

THINGS NEW AND OLD VOLUME 6

by C.H. Mackintosh

A collection of articles and writings by C.H. Mackintosh from Things New and Old Volume 6, covering various biblical topics and Christian teaching.

40 Chapters

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Things New and Old Volume 6

Behold, How He Loved Him

Say, was it sorrow for the dead
That stirred those fountains deep?
Say, was it grief for Lazarus
That bade the Savior weep?
Was it that He would fain have caught
The last expiring breath;
Or on those much-loved features gazed
Ere they were closed in death?
No, for He knew, 'twas His to speak
And bid death's shadow flee;
Was He not Lord of life and death,
The Resurrection He?
What then could move the Lord to grief,
And griefs external sign?
Why should He weep o'er Lazarus
When His was power divine?
Ah! 'twas that tender sympathy —
That love, so deep, so true,
That groaned for Mary's agony
And Martha's sorrow knew.
And silent friends had gathered there,
And sorrowing, round Him crept,
He knew their hearts were full of grief,
And therefore "Jesus wept."
His soul, in one short moment, passed
Long ages in review:

Glanced at the peace of Eden's bowers
And felt the curse was true.
Forward He looked, the coming scene
Might well His spirit move;
Shall He go on to Calvary,
Oh, deep, mysterious love!
The cross down the narrow path
In deepening shadow lay;
The darkness there — the Father's wrath
Foreclosing life's short day.
This side, the powers of earth and hell
Beset the narrow road,
Beyond, the choirs of heaven swell
Around the throne of God.
'Tis done, and should that burning love
Be e'er forgot by thee:
Think on the tears that Jesus shed
In dark Gethsemane.
Think how the Lord and Master wept
To see His people's pain;
Think how He shed His precious blood
A rest for us to gain.
Then say, should it not teach us too,
To do as He has done;
And shed our tears for others' woe,
Like God's beloved Son?

Bengel's Prayer

It is recorded of Bengel, an old German saint, that he was much given to intercessory prayer, and that he had power with God, and prevailed. One, who was anxious to find out his secret, watched him unobserved in his hours of retirement. "Now," said he, "I shall hear Bengel pray."

The aged saint sat long before his open Bible, and, while perusing its sacred pages, hours passed away, and, while comparing scripture with scripture, the hour of midnight sounded. Nature seemed at length exhausted. He folded his arms over the open word, and, looking up, gave utterance to these words, "Lord Jesus, thou knowest me; we are on the same old terms." A few moments more, and Bengel's weary frame was resting in a sweet slumber.

"WE WILL NEVER GIVE THEE UP."

(These lines were written with reference to one whose sad career they too truly describe. Handsome, generous, and amiable, early entering into uncontrolled possession of a large property, he was exposed to great temptations, to which his excitable temperament rendered him peculiarly open. Led away by wild companions, the downward course was speedily entered; and once there, he rushed on with fearful rapidity. He had Christian friends, and grace was given them to wrestle for his conversion, and to believe firmly and assuredly that the answer would come, though each day it seemed further off. "God's ways are not our ways." A few months after this poem was written, he was suddenly called hence, at the early age of twenty-five; and it is in humble gratitude to the God of all grace, and in simple trust in His word, that these lines are printed — that any who may be weeping and despairing over the case of some beloved one may take courage, and trust in the God who cannot lie, who even at the eleventh hour saved one whose case seemed utterly hopeless. Dear brother or sister in Jesus, who may thus be in deep waters, look up, pray on, and faint not. As God is true, He will, in His own time and way, answer your prayers. 1 Tim. 1:15; Psalm 50:15; Matt, 18, 19; 21:22; John 14:13, 14; 15:7; 16:23; Luke 11:9; Rom. 10:13; Isa. 57:19; Matt. 24:35. - A. L.)

We will never give thee up! O thou sadly-erring one,
The' faster in the downward path thy way-ward footsteps roam:
The' harder than an adamant thy steadfast brow be set,
In proud rebellion 'gainst thy God, thou'lt come to Jesus yet.
We will never give thee up! though each passing day and hour
Find thee a still more willing slave to Satan's deadly power—
The' tighter, closer, round thy life, sin's iron chain be bound —
The' darker grow thy deeds and words, thou, lost one, shalt be found.

We will never give thee up! the' thou have no heart, nor eye,
Nor ear, but for the reckless mirth of godless revelry —
The 'deeper in each vice thou plunge — the' thine the scoffer's part —
The drunkard's, swearer's, profligate's, Christ yet shall have thine heart.
We will never give thee up! though from thee thou shalt cast
All good — the' nature's graces all shall from thy heart have past —
The' men shall look with pitying scorn, shall tell us of despair,
Call thee a hopeless wreck — e'en then our God for thee shall care.
We will never give thee up! the' the heavens above like brass
Seem stretched, we know that e'en thro' them our feeble prayer must pass;
The earthborn clouds throng dark between, we know the sun is there,
That it will pierce them through anon — our God will answer prayer.
We will never give thee up I the' our eyes grow dim with tears,
And our hearts sick with hope deferred, in a waste of weary years,
Each ending darker than the last, we will not look at thee,
But whisper still unto our God, "Our eyes are unto thee."
We will never give thee up! The' faint, cold, and sinful be
Our best petitions offered up 'midst doubts and fears for thee;
We know no prayers of ours could stand the blaze of God's white throne,
But Jesus lives to intercede — He pleads them as His own!
We will never give thee up! we know the day must come
When thou, a lowly prodigal, shalt seek thy Father's home.
We know not when that day shall be; but as our God is true,
"Whate'er we ask in Jesu's name, that will the Father do."
We will never give thee up! God's sure word shall be our stay;
The' heaven and earth shall be removed, it cannot pass away.
Hath He not said, "Ask what thou wilt, the answer I will give?"
And think'st thou that He bids us ask, and will not let thee live?
We will never give thee up, O thou sadly erring one!

Morn, noon, and eve, and night, we'll pray, until the prize be won.
Dear wanderer! sadly yearn our hearts, but there's a heart above
That yearns with deeper tenderness — thou yet shalt know its love.
September, 1862.

The Better Part

“Mary, the only glory sweet
To any Christian heart is thine —
Hidden beside the Master’s feet,
Lost in that clearer light to shine.
Whilst evermore the heart obeys
The sermon of thy listening looks,
Learning religion from thy gaze,
Better than from a thousand books.
Thy silence is his sweetest psalm,
While from his lips thy name distils,
And, dropping like thy precious balm,
Ever his home with fragrance fills.”

Blind Beggar: Part 1

(John 9)

“A blind beggar!” What an expression of helplessness and need! What a picture of the real condition of the Jewish nation, and of every unregenerate soul! Let us turn aside, for a few moments, and gaze upon this singularly striking picture, or to speak more correctly, this most interesting piece of living history, this scene from real life.

The study of the ninth chapter of John suggests two very important questions, namely, first, “What has Jesus done for me?” Secondly, “What is Jesus to me?” These questions are very distinct and yet closely connected. We shall find them both forcibly illustrated in the glowing narrative of “The Blind Beggar.”

At the close of the eighth chapter, we find the Lord Jesus making His escape from the rude violence of the Jews, whose wrath was raised to the highest pitch by His pointed and powerful testimony. “Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, before Abraham was, I am. Then took they up stones to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.” Such was the return which the blessed Jesus met with for all His grace and truth. But no amount of rudeness and violence could interrupt Him in His unwearied course of service. The stream of goodness flowed on, unhindered by all man’s wickedness. If it could not find a channel in one place, it found it in another. If it failed of an issue here, it sought it there. The precious grace in the heart of Jesus must find an object somewhere. Eternal blessings on His Name!

“And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him. I must work the works of him that sent me while it is day; the night cometh when no man can work.” Thus it was with this blessed Workman. He pursued His path of service unhindered by all the enmity and opposition of the human heart. “As long as I am in the world I am the light of the world.” Yes, and that light should shine despite of all man’s efforts to put it out. The stones of the Jews could not hinder the divine Workman from working the works of God, and these works were to be made manifest in the case of any poor blind beggar who crossed His path in this dark and sinful world. How blessed to know that the most glorious, the most characteristic work of God is displayed in the salvation of lost, guilty, hell-deserving sinners!

“When he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, and said unto him, Go wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is, by interpretation, Sent.) He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing.”

Reader, note this carefully. There is more involved in this mysterious act of Christ, than we might, at first sight, imagine. The most likely way in the world to blind one who had his eyesight would be to put clay upon his eyes; but here the Lord Jesus opens the blind eyes of the beggar by that very

means. What do we see in this? Just the deep and precious mystery of the Person and work of Christ Himself, as He says at the end of this profound chapter, "For judgment am I come into this world, that they which see not might see: and that they which see might he made blind" Ver. 39.

This is deeply solemn! "For judgment I am come into this world." How is this? Did he not come to seek and to save that which is lost? So He Himself tells us again and again. Why then speak of "judgment?" The meaning is simply this. The object of His mission was salvation; the moral effect of His life was judgment. He judged no one, and yet He judged every one. The life of Christ down here was the most powerful test that ever was, or ever could be applied to man. Hence He could say, "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin.....If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin; but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father." John 15:22-24.

It is well to see this effect of the character and life of Christ down here. He was the light of the world, and this light acted in a double way. It convicted and converted, it judged and it saved. Furthermore, it dazzled, by its heavenly brightness, all those who thought they saw; while, at the same time, it lightened all those who really felt their moral and spiritual blindness. He came not to judge, but to save; and yet when come, He judged every man, and put every man to the test. He was different from all around Him, as light in the midst of darkness; and yet He saved all who accepted the judgment and took their true place.

The same thing is observable when we contemplate the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. "The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God." "We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God." (1 Cor. 1:18, 23, 24.) Looked at from a human point of view, the cross presented a spectacle of weakness and foolishness. But, looked at from a divine point of view, it was the exhibition of power and wisdom. "The Jew," looking at the cross through the hazy medium of traditionary religion, stumbled over it; and "the Greek," looking at it from the fancied heights of philosophy, despised it as a contemptible thing. But the faith of a poor sinner, looking at the cross from the depths of conscious guilt and ruin, found in it a divine answer to every question, a divine supply for every need. The death of Christ, like His life, judged every man, and yet it saves all those who accept the judgment, and take their true place.

Now it is not a little interesting to find the germ of all this in our Lord's dealings with the blind beggar. He put clay on his eyes, and sent him to the pool of Siloam. This was "Christ the wisdom of God and the power of God." It was the application of the doctrine of Christ, by the Spirit, through the Word. Thus it must ever be. If a man who thinks he can see looks at that doctrine, it will blind him. If a man who is blind has that doctrine applied to his heart, by the power of the Holy Ghost, through the word, it will open his eyes and fill him with light divine.

But let us trace the history of this blind beggar. No sooner were his eyes opened than he becomes an object of interest to all around. "The neighbors therefore and they which before had seen him that he was blind, said, Is not this he that sat and begged? Some said, This is he; others said, He is like him; but he said, I am he." The change was manifest to all. He might have lived and died, in beggary and blindness, unheeded, unnoticed; but he had been brought into personal contact with the Son of God, and that contact had produced a mighty change which could not fail to attract the

attention of all around. Thus it must ever be. It is impossible for anyone to have to do with Christ and not experience a something which cannot be hidden from those who are looking on. Personal contact with Christ is a divine reality. There is life and power in the very touch of Jesus. One believing look at the Savior of sinners — the Quickener of the dead, produces the most astonishing results.

Beloved reader, have you been brought to experience the sacred and mysterious power of this personal contact with Jesus? Have you tasted the wondrous virtue of the touch or the look? Be assured of it, nothing less will ever avail. You may be amiable, moral, and even religious, and yet have no divine, living, personal, connection with Christ at all. This is very solemn. We would fain lead you to feel its solemnity; and if you are really conscious of this, that so far as you are concerned, you have no vital union with Christ, then let us earnestly entreat you, now, to hear His voice and turn to Him in simple confidence. Only cast yourself upon Him in faith, and your spiritual eyeballs shall immediately feel the virtue of that mysterious clay wherewith Jesus anoints the eyes of the blind, and all around shall take knowledge of you that you have been with Jesus. Do not, we beseech you, put off this matter. Do not say, "I have time enough." Now is God's time. You have no tomorrow, Jesus is passing by. He waits to receive thee with open arms and lift thee from thy condition of blindness and beggary, to give thee spiritual vision and endow thee with the unsearchable riches of Christ. Then wilt thou be a witness for Jesus in the midst of thy neighbors and friends. They will see that it is not with thee as it used to be — that a real change has passed upon thee — that the tempers and lusts, habits and influences which once ruled thee with despotic power, now rule thee no longer — that though evil may occasionally break out, it does not habitually bear sway — though it dwells, it does not reign — though it plagues, it does not govern.

We are more and more impressed, each day, and each year of our existence, that the great object of preaching and writing — of oral or written ministry — is to bring the soul and Christ together. Till this is done, there is positively nothing done. Sermons may be preached, and volumes may be written, but unless the soul of the sinner, or the soul of the saint, is brought into actual, living, and life-giving contact with the Son of God, there is no real, tangible, permanent result reached. The blind man, in our chapter, might have gone on all his days, in his helpless and needy condition, even though surrounded by all the appliances of the Jewish system. Nothing was of any value to him save the name of Jesus. So it is, in every case. "None but Jesus can do helpless sinners good." But then I must be brought into vital connection with that divine and all-powerful Name in order to partake of the good. I may go on forever saying, "None but Jesus," and be nothing better. The devils know that none but Jesus can do helpless sinners good, but it avails them nothing; and men may know, or profess to know, the same thing, and they may mistake the profession for the reality, and so deceive themselves and perish eternally. There must be a living link, connecting the soul with Christ, in order to lift the soul out of its condition of spiritual blindness and poverty; and not only so, but the power of this living union must be maintained and habitually realized, in order to keep up in the soul the freshness and fruitfulness of the divine life. "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him, rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving." Col. 2:6, 7.

Here we have the two grand and essential points, namely, first receiving Christ, and then walking in Him. The first meets all the need of the sinner; the second perfectly answers all the demands of the saint. Many there are who seem to receive Christ, and yet do not walk in Him. This is the

secret of most of the meagerness and poverty which one meets amongst professing Christians. There is not the habitual walking in Christ. Other things intervene. We get occupied with the mere machinery of religiousness, with meetings, with ministry, with men and things. It may even happen that we allow our work, our very service, to come in between our souls and Christ. All these things, which surely are right enough in their right place, may, through Satan's craft and our lack of vigilance, actually displace Christ in our souls and superinduce barrenness and lifeless formality.

Oh! beloved Christian reader, let us seek to walk in abiding communion with Jesus. May we keep Him ever before our souls, in all His fullness and preciousness. Then shall our testimony be clear, decided, and unmistakable. Our path shall be as the shining light which shineth more and more unto the perfect day. May it be thus with all the people of God in this day of shallow profession!

We shall, if the Lord will, resume in our next the interesting narrative of "The Blind Beggar."

Blind Beggar: Part 2

In pondering the record of this blind beggar, we notice a very striking development of character, in the different classes of persons that are brought forward. In the poor man himself, we see an earnestness, a simplicity, and a reality which we greatly covet. He illustrates, very forcibly, the value and importance of honestly following the light as it shines upon our path. "To him that hath shall more be given" is a motto plainly visible on the face of our narrative; and a precious motto it is — a valuable incitement to a zealous and devoted career. It would manifestly have served the poor man's worldly interest, to cushion the truth as to what had been done for him. He might have enjoyed the benefit of the work of Christ, and yet avoided the rough path of testimony for His name in the face of the world's hostility. He might have enjoyed his eyesight, and, at the same time, retained his place within the pale of respectable religious profession. He might have reaped the fruit of Christ's work and yet escaped the reproach of confessing His Name.

How often is this the case! Alas! how often! Thousands are very well pleased to hear of what Jesus has done; but they do not want to be identified with His out-cast and rejected Name. In other words, to use a modern and very popular phrase, "They want to make the best of both worlds" — a sentiment from which every true-hearted lover of Christ must shrink with abhorrence — an idea of which genuine faith is wholly ignorant. It is obvious that the subject of our narrative knew nothing of any such maxim. He had had his eyes opened, and he could not but speak of it, and tell who did it, and how it was done. He was an honest man. He had no mixed motive. No sinister object, no under current. Happy for him! It is a terrible thing to have an under current in the soul, a mixed motive in the heart, a personal interest before the mind, a secondary object before the eye. Such things give the death-blow to all genuine, practical Christianity and true discipleship. If we want to follow a rejected Christ, the heart must be thoroughly free. The true disciple must have his heart freed from all the objects of personal interest, as well as of expediency. These things are sure to prove extinguishers in Satan's hand, for quenching the light of truth in the souls of men. A man may be ignorant of many things; but if he only honestly follows the light which God has graciously poured upon his pathway, he will assuredly get more. On the other hand, if for any object whatever, if to gain the most plausible and attractive end, light be extinguished, truth cushioned, testimony quashed, there is an end to all true devotedness.

