible it was to go on with a single soil upon the hands and feet?

Let my reader ponder this matter. Let him examine it in the light of scripture. Let him see that he really understands it. There is, in many cases, a great want of clearness as to the doctrine set forth in the brazen altar and the molten sea. Hence it is that so many earnest Christians get into spiritual darkness and trouble as to the question of daily sins and daily defilement. They do not see the divine completeness of their purgation, by the blood of Christ, and they therefore entertain the idea that they must, on every fresh occasion, betake themselves, as at the beginning, to the brazen altar, as if they had never been washed at all. This is a mistake. When once a man is purged by the blood of Jesus, he is clean forever. If Christ has cleansed me, I am divinely, and, therefore, eternally clean. I am introduced into a condition to which perfect cleanness attaches, and I can never be out of it. I may lose the sense of it, the power of it, the enjoyment of it. Peter speaks of some forgetting that they were purged from their old sins. If sin be trifled with, and if self be not judged, it is hard to say what a Christian may come to. The Lord give us to walk softly and tenderly, before Him, every day, so that we may not come under the blinding and hardening

influence of sin!

But, be it remembered, that the most effectual safeguard against the working and the influence of sin, is to have the heart established in grace, and to be clear in the apprehension of our standing in Christ. To be dark or doubtful as to these things is the sure way of falling into Satan's snares. If I am seeking to live a holy life in order to establish my position before God, I shall either be propped up in Pharisaism, or plunged into some horrible sin. But when I know that all my sins and all my defilements were judged and condemned in the cross, and that I am justified and accepted in a risen Christ, then I stand on the true ground of holiness. And, if I fail, as, alas! I do constantly, I can bring my failure to God, in confession and self-judgment, and know Him as faithful and just to forgive me my sins and to cleanse me from all unrighteousness. I judge myself on the ground of this, that Christ has been already judged before God for the very thing which I confess in His presence. If it were not so, my confession would be of no use. The only ground on which God can be "faithful and just to forgive and cleanse" is that Christ has already been judged on my behalf; and, most assuredly God will not execute judgment twice for the same thing. True it is—blessedly true, I must confess and judge myself, if I have gone wrong. A single sinful thought is sufficient to interrupt my communion. Every such thought must be judged, ere my communion can proceed. But it is as a purged one that I confess. I am no longer viewed as a sinner, having to do with God as a Judge. I am now in the position of a child having to do with God as a Father. He has made provision for my daily need, a provision which does not involve a denial of my place and portion, or an ignoring of the work of Christ; but a provision which tells me at once of the holiness and grace of Him who made it. I am not to ignore the altar because I need the sea, but I am to adore the grace of Him who provided both the one and the other.

3. Having said thus much on the material and contents of Solomon's molten sea, a very few words will suffice as to the object thereof. "The sea was for the priests to wash in." Thither came the priests, from day to day, to wash their hands and feet, so that they might always be in a fit condition to go through their priestly work. A striking type, this, of God's spiritual priests, that is to say, of all true believers whose works and ways need to be cleansed by the action of the word. Both the brazen laver, in the tabernacle, and the brazen sea in the temple, foreshadowed that "washing of water by the word" which Christ is now carrying on by the power of the Holy Ghost. Christ, in Person, is acting up in heaven for us; and, by his Spirit and word, He is acting in us and on us. Thus, and only thus, are we enabled to get on. He restores us when we wander; He cleanses us from every soil; He corrects our every error. He ever liveth for us. We are saved by His life. He maintains us in the full power and integrity of the position in which His precious blood has set us. All is secured in Him. "Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." Eph. 5:25-27.

And now, one word as to the "oxen" which sustained the brazen sea. The ox is used in scripture as the symbol of patient labor; and hence their significant place beneath the brazen sea. From whatever side the priest approached, he was met by the apt expression of patient labor. It mattered not how often or in what way he came, he could never exhaust the patience that was devoted to the work of cleansing him from all his defilements. What a precious figure! And we have the substance in Christ. We can never weary Him by our frequent coming. His patience is

exhaustless. He will not tire until He presents us to Himself without spot or wrinkle or any such thing.

May our hearts adore Him who is our Altar, our Laver, our Sacrifice, our Priest, our Advocate, our All!

Christian Perfection: Part 1

There are few thoughtful students of the New Testament who have not, at some time or another, felt a little perplexed as to the real force and application of a word which is of frequent occurrence, namely, the word, "Perfect." This word is used in such a variety of connections, that it is deeply important we should be clear as to what the Holy Ghost means by it in each particular case. We believe the context will, generally speaking, guide us to a right understanding of the just sense and application of the word in any given passage. We are aware that the subject of "Christian Perfection" has given rise to much theological strife and controversy; but we must, at the outset, assure our readers that it is not, by any means, our intention to handle the question in a controversial way we shall merely seek to bring under their notice the various passages, in the New Testament, in which the word "Perfect" occurs, or, at least some of the leading instances of its use, trusting the Lord to use what He may give us to write, for the glory of His name, and the profit of those precious souls for whom we ever desire to write. We shall not trace the word in the order in which it occurs, but rather in that order which the real need of the soul would naturally suggest. In this way, we shall find that the first great aspect of Christian perfection is presented to us in the ninth verse of the ninth chapter of Hebrews, and may be denominated Perfection as to the state of the Conscience.

"Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect (τελειωσαι) as pertaining to the conscience." The apostle, in this passage, is drawing a contrast between the sacrifices under the Mosaic economy, and the sacrifice of Christ, the former could never give a perfect conscience, simply because they were imperfect in themselves. It was impossible that the blood of a bullock or of a goat could ever give a perfect conscience. It might avail for a day, a month, or a year; but no longer. It could not possibly avail forever. Hence, therefore, the conscience of a Jewish worshipper was never perfect. He had not, if we may be permitted to use the expression, reached his moral end as to the condition of his conscience. He could never say that his conscience was perfectly purged, because he had not yet reached a perfect sacrifice.

With the Christian worshipper, however, it is different. He has, blessed be God, reached his moral end. He has arrived at a point, so far as the state of his conscience is concerned, beyond which it is utterly impossible for him to go. He cannot get beyond the blood of Jesus Christ. He is perfect, as to his conscience. As is the sacrifice, so is the conscience that rests thereon. If the sacrifice is imperfect, so is the conscience. If the sacrifice is perfect, so is the conscience. They stand or fall together. Nothing can be simpler, nothing more solid, nothing more consolatory, for any awakened conscience. It is not at all a question of what I am; that has been fully and forever settled. I have been found out, judged, and condemned, in myself. "In me, that is in my flesh, there dwelleth no good." I have got to the end of myself, and there I have reached the blood of Christ. I want no more. What could be added to that most precious blood? Nothing. I am perfect, as to the state of my conscience. I do not want an ordinance, a sacrament, or a ceremony, to perfect the condition of my conscience. To say so, to think so, would be to cast dishonor upon the sacrifice of the Son of

God.

The reader will do well to get a clear and firm hold of this foundation-point. If there be any darkness or uncertainty as to this, he will be wholly unable to understand or appreciate the various aspects of "Christian Perfection" which are yet to pass in review before us. It is quite possible that many pious people fail to enjoy the unspeakable blessing of a perfect conscience by reason of self-occupation. They look in at self and not finding aught there to rest upon—who ever did?—they deem it presumption to think of being perfect in any respect whatever. This is a mistake. It may be a pious mistake, but it is a mistake. Were we to speak of perfection in the flesh—what many, alas! are vainly aiming at—then, verily, true piety might recoil, with just horror, from the presumptuous and silly chimera. But, thank God, our theme is not perfection in the flesh, through any process of improvement, moral, social, or religious. This would be poor, dreary, depressing work indeed. It would be setting us to look for perfection in the old creation where sin and death reign. To look for perfection amid the dust of the old creation were a hopeless task. And yet how many are thus engaged! They are seeking to improve man and mend the world; and yet, with all this, they have never reached—never understood—yea, they actually deny the very first and simplest aspect of Christian perfection, namely, perfection as to the state of the conscience, in the presence of God.

This latter is our thesis, and we want the anxious reader to understand it, in its simplicity, in order that he may see the solid foundation of his peace laid down, by the very hand of God Himself. We want him, ere he lays aside this paper, to enter into the joyful sense of sins perfectly forgiven, and his conscience perfectly purged by the blood of Jesus. The entire matter hinges upon the question of the sacrifice. What has God found in that sacrifice? Perfection. Well, then, that perfection is for you, anxious one, and you should, at once and forever, enjoy it. Remember, it is not a question as to what you are; nor yet, as to what you think about the blood of Christ. No, dear friend, the question is, what does God think about the blood of His own Son? This makes all so clear. Say, is it clear to you? Can you, now, rest in it? Is your conscience set free, by being brought in contact with & perfect sacrifice? Oh! that it may be so. May God's Spirit, now, show you the fullness and perfectness of Christ's atoning work, with such clearness, vividness, and power, that your whole being may be emancipated, and your heart filled with praise and thanksgiving!

It makes the heart bleed to think of the thousands of precious souls kept in darkness and bondage, when they ought to be walking in the light and liberty which flow from a perfectly purged conscience. So many things are mixed up with the simple testimony of the word and Spirit of God, as to the value of Christ's work, that it is wholly impossible for the heart to get liberated. You will get a little bit of Christ, and a little bit of self; a little bit of grace, and a little bit of law; a little bit of faith, and a little bit of works. Thus the soul is kept hovering between confidence and doubt, hope and fear, just as one or other of the ingredients predominates in the mixture, or happens to be tasted at the moment. How rare is the gem of full, free, present, and eternal salvation! "We would fain cause that gem to sparkle, in all its divine and heavenly luster, under the gaze of the reader, at this moment. Then shall the chains of his spiritual bondage drop off. If the Son shall make him free, he shall be free indeed, and thus be able to rise, in the power of this freedom, and trample the legal system beneath his feet.

The more we ponder the question now before us—and we have pondered it a good deal—the more we are convinced that the true secret of all the error, confusion, and perplexity in which so

many are involved, in reference to it, will be found in the fact that they do not clearly understand death and resurrection—the new birth—the new creation. Were this grand truth only laid hold of, in power, it would make all clear, as to the state of the conscience. So long as I am seeking to tranquillize my conscience by efforts after self-improvement, so long I must be either miserable or self-deceived. It does not matter in the least what means I adopt, in carrying on the process, the issue must be one and the same. If I attempt to take up the profession of Christianity for the purpose of bettering self-improving nature—or mending my condition in the old creation, I must be a total stranger to the bliss of a perfect conscience. “All flesh is as grass.” The old creation lies under the withering influences of sin and its curse. A risen Christ is the Head of the new creation. 41 The beginning of the creation of God.” “The first begotten from among the dead.” (ἐκ νεκρῶν.)

Here, in very deed, is perfection for the conscience. What more do I want? I see the one who hung upon the cross, charged with the full weight of all my sins, now crowned with glory and honor, at the right hand of God, amid the full blaze of heaven's majesty. What can be added to this? Do I want ordinances, rites, ceremonies, or sacraments? Surely not. I dare not add aught to the death and resurrection of the Eternal Son of God. The ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper symbolize and celebrate that grand reality, and, so far, they are precious to the Christian—most precious. But when, instead of being used to symbolize and celebrate, they are used to displace death and resurrection—used as patches upon nature, crutches for the old man—props for the old creation, they must be regarded as a snare, a trap, a stumbling-block, a curse, from which may the good Lord deliver the souls of His people!

We would fain dwell upon this our first point, because of its immense importance, in this day of ordinances, traditionary religion, and self-improvement. We should like to ponder it—to elaborate, illustrate, and enforce it, in order that the reader may get a clear, full, bold grasp of it. But we look to God the Holy Ghost, to do His own work in this matter; and if He will graciously bring the heart under the power of the truth which has been so feebly unfolded, then indeed will there be both ability and leisure to look at the second great aspect of Christian perfection, namely, Perfection as to the Object of the Heart.

Here again, we are ushered into the new creation. Christ died to give me a perfect conscience. He lives to give me a perfect object. But it is very clear that until I have tasted the deep blessedness of the former, I can never be properly occupied with the latter. I must have a perfect conscience, ere my heart can be at leisure to go out after the Person of Christ. How few of us really taste the sweetness of communion with a risen Christ! How little do any of us know of that fixedness of heart upon Him, as our one paramount, engrossing, undivided object! We are occupied with our own things. The world creeps in, in one way or another; we live in the region of nature; we breathe the atmosphere—the dark, heavy, murky atmosphere of the old creation; self is indulged; and, thus our spiritual vision becomes dimmed, we lose our sense of peace, the soul becomes disturbed, the heart unhinged, the Holy Ghost grieved, the conscience exercised. Then the eye is turned in upon self, and back upon its actings. The time that else might be spent in holy and happy occupation with our Object, is, and must be, devoted to the business of self-judgment—heavy, but needed work!—in order to get back into the enjoyment of what we should never have lost, even a perfect conscience.

Now, the moment the eye is turned off from Christ, darkness must set in—oft times, darkness that may be felt. It is only as the eye is single, that the body is full of light. And what, beloved reader, is a single eye, but having Christ for our one object? It is thus that light divine pours in upon us, until every chamber of our moral being becomes lighted up, and we become lights for others, “as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light.” In this wry, the soul is kept happily free from obscurity, perplexity, and anxiety. It finds all its springs in Christ. It is independent of the world, and can move on, singing, “Salvation in that name is found, Cure for my grief and care; A healing balm for every wound. All, all I want is there.”

It is impossible for words to convey the power and blessedness of having Jesus ever before the heart, as an object. It is perfection, as we have it in Phil. 3:15, where the apostle says, “Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, (τελειοι) be thus minded: and if in anything ye be differently minded, (ἑτεροως,) God shall reveal even this unto you.” When Christ stands before the heart, as our absorbing and satisfying object, we have reached our moral end, so far as an object is concerned; for how can we ever get beyond the Person of Christ, in whom dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge! Impossible. We cannot get beyond the blood of Christ, for the conscience; neither can we get beyond the Person of Christ, for the heart; we have, therefore, reached our moral end in both; we have perfection as to the state of the conscience, and as to the object of the heart.

Here, then, we have both peace and power - peace for the conscience, and power over the affections. It is when the conscience finds sweet repose in the blood, that the emancipated affections can go forth and find their full play around the Person of Jesus. And, oh! what tongue can tell, what pen unfold, the mighty moral results of gazing upon Christ? “But we all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

(2 Cor. 3:18.) Observe, “Beholding.....are changed:” There is no legal bondage—no restless effort—no anxious toiling. We gaze, and gaze, and—what then? Continue to gaze, and as we gaze, we become morally assimilated to the blessed Object, through the transforming power of the Holy Ghost. The image of Christ is engraved upon the heart, and reflected back, in ten thousand ways, in on practical career, from day to day.

Reader, remember, this is the only true idea of Christianity. It is one thing to be a religious man; it is quite another to be a Christian. Paul was a religious man, before his conversion; but he was a Christian afterward. It is well to see this. There is plenty of religion in the world; but alas! how little Christianity! And why? Simply because Christ is not known, not loved, not cared for, not sought after. And even where His work is looked to for salvation—where His blood is trusted for pardon and peace, how little is known or thought of Himself! We are ready enough to take salvation through the death of Jesus, but oh! beloved reader, how far off do we keep from His blessed Person! How little does He get His true place in our hearts! This is a serious loss. Indeed, we cannot but believe that the pale, flickering light of modern profession, is the fruit of habitual distance from Christ, the central Sun of Christianity. How can there possibly be light, heat, or fruitfulness, if we wander amid the gloomy vaults and dark tunnels of this world’s pleasure, its politics, or its religion? It is vain to expect it. And even where we make salvation our object—when we are occupied with our spiritual condition—feeding upon our experiences—and looking after our

frames and feelings, we must become weak and low, inasmuch as these things are certainly not Christ.

There are many who, as we say, have retired from the world, have given up its balls, its parties, its theaters, its exhibitions, its concerts, its flower shows, its numberless and nameless vanities, who, nevertheless, have not found their object in a risen and glorified Christ. They have retired from the world, but have gone in upon themselves. They are seeking an object in their religion; they are engrossed with, forms of pietism; they are feeding upon the workings of a morbid conscience or a superstitious mind; or they are trafficking in the experiences of yesterday. Now, these persons are just as far from happiness, as far from the true idea of Christianity, as the poor pleasure-hunters of this world. It is quite possible to give up pleasure-hunting and become a religious mope—a morbid, melancholy mystic, a spiritual hypochondriac. What do I gain by the change? Nothing; unless, indeed, it be a vast amount of self-deception. I have retired from the world around to find an object in the world within—a poor exchange!

How different is this from the true Christian! There he stands, with a tranquillized conscience, and an emancipated heart, gazing upon an Object that absorbs his whole soul. He wants no more. Talk to him about this world's pleasure! Ask him has he been to the International Exhibition? What is his calm and dignified reply? Will he merely tell you of the sin—the harm of such things? Nay; what then? "I have found my all in Christ. I have reached my moral end. I want no more." This is the Christian's reply. It is a poor affair when we come to talk of the harm of this or that. It often happens that persons who speak thus are occupied, not with Christ, but with their own reputation, their character, their consistency with themselves. Of what use is all this? Is it not self-occupation, after all? What we want is, to keep the eye fixed on Christ; then the heart will follow the eye, and the feet will follow the heart. In this way, our path shall be as the shining light, shining, more and more, until it becomes lost in the blaze of the perfect and everlasting day of glory.

May God, in His infinite mercy, grant to the writer and the reader of these pages to know more of what it is to have reached our moral end, both as to the state of the conscience, and as to the object of the heart!

(To be Continued if the Lord will)

Christian Perfection: Part 2

In handling the subject of Christian Perfection, it might seem sufficient to say that the believer is perfect in a risen Christ: "Complete in Him which is the head of all principality and power." This, surely, comprehends everything. Nothing can be added to the completeness which we have in Christ. All this is blessedly true; but does it not still hold good that the inspired writers use the word "perfect" in various ways? And is it not important that we should understand the sense in which the word is used? This, we presume, will hardly be questioned. We cannot suppose, for a moment, that any thoughtful reader of Scripture would be satisfied to dismiss the matter without prayerfully seeking to understand the exact force and just application of the word, in each particular passage in which it occurs. It is plain that the word "perfect" in Heb. 9:9 is not applied in the same way as it is in Phil. 3:15. And is it not right - is it not profitable - is it not due to our own souls and to the sacred volume, to seek, through grace, to understand the difference? For our part, we cannot question it; and, in this confidence, we can happily pursue our examination of the subject of Christian Perfection, by calling the reader's attention, in the third place, to Perfection in the principle of our walk.

This is unfolded to us in Matt. 5:48. "Be ye therefore perfect, (τελειοι) even as your Father in heaven is perfect." "How," it may be asked, "can we be perfect as our Father which is in heaven? How can we reach to such an elevated point as this? How can we attain to so lofty a standard? We can understand our being perfect as to the conscience, inasmuch as this perfection is based upon what Christ has done for us. And we can also understand our being perfect as to the object of the heart, inasmuch as this perfection is based upon what Christ is to us. But to be perfect as our Father in heaven, seems entirely beyond us." To all this it may be said that our blessed Lord does not ask us to do impossibilities. He never issues a command without furnishing the needed grace to carry it out. Hence, therefore, when He calls upon us to be perfect as our Father, it is plain that He confers upon us a holy privilege, that he invests us with a high dignity, and it is our place to seek to understand and appreciate both the one and the other.

What, then, is meant by our being perfect as our Father in heaven? The context of Matt. 5:48 furnishes the answer. "But I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you; that (οπως) ye may be the children (υιοι) of your Father which is in heaven; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.....be ye therefore perfect even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

Here we have a lovely phase of Christian Perfection, namely, perfection in the principle of our walk. We are called to walk in grace toward all, and, in so doing, to be imitators of God as dear children. Our Father sends His sunshine and His showers even upon His enemies. He deals in grace with all. This is our model. Are we formed upon it? Reader, search and see. Are you perfect in the principle of your walk? Are you dealing in grace with your enemies and those who are in your debt? Are you demanding your rights? Are you, in principle, taking your fellow by the throat,

and saying, "Pay me that thou owest?" If so, you are not "perfect as your Father." He is dealing in grace and you are dealing in righteousness. Were He to act as you are acting, the day of grace would close and the day of vengeance open. Had he dealt with you as you are now dealing with others, you should, long since, have been in that place where hope is unknown.

Let us ponder this. Let us see to it that we are not misrepresenting our heavenly Father. Let us aim at perfection in the principle of our daily walk. It will cost us something. It may empty the purse, but it will fill the heart; it may contract our pecuniary resources, but it will enlarge our spiritual circle. It will bring us into closer contact and deeper fellowship with our heavenly Father. Is not this worth something? Truly it is. Would that we felt its worth more deeply. Would that we felt more of the dignity conferred upon us in our being called to represent, in this evil, selfish, dark world, our heavenly Father who pours, in rich profusion, His blessings upon the unthankful and the unholy. There is no use in preaching grace if we do not act it. It is of little avail to speak of God's dealing in longsuffering mercy, if we are dealing in high-handed justice.

But, it may be said by some, "However could we carry out such a principle? We should be robbed and ruined. How could business be carried on, if we are not to enforce our rights? We should be imposed upon and plundered by the unprincipled and the designing." This is not the mode in which to arrive at a just conclusion on our point. An obedient disciple never says, "How?" The question is, "Does the Lord Jesus call upon me to be perfect, as my Father in heaven is perfect?" Assuredly. Well then, am I aiming at this, when I summon my fellow-creature to a bar of justice? Is this like my Father? Is this what He is doing? No; blessed be His name! He is on a throne of grace. He is reconciling the world. He is not imputing trespasses. This is plain enough. It only needs full subjection of heart. Let us bow our souls beneath the weight of this most glorious truth. May we gaze upon this most lovely aspect of Christian Perfection, and seek to aim at the attainment of it. If we pause to reason about results, we shall never reach the truth. What we want is that moral condition of soul that fully owns the power and authority of the word. Then, though there may be failure in detail, we have always a touchstone by which to test our ways, and a standard to which to recall the heart and conscience. But if we reason and argue—if we deny that it is our privilege to be perfect in the sense of Matt. 5:48,—if we justify our going to law, when our Father is not going to law, but acting in the most unqualified grace, we deprive ourselves of that perfect model on which our character and ways should ever be formed.

May God the Holy Spirit enable us to understand, to submit to, and carry out, in practical life, this perfect principle! It is most lamentable to see the children of God adopting, in daily life, a course of acting the direct opposite of that adopted by their heavenly Father. We ought to remember that we are called to be His moral representatives. We are His children, by spiritual regeneration, but we are called to be His sons, in moral assimilation to His character, and practical conformity to His ways. "Do good to them that hate you.....that ye may be the sons of your Father which is in heaven." Striking words! In order to our being, morally and characteristically, the sons of God, we are called to do good to our enemies. This is what He does, and we are called to be like Him. Alas! how little we enter into this! How unlike we are! Oh! for a more faithful representation!

Time and space would fail us to dwell, as we should like to do, upon this deeply practical part of our subject; we must, therefore, pass on, in the fourth place, to the consideration of

Perfection in the character of our Service.

“I have not found thy works perfect (πεπληρωμένα) before God.” (Rev. 3:3.) The English reader should be informed that the word here rendered “perfect” is not the same as that used in the three passages already referred to. It is usually translated “fulfilled”—“finished”—“accomplished.” Its use in reference to the works of the Church of Sardis teaches us a deeply solemn and heart-searching lesson. There was a name to live; but the works were not fulfilled under the immediate eye of God. There is nothing more dangerous to a Christian than to have “a name.” It is a positive snare of the devil. Many a professor has fallen by means of being occupied with a name. Many a useful servant has been destroyed by the effort to keep up a name. If I have gotten a reputation in any department of service—as an active evangelist—a gifted teacher—a clear and attractive writer—a man of prayer—a man of faith—a person of remarkable sanctity, or great personal devotedness—a benevolent person—a name for anything, in short, I am in imminent danger of making shipwreck. The enemy will lead me to make my reputation my object instead of Christ. I shall be working to keep up a name instead of the glory of Christ. I shall be occupied with the thoughts of men instead of doing all my work under the immediate eye of God.

All this demands intense watchfulness and rigid censorship over myself. I may be doing the most excellent works, but if they are not fulfilled in the presence of God, they will prove a positive snare of the devil. I may preach the gospel—visit the sick—help the poor—go through the entire range of religious activity, and never be in the presence of God at all. I may do it for a name—do it through habit—through the force of surrounding circumstances and influences—do it because others do it, or expect me to do it. This is very serious, beloved reader. It demands much prayer—much self-emptiness—much nearness to, and dependence upon, God—much singleness of eye—much holy consecration to Christ. Self will be continually intruding upon us. Oh! yes, self, self, self, even in the very holiest things; and, all the while, we may appear to be very active and very devoted. Miserable delusion! We know of nothing more terrible than to have a religious name, without spiritual life, without Christ, without a sense of God’s presence possessing the soul.

Reader, let us look closely into this. Let us see that we begin, continue, and end our work under the Master’s eye. This will impart a purity and a moral elevation to our service beyond all price. It will not cripple our energy, but it will greatly tend to raise and intensify our action. It will not clip our wings, but it will guide our movements. It will render us independent of the thoughts of men, and fully deliver us from the slavery of seeking to maintain a name, or keep up a reputation—miserable, degrading bondage. May the good Lord grant us full deliverance from it! May He give us grace to fulfill our works, whatever they may be, few or many, small or great, in His own most blessed presence!

Having said thus much in reference to the character of our service, we shall close with a few lines on Perfection in our equipment for Service.

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect (αρτιος) thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” (2 Tim. 3:16, 17.) Here again, we have a different word, and one which only occurs in this one place in the entire New Testament. It is most expressive. It signifies present readiness for any exigence. The man who is acquainted with, and subject to, the word of God, is ready for every emergency. He has no need to go and cram for an occasion—to consult his authorities—to make himself up on a point. He is ready now. If an anxious inquirer comes, he is

ready; if a curious inquirer comes, he is ready; if a skeptic comes, he is ready; if an infidel comes, he is ready. In a word, he is always ready. He is perfectly equipped for every occasion.

The Lord he praised for all these aspects of Christian Perfection! What more do we want? Perfection as to the conscience; perfection in object; perfection in walk; perfection in the character of service; perfection in our equipment. What remains? What wait we for? Just this—perfection in glory—perfect conformity in spirit and soul and body, to the image of our glorified Head in heaven!

May the Lord so work in our hearts, by His Spirit, producing that which is well-pleasing in His sight, that we may stand “perfect and complete in all the will of God!”

Christianity: the Christian's Standing, Object, and Hope

Read Philip, 3.

A communication from "E. E." has drawn our attention to the third chapter of the epistle to the Philippians. Our Correspondent desires some light upon this most important section of inspiration, and we avail ourselves of the occasion to unfold its contents to our readers, generally, so far as the Lord may graciously enable us.

In our leading article for August, we have endeavored to hold up the Bible as the church's supreme and all-sufficient guide, in all ages, in all times, and under all circumstances. We now desire to hold up Christianity in its divine beauty and moral excellence, as illustrated in this well-known passage of holy scripture.

And be it observed that as it was the Bible itself, and not any special system of theology deduced there from, that we sought to present to our readers; so now, it is Christianity, and not any peculiar form of human religiousness, that we desire to place before them. We are deeply thankful for this. We dare not enter upon the defense of men or their systems. Men err in their theology and fail in their ethics; but the Bible and Christianity remain unshaken and unshakable. This is an unspeakable mercy. Who can duly estimate it? To be furnished with a perfect standard of divinity and morals, is a privilege for which we can never be sufficiently thankful. Such a standard we possess, blessed be God, in the Bible and in the Christianity which that Bible unfolds to our view. Men may err in their creed and break down in their conduct, but the Bible is the Bible still, and Christianity is Christianity still.

Now, we believe that this third chapter of Philippians gives us the model of a true Christian - a model on which every Christian should be formed. The man who is here introduced to our notice could say, by the Holy Ghost, "Brethren, be ye followers together of me." Nor is it as an apostle that he here speaks to us—nor as one endowed with extraordinary gifts, and privileged to see unspeakable visions. It is not to Paul, the apostle, nor Paul, the gifted vessel, that we listen, in verse 17 of our chapter, but to Paul, the Christian. We could not follow him in his brilliant career, as an apostle. We could not follow him, in his rapture to Paradise; but we can follow him in his Christian course, in this world; and it seems to us that we have in our chapter, a very full view of that course, and not only of the course itself, but also the starting-post and the goal. In other words, we have to consider, first, the Christian's standing; secondly, the Christian's object; and, thirdly, the Christian's hope. May God the Holy Ghost be our teacher, while we dwell for a little on these most weighty and most interesting points! And first, as to The Christian's Standing.

This point is unfolded, in a double way, in our chapter. We are not only told what the Christian's standing is, but also what it is not. If ever there was a man who could boast of having a righteousness of his own in which to stand before God, Paul was the man. "If," says he, "any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a

Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.”

This is a most remarkable catalog, presenting everything that one could possibly desire for the formation of a standing in the flesh. No one could excel Saul of Tarsus. He was a Jew, of pure pedigree, in orderly fellowship, of blameless walk, of fervid zeal and unflinching devotedness. He was, in principle, a persecutor of the church. As a Jew, he could not but see that the very foundations of Judaism were assailed by the new economy of the Church of God. It was utterly impossible that Judaism and Christianity could subsist on the same platform, or hold sway over the same mind. One special feature of the former system was the strict separation of Jew and Gentile; a special feature of the latter was the intimate union of both in one body. Judaism erected and maintained the middle wall of partition; Christianity abolished that wall altogether.

Hence Saul, as an earnest Jew, could not but be a zealous persecutor of the Church of God. It was part of his religion—of that in which he “excelled many of his equals in his own nation”—of that in which he was “exceedingly zealous.” Whatever was to be had, in the shape of religiousness, Saul would have it; whatever height was to be attained, he would attain. He would leave no stone unturned in order to build up the superstructure of his own righteousness—righteousness in the flesh—righteousness in the old creation. He was permitted to possess himself of all the attractions of legal righteousness in order that he might fling them from him amid the brighter glories of a righteousness divine. “But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.”

And we should note here that the grand prominent thought, in the above passage, is not that of a guilty sinner betaking himself to the blood of Jesus for pardon, but rather of a legalist casting aside, as dross, his own righteousness, because of having found a better. We need hardly say that Paul was a sinner—“the chief of sinners”—and that, as such, he betook himself to the precious blood of Christ, and there found pardon, peace, and acceptance with God. This is plainly taught us in many passages of the New Testament. But it is not the leading thought in the chapter now before us. Paul is not speaking of his sins, but of his gains. He is not occupied with his necessities, as a sinner, but with his advantages, as a man—a man in the flesh—a man in the old creation—a Jew—a legalist.

True it is, most blessedly true, that Paul brought all his sins to the cross, and had them washed away in the atoning blood of the divine sin-offering. But, in this noble passage, we see another thing. We see a legalist flinging far away from him his own righteousness, and esteeming it as a worthless and unsightly thing in contrast with a risen and glorified Christ who is the righteousness of the Christian—the righteousness which belongs to the new creation. Paul had sins to mourn over, and he had a righteousness to boast in. He had guilt on his conscience, and he had laurels on his brow. He had plenty to be ashamed of, and plenty to glory in. But the special point to be presented in Phil. 3:4-8 is not a sinner getting his sins pardoned, his guilt cleared, his shame covered, but a legalist laying aside his righteousness, a scholar casting away his laurels, and a

man abandoning his vain glory, simply because he had found true glory, unfading laurels, and an everlasting righteousness in the Person of a victorious and exalted Christ. It was not merely that Paul, the sinner, needed a righteousness because, in reality, he had none of his own; but that Paul, the Pharisee, preferred the righteousness which was revealed to him in Christ, because it was infinitely better and more glorious than any other.

No doubt, Paul, as a sinner, needed, like every other sinner, a righteousness in which to stand before God; but that is not what he is bringing before us in our chapter. We are anxious that the reader should clearly apprehend this point. It is not merely that my sins drive me to Christ; but His excellences draw me to Him. True, I have sins and therefore I need Christ; but even if I had a righteousness, I should cast it from me, and gladly hide myself "in Him." It would be a positive "loss" to me to have any righteousness of my own, seeing that God has graciously provided such a glorious righteousness for me in Christ. Like Adam, in the garden of Eden; he was naked, and therefore he made himself an apron; but it would have been a "loss" to him to retain the apron after that the Lord God had made him a coat. It was surely better far to have a God-made coat than a man-made apron. So thought Adam, so thought Paul, and so thought all the saints of God whose names are recorded upon the sacred page. It is better to stand in the righteousness of God, which is by faith, than to stand in the righteousness of man which is by works of law. It is not only mercy to get rid of our sins, through the remedy which God has provided, but to get rid of our righteousness, and accept, instead, the righteousness which God has revealed.

Thus, then, we see that the standing of the Christian is in Christ. "Found in him." This is Christian standing. Nothing less, nothing lower, nothing different. It is not partly in Christ, and partly in law—partly in Christ and partly in ordinances. No; it is "Found in him." This is the standing which Christianity furnishes. If this be touched, it is not Christianity at all. It may be some ancient ism, or some mediaeval ism, or some modern ism; but most surely it is not the Christianity of the New Testament if it be aught else than this, "Found in him."

We must press this upon the reader. We feel a solemn responsibility resting upon us, at the present moment. "We believe we have far more to do than to furnish the necessary amount of matter for each Month's Magazine. It is not the quantity but the quality that we have to attend to. Our business is not merely to furnish articles for the Magazine, but right articles, necessary articles, profitable articles for our readers. It were a comparatively easy matter to fill a monthly serial such as "Things New and Old," But this would never do. We must keep our eye upon the times in which we live—upon the consciences of our readers. We have to ponder the difficulties of the times, and the necessities of the conscience. We have to look to God to give us the right thing to say to our readers. We believe He has given us a work to do, in the publication of this little periodical, and He knows it is our heart's desire to do it as He would have it done.

We do therefore earnestly exhort the reader to look well to this our first point, "In Christ it is we stand." He is our righteousness. He Himself, the crucified, risen, exalted, glorified Christ. Yes; He is our righteousness. To be found in Him is proper Christian standing. It is not Judaism, Catholicism, nor any other ism. It is not the being a member of this church, that church, or the other church. It is to be in Christ. This is the great foundation of true practical Christianity. In a word, this is the standing of the Christian.

Let us now, in the second place, look at

The Christian's Object.

Here again, Christianity shuts us up to Christ. "That I may know him" is the breathing of the true Christian. If to be "found in him" constitutes the Christian's standing, then "to know him" is the Christian's proper object. The ancient philosophy had a motto which it was continually sounding in the ears of its votaries, and that motto was "Know thyself." Christianity, on the contrary, has a loftier motto, pointing to a nobler object. It tells us to know Christ—to make Him our object—to fix our earnest gaze on Him.

This, and this alone, is the Christian's object. To have any other object is not Christianity at all. Alas! Christians have other objects. And that is precisely the reason why we said, at the opening of this paper, that it is Christianity and not the ways of Christians that we desire to hold up to the view of our readers. It matters not, in the least, what the object is: if it is not Christ, it is not Christianity. The true Christian's desire will ever be embodied in these words, "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death." It is not that I may get on in the world—that I may make money—that I may attain a high position—that I may aggrandize my family—that I may make a name—that I may be regarded as a great man, a rich man, a popular man. No; not one of these is a Christian object. It may be all very well for a man, who has got nothing better, to make such things his object. But the Christian has got Christ. This makes all the difference. It may be all well enough for a man, who does not know Christ as his righteousness, to do the best he can in the way of working out a righteousness for himself; but to a man whose standing is in a risen Christ, the very fairest righteousness that could be produced by human efforts would be an actual loss. So is it exactly, in the matter of an object. The question is not, What harm is there in this or that? but, Is it a Christian object?

It is well to see this. We may depend upon it, beloved reader, that one great reason of the low tone which prevails amongst Christians will be found in the fact that the eye is taken off Christ and fixed upon some lower object. It may be a very laudable object for a mere man of the world—for one who merely sees his place in nature, or in the old creation. But the Christian is not this. He does not belong to this world at all. He is in it, but not of it. "They," says our blessed Lord, "are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." (John 17) "Our citizenship is in heaven and we should never be satisfied to propose to ourselves any lower object than Christ. It matters not, in the least, what a man's position may be. He may be only a scavenger, or he may be a prince, or he may stand at any one of the many gradations between these two extremes. It is all the same, provided Christ is his real, his only object. It is a man's object, not his position, that gives him his character.

Now, Paul's one object was Christ. Whether he was stationary, or whether he traveled; whether he preached the gospel, or gathered sticks; whether he planted churches, or made tents, Christ was his object. By night and by day, at home or abroad, by sea or by land, alone or in company, in public or private, he could say, "One thing I do." And this, be it remembered, was not merely Paul the laborious apostle, or Paul the raptured saint, but Paul the living, acting, walking Christian—the one who addresses us in these words, "Brethren, be ye followers together of me." Nor should we ever be satisfied with anything less than this. True, we fail sadly; but let us always keep the true object before us. Like the school-boy at his copy, he can only expect to succeed by keeping his eye fixed upon his head-line. His tendency is to look at his own last written line, and thus each succeeding line is worse than the preceding one. Thus it is in our own case. We take our eye off

the blessed and perfect head-line, and begin to look at ourselves, our own productions, our own character, our interests, our reputation. We begin to think of what would be consistent with our own principles, our profession, or our standing, instead of fixing the eye steadily upon that one object which Christianity presents, even Christ Himself.

But some will say, "Where will you find this?" Well, if it be meant, where are we to find it amongst the ranks of Christians, now a-days, it might be difficult indeed. But we have it in the third chapter of the epistle to the Philippians. This is enough for us. We have here a model of true Christianity, and let us ever and only aim thereat. If we find our hearts going after other things let us judge them. Let us compare our lines with the head-line, and earnestly seek to produce a faithful copy thereof. In this way, though we may have to weep over constant failure, we shall always be kept occupied with our proper object, and thus have our character formed; for, let it never be forgotten, it is the object which forms the character. If money be my object, my character is covetous; if power, I am ambitious if books, I am literary; if Christ, I am a Christian. It is not, here, a question of life or salvation, but only of practical Christianity. If we were asked for a simple definition of a Christian, we should, at once say, a Christian is a man who has Christ for his object. This is most simple. May we enter into its power and thus exhibit a more healthy and vigorous discipleship in this day, when so many, alas! are minding earthly things.

We shall close this hasty and imperfect sketch of a wide and weighty subject, with a line or two on
THE CHRISTIAN'S HOPE.

This, our third and last point is presented in our chapter in a manner quite as characteristic as the other two. The standing of the Christian is to be found in Christ; the object of the Christian is to know Christ; and the hope of the Christian is to be like Christ. How beautifully perfect is the connection between these three things! No sooner do I find myself in Christ as my righteousness, than I long to know Him as my object, and the more I know Him, the more ardently shall I long to be like Him, which hope can only be realized when I see Him as He is. Having a perfect righteousness, and a perfect object, I just want one thing more, and that is to be done with everything that hinders my enjoyment of that object. "For our conversation (or citizenship, πολίτευμα not ἀνστροφή Phil. 3:20,) is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself."

Now, putting all these things together, we get a very complete view of true Christianity. We cannot attempt to elaborate any one of the three points above referred to; for, it may be truly said, each point would demand a volume to treat it fully. But we would ask the reader to pursue the marvelous theme for himself. Let him rise above all the imperfections and inconsistencies of Christians, and gaze upon the moral grandeur of Christianity as exemplified in the life and character of the model man presented to our view in this chapter. And may the language of his heart be, "Let others do as they will, as for me, nothing short of this lovely model shall ever satisfy my heart. Let me turn away my eye from men altogether, and fix it intently upon Christ Himself, and find all my delight in Him as my righteousness, my object, my hope." Thus may it be with the writer and the reader, for Jesus' sake.

"Oh! fix our earnest gaze

So wholly, Lord, on Thee;
That with thy beauty occupied,
We elsewhere none may see.”

A Common Case

"You will excuse me, Sir, but I must say that I cannot agree with your preaching tonight." Such were the first words that a really anxious, but unhappy soul addressed to me the other evening, when something like the following conversation took place. I had finished speaking with others for the evening, so we had quiet and leisure to go into particulars.

"Very likely," I replied, "but what did I say that you cannot agree with?"

"Why, you stated a great many times, so that I am not mistaken, that the same moment the sinner comes to Jesus, he is received, forgiven, saved, and ought to be happy. I can't agree with that at all."

"Well, dear A., that is just what I did say, and I am thankful it has made such an impression on you. But, pray tell me, did I, in all that, go beyond the truth in my text? (Luke 7:36-50.) Was not all that true to the woman that came to Jesus?"

"Yes, I know it was all true to her. She knew it was true to her, for she heard Jesus say it. But how can anyone know now that it is true to them, until they feel it? They must have the witness in themselves. I know I have never been able to feel sure, at least, long at a time. I may tell you, Sir, that I was converted about seven years ago, at least I thought I was converted then. I was very happy at the time, and joined the chapel. But doubts came into my mind, and dark clouds came over me. I thought God was hiding His face from me, and I was in great darkness. No one knows what I have gone through but God and my own soul. Often and often I could not sleep in the night. And when I prayed, I could get no comfort, and sometimes I could not pray at all. I could do nothing, and enjoy nothing. I was miserable."

"But now, dear A., will you tell me what you have been praying and crying for, all this time? Have you been as bad as this for seven years?"

"Yes, I may say I have, though sometimes I am happy. But my prayer night and day has been that I might know that I was a child of God one of His."

"Well, but in what way did you ask, or expect, God to make that blessed truth known to you?"

"I want, of course, to feel it, to know it, by the work of His Spirit in me. Everyone knows that it is written in the Bible, and true to them that are His. But I believe there must be a deep inward work of the Spirit before anyone can be sure that they are quite safe. The spirituality of the law must be applied, and we must pass through deep experience before we can be sure, if ever any one can be quite sure in this world."

"Perhaps you are not aware, A—, that you are making a very serious mistake as to the way of peace. The mistake is this. You are looking at the work of the Spirit in you, in place of the work of Christ for you, I mean the work of Christ on the cross for us sinners. The work of the Spirit rather leads us into trouble by showing us how bad we are. But then the work of Christ is the ground of

pardon and peace, because He died for our sins. Blessed Lord! 'He was delivered for our offenses, and now, where are they? Gone, and gone forever! He put them away by the sacrifice of Himself. Only believe it! Jesus is risen! He left all our offenses behind Him. The Holy Spirit never directs your eye to His own operations in you, valuable and indispensable as these are, but always to the finished work of Christ. The office of the Spirit is to make known to us the Person, Work, and Glory of Christ. But if you get occupied with the evil that the work of the Spirit discovers in yourself, you must be unhappy, and most assuredly will continue unhappy so long as you do so. Neither can you obey that sweet word, 'Look unto Me,' and so become acquainted with the Lord Himself, and filled with Him."

"Well, I believe I have been looking too much to myself. But I have always been taught so. I have never heard that kind of preaching before."

"But I would like you to be convinced, before we say 'good night,' that the preaching is according to the word, and that you heartily agree with it. Once more look at the text. And, first, let me ask you this, Why has the Holy Ghost given us such a detailed account of what took place when that poor sinful woman came to Jesus? Was it not to assure us, that as Jesus never changes, the same thing must take place now, whenever a sinner comes to Him? She came in, poor woman, off the street; she uttered not a word, but fell at His feet, trusting to the mercy that she believed was in Him. And what were the Savior's first words to her? You must wait awhile? No. You must have a deeper sense of sin in yourself, and of the spirituality of the law? No. You must agonize in prayer many days and nights, months and years, before I can give you the assurance of pardon? No. What then? Now, be honest, what then? Blessed be His name! He first of all turns to the woman, then casts a look—a speaking look—of compassion on the weeping sinner at His feet; and then, the first opening of His lips to herself pronounces her full forgiveness. "And he said unto her, 'Thy sins are forgiven.....And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.' Now, in all fairness, let me ask you, how did Jesus meet this guilty one? Was it not with present forgiveness—present salvation—present peace? One other thing let me ask you. Is He changed now; or is He the same? Is he now a respecter of persons? Would He be different to any poor sinner who came to Him tonight? Oh! say not so! But I know you would not say so. But oh! why should you think so, and harbor in your mind unworthy thoughts of Jesus?"

"I wish I could see it in that light. I am sure your doctrine is a very comforting one. I have been wishing to serve God, and I have been praying earnestly for seven years, for the pardon of my sins, and I have still my doubts and fears at times. What I can't get over, is your saying that people ought to know they are forgiven the same evening they believe, and be rejoicing in Jesus."

"Now, let me ask you another thing. Did Jesus ever send away a sinner from His presence, who came seeking salvation, in a state of uncertainty? Never! no never! He states to all such, in the most positive manner, "Thy faith hath saved thee." Again, did He ever say to a sinner at His feet, I will forgive thee? Never! no never! But He affirms in the most absolute way, 'Thy sins are forgiven.' (Consult Mark 2:5, Mark 5:34, Luke 18:42, John 5:24.) The moment that the sinner is in his true place before the Lord—the Savior—all his need is met according to the fullness that dwells in Jesus.

"But then you may ask, how is the sinner to know all this? How is he to get the comfort of it? Certainly not by the state of his own feelings, but from the words that fall from the lips of Jesus. I

often say, 'what we want are good listeners;' you must listen to the word. 'Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.' (Rom. 10:17.) Jesus speaks to you through the written word, and that word must always have the first place. If you look for happy feelings before you believe the glad tidings, you will be disappointed. You must believe the good news before you can be made glad. And this, I believe, is the great difference between us. You judge, observe, by the way you feel, of your condition before God. I know my state in God's sight, by His own word. Therefore I can speak positively on every point that is revealed, for the word of God is unfailingly true. When that word assures the sinner that his sins are forgiven, is he to believe it or not? Surely to believe it, and to believe it without a single doubt, just because it is the word of God. Of course, he may often afterward have to confess his sins, but he is still to believe in the full and free forgiveness of all his sins, through the once shed blood of Jesus. The Savior's announcement, 'Thy sins are forgiven,' is always true on the solid ground of the glorious work of Christ for us. Christ sees to this—trust Him."

"But I often think that I am not a believer at all! That I have never really felt my need, and come as a lost sinner. I hope I have, but I cannot always feel sure."

"Well, that is another question, and an important one. If you have never yet believed in Jesus, or come to Him, which is the same thing, see to it now. Sleep not until you have come to Him, believing in His love and grace, and trusting in His precious blood,—the only safeguard from judgment. Many become religious, or pious in their ways, and pass before others for Christians, who have never been exercised about their condition as sinners before God—who know nothing about telling out all their sins before Him—confessing them unreservedly in the secret of the closet, and of receiving full forgiveness through the blood of the Lamb. The prodigal returned to his Father in his rags—in all the reality of his condition as a prodigal. And the Father met him in all the reality of His love and grace. This is the true way for the sinner and God to meet. And mark the results. Not only is there immediate forgiveness, but he is clothed in the righteousness of God.

The kiss of reconciliation is not a moment withheld, nor the ring of the unchangeable affections of the Father. And all begin at once to feed on Christ the slain one, and to rejoice in Him. Thus it is with all who arise and go to the Father. But, pray, what has made you so anxious for so long a time? Is not Christ your object? Do you not desire to know Him? "When this is really the case, the good work is begun."

"Oh! I do earnestly desire, above all things, to be sure that I am one of His. It is the only thing I do care for. And often, and often, I have come to Him in prayer; but then I can't feel sure, like you, that I am forgiven and saved. Oh! if I could but feel sure of that, I should be happy."

"And I am most anxious, dear A—, that you should feel sure. But there is only one way of being sure, and that is, by believing the word of God. Divine life, I doubt not, throbs in your soul, why not satisfy it with the sincere milk of the word? There, in these sacred pages, you will find an answer to all your anxieties. You may read your title clear, written by the finger of God, to the bright mansions above. And if you are content to take that word and to trust in it, you will now feel a divine certainty on every point that concerns you. I mean just now. The word of God is as true tonight as it will be tomorrow. The invitation to come to Jesus is as free,—His love is as real,—His grace is as boundless—His blood is as precious—your forgiveness is as sure—and your acceptance is as gracious—why then not believe it now, and be happy—and rejoice in the Lord?

We are saved by faith—made happy by faith—and rejoice by faith. The feelings will follow, but faith must be first.”

FAITH is a very simple thing,

Though little understood; 1 Cor. 2:14.

It frees the soul from death's dread sting,

By resting in the blood. Exod. 12:13, 23.

It looks not on the things around,

Nor on the things within; Jer. 17:9.

It takes its flight to scenes above,

Beyond the sphere of sin. Heb. 1:3.

It sees upon the throne of God,

A Victim that was slain; Heb. 10:12, 14.

It rests its all on his shed blood,

And says, “I’m born again.” 2 Cor. 5:15, 17

Faith is not what we feel or see,

It is a simple trust in what the John 1:9.

God of love has said O

Jesus, as “the Just.” 1 Pet. 3:18

The Perfect One that died for me,

Upon His Father’s throne, Rev. 3:21

Presents our names before our God,

And pleads Himself alone. Heb. 4:14, 15.

What Jesus is, and that alone,

Is faith’s delighted plea; Eph. 1:6, 7

It never deals with sinful self,

Nor righteous self, in me. Rom. 7:18

It tells me I am counted dead

By God, in His own word; Rom. 6:6, 7.

It tells me I am born again

In Christ, my Risen Lord. Rom. 6:4, 5.

In that He died, He died to sin;

In that He lives—to God; Rom. 6:10.

Then I am dead to nature's hopes,

And justified through blood. Rom. 3:24, 25

If He is free, then I am free,

From all unrighteousness; 1 John 3:5, 7.

If He is just, then I am just,

He is my righteousness. 2 Cor. 5:21. 1 Cor. 1:30, 31.

What want I more to perfect bliss?

A body like His own Phil. 3:20, 21

Will perfect me for greater joys

Than angels round the throne. Eph. 1:17-23.

Confession of Sin

It is most needful, in handling any truth of God, to cultivate the habit of calmly weighing all our conclusions in the balance of holy Scripture. In this way we are preserved from the evil of hastily seizing one side of a question and using it in such a way as to mar the integrity of divine truth, and damage the souls of men.

We have lately received several communications from our readers which seem to betray a want of clearness on the important subject of the believer's confession of sin, and as it is not possible to discuss such a question in a few hasty lines to correspondents, we think it better to devote a page or two, in the body of the magazine, so as to place the matter in a permanent form before our readers.

Some of our friends seem to confound two distinct things, namely, atonement and forgiveness. It is quite true that all our sins were atoned for on the cross, and hence the very moment we believe, through grace, on the Son of God, we pass out of a condition of guilt and condemnation, into a condition of perfect forgiveness and acceptance. The believer is united to Christ. He is complete, as to his standing before God, so that the word is, "As he is, so are we in this world." (1 John 4:17.) "We are complete in him." (Col. 2) "Accepted in the beloved." (Eph. 1) Nor can we ever lose this perfect standing. It is impossible that a single member of Christ's body can ever, for one moment, be out of that condition of perfect favor in which he has been set, by God's free grace, in union with a crucified, risen, and glorified Head.

He may lose the sense of it, the comfort of it, the power of it; but the thing itself he cannot lose. It is his unalterable standing in Christ. Clouds may overcast the sun and hide from our view his genial beams; but the sun shines all the while, with undiminished luster. The believer is accepted, once and forever, in Christ. He is united to Him by a link that can never be severed.

All this is divinely true, and is clearly laid down in the word in passages too numerous to quote here. But, be it remembered, it is not until we believe that we enter into this blessed position. The foundation of it all was laid in the death and resurrection of Christ, but it is only when we, by the power of the Holy Ghost, receive into our hearts the precious truth of the gospel that we enter into the enjoyment of it. "In whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise." Eph. 1

And we have further to bear in mind that though complete in Christ, as to our standing and title, so that, at any moment, we are ready to pass into the divine presence, and though possessed of the divine nature which cannot sin, because it is born of God, yet we have sin in us. We carry about with us a sinful nature, and are liable, if not watchful, to commit sin in thought, word, and deed. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father,

Jesus Christ the righteous. And he is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the whole world." 1 John 1:8; 2:2.

Here, then, we have the doctrine of confession laid down. "If we," believers, "confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Mark, he says "faithful and just," not merely gracious and merciful. That He is, blessed be His name; but He is more, He is faithful and just. On what ground? On the ground of atonement. It is wonderful to think that God can be so presented to us in connection with the forgiveness and cleansing of one who has committed sin. But there must be confession. The conscience must be kept clear. It will not do for a believer to commit sin, and say, "Oh! my sins are all forgiven, and I need not trouble myself about this matter." This will never do. A single sinful thought is sufficient to interrupt the believer's communion. It cannot touch his life or interfere with his security in Christ; but it can interfere with his communion, and mar his comfort. He cannot possibly have fellowship with God while there is the smallest unconfessed sin on his conscience. What is he to do? Let him pour out his heart in confession, let him make a clean breast of it. And what follows? Full forgiveness, and cleansing, according to the faithfulness and justice of God.

Some, however, may feel disposed to ask, "Do we not commit many sins which never come within the range of our conscience, and how are we to confess them?" The answer is very simple, such sins are not in question. We may, no doubt, confess in a general way, our manifold sins, failures, and short-comings, and feel assured of full forgiveness; but our communion is only interrupted by those things which get on the conscience. "If we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." When we are walking in the light, sin is not in question, but we are maintained before God according to the divine efficacy of the blood of Jesus. But if we get out of the light, in the actual practical condition of the soul, and commit sin, how do we get back? By confession, through the advocacy of Christ. If we walk in the light, we have the blood. If we sin, we have an advocate. The usual way with men is just to reverse this order.

This subject has been fully gone into before, in the pages of "Things New and Old;" but we feel it needful to insert this brief article, in order that our readers may have the simple testimony of the word on the point. May the Lord give us a right understanding in all things, and increase in us the spirit of complete subjection to the authority of holy scripture!

The Cruse That Faileth Not

“It is more blessed to give than to receive.”

Is thy cruse of comfort wasting?

Rise and share it with another,

And, through all the years of famine,

It shall serve thee and thy brother.

Love divine will fill thy storehouse,

Or thy handful still renew.

Scanty fare for one will often

Make a royal feast for two.

For the heart grows rich in giving;

All its wealth is living grain;

Seeds which mildew in the garner,

Scattered, fill with gold the plain.

Is thy burden hard and heavy?

Do thy steps drag wearily?

Help to bear thy brother's burden:

God will bear both it and thee.

Numbers and weary on the mountains,

Wouldst thou sleep amidst the snow?

Chafe that frozen form beside thee,

And together both shall glow.

Art thou stricken in life's battle?

Many wounded round thee moan.

Lavish on their wounds thy balsams,

And that balm shall heal thine own,

Is the heart a well left empty?

None but God its void can fill:
Nothing but a ceaseless fountain
Can its ceaseless longing still.
Is the heart a living power?
Silent win'd, its strength sinks low
It can only live in loving,
And by serving love will grow.

Eternal Punishment

We have received a communication on the deeply solemn subject of eternal punishment, from a person whose initials are "C. D. S.," and who would seem to be the exponent of the feelings of a very numerous class. Our correspondent does not, by any means, write as an objector, or a caviler, but as an honest enquirer; and we are not sorry to be called upon to bear a clear and decided testimony on a point of such grave moment. He asks us to let him know what the Holy Ghost has taught us on the subject, and we cheerfully comply.

We believe the word of God most clearly and fully teaches the eternity of punishment. The word which is rendered "everlasting," or "eternal," occurs about seventy times in the New Testament. We shall give some examples. "To be cast into everlasting fire." (Matt. 18:8.) "That I may have eternal life." (Matt. 19:16.) "These shall go away into everlasting punishment." (Matt. 25:46.) And in the same verse, "The righteous into life eternal." "Is in danger of eternal damnation." (Mark 3:29.) "They may receive you into everlasting habitations." (Luke 14:9.) "In the world to come life everlasting." (Luke 18:39.) "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." (John 3:15, 16, 36; 5:21.) "The commandment of the everlasting God." (Rom. 16:23.) "An exceeding and eternal weight of glory." (2 Cor. 4:17.) "The things which are not seen are eternal." (Ver. 18.) "An house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." (Chap. 5:1.) "They shall be punished with everlasting destruction." (2 Thess. 1:9.) "Hath given us everlasting consolation." (Chap. ii. 16.) "In Christ Jesus with eternal glory." (2 Tim. 2:10.) "The author of eternal salvation." (Heb. 5:9.) "Having obtained eternal redemption." (Chap. 9:12.) "Who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God." (Ver. 14.) "The promise of eternal inheritance." (Ver. 16.) "Called us unto Ids eternal glory." (1 Pet. 5:10.) "Into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior." (2 Pet. 1:11.) "This is the true God and eternal life." (1 John 5:20.) "Suffering the vengeance of eternal fire." (Jude 7.)

Now, we are aware that the opposers of the doctrine of eternal punishment endeavor to prove that the word everlasting does not mean everlasting in the Greek: and this is one reason why we have quoted such a number of passages in which the Greek word αἰώνιος, (aionios,) occurs, and in which the Holy Ghost applies it in such a variety of ways. The word which is applied to the punishment of the wicked is also applied to the life which believers possess, to the salvation and redemption in which they rejoice; to the glory to which they look forward; to those mansions in which they hope to dwell: and to the inheritance which they expect to enjoy. Moreover, it is applied to God, and to the Spirit. If, therefore, it be maintained that the word "everlasting" does not mean everlasting, then applied to the punishment of the wicked, what security have we that it means everlasting when applied to the life, blessedness, and glory of the redeemed? What warrant has any one, be he ever so learned, to single out seven instances from the seventy in which the Greek word aionios is used, and say that in those seven it does not mean everlasting, but that in all the rest it does? We believe none whatever. Men may reason as they will about divine benevolence and goodness—about its being inconsistent with the mercy of God to permit such a thing as eternal punishment—as to the strange want of proportion between a few years of sin and an endless eternity of punishment. A single line of holy Scripture is amply sufficient, in our judgment,

to sweep away ten thousand such reasonings, even though supported by the learned dogma that everlasting does not mean everlasting in the Greek. "Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." (Mark 9:46.) Solemn statement! Let men beware of trifling with it, or reasoning about it. Let them believe it, and flee from the wrath to come—flee, now, to Jesus, who died on Calvary's cursed tree to deliver us from everlasting bummers.

But not only is the eternity of punishment clearly laid down in Scripture—as clearly as the eternity of God Himself, or of anything pertaining to Him; we believe it also flows as a necessary truth from other truths which are generally received without a single question. Take, for instance, the immortality of the soul. Did the fall of man touch this question? We believe not. Man was made the possessor of an immortal spirit, by the breath of the Almighty; and we have no authority whatsoever to say that his fall made any difference as to this. Immortal he was, as to his soul, immortal he is, and immortal he must be. Yes; he must live forever, somewhere. Tremendous thought! Many do not like it. They would fain be able to say, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die." They would like to pass away as the beasts that perish; and this very desire, we doubt not, has been, in many cases, the parent of the notion that punishment is non-eternal. "The wish is father to the thought." But, ah! man must face that dreadful reality, ETERNITY. Saved or unsaved, there is no escaping that. He must either deny the immortality of the soul, or admit the eternity of punishment.

Again, take the doctrine of the atonement. If anything less than eternal punishment be due to sin, what need was there of an infinite sacrifice to give deliverance from that punishment? Could nothing less than the peerless, priceless, divine sacrifice of the Son of God deliver any one from hell fire, and that fire not be eternal? Did Jesus shed His precious blood to deliver us from the consequences of our guilt, and those consequences be only temporary? We can never admit any such proposition. Grant us the truth of an infinite sacrifice, and we argue from thence the truth of eternal punishment. We attach no weight whatever to the argument drawn from the lack of proportion between a few years of sin and an eternity of woe. We do not believe that this is the true way to measure the matter. The cross is the only measure by which to reach a true result; and we believe the deniers of eternal punishment offer dishonor to the cross, by lowering it into a means of deliverance from a doom which is not eternal in its duration.

And, now, one word as to the idea of its being incompatible with the character of God to allow such a thing as eternal punishment. Many seem to attach great weight to this. They appear to think that eternal misery could never comport with divine mercy and goodness. But those who urge this plea seem to forget that there is another side of the question which must, be looked at if we would reach a sound conclusion on the point. What about, divine justice, holiness, and truth? Are these things not to be taken into account? Can we base an argument on some of the divine attributes and leave others out? Surely not. We must look at them all. The cross of Christ has harmonized them all in the view of all created intelligences. In that cross God has set forth His perfect love to the sinner; but He has also set forth His perfect hatred of sin. Now, if a man deliberately rejects that only way of escape—that perfect remedy—that divine provision, what is to be done? God cannot let sin into His presence. He is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity. Will the deniers of eternal punishment tell us what is to be done? How is this question to be settled? They say by annihilation, that is, by man's perishing like a beast! Ah! this will never do. "The Lord God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul." (Gen.

2:7.) Was this ever revoked? Is there a shadow of foundation, in the entire Book of God, for the theory of annihilation? If there is, let it be produced.

We look upon it as a most miserable subterfuge - a pitiable attempt to get rid of the awful thought of eternity. But it will not do. Let man but cast his eye on the page of inspiration, and there he sees that tremendous word, "Eternity! Eternity! Eternity!" Let him but lend his ear to the voice that issues from the depths of his moral being, and he will hear the same soul-subduing word, "Eternity! Eternity! Eternity!" he cannot get rid of it He cannot shake it off. He is shut up to the stern fact that he must live forever.

Well, then, what about his sin? That cannot get into God's presence. God and sin can never be together. This is a fixed principle. God is good, no doubt, and the proof of His goodness is the gift of His Son. But that He is holy, and between holiness and sin there must be an eternal separation; so that we are forced to the same solemn conclusion, namely, that all those who die in their sins—all who die in the rejection of God's infinite provision for the forgiveness of sins, will have to endure the consequences of those sins in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, throughout the countless ages of eternity.

We shall not argue the matter further in this paper; but we would most earnestly beseech the unconverted reader to pause and seriously consider this most momentous question. Let him not be deceived by vain words. Let him not hearken to a false criticism which would fain persuade him that eternal does not mean eternal in this Greek, for oh! most assuredly, it does mean eternal whether in Hebrew, Greek, Latin, or English. Eternal can never mean temporal, or temporal eternal, in any language under heaven. And, furthermore, let him not hearken to a false sentimentality which would fain persuade him that God is too kind to consign any of His creatures to hell fire. God was so kind as to "give His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life." But God is too holy to let sin into heaven; and hence, instead of feeding himself with the vain hope, if hope it can be called, of annihilation, let him build upon the sure word of God which tells him of full, free, and everlasting salvation through the blood of the Lamb. Our God has no pleasure in the death of a sinner. His long-suffering is salvation, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. There is no reason why the reader should perish. God waits to be gracious. Mercy's door stands wide open, and the sword of judgment is in the scabbard. But the moment is rapidly approaching when all shall be changed, and then all who die in their sins will prove, by bitter experience, that notwithstanding all the arguments founded upon a false criticism and a false sentimentality, the punishment of sin is, and must be, eternal.

A Fervent Aspiration

Jesus, my spirit fain would soar
High—higher, and evermore
Rest,—rest my God on thee.
Yea, gladly would I flee away,
This vale is dark, and I would stay
Nigh Thee, my God; and gaze for aye—
Gaze—gaze, my Lord, on Thee.
E'en as my fettered spirit scales,
The garnished wall of glory vails
Thy face, my Lord, from me;
Yet when with faith's transpiercing sight,
I catch a glimpse of glory bright;
Then ravished in the heavenly light,
I seek, my Lord, for Thee.
'Tis not enough to charm the eye,
E'en there, my longing soul would cry,
"Jesus" my Lord, for Thee.
The' I should rest on seas of glass.
The harps, and crowns of gold, I'd pass,
Knowing thyself must all surpass,
Jesus—I would see Thee.
And now my constant rest would be
This "little while" in serving Thee,
Watching, my Lord, for Thee.
Whilst in Thy footprints hard I press,
Spotless I'd keep my glorious dress,

Jesus, my Lord, my Righteousness,
Whiter I'll shine near Thee.
Come quickly, Oh come quickly here,
Thy saints' expecting souls to cheer,
Jesus by meeting Thee.
Our Bridegroom Thou, oh, wondrous sight;
Our God, our Life, our Rest, our Light,
Our Morning Star—our day-spring bright,
Jesus, we wait with Thee.
A.C.T.

Final Perseverance: Part 1

(In reply to "S. A. D.")

Dear Friend,

Your letter treats of a deeply important subject—far too important indeed to be disposed of in a few hasty lines under the head of "Correspondents." The question of final perseverance, though, in our judgment, a very simple one, has perplexed a great many; and the questions which you introduce to our notice, and the passages of Scripture which you adduce, furnish abundant proof that your own mind is not quite clear or settled on the point. It may be, however, that the object of your communication is rather to superinduce such a discussion of the doctrine, in the light of holy Scripture, as may prove helpful to others, than to obtain any aid for yourself. However this may be, we are always happy to give our readers and correspondents the benefit of any light with which the Lord may have graciously favored us, in reference to subjects of common interest to all lovers of truth.

In seeking, then, to reply to your interesting letter, we have three things to do, namely, first, to establish the doctrine of final perseverance, or in other words, the eternal security of all Christ's members; secondly, to answer the questions which you have given us, and which we take to be those usually or frequently put by the opposers of the doctrine; and, thirdly, to expound those texts which you have quoted, and in which you seem to find considerable difficulty. May the Holy Spirit be our teacher, and may He give us minds entirely subject to Scripture, so that we may be able to form a sound judgment on the question now before us.

1. And, first, as to the doctrine of final perseverance; it seems to us exceedingly clear and exceedingly simple, if only we look at it in immediate connection with Christ Himself. This indeed is the only true way to look at any doctrine. Christ is the soul, center, and life of all doctrine. A doctrine separated from Christ becomes a lifeless, powerless, worthless dogma—a mere idea in the mind—a mere item in the creed. Hence, therefore, we must look at every truth as it stands connected with Christ. We must make Him our point of view. It is only as we keep near to Him, and look at all points from that one grand point, that we can have a correct view of any point. If, for example, I make self my point of view, and look from thence at the subject of final perseverance, I shall be sure to get a false view altogether, inasmuch as it then becomes a question of my perseverance, and anything of mine must, necessarily be doubtful.

But if, on the other hand, I make Christ my viewing point, and look at the subject from thence, I shall be sure to have a correct view, inasmuch as it then becomes a question of Christ's perseverance, and I am quite sure that He must persevere, and that no power of the world, the flesh, or the devil can ever hinder His final perseverance in the salvation of those whom He has purchased with His own blood, seeing "He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him." This, surely, is final perseverance. It matters not what the difficulty, or what the hostile power may be. "He is able to save to the uttermost." The world, with its ten thousand

snare, is against us; but “He is able.” Indwelling sin, in its ten thousand workings, is against us; but “He is able.” Satan, with his ten thousand devices, is against us; but “He is able.” In a word, it is Christ’s ability, not ours; it is Christ’s faithfulness, not ours; it is Christ’s final perseverance, not ours. All depends upon Him, as to this weighty matter. He has purchased His sheep, and surely He will keep them to the best of His ability; and, seeing that “All power is given unto him in heaven and on earth,” His sheep must be perfectly and forever safe. If aught could touch the life of the feeblest lamb in all the flock of Christ, He could not be said to have “all power.”

Thus it is immensely important to consider the question of final perseverance in inseparable connection with Christ. Difficulties vanish. Doubts and fears are chased away. The heart becomes established, the conscience relieved, the understanding enlightened. It is impossible that one who forms a part of Christ’s body can ever perish; and the believer is this, “We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.” (Eph. 5:30.) Every member of the body of Christ was written in the book of the slain Lamb, before the foundation of the world, nor can anything or anyone ever obliterate that writing. Hear what our Lord Jesus Christ saith, in reference to those that are His; “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any (man, devil or anyone else) pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me is greater than all; and no man (οὐδεὶς) is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand.” John 10:27 - 29.

Here, then, most assuredly, we have final perseverance, and that moreover, not merely the perseverance of the saints, but of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Yes, dear friend, this is the way we would have you view the matter. It is the final perseverance of the Holy Trinity. It is the perseverance of the Holy Ghost in opening the ears of the sheep. It is the perseverance of the Son in receiving all whose ears are thus opened. And, finally, it is the perseverance of the Father, in keeping, through His own name, the blood-bought flock in the hollow of His everlasting hand. This is plain enough. We must either admit the truth - the consolatory and sustaining truth of final perseverance, or succumb to the blasphemous proposition that the enemy of God and man can carry his point against the Holy and Eternal Trinity. We see no middle ground. “Salvation is of the Lord,” from first to last. It is free, unconditional, everlasting salvation. It reaches down to where the sinner is in all his guilt, ruin, and degradation, and bears him up to where God is, in all His holiness, truth, and righteousness, and it endures forever. God the Father is its source, God the Son is its channel, and God the Holy Ghost is the power of application and enjoyment. It is all of God, from beginning to end, from foundation to top-stone, from everlasting to everlasting. If it were not so, it would be presumptuous folly to speak of final perseverance; but, seeing it is so, it would be presumptuous unbelief to think of aught else.

True, there are great and manifold difficulties in the way—difficulties before, and difficulties after conversion. There are many and powerful adversaries; but that is the very reason why we must keep the question of final perseverance entirely clear of self and all its belongings, and make it repose simply upon God. It matters not, in the least, what the difficulties or the adversaries may be, for faith can ever triumphantly inquire, “If God be for us, who can be against us?” And, again, “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, for thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor

principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Rom. 8:35-39.

Here, again, we have final perseverance taught, in the clearest and strongest way possible. "Not any creature shall be able to separate us." Neither self, in all its forms, nor Satan, in all his wiles and machinations, nor the world in all its allurements, or all its scorn, can ever separate the "us" of Rom. 8:39, from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. No doubt persons may be deceived, and they may deceive others. Spurious cases may arise; counterfeit conversions may take place. Persons may seem to run well for a time and then break down. The blossoms of spring time may not be followed by the mellow fruits of autumn. Such things may be, and, moreover, true believers may fail in many things. They may stumble and break down in their course. They may have ample cause for self-judgment and humiliation, in the practical details of life. But, allowing the widest possible margin for all these things, the precious doctrine of final perseverance remains unshaken—yea untouched, upon its own divine and eternal foundation. "I give unto my sheep eternal (not temporary or conditional) life, and they shall never perish." And again, "Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." People may argue as they will, and base their arguments on cases which have come under their notice, from time to time, in the history of professing Christians; but, looking at the subject from a divine point of view, and basing our convictions on the sure and unerring word of God, we maintain that all who belong to the "us" of Rom. 8, the "sheep" of John 10, and the church" of Matt. 16, are as safe as Christ can make them, and this we conceive to be the sum and substance of the doctrine of final perseverance.

2. And now, dear friend, we shall, in the second place, briefly and pointedly reply to the questions which you have put before us.

1. "Will a believer be saved, no matter into what course of sin he may fall, and die in?" A true believer will, infallibly, be saved; but we consider that salvation includes not only full deliverance from the future consequences of sin, but from the present power and practice thereof. And, hence, if we find a person living in sin, and yet talking about his assurance of salvation, we look upon him as an antinomian and not a saved person at all. "If we say that we have fellowship with him and walk in darkness, we lie and do not the truth." The believer may fall, but he will be lifted up; he may be overtaken, but he will be restored; he may wander, but he will be brought back, because Christ is able to save to the uttermost, and not one of His little ones shall perish.