Reader, do give this point your most serious attention. See that you are acting up to your light. It is a great thing when each fresh ray of light communicated produces a step in the right direction. This will always be so, when the conscience is in a right condition. "The path of the just is as the shining light which shineth more and more unto the perfect day." Again, "When thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light; but when thine eye is evil, thy body also is full of darkness." How solemn the warning that follows! "Take heed, therefore, that the light which is in thee be not darkness." How could this ever be? How could light ever become darkness? Light not acted upon becomes darkness. Solemn thought! "Give glory to God, before he cause darkness, and your feet stumble on the dark mountains." We know of nothing more awfully dangerous than familiarity with truth without an exercised conscience. It throws one directly into the hands of Satan. Whereas an

exercised conscience — an upright mind — a single eye — keep us steadily going on in the holy, peaceful, lightsome ways of God. Hence, in our Lord's words, in Luke 11, there is marked and beautiful progress. "If," He adds, "thy whole body therefore be full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light." In other words, the man who has a single eye will not only have light for himself, but he will be a light-bearer for others; but a man whose eye is not single — who has a mixed motive — an under current — a secondary object — a personal end, is not only involved in moral darkness himself, but he is a dishonor to the name of Christ, an instrument in the hand of Satan, and a stumblingblock in the way of his fellow-men.

This is a truth of the deepest solemnity, in this day of easy profession and worldly religiousness. There is a wide diffusion of evangelical doctrine; and while we have to be truly thankful for the doctrine, and its wide diffusion, we have to watch against the use which the devil is making of it. We are deeply impressed with the conviction that the self-indulgent, superficial profession of the present hour is paving the way for the dark and appalling infidelity of the future. We feel the urgent need of something far more profound, earnest, and whole-hearted. We want more exercise of conscience. We are not sufficiently penetrated with the genuine spirit of the gospel. The enemy has not been able to shut out the pure light of the gospel. The dark cloud of ignorance and superstition which, for many a long and dreary century, had settled down upon Christendom, has been rolled away, and the bright beams of revelation's heavenly lamp have poured themselves upon the human mind and dissipated the gloom. We bless God for this. But we are not insensible to the craft and subtlety of the enemy, nor can we shut our eyes to the startling fact that evangelical profession without an exercised conscience, is one of the devil's most potent agencies, at the present moment. The doctrines of grace are widely promulgated and professed, but instead of being used for the subjugation of nature, they are made to furnish a plea for self-indulgence. The evangelical religion of the day in which our lot is cast is of a very light and fragile texture, ill adapted for rough weather. We are inclined to think that were the Church to be again visited by the stormy blast of persecution, it would thin her ranks amazingly, but it would, doubtless, be the means of developing a veteran band of witnesses; for amid much that is painfully superficial, there is, we are persuaded, much that is real, solid, and true.

In one word, then, we urge upon the Christian reader the importance of honestly following the light communicated, and we use the case of the blind beggar to this end. Nothing could daunt him. Nothing could shut his mouth. His light could not be extinguished. When "the neighbours" inquired, "Is not this he that sat and begged?" his ready answer was, "I am he." When they inquired further, "How were thine eyes opened?" he unhesitatingly replied, "A man that is called Jesus made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam, and wash; and I went and washed, and I received sight." When they proceeded further to ask, "Where is he?" he as frankly replied, "I know not." He neither lagged behind, nor rushed beyond, but honestly acted up to, his light. This is, precisely, what is needed. He had been brought into personal contact with Christ, and that personal contact formed the broad and solid basis of his testimony. This, we repeat, is what is needed. We should not go one hair's breadth beyond the measure of real personal knowledge of Christ; but then we should act faithfully up to that measure. It is our happy privilege to have to do with Christ, each one for himself, and our profession should be the result of that personal dealing. We are in danger of being merely propped up by the influences around, instead

of being sustained by the vital principle within. In the case of the blind beggar, the external influences were all hostile, but he boldly confessed the truth, and that, moreover, just in proportion to his own personal experience, and no further. He acted up to his light, and, we shall see, in the sequel, he got more.

Look at him in the presence of the Pharisees. These men, governed by blind prejudice, had deliberately closed their eyes against the light of truth. Instead of calmly sitting down to investigate the pure and heavenly doctrines of that blessed One whose voice had sounded in their midst, "They had agreed already that if any man did confess that He was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue." It was, therefore, obviously impossible that they could arrive at the truth, while their eyes were covered with the bandage of prejudice. They professed to see, therefore their sin remained. Solemn thought! "Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin; but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth." The permanency of sin is judicially connected with the empty profession of sight. A man who knows he is blind can have his eyes opened; but what can be done for the man who thinks he can see, while, at the same time, his eyes are covered with the bandage of blind prejudice? Alas! nothing. The light which is in him is darkness, and how great is that darkness! These Pharisees could talk of keeping the sabbath, and of giving God the glory, and yet say of Christ, "We know that this man is a sinner." So much for religiousness! A sabbath without Christ is a vanity. To talk of giving God the praise otherwise than through Christ is a deadly delusion. And yet thus it was with those poor Pharisees. They were disturbed by the testimony of the poor man. They would fain have quashed it. Most gladly would they have put the extinguisher of their official authority upon that dazzling, disturbing, detested light. But they could not. They tried to enlist in their service a cold-hearted expediency, as personified in "the parents;" but in vain.

The parents feared the Jews. They did not want to lose caste. They knew nothing of Christ, of His work, or of His Person, and they were not going to encounter obloquy or reproach for Him. They knew nothing about the marvelous cure that had been effected. "He is of age," said they, "ask him: he shall speak for himself. These words spake his parents, because they feared the Jews."

What a terrible snare is religious position! It is sure to act as a hindrance in the path of bold decision for Christ. If I have to pause in order to consider how such and such a step will affect my religious position, my influence, or my reputation, my eye is not single, my body is full of darkness, the very light which I profess to have, has become darkness, and I shall be an instrument in the hand of Satan, and a stumblingblock in the way of men.

How refreshing to turn from the dark background of prejudice and heartlessness, and contemplate the fearless honesty of the blind beggar. We must confess we greatly admire it, and long to imitate it. He did not know much; but what he did know he turned to good account. He boldly declared what Jesus had done for him. "One thing I know," said this noble witness, "that whereas I was blind, now I see." There was no gainsaying this. All the arguments of the Pharisee could not shake his confidence in the fact that his eyes had been opened. It was this that constituted the power of his testimony. It was based upon a plain, palpable fact. The man that sat and begged was now standing with his eyes open, and it was "a man called Jesus" that did it. Terrible fact! And yet the man was so ignorant; but he was honest. He told the plain truth and proved it in his person. He did not know much about Jesus. He neither knew who He was, nor where He was; but he knew and said quite enough to disturb the Pharisees amazingly. Higher and higher he rose in his testimony.

The gross irrationalism of his enemies actually forced him into clearer and yet clearer light, until, at length, he breaks forth in these memorable and irresistible accents, "If this man were not of God, he could do nothing."

It is positively quite a feast to read this record. To see an honest man boldly grappling with religious prejudice and intolerance, is something to do the heart good. Would to God there were many now-a-days formed on the model of this blind beggar! We know of no more powerful breakwater wherewith to stem the rising tide of infidelity, than the bold and vigorous testimony of those who have experienced aught at the hand of Christ. If such would only declare plainly what the Lord has done for them, and base their testimony upon what is plain and palpable — so plain and palpable as to be unanswerable, what power there would be! What point! What pungency! In the case before us we see that one poor ignorant man who had sat as a blind beggar was more than a match for the Pharisees and all their reasonings. He proved a most burdensome stone to them — so burdensome that they could not endure him. "Thou wast altogether born in sins," said they, "and dost thou teach us? And they excommunicated him." (Margin.)

Happy man! He had followed the light in simplicity and sincerity. He had borne an honest testimony to the truth. His eyes had been opened to see and his lips to testify. It was no "matter of wrong or wicked lewdness," but simple truth, and for that they cast him out. He had never troubled them in the days of his blindness and beggary. Perhaps some of them may have proudly and ostentatiously tossed him a trifling alms as they walked past, thus getting a name amongst their fellows for benevolence; but now this blind beggar had become a powerful witness. Words of truth now flowed from his lips — truth far too powerful and piercing for them to stand, and they thrust him out.

Happy, thrice happy man! again we say. This was the brightest moment in his career. These men, though they knew it not, had done him a real service. They had thrust him into the most honored position that any mortal can occupy, namely, a position of identification with Christ. And only see how the tender heart of the good Shepherd was moved by the bleatings of this outcast sheep! "Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when he had found him, he said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" This is deeply touching. No sooner had the poor sheep been rudely thrust out from the fold, than the true Shepherd flew to his side in order to lead him up higher and higher still along that path which he had hitherto trodden with such a bold and decided step. "Dost thou believe on the Son of God? He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him? And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him."

This is enough. This faithful witness here reaps a rich reward. He had followed on, with plain decision, along the path of simple, earnest testimony for Christ according to his light, and as a consequence, he was cast out by the religion of this world. He was forced outside the camp; but there Jesus found him and revealed Himself to his soul, and the curtain drops on this highly favored man as a worshipper at the feet of Incarnate Deity. What a place! What a contrast to the place in which we found him at the opening of his history! What a career! First, a blind beggar — then, an earnest witness — and, finally, an enlightened worshipper prostrate at the feet of the Son of God. Happy, highly honored man! May the Lord raise up many such in these days of cold indifference and superficial profession! Oh! for an earnest heart, true to Christ — a heart that never

calculates results, but presses on after Jesus regardless of consequences!

The Book and the Soul

In the formation of the character of a successful minister of the word of God, two ingredients are essentially necessary, namely, first, an accurate acquaintance with the Bible; and, secondly, a due sense of the value of the soul and of its necessities. The combination of these two qualities is of the utmost importance in the case of everyone who is called to minister in the word and doctrine. To possess only one of them will leave a man a thoroughly one-sided minister. I may be deeply read in scripture; I may have a profound acquaintance with the contents of the book, and a most exquisite sense of its moral glories; but if I forget the soul and its deep and manifold necessities, my ministry will be lamentably defective. It will lack point, pungency, and power. It will not meet the cravings of the heart, or tell upon the conscience. It will be a ministry from the book, but not to the soul. True and beautiful, no doubt, but deficient in usefulness and practical power.

On the other hand, I may have the soul and its need distinctly before me. I may long to be useful. It may be my heart's desire to minister to the heart and the conscience of my hearer or my reader; but if I am not acquainted with my Bible; if I am not a well-taught scribe, I shall have no material wherewith to be useful. I shall have nothing to give the soul — nothing to reach the heart — nothing to act on the conscience. My ministry will prove barren and tiresome. Instead of teaching souls, I shall tease them, and instead of edifying I shall irritate them. My exhortation, instead of urging souls on along the upward path of discipleship, will, from a lack of basis, have the effect of discouraging them.

These things are worthy of some consideration. You may sometimes listen to a person, ministering the word, who possesses a great deal of the first of the above-named qualities, and very little of the second. It is evident he has the book and its moral glories before his spiritual vision. He is occupied, yea, engrossed with them — so engrossed indeed as, at times, almost to forget that he has souls before him. There is no pointed and powerful appeal to the heart, no fervent grappling with the conscience, no practical application of the contents of the book to the souls of the hearers. It is very beautiful, but not so useful as it might be. The minister is deficient in the second quality. He is more a minister of the book than a minister to the soul.

Then, again, you will find some who, in their ministry, seem to be wholly occupied with the soul. They appeal, they exhort, they urge. But from lack of acquaintance and regular occupation with scripture, souls are absolutely exhausted and worn out under their ministry. True, they ostensibly make the book the basis of their ministry, but their use of it is so unskillful, their handling of it so awkward, their application of it so palpably unintelligent, that their ministry proves as uninteresting as it is unprofitable.

Now, if we were asked which of the two characters of ministry should we prefer? Without hesitation, we should say, the first. If the moral glories of the book are unfolded, there is something to interest and affect the heart, and if one is at all earnest and conscientious, he may get on. Whereas, in the second case, there is nothing but tiresome appeal and scolding exhortation.

But, we need hardly say, we long to see an accurate acquaintance with the Bible, and a due sense of the value of the soul, combined and healthfully adjusted in every one who stands up to minister to souls. The didactic will not do without the hortatory, or the hortatory without the didactic. Hence, therefore, let every minister study the book and its glories and think of the soul and its needs. Yes; — let each one remember the link between the book and the soul.

The Changed Cross

It was a time of sadness — and my heart,
Although it knew and loved the better part,
Felt wearied with the conflict and the strife,
And all the needful discipline of life.
And while I thought on these — as given to me
My trial tests of faith and love to be,
It seemed as if I never could be sure
That faithful to the end I should endure.
And thus no longer trusting to His might
Who says “we walk by faith and not by sight,”
Doubting — and almost yielding to despair,
The thought arose — My cross I cannot bear!
Far heavier its weight must surely be,
Than those of others which I daily see.
Oh, if I might another burden choose,
Methinks I should not fear my crown to lose.
A solemn silence reigned on all around,
E’en nature’s voices uttered not a sound,
The evening shadows seemed of peace to tell.
And sleep upon my weary spirit fell.
A moment’s pause—and then a heavenly light
Beamed fall upon my wondering raptur’d sight,
Angels on silvery wings seemed everywhere,
And angels’ music thrill’d the balmy air.
Then One, more fair than all the rest to see,
One—to whom all the others bow’d the knee,

Came gently to me as I trembling lay,
And — “Follow me,” He said, “I am the way.”
Then speaking thus — He led me far above,
And there, beneath a canopy of love,
Crosses of divers shape and size were seen,
Larger and smaller than mine own had been.
And one there was most beautiful to behold,
A little one, with jewels set in gold —
Ah, this methought I can with comfort wear,
For it will be an easy one to bear.
And so the little cross I quickly took,
But all at once my frame beneath it shook,
The sparkling jewels, fair were they to see,
But far too heavy was their weight for me.
This may not be, I cried — and looked again
To see if any there could ease my pain,
But one by one I pass'd them slowly by,
Till on a lovely one I cast my eye.
Fair flowers around its sculptur'd form entwin'd,
And grace and beauty seem'd in it combin'd;
Wondering I gazed — and still I wonder'd more
To think so many should have passed it o'er.
But oh, that form so beautiful to see,
Soon made its hidden sorrows known to me
Thorns lay beneath those flowers and colors fair,
Sorrowing I said — This cross I may not bear.
And so it was with each and all around,
Not one to suit my need could there be found;
Weeping — I laid each heavy burden down,

As my Guide gently said, "No cross — no crown."
At length to Him I raised my saddened heart;
He knew its sorrows, bid its doubts depart, -
"Be not afraid," He said, "but trust in me,
"My perfect love shall now be shown to thee."
And then with lighten'd eyes and willing feet,
Again I turned my earthly cross to meet,
With forward footsteps turning not aside,
For fear some hidden evil might betide.
And there in the prepar'd, appointed way,
Listening to hear and ready to obey,
A cross I quickly found of plainest form,
With only words of love inscribed thereon.
With thankfulness I raised it from the rest,
And joyfully acknowledg'd it the best,
The only one of all the many there,
That I could feel was good for me to bear.
And while I thus my chosen one confess'd,
I saw a heavenly brightness on it rest,
And as I bent — my burden to sustain,
I recognized my own old cross again!
But oh, how different did it seem to be,
Now I had learned its preciousness to see,
No longer could I unbelieving say —
Perhaps another is a better way.
Ah no! henceforth my one desire shall be,
That He who knows me best should choose for me
And so, whate'er His love sees good to send,
I'll trust it's best — because He knows the end.

L. P. W.

Cloven Tongues

(Acts 2:1-11.)

It will greatly enhance the grace of this lovely passage of scripture to bear in mind what it was that rendered the cloven tongues necessary. In the eleventh chapter of Genesis, we have the inspired record of the first grand effort of the children of men to establish themselves in the earth — to form a great association, and make themselves a name. And all this, be it remembered, without God. His name is never mentioned. He was not to form any part of this proud and popular scheme. He was entirely shut out. It was not a dwelling place for God that was to be erected on the plain of Shinar. It was a city for man — a center round which men were to gather.

Such was the object of the children of men, as they stood together on the plain of Shinar. It was not, as some have imagined, to escape another deluge. There is not a shadow of foundation in the passage for any such idea. Here are their words, “And they said, Go to, let us build us a city, and a tower whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.” There is no thought here of escaping another flood. It is sheer imagination, without any scripture basis. The object is as plain as possible. It is precisely similar to all those great confederacies, associations, or masses of flesh, that have been formed on the earth from that day to this. The Shinar Association could vie with any association of modern times, both in its principle and object.

But it proved to be a Babel. Jehovah wrote confusion upon it. He divided their tongues and scattered them abroad, whether they would or not. In a word, divided tongues were sent as the expression of divine judgment upon this first great human association. This is a solemn and weighty fact. An association without God, no matter what its object, is really nothing but a mass of flesh, based on pride, and ending in hopeless confusion. “Associate yourselves, O ye people, and ye shall be broken, in pieces.” (Isa. 8:9.) So much for all human associations. May we learn to keep clear of them! May we adhere to that one divine association, namely, the Church of the living God, of which a risen Christ in glory is the living Head, the Holy Ghost the living Guide, and the Word of God the living Charter!