2. "Will the Holy Spirit dwell in a heart where evil and unholy thoughts are indulged?" The body of the believer is the temple of the Holy Ghost. (1 Cor. 6:19.) And this precious truth is the solid ground of exhortation to purity and holiness of heart and life. We are exhorted not to grieve the Holy Spirit. To "indulge" evil and unholy thoughts is not christian walk at all. The Christian may be assaulted, grieved, and harassed, by evil thoughts, and, in such a case, he has only to look to Christ for victory. Proper christian walk is thus expressed, in John's first epistle, "We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not." (Chap. 5:18.) This is the divine side of the question. Alas! we know there is the human side likewise; but we judge the human side by the divine. We do not lower the divine to meet the human, but ever aim at the divine notwithstanding the human. We should never

be satisfied with anything lower than 1 John 5:18. It is by keeping up the true standard, that we may expect to raise our moral tone. To talk of having the Spirit and yet “indulge” in evil and unholy thoughts is, in our judgment, the ancient Nicolaitanism, (Rev. 2:6, 15) or modern antinomianism.

3. “If it be so, then will not people say, they may live as they like? “Well, how does a true Christian like to live? As like Christ as possible. If one had put this question to Paul, what would have been his answer? 2 Cor. 5:14, 15, and Phil. 3:7 - 14, furnish the reply. It is to be feared that the persons who ask such questions know but little of Christ. We can quite understand a person getting entangled in the meshes of a one-sided theological system, and being perplexed by the conflicting dogmas of systematic divinity; but we believe that the man who draws a plea from the freedom, sovereignty, and eternal stability of the grace of God, to continue in sin, knows nothing of christianity at all, has neither part nor lot in the matter, but is in a truly awful and dangerous condition.

As to the case which you adduce, of the young man who heard a minister stating in his sermon that, “Once a child always a child,” and who took occasion from that to plunge into, and continue in, open sin, it is only one of thousands. We believe the minister was right in what he said, but the young man was wrong in what he did. To judge the words of the former by the acts of the latter is utterly false. What should I think of my son if he were to say, “Once a son always a son, and therefore I may proceed to smash my father’s windows and do all sorts of mischief?” We judge the minister’s statement by the word of God, and pronounce it true. We judge the young man’s conduct by the same rule, and pronounce it false. The matter is quite simple. We have no reason to believe that the unhappy young man ever really tasted the true grace of God, for if he had, he would love and cultivate and exhibit holiness. The Christian has to struggle with sin; but struggling with it and wallowing in it, are two totally different ideas. In the one case, we can count on Christ’s sympathy and grace; in the other, we are actually blaspheming His name by implying that He is the minister of sin.

We consider it a very serious mistake to set about judging the truth of God by the actings of men. All who do so must reach a false conclusion. The true way is just to reverse the order. Get hold of God’s truth first, and then judge everything by that. Set up the divine standard and test everything thereby. Set up the public scales and weigh every man’s load therein. The scales must not be regulated by each man’s load, but each man’s load tested by the scales. If ten thousand professors were to fall away and live and die in open sin, it would not shake our confidence in the divine doctrine of final perseverance. The self-same word that proves the doctrine to be true, proves them to be false. “They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.” (1 John 2:19.) “The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his. And let everyone that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.” 2 Tim. 2:12.

(To be continued if the Lord will)

Final Perseverance: Part 2

Dear Friend,

We shall now proceed to examine the various passages of scripture which, as you say, are generally adduced by those who seek to overthrow the doctrine of final perseverance. But, before doing so, we deem it of importance to lay down the following fundamental principle which will, in our judgment, be found most helpful in the interpretation of scripture generally. The principle is very simple. No one passage of holy scripture can, by any possibility, contradict another. If, therefore, there be a seeming contradiction, it must arise from our want of spiritual intelligence. Thus, for example, if any one were to quote Jas. 2:24, in defense of the doctrine of justification by works, I might not be able to answer him. It is quite possible that thousands, like Luther, have been sadly perplexed by that passage. They may feel the fullest and clearest assurance that they are justified, and that not by any works that they have done, but simply "By faith of Jesus Christ;" and yet be wholly unable to explain these words of James, "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only."

Now, how is one to meet such a difficulty as this? He really does not understand the apostle James. He is involved in much perplexity by the apparent contradiction between James and Paul. What is he to do? Just to apply the principle above stated. No one passage of scripture can possibly contradict another. As well might we apprehend a collision between two of the heavenly bodies, while moving in their divinely appointed orbits, as that two inspired writers could possibly clash in their statements. Well, then, I read in Rom. 4:5, such plain words as these, "But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." Here I find works entirely excluded, as a ground of justification, and faith alone recognized. So also, in chapter 3. I read, "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified without (or apart from) works of law." (χωρὶς ἔργων νομον.) And, again, "Being justified by faith we have peace with God." Exactly similar is the teaching in the epistle to the Galatians, where we read such plain words as these, "Knowing that a man is not justified by works of law, but by faith of Jesus Christ, even we (Jews) have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by faith of Christ (ἐκ πίστεως) and not by works of law: for by works of law shall no flesh be justified." Chap. 2:16.

In all these passages, and many more which might be quoted, works are sedulously excluded as a ground of justification, and that, too, in language so plain that a wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err therein. If, therefore, we cannot explain Jas. 2:24, we must either deny its inspiration or have recourse to our principle, namely, that no one passage of holy scripture can possibly contradict another, and so remain, with unshaken confidence, and unruffled repose, rejoicing in the grand foundation truth of justification by faith alone, apart from law-works altogether.

Having called the reader's attention to the famous passage in Jas. 2, it may not be amiss to offer him, in passing, a word or two of exhortation which will help him in the understanding of it. There is a little word in verse 14 which will furnish the key to the entire passage. The inspired apostle inquires, "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith? "Had he said, "What

doth it profit though a man have faith?" the difficulty would be insuperable, the perplexity hopeless. But the important word "say" quite removes all difficulty, and unfolds, in the simplest possible way, the point which the apostle has in his mind. We might inquire, "What doth it profit though a man say he hath, ten thousand a year, if he have it not?"

Now, we are aware that the word "say" is constantly left out in quoting Jas. 2:14. Some have even ventured to assert that it is not in the original. But any who can read Greek has only to look at the passage, and he will see the word *ἔφη* (legee - say) placed there by the Holy Ghost, and left there by all our leading editors and Biblical critics; nor can we well conceive a word of more vital importance in a passage. Its influence, we believe, is felt throughout the entire contest in which it occurs. There is no use in a man merely saying he has faith; but if he really has it, it "profits" him for time and eternity, inasmuch as it connects him with Christ, and puts him in full and inalienable possession of all that Christ has done, and all that He is for us before God.

This leads us to another point, which will greatly tend to clear away the seeming contradiction between the two inspired apostles, Paul and James. There is a very material difference between law-works and life-works. Paul jealously excludes the former; James as jealously insists on the latter. But, be it carefully noted, that it is only the former that Paul excludes; as it is only the latter that James insists on. The acts of Abraham and Rahab were not law-works but life-works. They were the genuine fruits of faith, apart from which they would have possessed no justifying virtue whatever.

It is well worthy of note that, with the history of four thousand years before Him, the Holy Ghost, in the apostle, should have fixed upon two such works as that of Abraham in Gen. 22 and that of Rahab in Josh. 2. He does not adduce some acts of charity, or benevolence, though surely He might easily have selected many such from the vast mass of materials which lay before Him. But, as if anticipating the use that the enemy would make of the passage now before us, He takes care to select two such illustrations of His thesis as prove, beyond all question, that it is life-works and not law-works, He is insisting upon, and leave wholly untouched the priceless doctrine of justification by faith, apart from works of law.

Finally, if any should feel disposed to inquire as to the difference between law-works and life-works, it is simply this; law-works are such as are done in order to get life: life-works are the genuine fruits of life possessed. And how do we get life? By believing on the Son of God. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my words, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life." (John 5:24.) We must have life before we can do anything; and we get life not by "saying" we have faith, but by really having it, and when we have it, we will manifest the precious fruits thereof, to the glory of God.

Thus, then, we not only implicitly believe that Paul and James must harmonize, but we can plainly see that they do.

Having thus sought to define and illustrate our principle, we shall leave you, dear friend, to apply it in the various cases of difficulty and perplexity which may come before you in the study of scripture, while we endeavor to expound, as the Lord may enable us, the important passages of scripture which you have laid before us.

1. The first quotation is from the second epistle of Peter. "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction." (Chap. 2:1.) The difficulty of this passage arises, we suppose, from the expression, "Denying the Lord that bought them." But there is in reality no difficulty whatever in these words. The Lord has a double claim on every man, woman, and child beneath the canopy of heaven. He has a claim founded on creation, and a claim founded on redemption. It is to the latter of these two that the apostle refers. The false teachers will not merely deny the Lord that made them, but even the Lord that bought them. It is of importance to see this. It will help to clear away many difficulties. The Lord Jesus has a purchased right over every member of the human family. The Father has given Him power over all flesh. Hence the sin of those who deny Him. It would be sin to deny Him as Creator. It is a greater sin to deny Him as Redeemer. It is not, at all, a question of regeneration. The apostle does not say, "Denying the Lord that quickened them." This would indeed be a difficulty; but as the passage stands, it leaves wholly untouched the truth of final perseverance.

2. The second passage occurs at the close of the same chapter, verses 20 and 22. "For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning.....But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire." The diffusion of scriptural knowledge and evangelical light may and does frequently exert an amazing influence upon the conduct and character of persons who have never known the saving, quickening, emancipating, power of the gospel of Christ. Indeed it is hardly possible for an open Bible to be circulated, or a free gospel to be preached, without producing very striking results which, after all, will be found to fall far short of the grand result of regeneration. Many gross habits may be abandoned, many "pollutions" laid aside, under the influence of a merely intellectual "knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ," while, at the same time, the heart has never really been savingly reached at all. Now, it will be invariably found that when persons shake off the influence of evangelical light—even though that influence never extended beyond their outward conduct—they are sure to plunge into greater depths of evil, and greater excesses of worldliness and folly than ever; "The latter end is worse with them than the beginning." The devil takes delight in dragging the quondam professor through deeper mire than that in which he wallowed in the days of his ignorance and thoughtless folly. Hence the urgent need of pressing on all with whom we have to do, the importance of making sure work of it, so that the knowledge of truth may not merely affect their external conduct, but reach the heart and impart that life which, when once possessed, can never be lost. There is nothing in this passage to terrify the sheep of Christ; but very much to warn those who, though they may, for a time, put on the outward appearance of sheep, have never been, inwardly, aught but as the dog and the sow.

3. Eze. 18:24, 26. "But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die.....When a righteous man turneth away from his righteousness and committeth iniquity, and dieth in them; for his iniquity, that he hath done, shall he die." With this we may connect your reference to 2 Chron. 15:2, "The

Lord is with you while ye be with him: and if ye seek him, he will be found of you: but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you.” We feel constrained, dear friend, to say that it evidences a sad want of spiritual intelligence to adduce such passages of scripture as bearing, in any way, upon the truth of the final perseverance of Christ’s members. These and numberless other scriptures, in the Old Testament, as well as many similar passages in the New Testament, unfold to us the deeply important subject of God’s moral government.

Now, to be merely a subject of God’s government, is one thing; to be a subject of His unchangeable grace is another. We should never confound them. To elaborate this point, and refer to the various passages which illustrate and enforce it, would demand a volume; we would here only add our full persuasion that no one can understand the word of God who does not accurately distinguish between man under government, and man under grace. In the one case, he is looked at as walking down here, in the place of responsibility and danger; in the other, he is looked at as associated with Christ above, in the place of inalienable privilege and eternal security. These two Old Testament scriptures to which you have referred us are entirely governmental, and, as a consequence, have nothing whatever to do with the question of final perseverance.

4. Matt. 12:45. “Then goeth he and taketh with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be unto this wicked generation.” This closing sentence of this passage quite explains the whole context. Our Lord is describing the moral condition of the Jewish people. The spirit of idolatry had gone out of them, but only for a time, and to return again, in seven-fold energy and intensity, rendering their last state worse, by far, than aught that has yet appeared in their most marvelous history. This passage, taken in a secondary way, may be, very intelligently applied to an individual, who, having undergone a certain moral change, and exhibited a measure of improvement in his outward conduct, afterward falls back and becomes more openly corrupt and vicious than ever.

5. 2 John 1:8, 9 John, 8, 9. “Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward. Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.” In verse 8, the apostle exhorts the elect lady and her children to look to themselves lest, by any means, he should, lose aught of the fruit of his ministry. They were to form part of his reward in the coming day of glory, and he longed to present them faultless, in the presence of that glory, that his reward might be full. Verse 9 needs no explanation. It is solemnly plain. If one does not abide in the doctrine of Christ, he has got nothing. Let slip the truth as to Christ, and you have no security as to anything. The Christian most assuredly needs to walk watchfully in order to escape the manifold snares and temptations which surround him; but whether is that watchfulness better promoted by placing his feet upon the shifting sand of his own performances, or by fixing them firmly upon the rock of God’s eternal salvation? Whether am I in a more favorable position for the exercise of watchfulness and prayer, while living in perpetual doubt and fear, or reposing in artless confidence, in the unchangeable love of my Savior-God? We think, dear friend, we may very safely anticipate your reply.

6. Revelation 3:11. “Behold, I come quickly; hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.” Two things are here to be considered, namely, first, this is an address to an assembly;

and, secondly, it does not say, "That no man take thy life." A servant may lose his reward; but a child can never lose his eternal life. Attention to this would remove a host of difficulties, Sonship is one thing; discipleship is quite another. Security in Christ is one thing; testimony for Christ is quite another. If our security were dependent upon our testimony—our sonship upon our discipleship, where should we be? True, the more I know my security and enjoy my sonship, the more effective will be my testimony, and the more faithful my discipleship, but these things must never be confounded.

In conclusion, dear friend, you say that "All those texts which speak of enduring to the end, and overcoming, are thought to mean that, since there is a possibility of our not doing so, we may not be saved in the end." As to this we would merely add that we shall be most happy, at any time, to enter with you upon close examination of every one of those passages to which you, in this general way, refer, and to prove, by the grace of God, that not one of them, when rightly interpreted, militates, in the smallest degree, against the precious truth of final perseverance; but that, on the contrary, each passage contains within itself, or within its immediate context, that which will clearly prove its perfect harmony—with the truth of the eternal security of the very feeblest lamb in all the blood-bought flock of Christ.

May the Lord establish our souls, more and more firmly, in His own truth, and preserve us unto His heavenly kingdom, to the glory of His holy name!

Forgiveness of Sins: Part 1

“Oh! the blessedness; transgression forgiven; sin covered.” This, truly, is blessedness, and without this, blessedness must be unknown. To have the full assurance that my sins are all forgiven, is the only foundation of true happiness. To be happy without this, is to be happy on the brink of a yawning gulf into which I may, at any moment, be dashed forever. It is utterly impossible that anyone can enjoy solid happiness until he is possessed of the divine assurance that all his guilt has been canceled by the blood of the cross. Uncertainty as to this, must be the fruitful source of mental anguish to any soul who has ever been led to feel the burden of sin. To be in doubt as to whether my guilt was all borne by Jesus or is yet on my conscience, is to be miserable.

Now, before proceeding to unfold the subject of forgiveness, I should like to ask my reader a very plain, pointed, personal question, namely, “Dost thou believe that thou canst have the clear and settled assurance that thy sins are forgiven?” I ask this question, at the outset, because there are many, now-a-days, who profess to preach the gospel of Christ, and yet deny that anyone can be sure that his sins are forgiven. They maintain that it is presumption for anyone to believe in the forgiveness of his sins; and, on the other hand, they look upon it as a proof of humility to be always in doubt as to this most momentous point. In other words, it is presumption to believe what God says, and humility to doubt it. This seems strange in the face of such passages as the following, “Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.” (Luke 24:46, 47.) “In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.” Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14.

Here we have remission or forgiveness of sins (the word is the same in the three passages) preached in the name of Jesus, and possessed by those who believed that preaching. A proclamation was sent to the Ephesians and Colossians, as belonging to the “all nations,” telling them of forgiveness of sins, in the name of Jesus. They believed this proclamation, and entered on the possession of the forgiveness of sins. Was this presumption on their part? or would it have been piety and humility to doubt the forgiveness of sins? True, they had been great sinners, “dead in trespasses and sins—children of wrath—aliens and foreigners—enemies by wicked works.” Some of them had, doubtless, bowed the knee to Diana. They had lived in gross idolatry and all manner of wickedness. But then, “forgiveness of sins” had been preached to them in the name of Jesus. Was this preaching true, or was it not? Was it for them, or was it not? Was it all a dream—a shadow—a mist? Did it mean nothing? Was there nothing sure, nothing certain, nothing solid about it?

These are plain questions, demanding a plain answer from those who assert that no one can know for certain that his sins are forgiven. If indeed no one can know it now, then how could anyone have known it in apostolic times? If it could be known in the first century, then why not in the nineteenth? “David describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, ‘Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose

sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.” (Rom. 4:6 - 8.) Hezekiah could say, “Thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back.” (Isa. 38:17.) The Lord Jesus said to one, in His day, “Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee.” Matt. 9:2.

Thus, at all times, forgiveness of sins was known with all the certainty which the word of God could give. Any one of the cases adduced above is sufficient to overthrow the teaching of those who assert that no one can know that his sins are forgiven. If I find from scripture that anyone ever knew this marvelously precious blessing, that is quite enough for me. Now, when I open my Bible, I find persons, who had been guilty of all manner of sins, brought to the knowledge of forgiveness; and I therefore argue that it is possible for the very vilest sinner to know, now, with divine certainty, that his sins are forgiven. Was it presumption in Abraham, in David, in Hezekiah, in the palsied man, and in numbers besides, to believe in the forgiveness of sins? Would it have been a sign of humility and true piety in them to doubt? It will, perhaps, be argued that these were all special and extraordinary cases. Well, it matters not, so far as our present question is concerned, whether they were ordinary or extraordinary. One thing is plain, they completely disprove the assertion that no one can know that his sins are forgiven. The word of God teaches me that numbers, subject to like passions, like infirmities, like failures, and like sins as the writer and reader, were brought to know and rejoice in the full forgiveness of sins, and hence those who maintain that no one can be sure on this momentous question, have no scriptural foundation for their opinion.

But is it true that the cases recorded in the holy scripture are so special and extraordinary as not to afford any precedent for us? By no means. If any case could be so regarded it is surely that of Abraham, and yet of him we read that “ It was not written for his sake alone, that righteousness was imputed to him; but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification.” (Rom. 4:23-25.) “Abraham believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness.” (Gen. 15:6.) And the Holy Ghost declares that righteousness shall be imputed to us also, if we believe. “Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are justified from all things from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.” (Acts 13:38, 39.) “ To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.” Acts 10:43.

Now, the question is, what did the Apostles Peter and Paul mean, when they so unreservedly preached the forgiveness of sins to those who listened to them? Did they really mean to convey to their hearers the idea that no one could be sure that he possessed this forgiveness of sins? When, in the synagogue of Antioch, Paul said to his audience, “We declare unto you glad tidings” did he entertain the notion that no one could be sure that his sins were forgiven? How could the gospel ever be called “glad tidings” if its only effect was to leave the soul in doubt and anxiety? If indeed it be true that no one can enjoy the assurance of pardon, then the whole style of apostolic preaching should be reversed. We might then expect to find Paul saying to his hearers, “Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that no one can ever know, in this life, whether his sins are forgiven or not.” Is there aught like this in the entire range of apostolic preaching and teaching? Do not the apostles everywhere set forth, in the fullest and clearest manner, remission of sins as the necessary result of believing in a crucified and risen Savior? Is there the most remote hint of that which is so much insisted upon by some modern teachers, namely, that it is a dangerous

presumption to believe in the full forgiveness of all our sins, and that it argues a pious and humble frame of soul to live in perpetual doubt? Is there no possibility of ever enjoying, in this world, the comfortable certainty of our eternal security in Christ? Can we not rely upon God's word, or commit our souls to the sacrifice of Christ? Can it be possible that the only effect of God's glad tidings is to leave the soul in hopeless perplexity? Christ has put away sin; but I cannot know it! God has spoken; but I cannot be sure! The Holy Ghost has come down; but I cannot rely upon his testimony! It is piety and humility to doubt God's word, to dishonor the atonement of Christ, and to refuse the faith of the heart to the record of the Holy Ghost! Alas! alas! if this is the gospel, then adieu to peace and joy in believing. If this is Christianity, then in vain has "the dayspring from on high visited us to give the knowledge of salvation through the remission of our sins." (Luke 1) If no one can have this "knowledge of salvation," then to what end has it been given?

And let my reader bear in mind that the question before us is not whether a person may not deceive himself and others. This would be at once ceded. Thousands, alas! have deceived themselves, and thousands more have deceived others. But is that any reason why I cannot possess the absolute certainty that what God has said is true, and that the work of Christ has availed to put away all my sins? Men have deceived themselves, and therefore I am afraid to trust Christ! Men have deceived others, and therefore I am afraid that God's word will deceive me! This is really what it all amounts to, when put into plain language. And is it not well to have things thus put? Is it not needful, at times, to strip certain propositions of the dress in which legality and fleshly pietism would clothe them, so that we may see what they are? Does it not behoove us, when men stand forth as the professed and authorized exponents of a sound and enlightened Christianity, to test what they say by the unerring standard of holy scripture? Assuredly it does; and if they tell us we can never be sure of salvation; and that it is presumption to think of such a thing; and, further, that the very utmost we can attain to in this life is a faint hope that, through the mercy of God, we may get to heaven when we die; we must utterly reject such teaching, as being in direct opposition to the word of God. False theology tells me I can never be sure, God's word tells me I can. Which am I to believe? The former fills me with gloomy doubts and fears; the latter imparts divine certainty. That casts me upon my own efforts; this upon a finished work. To which shall I attend? Is there a shadow of foundation, throughout the entire volume of God, for the notion that no one can be sure of his eternal salvation? I most fearlessly assert there is not. So far from this, the word of God, in every section of it, sets before us, in the clearest way, the privilege of the believer to enjoy the most unclouded certainty as to his pardon and acceptance in Christ.

And, let me ask, is it not due to God's faithful word, and Christ's finished work, that the soul confiding therein should enjoy the fullest assurance? True, it is by faith that anyone can so confide, and this faith is wrought in the heart by the Holy Ghost. But all this, in nowise, affects our present question. What I desire is that my reader should rise from the study of this paper with a full and firm conviction that it is possible for him to possess the present assurance that he is as safe as Christ can make him. If any sinner ever enjoyed this assurance, then why may not my reader now enjoy it? Is Christ's work finished? Is God's word true? Yes, verily. Then, if I simply trust therein, I am pardoned, justified, and accepted. All my sins were laid on Jesus when He was nailed to the cursed tree. Jehovah made them all meet on Him. He bore them and put them away; and, now, He is up in heaven without them. This is enough for me. If the One who stood charged with all my guilt is now at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens, then, clearly, there is nothing against me.

All that divine justice had against me was laid on the Sin-bearer, and He endured the wrath of a sin-hating God that I might be freely and forever pardoned and accepted in a risen and glorified Savior.

These are glad tidings. Does my reader believe them? Say, beloved, dost thou heartily believe in a dead and risen Christ? Hast thou come to Him, as a lost sinner, and put thy heart's full confidence in Him? Dost thou believe that He died for our sins, according to the scriptures, and that He was buried and rose again the third day according to the scriptures? If so, thou art saved, justified, accepted, complete in Christ. True thou art, in thyself, a poor feeble creature, having an evil nature to contend with, every moment; but Christ is thy life, and He is thy wisdom, and thy righteousness, thy sanctification, thy redemption, thy all. He ever lives for thee up in heaven. He died to make thee clean. He lives to keep thee clean. Thou art made as clean as His death can make thee, and thou art kept as clean as His life can keep thee. He made Himself responsible for thee. God sees thee to be what Christ has made thee to be. He sees thee in Christ and as Christ. Wherefore, then, I pray thee, tread no more those gloomy corridors of legalism, pietism, and false theology, which have resounded for ages with the sighs and groans of poor sin-burdened, and misguided souls; but seeing the fullness of thy portion, and the completeness of thy standing in a risen and victorious Christ, rejoice in Him all thy days upon earth, and live in the hope of being with Him forever in His own mansions of heavenly glory.

At some future time, we may pursue the subject of forgiveness of sins; but we are anxious to give a full, clear, and decided testimony in this, our opening number for 1862, to the precious truth so frequently called in question by some of those who profess to preach the gospel, namely, that there is not such a thing as absolute certainty—divine, unclouded certainty—of our eternal security in Christ. May the Holy Ghost impart this certainty to my reader, ere he lays down this paper. May all the people of God be led to see that “God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.” 2 Tim. 1:7.

Forgiveness of Sins: Part 2

Having, in our number for January, sought to establish the fact that it is possible for one to know, upon divine authority, that his sins are forgiven, we shall now, in dependence upon the teaching of the Spirit of God, proceed to consider the subject of forgiveness of sins, as unfolded in the word, and in doing so, we shall present it under the three following heads, namely:—First, The ground on which God forgives sins; Secondly, The extent to which He forgives sins; and, Thirdly, the style in which He forgives sins. There is value in this threefold presentation, as it gives clearness, fullness, and precision to our apprehension, of the subject, as a whole. The more clearly we understand the ground of divine forgiveness, the more shall we appreciate the extent, and admire the style thereof.

May God the Spirit now be our guide while we ponder, for a little,

The Ground of Divine Forgiveness.

It is of the very last importance that the anxious reader should understand this cardinal point. It is quite impossible that a divinely convicted conscience can enjoy true repose until the ground of forgiveness is clearly seen. There may be certain vague thoughts respecting the mercy and goodness of God, His readiness to receive sinners and pardon their sins, His unwillingness to enter the place of judgment, and His promptness to enter the place of mercy. All this there may be; but until the convicted soul is led to see how God can be just and yet the Justifier—how He can be a just God and yet a Savior-God—how He has been glorified with respect to sin - how all the divine attributes have been harmonized, it must be a stranger to the peace of God which truly passeth all understanding. A conscience on which the light of divine truth has poured itself in convicting power, feels and owns that sin can never enter into the presence of God—that sin, wherever it is found, can only be met by the just judgment of a sin-hating God. Hence, until the divine method of dealing with sin is understood and believed, there must be intense anxiety. Sin is a reality, God's holiness is a reality, conscience is a reality, judgment to come is a reality. All these things must be looked at and duly considered. Justice must be satisfied—conscience purged—Satan silenced. How is all this to be done? Only by the cross of Jesus.

Here, then, we have the true ground of divine forgiveness. The precious atonement of Christ forms the base of that platform on which a just God and a justified sinner meet in sweet communion. In that atonement I see sin condemned, justice satisfied, the law magnified, the sinner saved, the adversary confounded. Creation never exhibited aught like this. There the creature enjoyed the manifestation of power, wisdom, and goodness; but the fairest fields of the old creation presented nothing like “grace reigning through righteousness”—nothing like a glorious combination of “righteousness and peace, mercy and truth.” It was reserved for Calvary to display all this. There that grand and all-important question, “How can God be just and the Justifier?” received a glorious reply. The death of Christ furnishes the answer. A just God dealt with sin at the cross, in order that a justifying God might deal with the sinner on the new and everlasting ground of resurrection. God could not tolerate or pass over a single jot or tittle of sin; but He could put it away. He has

condemned sin. He has poured out His righteous wrath upon sin, in order that he might pour the everlasting beams of his favor upon the believing sinner.

“On Jesus’ cross this record’s graved, Let sin be judged and sinners saved.”

Precious record. may every anxious sinner read it with the eye of faith. It is a record which must impart settled peace to the heart. God has been satisfied as to sin. This is enough for me. Here my guilty, troubled conscience finds sweet repose. I have seen my sins rising like a dark mountain before me, threatening me with eternal wrath; but the blood of Jesus has blotted them all out from God’s view. They are gone, and gone forever—sunk as lead into the mighty waters of divine forgetfulness, and I am free—as free as the One who was nailed to the cross for my sins, but who is now on the throne without them.

Such, then, is the ground of divine forgiveness. What a solid ground! Who or what can touch it? Justice has owned it. The troubled conscience may rest in it. Satan must acknowledge it. God has revealed Himself as a Justifier, and faith walks in the light and power of that revelation. Nothing can be simpler, nothing clearer, nothing more satisfactory. If God reveals Himself as a Justifier, then I am justified through faith in the revelation. When the moral glories of the cross shine upon the sinner, he sees and knows, believes and owns that the One who has judged his sins in death, has justified him in resurrection.

Anxious reader, see, I beseech thee, that thou apprehendest the true ground of the forgiveness of sins. There is no use in our proceeding to consider the extent and style, until thy poor troubled conscience has been led to rest upon the imperishable ground of forgiveness. Let me reason with thee. What is to hinder thee from, this very moment, resting on the foundation of accomplished atonement? Say, does thy conscience need something more to satisfy it than that which has satisfied the inflexible justice of God? Is not the ground on which God reveals Himself as a righteous Justifier, sufficiently strong for thee to stand upon as a justified sinner? What sayest thou, friend? Art thou satisfied? Is Christ sufficient for thee? Art thou still searching for something in thyself, thy ways, thy works, thy thoughts, thy feelings? If so, give up the search as utterly vain. Thou wilt never find anything. And even though thou couldst find something, it would only be an encumbrance, a loss, a hindrance. Christ is sufficient for God, let Him be sufficient for thee likewise. Then, but not until then, wilt thou be truly happy.

May God the Holy Ghost cause thee to rest, this moment, upon an all-sufficient sacrifice, as the only ground of divine forgiveness, so that thou mayest be able to enter, with real intelligence and interest, upon the examination of the second point in our subject, namely,

THE EXTENT OF DIVINE FORGIVENESS.

Very many are perplexed as to this. They do not see the fullness of the atonement. They do not grasp the emancipating fact of its application to all their sins. They do not enter into the full force of those lines, which, perhaps, they often sing,

“ All thine iniquities who doth

Most graciously forgive.”

They seem to be under the impression that Christ only bore some of their sins, namely, their sins up to the time of their conversion. They are troubled as to the question of their daily sins, as if these were to be disposed of upon a different ground from their past sins. Thus are they, at times, much cast down and sorely beset. Nor could it be otherwise with them until they see that in the death of Christ, provision was made for the full forgiveness of all their sins. True it is that the child of God who commits sin has to go to his Father and confess that sin. But what does the apostle say, in reference to one so confessing his sins? "God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Now, why does he say, "Faithful and just?" Why does he not say, "Gracious and merciful?" Because he speaks on the ground that the entire question of sin was gone into and settled by the death of Christ who is now up in heaven as the righteous Advocate. On no other ground could God be faithful and just in connection with the forgiveness of sins. The sins of the believer have all been atoned for on the cross. If one had been left out, he should be eternally lost, inasmuch as it is impossible that a single sin, however trifling, can ever enter the precincts of the sanctuary of God. And, further, let me add, if all the believer's sins were not atoned for in the death of Christ, then, neither by confession, nor by prayer, nor by fasting, nor by any other means, could they ever be forgiven. The death of Christ is the only ground on which God could, in faithfulness and justice, forgive sin; and we know He must either do it in faithfulness and justice, or not at all. This is to His praise and our exceeding comfort.

But I can imagine my reader exclaiming, "What! Do you mean to say that my future sins were all atoned for?" To this I reply, that all our sins were future when Christ bore them on the cursed tree. The sins of all believers, for the last eighteen centuries, were future when Christ died for them. Hence, if the idea of future sins presents a difficulty in reference to what we may commit, if left here, it presents just as great a difficulty in reference to what we have committed. But, in truth, all this perplexity about future sins arises, very much, from the habit of looking at the cross from our own point of view, instead of God's - looking at it from earth instead of from heaven. Scripture never speaks of future sins. Past, present, and future are only human and earthly. All is an eternal now with God. All our sins were before the eye of infinite Justice, at the cross, and all were laid on the head of Jesus the Sin-bearer who, by His death, laid the eternal foundation of forgiveness of sins, in order that the believer, at any moment of his life, at any point in his history, at any stage of his career, from the time at which the hallowed tidings of the gospel fall upon the ear of faith until the moment in which he steps into the glory, may be able to say, with clearness and decision, without reserve, misgiving, or hesitation, "Thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back." To say this is but faith's response to God's own declaration, when he says "Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." "Jehovah hath made to meet on him the iniquities of us all."

Let us, by way of illustration, take the case of the thief on the cross. "When he, as a convicted sinner, cast the eye of faith upon that blessed One who hung beside him, was he not, then and there, rendered fit to enter the paradise of God? Was he not furnished with a divine title to pass from the cross of a malefactor into the presence of God? Unquestionably. Did he need anything more to be done for him, in him, or with him, in order to fit him for heaven? By no means. Well, then, suppose that, instead of passing into heaven, he had been permitted to come down from the cross. Suppose the nails had been extracted and he allowed to go at liberty. He would have had sin in his nature, and having sin in his nature, he would have been liable to commit sin, in thought, word, and deed. Now, could he ever lose his title, his fitness, his meetness? Surely not. His title

was divine and everlasting. All his sins were borne by Jesus. That which had fitted him to enter heaven at the first, had fitted him once and forever, so that if he had remained on earth for fifty years, he would, at any moment, have been equally fit to enter heaven.

True it is, if the pardoned sinner commits sin, his communion is interrupted, and there must be the hearty confession of that sin ere his communion can be restored. "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth." But this is, obviously, a different point altogether. My communion may be interrupted, but my title can never be forfeited. All was accomplished on the cross. Every trace of sin and guilt was atoned for by that peerless, priceless sacrifice. By that sacrifice, the believer is transferred from a position of guilt and condemnation into a position of justification and perfect favor. He is translated from a condition in which he had not a single trace of righteousness, into a condition in which he has not a single trace of guilt, nor ever can have. He stands in grace, he is under grace, he breathes the very atmosphere of grace, and he never can be otherwise, according to God's view. If he commits sin—as who does not?—there must be confession. And what then? Forgiveness and cleansing, on the ground of the faithfulness and justice of God which have had their divine answer in the cross. All is founded on the cross. The faithfulness and justice of God—the advocacy of Christ—our confession—our full forgiveness—our perfect cleansing—the restoration of our communion—all rests upon the solid basis of the precious blood of Christ.

My reader will bear in mind that we are, at present, occupied with the one point, namely, the extent of divine forgiveness. There are other points of great importance, which might be looked at in connection, such as the believer's oneness with Christ, his adoption into the family of God, the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, all of which, necessarily, imply the full forgiveness of sins. But we must confine ourselves to our immediate theme, and having endeavored to set forth the ground and the extent, we shall close with a few words on

THE STYLE OF DIVINE FORGIVENESS.

We are all conscious of how much depends upon the style of an action. Indeed, there is frequently far more power in the style than in the substance. How often have we heard such words as these? "Yes, I own he did me a favor; but, then, he did it in such a way as to take away all the good of it." Now, the Lord has His style of doing things, blessed be His name. He not only does great things, but He does them in such a way as to convince us that His heart is in the doing of them. Not only is the substance of His acts good, but the style most charming:

Let us have a sample or two. Look, for instance, at Christ's touching word to Simon the Pharisee, in Luke 7 "When they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both." Now, so far as the mere matter of the debt was concerned, the result would have been the same whatever style had been adopted. But what heart does not perceive the moral power of the word, "frankly?" Who would part with it? Who could bear to see the substance stripped of its style? The creditor might forgive with a murmur about the amount. That murmur would, in the judgment of a sensitive heart, rob the act of all its charms. On the other hand, the frankness of the style enhances, beyond expression, the value of the substance.

Again, look for a moment, at that familiar but ever fruitful section of inspiration, Luke 15 Each of the parables illustrates the power and beauty of style. When the man finds his sheep, what does

he do? Does he complain of all the trouble, and commence to drive the sheep home before him? Ah! no; this would never do. What then? "He layeth it on his shoulders." How? Complaining of the weight or the trouble? Nay; but "rejoicing" Here we have the lovely style. He showed that He was glad to get His sheep back again. The sheep would have been safe on the shoulder, however it had been placed there; but who would part with the word "rejoicing?" Who could bear to see the substance of the action stripped of its charming style?