It was to gather this blessed assembly that the cloven tongues were sent, in grace, on the day of Pentecost. No sooner had the Lord Jesus Christ taken His seat at the right hand of power, amid the brightness of heaven’s majesty, than He sent down the Holy Ghost to publish the glad tidings of salvation in the ears of His very murderers. And, inasmuch as that message of pardon and peace was intended for men of various tongues, so the divine messenger came down prepared to address each “in his own tongue wherein he was born.” The God of all grace made it plain — so plain that it cannot be mistaken — that He desired to make His way to each heart, with the sweet story of grace. Man, on the plain of Shinar, did not want God; but God, on the day of Pentecost, proved that he wanted man. Blessed, forever, be His holy Name! God had sent His Son, and man had just murdered Him; and, now He sends the Holy Ghost to tell man that there is pardon through that very blood which he had shed, for his guilt in shedding it. Matchless, marvelous,

overwhelming grace! Oh! that it may subdue our hearts, and bind us to Him who is, at once, its source, its channel, and the power of enjoyment! The grace of God has far out-topped all the enmity of man. It has proved itself victorious over all the opposition of the human heart, and all the rage of hell.

Thus, then, in Gen. 11 divided tongues were sent in judgment. In Acts 2 divided tongues were sent in grace. The blessed God of all grace would cause each one to hear of full salvation, and hear of it in those very accents in which his infant ears had hearkened to the earliest whisperings of a mother's love. "His own tongue wherein he was born." It mattered not whether the tongue was soft or harsh, refined or barbarous, the Holy Ghost would use it as the vehicle for conveying the precious message of salvation right home to the poor heart. If divided tongues had once been given to scatter in judgment, they were again given to gather in grace; not now round an earthly tower, but round a heavenly Christ; not for the exaltation of man, but for the glory of God.

Now, it is well worthy of notice, that when God was giving the law from Mount Sinai, He spoke only in one tongue and to one people. The law was carefully wrapped up in one language, and deposited in the midst of one nation. Not so the Gospel. When that was the burden, God the Holy Ghost Himself descended from heaven, in cloven tongues, to waft the soul-stirring tidings, far and wide, over the whole world, and convey them "to every creature under heaven" in the very dialect wherein he was born. This is a great moral fact. It comes down upon the heart with uncommon weight and power. When God was speaking in terms of requirement and prohibition, He confined Himself to one language; but when He was publishing the message of life and salvation, pardon and peace, through the blood of the Lamb, He spoke in every language under heaven. When man's duty was to be declared, God spoke in one dialect; but when God's salvation was to be published, He spoke in every dialect under heaven.

This, surely, tells a tale. It declares plainly which is more in harmony with the divine mind, law or grace. Blessed be His Name, He delights in grace. Law and judgment are His strange work. He has pronounced the feet of those that publish the gospel to be beautiful; whereas, of those who desired to be teachers of the law, He has said, "I would they were even cut off that trouble you." Thus His acts and His words discover the bent of His loving heart towards poor unworthy sinners. He has left nothing undone, nothing unsaid, to prove His perfect willingness to save and bless; and therefore all who die in their sins will perish without excuse, and those awful words will echo through the regions of eternal gloom, forever and ever, "I would, but ye would not!" Reader, think of this! Are you yet in your sins? If so, we earnestly beseech you to flee, now, from the wrath to come. Accept the message of pardon, now sent to you in your own tongue wherein you were born, and go on your way rejoicing.

In conclusion, we might add, that Gen. 11, Acts 2, and Rev. 7:9-17 form a very lovely group of scriptures. In the first, we see divided tongues sent, in judgment; in the second, divided tongues given in grace; and in the third, divided tongues gathered in glory. Well may we say, "Thy testimonies are wonderful, therefore doth my soul love them."

Consistency Under Persecution

The daughter of an English nobleman, was providentially brought under the influence of the followers of Jesus, and thus came to the knowledge of the truth concerning Him. The father was almost distracted at the event, and by threats, temptations to extravagance in dress, by reading, and traveling in foreign countries and to places of fashionable resort, took every means to divert her mind from things unseen and eternal; but her heart was fixed. The God of Abraham had become her shield and her exceeding great reward. And she was determined that nothing finite should deprive her of her infinite and eternal portion in Him, or displace Him from the center of her heart. At last the father resolved upon a final and desperate expedient by which his end should be gained, or his daughter ruined, so far as her prospects in this life were concerned. A large company of the nobility were invited to his house; it was so arranged, that during the festivities, the daughters of different noblemen, and, among others, this one, were to be called to entertain the company with singing and music on the piano-forte. If she complied, she forfeited her good conscience, and returned to the world; if she refused compliance, she would be publicly disgraced and lose, beyond the possibility of recovery, her place in society. It was a dreadful crisis, but; with peaceful confidence did she await it. As this crisis approached, different individuals, at the call of the company, performed their parts with the greatest applause. At last the name of this daughter was announced. In a moment all were in fixed and silent suspense, to see how the scale of destiny would turn; without hesitation she rose, and with a calm and dignified composure took her place at the instrument; after a moment spent in silent prayer, she ran her fingers along the keys, and then with an unearthly sweetness, elevation, and solemnity, sung, accompanying her voice with the notes of the instrument, the following stanzas:

No room for mirth or trifling here
For worldly hope or worldly fear,
If life so soon be gone;
If now the Judge is at the door,
And all mankind must stand before
The inexorable throne.
No matter which my thoughts employ,
A moment's misery or joy,
But, oh! when both shall end,
Where shall I find my destined place;
Shall I my everlasting days

With fiends or angels spend?
Nothing is worth a thought beneath,
But how I may escape the death
That never, never dies;
How make mine own election sure,
And when I fail on earth secure
A mansion in the skies.
Jesus, vouchsafe a pitying ray,
Be Thou my guide, be Thou my way
To glorious happiness.
Ah! write my pardon on my heart,
And whensoever I hence depart,
Let me depart in peace.

The minstrel ceased — the solemnity of eternity was upon that assembly. Without speaking, they dispersed. The father wept aloud, and when left alone sought the counsel and prayers of his daughter, for the salvation of his soul. His soul was saved, and his great estate consecrated to the Savior.

From The Church.

David's Last Words

(2 Sam. 23)

There is something deeply touching and most consolatory in the last words of "The sweet Psalmist of Israel." It is good and profitable to listen to the "last words" of any saint of God or servant of Christ —well to hearken to the mellow accents of the hoary-headed and experienced —seasonable to those who have reached the final stage of life's rough journey. We all know that, upon our first starting on our course, there is a quantity of romance about us. We cherish large expectations from men and things. We fondly imagine that all is gold that glitters, and we foolishly hope that all the promises and pretensions of the scene around will be fully actualized. But alas! as we get on, we discover our mistake. Stern reality cures us of much of our youthful romance, and the keen blasts of the desert carry away much of the bloom of our young days, The young believer is apt to confide in every one who makes a profession; and this artless confidence is very lovely. Would that it always met with a more worthy response. But it does not. One meets with much, even in an ordinary Christian career, to chill, to wither, to contract, and repulse. Hence the weight and value of "last words," in any case, but especially when we get them, not merely as the fruit of matured judgment, but, as in David's case, by inspiration of the Holy Ghost.

"Now these be the last words of David, David the son of Jesse said, and the man who was raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel, said, The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue. The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God. And he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth, by clear shining after rain."

Here, David sets up the divine standard of character for one called to rule over men. "He must be just;" and upon the basis of justice is erected a superstructure of cloudless light, richest blessing, and abundant fruitfulness. All this will, as we very well know, be only realized when the Son of David, now hidden in the heavens, shall ascend the throne of his Father, and stretch forth his scepter over a restored creation.

But not only does David set up the divine standard; he compares himself with it, and it is in this comparison we have the great moral and practical truth which I desire to fasten on my reader's heart. "Although," says David, "my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow." The only way to get a right view of ourselves is by looking at Christ. This is what David does in these last words. He weighs himself in a perfect balance, and declares himself light. He measures himself with a perfect rule, and confesses himself entirely defective. He gazes upon the perfect model, and exclaims, "I am not like that." He looks back over the past and sees the failings and the faults. He turns over page after page of life's checkered story, and his eye, enlightened by beams of light from the sanctuary, sees the blots and the blemishes. But, blessed be God, he can fall back upon "an everlasting covenant, ordered in all

things and sure,” and, in that well-ordered covenant, finds “all his salvation, and all his desire.”

There is uncommon beauty and power in the connection between the “although” and the “yet” in the above passage. The former leaves a wide margin in which to insert the utterance of a convicted and chastened heart; the latter opens the floodgates to let in the full tide of divine mercy and loving kindness. “Although” puts man in the dust as a failing one; “yet” introduces God in all the fullness of His pardoning love. That is the language of a soul that has learned itself; this the breathing of a heart that had learned something about God.

Oh! beloved reader, is it not a signal mercy that, when we reach the close of our history, and review the past — when, as regards ourselves, we have only to say, “My house is not so with God,” we shall then fully prove the eternal stability of that grace in which we have found “All our salvation, and all our desire?”

David's Three Attitudes

In the course of David's most eventful and deeply instructive history, we find him presented, by the pen of inspiration, in three remarkable attitudes, namely, lying as a penitent; sitting, as a worshipper; standing, as a servant. And not only do we see him in these attitudes, but we hear his utterances therein; and, we may truly say, the seeing and the hearing are full of deep moral instruction for our souls. May the Holy Spirit enable us to profit by it! May He guide our thoughts as we look at, and hearken to, King David, as a penitent, a worshipper, and a servant! And, first, then we have him Lying as a Penitent.

"And David fasted, and went in, and lay all night upon, the earth." (2 Sam. 12:16.) Here, then, we have David lying upon the earth, in the attitude of a true penitent. The arrow of conviction had entered his conscience. Nathan's pungent, pointed word, "Thou art the man," had fallen, with divine power, upon his heart, and he takes his place in the dust, conscience-smitten, and heart-broken, before God.

Such is the attitude. Let us now hearken to the utterance. This latter we shall find in the fifty-first Psalm. And oh! what an utterance it is! How fully in keeping with the attitude! "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness; according to the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions." This is real work. The penitent places his sins side by side with the loving-kindness and tender mercy of God. This was the very best thing for him to do. The best place for a convicted conscience is the presence of divine mercy. "When a convicted sinner and divine love meet, there is a speedy settlement of the question of sin. It is the joy of God to pardon sin. He delights in mercy. Judgment is His strange work. He will cause us to feel the sinfulness of sin — to judge it — to hate it. He will never daub with untempered mortar, or cry peace, where there is no peace. He will send the arrow home. But, blessed be His name, the arrow from His quiver is sure to be followed by the love of His heart, and the wound which His arrow inflicts will be healed by the precious balm which His love ever applies. This is the order — "Thou art the man" — "I have sinned against the Lord" — "The Lord hath put away thy sin."

Yes, beloved reader, sin must be judged in the conscience, and the more thoroughly it is judged the better. We greatly dread a superficial work of conscience — a false peace. We like to see the conscience probed to its deepest depths, by the action of the Word and the Spirit of God — the grand question of sin and righteousness fully discussed, and finally settled in the heart. We have to bear in mind that Satan transforms himself into an angel of light, and, in this dangerous character, it is quite possible he may endeavor to lead souls into a kind of false peace and happiness, not founded upon the cross as the divine provision for the sinner's deepest necessities. We should deeply ponder those weighty words in the parable of the sower. "But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it: yet hath he no root in himself, but dureth for a while; for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended." Matt. 13:20, 21.

Mark the words, "Anon, with joy receiveth it." There is no deep work of conscience — no moral judgment of self or of sin; and, as a consequence, no depth of root — no power of endurance. This is peculiarly solemn, and worthy of the most profound consideration, at the present moment. We cannot too carefully ponder the connection between the expressions, "Anon, with joy" — "No root" — "Withered away." There is great danger of a merely intellectual reception of the plan of salvation, apart from any spiritual work in the conscience. This is frequently attended with the most joyous emotions. The natural feelings are wrought upon, but the truth has not penetrated the heart; there has been no furrow made by the action of the word; and hence, when the time of trial comes, there is no power of continuance. It is found to be mere surface work, which cannot stand the action of the sun's scorching rays.

Now, let not the reader suppose that we attach undue importance to conscience-work in the matter of conversion. We are fully persuaded that it is the Christ we reach, and not the way we reach Him, that saves our souls; and moreover, the true foundation of the soul's peace is not a certain process or exercise of any kind, whether of the heart, the conscience, or the understanding. It is the divinely-efficacious sacrifice of the Son of God that purges the conscience and imparts peace to the convicted soul. It is the assurance, on God's authority, received by the grace of the Holy Ghost, that the momentous question of sin was settled, once and forever, on the cross, that liberates the soul and gives a peace which nothing can ever disturb.

All this is so plain that if any one were to say to us, I have peace because I have passed through such deep exercises of conscience," we should, without hesitation, tell him he was self-deceived. It was not an exercise of conscience that ever satisfied the claims of God, and therefore it is not an exercise of conscience that can ever satisfy the earnest cravings of a convicted soul. Christ is all, and having Him, we want no more. We deem it a thorough mistake for persons to build anything on the mode of their conversion. It "is, in point of fact, affording the enemy an advantage over them, which he is sure to use in shaking their confidence. The ground of the believer's peace is not that he was converted in such and such a manner — that he felt so deeply, and wept so much, or struggled so hard, or prayed so fervently. All these things have their place and their value. We do not suppose that Paul ever forgot, or ever will forget, the moment between Jerusalem and Damascus; but we are perfectly sure he never built his peace upon the remarkable circumstances of his conversion. Luther could never forget his two years in the cloister, but Luther never built his peace upon the profound exercises of those years. Bunyan could never forget the slough of despond; but Bunyan never built his peace upon the mental anguish which he tasted therein.

No doubt, the exercises through which these three remarkable men passed, exerted a very important influence on their, after course and character, both as Christians and as ministers; but the ground of their peace was not aught that they had felt, or passed through, but simply what Christ had done for them on the cross. Thus it must ever be; Christ is all and in all. It is not Christ and a process, but Christ alone. Let souls ever remember this, and let it be well understood that, while we press upon our readers the immense importance of a deep and thorough work of conscience, we do not want them to build upon the work in their conscience, but upon Christ's work on the cross. "It is the work wrought for us, and not the work wrought in us, that saves our souls." True, they are intimately connected; and, therefore must not be separated; but they are perfectly distinct; and, therefore must not be confounded. We can know nothing of the work wrought for us save by the work wrought in us; but just in proportion to the depth and intensity of

the work wrought in us, will be the clearness and fixedness of our rest in the work wrought for us.

But there is another point in reference to which we are anxious to avoid misunderstanding. Some might suppose that the object of our remarks on David, as a penitent, is to prove that unless we have passed through precisely the same exercises, we have no just ground for believing that we are really regenerated. This would be a grave mistake. For, in the first place, David had been a child of God for many a day before that solemn moment on which we have been meditating. And, further, we believe that David found his relief not in any exercises within, but in communications from without, even the precious promises and assurances of God to his soul. He rested not on the fact that the arrow had entered his heart, in these words, "Thou art the man," and drawn forth the penitential cry, "I have sinned against the Lord." No; but upon the precious truth conveyed to him in the words, "The Lord hath put away thy sin."

Finally, let not a damp be cast upon any souls because the earliest moments of their spiritual history were characterized not by profound penitential exercises, but rather by the most peaceful and happy emotions. It is impossible that the "Glad tidings" of salvation can do aught else but gladden the believing soul. There was great joy in Samaria when Philip preached Christ to them and the eunuch went on his way rejoicing when he learned that Jesus had died for his sins. How could it be otherwise? How could anyone believe in the forgiveness of sins and not be made happy by the belief? Impossible. "Glad tidings of great joy," must make the poor heart glad. "Forgiveness 'twas a joyful sound, to us when lost and doomed to die." Surely it was. But does this fact interfere, in the smallest degree, with the value of a deep and thorough work of the Spirit of God in the conscience? By no means. A hungry man values bread, and although he will not think of feeding upon the pangs of hunger, yet the pangs of hunger make him value the bread. So, it is with the soul; it is not saved by penitential exercises; but the deeper its exercises, the more solid its grasp of Christ, and the more steady and vigorous its practical Christianity.

The simple fact, beloved reader, is this. We see, in the present day, a fearful amount of flippant, easy-going, airy Christianity, so called, which we greatly dread. We meet with many who seem to have attained a kind of false peace and frothy happiness, without any real exercise of conscience, or any application of the power of the cross to nature and its ways. These are stony-ground hearers. There is no root — no depth—no power — no permanency. And not only are such persons self-deceived, but the tone and aspect of their profession are, amongst other influences, forming the channel along which the tide of infidelity shall, ere long, roll its poisonous and desolating waters. We believe that cold, uninfluential orthodoxy, and flippant, formal, airy profession are, just as thoroughly as dark and degrading superstition, paving the way for that infidelity which shall yet cast its mantle over the whole civilized world.

This is a deeply solemn thought; but we are impressed with it, and we dare not withhold it from our readers. We long to see a more effective testimony for Christ — a more earnest discipleship — a more thorough self-surrender and whole-hearted consecration to the name and cause of Christ. For this we sigh, for this we pray; and we certainly do not expect to find it amid the ranks of those who have never known much exercise of conscience, or tasted the power of the cross of Christ.

However, we must not anticipate a line of thought which may come before us as we proceed with our subject. We shall, with God's blessing, see in David, ere we close, a noble illustration of personal devotedness. Meanwhile, let us contemplate him in the second of his remarkable

attitudes, namely, Sitting as a Worshipper.

In the opening of the seventh chapter of the second book of Samuel, we find David sitting in his house of cedar, and surveying the many and varied mercies with which the hand of Jehovah had surrounded him. "And it came to pass, when the king sat in his house, and the Lord had given him rest roundabout from all his enemies, that the king said unto Nathan the prophet, See now, I dwell in an house of cedar, but the ark of God dwelleth within curtains. And Nathan said to the king, Go, do all that is in thine heart: for the Lord is with thee."

In a word, David would build a house for God. But he was not the man, nor was his the time for that. Nathan is, at once, dispatched to correct the mistake. The service was well-meant; but that was not sufficient. It must be well-timed as well as well-meant. David had shed much blood; and, moreover, there were enemies and evil occur-rent. There were also deeper lessons of grace in which David had to be instructed. God had done much for him; but all that had been done, in the past, was as nothing compared with what was yet to be done in the future. If a house of cedar was a great thing, how much greater was an everlasting house and kingdom. The Lord telleth thee, that "he will make thee an house." This was reversing the matter altogether. The doings of the past were full of grace — the doings of the future would be full of glory. The hand of electing love had lifted David from the sheepcote to place him on the throne of Israel. "And this was yet a small thing in thy sight, O Lord God; but thou hast also spoken of thy servant's house for a great while to come." The past and the future are both brought, in brilliant array, before the vision of King David, and he has only to bow his head and worship.

"Then went King David in, and sat before the Lord, and he said, who am I, O Lord God?" Here then, we have David's second attitude. Instead of going out to build for the Lord, he went in and sat before the Lord. There is great moral beauty and power in this. To an unintelligent eye, he might have seemed to be in a very useless attitude; but, oh! we may rest assured of this, that no one can ever stand as a servant, who has not sat as a worshipper. We must have to do with the Lord, before we can act for the Lord. Show us a man who has really occupied the place of a worshipper, and we will show you one who, when he rises to his feet, will prove an effective servant.

And be it noted, it is one thing to sit before the Lord, and another thing to sit before our work — our service — our preaching — our circumstances — our experiences — our anything. How often are we tempted to sit down and gaze at, or think over, our various exploits, even though these may be ostensibly in the Lord's work? This is sure to super induce weakness. Nothing can be more miserable than self-occupation. It is right enough to feel thankful if the Lord has used us in any department of work; but oh! let us beware of keeping self before our eyes, in any shape or form, directly or indirectly. Let us not be found self-complacently surveying the various things in which we are engaged, the different interests we have set on foot, or the varied spheres of action in which we take part. All this tends to puff up nature, while it leaves the soul barren and impoverished.

Mark the difference! "Then went king David in and sat before the Lord, and said, who am I?" "I" is sure to fall into obscurity and oblivion when we sit before the Lord. We hardly know which to admire most, the attitude or the utterance. "He sat," and said, "Who am I?" Both are lovely — both in exquisite moral order. May we know more of their deep, deep meaning and immense practical

power! May we prove what it is to sit in the divine presence, and there lose sight of self and all its belongings!

We do not attempt to enter upon an exposition of the fifty-first Psalm which, as we have said, is David's utterance as a penitent, nor yet of the seventh chapter of second Samuel, which gives us his utterance as a worshipper; we merely introduce these precious scriptures to the notice of the reader, and pass on, in the third and last place, to look at David Standing as a Servant. "Then David the king stood up upon his feet." (1 Chron. 28:2.) This completes the picture of this lovely character. We have seen him lying on the earth, with the arrow of conviction piercing his conscience, and the chastening rod of God held over him. We have seen him seated in the sanctuary, surveying the actings of grace in the past, and anticipating the bright beams of glory in the future. And now we see him rising into the attitude of a real, true-hearted servant, to lay himself and his resources at Jehovah's feet. All is intensely real. The penitential cry — the aspirations of the worshipper — the accents of devotedness and consecration — all is deep, fervent and genuine. "I have prepared with all my might for the house of my God." "Moreover, because I have set my affection to the house of God." What self-forgetting devotedness is here! David was not to have the honor of building the house, but what was that to one who had found his place in the sanctuary, and learned to say, "Who am I?" It was all the same to David who was to build the house. It was the house of his God, and that was enough. The strength of his hand, the love of his heart, and the resources of his treasury were all willingly devoted to such an object.

We would fain pause here to expatiate; but we must close. May the Holy Ghost apply these things to our hearts, by His mighty power. Christian reader, dost thou not long for more whole-hearted devotedness? Dost thou not sigh after a more lofty consecration of thyself and all that thou hast to Christ and His cause in the earth? Well then, just get a little nearer to Him. Seek to be more in His presence. You have risen up from the attitude of a penitent, go, now, and sit, and gaze, and worship; and then, when the fitting occasion offers, you will be ready to occupy the position of an effective-servant.

Earth's Attractions

I heard the notes of a captive bird,
His song had a plaintive tone,
My heart was sad, and that little voice
Seemed to echo my spirit's moan.
And I felt so grieved to see him bound
In that small and wiry home,
And I longed to set the pris'ner free,
O'er the distant fields to roam.
I lifted the door and bade him fly,
But alas! he did not rise
Aloft, to pour forth a joyous song
In the beauteous summer skies.
But he downward flew, and on a field,
All wet with the recent rain,
He paused, delighted for a while
With some seeds of scattered grain.
The ground was wet, and his little feet
Adhered to the clayey soil,
He flapped his wings and strove to rise,
But in vain was all his toil.
I watched him awhile and then methought,
As I set the prisoner free,
How this little bird had surely brought
A lesson of truth to me.
For I knew the Lord had set me free
From sin's dark galling chains,

Yet like this bird I had sought to bind
My soul in those bonds again.
I'd seen there was much that wealth could buy,
I'd wished that power were mine,
And I'd longed for more of that golden store,
That its joys might round me shine.
But I forgot, if the soul would rise
To bask in your heavenly sphere,
It would sooner reach those happy skies
The less that it cared for here.
So I pleaded, "Father, forgive thy child;"
From earth's cares, oh set me free;
And lead this heart, by the world beguiled,
Still nearer, my God, to Thee.
"Forbid it, Lord, that my soul should fly
Down to the earth again,
Or forget those brighter joys on high
For some seeds of golden grain."

Faith's Morning, Noon, and Even

The breaking morn, in cheerful ray,
With many a promise opes the day,
Setting the sun upon his way,
To tread his radiant journey.
So faith's fair spring-time opens heaven,
When clouds and doubts are backward drives,
Revealing Christ to sinners given;
Their morning pledge of glory.
Then, as in robes of glittering dye,
The ruler of the mid-day sky,
With fruitful ardor from on high,
Blesses the world before him.
So, Christ, in risen virtue strong,
Our life, our victory, strength, and song,
In freedom bears our souls along
To serve and to adore Him.
And then, at eve, with "farewell sweet,"
The day retires — so soon to greet
Regions that wait his smile to meet
Its varied beauties blending.
So faith, in hopeful evening hour,
Calm in the Savior's chastened power,
Anchors beside earth's parting shore,
In sight of joys unending.

Five Words

(1 Cor. 14:19.)

It is often very wonderful to mark the way in which the words of scripture seize upon the heart. They are, indeed, "as goads, and as nails fastened by the masters of assemblies." At times, some brief sentence, or clause of a sentence, will lay hold upon the heart, penetrate the conscience, or occupy the mind, in such a way as to prove, beyond all question, the divinity of the book, in which it stands. What force of reasoning, what fullness of meaning, what powder of application, what an unfolding of the springs of nature, what an unveiling of the heart, what point and pungency, what condensing energy, we meet with up and down throughout the sacred pages! One delights to dwell upon these things, at all times; but more especially at a moment like the present, when the enemy of God and man is seeking, in such varied ways, to cast a slur upon the inspired volume.

The foregoing train of thought has, not infrequently, been suggested to the mind by the expression which forms the title of this article. "I had rather," says the self-emptied and devoted apostle, "speak five words with my understanding, that I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue." How important for all speakers to remember this! We know, of course, that tongues had their value. They were for a sign to the unbelieving. But, in the assembly, they were useless unless there was an interpreter.

The grand end of speaking in the assembly, is edification, and this end can only, as we know, be reached by persons understanding what is said. It is utterly impossible that a man can edify me, if I cannot understand what he says. He must speak in an intelligible language, and in an audible voice, else I cannot receive any edification. This surely is plain, and well worth the serious attention of all who speak in public.

But, further, we would do well to bear in mind that our only warrant for standing up to speak, in the assembly, is that the Lord Himself has given us something to say. If it be but "Five words," let us utter the five and sit down. Nothing can be more unintelligent than for a man to attempt to speak "Ten thousand words" when God has only given him "Five." Alas! that something like this should so often occur! What a mercy it would be, if we could only keep within our measure! That measure may be small. It matters not; let us be simple, earnest, and real. An earnest heart is better than a clever head; and a fervent spirit better than an eloquent tongue. Where there is a genuine, hearty desire to promote the real good of souls, it will prove more effectual with men, and more acceptable to God than the most brilliant gifts without it. No doubt, we should covet earnestly the best gifts; but we should also remember the "more excellent way," even the way of charity that ever hides itself and seeks only the profit of others. It is not that we value gifts less, but we value charity more.

Finally, it would greatly tend to raise the tone of public teaching and preaching to remember the following very homely rule, "Do not set about looking for something to say, because you have got to speak; but speak because you have got something that ought to be said." This is very simple. It

is a poor thing for a man to be merely collecting as much matter as will fill up a certain space of time. This should never be. Let the teacher or preacher attend diligently upon his ministry — let him cultivate his gift — let him wait on God for guidance, power, and blessing — let him live in the spirit of prayer, and breathe the atmosphere of scripture; then will he be always ready for the Master's use, and his words, whether "Five" or "Ten thousand," will, assuredly, glorify Christ and do good to men. But, clearly, in no case, should a man rise to address his fellows, without the conviction that God has given him somewhat to say, and the desire to say it to edification.

A Fragment

How desirable, therefore, that we should deal faithfully with ourselves — judging everything before God that is of self. And, withal, seeing that the truth as it is in Jesus, pervades the whole heart, and forms and fashions the life— that the affections are governed, and the character formed by the hope of His coming. Cherish a tender conscience. Remember this — whatever unfits for Christian duties — whatever cools the fervor of devotion — whatever indisposes us to read the scriptures, or engage in prayer —whatever we could not engage in with a perfectly clear conscience, in the presence of a rejected and suffering Savior, are not for us. The pleasures, amusements, recreations, which we cannot thank God for, should be avoided. When the thought of God — of Christ — of His coming — of the judgment-seat, falls like a cold shadow on what we call enjoyment, we are out of our right place; let us flee from it.

Let us never go where we cannot ask God to go with us. Let us never be found where we cannot act as Christ would have us. Let us pass each day as pilgrims consciously on the way to their heavenly inheritance. Let us press after close communion with Jesus. Let the love of God reign in our hearts; and thus shall we be kept from a thousand snares, exhibit a holy consistency, and become possessed of a peace and a joy which passeth knowledge.

Fragments: a Good Motto for a Workman

“Know your job and stick to it.” Ponder this. It involves more than you might, at first sight, imagine. The first thing is to know your job. Many err here. They do not seem to know well what to be at. They run from one job to another, and, as a consequence, do not succeed at anything. Seek, therefore, to know, in communion with the Master, what your work really is. It may be very humble, unpretending, unattractive sort of work; but no matter if it be your work, that is all you want to know. And what then? Why stick to it — keep at it — let no one jostle you out of it. You may meet many who will not like your mode of doing your work — many perhaps who think you ought to be at something else. But keep on, never minding. Be kind and courteous; but stick to your job. As a workman, your immediate, your paramount business is with your Master, not with your fellow servants. You may be misunderstood and misrepresented; but see that you stick to your job. Seek to do the best you can, and when the Master returns, you will be all right.

THREE THINGS WORTH REMEMBERING.

1. The nearest way to a man’s heart is round by heaven.
2. The best place for quarrelers to meet is in the dust.
3. The next best place to being with Christ, in the glory, above, is to be with Him, in the gutter, below.

AN IMPORTANT PRINCIPLE.

It is the energy of attaining, and not the measure of attainment, that constitutes the ground of communion. If this be lost sight of, the Church will be broken up into cliques, instead of all seeking to press on together.

THE MORAL SECURITY OF A LOWLY PATH.

How one does long to know more of this! “God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble” What a difference between the two attitudes! God must resist the proud; but when man takes his true place, God has nothing to resist; every barrier is removed, and the full tide of divine goodness can flow into the lowly heart. God can dwell with, a lowly heart. There may be great weakness, great poverty, nothing attractive; but God can dwell there, and that is enough. It is a great point to be able to ascertain what God can go along with. He certainly cannot go on with pride, with assumption, with pretension, with bustling self-importance. Whenever you see these things in a man, you may be quite sure God is not dwelling with him. I am not speaking of salvation, but merely of the precious privilege of having God making His abode with me. It is this which constitutes the moral security of a lowly path. Oh! that we may know it in this day of human pretension!

The House of God

In the progress of scripture, we see the blessed God adopting and entering the house, which the faith and service of His saints raise for Him, in a very striking way indeed. It is heartily He does this; or, in His own language, “assuredly with His whole heart and His whole soul.” Jer. 32:41.

We begin to mark this in the wilderness, in the day of Exod. 40. The camp of Israel, in the obedience of faith, had fashioned and furnished the tabernacle. Moses had sealed their work that all had been done according to God. As we read, “Moses did look upon all the work and behold they had done it, as the Lord had commanded; even so had they done it; and Moses blessed them.” And then, the glory filled this curtained house so fully that none other for a time, not even Moses himself, could find place in it.

The same is seen when the house of hewn-stone and cedar was raised in the times of the kingdom by Solomon, in the day of 2 Chron. 5 The glory enters this house of stone, as once it had entered the tent of curtains — was now with Israel in the land as once it had been with Israel in the wilderness. There was no expression of reluctance or indisposedness, altogether the contrary. The God of heaven, whose dominions are only measured by the creation in its limitless length and breadth, enters His house among the children of men, in the midst of the earth’s ruins, in a style which speaks this language, “Here will I dwell, for I have a delight therein.”

It is edifying to see this willing and ready, as well as gracious, intimacy with us on the part of the blessed God. But we have other witnesses of the same in the New Testament.

When the temple, the living temple is raised, as we see in Acts 2, the glory again enters — and in its ancient style; for this style is, (like the Lord of glory Himself) “the same yesterday, today, and forever.” The Holy Ghost enters the assembly of the saints, the living New Testament Temple, with a “sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind,” while cloven tongues, like as of fire, sat upon each of them. This was as the cloud covering the tent, and the glory filling the Tabernacle, in Exod. 40, and this was surely witnessing with what a full heart the Lord was again occupying Himself of the place, which faith had prepared for Him.

This surely is so. The delight and heartiness with which this was done is as simply impressed on the inspired page, as the deed itself.

And again, in Rev. 21 The tabernacle of God is to be with men. God is about to dwell with them — not simply to visit them now and again, as in patriarchal days, at the tent of Abraham, at Mamre, or to shut the door of the ark upon Noah; nor simply to pitch His tent among them, as in the days of the wilderness: but to dwell with them, and take up His abode with them, and to have His home there. And mark again, that this is done, as the like had ever been done, in full earnestness and desire of His heart, a great voice from heaven exultingly announces the fact, and tells out the large and precious fruit that is to follow. Rev. 21:2-4.

This is one very happy sight to have of the house of God, one very sweet chapter to read in the story of that house— the manner of the Lord's adoption of it, and entrance into it. But we will still look at this great object somewhat further; for it is indeed a great sight to see to. God's house bespeaks Himself. It is the witness of what He is, for He there records His name. See Deut. 12; 14, &c.

It is, therefore, faith which discovers His house, wherever it may be, for it is faith, and faith only, which knows Him. And if He be not known, His house cannot be discovered.

After this manner, in early patriarchal days, Jacob discovered God's house. He was at that moment the representative of a generation that had destroyed themselves — a sinner. He was a ruined man — at least for the present — and this condition was the fruit of his own iniquity, the end of the way he had taken. Instead of remaining at home, and in his father's house, the heir of the land, the birthright, and the blessing, he was then an exile, and was soon to be a drudge; then wandering, as it were, penniless, without friend or fellow, and soon to be as a hireling, at the mercy of an injurious master. But the God of grace had appeared to him. Heaven's hand had just been wide opened to him, and the hosts of heaven had pledged him all providential care, let his wanderings and captivities be as wild and as hard as they may. And to crown all this revelation of grace in behalf of this self-ruined sinner, the voice of the Lord had just assured him of final restoration and all its attendant blessings.

Now this was God. This was a full and rich witness of what God is. This was grace abounding over the judgment which man, the sinner, had incurred. This was the gospel, and the gospel is a revelation of God. This, therefore, again, I say, was God.