So also in the case of the woman and her lost piece of silver. "She lights a candle, sweeps the house, and seeks." How? With dullness, weariness, and indifference? By no means; but "diligently," like one whose whole heart was in her work. It was quite manifest that she really wanted to find the lost piece of silver. Her style proved this.

Lastly, mark the style of the Father in receiving the poor returning prodigal. "When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him." He does not send out a servant to tell the erring one to turn aside into one of the out offices, or betake himself to the kitchen, or even to confine himself to his own room. No; he himself runs. He, as it were, lays aside his paternal dignity, in order to give expression to his fatherly affection. He is not satisfied with merely receiving the wanderer back. He must prove that his whole heart is in the reception; and this he does, not merely by the substance of the act, but by his style of doing it.

Various other passages might be adduced to illustrate the style of divine forgiveness; hut the above will suffice to prove that God graciously recognizes the power which style has to act upon the human heart. I shall, therefore, in closing this paper, make an earnest appeal to my reader, as to what he now thinks of the ground, the extent, and the style of divine forgiveness.

Beloved reader, thou seest that the ground is as stable as the very throne of God itself; that the extent is infinite; and the style all that the heart could possibly desire. Say, therefore, art thou satisfied as to the great question of the forgiveness of sins? Can you any longer doubt God's willingness to forgive when He has set before you, in such a way, the ground on which, the extent to which, and the style in which He forgives sin! Can you hesitate when He actually "Opens His own heart to thee and shows His thoughts how kind they be?"

He stands with open arms to receive thee. He points thee to the cross where His own hand laid the foundation of forgiveness, and assures thee that all is done, and beseeches thee to rest now, henceforth, and forevermore, in that which He has wrought for you. May the blessed Spirit lead thee to see these things in all their clearness and fullness, so that thou mayest not only believe in the forgiveness of sins, but believe also that all thy sins are frankly and forever forgiven!

The Gem

“If a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned.”—Song of Solomon 8:7.

Gem of the deep, within its rugged shell,
Spotless and pure, and exquisitely white,
Lurks the rich pearl:—Thus love, O Lord, will dwell—
Love to thy name! where our defective sight
No beauty finds, while thou through all canst see,
And prize the jewel that belongs to thee.
Lord! thou art Love—and shall we dare contemn
The feeblest soul where thou art pleased to dwell?
Where love divine, that pure and perfect gem,
Dim and unpolish'd now, shall far excel
You orient the sun, when sorrow's night is past,
In its full luster unobscured at last.
What brought the Son, O blessed Father! down,
To dwell, to suffer, die at last on earth,
But love divine? In thine eternal crown,
What gem of nameless all-excelling worth,
Most brightly shines—irradiates all above,
With its pure beams? What jewel, Lord! but Love?

Glory - Glory

The sands of time are sinking, the dawn of Heaven breaks,
The summer morn I've sighed for, the fair sweet morn awakes!
Dark, dark hath been the midnight, but dayspring is at hand,
And glory—glory dwelleth in Immanuel's land.
The King there in His beauty, without a veil is seen:
It was a well spent journey, though seven deaths lay between:
The Lamb, with His fair army, doth on Mount Zion stand,
And glory—glory dwelleth in Immanuel's land.
Oh! Christ He is the fountain, the deep sweet well of love!
The streams on earth I've tasted, more deep I'll drink above:
There, to an ocean fullness, His mercy doth expand,
And glory—glory dwelleth in Immanuel's land.
Oft in you sea-beat prison my Lord and I held tryst:
For Anworth was not Heaven, and preaching was not Christ;—
And aye, my murkiest storm-cloud was by a rainbow spann'd,
Caught from the glory dwelling in Immanuel's land.
Fair Anworth, by the Solway, to me thou still art dear,
E'en from the verge of Heaven I drop for thee a tear.
Oh! if one soul from Anworth meet me at God's right hand,
My Heaven will be two Heavens, in Immanuel's land.
Deep waters cross'd life's pathway, the hedge of thorns was sharp:
Now, these lie all behind me—oh! for a well-tuned harp!
Oh! to join Halleluiah with your triumphant band,
Who sing, where glory dwelleth, in Immanuel's land.
Soon shall the cup of glory wash down earth's bitterest woes,
Soon shall the desert briar break into Eden's rose;

The curse shall change to blessing—the name on earth that's bann'd
Be graven on the white stone in Immanuel's land.
Oh! I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine!
He brings a poor vile sinner into His "house of wine:
"I stand upon His merit, I know no safer stand,
Not e'en where glory dwelleth, in Immanuel's land.
The bride eyes not her garment, but her dear bridegroom's face;
I will not gaze at glory, but on my King of Grace—
Not at the crown He giveth, but on His pierced hand:—
The Lamb is all the glory of Immanuel's land.
I have borne scorn and hatred, I have borne wrong and shame,
Earth's proud ones have reproached me for Christ's thrice blessed name:—
Where God's seal sets the fairest they've stamp'd their foulest brand,
But judgment shines like noonday in Immanuel's land.
They've summoned me before them, but there I may not come,
My Lord says "Come up hither," my Lord says "Welcome home!"
My kingly King, at His bright throne, my presence doth command,
Where glory—glory dwelleth in Immanuel's land.
From the last words of Samuel Rutherford.

The Hand Divine

O tell me not of sorrow,
O speak not of despair,
The dawn will break tomorrow,
Without our mortal care.
Weep not the withered day-dream,
The sun again will shine,
His hand who paints the sunbeam
Moves over all, divine.
O tell me not of sorrow.
For from this world of pain,
Life's oars we only borrow
Our native shore to gain.
Earth's bitter hours of sadness
To temper joy combine,
Then wake the harp to gladness,
There is a hand divine.
And tell of smiles forthcoming
For life is far too brief
To spend in tears and pining
O'er every fallen leaf.
The hearts of those who love us,
A wreath of joys entwine,
The hand that moves above us
Is over all, divine.
Life's sweetest flowers decay,
The worm is at the bud,

The bright, the fair, the gay,
Are swept by death's cold flood;
We may not rule tomorrow
Nor spare one hour's decline;
Then linger not in sorrow,
There is a hand divine.
If came the winter never,
We should not love the spring,
If sang the birds forever,
They would not seem to sing;
Along life's coasts of weeping
The heavenly beacons shine,
The watchman guard is keeping,
There is a hand divine.

Have Ye Counted the Cost?

Have ye counted the cost!
Have ye counted the cost!
Ye warriors of the Cross?
Are ye fixed in heart, for your Master's sake,
To suffer all earthly loss?
Can ye bear the scoff of the worldly-wise,
As ye pass by pleasure's bower,
To watch with your Lord, on the mountain top,
Through the dreary midnight hour?
In the power of His might!
In the power of His might!
Who was made thro' weakness strong,
Ye shall overcome in the fearful light!
And sing His victory song!
But count ye the cost; yea, count ye the cost—
The forsaking all ye have!
Then take up your cross and follow your Lord,
Not thinking your life to save!
By the "blood of the Lamb,"—
By the "blood of the Lamb,"—
By the faithful witness Word!
Not loving your lives unto death for Him,
Ye shall triumph with your Lord!
So count ye the cost; yea, count ye the cost,
Ye warriors of the cross!
Yet in royal faith and in royal love,

Count all selfish gain but loss.'

O! the banner of love!

O! the banner of love!

It will cost you a pang to hold!

But 'twill float in triumph the field above.

Though your heart's blood stain its fold.

Ye may count the cost! ye may count the coat

Of all Egyptians treasure!

But the riches of Christ ye cannot count—

His love ye cannot measure!

The Heart's Questions

(1 Kings 10)

The Queen of Sheba presents to us the condition of soul of one, who finds that however great and extended may be his own resources, they are wholly inadequate to meet the questions which arise within the heart—questions which none can meet or satisfy but One, even He whom “God hath made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption.” 1 Cor. 1:30.

The case of the young man in Mark 10, who sought the Lord for that which he knew not how to obtain for himself, is one both of analogy and contrast. Both seek a Solomon; both feel that they need Him; but the one finds in Him all that satisfies her heart, so completely, that there is no spirit left in her,” while the other, though conscious of His greatness, feels it too great a sacrifice to renounce all that he had trusted and rested in for Him. That is, he does not see in Him that supreme blessedness and glory, that all his own was (like Paul’s) “dross” in comparison, or that the survey of that glory, left him, like the Queen of Sheba—without spirit—overwhelmed—lost in it!

Practically, we all feel that we need Christ, whatever be our natural resources; but the question is how do we seek Him? Is it as the Queen sought Solomon; or as the young man, the greater than Solomon? The answer to this question determines the result. If like the Queen I begin by conferring with Him of all that is in my heart, her blessing will be mine; but if I do not confide in the wisdom which I seek to engage on my behalf; if I cannot confide my whole mind, there will be an imperfection in the relief, and in proportion to that imperfection of relief, will there be an inability on my part to fix my heart and attention on the One who can relieve me fully; and consequently to find an interest in His ways and doings? for this last can only be the result of the “questions” of the soul being met and satisfied. True, the Lord knows all my mind and state, but in presenting myself before Him in order to receive from Him, and to have all my “questions” and anxieties resolved by Him, I must spread them before Him consciously to myself (so to speak) that I may feel where His counsel and wisdom can touch and color each of them. In this the young man failed; there was no conferring of heart with him. The woman of Samaria was drawn into conference with Him, and the discovery that He knew “all things that ever she did,” inspired her with confidence as to His ability to meet the sense of need which He had awakened in her soul. Peter was touched by it, John 21, “Lord, thou knowest all things”, he exclaims, and then he is fully restored. The young man asked what he was to do. The Queen, the woman of Samaria, and Peter, felt how dependent they were on the wisdom of God, not on their own, like the young man.

On Him, “God manifest in the flesh,” my soul depends; I confer with Him, of all that is in my heart, whether as a sinner, now first awakened, like the woman of Samaria, or as a disciple, like Peter; in either case the conferring of heart must be full, or the appreciation and attraction of His blessedness will not be revealed to me; neither shall I be fixed and concentrated on Him, unless I find how entirely and wondrously He has seen into the lowest depths of my heart, and met every “question” arising from the confusion and evil there. If I fall short in knowing His wisdom, I fall short in appreciating Himself, and if I do not entirely and surpassingly appreciate Him, above all my

resources here, I shall, like the young man, go back to them, though doubtless, "sorrowful." But if the soul is consoled and satisfied with His wisdom—a wisdom adapted to its own needs, and questions, all that concerns Him will then engage it. It was no effort for the Queen of Sheba to enter into all the doings and interests of Solomon; nay, they so engrossed her, that self had no place, there was no spirit left in her; and in like manner, Peter, having learned the Lord's sufficiency for himself, can enter into His interests in His sheep and lambs; and not only so, but he can find it easier to follow Him than to leave Him. And need I add, that a soul that is following Him must know that joy and gladness of heart which spring from the happy communion with Him in His interests, which it has entered into, through the light that has disclosed to it the wisdom and fullness of Himself to meet all its questionings, its needs, and its distress.

The Jubilee

Lev. 25:8-16.

Someone has truly remarked that the institution of the Jubilee had a double testimony. It testified of man's confusion, and it testified of God's order. During forty-nine years, many things were suffered to get into disorder, under the hand of man. One man got into poverty, another into debt, another into bondage, another into exile. Again, one man, through extravagance, had let his inheritance slip through his hands; another, by his shrewdness or penuriousness had added to his.

Thus it happened during man's day. But the trumpet of jubilee changed, in a moment, the entire condition of things. No sooner had that hallowed sound fallen on the ear than the debtor was released, the slave emancipated, and the exile brought back. The jubilee was God's year, and He would have no debtors, no slaves, no exiles. All should be free and happy, and all abundantly supplied throughout Jehovah's year. When the Lord alone is exalted, all must be right.

Now, it is interesting and very practical to note the various ways in which men would be affected by the approach of the year of jubilee. The man who had lost property would be glad because he should get it back. The man who had gained property would be sorry because he should lose it. But the man who had done neither—who had neither lost nor gained—the right-minded Israelite who had retained his patrimony and was satisfied therewith, this man would regard the Jubilee not with reference to his gains or his losses, but simply as a noble testimony to God's order, and as securing the blessing of the entire nation.

Thus it was with the Jew, in reference to the Jubilee; and thus it should be with the Christian, in reference to the glorious appearing of the Son from heaven. We should simply look forward to that blessed event as the moment of Christ's exaltation—the moment of His full investiture with the kingdoms of this world—the moment in the which a period shall be put to all man's misrule and confusion, and the order of God be established forevermore. Blessed, longed-for moment!

And be it noted here, that the cross is, at once, the remedy for all man's confusion, and the basis of God's order. This is strikingly brought out in the ordinance of the Jubilee. "Then shall thou cause the trumpet of the jubilee to sound on the tenth day of the seventh month; in the day of atonement shall ye make the trumpet sound throughout all your land." The trumpet of Jubilee and the day of atonement were inseparably linked together. The blood of the cross is the foundation of everything. In the times of the restitution of all things, the river of life will proceed out of the throne of God and the Lamb. Rev. 22:1.

The Judgment Seat of Christ

We have lately received communications from various friends, in which they earnestly seek light as to the solemn subject of the judgment seat of Christ; and as it is more than probable that many others may be exercised on the same point, we are unwilling to give it a hasty notice in our answers to correspondents.

One dear friend writes thus: "I am, at present, in a difficulty. It is this: a very dear friend has, for some time past, been very unhappy in the thought that, at the judgment seat of Christ, every secret thought and every motive of the heart will be made manifest to all there. She has no fears or doubts as to her eternal salvation, or the forgiveness of her sins; but she shrinks with horror from the thought of having the secrets of her heart manifested to all there."

Another writes as follows: "Remembering those blessed and eternally-important truths in John 5:24 John 1:7 - 9, 2:12; Heb. 10:1-17, I wish to know how you understand the following texts, which I shall transcribe in full, in order to point out the particular words to which I refer.

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.' (2 Cor. 5:10.) 'So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.' (Rom. 14:12.) But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong he hath done: and there is no respect of persons.' Col. 3:24, 25.

"It is on the above texts that I am anxious to be correct as to interpretation and application; and I have thought it probable that you would not regard it as trespassing on your time, if I were to ask your opinion on the subject."

We have been much interested, of late, in looking into the various reasons of the perplexity which seems to prevail in reference to the solemn subject of "The judgment seat of Christ." The very passages which our correspondent quotes are so plain, so pointed, and so definite on the question, that we have only just to take them as they stand, and allow them to have their due weight upon the heart and conscience. "We must all be manifested before the judgment seat of Christ." "Every one of us must give account of himself to God." "He that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong he hath done."

These are plain statements. Should we desire to weaken their force—to blunt their edge—to turn away their point? God forbid! We should rather seek to make a holy use of them by keeping a pressure upon nature, in all its vanities, lusts, and tempers. The Lord intended we should use them thus. He never intended that we should use them, in a legal way, to shake our confidence in Christ and his full salvation. We shall never come into judgment as to our sins. John 5:24; Rom. 8:1; 1 John 4:17, are conclusive as to that point. But then our services must come under the Master's eye. Every man's work shall be tried of what sort it is. The day will make everything manifest. All this is very solemn, and should lead to great watchfulness and carefulness as to our works, ways, thoughts, words, motives, and desires. The deepest sense of grace, and the clearest apprehension of our perfect justification as sinners, will never weaken our sense of the deep

solemnity of the judgment seat of Christ, or lessen our desire so to walk as that we may be accepted of Him.

It is well to see this. The apostle labored that he might be accepted. He kept his body under lest he should be disapproved of. Every saint should do the same. We are already accepted in Christ, and as such, we labor to be accepted of Him. We should seek to give every truth its proper place, and the way to do this, is to be much in the presence of God, and to view each truth in immediate connection with Christ. There is always a danger of making such a use of one truth as, practically, to displace some other truth. This should be carefully guarded against. We believe there will be a full manifestation of everyone and everything before the judgment seat of Christ. Everything will come out there. Things that looked very brilliant and praiseworthy, and that made a great noise amongst men, down here, will all be burned up as so much “wood, hay, and stubble.” Things that were blazed abroad, and made use of to surround the names of men with a halo of human applause, will all be submitted to the searching action of “the fire,” and, it may be, very much of them reduced to ashes. The counsels of all hearts will be made manifest. Every motive, every purpose, every design will be weighed in the balances of the sanctuary. The fire will try every man’s work, and nothing will be stamped as genuine save that which has been the fruit of divine grace in our hearts. All mixed motives will be judged, condemned, and burnt up. All prejudices, all erroneous judgments, all evil surmisings concerning others—all these and such like things will be exposed and cast into the fire. We shall see things then as Christ sees them, judge them as He judges them. No one will be better pleased than myself to see all my stubble consumed. Even now, as we grow in light, knowledge, and spirituality, as we get nearer and liker to Christ, we heartily condemn many things which we once deemed all right. How much more shall we do so when we stand in the full blaze of the light of the judgment seat of Christ?

Now, what should be the practical effect of all this upon the believer? To make him doubt his salvation? To leave him in a state of uncertainty as to whether he is accepted or not? To make him question his relationship to God in Christ? Surely not. What then? To lead him to walk in holy carefulness, from day to day, as under the eye of his Lord and Master—to produce watchfulness, sobriety, and self-judgment—to super induce faithfulness, diligence, and integrity in all his services and all his ways.

Take a simple illustration. A father leaves home for a time, and, when taking leave of his children, he appoints a certain work to be done, and a certain line of conduct to be adopted during his absence. Now, when he returns, he may have to praise some for their faithfulness and diligence, while he blames others for the very reverse. But does he disown the latter? Does he break the relationship? By no means. They are just as much his children as the others, though he faithfully points out their failure and censures them for it. If they have been biting and devouring one another, instead of doing his will; if one has been judging another’s work instead of attending to his own; if there has been envy and jealousy instead of an earnest hearty carrying out of the father’s intentions—all these things will meet with merited censure. How could it be otherwise?

But then some, like our correspondent’s friend, ‘shrink with horror from the thought of having the secrets of the heart manifested to all there.’ Well, the Holy Ghost declares that “The Lord will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the heart: and then shall every man have praise of God.” 1 Cor. 4: 5 He does not say to whom they shall be manifested; nor

does this, in the least, affect the question, inasmuch as every true-hearted person will be far more deeply concerned about the judgment of the Master than about the judgment of a fellow-servant. Provided I please Christ, I need not trouble myself much about man's judgment. And, on the other hand, if I am more troubled about the idea of having all my motives exposed to the view of man than I am about their being exposed to the view of Christ, it is plain there must be something wrong. It proves I am occupied about myself. I shrink from the exposure of "my secret motives." Then it is very plain that my secret motives are not right, and the sooner they are judged the better.

And, after all, what difference would it make, though all our sins and failures were made manifest to everybody? Are Peter and David a whit less happy because untold millions have read the account of their shameful fall? Surely not. They know that the record of their sins only magnifies the grace of God, and illustrates the value of the blood of Christ, and hence they rejoice in it. Thus it is in every case. If we were more emptied of self and occupied with Christ, we should have more simple and correct thoughts about the judgment seat as well as about everything else.

May the Lord keep our hearts true to Himself in this the time of His absence, so that when He appears we may not be ashamed before Him! May all our works be so begun, continued, and ended in Him, that the thought of having them duly weighed and estimated in the presence of His glory may not disturb our hearts'. May we be constrained by the "love of Christ," not by the fear of judgment, to live unto Him who died for us and rose again! We may safely and happily leave everything in His hands, seeing He has borne our sins in His own body on the tree. We have no reason to fear, inasmuch as we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. The moment Christ appears we shall be changed into His image, pass into the presence of His glory, and there review the past. We shall look back from that high and holy elevation, upon our course down here. We shall see things in a different light altogether then. It may be we shall be astonished to find that many things, of which we thought a great deal down here, will be found defective up there; and, on the other hand, many little things which were done in self-forgetfulness, and love to Jesus, will be sedulously recorded, and abundantly rewarded. We shall also be able to see, in the clear light of the Master's presence, many mistakes and failures which had never before come within the range of our vision. What will be the effect of all this? Just to evoke from our hearts loud and rapturous hosannahs to the praise of Him, who has brought us through all our toils and dangers, borne with all our mistakes and failures, and assigned us a place in His own everlasting kingdom, there to bask in the bright beams of His glory, and shine in His image forever.

We shall not dwell further on this subject, just now; but we trust sufficient has been said to relieve the minds of those dear friends who have consulted us on the point. We shall ever regard it as a happy service to communicate with our readers on any question which may happen to present difficulty to their minds. We can truly say, our desire is that the Lord would make this little Magazine a channel of help and blessing to the souls of His people everywhere, and that the name of the Lord Jesus may be magnified.

Lines Written by a Covenanter on His Prison Walls on the Morning of His Execution

My last sun has risen, it is far on its way,
The soul quits its prison ere the close of the day;
Farewell, hours of sorrow, I shall know you no more;
Ere day dawn tomorrow, our union is o'er.
A bright ray of glory, o'er the river of death,
I fear not its flowing with that light for my path.
Blest beam of its tracing o'er the gloom of that river,
Has dispersed all its horrors and calmed it forever.

The Living Stone

The mystery of the Stone, as I may call it, is found in all parts of scripture. Something is said of it here and there from beginning to end; in Genesis, in the Psalms, in the Prophets, in the Evangelists, in the Epistles, and in the Apocalypse.

In the words of Jacob to his twelve sons, in Gen. 49 we begin to hear of it. The patriarch had been speaking of the sons of Joseph and the honor that had followed them; and in these things, the Spirit leads him to see a type or foreshadowing of Christ. He says, "From thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel." That is, he prophesied that by death and resurrection, the Lord Christ would be made a shepherd and a stone to Israel; everything, as I may say, to His people.

This prophetic word, therefore, tells of the quarry where this wondrous Stone was to be found; how it was, that the Lord would become a help to His people, and surely we know this is so. No help for us, even in Jesus Himself, but through His precious death and glorious resurrection.

Isaiah takes up this thought, surely under the same Spirit, and speaks of Christ as a "tried stone," and also as a "foundation;" (chap. 28:16,) thus adding a second thought, or bringing this Stone out of the quarry where it was found, to use it as a foundation-stone, and Peter quotes this of Isaiah. 1 Pet. 2:6.

The Psalmist then instructs us farther; telling us that this Stone was disallowed by the people of Israel, to whom God offered it as a foundation. (Psalm 118:22.) And this is referred to by the Lord Himself in Matt. 21:42, and by the Holy Ghost in Acts 4:11.

The Psalmist, the Lord, and the Holy Ghost, in the same places, thus tell us that this wondrous Stone, thus rejected and disallowed by Israel on the earth, has been taken to heaven, and there seated in the chief place of dignity and strength, or as "the head stone of the corner."

Isaiah, the preaching of Peter, and Peter in his epistle, then concur in teaching us further, that this Stone, thus exalted to heaven after its rejection by the builders here, that is, Christ in resurrection and glory, in His ascension after His death, is still a sure foundation to all poor sinners who will but lean on Him and trust in Him—a sanctuary to them, life and salvation to them. Isa. 8:14, Acts 5:12, 1 Pet. 2:6.

The Lord Himself farther tells us, that this exalted Stone, now the head of the corner in heaven, shall, by and bye, fall on all who now disallow it, refusing to use it as a foundation, or stumble over it, and thus grind them to powder. Matt. 21:44.

Daniel tells us, in company with this, but in a larger, or national form, that this judgment shall indeed be executed—and then further instructs us, that when this Stone has thus exercised itself in judicial power, it will display itself in kingdom-glory, or, like a great mountain, a universal monarchy, as we speak, fill the whole earth. Dan. 2:35.

This is the great, final destiny of this mysterious Stone. And thus, scripture after scripture, detached in all parts of the wondrous, divine volume, completes, in a great sense, the story of this Stone. “We first see it as in the quarry, formed there for future use, according to settled counsels. We then see it offered as a foundation to Israel, and refused by them. We next see it lifted up to heaven, and again offered as a foundation, the secret of life and salvation to sinners all the world over. We then follow it in its course as returning or falling from heaven, to crush its rejecters and its adversaries. And at the last, we see it, in its glory, as a mountain or a kingdom filling the whole earth.

This is a wondrous sight afforded us by the one Spirit through Patriarchs, Prophets, Evangelists and Apostles.

We have, however, a little more to learn of it. That is, we learn what this Stone does with those who use it as their foundation. Peter teaches us that the Lord, as this Stone, imparts Himself fully to those who believe on Him or come to Him. He is a living Stone, and they become living stones. He is a precious Stone, and they become precious stones. (1 Pet. 2:4 - 7.) And these things we see and read—for the same Lord in another place says, “because I live ye shall live also.”—and we see, as in the holy Jerusalem, the symbol of saints as the Bride of the Lamb, stones in their varied preciousness, as jasper, chalcedony, emerald, and the like; thus verifying, in that form, the word of Peter, that Christ imparts His preciousness as well as His life to His saints; and thus also bringing in the Apocalypse to bear its testimony, with all scripture, to this mysterious Stone, at which I am now looking. Rev. 21.

It is indeed a theme of wondrous value. But if I have now dismissed my subject, I would ask a question.

Is there not something of an allusion in 1 Pet. 2:4-8, to Matt. 16:16?

In Matthew, Peter confessed to Jesus that He was “The Son of the living God.” The Lord then recognized that fact, that truth, His own Person as “the Son of the living God,” as the Rock on which the Church was to be built.

Here, in his Epistle, Peter, according to this, speaks of the Lord as “a living stone,” to whom we must come, and on whom we must build—teaching us moreover, that thus we become “a spiritual house, a holy priesthood,” conducting the service that is acceptable to God. And in this teaching, he leads us somewhat beyond the point, up to which the Lord had instructed us in Matt. 16 for he shows us something of the ways of that church, the building of which the Lord had but just anticipated.

So that I judge I may answer my own inquiry, and say, that there is a connection between Matt. 16 and 1 Pet. 2.

But what an answer does all this afford, to those who speak of Peter as being the rock on which the church is built! Peter himself being witness, we boldly say, that Christ is that Rock, the living Stone, to whom we must come, and on whom we must build, in order to be the church of the living God, or the spiritual house of His present dispensation. Surely, surely, this is so.

But again, as to the connection between Matt. 16 and 1 Pet. 2.

In Matthew, Peter had resented the thought of his Master being rejected in this world. When He spoke of His going to Jerusalem, and of His there being put to death by the wicked of the world, a martyr at the hand of man, Peter said, "Be it far from thee, Lord; this shall not be unto thee." But now, in the day of his Epistle, he has so thoroughly learned the lesson which he then refused to sit at, that he teaches us, that now there is no spiritual house, no church, that is not built on Christ as disallowed of man.

This is to me very striking indeed. Most satisfactory and confirming it is, to see the Peter of Matt. 16 thus reappearing in 1 Pet. 2; but reappearing in such advanced condition of soul; able now, not only to seal the word which he had himself there uttered, that Christ was the living one, but to carry on our knowledge of His ways as the living one beyond what He Himself had then taught us; and ready now, not only to seal the word which the Lord had there uttered, that He was to be disallowed and cast out, but to carry out that fact to some of its weighty consequences as to the house or church of this dispensation.

"On Christ, salvation rests secure;

The Rock of Ages must endure;

Nor can that faith be overthrown

Which rests upon the 'Living Stone.'"

The Love of Christ

“We have the full knowledge of accomplished redemption, we know that we are sitting in the heavenly places in Christ. Our conscience is forever purged. God will remember our sins and our iniquities no more. But the effect of this work is, that we are entirely His, according to the love that is shown in the sacrifice that accomplished it. Morally, therefore, Christ is the all in all of our souls. It is evident that if He loved us, if he gave Himself for us, when in us there was no good thing, it is in having absolutely done with ourselves that we have life, happiness, and the knowledge of God. It is in Him alone that we find the source, the strength, and the perfection of this.

“Now, as to justification, this truth makes our position perfect. In us there is no good thing. We are accepted in the Beloved—perfectly accepted in His acceptance, our sins being entirely put away by His death. But, then, as to life, Jesus becomes the one object, the all in all of our souls. In Him alone the heart finds that which can be its object—in Him who has so loved us and given Himself for us—in Him who is entire perfection for the heart. As to conscience, the question is settled in peace through His blood: we are righteous in Him before God, while exercised daily on that ground. But the heart needs to love such an object, and in principle will have none but Him, in whom all grace, devotedness to us, and every grace, according to God’s own heart, is found.

“The Church—loved, redeemed, and belonging to Him—having by the Spirit understood His perfections, having known Him in the work of His love, does not yet possess Him as she knows Him. She sighs for the day when she will see Him as He is. Meanwhile He manifests Himself to her, awakens her affections, and seeks to possess her love, by testifying all His delight in her. She learns also that which is in herself—that slothfulness of heart which loses opportunities of communion with Him. But this teaches her to judge all that in herself, which weakens the effect on her heart of the perfections of her Beloved. Thus she is morally prepared, and has capacity for the full enjoyment of communion with Him; when she shall see Him as He is, she will be like Him. It is not the effort to obtain Him; but we seek to apprehend that for which we have been apprehended by Christ. We have an object that we do not yet fully possess, which alone can satisfy all our desires—an object whose affection we need to realize in our hearts—an end which He in grace pursues by the testimony of his perfect love towards us, thereby cultivating our love to Him, comforting us even by the sense of our weakness, and by the revelation of His own perfection, and thus showing us all in our own hearts that prevents our enjoying it. He delivers us from it, in that we discover it in the presence of His love. It is impossible to exaggerate the importance of cultivating these holy affections which attach us to Christ, and cause us to know His love, and to know Himself.

“Practically, what deep perfection of love was in that look which the Lord gave Peter when he had denied Him! What a moment was that when, without reproach, although instructing him, He testified His confidence in Peter by committing to him, who had thus denied Him, the sheep and the lambs so dear to His heart, for whom He had just given His life!

“Now this love of Christ’s, in its superiority to evil, a superiority that proves it divine, reproduces itself as a new creation in the heart of every one who receives its testimony, uniting him to the Lord who has so loved him.

“Is the Lord anything else than this for us? No, my brethren, we learn His love, we learn in these exercises of heart to know Him Himself.”

The Love of Christ Which Passeth Knowledge

“O Lord, Thy love’s unbounded,
So deep, so full, so free;
My soul is all enraptured,
Whene’er I think on Thee!”
On thine immortal glories
What mortal eye may gaze?
What words reveal their wonders—
What lip declare Thy praise?
O Lord, when lost in darkness
And wandering far from Thee,
Thy grace restrained my footsteps,
Thy mercy set me free.
Thy life my soul enlightened,
Thy hand prepared my way,
And Thou my steps supportest,
Mine everlasting stay!
But, O Thy love, my Savior!
‘Tis this I long to know—
That I, Thine own beloved,
With kindred love may glow
My spirit with Thy Spirit
Hath fellowship divine:
Thou stayest me with flagons,
Thou cheerest me with wine.
Beneath Thy pleasant shadow
I sit, in sweet repose,

To taste the secret blessings
Thy gracious hand bestows
'Tis there, I trace Thy beauty,—
Thy fullness there I learn—
How deep Thine own affection:—
How poor my faint return.
And there, Thy still small whisper,
My fainting heart console,
Thy words, like dews descending,
Revive my drooping soul.
But O! no thought can measure,
No creature heart contain
That love's eternal fullness,
Which stoops my heart to gain.
Then teach me, Lord, this perfect,
This changeless love to know,
That I, with ardent purpose,
May walk with Thee below.
Until Thy bright returning
Thy chosen Bride shall cheer,
Let this blest knowledge make me
A pilgrim wandering here.

Ministry

(1 Cor. 12-14.)

In these three chapters, which I would commend to my reader's prayerful study, we have three most important points in connection with the subject of ministry in the Church of God.

1. In chapter 12 we have the only divine basis of ministry, namely, membership in the body, according to the will of God, as we read at verse 18, "But now hath God set the members, every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him." This is the grand principle: "God hath set....as it hath pleased him." It is not a man setting himself, or one man setting another, in any shape or form. Such a thing finds no place in this divine treatise on ministry. "There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all." (Ver. 4-6.) The Holy Trinity is here presented in connection with ministry. It is the gift of the Spirit, administered under the lordship of the Son, and rendered effectual by the Father. These three things are absolutely essential to all effectual ministry.

2. Then, in that lovely chapter 13 we have the motive spring of ministry, which is "love." (ἀγάπη.) A man may possess the most brilliant gift, but if it be not exercised in love—if love be not the spring which sets it in motion—it will profit nothing. A man might rise in the assembly to show forth his power of speaking with tongues, his gift of prophecy, his understanding of mysteries, his knowledge of doctrine, or his power of eloquence, and not do one atom of good to the assembly, or to any individual member thereof, simply because love was not the motive spring of his service. It is well to weigh this. It is a most searching point for all who engage in any ministry. The minister should ever try himself with this question, "Is it love that sets me in motion?" If not, he will prove good for nothing. May the Holy Ghost apply this in power!

3. Finally, in chapter 14 we have the object or result of ministry, namely, "edification." This is the end of all ministry. The apostle "would rather speak five words" with this end in view, "than ten thousand" for self-display. "That the assembly may receive edifying" is the special point pressed throughout this entire chapter. It is this object which love will ever seek to gain, let the gift be what it may. Love has no object to gain but the good of others. Now, it must be obvious that no one could receive any profit or edification from an unknown tongue, unless there were an interpreter. The same, of course, holds good with respect to an unheard tongue. If I cannot hear what a man says, in prayer or teaching, I am as little edified as though I could not understand his tongue.

Let us, then, remember these three things—the basis, motive spring, and end of true ministry. May we ponder them deeply, and seek to understand them thoroughly, and to carry them out practically, to the glory of God and the good of His Church.

Nearing the Haven

When for eternal worlds we steer,
And seas are calm, and skies are clear,
And faith in lively exercise.
And distant hills of Canaan rise,
The soul for joy then claps her wings,
And loud the lovely sonnet sings,—
I'm going home.
With cheerful hope her eyes explore
Each landmark of the distant shore—
The trees of life, the pastures green,
The golden streets, and crystal stream—
Again with joy she claps her wings,
And loud the lovely sonnet sings,—
I'm almost home.
The nearer still she comes to land,
More eager all her powers expand,
With steady helm and flowing sail
Her anchor drops within the veil;
And now with joy she folds her wings,
And the celestial sonnet sings,—
I'm safe at home.

Parables and Arguments

It has been observed by those who have acquired a competency to speak on such subjects, that hieroglyphics went before letters, and parables before arguments. Nature suggested this order, rather demanded it; and it is to be seen that Scripture has observed it, thus following where nature led the way.

The divine volume opens with parables, and closes with arguments. It begins with illustrative teaching, and ends as with rudimental or dogmatic. But the things taught in these different methods are the same. We find the narratives of Genesis in the reasonings of the epistles.

And thus, the earliest and the latest books are linked together in the most attractive and persuasive manner. All, I may say, are welcoming each other's presence and company. They converse together; they understand each other's language, though one speak in the artless style of childhood, and the other in the grave, sententious wisdom of age. And the whole is thus wondrous as well as precious, hearing its own self-evidencing light to this great fact, that it is the same Spirit which has quickened and filled the whole volume from first to last.

And let me further say, that in this wondrous combination, nothing can exceed the sweetness and simplicity of the child's language, as we listen to it in Genesis; and nothing can be more sound and sure than the reasoning of the man, as we follow it in the epistles; and yet, as we said, the stories of the Patriarch combine with the arguments of the apostles. Each of them announces the like mysteries. I would instance what I mean, and look, first, at Abraham in Gen. 15.

As we may say, on a fine, clear, starry night, in the land of Canaan, Abraham is called forth, by the voice of the Lord, to look to the sky and mark the number of the stars if he can; and this simple circumstance, with the intercourse between him and the Lord which accompanied it, serves the apostle's close and conclusive treatise on the justification of a sinner, in the epistle to the Romans. See chap. 4.