Jacob discovers all this. He reads that mystic spot, and reads it rightly. "This is none other but the house of God," he says. God was revealed then, and faith, as it always does, understood the revelation. In the eyes of faith, the desert place called Luz had become Bethel. However barren and wild it may have been in itself it was God's house, for there God had just recorded His name.

It is beautiful to see faith thus in clear-sightedness making discoveries of God, though much of human infirmity may at the same time be besetting the heart, as was the case with Jacob then, and faith still acts and speaks in him. He calls this house of God, "the gate of heaven." The simplicity and decision of this is something very fine. For it is indeed thus. If we are in God's house, though in the midst of man's ruins, if we have received the record of His name published in a world of sinners, a revolted, rebel world, we are standing at the gate of heaven. Once in the kingdom of the dear Son, we are on the borders of the inheritance of the saints in light. (Col. 1) "Whom he justified, them He also glorified." (Rom. 8) And so here in the faith of the patriarch. Jacob, having discovered that he was in God's house, knew that He was standing at the gate of heaven. He was that moment "meet" for glory, since he had known grace. God was thus pledging salvation to him, pardon and peace, and this was enough to assure him, that he was to be at home with Him in His own heaven forever.

Long after these patriarchal days of Jacob, we find the same. I mean in David and in the days of the kingdom of Israel.

Sin had again abounded, but grace had again much more abounded. David, like Jacob, had destroyed himself, but God had visited him with salvation. The Jebusite's threshing-floor now

witnessed this, as once the desert, and stony Luz had witnessed it. (See 1 Chron. 21) God had published His house again—and it is the same house. Time had not changed it — “The same yesterday, today, and forever.” God was revealed then, as He had ever been, and still is; and David did not hesitate. “This is the house of the Lord God,” says he, in the spirit of the patriarch. Each of those had had the same revelations of God, and faith dealt with that revelation in the same confidence, though centuries and centuries had rolled between them.

This is simple and blessed. And it is happy further to see, with what a jealous, careful, undivided heart David cleaves to the spot. He was afraid to leave it — a good word for us all. Other places had their claims and their fascinations. The high place at Gibeon was the place of the tabernacle and its altar, and the tent which David himself had prepared on Mount Zion was then the dwelling of the Ark. But where God had frankly answered in grace the conditions of a self-ruined sinner, where the sword of judgment had just been sheathed, and the sacrifice had just been accepted by fire from heaven, there David must stay. God had gone on, in the revelation of Himself, as to “the place that is called Calvary,” to Mount Moriah where He had provided Himself a Lamb; and David or faith must go on with Him. Faith must, keep pace with revelation. The light had shone before; but if it had now reached its noon-day fullness, David must not walk as in the earlier twilight. “This is the house of the Lord God,” says he, “and this the altar of burnt offering for Israel.” At the threshing-floor of Ornan he must raise his Ebenezer. The priests of the tabernacle may say, they know no such place; but God had known it, and faith must own it.

And let me just add, it is to be thus with us. We have discovered the house of God. for God has revealed Himself. He has recorded His name, and that forever, in the Jebusite’s floor, on Mount Moriah, which is “the place that is called Calvary” — for there He shines as the just God and yet the Savior, the God of peace, who provided a Lamb for His own altar there, and accepted the sacrifice again, rending the veil, and seating the Purger of sins, in the highest heavens. Faith sits at the table in the house of God when His salvation is celebrated, and says again, as with the patriarch, and with the King of Israel, “This is the house of God, this is the gate of heaven, this is the altar of burnt offering.” There faith, at this hour, shows forth the death of the Lamb of God, and shows it forth as with a burnt-offering of praise; and shows it forth “until He come,” consciously standing at the gate of heaven, or upon the borders and confines of glory. 1 Cor. 11

Landmarks and Stumblingblocks: Part 1

“Thou shalt not remove thy neighbor’s landmark, which they of old time have set in thine inheritance.” Deut. 19:14.

“Take up the stumblingblock out of the way of my people.” Isa. 57:14.

What tender care, what gracious considerateness, breathe in the above passages! The ancient landmarks were not to be removed; but the stumblingblocks were to be taken up. The inheritance of God’s people was to stand forth in all its length and breadth, while the stumblingblocks were to be sedulously removed out of their pathway. Such was the grace of Israel’s God! Such His care for His people! The portion which God had given to each was to be enjoyed, while, at the same time, the path in which each was called to walk should be kept free from every occasion of stumbling.

Now, if we are to judge from the tone and character of several recent communications, we believe we are called upon to give attention to the spirit of those ancient enactments. Some of our friends have, in their letters to us, opened their minds, very freely, as to their spiritual condition. They have told us of their doubts and fears, their difficulties and dangers, their conflicts and exercises. We must say we feel truly grateful for such confidence; and it is our earnest desire to be used of God in the interesting work of helping our readers by pointing out the landmarks which He, by His Spirit, has set up, and removing the stumblingblocks, which the enemy has so diligently flung in their path. It never was our object merely to conduct a Magazine — to bring out a monthly number — to fill so many pages. But we have desired, and that most earnestly, that “Things New and Old” should be a direct agent in the hands of the Holy Ghost, in the great work of quickening, liberating, and edifying souls. The day will declare how far our desire has been answered. We have abundant reason to bless God for the fruit which He has allowed us to gather; and our earnest prayer is that when our little serial ceases to be useful, it may cease to exist — that its issue may cease with its interest — that it may never outlive its freshness. For this we count on God; and to Him we look for grace to say the right thing in the right way, and at the right time.

In pondering the cases which have lately been submitted to us, we have found some in which the enemy was most manifestly using as a stumblingblock the doctrine of election misplaced. We have reason to believe that thousands have stumbled over this stumblingblock, and we are most anxious to see it taken up. The doctrine of election, in its right place, instead of being a stumblingblock in the pathway of anxious enquirers, will be found to be a landmark set by them of old time, even by the inspired apostles of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, in the inheritance of God’s spiritual Israel. But we all know that misplaced truth is more dangerous, by far, than positive error. If a man were to stand up, and boldly declare that the doctrine of election is false, we should, without hesitation, reject his words. But we might not be quite so well prepared to meet one who, while admitting the doctrine to be true and important, puts it out of its divinely appointed place. And yet this latter is the very thing which is so constantly done, to the damaging of the truth of God, and the darkening of the souls of men.

What, then, is the true place of the doctrine of election? Its true, its divinely appointed place, is in the inside of the house, in the hands of the teacher, for the establishment of true believers. Instead of this, the enemy has put it outside the house, in the hands of the evangelist, for the stumbling of anxious enquirers. Harken to the following language of a deeply exercised soul. "If I only knew that I was one of the elect I should be quite happy, inasmuch as I could then confidently apply to myself the benefits of the death of Christ."

Doubtless, this would be the language of many, were they only to tell out the feelings of their hearts. They are making a wrong use of the doctrine of election — a doctrine blessedly true in itself — a most valuable "landmark," but a most dangerous "stumblingblock." It is very needful for the anxious enquirer to bear in mind that it is as a lost sinner, and not as "one of the elect," that he can apply to himself the benefits of the death of Christ. The proper stand-point from which to get a saving view of the death of Christ is not election but conscious ruin. This is an unspeakable mercy, inasmuch as I know I am a lost sinner; but I do not know that I am one of the elect until I have received, through the Spirit's testimony and teaching, the glad tidings of salvation through the blood of the Lamb. Salvation — free as the sunbeams, full as the ocean, permanent as the throne of the eternal God — is preached to me, not as one of the elect, but as one utterly lost, guilty, and undone; and when I have received this salvation there is conclusive evidence of my election. "Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God; for (οτι) our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." (1 Thess. 1:4, 5.) Election is not my warrant for accepting salvation; but the reception of salvation is the proof of election. For how is any sinner to know that he is one of the elect? Where is he to find it? It must be a matter of divine revelation, else it cannot be a matter of faith. But where is it revealed? Where is the knowledge of election made an indispensable prerequisite, an essential preliminary, to the acceptance of salvation? Nowhere, in the word of God. My only title to salvation is that I am a poor good-for-nothing, guilty, hell-deserving sinner. If I wait for any other title, I am only removing a most valuable landmark from its proper place, and flinging it as a stumblingblock in my way. This, to say the least of it, is very unwise.

But it is more than unwise. It is positive opposition to the word of God, not only to the quotations which stand at the head of this paper, but to the spirit and teaching of the entire volume. Harken to the risen Savior's commission to His first heralds: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." (Mark 16:15.) Is there so much as a single hair's breadth of ground, in these words, on which to base a question about election? Is anyone, to whom this glorious gospel is preached, called to settle a prior question about his election? Assuredly not. "All the world" and "Every creature" are expressions which set aside every difficulty, and render salvation as free as the air, and as wide as the human family. It is not said, "Go ye into a given section of the world, and preach the gospel to a certain number." No; this would not be in keeping with that grace which was to be proclaimed to the wide, wide world. "When the law was in question it was addressed to a certain number, in a given section; but when the gospel was to be proclaimed, its mighty range was to be, "All the world," and its object, "Every creature."

Again, hear what the Holy Ghost saith, by the apostle Paul: "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." (1 Tim. 1:15.) Is there any room here for raising a question as to one's title to salvation? None whatever. If Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, and that I am a sinner, then I am entitled to apply to my own soul

the benefits of His precious sacrifice. Ere I can possibly exclude myself there from I must be something else than a sinner. No doubt, if it were anywhere declared in scripture that Christ Jesus came to save only the elect, then clearly, I Should, in some way or another prove myself one of that number, ere I could make my own of the benefits of His death. But, thanks be to God, there is nothing the least like this in the whole gospel scheme. "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." (Luke 19:10.) And is not that just what I am? Truly so. Well then is it not from the standpoint of a lost one that I can look at the death of Christ? Doubtless. And can I not, while contemplating that precious mystery from thence, adopt the language of faith and say, "He loved me, and gave himself for me?" Yes, as unreservedly and unconditionally as though I were the only sinner on the surface of the globe.

Nothing can be more soothing and tranquilizing to the spirit of an anxious enquirer than to mark the way in which salvation is brought to him in the very condition in which he is, and on the very ground which he occupies. There is not so much as a single stumblingblock along the entire path leading to the glorious inheritance of the saints — an inheritance settled by landmarks which neither men nor devils can ever remove. The God of all grace has left nothing undone, nothing unsaid, which could possibly give rest, assurance, and perfect satisfaction to the soul. He has set forth the very condition and character of those for whom Christ died, in such terms as to leave no room for any demur or hesitation. Listen to the following glowing words: "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." "For if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son," &c. Rom. 5:6, 8, 10.

Can aught be plainer or more pointed than these passages? Is there a single term made use of which could possibly raise a question in the heart of any sinner as to his full and undisputed title to the benefits of the death of Christ? Not one. Am I "ungodly?" It was for such Christ died. Am I a sinner? "It is to such that God commendeth His love. Am I "an enemy?" It is such God reconciles by the death of His Son. Thus all is made as plain as a sunbeam, and as for the theological stumblingblock caused by misplacing the doctrine of election, it is entirely removed. It is as a sinner I get the benefit of Christ's death. It is as a lost one I get a salvation which is as free as it is permanent, and as permanent as it is free. All I want, in order to apply to myself the value of the blood of Jesus, is to know myself a guilty sinner. It would not help me, the least, in this matter, to be told that I am one of the elect, inasmuch as it is not in that character God addresses me in the gospel, but in another character altogether, even as a lost sinner.

But then, some may feel disposed to ask, "Do you want to set aside the doctrine of election?" God forbid. We only want to see it in its right place. We want it as a landmark, not as a stumblingblock. We believe the evangelist has no business to preach election. Paul never preached election. He taught election, but He preached Christ. This makes all the difference. We believe that no one can be a proper evangelist who is, in any wise, hampered by the doctrine of election misplaced. We have seen serious damage done to two classes of people by preaching election instead of preaching Christ. Careless sinners are made more careless still, while anxious souls have had their anxiety intensified.

These, surely, are sad results, and they ought to be sufficient to awaken very serious thoughts in the minds of all who desire to be successful preachers of that free and full salvation which shines

in the gospel of Christ, and leaves all who hear it without a shadow of an excuse. The grand business of the evangelist is to set forth, in his preaching, the perfect love of God, the efficacy of the blood of Christ, and the faithful record of the Holy Ghost. His spirit should be entirely untrammelled, and his gospel unclouded. He should preach a present salvation, free to all, and stable as the pillars which support the throne of God. The gospel is nothing more nor less than the unfolding of the heart of God as it expresses itself in the death of His Son, and in the deathless record of His Spirit.

Were this more carefully attended to there would be more power in replying to the oft-repeated objection of the careless, as well as in hushing the deep anxieties of exercised and burdened souls. The former would have no just ground of objection; the latter, no reason to fear. When persons reject the gospel on the ground of God's eternal decrees, they are rejecting what is revealed on the ground of what is hidden. "What can they possibly know about God's decrees? Just nothing. How then can that which is secret be urged as a reason for rejecting what is revealed? Why refuse what can be known, on the ground of what cannot? It is obvious that men do not act thus in cases where they wish to believe a matter. Only let a man be willing to believe a thing, and you will not find him anxiously looking for a ground of objection. But alas! men do not want to believe God. They reject His precious testimony which is clear as the sun's meridian brightness, and urge as their plea for so doing His decrees which are wrapped in impenetrable darkness. What folly! What blindness! What guilt!

And then as to anxious souls who harass themselves with questions about election, we long to show them that it is not in accordance with the divine mind, that they should raise any such difficulty. God addresses them in the exact state in which He sees them and in which they can see themselves. He addresses them as sinners, and this is exactly what they are. There is nothing but salvation for any sinner, the moment he takes his true place as a sinner. This is simple enough for any simple soul. To raise questions about election is sheer unbelief. It is, in another way, to reject what is revealed on the ground of what is hidden; it is to refuse what I can know, on the ground of what I cannot. God has revealed Himself in the face of Jesus Christ, so that we may know Him and trust Him. Moreover, He has made full provision in the atonement of the cross, for all our need and all our guilt. Hence, therefore, instead of perplexing myself with the question, "Am I one of the elect?" it is my happy privilege to rest in the perfect love of God, the all-sufficiency of Christ, and the faithful record of the Holy Ghost.

We must here close, though there are other stumbling-blocks which we long to see removed out of the way of God's people, as well as landmarks which are sadly lost sight of.

Landmarks and Stumblingblocks: Part 2

We should, just like to add a line or two to our leading article for August, in order to remove one or two more of those stumblingblocks which so sadly block up the path of anxious enquirers.

We find, in many cases, that appropriation is used as a great stumblingblock to souls; and although we have devoted a paper to this very subject, in one of our earlier volumes, we deem, it right to touch upon it briefly in this article for the purpose of. showing the reader that instead of being a stumblingblock in his way, it is, in reality, a landmark in his spiritual inheritance.

To judge from the way in which many put the subject of appropriation, it would seem as though they looked upon it as something which they have to do ere the benefits of Christ's death can be made available for them. This is a great mistake. The death of Christ, in all its atoning efficacy, applies itself to the sinner the moment he takes his place as a sinner. So far from there being any difficulty in making the application, the difficulty, nay the impossibility, is to refuse it. The blood of Jesus is for the guilty sinner as such. Every one, therefore, who knows and feels himself to be a guilty sinner, is privileged to rest simply in that precious blood. The atoning work is. done. Sin is put away. All is finished — yes, finished by God's own hand. Have I to wait for anything further? Have I got something else to do — something to add to the finished work of Christ? Assuredly not. I am simply called to rest, by faith, in what Christ has done for me, and know that all my sins are divinely put away, and that my conscience is as clean as the blood of Jesus can make it.

This is appropriation. It is taking God at His word — setting to my seal that God is true. It is not a certain indescribable work of mine, but a resting in the work of Christ. It is not waiting for something that is to be done by me, but a confiding in what has been done by Christ. This makes all the difference. Appropriation is really a landmark, not a stumblingblock. It is only because people mistake what it is that they stumble over it. It not un-frequently happens that while they are vaguely looking for it, they actually possess it. If I heartily believe that Jesus died and rose again, I am privileged to take up those precious accents of the apostle, and say, "He loved me and gave himself for me." This, truly, is the language of appropriation. But it is appropriation in its right place — as a landmark, not as a stumblingblock. Appropriation, as a stumblingblock, speaketh on this wise, "I know that Christ died for me, but I cannot appropriate the benefits of His death." This is a very serious error indeed. It is, in reality, to imply that the death of Christ is of no avail without a certain work on the sinners part; whereas scripture teacheth us that the moment a sinner takes his true place, as utterly lost, the death of Christ applies to him as fully and as truly as though he were the only sinner in the universe, and, moreover, that he is justified by faith and not by works of any kind.

It is truly wonderful to mark, the various methods in which the enemy tries to harass and stumble souls. If he cannot succeed in causing them to look to, and lean upon, legal efforts and ceremonial observances, he will perplex them with questions respecting election, appropriation, realization, feelings, frames, and experiences. Anything, in short, but simply resting in a full Christ. It is not that we undervalue these things; far from it; we value them as landmarks, but we dread them as

stumblingblocks. The true ground of a believer's peace is not election, appropriation, or realization, but Christ. He rests on the eternal truth that God dealt with Christ on the cross about all his sins — that the entire question was gone into and settled there, once and forever. To believe this is appropriation. To abide in the faith of it is realization.