Abraham, dead in himself, believing, as he looked on the sky, that God could and would, according to the promise then made him, give him a seed as numerous as the stars on which he was then gazing, is used by the apostle as illustrative of the faith which justifies the sinner. The patriarchal story is thus found to be a parable as well as a story; or, mystery as well as history, and to join with the reasonings and conclusions of the apostle, in giving us sinners holy confidence before God.

Let us now look at Sarah, in Gen. 21. Can any circumstances, I ask, be more homely, more commonplace, amid the events of human life, than the dismissal of a servant because she had, perhaps, forgotten what she owed her mistress? A female servant discharged for disrespectful behavior! And yet, this is the fact in the history of the family of Abraham which is wrought into that argument of the apostle which proves a sinner's title to walk before God in the spirit of adoption, or the liberty of a child. See Gal. 4

Surely there is something both affecting and attractive in this. What illustrations, I ask, can be more inartificial, more level to the young or to the untutored mind, than those which the early book of Genesis is thus seen to supply? And what reasonings on some of the profoundest inquiries which the heart of man can entertain, more satisfactory than those which the epistles conduct to their conclusions? And yet these things are found together! Who, I then ask again, has been the artificer of such a book? Who has woven together those hieroglyphics and letters, these parables and arguments? Surely "the key of this inquiry lies at the door." The parable went before the argument in the order, as we have said, which nature suggested. The stories of the patriarchs have answered well for the treatises and discussions of the apostles; and if, as another has said, we get "the sweet harmonies and deep analogies of nature," surely we may add after all this, that we get likewise the sweet harmonies and deep analogies of Scripture.

But I must give another instance. It is the Abraham of Gen. 14. The victor-patriarch, on his return from the battle, is there met by the priest of Salem, with suited refreshments sent to him as from God Himself with a blessing, by the hand of that august stranger. Abraham accepts it, and so feeds upon what Melchizedec had brought him, so deeply drinks into the very spirit and virtue of the occasion, that he is able to give the king of Sodom and all his offers an answer, a triumphant answer, on the spot.

But this striking scene in the book of Genesis is wrought into an argument in the epistle to the Hebrews. It stands there as a testimony to us, of the effective priesthood of the true Melchizedec, the Son of God, the Lord Jesus; and we are called to enjoy, by faith, the virtues of that priesthood, as Abraham enjoyed his communion with the royal priest of Salem, and proved the power of it.

Surely all this makes the divine volume wonderful and attractive. What authority it acquires and maintains, what delight it awakens! Would that one used the mysteries and communications of it as one does the book, that contains and conveys them. Abraham and Sarah were beyond us, if one may speak for others, in this.

How simply and at once, with a believing mind, did Abraham accept the promise of God in Gen. 15, not considering his own death-estate, nor that of Sarah, but believing in God as a quickener, he came forth as justified by faith. How, with full decision of faith, did Sarah accept the spirit of liberty, the privilege of adoption, when she sent Hagar and Ishmael out of the house, that she might enjoy her weaned Isaac alone. And with what fervency and grasp of soul did Abraham accept the refreshments and the blessing of Melchizedec, going forth from that communion to gain a victory over all that the world could have made him or given him! And we are to be like-minded in all this. We are to be simple in our acceptance of the fruits of grace; we are to walk with God in the certainty of justification, in the liberty of children, and in the sure hope of accomplished warfare, and of the refreshments of the kingdom.

But we are not in the glow of these mysteries as grace would have us to be; we need the exhortation, "be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus," and again, "stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free." Let me rather ask, do we not very feebly image these circumstances, these narratives to ourselves, and thus lose much of the force of those blessed truths which they contain and convey? They are strange and somewhat out of the way, it may be. Yes; and so are the mysteries they illustrate. What a strange thing to see an aged couple, after a life of disappointment, embracing a child! What a strange thing to see a sinner, who has involved

himself in death and judgment, glorying in the assured possession of life and righteousness! It is death rejoicing in life. It is exultation in resurrection form: and yet, strange and out of the way as all this is, in the reckoning of flesh and blood, this is the believer's condition, as once it was our father Abraham's. We must live this parable if we would rightly understand it.

So, in Sarah's case. The inmates of the house who, for fourteen years and more, had lived with the family (yea, and in such relationship, too,) sent off at a moment's warning, for such a slight offense! What a strange thing, and more than strange! Would not a respectable neighborhood be indignant at such conduct? Would not the dismissal of a servant under such terms be resented by all who heard of it? Sent away at once, without getting time, even if she had affronted, to restore herself and seek forgiveness! And in like manner does not respectable flesh and blood resent the thought of a sinner freeing himself, through faith in the Son of God, from the spirit, and fears, and bondage of the law? Does not the moral sense denounce such pretension?

Surely, we may say all this. We do not realize these scenes and narratives in the strangeness that attaches to them, nor their great originals; I mean the mysteries which they exhibit. We are cloudy in our apprehension where we should be bright, and feeble and cold in our faith and affections when we should be bold and fervent, we are too little like Abraham in Gen. 15. and Sarah in Gen. 21; and too much like Abraham in Gen. 21, and Sarah in Gen. 18.

Here, however, we must distinguish things that differ; and we shall find our relief and comfort in doing so. We may be indisposed, like Abraham, in Gen. 21, to send Hagar away at the demand of Sarah, but this is not the same as if we brought her back after she had been sent away. I may but feebly act on my liberty in Christ, and linger still, in a legal spirit, over myself; but this is not as if I were advisedly to turn again to the rudiments of the world or of the law, again putting myself, as the apostle speaks, under "bondage" to "beggarly elements." Abraham never did this. He never brought back Hagar after the demand of Sarah had taught him to dismiss her. The Lord came and gave him counsel when, through weakness, he hesitated about listening to Sarah's requirement that the bondwoman should be sent away; but how, I may ask, would He have dealt with him, had he attempted to bring her home again after she had been sent away? It is interesting and instructive to see, that the epistle to the Galatians answers this question. For the Galatians were doing this. They were reviving ordinances; they were returning to fleshly confidences; they were proposing to sustain their conscience before God by religious doings, thereby to perfect what Jesus had begun for them; and the fervency and holy anger which glows in the epistle to them, may stand before us as the counterpart or expression of what the Lord's way with the patriarch would have been, had he attempted to bring home again the dismissed Hagar and her son.

All this, which we get in the word, is surely excellent. What a combination of moral glories! What a harmony of sweet voices! All we need is, eyes to see, and ears to hear the wonderful works and words of God.

"The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple." (Psalm 19:7.)

The Receipt

Some time ago, I was standing with a commercial gentleman in his office, conversing with him about his eternal prospects. He was one who had manifested some anxiety as to the great question of his soul's salvation, and I had frequently spoken to him before. On the occasion to which I now refer, we were speaking about the ground of a sinner's peace in the presence of God. There were some files hanging up in a corner of the office, and pointing to them, I said, "What have you got upon those files?" "Receipts," said he. "Well," I said, "Are you anxious about the amount of these various bills?" "Not in the least," he replied, "they are all receipted and stamped." "Are you afraid," I continued, "lest those persons from whom you received the bills should come down upon you for the amount?" "By no means. They are all legally settled, and do not cost me a single thought."

"Now, then," said I, laying my hand upon his shoulder, "will you tell me what is God's receipt to us for all that we as sinners ever owed to Him as a righteous Judge?" He paused to consider, and then replied, "I suppose it is the grace of God in the heart." "Nay; that would never do. God's grace in my heart is no receipt for all I ever owed Him." My friend paused again, and then said, "It must be the knowledge of salvation." "No; you have not laid hold of it yet. You cannot but see the difference between your knowledge that these bills are paid, and the receipts which you have on your file. You might know they were paid, and yet, if you had no receipt, your mind would not be at ease." "Well," said he, "it must be faith." "Not right yet," said I. "Faith is no receipt." At length, feeling assured he had the true answer, he exclaimed, "It is the blood of Christ." He seemed a good deal disappointed when I still demurred, and quite gave up the attempt at further reply.

"Now," said I, "it is most blessedly true that the blood of Christ has paid the debt which I, as a guilty sinner, owed to divine Justice; yet you must admit there is a difference between the payment of a debt and the receipt. For even, though you had seen the full amount paid down, yet until you were in possession of the receipt, your mind would not be at ease, inasmuch as there was no legal settlement of the transaction. You must have a receipt. What, therefore, is God's receipt for that heavy debt which we owed Him? Blessed be His name, it is a risen Christ, at the right hand of the majesty in the heavens. The death of Christ paid my debt, His resurrection is a receipt in full, signed and sealed by the hand of Eternal Justice. Jesus "was delivered for our offenses, and raised again for our justification." Hence, the believer owes not a fraction to divine justice, on the score of guilt, but he owes an eternity of worship to divine love, on the score of free pardon, and complete justification. The blood of Christ has blotted out his heavy debit; and he has a risen Christ to his credit.

How marvelous that a poor guilty creature should be able to stand as free from all charge of guilt as the risen and glorified Savior! And yet, so it is, through the grace of God, and by the blood of Christ. Jesus has paid all our debts, discharged all our liabilities, canceled all our guilt, and has become, in resurrection, our life and our righteousness. If it be true that, "If Christ be not raised we are yet in our sins," it is equally true that, if He be raised, we who believe in Him are not in our sins.

Relief for a Burdened Heart

(A. Reply to an Anxious Enquirer, "E. M.")

Dear Friend,

Your letter has interested us exceedingly. Few things, indeed, lie nearer to the heart than the case of anxious and burdened spirits. The work of emancipating; and soothing such is becoming, each day, more and more charming to us. Words could not convey how intensely we long to be used as God's instruments in this most delightful work. We are fully persuaded that it is a work, which lies very near the heart of Christ. How could we question this, while hearkening to such words as these, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised." (Luke 4:18.) And again "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." (Matt. 11:28.) How precious is the thought of God sending His Son, and anointing Him with the Holy Ghost, to preach glad tidings to the poor, to bring healing to the broken-hearted, sight to the blind, deliverance to the captive, liberty for the oppressed, rest for the weary! What unspeakable comfort for one who may find himself in any of these conditions!

Now, dear friend, it seems very plain that you are a weary, heavy-laden one, and as such, you are the very object for the gracious ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ; you are one of those for whom He was sent, and for whom He was anointed by the Holy Ghost. We have not the slightest doubt but that the root of the matter is in you. The very anxieties to which you give expression are, in our judgment, the evidence of a spiritual work in your soul. Not that we want you to build your peace upon this. God forbid! If all the angels in heaven, and all the men upon earth were to give expression to their confidence in your Christianity, it might be a comfort and an encouragement to you, but could never form the ground of your peace, in the presence of a holy, sin-hating God. It matters little, comparatively, what men think about you, the question is, what does God think about you? He has found you out. He knows the worst about you; and yet He loves you, and gave His Son to die for you. Here is the only ground of a sinner's peace. God Himself has met your case. He has been glorified about your sins, in the death of His Son. It does not matter the least what you are. You say you are, sometimes, at a loss to know in what light to regard yourself, whether as wholly unconverted, or a backslider. The fact is, what you really want is to get to the end of yourself altogether; and when you get there, you will find God in all the fullness of His grace, as manifested in Christ; and surely to get to the end of oneself and find Christ, is the true way to find peace.

It seems to us that one special malady from which you are suffering, just now, is intense self-occupation. This is the case with thousands. It is quite true that the Spirit of God will exercise us about our condition, and cause us to judge it. but then it is only for the purpose of leading us to the very bottom of it all, so that we may find settled repose in the fullness and sufficiency of Christ. This kind of exercise is very good. We delight in seeing a soul under deep spiritual work—the

deeper the better. We are of opinion that, in spiritual husbandry, the deeper the furrow the stronger the root. We do not attach much value to a superficial work in the conscience; for although it is quite true that we are not saved by any special process or exercise whether of heart or conscience, still we have frequently found that persons who had glided rapidly into a certain feeling of peace, were in danger of gliding as rapidly out it, and becoming as miserable as they had once been happy. Sin must be seen in its sinfulness, and the sooner it is thus seen the better, so that having it really judged in the conscience, we may lay hold of a full and precious Christ, as God's answer to it all. When this is the case, the heart enjoys a more solid, abiding peace, and is not subject to those variations of which so many complain.

But, on the other hand, there is a kind of self-occupation into which Satan leads the awakened sinner for the purpose of keeping him from Christ. This must be carefully guarded against. We apprehend he has entangled your feet in this snare. The style and tone of your letter quite lead us to this conclusion. We most fully enter into your case. Indeed, you possess our entire sympathy. We deeply respect the feeling which leads you to absent yourself from the Lord's Table, in your present state of soul. We consider it vastly superior to the lightness, flippancy, and heartless formality with which so many approach that sacred institution. Far be it from us to pen a single line which would have the effect of emboldening you to approach the Lord's Supper in an unhappy and untruthful condition of heart and conscience. But then we want you so to apprehend the gospel of the grace of God—the full forgiveness of your sins however magnified and multiplied—your complete justification, through the death and resurrection of Christ—we want you so to see the application of all this to your own soul, as that you may be able, like the poor man in the third of Acts, to rise up from your crippled condition, and enter into the temple, leaping and walking and praising God. Be assured of it, dearly beloved, this is your privilege. There is nothing to hinder your enjoyment thereof, this moment, save the unbelief and legality of your own spirit. The enemy would keep you occupied with yourself in order to keep you from Christ. Watch against this. It is the most hopeless, gloomy labor, to be seeking for aught in yourself. Look off unto Jesus. You will find all you want in Him. May the power of the Holy Ghost fill your whole soul with the fullness and preciousness of Christ, so that you may get into, and continue in, that holy and happy liberty which is the proper portion of every child of God.

You will further bear with us, dear E. M. when we tell you that we discern in your letter a great deal of the legal clement. This is an evil at once hateful to the Spirit of God and subversive of your own peace and comfort. You want to get into and breathe the genial atmosphere of free grace—that grace which reigns through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord. You have very unworthy thoughts of God's perfect, eternal, and unchangeable love. You seem to measure God very much by the standard of your own thoughts. You are reasoning from what you are to God, instead of believing what God is to you. This is a serious mistake—the mistake of many, we are all, more or less, prone to this grievous error. Very few, comparatively, live in the actual enjoyment of salvation by grace. There is the continual weighing of self in a legal balance. The principle of law is so deeply embedded in the heart, that nothing but the mighty power of the Spirit of God can deliver us from it, and lead us into the practical understanding of that brief, but most comprehensive statement of the apostle: "Ye are not under law; but under grace." Rom. 6.

Now, we hold it to be utterly impossible for a soul to enjoy settled peace so long as it is, in any measure, under the influence of this law-principle. There may be occasional gleams of sunshine,

such as you describe in your own experience; but there never can be abiding gospel—peace, so long as a single trace of the legal element is allowed to hold sway over the conscience. Abiding peace can only flow from a deep, thorough, practical sense of free grace; and that free grace acts towards the sinner on the settled ground of accomplished atonement. Legality, on the other hand, will ever be directing the eye inward upon self—yes, ever and only upon self. It will lead us to measure our standing before God by our own progress in personal holiness, our efforts, our services, our doings, our ways, our feelings, our frames, our something or other. All this produces spiritual darkness, gloomy uncertainty, mental bondage, intense soul-torture, depression, irritability, sourness of temper. And these things again react most prejudicially, upon our whole moral being. They fling back their demoralizing influence upon the life and character. The harp is hung upon the willow. The hymn of joyous praise can only, as you say, be occasionally sung. The Eucharistic feast—that most precious memorial of accomplished redemption—is abandoned, or if not abandoned, is gone through—we dare not say celebrated—without freshness, unction, power, elevation, or depth of spiritual tone. In this way, Christ is dishonored, the Holy Ghost is grieved, the testimony is marred, and the standard of practical Christianity greatly lowered. Moreover, the enemy, finding us in this condition of soul, cuts out ample work for us, by acting, in various ways, upon our lusts and passions, which only gather strength from the very fact of our being under law; for as the apostle says, “The strength of sin is the law.” Thus the soul’s history is summed up in two words, namely “Lust and law,” or “Law and lust,” and one is tossed like a ball from one to the other, until free grace comes in and gives full deliverance from both. Grace gives you power over sin; whereas law gives sin power over you. Grace keeps you in the place of continual victory; law keeps you in the place of continual defeat.

May the Lord lead you and all His people into a clearer apprehension of grace, that so your peace may flow as a river, and the fruits of righteousness abound to the praise of His name!

But we are not yet done with your letter, dear friend. We think we discern another feature in your case which tends to produce the spiritual depression of which you complain. If we mistake not, you are afflicted with a morbid or scrupulous conscience. This is a sore evil—a heavy burden—a very great trial. We deeply feel for any soul laboring under this grievous malady, for it not only affects oneself, but all with whom one comes in contact. There is a very wide difference indeed between a scrupulous conscience and a tender conscience. The former is governed by its own fears; the latter, by the word of God. That super induces feebleness and uncertainty in all one’s ways; this a holy stability and consistency. We can hardly conceive a more troublesome companion than a morbid or scrupulous conscience. It is always creating difficulties for its possessor, and placing stumbling-blocks in his way. A tender conscience, on the contrary, is invaluable. It resents only what ought to be resented. Its action is true and healthy. It does not morbidly seek out cause of trouble and defilement; but, being duly acted upon by the word of God, as applied by the Holy Ghost, it yields a true Response, and thus discharges, with vigor, its divinely appointed functions.

Think, then, beloved, of all these things, and seek to watch against them, pray against them, and above all, believe against them. Get done with self-occupation, rise above your legal fears, and cast away from you the workings of a morbid conscience. Be assured of it these are three features in your case; and they are the features of many a case—a self-occupied heart, a legal mind, a morbid conscience. Terrible evils! May the power of the Holy Ghost give you full deliverance from these three efficient agents of the devil! May He break every chain and give you to taste the true

sweetness of spiritual liberty and communion of heart with a reconciled God and Father.

Do not, any longer, harass yourself with the questions, "Am I a converted person? or am I a backslider? am I this? or am I that?" "You are, in yourself, a poor lost, unworthy, good-for-nothing creature; and yet God commendeth His love toward you in that He gave His only begotten Son to bear your curse and burden on the tree. Cast yourself on His boundless love, "a sea where none can sink." See that all is done. The debt is paid. Satan is silenced. The law is magnified. Sin is put away. God is satisfied, yea, glorified. What more would you have? For what are you waiting? You may, perhaps, say to us "I know all this." You do say in your letter that you "can hardly expect to hear anything more than you have already read." Well, we want you to make your own of all this by simple, childlike faith. We want to drive you from behind every bush, and out of every legal lurking place, into the full blaze of divine and everlasting love. Cast away from you, we beseech you, dear friend, all your legal reason-lags, and seek to exercise a believing mind that just takes God at His word, and takes possession, without a question, of all that He gives. We do not want to heal your wound slightly; to cry "peace, peace, when there is no peace." This would be cruelty rather than kindness. But we desire that you should "know the things which are freely given to you of God," and which are as clearly revealed in the word, as they are freely given through grace. We long to see you as happy as the gospel of the grace of God is fitted to make you. Then you will be able to sing hymns of praise, and take your seat at the table of the Lord in happy, holy, elevated communion and worship.

May the good Lord meet you in your present need! May He disperse, by the bright and blessed beams of His love, the dark cloud that has settled down upon your spirit, and fill you with all joy and peace in believing. To Him we do most affectionately commend you, praying Him to make use of what we have written, in blessing to your precious soul, and His name shall have all the praise throughout the everlasting ages.

Rest in Jesus

Steadfast in thy work of love,
Continue blest.
And through the Spirit from above.
In Jesus rest.
O ne'er retard thee in the race,
The prize to win;
On, with firm step and steady pace.
And rest in Him.
Forward, toward that bright abode,
Where He is gone;
Onward, supported by thy God,
To wear the crown.
Stand fast, let the Spirit's sword
Be ever drawn,
Till for a palm, at Jesus' word,
Thou lay'st it down.
Be patient in continuing
The seed to sow,
Have faith! although the fruit it bring
Thou may'st not know.
O leave the issue to His care
Who knoweth best,
And constant still, with watchful prayer,
In Jesus rest.
And may the Spirit's threefold power
On thee be shed;

May God His richest blessings shower

Upon thy head.

May'st thou be blest abundantly,

Above thy need,

And in thy Jesus

O may'st thou Have rest indeed!

Resurrection

A Correspondent requests a special notice of Phil. 3:11. "If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection from among the dead." The point toward which the desires of the true Christian ever tend is resurrection-glory. It matters not to him by what way he is to reach that point. He longs to reach the glory, "by any means."

It may be that our friend finds difficulty in the word "if," as though it implied a doubt in the mind of the apostle as to his reaching the end in safety. We do not believe he had any such thought in his mind. The idea is simply this—he had the goal before him, and he was eagerly pressing toward it. His vision was filled with it, his heart was set on it, and as to the "means" by which he was to reach it he was quite indifferent.

It may be interesting to observe that the word which is rendered "resurrection," only occurs, so far as we are aware, in this one passage, and properly signifies "resurrection from among." The word ἀναστάσις (anastasis, resurrection) occurs about forty-two times in the New Testament, and is applied to the broad fact of resurrection. But the word used in the eleventh verse is morally linked with the expression in Mark 9:10, "Questioning one with another what rising from among the dead (ἐκ νεκρῶν) should mean." The disciples would have found no difficulty in the thought of resurrection as such, seeing that every orthodox Jew believed in it. But a "rising from among the dead" was something strange to them. Hence their "questioning."

Now, the proper hope of the Christian is not merely "resurrection of the dead," but "resurrection from among the dead." This makes a very material difference. It completely sets aside the idea of a general simultaneous resurrection. To speak of a resurrection from among the dead, obviously implies that all shall not rise together. Rev. 20:5. teaches us that there will be a thousand years between the two resurrections; but it is of importance to see that the very word used by the apostle to express that resurrection for which he was looking, is quite different from that usually employed to set forth the general thought of resurrection. Why is this? Simply because he meant a special thing and he therefore used a special word—a word which, as we have said, occurs only in this one place.

It is deeply solemn to remember that the Lord's people will rise from their graves and leave behind them the ashes of the wicked dead to molder for a thousand years longer. This thought may seem to be foolishness to the natural man, but scripture teaches it, and that is quite enough for the Christian. The resurrection of the Church will be upon the same principle, and partake of the same character, as the resurrection of Christ; it will be "a resurrection from among the dead." May our hearts be set upon that glorious goal!

The Sheltering Wing

(The last Poem of the Blind Poet)

I am old and blind!

Men point at me as smitten by God's frown—

Afflicted and deserted of my mind,

Yet am I not cast down.

I am weak, yet strong—

I murmur not that I no longer see—

Poor, old, and helpless, I the more belong,

Father Supreme! to Thee!

O merciful One!

When men are farthest, then Thou art most near;

When friends pass by, my weakness shun,

Thy chariot I hear.

Thy glorious face

Is leaning towards me—and its holy light

Shines in upon my lonely dwelling place,

And there is no more night!

On my bended knee

I recognize Thy purpose clearly shown,

My vision Thou hast dimm'd that I may see

Thyself—Thyself alone.

I have naught to fear—

This darkness is the shadow of Thy wing.

Beneath it I am almost sacred—here

Can come no evil thing.

Oh! I seem to stand

Trembling, where foot of mortal ne'er hath been,
Wrapped in the radiance of Thy sinless land,
Which eye hath never seen.

Visions come and go,
Shapes of resplendent beauty round me throng!
From angel lips I seem to hear the flow
Of soft and holy song.

It is nothing now,
When heaven is opening on my sightless eyes,
When airs from Paradise refresh my brow,
The earth in darkness lies.

In a purer clime
My being fills with rapture—waves of thought
Roll in upon my spirit—strains sublime
Break over me unsought.

Give me now my lyre!
I feel the stirrings of a gift divine;
Within my bosom glows unearthly fire,
Lit by no skill of mine.

A Solemn Call

Awake! Oh fellow sinner!—Wake!

The weight of death is on thy soul!

The burden infinite of sin's uncanceled debt

Forthstretching from that dire primeval fall,

And reaching on to the abyss of twice-told living death,

That waits for ruined man!

Awake! The shroud of night is on thy soul,

Blackness of darkness! infinite—

Still uncomprehended and unfelt though now begun,

To end (not lose its end) in that immensity of woe

Unuttered and unknown,

How shall we bid thee wake and rise, that

Christ may give thee light!

Oh! life of earth whose boast is in the grave;

Time's passing mirage, vision of a night,

How can man deem thee aught, and claim thee as his all?

For thou but lull'st thy victims with sure opiates of forgetfulness.

And bid'st them dream of life, while drifting down thy fiery stream

Into the tideless ocean of eternal death:—

Man clasps a shadow, and th'eternal substance scorns—

He thirsts, yet slakes his thirst with poison

Ere he turns to th' eternal fount—

Source uncreate of light, and life, and love,

Which open stands wooing his need, that he

May drink therefrom and live forever.—

Water of life! the smitten Rock has bid thee flow,

And freely flow for us.

Gush forth in every heart in all thine energy divine

And seal thy resurrection-power and every sin-sick soul

That yearns for life.

Light of eternal truth shine forth—irradiate on thy page

And bid each opened eye, thy glory see,

Each wakened ear the breathings of thy quickening voice confess,

Oh, word of life, who badst the dead to rise—

Who spake the word, "Let there be light,"

And darkness fled away.

T.T.

Meditations on Song of Solomon

Ver. 5, 6. "I am black, but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon. Look not upon me, because I am black, because the sun hath looked upon me: my mother's children were angry with me: they made me the keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept." The Bride has spoken of the King's embrace, His love, His name, and His chambers. Now, stirred up by something that has occurred, she calls to mind, and freely confesses, what she is in herself. At the same time, as happily affirms what she is in His sight. Needed truth at all times, if we would preserve a well-balanced mind. The more thoroughly we know the worthlessness of the flesh, the more shall we appreciate the worthiness of Christ, and the better shall we understand the work of the Holy Spirit. When the total depravity of human nature, is not a settled reality in the soul, there will ever be confusion in our experience, as to the vain pretensions of the flesh, and the divine operations of the Spirit.

There is nothing good whatever, in our carnal nature. The most advanced in the divine life has said, "In me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing." How sweeping! "No good thing." But can it not be improved by diligence in prayer and watchfulness? No, never; it is wholly incurable. Long, long ago, this was affirmed by the God of truth. See Gen. 6 "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually..... And God said unto Noah, "The end of all flesh is come before me." Now, what is the end, or the result, of all flesh? Why, that it is "evil," "only evil," and "evil continually;" that is, plainly, evil without any good, and evil without any cessation; and this is said of all flesh, observe, not of some, merely. So that all are included. True, in some we may find nature polished, cultivated, and refined; in others rough, rude, and rugged, but it is carnal nature in both. We may not be able to bend a bar of iron, yet it may be so beaten out, as to become quite flexible, but it is the same iron still. Its appearance has changed, but its nature is the same.

Well, admitting all that to be true as to our sad nature, why call it "needed truth and necessary to a well-balanced mind?" Because it enables us to distinguish between flesh and Spirit, and to know from which the thought, suggestion, or inclination may come. Seeing they are both in us, and the one unmixed good, and the other unmixed evil, this is all important. Endless confusion, trouble, perplexity, and, in some cases, deep melancholy, are the unhappy results of ignorance on this point. I mean the subject of the two natures. Nothing that is good can spring from our carnal nature. Suppose I meet a person who is in deep concern about his soul; and earnestly longing to know Christ and salvation. I know for certain the Holy Spirit is at work in that soul. Such desires after Christ and salvation are good, and could never spring from a nature that hates both God and Christ, and loves this world better than heaven. The soul may indeed be in great distress, and full of doubts and fears as to the issue, and even refusing to be comforted. But, in God's mind, it is saved already. And when it believes the truth it will rejoice. The good work was begun in the soul of the prodigal when first he said within himself "I will arise and go to my Father." The Spirit of God will fully satisfy every desire which he creates. Christ Himself is the perfect answer to every desire of the heart.

We learn from holy scripture three points of daily, practical importance: namely, that flesh opposes the Spirit, Satan opposes Christ, and the world opposes the Father. (Gal. 5; Gen. 3; 1 John 2.) These are our three grand enemies, hence the importance of knowing on whose side we are standing. For example; in place of perplexing myself as to where the world begins and ends, in what is called worldliness, I have simply to ask, "Is it of the Father?" In hundreds of instances it would be impossible to say where worldliness begins and ends, by looking at the thing itself. But you may soon ascertain, "if it be of the Father." And when we see that it is not of the Father the question is settled. It must be of the world. There is no middle, or neutral ground in scripture. The same rule applies to the others. Whatsoever is not of the Spirit is of the flesh, and whatsoever is not of Christ is of Satan.

But though, in our meditations on the words of the Bride, we have run into these practical details, we by no means think that such thoughts were in her mind. Jewish experience being more of an outward, temporal, and typical character.

The blackness of which she speaks is external. It is a darkness of complexion—she is sun burnt; the warning word of the prophet has come to pass. "There shall be burning instead of beauty" (Isa. 3:24.) And because of this, she feels keenly the curious gaze of the daughters of Jerusalem. "Look not upon me, because I am black, because the sun hath looked upon me." The time was when the daughter of Zion was beautiful and glorious, a praise in the earth. "Thy renown," says the prophet, "went forth among the heathen for thy beauty; for it was perfect through my comeliness, which I had put upon thee, saith the Lord God." (Eze. 16) But because of her ingratitude, and unfaithfulness, she had been reduced to the sad condition of a poor sun burnt slave. The Prophet Jeremiah also, in his "Lamentations" over the downfall of Jerusalem, describes in the most touching manner, not only what she once was, but what, through affliction and sorrow, she had become. "Her Nazarites were purer than snow, they were whiter than milk, they were more ruddy in body than rubies, their polishing was of sapphire. Their visage is blacker than a coal; they are not known in the streets; their skin cleaveth to their bones; it is withered, it is become like a stick." Well might he exclaim, in the bitterness of his soul, "How is the gold become dim? How is the most fine gold changed? "If such, oh my soul, be the awfully evil, bitter, and sorrowful fruits of sin in this world where "mercy rejoiceth against judgment," what must they be in the world to come, where hope perisheth, and where despair seizes upon the guilty soul? Canst thou look back to the cross and see thy sins, all thy sins, judged there—put away there—and buried in the grave of everlasting forgetfulness? God, and faith, alone know the power of that cross—and glory in its eternal efficacy. Then, judge all evil in thy heart and ways fully now, knowing that Christ was judged for it there. That which was imputed to Christ shall never be imputed to thee. "Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile." Psalm 32

When I see that the sin which I mourn over was borne by Jesus, and that He put it away forever by the sacrifice of Himself, all guile departs. I have no desire to hide, extenuate, or excuse my sin. It was put away on the cross, and is now pardoned on that ground. In the presence of such love and goodness, fear is cast out. I am free and unreserved; and I can only praise the Lord for His boundless grace to me.

The term "black" is generally used in scripture as expressive of affliction, sorrow, and persecution. "My skin," as Job says, "is black upon me, and my bones are burned with the heat." (Chap.

30:30.) It is emphatically so with disobedient Israel. But here, the confession is sweetly coupled with faith in Christ, and so becomes, morally, the truthful expression of all believers. "I am black, but comely." Black as sin in myself—whiter than snow in Christ.

This will be the language of the God-fearing remnant in the latter day, who shall have passed through the depths of Jacob's trouble, sorely scorched indeed shall they be, by the burning heat of "the great tribulation." Not only shall they suffer persecution under Antichrist the great oppressor, but even their own brethren after the flesh shall be turned against them. "Hear the word of the Lord, ye that tremble at his word; your brethren that hated you, that cast you out for my name's sake, said, Let the Lord be glorified: but he shall appear to your joy, and they shall be ashamed" Isa. 66:5.

This, we believe, is what the now joyous Bride refers to. "My mother's children were angry with me: they made me the keeper of the vineyards." Like another Ruth, the vineyards which she was compelled to toil in, become her own. And happy now in the love of her great deliverer, and rich Lord, she could freely speak of what she had passed through, and what she still was in her own eyes. "Black as the tents of Kedar—comely as the curtains of Solomon."

The sons of Ishmael, it is said, use the rough, shaggy skins of their black goats for the outward covering of their tents. And to the traveler's eye, they have an intensely black appearance in the desert, beneath the rays of a bright sun. And, most surely, were man in his best estate placed under the beams of the brighter Sun of Righteousness, blacker far than the wild Arab's tent would he be. Even of a burning lamp, as one has said, when placed in the rays of the sun, nothing can be seen but the black wick. But, oh! thrice happy thought, if the sense of our uncomeliness should still trouble us, it no longer troubles the blessed Lord. He has removed it all and forever from His own eyes. And faith's eye sees with Him. The judgment of God, and the judgment of faith are ever the same. Thy sins which were many are forgiven. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin.

The expression "curtains of Solomon" may have reference to the beautiful veil of King Solomon's Temple: the type we know, of the holy humanity of Jesus. All believers shall yet be conformed to the now perfect Man in heaven, the head of the new creation. "As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." (1 Cor. 15:49.) The "Daughters of Jerusalem," here introduced, are evidently distinct from the Bride, though intimately connected with her, as may be seen from the important place they occupy in this beautiful scene. If the Bride be the representative of the beloved city, Jerusalem—the earthly capital of the great King, the daughters of Jerusalem may represent the Cities of Judah. Hence we can understand their presence and place on so many occasions, yet never reaching the position of the Bride in the estimation of the King. According to the word of the Lord, Jerusalem must ever have the preeminence. "For now have I chosen and sanctified this house, that my name may be there forever, and mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually." 2 Chron. 7:16.

Ver. 7. "Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon; for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions." A blessed change has now taken place in the occupation of the Bride. The Bridegroom fills her eye and her heart. Self is dropped! What a mercy! It is neither black self, nor comely self, now. It is always unhappy in result to be occupied with self. Innumerable perplexities, and sorrows, flow

from the eye looking within, in place of looking out from self, and up to Christ.

There are three things, O my soul, in this beautiful verse, which will deserve thy serious meditation.

1. The earnest affection of the heart. She does not, observe, “O thou whom my soul” ought to love, or even desires to love, but “O thou whom my soul loveth” There is a bright flame of love in her heart to the Person of her Lord and Savior. She loves Himself. “Tell me, O Thou.” This is nearness, “Me,” “Thou,”—“Thou,” “Me.” Happy condition for a soul! What, my soul knowest thou of this?

The word appreciation seems more fitly to express the little I know of this blessed matter, than the idea of the sensations of an earnest, ardent affection. What is there, in existence, I inquire, that I care more for than my Savior—that I would prefer to Him? What is this? Is it love? Who else—what else—is loved more?

But, oh! the day draws near, when these eyes shall see the King in His glory. Then shall this cold, dull heart be ravished with His beauty, and burn forever with a pure flame of perfect love for Him alone.

“Soon shall my eyes behold thee, with rapture, face to face;

One half hath not been told me of all thy power and grace;

Thy beauty, Lord, and glory; the wonders of thy love,

Shall be the endless story of all thy saints above.”

2. She desires refreshment and nourishment—directly from Himself. “Tell me.....where thou feedest thy flock?”

She goes not to the shepherds of Israel, who cared more for the fleece than the flock; but to the chief Shepherd Himself. She had been brought to Him as King, now she appeals to Him as Shepherd. Like David of old, He is the Shepherd-King; and oh! how graciously, lovingly, and tenderly, will He yet gather the now scattered sheep of Israel. Nothing can exceed the grace and beauty of the following verses. “For thus saith the Lord God, Behold I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out. As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day. And I will bring them out from the people, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land, and feed them on the mountains of Israel by the rivers, and in all the inhabited places of the country: I will feed them in good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be; there shall they lie in a good fold, and in a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel. I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord God.” Eze. 34

3. Her heart longs after the noonday rest of His highly favored flock. “Tell me.....where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon.” Personal communion, divine nourishment, and quiet rest, are the rich blessings her soul now earnestly breathes after. Wearied with the fruitless search for rest and refreshment apart from God, she longs after the green pastures, and the still waters, of His love

and grace. Those who have wandered on the dark mountains, uncheered by the light of God's countenance, know their dreadful barrenness. But when restoration is full and happy, the tender blade is sweeter than ever. The Bride, having tasted the blessedness of communion with the Lord, now desires that it may be increased and uninterrupted.

The thought of being suspected by others of insincerity greatly troubles her. "For why," she adds, "should I be as one that is veiled (margin) by the flocks of thy companions?" Who the "companions" are, it may be difficult to say, unless they be under-shepherds, who could not understand or meet her case like the Princely Shepherd Himself. He knew her heart. She could confide in His. The term "veiled" seems to convey the idea of being suspected. (Gen. 38:15.) This is very cutting to an honest, upright mind, but not uncommon. Many who profess to be the shepherds of God's sheep, can but little understand the path of one who is walking with the Lord outside of all the prescribed rules of men—who desires to please the Lord, if he should offend all else beside. There is such a thing as an energy of love that rises above all mere human arrangements, and holds communion immediately, not mediately, with the Lord. An energy that could not tarry for the routine of human forms. Such an one is most likely to be misunderstood and misrepresented by those who move in the more beaten track. Like Hannah, the mother of Samuel, who prayed with an inward, spiritual energy, which Eli, the priest of God, did not understand. But the Lord knows the motive of the heart, and the spring of the energy.

Just as the loved one was suffering in her soul from the mean suspicions of others, the Beloved appears for her comfort. This is the first time we hear the Bridegroom's voice. But, oh! what grace flows out to her! What words drop from His lips! "O thou fairest among women," is the first utterance of His heart. Enough, surely, to sweeten the most bitter soul.

She might be troubled about her appearance, and about the unworthy thoughts of others; but such an assurance of His love and esteem is well fitted to remove all her troubles, and to fill her heart with boundless joy. In place of looking upon her as she is in herself, "black as the tents of Kedar"—an outdoor slave withered by the sun,—He assures her, that not only does He esteem her fair and comely, but the fairest of the fair.

Meditations on Song of Solomon

Ver. 8. "If thou know not, O thou fairest among women, go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents," The Bridegroom's answer is readily and distinctly given, but nothing more. No approbation is expressed as to the questions. And most important questions, surely, they are. Why is this? Is the Beloved not delighted in hearing such questions asked by His loved One? He does not say so, important though they be. He is delighted with herself, and assures her of His delight in the strongest terms. "O thou fairest among women." His love is unchangeably the same. Happy thought! Nothing in her ways—nothing said of her by others—can ever alter the affections of His heart for His Bride, although, alas, there are many things said and done by her that He cannot approve of. The believer, personally, is perfect in Christ, and in His sight. He is "justified from all things," but practically he is full of failure.

In the present instance, His address to herself, and His answer to her questions, breathe a different spirit. Why is this? again I ask. My soul would know the Master's mind. Oh, for one bright gleam of the Holy Spirit's light on the sacred page! Then should I know, not the letter of Scripture

merely, but the thoughts and feelings of the mind from whence it flows. Learn, then, O my soul, that approval is never expressed in Scripture, save when consistent with truth and holiness. Oh! how often we pray for what we have! How often we ask for light and direction as to our path, when the light of a cloudless sky shines on the way in which we should go. Naturally, the sheep is the most wandering creature in the field.

Is there not something in that little word “if” which seems to imply that He expected she would have known the pathway of His flock? As if the Lord had said,—Surely thou knowest. My mind on all these questions, as the Shepherd of Israel, lies plainly before thee. Why not read, my love, and understand? He cannot upbraid, yet His love is faithful. As He said to Philip, “Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?” How gently He leads! How kindly, even the rebukes of His love!

Christian fellowship, as taught in the word, is often very little thought of by young converts. They follow, generally speaking, where it will be most convenient, or most agreeable to themselves, without any exercise of conscience, as to whether they are following in the footsteps of the flock. They may be right, or they may be wrong, as to their path, but they have never prayerfully examined the word of God to ascertain His mind on the subject. Had the Church continued undivided, as it was at Pentecost, there would have been no need for such exercise and examination; but seeing the professing Church is now broken up into so many sections, it becomes every child of God to search the Scriptures, that they may know and do His holy will.

It is sorrowful to find, however, that many of the Lord’s dear ones count this subject unimportant, non-essential. This thought, let me affectionately say to all such, never came from the Bible. It is most dishonoring to God and injurious to the soul. The trials through which we find the Bride passing in the different parts of this book, seem entirely owing to her neglect of the instructions here given. We feel assured, that next in importance to the soul’s salvation, is church communion. If the Christian be careless about this matter, and not exercised as to the Lord’s mind he will be sure to follow his own will. And then what must the consequences be? God is robbed of His glory; His word is set aside; the Master is not followed: the Spirit is grieved, and the soul loses its freshness. Under such circumstances, “first love” soon declines, and peace and joy give place to doubts and fears.

Comparatively few, we believe, long retain, in divine freshness, their first love. The lively sense of the Lord’s “great love” to us, and how He has met all our necessities, is soon but feebly remembered. This is falling from our first love. And why is this? In place of going on to know the Lord more fully, and seeking only to please Him, we choose our own way, follow our own will, and thereby grieve the Holy Spirit: hence, darkness creeps over the mind, the light is, as it were, shut out, and we become feeble and uncertain about everything.

The Lord speaks of two kinds of rest in Matt. 11, which may be well to notice here, “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” This is the immediate gift of His love through faith in Himself. All who believe, without exception, have this rest. All our weary and fruitless efforts after salvation are brought to a close when we come to Jesus, and the heavy burden of sin under which we groaned is forever removed. But the Lord further says, “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest to your souls.” Rest of conscience he gives through the forgiveness of our sins, when first we believe in

Him. Rest of heart we find in obedience and subjection to His will. "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me and ye shall find rest—rest and peace in every circumstance however trying. This text explains why so many get into trouble of soul soon after the joys of conversion, and why, when difficulties appear, though they may know the forgiveness of sins, they are uneasy and restless. Subjection to Christ in the details of life, both socially and ecclesiastically, and learning of Him, are lost sight of. To be under the same yoke with Christ, is to walk side by side and step by step with Him. "Take my yoke upon you." This would indeed be walking closely with the Lord, and thus would we surely "find rest," for all our weakness would fall on Him. When two are yoked together, the strong one can help the weak one along; and surely, the most feeble Christian, when under the same yoke with Jesus, the Mighty One, need fear no difficulties. Nothing can be a difficulty to him. All needless fears would vanish from His presence, and our chariot wheels would move lightly through the deepest sand of the desert.

But it will be said by some, that all this is clear enough as to individual walk and holiness, but our ecclesiastical path and position are not so plainly revealed. Nothing would be more unseemly than for young Christians to be sitting in judgment on the different denominations of professing Christians. But all may, and it is incumbent on all, both old and young, to inquire into the Lord's mind on this important matter. We have both individual and corporate responsibilities: and the word of the Lord tells us as plainly of the one as of the other. Nothing, surely, could be plainer, on the subject of Church-fellowship than Matt. 38. 20: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Here we have plainly laid down the true foundation of all christian communion—Christ the center, and believers gathered to Him by the Holy Spirit. It is not said, Observe, where two or three meet, or where two or three gather, but where two or three are gathered. Thus referring to a gathering power, and not to the mere choice or exercise of the human will. The Holy Spirit, we all know, is the power that gathers to the name of Jesus. (John 14; 16) Christ is God's center—His Spirit, the power of gathering to that center—His children, those that are gathered." This is the Church of God. And this is what we are to search for, not in word or in spirit merely, but in an embodied form.

"I will pray the Father," said the blessed Lord, as He was about to leave His disciples, "and He will give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you forever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him; but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you" (John 14:16, 17.) Here we have the gathering, forming, and sustaining power of the Church of God. All believers are gathered to Christ as their only center, formed into one body, and sustained in living unity by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost.

Observe, especially, three things with regard to the Holy Spirit's presence in the Church:— 1st, "That He may abide with you forever." Not for a limited time, as the Savior Himself had been, but forever. 2ndly, He dwelleth with you. As an assembly, He shall be "with you." 3rdly, And shall be in you; indwelling each believer personally. These precious truths were afterward plainly taught by the apostle in the epistles. "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you." (1 Cor. 6:19.) "In whom ye are also budded together for an habitation of God through the Spirits (Eph. 2:22.) Oh! wondrous, precious, blessed truth! The Spirit "in you," "with you," "forever." Oh! how richly dowried is the Bride of the Lamb!

We will now look for a moment at a practical illustration of Matt. 18-20, "Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.....And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost." (John 20) Here we have a true and lovely picture of the assembly of God. Christ in the midst—the center—and the disciples gathered to the risen Jesus. Peace, worship, service, and the spirit of sonship characterize them.

An assembly gathered on this divine ground will not only acknowledge Christ in their midst, but the Holy Ghost as the Sovereign Ruler, and source of edification and comfort. Such, will wait on the Lord, that they may be guided by His Spirit, to the glory of God. 1 Cor. 12; 14.

With both precept and example so plainly before me, need I yet come to the Lord and ask Him where He feeds His flock? What more can He say than He has said? I may be quite unable to tell the difference between one section of the professing church and another, but I need be at no loss to ascertain if either be according to the word of God so plainly revealed. Rather, then, let me ask Him to keep me from every bye-path—from following my own will; and that He would lead me by His Holy Spirit in the way of truth. But, O my soul! never forget that He has pledged Himself to be where disciples are gathered to His name. There they feed, and there they rest. His presence is enough to fill the soul to overflowing. "In thy presence is fullness of joy." The most attractive ministry—the most fascinating observances—the most loved associations, are not Christ. They may, or they may not, have His sanction. What I desire, what I need, is to be where faith can say for certain, Christ Himself is there.

Fairer than all the earth-born race, Perfect in comeliness thou art; Replenished are thy lips with grace, and full of love thy tender heart: God ever blest! we bow the knee, And own all fullness dwells in Thee.

"Feed thy kids beside the shepherd's tents." Having learned the true ground and character of christian communion from the word, we are responsible to guide the young amongst us into these paths—the footsteps of the flock of God Divine nourishment, suited both to old and young, will be found there. The lamb soon learns to follow in the footsteps of its mother, and feed on the same pasture. The Princely Shepherd of Israel cares for the lambs of His flock. "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd; he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom; and shall gently lead those that are with young." (Isa. 40:11.) The feeblest of the flock were cared for when He led forth His people Israel out of Egypt, and through the deep. "Not an hoof was left behind." And food was found for all, around their tents in the morning, as they journeyed through the waste, howling wilderness.

The good Lord would have it to be so now, in the assemblies of His saints. And where the Holy Ghost is free and unhindered in His operations, He will surely provide milk for the babes, and strong meat for those who are of full age. The Church is spoken of as the "habitation," tent, or tabernacle of God. (Eph. 2:22.) To this tent in the wilderness, where God Himself vouchsafes to dwell, we would earnestly and affectionately pray that all the lambs of Jesus may be gathered. Oh! that the presence of Jesus may have attractions for their hearts supreme to all others. Hear Him say, O my soul, "there am I in the midst of them." Oh! then, be where Jesus is! Who else, what else, could make up for His absence? What would the finest assembly on earth be without Him?

Yea, what would heaven itself be without His presence? A blank! What is the wilderness with His presence? The paradise of God. Anywhere, everywhere, His presence is the place of blessing, of joy, of happiness. Oh! may God gather the many precious lambs of Jesus in these last days, to the true fold of the Shepherd and Bishop of Souls.

“A little while” to tread the paths of sadness—

To toil with weary feet in miry ways:

Then to pour forth the fragrant oil of gladness,

And clasp the girdle round the robe of praise!

Meditations on Song of Solomon

“I have compared thee, O my love, to a company of horses in Pharaoh’s chariots. Thy cheeks are comely with rows of jewels, thy neck with chains of gold” Now, He speaks of herself entirely. The subject of the questions is dropped, His address is direct and personal. And oh! how full and free are the expressions of His admiring love.

“I have compared thee, O my love,.....thy cheeks are comely.....thy neck with chains.”

How often the human mind invests with attractions the object of its admiration, and then loves and worships its own image. Not so the divine mind: there, all is real. The Lord invests the Bride of His heart with His own attractions, and then admires her. He loved her, adored by His name, before there was anything about her to admire. This is divine. “God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” Having adorned her with His own excellencies, there is now nothing to offend His eye, or grieve His heart. “Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee.” “Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” She has the same life and position as her risen, living Lord. Oh! what dignity, glory, and blessedness!

In the greatness of His love, He “gave himself for us.” And now, as the crucified and risen Jesus, we are fellow heirs with Him. “Not as the world giveth, give I unto you.” (John 14:27.) The world gives a part and keeps a part, but Christ gives all. “The glory which thou gavest me I have given them.” (John 17:22.) In admiring His Bride, though she is still in the wilderness, He is consistent with Himself, for she is perfect in His own perfectness.

Rebekah was enriched and adorned with the jewels of Isaac, long before she reached his mother’s tent.

“In Haran thus

The kindred of Rebekah wondering saw

The newly-given splendor; bracelets rich

Circled her arms; and pendant on her face

The weighty proof of Isaac’s bounty shone,

In value questionless. And could she doubt,

Could any doubt who saw her decked with these,
His covenanted love and bounteous heart,
Of whom they were the sparkling messengers?"

And of the bride of Jehovah it is said "I decked thee also with ornaments, and I put bracelets upon thy hands, and a chain on thy neck. And I put a jewel on thy forehead, and earrings in thine ears, and a beautiful crown upon thy head. Thus wast thou decked with gold and silver.....And thy renown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty; for it was perfect through my comeliness, which I put upon thee, saith the Lord God." Eze. 16

"We will make thee borders of gold with studs of silver." A chain of gold, we know, is the token of promotion, high favor, and dignity, as in the case of Joseph and Daniel. But "what meaneth these wonderful words of the King?" He has been admiring His Bride—her "rows of jewels"—her "chains of gold," and now He is moved to do yet more for her: "We will make thee borders of gold with studs of silver."

Some have thought that the mystery of the holy Trinity may be referred to in the plural "We." In the works of creation it was said, "Let us make man in our own image, and after our own likeness." And in the work of redemption, we know, the opportunity came for the manifestation of the different persons of the Godhead. "If a man love me," says Jesus, "he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him." And of the Spirit, He says, "Ye know him, for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." John 14

But what are we to understand by "borders of gold with studs of silver?" May it not be a crown that is spoken of? A crown of gold bespangled with silver? Ezekiel seems to say it is. "And I put a jewel on thy forehead, and earrings in thine ears, and a beautiful crown on thine head. Thus wast thou decked with gold and silver." What then? Shall the restored, royal tribe of Judah yet wear this beautiful crown in the land of Israel—in the holy city Jerusalem? Wondrous grace! Love divine! And will it be the united gift of the adorable Trinity?

Can Judah fail to remember, or can I ever forget, that Thy royal brow, O King of Salem, was once, in these very scenes, wreathed with a crown of thorns? No earthly jewels lustered that crown. But the rich ruby-drops from Thy holy veins were its jewels of eternal weight, and imperishable value. Awake! awake, O my soul! meditate on the grace and love of Jesus. What wilt thou think, how wilt thou feel, when that once pierced hand, places on thy head a garland of unfading glory? Shall thine eye be caught with the crown, or be dazzled with the glory? Oh no! the first glimpse of that "countenance transcendent" shall fix thine eye, and ravish thy heart forever!

There is always something, in the manner of the Lord's love most grateful to the heart. He says to herself what is in His mind. This meets the first desire of love—personal communion. Well does Jesus know how to fill the heart with deepest joy. But will it always be so? Yes, yes, O my soul! His love shall endure forever. He changeth not. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. In the past, the present, and the future, He is the same. But, oh! how the heart delights in being so immediately, so individually, so distinctly addressed by Himself. Amongst the myriads of the redeemed, not one is overlooked, or neglected by Him. "He loved me, and gave Himself for me," will be the thrilling note in the song of all. His love, in its eternal sweetness and fullness, fills all

hearts to overflowing, and turns all hearts into harps of sweetest melody, to sound forever his un-beginning, never-ending love.

Love that no tongue can teach,

Love that no thought can reach;

No love like His. God is its blessed source,

Death ne'er can stop its course,

Nothing can stay its force;

Matchless it is.

There is divine wisdom, and instruction for the soul, in the selection of His first comparison. "I have compared thee, O my love, to a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariots." The mystic Bride of the true Solomon is here reminded of Egypt, out of which He redeemed her with an outstretched arm. And of "Pharaoh," from whose iron grasp He rescued her. Most suggestive references to the children of Israel, and, morally, to us. The truth of God is a circle. The love that delivered us out of Egypt that brings us into Canaan, with all its mercies by the way, is a perfect unbroken circle of grace and truth. And, moreover, every part of that circle shall be held in everlasting remembrance. The grace that meets us in the world, conducts us to the heart of God, its native fountain. "But now, in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ." Eph. 2:13.

The chariot-horse, with its gorgeous trappings, may be the symbol of strength, symmetry, swiftness, royalty, and willingness in service. No sooner has the charioteer taken his seat, than his steeds are in readiness to move off. They become impatient of delay, the raising of the foot, the movement of every muscle, plainly tell him, that if he be ready, they are quite ready. And then, how subject, notwithstanding their power, to the slightest touch of the guiding rein. Seest thou, O my soul, in this ready, willing service, a fair representation of thine own? Is it so? Or, alas! what? No swiftness—no symmetry—no consistency—no subjection to the guiding hand. What! Is it so? Examine all thy ways beneath the glance of the Master's eye. Is there one thing on earth that thou wouldst dread more, than to be turned out of His service? Remember, O remember! that though as a son thou shalt be in thy Father's house forever—as a sinner saved by grace, thou art saved forever—still, as a servant, if thou art idling thy time, or spoiling thy work, it may be taken from thee and given to another. O most patient Master, keep thy servant ever girded, obedient, and ready for service; and caring only to meet Thy mind.

"While the King sitteth at his table, my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof" There is an infinite difference between the attractions of nature, and the graces of the Spirit. Hast thou well considered this, my soul? Honey, the sweetness of nature, was forbidden to be used in the sacrifices. A little of it, from the end of a rod, may enlighten the eyes, and refresh the heart of the warrior in the day of battle, but it can never refresh the heart of the Lord of hosts. Its amiable qualities are truly valuable for the family, the social circle, and the world at large, but totally unfit for God's altar or the King's table. Both the sweetness and the sourness of nature are alike rejected by the Holy One of Israel, "So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." Rom. 8:8.

We must have a new nature, even the life of the risen Jesus in the soul, before we can do anything to please God, or bring an acceptable offering to Him. “Ye must be born again.” “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.” (Gal. 5:22, 23.) The divine life, bearing fruit by the Holy Spirit, is the most fragrant, and refreshing of all fruits to the Savior of sinners. The “spikenard,” to Him, has “an odor of a sweet smell,” and its virtue endureth forever. (Phil, 4.) The alabaster box of spikenard, that once filled with richest odors the presence chamber of Bethany, has not yet lost its fragrance to Jesus. “She hath done what she could,” was the immediate, unmeasured commendation of His love. And “Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of as a memorial of her.”

“Love is the truest providence, Since beyond time her gold is good, Stamped for man’s mean “three hundred pence,” with Christ’s “she hath done what she could.”

It is a mistake to suppose, that we have nothing to present to the King while He sitteth at His table. True, of His own we give Him; but it is all the sweeter to both on that account. What is sweeter than grace? The Israelite was to bring a basketful of his first ripe fruits and present it to the Lord his God. (Deut. 26) True worship is communion, fellowship. If the Bridegroom has His “good ointments,” the Bride has her “spikenard,” yet it is all grace. The table is His—the ointment and spikenard too are His. “Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil: my cup runneth over.” Psalm 23.

The heart never rises to the point of worship until it runs over. Then it has nothing to ask for. True worship is the overflowing of the heart. And oh, how sweet, how precious, how blessed it is! When the Holy Spirit ministers of the fullness of Jesus to our souls, how soon the heart runs over. And this overflowing of the heart, with the fullness of Christ, is true, heavenly worship. Hence the important difference between a prayer, and a worship meeting. We should come to the former with empty vessels, and so cry to the Lord, as if we would storm the heavens, rather than go away without our answer. But to the latter, we should come thoroughly self-judged, well prepared to feast on the King’s dainties—the spoils of His victory—the fruits of redemption. Thus shall we find our every need met, and our every desire satisfied. And have we nothing to ask for at the table? Nothing, unless the King has forgotten something you need—except it be for a larger heart. To be in the presence chamber of the Lord—the holiest of all—and to be feasting on the rich provisions of His table; what can we be but satisfied? what can we do but praise, admire, adore, love, and worship the Lord our God and Father?

The Bride has now reached the highest place of blessedness. She is peacefully enjoying the presence of the King, while He is reclining at His table. The activities of service have given place to the repose of worship. The burning sun—the persecution—the poverty—the sorrow, ere all forgotten in the fullness of that joy which His presence gives. And now, the box is broken, the spikenard flows, the fragrance fills the house, the head and the feet of Jesus are anointed, and His heart is ravished with the advances of her love.

Meditations on Song of Solomon

Ver. 13. “A bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved unto me; he shall lie all night betwixt my breasts.” If the chariot-horse suggests the thought of willing service, and the “spikenard” he the symbol of

divine worship, may not the “bundle of myrrh” be the emblem of a daily and hourly testimony for Christ? And what more natural, as a consequence of deep and solid communion with the Lord? Is not the heart strengthened for testimony in such happy seasons? Uninteresting and powerless will all our services become, if personal communion be neglected. How was it that David displayed such courage in the valley of Elah? Was it the rashness of youthful inexperience? Oh no, not at all! His faith, through communion in secret, had been raised to the very thoughts of God Himself about his people. Hence his valor in the open field. “Blessed be the Lord my strength,” he could sing, “which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight.” Psalm 144:1.

We are taught the same truth by our blessed Lord in John 7:37. “In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.” In vain will we seek to become the means of refreshing and blessing to others, unless we drink, and drink daily and deeply, at the fountain-head for ourselves. Every fresh testimony for Christ, should be the result of fresh communion with Him. Oh! how needful for the servants of the Lord to remember this. Forget it not, O my soul, but like Moses in the land of Midian, sit down by the well—the well of living waters. “And he sat down by a well.” (Exod. 2) Thus close to the well, he was in a position to be helpful to the seven daughters of the priest of Midian and to his flock. This scene may speak of Christ opening the fountain of redeeming love to His Bride, but surely it is a most instructive lesson for an evangelist! Oh! to be thus, in heart near to the well of life—heaven’s water springs, and so become the channel of these living waters to others.

“Whom have we Lord but Thee,

Soul thirst to satisfy,

Exhaustless spring! the waters free!

All other streams are dry.”

The heart of the spouse, like the woman at the well of Sychar, is overflowing. She must spread abroad the glory of her Savior’s name. More precious to her heart, than a bundle of this costly spice to the merchant is her well-beloved. “A bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved unto me.” Blessed appreciation of Christ! Happy fruit of nearness, in communion, to Him! And mark, too, my soul, the affection which He creates in the heart. She can say in truth, “my well-beloved.” Oh! happy, privileged spouse! I wonder not at thy holy and good resolution, “He shall lie all night betwixt my breasts.” There, nearest to her heart, she places her sweet-smelling myrrh—her disinfecting spice. And now, wherever she goes, the odor of her precious treasure is spread abroad.

A bundle, or little bag, of myrrh, carried in the bosom, scents the garments, and diffuses its fragrance all around, whether at home or abroad, at work or resting, in the sanctuary or the social circle, silently but surely, the fragrance of the perfume, like the air, fills the scene. And even after the person has left, the sweet odor remains, as a testimony to the value of that which lay nearest her heart. Oh! exquisite emblem! Is this thy faithfulness to Jesus, O my soul? Does He lie embalmed in thy heart, and does the sweet savor of His name go with thee, whithersoever thou goest, and remain when thou art gone?

Soul-searching truth! “Occupy till I come” were the farewell words of the rejected Jesus to His disciples; and over the memorials of His dying love, He has written in wondrous grace, “This do in remembrance of me.” He has not asked us to do some great thing for Him, or to lay on his altar some costly sacrifice? No; but simply to be occupied with Himself as earth’s rejected Christ, during His absence, and to give Him a place in our hearts. “Remember me,” was His last request—think of Me—refer everything in your hearts to Me. Have we done so? Have I done so? Do I now do so? Has the affianced Bride of the Lamb, thus placed Him in her bosom, and carried Him there during the long, long dark night of His absence? Alas, alas, the requests of thy love have been forgotten! Rivals have been admitted and entertained; and sorrowful it is to find thee outside, in thine unwearied love, knocking at the door, until, in the mystic language of the song of songs, thy head is filled with dew, and thy locks with the drops of the night. “But the night is far spent, the day is at hand.” Yes, the happy day draws near, when, through thy patient grace, the affections of thy heavenly and earthly people shall perfectly answer to thine own.

Thine eye in that bright cloudless day,
Shall, with supreme delight,
Thy fair and glorious Bride survey,
Unblemished in thy sight.

Ver. 14. “My beloved is unto me as a cluster of camphire from the vineyards of En-gedi.” The bundle of myrrh is hidden from the eye in the breast, but the cluster of camphire is an object for the eye, and carried openly in the hand. Myrrh is the living juice of the tree, which flows in drops through broken parts of the bark, something like blood from the veins, or tears from the eye. The flowers of the camphire tree grow in dense clusters, and are beautiful as well as fragrant. “That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith” is the prayer of the apostle. And we are to be “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.” 2 Cor. 4:10.

“As myrrh new bleeding from the tree,
Such is a dying Christ to me.”

How widely different the line of thought suggested by a tree in full blossom, and one, wounded and bruised, and the life juice flowing from its veins. The one is the symbol of death, the other the power of life. The tender bud finding its way through the hard bark of winter, is always a striking, and interesting illustration of resurrection; the blossoms and the fruit are the manifestations of the power of life, and of rich blessings to man. The little seed that is cast into the ground, and upon which the clods are heaped, may seem for a time, hopelessly lost; but the reviving spring comes round, and through the energy of life, every surrounding circumstance is mastered; the tender blade appears, and in due time waves its golden grain in triumph over them all.

How sweetly all this, and more than this, was shadowed forth in Aaron’s rod that budded, through the intervention of God in grace. (Num. 17) In one night the dry rod of Aaron—a piece of dead wood, budded, bloomed, and bore fruit. Precious type of the risen Jesus, fruitful now in resurrection! Here in types and shadows, we are taught that we need the risen Jesus, as our Great High Priest to take us through the wilderness, and into the land of Canaan. Grace reigns in

Priesthood and saves the people. Nothing short of the priestly ministry of Jesus can meet our need. He who died to make us clean, now lives to keep us clean. (John 13:1-17.) He is both our sacrifice and our priest. The blood of atonement, and the water of purification, both flowed from the wounded side of Jesus. This was the opening of the fountain for sin and for uncleanness.

How lovely to the eye as well as fragrant to the heart is our risen, exalted, and glorified Lord! His Person—His ministry—His relationships are infinitely precious; and ever the same. “My beloved is white and ruddy; the chiefest among ten thousand—... yea, he is altogether lovely.” (Chap, 5.) “For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.” (Col. 2:9.) The fullness of grace and glory dwell in Him. “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth.” (Col. 3:1, 2.) Oh! what clusters of attractions are there, had we only eyes to see them, and hearts to value them!

The vineyards of En-gedi, we are told, were celebrated for their rich fruits, and costly spices. That which is beautiful to the eye, sweet to the taste, and fragrant to the senses, was to be found there in abundance. And famous too, are these scenes, as having furnished a hiding place for David and his men when persecuted by Saul. (1 Sam. 24:1-4.) The fruitful valleys below, and the strongholds in the mountains around, provided both shelter, nourishment, and refreshment, for God’s anointed King, and those who had cast in their lot with him.

Yet, oh! how faintly do all the good things of earth shadow forth the unsearchable riches of Christ. All abundance comes from Him. There is nothing rich that He has not enriched. Nothing sweet that He has not sweetened—nothing full that He has not filled, and yet all that we now know of His fullness, is but as a drop to the ocean. Every good thing cometh down from above; and all speak of Him. The really good thing that is found in the creature, reminds thee, O my soul, of Him, in whom all perfection centers, as the Man Christ Jesus - God with us. As thou walkest in the field or in the garden, in the valley or on the mountain, or in thy usual round of daily duty: every second thought may be of the “well-beloved” absent One. The bleeding myrrh and the blooming camphire, may well recall to thy mind the cross and the glory, and lead thee to think of Him “ who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification.” Rom. 4:25.

No tree ever bore such fruit for God and man as the cross of Calvary. There, sin was put away according to the claims of the glory of God; and there, too, the enemy was vanquished and his whole power completely destroyed. The cross is the foundation of our pardon, peace, reconciliation, acceptance, and every blessing, both in time and in eternity. It is the procuring cause of all. There, God has been revealed in perfect love, and perfect righteousness. As hating sin, yet loving the sinner. Love triumphed in the cross; yet holiness and justice, truth and righteousness, were displayed and glorified. On this solid foundation, the chief of sinners is fully and freely forgiven, the same moment he believes in Christ; and his pardon is as perfect as the work of the cross. Sin, and sins, were “put away” on the cross—by the blood of the cross; and on that ground, the sin of our nature, and the many sins of the life, are all forgiven through faith in that precious blood.

Faith can say, in holy triumph, “He was delivered for our offenses.” And where are they? Abolished—gone—and gone forever. “He made an end of sin.” He who died for our sins, has been “raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father,” and that is the eternal settlement of the

question of sin. "He was raised again for our justification." The risen Jesus is God's own witness that the believer is justified. This is faith's sure, unfailing ground. All is peace. "It is finished." Christ is risen.

And now for the consequences of faith - the many and fragrant clusters of richest blessing to the soul. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.....And not only so, but we also joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the reconciliation." Rom. 5:1-11.

I journey through a desert drear and wild,
Yet is my heart by such sweet thoughts beguiled,
Of Him on whom I lean, my strength, my stay,
I can forget the sorrows of the way.
Thoughts of His love—the root of every grace,
Which finds in this poor heart a dwelling place:
The sunshine of my soul—than day more bright,
And my calm pillow of repose by night.
Thoughts of His sojourn in this vale of tears—
The tale of love unfolded in those years
Of sinless suffering and patient grace,
I love again, and yet again to trace.
Thoughts of His glory—on the cross I gaze,
And there behold its sad, yet healing rays:
Beacon of hope, which, lifted up on high,
Illumes with heavenly light the tear-dimm'd eye.
Thoughts of His coming—for that joyful day
In patient hope I watch, and wait, and pray.
That day draws nigh, the midnight shadows flee;
Oh, what a sunrise will that advent be!
Thus while I journey on, my Lord to meet,
My thoughts and meditations are so sweet,
Of Him on whom I lean, my strength, my stay,

I can forget the sorrows of the way.

Meditations on Song of Solomon

Verse 15. "Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair, thou hast doves' eyes." What is it, some will ask, that can make one defiled and deformed by sin, thus "fair" to the eye of Jesus? Where, when, how, can it be found? This is all that is needed to fill to overflowing the soul's cup of happiness! What would all the riches, honors, and glories of this world be, compared with hearing such words from such lips! "Behold, thou art fair, my love." Most truly, this is the soul's ineffable blessedness! The gospel of the grace of God, my friend, gives the answer to thy question. Know then, that when a soul is drawn to Jesus, it is received by Him, and placed in the light of God's presence, in the full value of His finished work, and in the matchless beauty of His adorable Person.

This is grace—the grace of God in the gospel of His Son to everyone that believeth. "All that believe are justified." And all that believe are "accepted in the Beloved," through the accomplished work of the cross. (Eph. 1:2.) His precious blood cleanseth from all sin. (1 John 1) Then, oh, how "fair!" "Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us." (Psalm 90:17.) What perfection of beauty this must be! "The beauty of the Lord our God." How fair for the courts above! The beauty of angels will be perfect after their own order, but the sinner saved by grace shall shine in the beauty of the Lord forever.

All this, I think, I can believe, some may reply, but oh, can such a place—can such blessing ever be mine? "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," is heaven's answer to every anxious enquirer—is heaven's declaration of perfect grace to all. Believe in Jesus, trust in Him, defiled and deformed as thou art, and sooner far than thy thoughts can turn from one subject to another, thou art altogether "fair" in His sight. "Only believe." The work is finished "long, long ago." Oh! beware of that "deadly doing!" The gospel seems too simple to admit of explanation. It is a report to be believed—an invitation to be accepted—a voice of love beseeching thee to be reconciled to God—a proclamation of pardon and peace by Jesus Christ. (Acts 10:36; 13:38, 39.) Not, observe, the promise of pardon and peace, but the preaching of pardon and peace. This makes a wonderful difference. And observe, further, that it is neither by law nor promise that the soul is thus richly blessed; but by Jesus Christ. The moment thou hast faith in Him, thy forgiveness, justification, and reconciliation, are proclaimed by the truth of God.

Take one example, as an illustration of the ways of God, in grace, with sinners. In the third chapter of Zechariah, we see Joshua standing before the Lord. He is a type of God's dealings, in grace, with Jerusalem in the latter day. This chapter is the history, I believe, of how the Bride of the king is so "fair" in His sight. This is important as to our present question. It is also the history of every sinner saved by grace. Joshua is clothed in filthy garments. Satan is there to resist him. He always seeks to hinder the blessing of souls. But the Lord shelters the defenseless one. He casts out none that come to Him. He rebukes and silences the adversary; and speaks and acts for Joshua. This He always does. Be of good courage. The filthy garments are taken away; his sins are all forgiven. There is not a rag left for Satan to lay hold on. Thus cleansed from all his defilements, "He is clothed with a change of raiment." The robe of God is put upon him. And now, how "fair!" But this is not all. A fair miter is set upon his head. Surely "The beauty of the Lord our God" is now upon him! He is, what God in "the exceeding riches of His grace" has made him. "Unto him that

loved us, and—washed us from our sins in his own blood. And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion forever and ever, Amen.” Both the kingly and the priestly crown are ours - ours in His right. This is their glory! Highest in dignity, belonging to royalty. Nearest in worship, belonging to priesthood. And oh! how sweet the thought, the work is all of God from first to last, and so can never fail. “The Lord hath chosen Jerusalem.....Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?.....I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee.....I will clothe thee with change of raiment.....And I said, Let them set a fair miter on his head.” It is all of God—by Christ Jesus through the work of the cross. “Without shedding of blood is no remission.” Grace reigns—God is glorified—faith triumphs—Satan confounded, and the sinner eternally saved.

This know also, my dear friend, that if thy desire after Christ, and after the enjoyment of His favor be true and sincere, there must already be grace in thy heart. The desire must come from Him. Where there is nothing more than mere nature, there can be no longing desire for the blessed Lord and His favor. Faith, salvation, and desire, go together, although the timid believer will often hesitate to say “He is all my salvation and all my desire.” The clearest evidence of divine life in the soul, is when the heart is occupied with Him, the link of connection is formed and can never be broken; faith alone enters into its blessedness. Oh! rest, abide in Him.

Being associated with the risen Jesus, we are one with Him in resurrection. (Eph. 2) This gives us our wondrous place in His sight. All who are brought into this new—this resurrection state, are fair even as Christ is fair. Only that in all things He has the pre-eminence as it is written, “Thou art fairer, than the children of men.” Hence, we find the same terms of endearment and admiration applied to both. And the same things said of both; the Bride being the reflection of the Bridegroom. If the garments of the Bride are scented with myrrh; it is said of the Bridegroom, “All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes and cassia.” What a blessed theme this great truth opens up for meditation! Oneness with Christ, as risen and glorified! How little the world in all its relationships and associations would seem, did we look at them from this point of view!

What is here said of Israel, or of the remnant, prophetically, (“Behold, thou art fair, my love,”) is true now in a deeper sense, of the church of God, the Bride of the Lamb. At the same time, the great principle of the song is common to both. The Lord’s love is perfect. He loves Israel; He loves the Church; and in due time He will create those affections in the hearts of both, which will perfectly answer to His own. Hence, the moral value and application of this book to the Christian, is of great importance. It is the fellowship of hearts. Still, it is always well to keep in view, the difference between what will be the place of the Jew in the latter day, and what the place of the Christian now is.