May the Spirit of God lead the anxious reader to understand these things! It is our heart's desire and prayer to God continually that burdened souls may be set at liberty, by the knowledge of a full and free salvation — a salvation unencumbered by any of those perplexing questions which are so frequently raised to the damage of God's truth and the darkening of the souls of men. Election is a truth; appropriation is a fact; realization is a reality but let us, once for all, declare, and let the reader fully understand and constantly remember, that these things are not to be laid as stumblingblocks along the pathway of the sinner, but set up as precious landmarks in the inheritance of the saints.

Not Now

Mark 5:18

Not now, my child, —a little more rough tossing,
A little longer on the billows' foam, —
A few more journeyings in the desert-darkness,
And then the sunshine of thy Father's home!
Not now, — for I have wand'rers in the distance,
And thou must call them in with patient love;
Not now, — for I have sheep upon the mountains,
And thou must follow them where'er they rove.
Not now, — for I have lov'd ones sad and weary,
Wilt thou not cheer them with a kindly smile?
Sick ones, who need thee in their lonely sorrow,
Wilt thou not tend them yet a little while?
Not now, — for wounded hearts are sorely bleeding,
And thou must teach those widow'd hearts to sing;
Not now, — for orphans' tears are thickly falling,
They must be gathered 'neath some sheltering wing.
Not now, — for many a hungry one is pining,
Thy willing hand must be outstretch'd and free,
Thy Father hears the mighty cry of anguish,
And gives His answering messages to thee.
Not now, — for dungeon walls look stern and gloomy,
And pris'ners' sighs sound strangely on the breeze,
Man's pris'ners, but thy Savior's noble free-men;
Hast thou no ministry of love for these?
Not now, — for hell's eternal gulf is yawning.

And souls are perishing in hopeless sin, —
Jerusalem's bright gates are standing open, —
Go to the banished ones, and fetch them in!
Go with the Name of Jesus to the dying,
And speak that Name in all its living power;
Why should thy fainting heart grow chill and weary,
Canst thou not watch with me one little hour?
One little hour! and then the glorious crowning,
The golden harp-strings and the victor's palm, —
One little hour! — and then the Hallelujah!
Eternity's long, deep thanksgiving psalm!
C. P.

One With Christ

With Christ we died to sin, Rom. 6:8.

Lay buried in his tomb; Rom. 6:4.

But, quicken'd now with Him, "our Life," Eph. 2:5.

We stand beyond our doom! Rom. 6:7.

Our God, in wondrous love, Eph. 2:4.

Hath raised us who were dead; Eph. 2:6.

And, in the heavenlies, made us sit" Eph. 2:6.

"In Christ," our Living "Head." Eph. 1:22, 23.

For us He now appears Heb. 9:24.

"Within the veil" above; Heb. 6:19, 20.

"Accepted," and "complete in Him," Eph. 1:6.

We triumph in His love. Rom. 8:39.

In Christ we now are made 1 Cor. 1:30.

"The righteousness of God;" 2 Cor. 5:21..

As heaven-born men, and heirs with Him, 1 John 5:1.

We follow where He trod. Col. 3:1, 2.

Rejected and despised, Isa. 53:3.

He bore the "open shame:" Heb. 6:6; 12:2.

As fellow-sufferers, journeying home, Rom. 8:17.

We glory in His name. Acts 5:41.

Soon will the Bridegroom come, Rev. 22:20.

His Bride from earth to call; 1 Thess. 4:16, 17.

We, glorified with Him shall reign, Rev. 20:4.

Till God be all in all. 1 Cor. 15:28.

Precious Fruit From the Lord's Garden

“Ah! in what rugged and neglected spots,
Passed over in thy culture, often grew,
Unnoticed and unknown to all but me,
The richest fruits — humility and love,
The myrrh of penitent and contrite hearts,
The spices exquisite of trust and praise—
Grief was a winepress forcing the rich juice
Of grapes I watched maturing from the bud;
Bruised, they gave forth the wine of thankful love;
Despised or disappointed, “It is well,”
Was all the sufferer’s utterance. Drank I not
Holy enjoyment in those crushed-down saints?
Milk, too, I tasted — many a tiny cup
Was filled to overflowing for my joy
With thoughts and promises of Holy Writ.
My Father’s word
Earnestly studied, carefully retained,
Believed, beloved, securely trusted in —
Rejoiced my spirit while supporting theirs.”

Reason and Revelation

Feeling, as we do, the deep solemnity of the present time, and the danger which besets the Christian's path, on every side, we press upon our readers the immense importance of the Word of God, and implicit subjection to its holy authority, in all things. We do not exactly feel called upon to take formal notice of such attacks as the "Essays and Reviews," or the more recent attempt to cast a slur upon the five books of Moses. The former has, in our judgment, been thoroughly exposed by more than one able hand; and we have no doubt but that the latter monstrous production will meet with similar handling. We look upon all such attacks as the direct and positive work of Satan, who is seeking, in every possible way, to shake the foundations of our most holy faith, and to pave the way for the march of infidelity and blasphemy, which, as we believe, will, ere long, darken the whole civilized world. It is surely most appalling to think that the professed pastors and teachers of Christianity should be the very men to rise up and lay impious hands upon the pillars upon which that Christianity reposes. May the Lord have mercy upon them, and open their eyes, that they may see their folly, guilt, and danger, and flee for refuge to that precious blood which cleanseth from all sin!

Still, though we do not deem it our place, as the conductors of this little serial, to review or expose infidel books, we cannot refrain from raising a warning cry against the influence of infidel principles. We see, in all directions, an effort to humanize everything divine and sacred — to bring everything down to the level of man's blind and perverted reason — to exclude all that is mysterious — all that is heavenly and divine — to exalt reason and insult revelation — to shut out God. Yes, beloved reader, this is the enemy's grand effort — to shut out God, and upset God's Revelation. We look in one direction and we see professedly Christian teachers seeking to undermine Christianity. We turn our eyes to another quarter, and we behold a so-called Christian bishop sitting in judgment upon the Pentateuch, and audaciously denying its divine inspiration. We look again, and we see some, daring to approach the profound mystery of the cross, to speculate, as medical men, upon the causes of the death of Christ!

We confess we shudder at the contemplation, and ask, where are we? What will come next? Is God to be shut out, in everything? Must He not speak at all? Is He to be refused a hearing, if He utters a word which man's stupid reason cannot understand? Does faith come by reason, and reason by the word of man? It would seem so. The rare and exquisite touches of the pen of inspiration must be tried by the clumsy rules of arithmetic, or the far more clumsy rules of the infidel's moral sense; and the precious sacrifice of the Son of God must be treated more as a subject for a doctor's case-book than as a holy mystery revealed in the pages of the book of God.

May God preserve His saints in these awfully perilous times! May he fill our hearts with a very deep sense of the solemnity of the present moment, and lead us to keep close to Himself and to His word! Then shall we be safe from every hostile influence. Then shall we not regard the sneer of the skeptic or the arguments of the infidel. We shall know whence all such things come and whither they tend. Christ will be our enjoyed portion, His word and Spirit our guide, His coming the

hope of our hearts.

A Religion of Four Letters

“There is a wide difference between your religion and mine,” said a Christian lady to one in whose spiritual condition she had long been interested. “Indeed,” said he, “how is that?” “Your religion,” she replied, “has only two letters in it, and mine has four.”

It seems that this gentleman was one of that numerous class who are seeking to get to heaven by their doings, by attention to ordinances and ceremonies, by what the apostle, in the ninth of Hebrews, terms, “dead works.” But he did not understand about the “two letters” and the “four.” His friend had often spoken to him, and on the occasion to which our anecdote refers, she had called to take her leave of him for some time, as she was about to go from home.

“What do you mean,” said he, “by two letters and four?” “Why your religion,” said the lady, “is d-o, DO; whereas mine is d-o-n-e, DONE.” This was all that passed. The lady took her leave; but her words remained and did their work in the soul of her friend— a revolutionary work verily. The entire current of his thoughts was changed. Do is one thing; done is quite another. The former is legalism; the latter is Christianity. It was a novel and very original mode of putting the gospel; but it was just the mode for a legalist, and the Spirit of God used it in the conversion of this gentleman. When next he met his friend, he said to her, “Well, I can now say, with you, that my religion is d-o-n-e, DONE.” He had learned to fling aside his deadly doings, and rest in the finished work of Christ. He was led to see that it was no longer a question of what he could do for God, but of what God had done for him.

This settled everything. The four golden letters shone under the gaze of his emancipated soul, “d-o-n-e.” Precious letters! Precious word! Who can tell the relief to a burdened heart when it discovers that all is done! What joy to know that what I have been toiling for, it may be many a long year, was all done over eighteen hundred years ago, on the cross! Christ has done all. He has put away sin — magnified the law and made it honorable — satisfied the claims of divine justice — vanquished Satan — taken the sting from death and the victory from the grave — glorified God in the very scene in which He had been dishonored — brought in everlasting righteousness. All this is wrapped up in these four golden letters, “d-o-n-e.”

Oh! who would not give up the two for the four? Who would not exchange “d-o,” for “d-o-n-e?”

Reader, what say you to this? What of your religion? Does it consist of two letters or four? Is it still “d-o,” with you? Or have you found your happy portion and rest in “d-o-n-e”? “Do think of it, dear friend — think deeply — think seriously, and may God’s Spirit lead you, this moment, to cease from your own “d-o” and to rest in Christ’s eternal “d-o-n-e!”

Ques. “What must I DO to be saved?”

Ans.

“Nothing either great or small,

Nothing, sinner, no;
Jesus did it, did it all,
Long, long ago.
“When He, from His lofty throne,
Stooped to do and die,
Everything was fully done,
Hearken to His cry—
“It Is finished!” Yes, indeed,
Finished every jot.
Sinner, this is all you need;
Tell me, is it not?
“Oh! thou trembling, anxious one,
Wherefore toil you so?
All was finished, all was done,
Long, long ago.
“Till to Jesus’ work you cling
By a simple faith,
‘Doing’ is a deadly thing—
‘Doing’ ends in death.
“Cast thy deadly doings down,
Down at Jesu’s feet;
Stand in Him — in Him alone,
Gloriously complete.”

The Sisters of Bethany

“What hope lit up those sisters’ gloom,
When first they sent his help to crave,
So sure that, hearing, He would come,
And coming, could not fail to save.
Counting the distance o’er again,
Deeming Him near and yet more near,
Till hope, on heights she climbed in vain,
Lay frozen to a death-like fear.
Watching with two-fold strain intent
The expected steps, the failing breath,
Till hope and fear together spent,
Sank in the common blank of death.
Beyond this burning waste of hills,
Beyond that awful glittering sea,
‘Mid those blue mountains lingering still,
Have our faint prayers not reached to Thee?
Or are the joys and griefs of earth,
To Thee, whose eyes survey the whole,
But passing things of little worth,
That should not deeply stir the soul?
His tears ere long shall hush that fear
For every mourning heart forever;
And we who now His words can hear
Beyond the hills, beyond the river —
Know that as true a watch He kept
On those far heights, as at their side,

Feeling the tears the sisters wept,
Marking the hour the brother died.
No faintest sigh His heart can miss;
E'en now His feet are on the way,
With richest counterweight of bliss
Heaped up for every hour's delay;
That nevermore should hope deferred
Make sick the heart that trusts in Him,
But nourished by His faithful word
Grow brighter still as sight grows dim."

The Snares of a Young Convert

Some time ago, I was asked to call and see a young man who was very ill with heart disease. He was a corporal in the dragoons, and had been seventy days in the hospital. On the occasion of my visit, he was rather better, and able to be out a little, so I walked with him up and down the barrack square. I soon found that he was in a very wretched state of mind. He had been about five years in the army, and, doubtless, he had, like most young men of his class, pursued a wild and reckless career. A barrack-room, as we know, is not favorable to morality or piety. It requires no ordinary measure of grace and moral power to be able to withstand the corrupting and demoralizing influences of such a scene, and where there happens to be nothing beyond mere nature, however well brought up, it soon yields to the overwhelming torrent of immorality and impiety which has, alas! in almost every case, to be encountered by those who enter on military life.

I was not surprised, therefore, at the tale which my young friend, Corporal D., had to tell me — a tale of wildness and folly — a tale which I had to tell of myself, though I was never in the army. I was quite prepared for it all, and only too thankful to find that the arrow had entered the young man's soul — that the plowshare of conviction was doing its needed work, and turning up the furrows of the conscience to receive the incorruptible seed of the gospel. I delight in a deep work of conscience. I believe it often happens that those who reach the haven of true gospel peace, through the fiercest storms of conscience, and the wildest heavings and tossings of the entire moral being, prove the steadiest Christians afterward. We must not lay down an iron rule; but we may be allowed to express our deep sense of the value of a thorough, genuine work of the Spirit of God, in the conscience.

Such a work, I felt sure, was going on in the soul of the young soldier; and, inasmuch as the only balm for a wounded spirit — a stricken heart — a convicted conscience, is the precious blood of Jesus, I at once proceeded to point him to that divine, and all-sufficient remedy. I endeavored, especially, to press upon him a truth which had given my own soul peace, twenty-four years ago, namely, this, "It is the work wrought for you, and not the work wrought in you, that saves you." It was perfectly plain there was a real work of God's Spirit in the young man's soul, and the present effect of this work was to make him feel the burden of his guilt. The Spirit of God raises the question of sin in the conscience, and this question can only be divinely settled by the application of the value and efficacy of the atonement of Christ. The question of sin, when divinely raised, can only be divinely settled. It will not do to cry, "peace, peace, when there is no peace." It must be a real work of the Holy Ghost, bringing home to the troubled, anxious soul, the value of that atoning work which has forever put away sin, and perfectly satisfied all the claims of God and revealed His righteousness in the pardon and justification of every soul that simply believes in Jesus.

Now, I found that Corporal D. was looking at anything and everything but this perfect work of the Son of God. He was trying to get comfort and rest in his pious efforts, such as reading and prayer — things, as I told him, very right and very valuable in their place, but which, as a foundation for a guilty sinner's peace, were altogether worthless as he himself was, at that moment, fully proving. I

sought to show him, that it was impossible that he could ever be happy or ever find peace, while he was looking right away from the object at which God was looking. "God is looking at Christ; you are looking at your works. God says, 'When I see the blood, I will pass over you;' but God is satisfied with what He has done for you; you want to find satisfaction in what you are trying to do for Him. What a vast difference! God has under His eye, continually, a finished work; you have under your eye, continually, an unfinished work. Hence your misery. You must be miserable so long as you continue to gaze upon an unfinished work. If there is a work which must be done, and I am trying to do, but cannot succeed, I must be wretched. But if I find that this work has been done by another, even by Christ, for me, I am made happy."

This is the substance of what I earnestly endeavored to press upon my young friend, Corporal D., as we paced the barrack-square together. He seemed to grasp it, and get comfort from it. I felt as though a ray of divine light had entered his precious soul, and, as my time was expired I took leave of him. He accompanied me to the gate, and as he shook me by the hand, he thanked me fervently for coming to see him, and promised to attend a gospel lecture, next evening, which he did.

Shortly after this, I left home for some weeks; and, on my return, almost the first thing I heard was that my poor friend, Corporal D., was very ill again, and not only ill in body, but also, alas! as miserable as ever in soul. I felt truly sorry for this, and lost no time in making my way to the military hospital. The moment I sat down beside him I saw, at a glance, that he was very ill and very unhappy. "Well, D.," said I, "what has gone wrong with you? I thought you seemed quite happy six weeks ago, when we parted at the barrack-gate. Whatever has happened?" "Oh! sir," he replied, "I am afraid I have not the right kind of faith. I fear I am not converted at all. I am very unhappy."

I saw, at once, his spiritual whereabouts, and I said to him, "Now, D., look at this. Six weeks ago, I called to see you, and I found you occupied with your works, and, as a consequence, miserable. Today, I call to see you, and I find you occupied with your faith, and, as a consequence, miserable. The effect is the same in each case. And why? Simply because in looking at your faith, you take your eye off Christ just as much as when looking at your works. Faith never looks at itself to see if it be the right kind; but ever looks at Christ, assured that He is the right object. And, furthermore, let me ask you to bear in mind, that the ground of my peace is not that I was converted twenty-four years ago, but that Jesus bore my sins on the cross, 1830 years ago, and is up in heaven without them. I believe I was converted — I believe that a real change has taken place — that a real work of God's Spirit has been wrought in me. But though this is true, and though all the saints on earth, and all the angels in heaven were to express themselves satisfied as to my conversion, that would not form the foundation of my peace. What gives me peace is the truth that God has been satisfied about my sins, by the finished work of Christ. You cannot be too simple in your apprehension of the true ground of your peace. It is not your being truly converted, or your having the right sort of faith, or the right sort of feelings, but simply, that Jesus died and rose again. True, the work of the Spirit, in conversion, must never be separated from the work of the Son in atonement, but neither must they be confounded. Thousands do confound them, and thus, like you my dear friend, get into darkness and misery."