Although the marriage of the Lamb has not yet come, the relationship between Christ and the Church is already formed. As the apostle says, “I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a “chaste virgin to Christ.” (2 Cor. 11:2.) Blessed truth! The espoused of the Savior, the Son of the Father! But knowest thou, O my soul, the affections belonging to this near and dear relationship? In place of a painful uncertainty, which often agitates the minds of those who are only looking forward to relationship, hast thou the calm peaceful affection and joy, which naturally flow from a settled union? If so, the desire of thy heart will be great for thy Lord’s return. Affection is the true ground of the cry, “Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.”

The Bridegroom further adds in His present address, "Thou hast doves' eyes." Our associations with the dove in scripture, are of the most instructive kind. From the eighth chapter of Genesis down to New Testament times, it occupies an interesting place in the word. On our first acquaintance with the dove, we find it in connection with the ark of God and the olive tree. Precious types of the salvation and the peace of God. She plucked, and held fast, the olive leaf, when the judgments of God covered the earth. And while the waters were unabated it could find no rest for the sole of its foot, until it returned to the ark. The world under judgment was no place for it. Again, we find, the dove alone, of all the feathered tribe, was offered in sacrifice under the law, and thereby typified the Lord Himself. The same type serves for both Christ and His Spouse. Wondrous unity! "For as the body is one and hath many members, and all the members of that one body being many, are one body; so also is Christ." (1 Cor. 12:12.) Mark, the apostle is speaking of that which is a figure of the Church, but in place of concluding, "so also is the Church," he adds "so also is Christ." He sees the Church in Him. They are one body.

The Holy Spirit is also typified by the dove. "And John bare record saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him." It is also said, that when the dove is absent from its mate, it sits solitary and mourns. "I did mourn like a dove." And, "We mourn sore like doves." (Isa. 38:14; 59:11.) Simplicity, purity, harmlessness, faithfulness, seem to be represented by the dove. When the eye of the Christian is single, chaste, and constantly fixed on Christ, then may it be said, "Thou hast doves' eyes."

Ver. 16, 17. "Behold thou art fair, my beloved, yea! pleasant; also our bed is green. The beams of our house are cedar, and our rafters of fir? There is great beauty in this rejoinder. The Bride speaks not of herself, she hears the expressions of His admiring love, hut says nothing about herself. Not even that she is unworthy of such love. However deep her emotions, self is passed over. This is true humility. We may speak of bad self, and unworthy self, and the heart be full of pride. True humility speaks not of self at all, either good or bad. But this is a hard lesson to learn. Christ is our only perfect example. The blessed Lord humbled Himself. He took the lowest place. The first Adam exalted himself, and he was abased. The last Adam humbled Himself and God highly exalted Him. Follow Jesus then, O my soul! Wait thou only upon God, trust in Him. "For every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." (Luke 18:14.) This is a principle of wide application; it reaches to all the details of life, and is of immense practical importance. Learn its working perfectly in the two Adams. See it daily exemplified in the two natures. Poor human nature is ever ready to listen to the lie of the tempter, "Ye shall be as gods." But the divine nature is content with the place wherein God has set it, until He says, "Come up higher."

But what of the old nature in the Christian? The scriptures say plainly, that it came to its end on the cross. "Ye are dead," is plain enough. "And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." And again, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." (Col. 3; Gal. 2) Were we to walk in the light and power of this great foundation truth, humility would characterize us. The flesh, in its vanity and assumption, would be mortified; and the meek and lowly spirit of Jesus would be manifested.

The bird that soars on highest wing.

Builds on the ground her lowly nest;
And she that doth most sweetly sing,
Sings in the shade when all things rest.
In Lark and Nightingale we see,
What honor hath humility.
When Mary chose the better part,
She meekly sat at Jesu's feet.
And Lydia's gently opened heart
Was made for God's own temple meet.
Fairest and best adorned is she,
Whose clothing is humility.
The saint that wears heaven's brightest crown
In humble adoration bends;
The weight of glory bows him down,
Then most, when most his soul ascends.
Nearest the throne must ever be,
The footstool of humility.

When Christ is a complete covering to the eye, contentment fills the heart. We can afford to take the lowest place. Everything needed to make us happy is found in Him. He is not only fair to the eye, but pleasant to the heart. Many are fair that are not pleasant, and many are pleasant that are not fair, but Christ is both. "Behold, thou art fair, my beloved, yea, pleasant." Oh! what combinations—what perfections—what harmonies are found in Jesus! Here, and here alone, the heart can find rest. Quiet, perfect rest. Hence, the Bride most significantly adds, "Also our bed is green." The green pastures, and the still waters of Jehovah's plenteous grace, have long been familiar to our minds, as the expressive symbols of the repose and refreshment of the sheep of Christ, under His shepherd care. "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside the still waters." "Pastures of tender grass.....waters of quietness" are the daily fare of those whose feet are found "by the footsteps of the flock." But the shepherd never pitches his tent inside the walls of the city. There is no tender budding grass—no waters of quietness there. Outside the dingy walls, in the rural scenes, He rests his flock. "The city," doubtless, in this book, is typical of the world, the country of heavenly places. Only shame and sorrow befall the Bride when she is beguiled into the city. The Bridegroom is never found there, His favorite retreats are the vineyards, the gardens, the mountains of myrrh, the hills of frankincense, and the valleys where the lilies bloom.

But there is one word in these closing sentences, which indicates full, conscious, happy fellowship with the “well beloved.” I mean that little word “our,” “our bed is green,” “our house,” “our rafters.” It is like the precious little “us,” “we,” and “with,” in the Epistle to the Ephesians. Oh! happy union—blessed unity, “our, us, we, with.” Eternal oneness with Christ! One in life, one in righteousness, one in acceptance, one in peace, one in rest, one in joy, one in heavenly, eternal glory!

Joyless indeed would be the fairest scenes of earth, and joyless too, would be the house of many mansions without the presence of the blessed Lord—the divine Bridegroom of the heart. But the sure word of promise is, “And so shall we ever be with the Lord.” And again, “that where I am, there ye may be also.” Enough! O Lord! It is enough! With Thee, and like Thee! Consider this, my soul! Here is perfect rest for thee—calm repose. With Thee, and like Thee, O Lord, forever, in the Paradise of God—in the house of many mansions, fill up the full measure of our eternal happiness, dignity, and glory.

With Him I love, in spotless white,

In glory I shall shine;

His blissful presence my delight,

His love and glory mine.

All taint of sin shall he removed,

All evil done away;

And I shall dwell with God's beloved

Through God's eternal day.

Meditations on Song of Solomon

Ver. 1. “I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys.” “What a wondrous thing grace is—the grace of God to sinners! What mighty changes it effects in those who know it, as to their thoughts, objects, desires, and affections. It gives us the mind of the Lord as to what we are in His sight, and to His heart. Here, mark it well, my soul, and meditate deeply thereon. The fountain is deep, drink freely.

To know grace, is to know God, and His full salvation by Jesus Christ, through the teaching and power of the Holy Spirit. But a little while ago, and the Bride was confessing, “I am black.....black as the tents of Kedar,” and now, through grace, she can say, and say in truth, nothing doubting, “I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys”—The very crown and ornament of Sharon—the very beauty and sweetness of the valleys. And mark, too, that she says, “The rose.....The lily.” She speaks not in general terms of her attractions to the Bridegroom, but in the most definite way. She is not vainly boasting to others of what she is, but addressing Himself directly, in the happy consciousness of her own place in His heart. There is full communion, for He immediately adds, “As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters.” And further on in the book, He says plainly, “My dove, my undefiled, is but one, she is the only one of her mother, she is the choice one of her that bare her.” Such is the distinguishing love and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and such

is the special place which the Bride has in His sight. He always goes beyond her in the expression of affection. This is most blessed to the heart. How widely different is the beautiful, fragrant lily to the lacerating thorn!

There are many who say, when they hear such truth, "O, I am not worthy of such a place." Quite true, if you speak of your own worthiness. But what place do you think you are worthy of? If not this one, an inferior one, I suppose. But is this humility? No, friend, it is pride of heart. We are worthy of no place at all in His presence. Consequently, any place there, must be pure, sovereign grace. To be within the threshold, would be as pure grace, as to be on the throne.

The prodigal son, no doubt, thought that it would be very humble in him to say, "Make me as one of thy hired servants." But this was remaining pride and legality of heart, not humility. All such thoughts spring from the natural heart which is essentially proud and legal, and utterly ignorant, both of its own condition, and of the grace of God. True humility is seen standing afar off, and confessing that it is not worthy to lift up so much as its eyes to heaven. (Luke 18) The prodigal had no more title to be received as a servant than as a son. He had forfeited all claim on the ground of righteousness. He had but one plea to offer; viz., his pressing need. He could only be met in grace. Had he been met in righteousness, he would have been condemned forever. But grace reigns; nothing is said about his sins. He could not have answered for one of a thousand. The question of sin was settled between God and Christ on the cross. And now, grace shines, and shines in all its heavenly brightness. The Father's heart is the spring, and He has His own joy in it all. He acts from Himself, and as Himself. The prodigal's pre-meditated speech is interrupted; he never gets to the part which says, "Make me as one of thy hired servants." How could he? Grace prevents; the Father ran to meet him, fell on his neck and kissed him. Reconciliation is expressed and accomplished the moment they meet. He receives the kiss of peace at once; grace is free. God having received the atonement on the cross, we receive the reconciliation the moment we meet Him in Christ.

And now, being reconciled through the blood of the cross; the once lost, ruined, and degraded one is made a son and an heir—an heir of God and a joint heir with Christ. This is grace—the grace of God in Christ Jesus, to all who believe in His name. And, further, the same one shall shine in grace, and be the vessel of its display throughout the countless ages of eternity. As age after age rolls on in countless numbers, those who have been the subjects of that grace in time, shall continue to shine in its ever-increasing brightness. Oh! what a place for the once poor, friendless, homeless, outcast one to occupy, and that forever. But God is establishing His character for grace, and such are the suited vessels for its glorious and eternal display, in the house of many mansions. "That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus." Eph. 2:7.

Ver. 3. "As the apple-tree among the trees of the wood so is my Beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste." Learned men have searched and written much, endeavoring to prove the particular kind of rose and lily that are referred to in the first verse, and the particular kind of tree in the third. Most say that what is here called "The rose of Sharon," belongs to the lily tribe, and should be translated, "The Narcissus of Sharon." Many different opinions have also been given, as to the particular flower here meant by the "lily." And many good, and learned men too, have thought, that in the first verse we have the

voice of the Bridegroom, not of the Bride. And many, alas, who have written, and written much, have been more occupied with the flowers than the persons. But surely in the second verse, the Bridegroom owns the speaker in the first verse to be His loved one. "As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters." All are agreed that this is the voice of the Beloved. In the first verse, we have no doubt, the Bride as the speaker. She is acknowledging in the joy of communion, what He in His grace has made her, that all her beauty in His sight, as well as the affections of her heart for Himself, are His own creation. And in comparing herself with these beautiful flowers, she is only repeating what He Himself has taught her.

But mark well, my soul, that she says, "I am the lily of the valleys"—not of the cities. In the quiet vale she finds her native soil and breathes her native air. There she blooms for the eye of her Beloved, and sheds her fragrance for his refreshment. "He feedeth among the lilies." It was in the city where she lost the joys of His presence; and where she was insulted and unveiled by the watchmen. These were her wandering, backsliding moments. Oh! how much better for her, had she never left her native valleys! My soul, here pause a little. Meditate on these things. At a distance—far from the stream and spirit of this world—in heart, far from its attractions, study that which will be pleasing to the eye of Jesus, and refreshing to His heart. Oh! wondrous truth! that He who is seated on the throne of God in heaven, and surrounded with its glory, should yet think at all of such good-for-nothing ones as we are, and, most of all, to be pleased and delighted, or grieved and wounded, by the character of our ways! Alas I that He should be so frequently wounded in the house of His friends! Oh! is there one thing under the sun, that should give thee such unfeigned pleasure, as to please Him? Canst thou think of anything more unworthy of a Christian, than his seeking to please himself, and to find pleasure in the things of the world? Especially when he knows, as men speak, it is to grieve the heart of One, whom only he should find His supreme delight in pleasing- the One who died for him on Calvary.

Having well-judged thy heart and ways on this solemn subject, let thy care, love, and sympathy go out after others, especially the young of the flock, for the Lord's glory. How beautiful to the eye of Jesus now, and how refreshing to His heart to see those for whom He died walking happily and steadfastly in the footsteps of the flock, and feeding beside the shepherds' tents. There the tender budding grass is found, and the quiet waters flow. But oh! how grieving both to the chief, and to the under shepherds to witness, it may be, a dear young disciple, who seemed for awhile to be all heart for the Lord, yielding to the arguments of unconverted friends and to the attractions of the world, and, by and by, making excuses for a measure of conformity to the fashion of the world. Must I give up this—and must I give up that? such will sometimes say. Rather think, my brother, my sister, on what you gave up, in the first place, in order to enjoy these things. Most solemn thought! For these follies and vanities you gave up Christ. I mean as to your experimental enjoyment of Him. You know that you cannot enjoy the Lord and these things at the same time. And now, you must give up these for Christ. But do you hesitate for a moment? Look to the cross! "O how He loves"—O how He dies, and dies for thee—and for these very sins! Oh! cast thyself at His blessed feet in true godly sorrow. Thou hast offended His eye, thou hast grieved His heart, thou hast dishonored His name; confess all to Him; and thy restoration shall be perfect, and all thy past sins shall be forgiven and forgotten forever.

But until this is done, spirituality of mind, earnestness of heart, and communion with the Lord are interrupted. It is a solemn case of backsliding. And unless the Lord clog the wheels of the chariot,

who can tell how fast and how far it may run down the hill. Sometimes an accident will happen and stop it suddenly, but with much damage, the scars of which may remain forever. O Lord, let Thy grace shine forth; and allure many into the wilderness who keep too near the world's borders, and too often cast a wishful glance over the line of separation. Wean them from this present evil world. Let them be arrayed in the meek and lowly beauties of the lily, for Thee alone. Suffer them not to appear adorned for the eye of the world. Surely, most blessed Lord, to hear Thee saying, "As the lily among thorns so is my love among the daughters," would infinitely more than recompense for all our self-denial.

We are told by those who have traveled in the East, that the apple-tree of this country is not what is here meant; but, most likely, the rich citron-tree of Palestine. The thick dark green foliage of the citron boughs affords a most convenient shelter from the rays of the sun, and its delicious fruit is most fragrant and refreshing. Compared with the common trees of the wood, it must be an object of great beauty and interest to the eye of the weary traveler. So the spouse compares her Beloved with all others. "As the apple-tree among the trees of the wood, so is my Beloved among the sons." There is none like Christ. He is "the chiefest among ten thousand." She is in the full enjoyment of Himself. Not of His gifts merely, blessed as these are, but of Himself.

There is now, observe, full personal communion. She is in the cloudless light of His favor. The response is perfect: "As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters." "As the apple-tree among the trees of the wood, so is my Beloved among the sons." What has grace wrought! See where it leads to! Could the Jew ever have reached the bosom of God by climbing the rugged cliffs of Sinai? Ah, no! It must be all grace from first to last. Here we see perfect reconciliation and communion. The Lord rests in His love; as it is written, "He will rest in his love, he will joy over them with singing." (Zeph. 3:17.) The Bride too, is now enjoying perfect repose in that unchanging love. "I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste." Here her soul finds rest, joy, and abundance. The heart is feeding on Christ. Every need is met. She is in her own happy place now. She once had another place. The place, alas, of sin and death. But the Lord has delivered her out of it, and brought her into His own—His new place as the risen Messiah. And this is now her place: she cannot be in both. "I raised thee up under the apple-tree" The apple-tree is Christ.

Israel, we know, shall ere long be raised up from their present condition of national death, to enjoy the blessings of the new covenant under Christ. But they can only be raised up by Christ, and come unto blessing under Christ. Mercy is their only ground, helpless necessity their only plea, and Christ their only way. When it comes to this, all is well, forever well, both with Jew and Gentile. Israel shall yet be gathered on this ground, and under this blessed Head. Then shall they sit under His shadow in the fullest sense, and find His fruit sweet to their taste—the glorious fruits of His wondrous love in dying for the rebellious nation. "And so all Israel shall be saved; as it is written, there shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob." (Rom. 11:26.) "In that day, saith the Lord of hosts, shall ye call every man his neighbor under his vine and under his fig-tree," Zech. 3:10.

"Hail, blessed scene of endless joy!

Where Jesus shall forever reign;

Where nothing hurtful shall annoy,
But gladness fill the happy plain.
Free from all sin, and free from fear,
None shall e'er sigh or shed a tear."

Meditations on Song of Solomon

Ver. 4. "He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love" In meditating on the different scenes of delight, into which the happy Bride is introduced by the King, let thy thoughts, O my soul, dwell for a little, on the source of these many streams of happiness. It is the believer's privilege to drink at the fountain as well as at the stream. God Himself is the source of all our blessing. The pleasures which are at His right hand can never be numbered. But the deep, deep fountain of the soul's perfect blessedness, is the happy assurance, that nothing was needed to turn the heart of God to us. Oh, precious truth! His love is like the ring that was put on the hand of the prodigal, it has neither beginning nor end. "God is love." He changeth not. Therefore, all the rich blessings of His love are secured to us forever, by what He is in Himself. Not by what we are, but by what He is. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." 1 John 4:10.

This is the perfect rest of faith—the heart of God—the native fountain of all true happiness. How can I doubt the love that gave an only-begotten Son? What an answer to every question—He gave His Son for me a sinner. "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Rom. 5:8.) What is unbelief? Not believing how good God is in giving His Son to die for us. What is faith? Believing in the perfect love of God, and the gift of His dear Son, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." John 5:24.

The work of Christ was not needed to turn the heart of God to the sinner, but to turn the heart of the sinner to God. All Scripture reveals this blessed truth. It was revealed in the Garden of Eden when man fell. This was the first occasion to bring it out. The guilty pair sought a hiding-place from the presence of the Lord, behind the trees of the garden. But the voice of Him who came to seek and to save the lost, falls in gracious accents on their ear; "Adam, where art thou?" Man is now a lost sinner, and God is seeking him. The first words of redeeming love, characterize the whole work of redemption. And the revelation of God's love in the prediction, that the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent, gained their confidence, we doubt not, and drew them from their hiding-place into the presence of God. Ever since then, and now, at this present time, when the sinner, through grace, believes in the perfect love of God, in the gift and work of His Son, he is brought to God in faith, and in the full credit of the death, resurrection, and glory of the Lord Jesus. Thus he is pardoned, and accepted in the Beloved, and the desires of the heart of God towards him are fully answered.

But though the love of God towards us has ever been the same, there were many hindrances in us to its full and free outflow. God is righteous as well as love. He is holy as well as merciful. He is ever consistent with Himself. But what love desired, wisdom planned, and power accomplished.

The removal of the hindrances proves the greatness of the love. Jesus came to do the will of God. He finished the work. He put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. Love, divine, eternal love, could not do more than this. He abolished sin by the sacrifice of Himself. To what end, O my soul, was this great, mysterious sacrifice? The Apostle answers— "That he might bring us to God." Not merely into heaven, but back to God Himself. To the knowledge of Himself, and to perfect reconciliation with Him. "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God" (1 Pet. 3:18.) And again, it is written, "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." (2 Cor. 5:21.) And now, mark, we have both the love and the righteousness in Christ. Both are ours in Him. He is also our life as the risen Jesus; but carefully observe, that it is a life beyond the grave, a life which has the stamp of victory over death and the grave. We have everything in Christ now which fits us for the immediate presence of God, where there is fullness of joy, and pleasures forevermore.

In companionship with Jesus, the spouse is here enjoying the same scenes as Himself. They are, as it were, visiting the many springs of divine happiness. He is leading her to the "fountains of living waters." In the morning of the day, she says, "The King hath brought me into his chambers." A little while after, and the scene is changed. She appears to be with Him in the fields, where He feeds and rests His flock at noon. Further on in the day, she says, "Our bed is green. The beams of our house are cedar, and our rafters of fir." Here, the figure appears to be that of persons reclining on the tender grass, beneath the refreshing shade of the interlacing boughs of the fir and cedar trees. After this, she sat down under the shadow of the apple tree, and found the fruit thereof sweet to her taste. And now, at the close of the day, we may say, she is brought by her Beloved to the banquet of wine, under the banner of His love. The unfolded, manifested love of the Bridegroom is the secret of all her joy, the native spring of all her delights.

Long, long has the banner of His love been lying, as it were, folded up. Faith always knew that in God's account, it was only laid aside for a little while. Surely wrapped up in the word of promise, though not displayed. Still, many good men have both said and written, that the banner of Jehovah's favor would never again float over His ancient Zion. The truth of God as to the rebuilding of the city and temple, and the restoration of Israel, has been overlooked by many, and spiritualized by others. But what saith the Scripture?

Ever since "the Nobleman" spoken of in the parable, I went into a far country, to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return, no banner of divine love has waved over Jerusalem. For more than eighteen hundred years the beloved city, and the beautiful temple have been laid in ruins, and the people dispersed to the four winds of heaven. This, the Lord Himself repeatedly predicted. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not. Behold your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." Matt. 23:27-29.

He has delayed His return, we know, in rich grace to us. His love has been active, though not in Israel. His long suffering is salvation. From Jew and Gentile He has been calling out, through the power of the Holy Ghost, by the preaching of the gospel, a people for His name. (Acts 15:14 - 18.) Since the day of Pentecost, He has been making "of twain one new man." This is what God is now

occupied with, and what we should be occupied with, namely, the new man; not the old man. Hence we are exhorted to “put off the old man,” and to “put on the new man.” (Eph. 4) But ere long, the Church, which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all, shall be complete, and caught up to meet the Lord in the air,—and so shall we ever be with the Lord. (Eph. 1:22, 23 Thess. 4 Thess. 4) This will be accomplished before Israel can be owned again as the people of Jehovah. But though the Jews have been long set aside and chastised for their sins, the Apostle assures us that they are not cast off forever, and that “the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.” Rom. 11

The time to favor Zion shall come, the time which God hath set. He shall appear in His glory, when He builds up Zion. For the name of the Lord shall be declared in Zion, and His praise in Jerusalem. (Psalm 102) The word of the Lord shall stand fast forever: the mere theories of men shall come to naught. “For, lo the days come, saith the Lord, that I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel and Judah, saith the Lord; and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it.” (Jer. 30:3.) And, again, “Yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly with my whole heart, and with my whole soul.” (32:41.) Then, surely, shall the banner of God’s unchanging love wave over them. Oh! what must be the blessing of that people whom God shall assuredly bless with His whole heart and soul! What grace and condescension in God thus to speak! Oh, what blessing awaits the now outcast, and down-trodden Jew! Few will believe it, but the day is coming, and near at hand, when Messiah their King shall stand up for them against every foe—when He shall be a wall of fire around His beloved Jerusalem, and the glory in the midst of her. Then shall the long folded-up-banner of His love be unfurled, to be furled no more forever. Then shall all the families of the earth see the Lord’s faithful love, when they come up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles. (Zech. 14) And then, O then, shall this precious word be fulfilled, “He brought me into the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love. Stag me with flagons, comfort me with apples; for I am sick of love.”

And now, O my soul, what do these changing scenes of deep, and deeper blessedness - these varying fountains of fresh delight, suggest for thy meditation? What voice have they for thee now? Figures and allegories though they be, they were written aforetime for thy learning. Plainly, they represent the realities of fellowship with Christ—Bridegroom and bridal affections—the sympathies of hearts that are one. Hast thou not sometimes observed, that after actual separation from the world for awhile, as a hidden one, and close communion with the Lord enjoyed, the tone and character of our minds become more spiritual. The Lord’s presence is more fully realized; the body becomes less a clog, the spirit more free. Then we feel further from earth and nearer to heaven, in the conscious enjoyment of heavenly things, in the assurance of the Lord’s love, and His delight in us.

But this state of high spiritual enjoyment is only occasional; nor is it reached, generally speaking, in a moment. We cannot turn, all at once, from the enjoyment of earthly things, to this measure of enjoyment of heavenly things. True we have Christ, and the Spirit, and the Word, and the Father’s love, always the same; but our communion in these things is not always the same. Even the necessary occupation of mind and body with temporal things, blunts our spiritual sensibilities for the time. Secret prayer, meditation on the word, self-judgment, the body kept under, the heart delighting in the things of God, and the Spirit revealing to our souls the love of Jesus, will, in most

cases, be found associated with this condition of spiritual enjoyment. Indeed, we believe, these exercises must be the habit of the believer, if he would be heavenly minded. We must walk by faith, as belonging to the new creation, not by sight as of the old. (2 Cor. 5:16, 17, 18.) At the same time it is well to remember, that the blessed Lord is not bound to any one class of means, in bringing His loved ones into His house of wine—the place of His presence where there is fullness of joy. We have seen a soul in ecstasies of joy, through being suddenly brought to a sense of its own failure, and of the Lord's unfailing love. But here, in the case of the Bride before us, there has been no apparent failure as yet, there is marked progress in her experience. Like a soul coming from the closet to family worship, and from thence to the public banquet of the Savior's dying love. The tone of her communion deepens, as she passes from scene to scene. Her joy increases, until the revelation of the Bridegroom's love and goodness, become so overpowering to her soul, that the body faints under it. Yet she seeks to be sustained by that which has exhausted her. "Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples; for I am sick of love."

"The love, the love that I bespeak,

Works wonders in the soul;

For when I'm whole it makes me sick,

When sick it makes me whole.

I'm overcome, I faint, I fail,

Till love shall love relieve;

More love divine the wound can heal,

Which love divine did give."

Ralph Erskine.

Feeding on Christ never satiates the soul. While it satisfies to the full, it whets the appetite. And the Lord's delight is to give more abundantly, "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." He alone can satisfy the desires of the heart and of the mind. But mark, He draws her yet nearer to Himself. "His left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me" Blessed Lord Jesus—Savior God—Heavenly Bridegroom—Head of Thy body, the Church! Where shall we find the heights and depths, the lengths and breadths of Thy love? More intimate—more real—more blessed communion can never be enjoyed. She leans her head on the bosom of her Beloved, the place of perfect and eternal repose. There can be nothing higher than this—lower there ought not to be. Oh, for more experience of the exhausting, and sustaining power of the Lord's gracious presence! Oh, for a larger heart—a more capacious soul!

Ver. 7. "I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, till he please." At the close of this happy and cloudless day, we leave the Bride of the King, in the repose which His changeless love alone can give. The banner of His love over her, the everlasting arms underneath her, she rests in His eternal embrace. She delights in what He is. Hence she speaks of His shadow, His fruit, His banquet, His banner, His left hand, His right hand. It is all, it is only, Christ. When the soul is thus occupied with Him, He of all

others is the most careful that it should not be disturbed. The roes and the hinds, are the most easily startled creatures in the field. And their sense of hearing is so acute, that a far distant sound of danger will alarm them. So keenly sensitive should we all be to the most distant approach of that which would interfere with our walk and communion with the Lord; or that would in any way turn us aside from the paths of practical holiness, and entire devotedness to the Lord Jesus Christ.

“The startled roe, and timid, trembling hind,
See how they stand in watchfulness intense,
Noting the changeful breeze, lest on its wing
Some tones of distant peril should be borne!
I charge you, daughters of Jerusalem,
I charge you by the roes and by the hinds,
Ye sons and daughters of Almighty God.
Be watchful too;—be jealous over prayer,
With sensitive alarm observe and shun
Whate'er disturbs or threatens to disturb
Communion with your God!—the roving thought,
The self-exalting fancy, and the doubt
Disruptively unjust; come they not oft
Struggling to quench the flame of holy love
Enkindled in the soul, and intercept
Glory's bright dawning from the eager eye.”

Metrical Meditation.

Meditations on Song of Solomon

Ver. 8. “The voice of my beloved, behold he cometh leaping upon the mountains, shipping upon the hills” When the soul has been maintained, for a length of time, in uninterrupted communion with the Lord, the affections become more lively, and the desire for His return becomes more real and earnest. Hast thou caught, O my soul, the spirit of the loving and loved Shelomoth, in these blessed words? “The voice of my beloved, behold, he cometh.” Is He indeed thy best beloved? Is there no voice to thee like His? Art thou waiting and longing for Him daily?

There is a great difference between a person believing in what is called “the doctrine of the second advent,” and a loving soul in the joy of communion, earnestly looking and longing for the Lord Himself to come. How little influence the belief of the doctrine has on the heart and life, compared with having the Person of Christ, as the all influential object for the heart, and being like the Thessalonians, “Waiting for the Son from heaven;” or like the Bride waiting for the Bridegroom.

“The Spirit and the bride say come.” It is the heart of the Bride that says come, though moved and stirred by the Spirit who dwells there. He gives us the happy consciousness of the relationship, and the affections that belong to it.

We are swift to hear, and quick to recognize the sound of the voice we love. The well-known voice, and the familiar name “Mary,” thrilled her whole soul. And even when the person speaking is too far off for us to hear the words, the sound is enough to touch the cord that vibrates the whole heart, and awakens all its drowsy energies. “The voice of my beloved,” she exclaims, “behold he cometh.” Her whole soul is filled with expectation. Now He is near.

“The Lord is at hand.” Lo, He comes! He comes! “Leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills. My beloved is like a roe or a young hart.” His feet are swift as hinds’ feet.

In place of nearness to the Lord in spirit fully satisfying the heart, it really increases its desires for the fuller joy which His Personal presence gives. What could be more near, more dear, more intimate, than the communion which we have seen the Bride enjoying, by faith, since the commencement of our meditations? There has been no interruption to her joy, but decided progress in the apprehension of His love, and the enjoyment of His favor. Some have thought, that in the passage before us, there are signs of the heart going back and getting out of communion—during the season of her repose. That the abundance of her privileges led to a measure of carelessness. And that her great spiritual enjoyment was succeeded by a measure of declension. Such a thing, we doubt not, has often occurred, but we see no signs of it here.

Is it when we are in communion or out of communion that we desire the coming of the Lord? Easily canst thou answer this question, O my soul. There can be no real desire for the Lord to come when we are not happy with Him. True, we are always safe in Him, but, alas, we are not always happy with Him. If we have gone a step too far with the world, or neglected self-judgment, we lose our happiness with Him, and at such times, we would rather that He did not come. “Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.” (John 13:8.) He does not say, observe, thou hast no part in Me. That He could never say. But He teaches Peter, and us, that if self-judgment is neglected - if the daily defilements are not cleansed away “with the washing of water by the word,” fellowship with Him is interrupted. He cannot go on with unjudged—unconfessed evil. “Thou hast no part with me,” are words of deepest solemnity. What wouldst thou not rather part with, O my soul, than part company with thy Lord, even for a day, or an hour? Where would he thy power for walk, worship, and service? What weakness, what darkness would beset thy path! Shame may cover thy face, and sorrow fill thy heart, as thou placest thy soiled feet in His hands, for surely He will see where thou hast been. But remember this, they never can be washed, until He do it. “If I wash thee not thou hast no part with me.” If thou wouldst walk with Jesus, and be happy with Him, thou must walk in separation—in true separation from all evil—from all that is contrary to His holiness, and unbearable to His nature. Lead me, O Lord, in thy way, in this evil day, that so I may ever most earnestly pray for, and lovingly desire, Thy coming!

“My Lord delayeth his coming,” is the language of a heart that is seeking present gratification in this world. “Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly,” is the language of a heart that is filled with love to Jesus, and earnestly breathing after personal nearness to Himself. In the proportion that we enjoy Christ spiritually, will we long to see Him face to face. In the New Jerusalem, “They shall see his

face.” Who would not long for this, that has seen Him even through a glass darkly? This is always a test of the soul’s condition. When the house is in confusion, the wife is not waiting and longing for her husband’s return. No, she is occupied in getting things put in order, and when everything is straight and such as he likes, she begins to think of his coming, and longs to hear his voice, and see his face.

Is it not enough, some Christians say, that I know I am His? Why should I be every day looking for His coming from heaven? I know my sins are pardoned, and that I am saved. Besides, I can trust and love the unseen Savior. So far well, my fellow Christian, but is this the voice of an earnest, loving heart, or of one that is cold and indifferent as to His blessed Person? Canst thou think of all His love and grace, of all His sufferings, and death for thee, and of His exaltation and glory, and not long to see Himself? Art thou not longing for a glimpse of that face, which shall ravish thy heart forever, and fill thee with loftiest praise? What would the absent husband think, how would he feel, were his wife thus to speak: “I know I am his. That is enough for me. I am satisfied. Besides, I am hearing from him daily, and receiving the assurance of his love, but I never think about his return. I have never once said—“Make haste home I never long to see his face.” Ah! my friend, my friend, how would you interpret such a condition of things? Would you call this love for the absent one? Would it satisfy your own heart—especially if you loved your wife with a “great love.” Oh, no! nothing but love in return will ever satisfy love. “We love him, because he first loved us.” Christian love is the reflection of Christ’s. The more frequently the loving wife hears from her absent husband, the more is her desire quickened for his return. And the communications of his love by letter, only make her long the more to see himself. The home circle may be perfectly comfortable, but to her heart it wants the presence of one to make it completely happy. And while he is not there, nothing on earth can fill the blank. Alas, how little we feel the blank which the Person of Christ alone can fill!

It is the Lord Himself, as Messiah the King, that the loving spouse so longs after here. “The voice of my beloved, behold, he cometh.” He has revealed Himself to her heart. She now enters, by faith, into His love and joy as the Bridegroom, the King in Zion. Now she knows and values His love, and longs to possess Himself as her own Messiah. Blessed change! The place where He was once despised and rejected, by the daughter of Zion, and over which He shed tears, shall ere long be the scene of His Bridegroom-love, and His bright millennial glory. The desire of the God-fearing remnant in the latter day for the appearing of the Messiah as their King and Deliverer, is spoken of in the Psalms and the prophets, as of the most fervent and intense character, “Oh that thou wouldest rend the heavens, that thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence. As when the melting fire burneth, the fire causeth the waters to boil, to make thy name known to thine adversaries, that the nations may tremble at thy presence.” Isa. 64:1, 2.

Under the figure of a Bride, we have the same intense desires in the song, though different in character. In the passage before us, it is not so much their own deliverance, and the overthrow of their enemies, or even His own kingdom and glory, as the heart’s desire for the Person of their coming Messiah. It is “My beloved....He cometh. He comes quickly. Like a roe or a young hart.” Already He is, as it were, at the wall of our house, looking through the windows, and showing Himself through the latticework of our garden. The remnant in Jerusalem have, here, intimations of the near approach of the King -their own full deliverance and millennial glory. He greatly cheers

their heart by still plainer revelations of Himself, and by reassuring them of His love, and of the joy of His heart in them. Nothing could be more beautiful and touching than the words of the Lord in the following verses. He addresses herself—she loves to repeat His words, “My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land. The fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grapes give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.” (Ver. 10-13.) A little while ago, and she could only discern the sound of His voice, and catch through the lattice-work a glimpse of His eye. But now, O happy Bride, He is near enough for her to hear the words of his mouth. To faith, blessed be His name, He is ever near, ever present. “His left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me.” This is faith. It can lean upon His bosom. It can repose in His embrace at night, and go out with Him in the morning to the vineyards, to see how the vines flourish. This is most blessed. Still, personally, He is not here. He is in heaven, we are on the earth. Knowest thou well, my soul, these distinctions? And say, is it not while reposing by faith in Him, that thy heart most earnestly longs for His coming, to take thee up to be with Himself in glory? Oh! to be free in heart from this world; and ever ready, like the bird on the bough of the tree, with well fledged wings to fly away. Earth’s fairest scene is not heaven, its happiest spot is not the paradise of God.

Now, the day of gladness begins to dawn for long oppressed Israel. The morning breaks! “The Lord Himself will soon appear.” “The kingdom of heaven is at hand.” The long, dark, and dreary winter of the Lord’s absence is past. The spring time has come, the summer draweth nigh. The bright and cloudless morning begins to dawn. Since the day that man sinned and fell, this groaning earth has never witnessed such a scene of vernal beauty as these verses describe. Nevertheless, they fitly represent the future glory and blessing of the land of Israel, and of the whole earth.