Thus I argued and reasoned with Corporal D., in whose spiritual condition I felt an intense interest. I had provided myself with a few oranges to refresh the poor invalid, and it occurred to me that I

might use one of them in order to illustrate the point which I so much desired to unfold to him; so taking it up in my hand, I said to him, "D., do you see this orange? Now tell me this, when I hand you this orange, which is it, your hand or the orange, that will remove your thirst, and refresh you?" "The orange, of course," said he. "Just so," I replied, "you can quite see this — a child can see it. It is not the hand, but the orange that does you good. It is not the mode in which you take it, but the thing you take. True, they are not to be separated; but neither must they be confounded. Now thus it is precisely in reference to your faith and the object on which that faith lays hold. Your faith may be weak or it may be strong, but whether weak or strong, it is not your faith, but the object, Christ, that meets your need."

"I see it, sir," said the young soldier, with energy and warmth, "I see it, now, clearly. I have been looking away from Christ, and, in this way, have got into darkness. May I be enabled to keep my eye fixed on Him alone." "Yes," I said, "if you want to be wretched, look in; if you want to be distracted, look round; if you want to be happy, look up."

After some further conversation, I again took leave of my friend, and in a few days, as I was going to preach in the neighborhood of his barracks, who should accost me in the street, but Corporal D., dressed in colored clothes and looking so happy. His countenance was radiant, and he did not look like the same man. He had been pronounced by the medical authorities to be unfit for further military duty, and was waiting for his discharge. On my expressing my joy at seeing him, and my hope that he was now quite clear, "Oh! yes, sir," said he. "I am quite happy, and I am now determined to carry the blood-stained banner of the cross through the length and breadth of the land." All this was spoken with much ardor and enthusiasm. I did not, in the least, doubt its sincerity; but I feared he was in danger of falling into another snare of the enemy, and I therefore said to him, "D., you must take care. About two months ago, I saw you for the first time, and you were looking at your works, and you were miserable. I saw you six weeks afterward, and you were occupied with your faith, and you were miserable. Today, I find you are occupied with your service, and I greatly fear it will take your eye off Christ, just as effectually as if you were occupied with your faith or your works. It is not that I value faith or service less, but I value Christ more." I have met many young converts who have fallen into the snare of getting more occupied with service than with Christ. They have allowed their work to get between their hearts and the Master, and, in this way, they have fallen into darkness and depression. Keep your eye on the Master — cling to Christ — abide in Him, and then you will be found in service of the right kind. It is only as we abide in the vine, that we bring forth fruit. We do not get to Christ by being in service, but we get to service by abiding in Christ. "If any man thirst, let him come unto me" For what? Is it to draw for others? Nay, but to "drink" for himself. And what then? "Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." This is the true principle — this is service in its right place — testimony flowing out of communion. If you make service your object, you will break down; but if you make Christ your object, your service will be of the right stamp.

The foregoing is the substance of my three conversations with Corporal D., so far as my memory serves; and I am induced to put it on paper for the benefit of others, by the consideration that the snares and difficulties which beset the path of one young convert may beset the path of thousands; and I do most earnestly desire to be helpful, in any way, to such. May the Lord, in His exceeding goodness, be pleased to use what I have written for the establishment of souls in His own eternal truth, and His name shall have all the praise.

Meditations on Song of Solomon

Ver. 16. "My beloved is mine and I am his; he feedeth among the lilies: The happy spouse now speaks with full assurance, as to the possession of her object. She speaks of Him as her own. There is conscious possession of the object of her affections. "My beloved is mine." She does not say, "I hope He is." But says plainly, without a question, He is mine. When affection is real, the desire of the heart is to obtain possession of the object. For this it will persevere. Nothing, less will satisfy the heart.

We have seen, in our Meditations, that the Bride was in the full enjoyment of the blessings of His love. We have also listened to her speaking with admiring delight, of His many, and excellent qualities; still the heart was seeking after possession — relationship. When the person is possessed, all his qualities and virtues are possessed. He Himself is mine. Thus will it be in the latter day. Christ will be for the remnant, and the remnant will be for Christ. "Thou shalt abide for me: thou shalt not be for another: so will I also be for thee." (Hos. 3) But we are all slow of heart to believe. Again and again, He assures her of His admiring love, and of His great delight in her. The outpouring of His affection is wonderful. Even when she speaks of her blackness, His ready reply is, "O thou fairest among women." How could a doubt remain as to the purpose of His heart? Now she sets what is coming, relationship is anticipated, she can say with certainty — He is mine! Blessed triumph! Happy victory! "Jesus is mine." Now, she speaks not of the fruits of His love, or of His excellencies, but of Himself. All are included in the person.

Couldst thou speak thus certainly, O my soul, as to the possession of any earthly object? Assuredly not. One might say, with a measure of truth, "This money is mine — This place is mine — This honor is mine — This happiness is mine." But how soon may all these things pass away from us, or we from them? Only when Christ is the object of the affections can it be truly said, "My beloved is mine." How often it has happened, that when we thought we had sure possession of that on which the heart had been set, it either eluded our grasp, or if, perchance, we got a hold, the long looked-for object withered in the hand like a flower plucked from its stem, or if it bloomed for a while, our disappointment was the deeper when it perished. How many, alas, of the children of men, will have at last to take up a lamentation and say, "All I cared for, all I lived for, all I toiled for, all I sighed for, is not mine, now — never will be mine, never can be mine; for a morsel of meat I sold my birthright, and now all hope is perished, and I must go penniless and portionless forever!"

What a vain thing it is, for any of the sons or daughters of men, to speak of "My" anything as to this world. Supposing one could speak of everything that the world holds dear, as my riches, my influence, my power, my wisdom, my fame, — what would they, what could they do for the soul, the nobler part of man? But, oh! how different, when Christ — the well-beloved, is the object of desire — of affection! And when faith can say without the least misgiving — "Christ is mine — He is my beloved — and my beloved is mine" — mine now — mine to wash my sins away — mine to clothe me with the righteousness of God — mine to dwell in my heart by His Spirit — mine through life — mine in the swellings of Jordan — mine in heavenly glory. Yes! my soul, and more — much

more! Mine to look to — mine to speak to — mine to care for me — mine to sympathize with me — mine to succor me — mine to close my pilgrim path — wind up my long and weary journey and take me up in the skirts of His cloudy chariot to be with Himself forever. Say, say, O my soul, is this — all this, a suited portion for thee? Is it enough for a poor, vile sinner?

Ah, who can weigh

The mines of treasure hidden in those words:

I am my Savior's, and the Savior mine?

What overwhelming prospects they reveal

Through ages yet to come! The spouse of Christ

Fears not to use them, glories in their use,

My Lord, my God, my Savior, my beloved!

But has she not His warrant? Said not Christ,

As Me the Father loved, so loved I you?

And loved He not unto the end His own?

And claims He not from them one only gift, —

That only gift their heart?

But ere leaving this blessed, precious, glorious subject, record thy wonder and astonishment that any of the sons and daughters of men should overlook, neglect, or despise this portion — this Christ, —this well-beloved. "For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily"— All else is emptiness and vanity. And now, as the risen one in glory, the heir of all things, He invites the poor and the needy, the rich and the noble, the young and the old, to come to Him, that they may share with Him His position, His riches, and His glory. "For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Rom. 10:1-13.

On the other hand, many a dear, precious soul that truly loves the Lord and trusts in Him is afraid to say, "My beloved is mine." They think it would be presumptuous. Surely they forget that He says it first. And can it be presumptuous to affirm that His word is true? It is always more humble to be guided by His word, than by our own thoughts and feelings. But how came such to love Him? Just because He first loved them. "We love him," says John, "because he first loved us." We never anticipate Christ. The soul that really desires Christ and His salvation, is in possession of both. It may refuse to believe it, but it is not the less true. He has already visited that soul in the riches of His grace. He creates the desire that He may satisfy it. He creates the love that He may meet it. He creates the faith that He may answer it. Every good thing cometh down from above. Nothing good can spring up in our hearts naturally. Nothing good can be planted there by the world or Satan. Everything that is good must come from above. And all this is wrought in the soul by the Holy Spirit, through the gospel. Every good thought or desire comes from the Lord; so that we may truly say, to desire Christ is to have Him — to desire His salvation is to have it. Every soul that

really desires to know Christ — to trust Him — love Him — serve Him — praise Him; shall surely know and enjoy Him; love, serve, and praise Him forever. Man may awaken expectations that he can never satisfy; he may induce love, and bitterly disappoint it: but not so the blessed Lord. He is the true God — His love is perfect. It has been fully manifested.

Be assured then, dear fellow-believer, that He is ours — ours, by the free gift of God; ours by the gift of Himself, so that we can say in all humility — “Jesus is mine” — “My beloved is mine.” May our souls be enabled to take a more comprehensive grasp of all that He is, and of all that He has for us!

“And I am his.” Well she knows that she is His. He has often assured her heart of this precious truth. The Bride is in the habit of saying what she thinks of her Beloved to others; but He addresses herself directly. “O my love, my dove, my fair one.” The dignity and glory of the Head are seen in Him. Is it not a truly blessed thought, O my soul, that the Christian belongs to no one but Christ — and is subject to nothing but Him? “Therefore let no man glory in men,” says the Apostle, “for all things are yours. Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come: all are yours. And ye are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s.” (1 Cor. 3:21, 22, 23.) Precious truth! It is plainly stated. The word can never change. “Ye are Christ’s.” The individual soul can say, “I am his.” Thus we honor God’s word. We belong exclusively to Him. We are subject only to Him.

Moreover, it is also said, “All things are yours.” While we belong to no one but Christ, all things belong to us. “Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas,” &c, &c. They are all in the place of servants to us, no longer as masters. Even death itself has lost the mastery; It is now to the believer, not a master, but a messenger of peace — his servant. It can no longer look on me as its prey; the world can no longer say I am its own; the enemy cannot say, I am his. That precious word settles all, “ye are Christ’s,” and no one’s else. Oh! believe it - so believe it, as to follow Him alone. We are bought with a price. We are His by right of purchase — the price, His precious blood. But is it not enough, O my soul, to know that thou art His — His now, henceforth, and forever — His in time, and His through all eternity? Blessed Lord! it is enough It is relief and rest to the heart, energy and power to the life, to know that Thou art mine, that I am Thine, and that I never can pertain to another. O my soul, meditate on these realities — ponder them closely. Though thou must now dismiss them for a season, return to them again. There is a living freshness to the soul in kindred love, in eternal relationship.

“He feedeth among the lilies.” She remembers the name He gave her, “The Lily.” This is happy — anything but presumptuous! Oh! that we might think more on the words which He uses, on the titles which He gives. As “The Lily,” she is the representative of all His people. In the largeness of her soul, she calls them all “lilies.” Besides, she knows that “He feedeth among the lilies.” He is to be found there. He finds His refreshment, satisfaction, and delight, in the garden of lilies. Oh! to be used in gathering lilies into His garden, that He may find fresh delight, while yet He delays His coming.

Ver. 17. “Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, turn, my beloved; and be thou like a roe, or a young hart, upon the mountains of Bether” (or division, margin.) The full assurance of His love, and the happy enjoyment of Himself by faith, greatly increases her desire for the day of His glory. Then, “all shadows flee away.” All types and shadows being fulfilled in Him, they pass away

when He appears. Now, we see through a glass darkly, then, face to face. We shall see the same Jesus then as we see now, but the dim glass shall be removed. "We shall see him as he is." For Israel, the rising beams of the Sun of Righteousness shall chase away forever all the darkness of night, and all the gloom of their long and dreary winter. The flowers appear, the birds begin to sing, creation is filled with joy.

The exercise of faith and hope in these two verses is beautiful and instructive. In reply to His description of the millennial day of glory, and of the place she has in His heart, (ver. 10- 5,) she thus expresses her faith, "My beloved is mine and I am his." And her hope "until the day break, and the shadows flee away." There is no question on her mind as to the day of glory being near. She only waits for its dawn, and she further knows, that before the brightness of that morning, every shadow must flee away. "And he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain." 2 Sam. 23:4.

But, "until" the dawn of that happy day, she prays her beloved to abide with her. She earnestly desires that she may have His gracious presence, and the comfort and sustainment of His love, "until" He appear Himself in glory. She clings to the person of her Beloved. Happy fruit of a well-grounded faith and a "blessed hope."

"Turn, my beloved, and be thou like a roe, or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether." She is still in the wilderness. Her trials are many. Like a country that is intersected with mountains and valleys, the pathway is difficult. She longs for her Beloved to come in power and glory, with the swiftness of the roe or the hart, on the mountains of division. What are the mountains and the valleys to the swift gazelle? They are as nothing. What are all the difficulties of Israel's full restoration to the Lord? They are as nothing. One gleam of His coming glory will strike terror into the hearts of their enemies, and prepare the way for the ransomed of the Lord to return and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." (Isa. 35:10.) Then, "every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain; and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." (Isa. 40:4, 5.) But, "until" that long looked for moment arrive, she prays to be maintained in the enjoyment of His love, and encompassed with His favor as with a shield. Blessed combination! Happy fruits of grace! Faith laying hold on the word — hope, looking out for the first streak of day — prayer, for the present enjoyment of His gracious presence. She is pressing on, and would press through everything, that she may be actually with Himself.

Consider this, O my soul, meditate on these things. Is this thy condition? Having faith in the word of the Lord, art thou looking, longing, and waiting for His return? And is it thy constant prayer to be maintained in His presence "until He come?" "The hour immediately before the break of day, is said to be the coldest and darkest hour of the night. So will it be with the remnant of Israel in the latter day. "Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it; it is even the day of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it." (Jer. 30:7.) But the first breath of morning will bring deliverance to the waiting, praying remnant, and destruction to their proud oppressors. "This know also," says the apostle, writing for the Church, "that in the last days perilous times shall come." Happy they, who are holding fast by the word, — following the Lord, and waiting for His coming. The last hour of the

night may indeed be cold and dark, but heed it not, O my soul, weather it, watch, pray — the morning will soon break — abide in thy watchtower. Happy they, who with diligent, sleepless eye, catch the first twinkle of the Morning Star!

“But ye beloved, building up yourselves in your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.”
Jude 20, 21.

Meditations on Song of Solomon

Ver. 1. “By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth; I sought him but I found him not”
The heart of the spouse is feeling the loneliness of the night while waiting for the dawn of the morning. She is thinking of the One who brings the morning with Him. But she has lost the sense of His nearness. This is failure. The conscience is awake — the affections are lively, “I sought him whom my soul loveth.” Yet there is no joy — she is in trouble. Pray, why is this, O my soul? How should this be? Hast thou discovered, in thy meditations, the secret spring of this strange condition? A lively conscience — ardent affection, yet in darkness! There can only be one cause for such a state of soul — the eye rests not on the Beloved Himself. Apparently, there may be other causes, but this is the real one. Her eye has wandered, and she is in darkness — in felt loneliness. She has rest as to salvation; “my bed”— a resting place, though, for the moment, it is “night” with the soul. It matters little, for the purposes of the enemy, on what the eye rests, if he can only get it off Christ. It may be occupied with the best of things, such as the work of the Lord, our brethren, brotherly love, the fellowship of saints. But even these things, blessed as they are, will lead to failure, if any one of them becomes the governing object of the heart in place of the Person of Christ. But what shall we say of self and the world coming in, in some of their ten thousand forms? Darkness, weakness, and sad confusion must follow.

Many have said, I know, with reference to such a state of soul, that it is the Lord hiding His face, that we may be tried, and that our affections may be quickened. We see no ground for such a conclusion as to the ways of the Beloved in the Song of Songs. Here, like the fine flour, He is perfectly even notwithstanding her changeableness. And, certainly, such a notion would be contrary to the plainest teaching in the Epistles. The same stroke of judgment that slew the Lamb, rent the veil; so that Christ and His redeemed entered into the “holiest of all;” and are in the light as God is in the light. Surely, Christ is in the light, never in darkness. And we are where He is, and as He is. “The darkness is past,” as John tells us, “and the true light now shineth.” And again, he says, “As he is, so are we in this world.” The veil is done away in Christ.

The soul, I admit, may feel when in darkness as if He had withdrawn Himself and was gone. But in such a case it is the soul that has withdrawn itself from Him; not the Lord that has withdrawn Himself from it. Of course, there will not be the same manifestation of divine love to the soul when it has lost sight of Him, as when it is closely following Him. As the Lord has said, “If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.” (John 14:23.) This is plain enough. The Lord is ever the same. He changeth not. When there is a change as to our communion— as to our enjoyment of Christ, it is entirely with ourselves. We may rest assured, that He will manifest to the fullest extent possible, the love that we can appreciate, so long as the eye is fixed on the Person of the Lord—so long as He is our object, our center, light, love, peace, and joy fill the soul. But when the eye wanders — when He

ceases to fill the full vision of our souls, darkness comes in; then follows, through the craftiness of the enemy, the numerous train of perplexing, agitating thoughts and feelings. "The light of the body is the eye; if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." Matt. 6:22.

Learn then, O my soul, from the experience of the spouse; this much-needed lesson, namely, "That nothing short of the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, can ever satisfy the affections of the new nature." "Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?" is the natural, genuine cry of that nature, when Christ Himself is not seen. The form of the cry may be different in each one, but the cause of uneasiness is the same in all. A single eye has not a double object. The Bride has got occupied, during the night, with something besides her Beloved. It may have been the wilderness — the weariness of the way — or it may have been with the anticipated glories of the breaking morn. But, certainly, it was not with Himself, as on a former occasion when she said, "A bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved unto me; he shall lie all night betwixt my breasts." Then, peace and joy filled her soul, and the sweet fragrance of His name was spread abroad. Now, restlessness and trouble, and her own failure is manifested.