“See the day

As if already present, when the storm

Of wintry tribulation shall have passed,

And clouds have ceased to pour their torrents down,

And floods restrained their overwhelming rage:

See earth made beautiful.....Lo! Judah’s sapless bough,

And severed Ephraim, are grafting in—

Wondrous precursors of the summer nigh.”

Many have thought and said, that Israel’s winter would be perpetual. That no spring or summer would ever return for the cast-off nation. But such thoughts were never learned from the book of God. There we read in the plainest terms, that in due time “He shall cause them that come of Jacob to take root. Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit.” The cheering beams of “the Sun of Righteousness” shall chase away forever the gloom and barrenness of their long winter. The budding flowers, the ripening figs, the blooming vines, the singing of birds, the voice of the turtle, are sure emblems, not only that winter is past, but that

spring has come. And though nothing in the vineyard of the Bride be yet ripe, there is, in the unfolding bud of promise, the sure pledge of a glorious summer, and an abundant autumn.

Meditations on Song of Solomon

Ver. 14. "O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice: for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely." In thy meditations, O my soul, on the signs of the coming glory, see that thou distinguish according to scripture, between that which is earthly, and that which is heavenly—between the earthly calling of Israel, and the heavenly calling of the Church. The blessed Lord, as Jehovah, in the latter day will espouse the cause of His earthly people, and Jerusalem will become the center of earthly glory and blessing in her character as Bride of the King. The Church is the Bride of the Lamb—the once lowly, suffering, atoning Lamb, but now exalted, heavenly Christ. Both, of course are figurative. But figurative of what? The term Bride is the symbol of affection, endearment, and oneness as to position. The Bride ranks with the Bridegroom. The Jewish Bride will rank with Him in earthly glory. The Church, the heavenly Bride, will rank with Him in heavenly glory. Having owned and trusted Him during His humiliation and rejection, she will be nearest and dearest to Him, in His exaltation and glory. The term also represents myriads of saved souls. An individual believer now, could not speak of Christ as his Bridegroom, but as his Savior. I can say, He is my Savior, and that "He loved me and gave Himself for me." He is the Savior of the sinner, the Bridegroom of the Church.

The glory of the coming kingdom will be twofold—celestial and terrestrial. "That in the dispensation of the fullness of times, he might gather together in one, all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him." (Eph. 1:8, 9, 10.) The full power, blessing, and glory of both spheres, will be headed up in Christ.

Here, mark, for a moment, the difference between Israel's place and blessing in connection with the coming kingdom, and that of the Church, as spoken of in Scripture. The Lord comes down to where Israel is, and blesses them there. "The Redeemer shall come to Zion." (Luke 1-80.) The Church is caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. (1 Thess. 4) They (the Jews) will be blessed with all temporal blessings in a pleasant land. (Amos 9:11-15.) We, with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places. (Eph. 1) Jerusalem on earth will be the center of earthly glory and blessing—the royal city—the metropolis of the whole earth; and through it all the nations of the earth shall be blessed. For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. (Isa. 2) The Jerusalem above will be the center of heavenly glory. The glory of God will lighten it, and the Lamb will be the light thereof. (Rev. 21) The heavenly saints will be in their bodies of glory; fashioned like unto Christ's body of glory. (Phil. 3:21.) The whole house of Israel will then be blessed with the long promised blessing of the new heart and the right spirit. (Eze. 36:24-28.) And they shall fall away no more forever.

Israel of old is spoken of as being married to Jehovah. "For thy Maker is thine husband, the Lord of Hosts is his name." (Isa. 54:5.) But because of their unfaithfulness, and especially for their rejection of Christ, they were cast off for a season. Since then, Israel has been on the common level of all sinners. In the preaching of the gospel, both Jews and Gentiles are alike addressed as lost sinners; and all who are gathered out by the grace of God from both parties, are formed into "one body." Both are blessed with the same privileges in Christ, and the "one body" is blessed with the same privileges as Christ in heavenly places. The Gentiles who were dispensationally far off,

and the Jews who were nigh, have now, on the principle of faith, equal blessings in Christ. He hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition, for to make in Himself of twain one new man, so making peace. "For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father." See Eph. 2:13 - 22.

The true hope of the Church—the "one body"—indwelt by the "one Spirit," is the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ from heaven, to receive us unto Himself. "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself: that where I am, there ye may be also." When this has been accomplished, Israel will again appear on the scene. Then the Spirit of God will begin to work in the remnant of Judah. After the Church is caught away, and during the open reign of Antichrist, before the Lord appears in glory—just between the rapture of the saints and the glorious appearing, this remnant will be the object of the Lord's especial care and love. Speaking of them under the figure of a spouse, He says, "I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her. And I will give her, her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope; and she shall sing there as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of Egypt. And it shall be at that day, saith the Lord, that thou shalt call me Ishi, that is, my husband, and shalt call me no more Baal, that is, my lord. And I will betroth thee unto me forever" Now, their espousals shall be everlasting, the union shall endure forever, and great will be the Lord's delight in His faithful, loving, admiring, adoring, Worshipping spouse. See Hos. 1; 2; 3

What then, are we to understand by the passage before us? "O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely" From the tenth verse to the close of the fifteenth, we have an unbroken address of tenderest love, sweetest encouragement, and brightest hope. What more blessed words could even the lips of divine love utter? His object is to draw out her heart in love and confidence towards Himself. It is quite evident that the full blaze of millennial glory, will not burst suddenly on the land of Israel and the nations, but by degrees, like the passing away of winter, and the gradual approach of spring and summer. Hence the need of faith on the part of the spouse. But He cheers her heart with the assurance that the day of her deliverance draweth nigh. He would have her to know that His eye is upon her, and to wait patiently. On the other hand, we learn from many portions of Scripture, that she will, at this moment, be the special object of the malice of Antichrist. He will seek to devour the faithful remnant. (Rev. 12:6, 17.) But guided by the Spirit of God, she finds a refuge in the wilderness. "Then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains." The Beloved knows her hiding-place. To His eye and to His heart, she is like the dove in the rock—in the secret place of the stairs, or the rugged side of the precipice, which has the appearance of a stair.

But her voice is sweet to her Beloved, and He loves to hear it, though it still resembles the mournful note of the dove, that sits solitary, mourning for its mate. Her countenance is comely: she is beautiful to Him, however marred by persecution, suffering, and trial. And He seeks to see her—to hear her—oh deepest, tenderest, kindest love! Was ever love like this? There is no love like His. "Let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice, for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely." Oh! what gracious, unselfish love! What a revelation, what an unfolding of His heart! Truly may it be said of His heart, but of His heart only, "Love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave." Does death take a strong hold of its victim? Oh, how strong!—what a

hold!—such is the strength—the hold of the Savior's love. Let thy meditations be deep, and patient, O my soul, on the love of Christ—the love of Christ to His spouse - the love of Christ to thee. Think of the grasp—the hold—which death takes—think of the almighty grasp, the eternal hold of the Savior's love. The similitude is appalling—overwhelming—the reality consoling, comforting, refreshing, and strengthening, beyond all measure. Oh! the deep, vast, profound, immeasurable, untraceable glories of the Savior's love!

Still further,—gather up all thy strength—concentrate all thy thoughts—meditate on that other aspect of the Savior's love: “Jealousy is cruel as the grave.” What meaneth this? These seem hard words to set forth my Lord's most tender love. Only strong similitudes give an idea of the power of His love. These give its twofold aspect. If death takes a strong hold of a person, the grave keeps it. It is unyielding. It is a cruel grave. It hears not the cry of the bereaved. The widow's groans, and sighs, and tears - the orphan's deep and bitter wail, are alike unheeded. It holds fast its prey. It yields not to the deep tones of the broken in heart, the wounded in soul, and the crushed in spirit. If thou shouldst supplicate the grave on bended knee, ever so earnestly, it will never yield to thee the beloved one who has been wrenched from thy heart's core, and entombed in its deep caverns. How often it has been besieged, and besought, with bitterest tears, deepest groans, loudest cries, but all in vain. It hears not, it heeds not, it yields not. What takes such hold as death? What keeps it like the grave?

Learn then, O my soul, from these dark, but strong similitudes, the character of the Savior's love. Sheltered in the cleft of the rock—in His wounded side—nestling in that mysterious heart of love; His timid, fluttered dove securely rests. No bird of prey can ever molest her there. All the vultures of hell cannot touch a feather of her wing. They can never reach the cleft of the rock wherein she hides. She is far above their highest flight. But may she not lose her hold some day, in an unguarded moment, and after all be seized and perish by those who are seeking to devour? Did her security depend in the least degree on her holding fast all would be lost in a moment. But, bless God, all depends on the hold which Jesus has. It is the rock that holds her, not she that holds the rock. What takes such a hold as death? What keeps it like the grave? Divine love holds its objects with a power stronger than death, though sweetly tender, and is more unyielding than the grave. Will the blessed Lord ever “deliver the soul of his turtle dove unto the multitude of the wicked?” No! never! never! “I give unto my sheep eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.” (John 10:28, 29.) “Behold a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment. And a man shall be a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place; as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.” Isa. 32:1, 2.

But all types and figures, allegories and illustrations utterly fail to set forth the Savior's love. His glory will be revealed, and all flesh shall see it. But His love can never be revealed. True we shall see Him as He is—in all the realities of His love, and know even as we are known; and find in His love our eternal delight. But there are heights and depths, lengths and breadths in His love which must remain unknown, unrevealed forever.

Ver. 15. “Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes.” Most graciously the well-beloved links himself with His spouse, in the care of the vineyard. Take

“us” the foxes.....for “our” vines have tender grapes. They are yet green and tender. They are only beginning to blossom. The vineyard must be guarded. The little foxes have sharp teeth, and though little, they are subtle, and do great damage amongst the vines. During the bleakness and barrenness of winter there is no cover in the vineyards for the fox. The leafless bough offers no inducement. But with the reviving spring they find abundant shelter, and favorable opportunities to commit their ravages. Watch thou, O my soul, the state of thine own heart. Watch especially against the daily cares of this present life, and the thousand things that tend to mar thy fruitfulness. Abide in the true vine, let thy nourishment be drawn from His roots. So shalt thou bear much fruit to the Father’s glory. “Be careful for nothing: but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Phil. 4:6, 7.

In times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord, and of great awakenings, there is need for redoubled care. It is truly pleasing to witness the springing bud, and the unfolding blossoms. To listen to the songsters amongst the branches; the soft and significant voice of the turtle; but the keeper of the vineyard has more to do than contemplate the beautiful, or listen to the sweet sounds of music. He must watch against the subtle intruder, that lurks amongst the luxuriant foliage of the vines to deceive and to destroy. Around thee now, and back over many years’ experience, thy thoughts instinctively flow. Many a goodly vine hast thou seen marred for a season by the cunning craftiness of him who lieth in wait to deceive. Oh! how heart-breaking such disappointments are!

“Redouble your precautions, O ye saints!

Aware of the destroyer!—stop the gaps

Where, entering silently, he spoils the vines:—

Be cautious! for your enemy is strong,

To sleepless malice adds perfected craft,

And spiteful certainty of shortening rule;—

Ye know, if ye are Christ’s, your struggling souls

Resist a baffled and defeated foe.

‘Take ye those foes’ who contrive the woe

Of God’s Jerusalem! expose their craft.

Seize your keen weapons, servants of the Lord.

And sword in hand, yea, in your armor build

Her walls and fences that are broken down!

“The weakest is made strong who cleaves to Christ.”

Like the vine-dresser who has taken every pains to see that his vines are well watered, trained and pruned; he leaves them in the evening, full of hope that they may be looking still better in the

morning. But, lo! to his bitter disappointment, the destroyer has been amongst his vines—many are sadly nipped, one, to outward appearance, is ruined. While the keeper of the vineyard slept, the fox was accomplishing his work of devastation. Its sharp teeth had gnawed the stem to its core. The life-blood was running down. It was also stripped of its bark, the branches were broken, the leaves lay scattered on the ground, and the tender grapes were entirely gone. Alas, alas, it was one of his most flourishing vines. It had a goodly stem, well-nourished in a rich soil, beneath the genial beams of a southern sun. Its blossom was beautiful, and it promised an abundant vintage. But in the night, in an evil hour, it fell a prey to the enemy. While the husbandman looked thus sorrowfully on his dismembered vine, the thought crossed his mind—thank God! —the root remains. For even the foxes of hell may not burrow up the roots of any plant of the Father's planting. But such was the damage done to his hopeful vine, that for a long time to come, it would bear but little fruit.

The application is easy. In the secret of the divine presence, O my soul, study the lesson. Has God given thee a love for souls? —a pastor's heart? Oh! seek to win souls to Christ; and to shelter, nourish, and watch over the sheep and lambs of His fold. "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof.....And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away." 1 Pet. 1:10.

Meditations on Song of Solomon: Chapter 1:1-3

There is nothing which the men of this world dread more than solitude and reflection. They would rather be over-pressed with engagements than have leisure for thought. The conscience, ill at ease, will at such times, lift up its voice; but its warning voice must be hushed by that convenient word duty, and its honest speech is soon and willingly forgotten. Sins—many sins—are there, and the thought of God as the judge of sin is dreadful. The condition of the soul is such that it cannot bear the light, therefore darkness is loved. The activities of this present life are sought and welcomed, that the crushing weight of reflection may be escaped. The pleasures of the world, too, in due time and place, serve a similar purpose.

Thus, every care is taken that solitude may be avoided, and that there may be no opportunity for calm and serious reflection. The solemn and eternal realities of the soul have no portion of thought or time allowed them; the higher, nobler, and better part of man is totally neglected, and left uncared for, and unprovided for, notwithstanding its deep, pressing, and eternal need. “For what shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” Mark 8:36, 37.

Such, alas! is man—man without the knowledge of God—without the knowledge of his condition as a sinner, and without the knowledge of Jesus as the Savior of sinners.

But turn for a while, O, my soul, from the contemplation of a scene so heart-rending, though strong, yet tender, are the links that would draw thee there, and lead thee to wean loved ones from it, and win them for Christ. Cherish a spirit of meditation in the sweet solitudes of the soul's separation from the world, where the scene is radiant with the presence of the Savior, and joyous with “The Song of Songs.” The wider the separation from the world, the deeper the communion, the richer the blessing. In heart and spirit having no sympathy with it; and, really, though in it, yet far away from its bustle and all its unhallowed scenes. A mighty chasm now separates believers from this present evil world: “They are not of the world,” says Christ, “even as I am not of the world.” The position of Christ in resurrection is the definition of ours as seen in Him. The calm, reflective quiet of the soul in communion with the Person of the exalted Lord, are its sweetest moments while here on earth. These may be found in the chamber of sickness, the rural scene, or in the very seat and center of this world's activities. All depends on the state of the heart. To be alone, and yet not alone, how blessed!

But why call this precious little book “The Song of Songs?” Just because it is Solomon's, or, rather, Christ's, who will in due time be king in Jerusalem, in true Solomon glory. On the same principle He is called “King of kings, and Lord of lords.” Pre-eminence in all things is His. There are many sweet songs in Scripture. Moses, Miriam, and her maidens, Deborah, and David, all sang sweetly of the Lord's goodness. It is said of Solomon himself that “his songs were a thousand and five;” but this one he styles “The Song of Songs.” It far surpassed them all. It is the deep melody of hearts filled with holy love, and finding their supreme delight in its full and free expression, “We love him because he first loved us.” Oh! to be able at all times to sing the song of the Savior's love, with the

heart and with the understanding also.

Ver. 2. "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth" What unsuspecting, pure, and impassioned affection breathes in this remarkable address. It is like the artless, yet ardent kindling of affection between the nearest kindred when they meet after a long absence. So engrossed is the heart with its object, that forms, ceremonies, and all surrounding circumstances are entirely lost sight of. The happy consciousness of the place which she has in His heart carries her away. How few there are in this world that one could so unformally and affectionately address: and yet this is the language of a saved sinner to the holy Savior. Dost thou, O my soul, understand this? No doubts, no fears in the heart that can thus address the divine Bridegroom—the glorified Jesus in heaven. Many now-a-days think it presumption to have full, perfect, unmisgiving confidence in His grace and love, and if they dare venture to trust Him, it is with many doubts and fears; and that, too, after He has written His love to lost sinners in characters of blood, and engraven it as on the face of the rock forever. What must such think of the boldness of the Bride? That she has forgotten herself, her place? Ah! no. The secret is this: the conscience having been cleared of all sin by the one sacrifice of the once lowly Jesus, the heart is now free and happy in the presence of the risen and glorified Christ. And this is all that any guilty sinner needs to make him feel at home and happy in the chamber of the King, namely, the blood of Christ for the conscience, and the Person of Christ for the heart. Every blessing will be found folded up in these two. Every Christian has both. Lord, help them to believe it!

In this blessed little book, mark well, my soul, there is no mention of sin, pardon, or justification. Why is this? These questions had been previously settled, and now the heart is enjoying full and perfect liberty in the Lord's presence. All such questions, in every case, are settled when the sinner is first brought to the feet of Jesus. Settled on the solid ground of the Savior's finished work. Never, no never again to be raised, so far as God and faith are concerned. Satan, and the unbelief of our own hearts, may seek to disturb the eternally settled question. But all such thoughts should be treated as coming from such sources.

"I know that whatsoever God doeth, it shall be forever: nothing can be put to it, nor anything taken from it." (Eccl. 3:14.) Hence, the heart that knows these things is free, happy, and at home in the immediate presence of the Lord, and that, too, in the highest sense. "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth."

Here, the heart is breathing after, not the sense of forgiveness, but a more direct demonstration of His love. She is occupied with Himself. Not so much with any of His qualities, or with any particular kindness she has received from Him, as with Himself personally. Having Him she has all His qualities and all His kindnesses; as she says, "Let HIM kiss me." She has no idea of explaining of whom she thus speaks. There is a condensed as well as an expansive energy in love. It reminds us of the loving and bereaved heart of Mary when she said, "Sir, if thou have borne HIM hence, tell me where thou hast laid HIM." He was first and last in her mind, no one else was in her heart from whom to distinguish Him, and there was none with whom she could compare Him. She knew of no one else to be thought of, or cared for. Nothing could satisfy her heart but the Person of her Lord, dead or alive. Wondrous affection! Oh, that He had such a place in this poor heart of mine. "A little while," and He shall have it all, and forever. Oh! hasten the happy day, my Lord, thou well-beloved of the Church, thy Bride.

In holy scripture we find a kiss is the token of reconciliation, the pledge of peace, and the expression of affection. It is said of David and Jonathan, that they kissed one another, and wept one with the other, until David exceeded" (1 Sam. 20:41.) Sweet illustration of the true David, ever exceeding all our love. "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." And Joseph, too, kissed all his brethren and wept upon them, and after that his brethren talked with him." (Gen. 45:15.) And, again, the father kissed the prodigal while he was yet in his rags.

And would such demonstrations of love be too much to ask, or expect, after he was cleansed from all his defilement, and clothed in the best robe? Assuredly not! Is it too much then for the Bride in the Song of Solomon—for the believer in Jesus, to desire such an expression of the Lord's love? Certain we are that she desired it not because she had any doubt of its being there, but because she delighted in its manifestation. Love can only be satisfied with love.

"For thy love is better than wine." The love of Jesus is now preferred to all the joys of earth. Wine is the symbol of the natural delights of men—the joys and the luxuries of earth. But what are all these now, in their most charming form, to the soul that is delighting in the love of Jesus? They have lost their charm for the eye and the heart, and now they would be a weariness and a burden heavy to be borne. Jesus Himself is the soul's delight. "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." 1 Pet. 1:8.

The vine-tree has its roots in the earth. The Nazarite, while under his vow, was to taste nothing that was made of the vine tree, from the kernels even to the husks. (See Num. 6) He was to be entirely separate from the pleasures of the world unto the Lord. Every believer is a Nazarite, according to the blessed Lord's own vow. "But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." (Matt. 26:29.) Being associated with Him, we are under His vow; and ought to be true Nazarites unto God. But this can only be, by finding all our joy, delight, and satisfaction in the love of Jesus. He is now patiently, waiting, far away from the joys of earth, until the bright Millennial morning, when He shall again come forth, in His true Melchizedec character, to refresh the victorious armies of Israel, the children of Abraham, with the bread and wine of the kingdom. (Gen. 14) We too, should patiently wait till then, for we shall come forth with Him in heavenly glory. The full period of the vow shall then be accomplished. The King in Jerusalem shall again be united to His earthly people, and all nations shall be made glad and rejoice in their joy and gladness. And then shall the daughter of Zion know the meaning of those words long ago uttered at the marriage in Cana of Galilee, "But thou hast kept the good wine until now."

"Thy love we own, Lord Jesus;

And wait to see thy glory.

To know as known, and fully own

Thy perfect grace before Thee:

We plead thy parting promise,

Come, Savior, to release us.

Then endless praise our lips shall raise,

For love like Thine, Lord Jesus.”

Ver. 3. “Because of the savor of thy good ointments thy name is as an ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love thee.” Now she gives us some idea of His name, “thy name is as ointment poured forth” To her heart it is most fragrant. All His names, titles, attributes, and relationships are most sweet to her taste. His name is Himself. It is expressive of His nature, excellencies, and graces. She is at a loss to utter the riches of His goodness, therefore she says, “His name is as ointment poured forth.” The savor of His ointment is not confined to herself; those associated with her share in its profusion. The attendant virgins are attracted and refreshed by the sweet odors of His name. Happy thought! It is not an ointment sealed up, but “poured forth.” Oh! what fellowship there is in the love of Jesus! Here pause a little, O my soul, and meditate on the fullness of the name of Jesus: “For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.” What a center, what a source it is! Around it the Church of God is now gathered as its only center, by the quickening power and indwelling of the Holy Ghost. “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” But, ere long, the heavens and the earth shall be united by its power and glory. The earthly Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, with all the surrounding nations, the heavenly Jerusalem, and the innumerable company of angels—the general assembly, and church of the first born which are written in heaven, shall all be attracted to, and united by, that one, dear, uniting name. The Father hath purposed this wondrous glory for His Son, and it shall surely come to pass,” That in the dispensation of the fullness of times (the millennium) he might gather together in one (under one head) all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him.” (Eph. 1:11.) Then shall the fragrance of His name be wafted on every breeze, and all kindreds and tongues shall unite in that note of praise, “O LORD, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth.” Psalm 8.

And when the thousand years of millennial blessing and glory shall have run their course, the heavens and the earth fled away, and the final judgment past, that name shall have lost none of its fragrance, power, and glory. It will then unite, in sweetest love, in holiest bonds, the many circles, the countless myriads of the new heavens and the new earth. The joy of every heart, the melody of every tongue, shall find their spring, power, motive, and object in Him. Every mountain of myrrh, and every hill of frankincense shall owe their sweetness to His presence. And still His name shall be as ointment poured forth; yes, “poured forth,” and “poured forth” forever. All His garments smelling of myrrh, aloes, and cassia, in the ivory palaces. And as age after age rolls on, the rich and varied graces of His love shall still be “poured forth” in infinite profusion, causing all hands and hearts and lips, to drop with sweet smelling myrrh, and filling every scene throughout the vast realms of the blest with the eternal fragrance of His name.

Meditations on Song of Solomon: Chapter 1:4

Ver. 4. "Draw me, we will run after Thee." The more we know of Christ, the more shall we desire to know of Him. The nearer we are to Him, the more shall we desire to be drawn nearer still. As Paul says, "That I may know Him," yet none on earth knew Him so well. And, again, "That I may win Christ," yet never was saint more sure of his prize than Paul. He could say in truth, though a prisoner in Home, and in want, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." "What rich experience—what quiet confidence—what boundless joy, shines in his letter to the Philippians! There is such an infinity of blessing for us in Christ, that the more we apprehend it, the less we feel we have apprehended it. The more we taste of the reality and fullness of His love, we shall be able, the more truly, to say, It passeth knowledge. There are breadths and lengths, and depths and heights, which we can never comprehend. And there is such joy in His presence, that even while we are enjoying it, the heart so yearns for greater nearness, that it feels, comparatively, as at a distance.

Were I to read the heart of the loving Bride through these words, "Draw me, we will run after thee," I should say, her desire to be near the Person of the Lord is so great that, near, and dear, though she be, there is something like felt distance experienced. Hence the deep breathings of her heart, "Draw me"—oh! draw me nearer—closer—my Lord, to Thee! There is growth in grace,—compared with ver. 2—a growing apprehension of Himself. There is a greater desire for closer communion. It is similar to what we find in many of the psalms. "O GOD, Thou art my God, early will I seek thee; my soul thirsteth for Thee, my flesh longeth for Thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is.....my soul followeth hard after Thee; Thy right hand upholdeth me." (Psalm 63) The most blessed communion with the Lord, is perfectly consistent with the most earnest longings for greater nearness to Himself. Speakest thou thus, my soul, of thyself? Knowest thou this in thine own experience? Examine all thy words and ways as before the Lord, and pass judgment upon them. The Holy Spirit tells us that He tried His words, as in a furnace, "seven times." How often, alas, we both speak and write, without even trying them once.

There is a beautiful connection between the Lord's drawing, and our running. "We will run," but carefully note the last two words—"after Thee." There is more, much more, in these words than can here be noted. They are all important. "After Thee," not after our own notions, or even after the best of men on earth, but "after Thee." As it is said in that beautiful sixteenth psalm, "I have set the Lord always before me." Not at times, merely, but "always." Oh! what a path ours on earth would be were this the case! How separated would it be from everything that is not Christ. And, surely, in all fairness, when we pray "draw me," we should be ready to add, like the spouse and her companions, "we will run after Thee."

But mark another deeply precious thought, suggested by the subject of our meditation. The One who draws, goes before. Thus the Lord goes before His people in the wilderness, and sees the danger and meets it, before they come to it. Many, many are the dangers that we are, by Him, delivered from, that we know nothing about. "And when he putteth forth his own sheep, He goeth

before them, and the sheep follow Him." A snare may be laid for us by the enemy, in the way that we said we would go, but our divine Leader, seeing the snare, turns into another path, leads in another direction, and the snare which might have proved fatal is escaped. And yet, I may feel so disappointed, and so discontented, because something hindered me reaching my previously appointed place. Blessed Lord! may we ever, and only, "run after Thee."

"Draw me! I will run after Thee, will seek

To hear obediently what Thou wilt speak:

And step by step the blessed path would trace

Of my beloved - full of truth and grace."

"The King hath brought me into His chambers; we will be glad and rejoice in Thee; we will remember Thy love more than wine; the upright love Thee." Now we have the result, the happy fruit, of the drawing, and the running.

The prayer expressed conscious weakness, and dependence, combined with holy diligence. They have run well and reached the goal. And now they are crowned with joy and gladness. But, never forget, my soul, it is grace that draws, and grace that runs, and grace that crowns, and that all flow from the shoreless ocean of the Savior's love. "We will remember Thy love more than wine." Now she uses the word "remember," she knew His love before. But she is enjoying it with increased interest. Like air, she is surrounded with it, she is in it. "The King hath brought me into his chamber."

But why should Christ be here called "The King?" It is prophetic of His relationship with Israel after their restoration. As to His right or title, He is always that. Is He ever called the King of the Church? Not in scripture. He is a King and worthy of all homage. But in scripture He is spoken of as Head of His body, the church, and as King of the Jews. And as such, observe, He came at first in lowly grace, and presented Himself to the daughter of Zion, but, alas, she refused Him. He was despised and rejected, crucified and slain, but God raised Him up, and gave Him glory. Thereby making good, in resurrection, His rights and titles, not only as King of the Jews, but also as Head of His body, the Church, and center of all coming glory. (Compare Zech. 9 John 12 Acts 2 Eph. 1 Phil. 2) With the same breath the Jews cried, "Hosanna; Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord," and, "Away with him, Away with him! Crucify Him!" Such, alas, is the brief duration of human popularity! At last they filled up the measure of their sins. Their relationship with God was broken. The Messiah was cut off—the testimony of the Holy Ghost was despised—and, for the time, all was gone, as to the kingdom.

Nevertheless, the word of the Lord shall stand fast forever. Man's unbelief and sin can never make the faithfulness of God of none effect. In the redemption accomplished by Christ, a foundation was laid for the future restoration of Israel, in grace, according to the changeless purpose of God; and for placing the children in the full possession and enjoyment of all the blessings promised to the fathers. "Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers." (Rom. 15:8.) Nothing can be plainer than the predictions of God's word as to the future reign of the Lord Jesus, in connection with the throne of David, and the whole house of Israel. Of course, His reign and His glory will not be confined to the

restored tribes and the land of Israel; but Jerusalem and the cities of Judah will form the earthly center of His millennial kingdom. Just as the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God, will be the heavenly center of the many connecting circles of His heavenly glory. Heb. 12:22-24.

But as our meditations are of “the King,” we will dwell a little on the prophecies which reveal and unfold Him to us in this character. “For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to stablish it with judgment and with justice, from henceforth, even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.” (Isa. 9:6, 7.) This ancient prediction, which the zeal of the Lord of hosts will in due time perform, was, in substance, repeated to Mary by the angel. “Thou shalt bring forth a Son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.” (Luke 1:31-33.) Prophecies on this subject, yet unfulfilled, are almost innumerable.

But was not Jehovah, of old, King in Jerusalem? Oh, yes; most true! From the time of Israel's deliverance out of Egypt, until the days of Samuel, Jehovah was their king. Then they desired a king like the nations around them, and rejected the Lord as their king. But this, like everything else, with Israel under the law, ended in complete failure. From the banks of the Red Sea, to the cross on Calvary, or to the stoning of Stephen, we have a history of failure. And that, not only in one position or relationship, but in all. If we look at Israel as under law—as a vine brought out of Egypt and planted in the land—as the married wife, and as God's witness on the earth, we find that there was not only constant failure, but they became incorrigible in their sins. Hence, at last, God's righteous judgments came upon them. Their beloved Jerusalem was encompassed with armies, their temple and city razed to the ground, and those that escaped the edge of the sword, were driven by the sore displeasure of God to the four winds of heaven.

From that day to this, Israel's condition has been “forsaken and desolate.” But it will not be always so. It is most needful to mark, at such a point as this, the difference between God's ways in government with His people, and His ways in grace. The Jews, in the righteous government of God, because of their sins and impenitence, have been, and still are, under His chastening hand; but the grace and love of His heart towards them remain unchangeably the same. Mark the terms of the covenant, “And I will for this afflict the seed of David, but not forever.” (1 Kings 11:39.) This is a principle of immense importance, not only with Israel and the Church, but with the individual Christian. The same great principle is referred to by the apostle when he is handling the subject of Israel's rejection and restoration. “Because of unbelief they were broken off—but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sake. For the gifts and callings of God are without repentance.” Rom. 11

The present condition and future restoration of the Jews are touchingly described by the prophet Hosea, “For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim. Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the LORD their God, and David their king, and shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days.” Precious thought! They will yet “seek the Lord

their God, and David their king.” And what is the book of Canticles? Is it not the assurance, and the re-assurance to the remnant, of the unchanging affection of the King? Here, the God-fearing remnant in the latter days can read His love—the unwearied, unupbraiding, patient love of “the Lord their God, and David their king.” In the past, all failed under law. In the future, all will be re-established under grace. In the past, they were on the ground of the conditional part of the covenant. In the future, they will be on the ground of the unconditional grace of God. The value of the sacrifice of their once-rejected Messiah, and the fullness of the love of God, will be the measure of their blessing. But who can measure that which is immeasurable? Such will be the love of the king to His Jewish Bride.

The book of Ruth illustrates, in the most simple and touching way possible, the past, present, and future condition of Israel.

No fruit remained of the married life of Naomi. “Call me not Naomi,” she says, which signifies my delight, but “call me Mara,” bitterness, “for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me.” Her husband, Elimelech, (which signifies, my God is king,) and her two sons, died in the land of Moab. Naomi was now a widow, desolate, fruitless, and, naturally, without resources. “Call me Mara.... I went out full, and the Lord hath brought me home again empty.” Striking type of the Jewish nation, who, having lost God as its king and husband, is now as a widow, and desolate. But a feeble remnant, in the person of the meek and lowly Ruth, clings to Naomi, and, virtually, takes shelter under the wings of the God of Israel. “Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth.” The fields which she first entered as a gleaner, became her own. But the nearest kinsman-redeemer refuses to redeem the inheritance, if Ruth must be taken as his wife with it. And this is done in the presence of ten witnesses. These ten men of the city may represent the ten commandments, which were given before Christ came, but there was no fruit unto God under the law. See Rom. 7:1-4.

Boaz (which signifies, in Him is strength) now espouses the cause of the feeble remnant of Elimelech’s house, with all his heart. He is a type of the risen Christ, who was “declared to be the Son of God with power....by the resurrection from the dead.” (Rom. 1:1, 4.) What makes this picture so perfectly beautiful, is the circumstance, that Ruth had no direct claim on Boaz. He was not the nearest of kin; so it was all grace. Israel, as well as the Gentiles, must now come into the inheritance on the ground of pure grace.

“And Ruth bare a son.....and Naomi took the child and laid it in her bosom, and became nurse unto it,” and the women said, “There is a son born to Naomi.” Touching scene! Lovely grace’. The widow’s heart is made to sing as in the days of her youth. The desolate one is become, as it were, a mother of children. The bereaved bosom is again filled with a living heir. All is joy. Here, we have prefigured, in the most lovely way, the full restoration of Israel to honor, glory, and dignity in the land. The true Boaz will, ere long, take up the cause of the God-fearing remnant, and reestablish Israel in the land, upon an entirely new footing altogether. This is the joyous theme of numberless scriptures.

Take a sample. “And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name. Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God. Thou shalt no more be termed forsaken; neither shall thy land be termed any more desolate: but thou shalt be

called Hephzi-bah (i.e. my delight is in thee), and thy land Beulah (i.e. married), for the Lord delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married.” (Isa. 62) And again, “Therefore behold I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her. And I will give her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope; and she shall sing there as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt... and I will betroth thee unto me forever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving kindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness; and thou shalt know the Lord.” (Hos. 2) Oh! wondrous, matchless grace! The grace of God in Christ Jesus to the chief of sinners! Love is the spring. Grace flows. The lost one is found. Love is ever the same. The Lord loves Israel—He loves the Church—He loves the individual believer. Every soul that is drawn to Him He loves with a perfect love. The deeper love and joy are His. Oh matchless love—boundless grace—heavenly joy, eternal delight—Hallelujah! “The King hath brought me into His chambers.”

The Vessel

On! is it come—the sweet and blessed calm,
Foreseen and hoped for through those darksome years
Of anguish and of dread? Here, here at last,
I, a deep vessel in the shoreless sea
Of thine own fullness, O eternal God!
Filled in that fullness, find my prayer, my hopes.
All, all Fulfilled, and nothing more to crave.
The bright reality, the thing itself,
Transcends all thought, eclipses every hope;
Dwelling in God, by God indwelt,
I know Love in its fullness, life to me is bliss.
All, all within, beneath, around, above,
Speak but of Thee, and tell me what I am,
The happiest of the happy! O thou peerless One!
Great God revealed in flesh, the living link
‘Twixt Godhead and my soul! be thine the praise,
The loving worship of a loving heart,
Rich in Thyself, for oh, however filled,
Howe’er exalted, holy, undefiled,
Whatever wealth of blessedness is mine,
What am I, Lord! an emptiness, a nothing,
Thou art my boast, in whom all fullness dwells
Of the great Godhead. Thou whose name I bear,
Whose life is mine, whose glory and whose bliss,
All, all are mine.

E. D.

The Voice

Oh! that I were a voice—a voice whose cry,

The troubled heart might calm:

A faithful echo of the voice of old,

That cried, “Behold the Lamb!”

Oh! to be nothing, of all self bereft,

One theme alone be mine;

I would be but a sound to bear abroad:

No name, dear Lord, but Thine.

I’d stand and gaze on Thee, lost in the path

That Thy dear feet have trod;

And then I’d follow with the joyous shout—

“Behold the Lamb of God!”

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