Vers. 2, 3. "I will rise now, and go about the city; in the streets and in the broad ways, I will seek him whom my soul loveth: I sought him but I found him not. The watchmen that go about the city found me; to whom I said, Saw ye him whom my soul loveth " Her position and her action are changed, but rest is not found. She has shaken off the spirit of supineness. Her cry is the language of a soul in earnest. But the streets and broad ways of the city, where watchmen are placed to maintain moral order, are not the places to find her Beloved. "He feedeth among the lilies." And this she well knew, only she is confused and agitated, as many have been in similar circumstances. The footsteps of the flock — the shepherds' tents — the budding grass — the mountain of myrrh — the hill of frankincense — the field — the garden — the beds of spices — the rural scenes, in contrast with the city, were His favorite haunts, and where He was to be found. But if her inactivity was failure, her activity was a mistake. Had humiliation and confession followed the former, the latter might have been prevented. But, oh! who could fail to admire the fervor of her love, the fullness of her heart, and the honesty of her confession. Four times in these four verses, she speaks of "Him whom her soul loveth." But she never pretends to have found Him until she has, or to be happy until she is. Would to God we witnessed in all cases of failure, such affection, earnestness, and honesty. It was through the fervor of her affections that her failure was exposed. Oh! that every case of backsliding from the Lord, might be unveiled through the ardor of deep affection for the blessed, adorable Person of Christ!

But such are the affections of the Spouse for her Beloved, that nothing save Himself could for a moment meet the need of her heart. And had she been in heaven, in place of the city, and not found Him there, it would have been just the same. She must have continued her search. And as she passed from scene to scene, and from glory to glory, still her question would be, to all she met in the shining way, "Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?" Heaven, in all its brightness, without Him, would not have satisfied the affections of her renewed soul. It was Himself she was seeking — the Person of her blessed Lord — and nothing else, nothing besides, could take His place. Only the love of the Savior can satisfy the love of the saved — only the love of the Bridegroom can satisfy the love of the Bride. This is the ordinance of heaven - the wisdom and goodness of God. Thus the blessed Lord becomes the object and center of all renewed hearts, as He is God's; and also the object and center of all their ways, as He has been, and ever will be, the one object, and sole

center of all the ways of God.

A deeply blessed, and most practical lesson may be learned, from this grand central truth. "Love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love..... Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit." (1 John 4:7 - 19.) In the day of our regeneration, when "born of the Spirit," a new life is implanted in the soul, which finds its rest alone in Jesus. "Come unto me, I will give you rest." This is the rest of God, and of our new life. Above the world, above the clouds, above the storms, above the heavens, it rests on the bosom of the Beloved. Then, why is it that so many true Christians are strangers to solid peace and rest, not to speak of joy and love? Simply because Christ Himself is not the one object before the mind and the heart, and in all their ways, both human and divine. The uneasiness, the restlessness, the disquietude of true Christians is to be accounted for on this ground alone. The moment Christ gets his right place in the heart, everything else, consequently, drops into its own right place according to divine order. But if anything be allowed to come between the heart and Christ, the Holy Spirit is grieved, the soul is darkened, weakness and confusion follow, and the whole moral being gets out of order.

Jesus! Thou art enough

The mind and heart to fill;

Thy life — to calm the anxious soul;

Thy love — its fear dispel,

O fix our earnest gaze,

So wholly, Lord, on Thee,

That with thy beauty occupied,

We elsewhere none may see.

Ver. 4. "It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found him whom my soul loveth; I held him, and would not let him go, until I had brought him into my mother's house, and into the chamber of her that conceived me" Great was the joy of the delighted Shelomith when she found her Beloved. "I found him." Blessed declaration, "I" a poor weak, wandering, worthless one, "found him." "Found Him" — who is the spring of all joy — the fountain of all blessedness. Her earnest, loving search is rewarded. It must be ever so. "He that seeketh findeth." When the heart is really turned to the Lord, it soon finds Him. It is His delight to reveal Himself to such, as He did to the loving Mary. He meets His Bride in the way, she sees Him — she embraces Him — she holds Him — she will not let Him go, until she has brought Him into her mother's house.

But great as was her joy, it was as nothing compared with His, at first sight, the joy may seem to be all on one side. But it was not so. In the proportion that we love, will be our sorrow in losing, and our joy in finding, the loved One. Blessed truth, when seen in Christ. What a field for meditation! What treasures may be found therein! Here, much may be learned of the affections of the Lord, and of His deep sympathies with His people. Take an illustration.

Supposing the Bridegroom's love to be a hundred-fold greater than the Bride's, would His disappointment, on the occasion of her wandering, be a hundred-fold deeper than hers who had wandered? Most assuredly. The affections characterize the disappointment or the joy. What was the proportion between the joy of the Father and the Prodigal when they met? Rather, what was the difference? Infinite.' And so it must ever be, between the heart of the Lord and His people. Oh! how careful and watchful should we be lest we wander, and so grieve and disappoint the tender, loving hear'; of Jesus. And, oh! what a motive to repent and return, when we have wandered from Him, and thereby grieved and dishonored His blessed name!

But who, it may be asked, is the mother, and what are we to understand by the mother's house? We have the answer plainly given in the prophecies of Hosea. "Say ye unto your brethren, Ammi: and your sisters, Ruhamah. Plead with your mother, plead." Israel as a nation is the mother. And when the long-broken relations between the Lord and His ancient people are re-established, He will have entered the mother's house. But on these points we have already dwelt in our meditations more than once, and need not here further refer to them.

The spouse, or godly remnant of the nation, knowing His Bridegroom love, falls into His embrace. She could find no resting place until she found Him, and now, worn and weary with her wanderings, like the prodigal in the far country, she finds perfect repose in His changeless love. His heart is the only resting place of hers. "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," This charge was considered in our meditations on chap. 2: 7. The same charge occurs in chap. 8: 4. Each time it is given the coming of the Lord immediately follows. In chap. 2: 7, it is the revelation of Himself. "The voice of my beloved, behold he cometh." It is Himself, personally, that is here thought of. In chap. 3: 5, it is the Messiah coming in royal procession, as the true Solomon, crowned King of Israel by the heart of the nation. "Behold King Solomon with the crown wherewith his mother (Israel) crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart." In chap. 8: 4, the bride is seen leaving the wilderness as united to Him. This is marked progress. "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?" This is all that the heart desires. It is the consummation of all happiness. To be with Him — one with Him — and like Him, is the full, perfect, and eternal blessedness of all His people.

From the sixth verse to the end of the chapter, we have a prophetic view of the Bridegroom coming out of the wilderness with His Bride. "Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all powders of the merchant." The Jews rise not, like the Church, to meet the Lord, in the air. He goes to where they are. The Spirit of prophecy tells us that they were in the wilderness together. It was there that He revealed Himself to her, in His unchanging love, as the true Messiah. "Behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her." "And to the woman (the Jewish remnant) were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent." Hos. 2, Rev. 12.

And now, according to the prophecy under meditation, these "times" have run their course. The great events crowded up in these truly eventful years have been rapidly disposed of. The old serpent has been shut up in the bottomless pit, the beast and the false prophet have been cast into the lake of fire, and the rebellious nations have been judged. "The besom of destruction "has

swept the empire of antichrist. What man is, has been fully proved. He is set aside forever as a vessel of testimony, and Christ now comes to take the place of the faithful and true witness for God in the earth. The scene being thus cleared, the throne of the Son of David, the Prince of Peace, is set up. The Bride of the King is brought from her hiding place in the wilderness with royal honors. The sight is glorious! The morning breaks! The rising sun sheds his beams over the land. Jerusalem is filled with joy! Now they shall say, and the rapturous shout shall not die on their lips as it once did, "Hosanna! Blessed is the King that cometh in the name of the Lord."

The royal procession moves on. The wilderness is left behind forever. The sixth verse may be descriptive of the graces that shine in her. The smoking incense, and the sweet spices, give us the idea of praise, thanksgiving, and other fruits of the Spirit. Verses 7, 8, 9, 10, may be more especially descriptive of the dignities, excellencies, and glories that belong to the King. The "bed" or "chariot" is the royal carriage. But mark, especially, it is the King's own workmanship. "King Solomon made himself a chariot of the wood of Lebanon." Christ provides everything, and prepares everything for His people. He leaves nothing for us to do, save to enter into that which He has finished. The cedar wood is typical of fragrance and incorruptibility. The "pillars" of strength. The "silver" of purity. The "gold" of divine righteousness. The "purple" of royalty. "Love" is the spring of all — God is love. "The daughters of Jerusalem" and "the daughters of Zion" may refer to the cities and tribes of Israel, for all which, divine love has paved the way for their national dignity, and millennial glory.

Meditations on Song of Solomon

Ver. 1. "Behold, thou art fair, my love, behold, thou art fair; thou hast doves' eyes, within thy locks; thy hair is as a flock of goats that appear from mount Gilead." When the woman touched the hem of the Redeemer's garment, the virtue that was in him flowed out to her. (Mark 5) The finger of faith not only touched the border of His garment, but it touched the secret spring of His heart, which faith only can reach. All the treasures of that heart were thrown open to faith. Her case was "immediately" and perfectly met. The fountain of her disease was dried up, and all the streams cut off. "She felt in her body that she was healed of that plague." Yet she was without peace or rest of soul, to say nothing of joy. She fell at the feet of Jesus "fearing and trembling." Here, O my soul, pause a little, meditate, in the solitude of the sanctuary, on this instructive scene.

Is it possible, I ask, that all the virtue that is in the blessed Lord, may be possessed by a believer, and yet that believer be a stranger to peace? So it was with this dear woman before us, whose faith was great. And so it is, alas! with thousands of the Lord's dear people now. Herein is a mystery unto many. How is it to be accounted for? The case of the woman is plain enough? and also gives the explanation of every other case. Although she had received for her need, all the virtue that was in Him, she was still a stranger to the thoughts of His heart towards her. She needed the revelation of His heart to herself, to give her full peace in His presence. What she wanted, was the knowledge of what He thought about herself. And this is what every sinner needs, as well as the woman. He withholds nothing from the touch of faith. The first touch of faith secures for the soul all that He is Himself, and all that He has to bestow. But full repose of soul is only found in knowing the heart that surrendered all to win us for Himself. Then, but not till then, shall we be in the full repose of His love. Oh! to know His own thoughts about us! Oh! to know His love for us! "He loved me and gave Himself for me" are the highest notes we shall ever sing.

But, one glance more at this blessed scene before leaving it. Only watch, for a moment, the outgoings of the Savior's love, to this poor woman. Oh! who can understand the love that breathes in these words? "And he looked round about to see her that had done this thing." What love! His heart rejoices! He has gained His prize! From all eternity He had looked forward to that happy moment. The works of Satan are destroyed, God is glorified — grace shines, and faith triumphs. But His eyes must rest upon her. "Where is the one that has done this thing?" With what interest His eyes behold her! And now He reveals Himself to her heart, and fills her soul with the peace and joy of His salvation. "Daughter" — nearest and dearest of kindred — tenderest of human ties — thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague.

These reflections have been suggested while meditating on the first seven verses of this wonderful chapter. Here, the Beloved reveals to His loved one, in a remarkable way, the thoughts of His heart about herself - about her matchless beauty in His sight. Oh! for a circumcised ear and heart, to receive and retain forever, the words He has chosen to express His admiration of His Bride. He sits, as it were, and gazes with enraptured delight, on each feature of His fair and beautiful spouse. He then speaks plainly to herself of His admiring love. "Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse." Such praise from man would be most injurious, but when it comes from His lips, it only deepens our humility, and makes us more like Himself. It fills the soul with a calm and peaceful joy; it unites us more closely to His heart, and transforms us more into His image. It is the blessed foundation of closest fellowship.

After assuring her heart, in general terms, that she is "fair" in His sight, He enumerates seven distinct features, which He has been contemplating, separately, and minutely, with great delight. The eyes, the hair, the teeth, the lips, the temples, the neck, and the breasts. Each feature being perfect in itself He sees in her the assemblage of perfection and beauty. "Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee." The minuteness of the inspection manifests the boundless interest and delight He has in her. The number seven, too, gives the idea of fullness and completeness. But need we wonder? "The beauty of the Lord our God is upon us." In all parts and proportions, the believer is perfect in Christ's perfectness, and comely in His comeliness. He has put away all that was ours, and given us all that is His own. Hence we are exhorted to put off the old man, and to put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. (Eph. 4:22, 23, 24.) We will now briefly glance at the seven features separately.

"Thou hast doves' eyes within thy locks." The dove was ceremonially clean. It only, of all the feathered tribe, was offered in sacrifice on God's altar. (See Meditations, chap. 1: 14.) It is the understood emblem of humility, chastity, and harmlessness. "Thou hast doves' eyes." The eye is a term often used in scripture for spiritual light and understanding. "If therefore thine eye be single thy whole body shall be full of light." But there is one peculiarity about the dove's eyes which may be designed to teach the believer a needed lesson. It has a wonderful power of distant vision. It is supposed to see from an immense distance, its own dove-cot. Having been taken far from home, it may be seen, when liberated from its cage, ascending very high — steadying itself in the air, until it has discovered its way back: it then flies straight and rapidly home. Oh! for this power of distant and heavenly vision, that, having seen by faith the Risen Jesus, we may forget the things that are behind, and press on to those that are before. Christ, Himself, is the Christian's mark — but the "mark" must be seen, before we can take our aim. First, fix thine eye, O my soul, on the risen, exalted Man in glory. Then, "press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ

Jesus.” (Phil. 3.) The similitude is easily understood — is it true of thee, my soul? This is the question, what is thine aim? what is thy course? what is thy progress? Observe, the beautiful, bright eye of the Bride, glancing through her flowing tresses, meets the admiring eye of the Beloved, and ravishes His heart, “Thou hast doves’ eyes within thy locks.” “Her locks soften their brightness.

“Thine are the locks, of which each single hair
Draws nourishment distinctly, and has root
In Him, the Head: of which not e’en the least
Can e’er be injured to that Head unknown;
Thine are the congregated ringlets, diverse each
In form or fullness, yet containing each
Units all separable; vital all
And individual, howe’er amassed
In throngs collective, and those throngs themselves
Parts of a whole in fellowship with Christ,
Round whom His people cluster; and from whom
Derive those eyes of dove-like gentleness,
That look benignant on the world around.”

“Thy hair is as a flock of goats, that appear from mount Gilead” The comparison here, may be to the long, glossy hair of the goats that graze on Mount Gilead, and to the circumstance of their appearance as a flock, or one united company, feeding on the rich pastures of the high places. The effect, to the eye, must have been profusion in each, and unity in the whole. “Long hair,” the apostle tells us, is the covering, and glory of the woman, 1 Cor. 11:15.

But may there not also be a reference in this comparison, to the long hair of the Nazarite, which was the type of power in the Spirit? Samson’s great strength lay in his seven locks. They were the symbol of his unbroken vow — of his consecration to God. Every believer is a Nazarite to God, in Christ, and ought to be one in practice. “I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come.” (Luke 22:18.) This is the Nazarite vow of the blessed Lord; and every believer, being one with Christ, is under His vow. Herein lies the believer’s strength, namely, in separation according to the law of the Nazarite. While Samson’s seven locks were unshorn, the enemy could gain no advantage over him. The Spirit remained in power with him, so long as he kept the secret of his communion with God. But, alas, alas, how difficult for a Nazarite to retain his locks in the lap of Delilah. Alas, alas, that the foul fingers of a harlot should ever touch the locks of God’s Nazarite! Seek, then, O my soul, by diligence, watchfulness, and prayer, to live, and walk, in separation from the world, in fellowship with Christ, and in the power of the Spirit; that thy locks may never be shorn, and that the secret of thy communion may never be broken.

“Thy teeth are like a flock of sheep that are even shorn, which came up from the washing: whereof every one bear twins, and none is barren among them.” Here, the comparison fitly represents every point of the feature, with great perfection. In the sheep, even shorn, we have the encumbrance of nature removed regularly, evenness.

“Coming up from the washing” — cleanness, whiteness. They have been washed in the fountain which removes all uncleanness. The upper and under rows exactly correspond. They are “twins.” “None is barren among them.” There is none wanting. The Bride can now eat the bread of life — the old corn of the land. She is of full age. The risen, exalted, glorified, and coming Messiah, is the food and nourishment of her soul. In the Lord’s sight there is evenness, purity, fruitfulness, nothing lacking, in the one He loves. What a mercy it is so, and that He tells us, Himself, that it is so. “Bless the Lord; O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name.”

“Thy lips are like a thread of scarlet, and thy speech is comely” As the river of God’s grace which flows through this world, is deeply tinged with the blood of the cross, so should the conversation of the believer be. “I determined,” says Paul, “not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified,” and again, “God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Cor. 2:2; Gal. 5:14.) Observe carefully, O my soul, the significance of this feature in holy scripture. And, oh! may a deep scarlet line thread its way through all thy conversation; so shall thy “speech be comely” to thy well-beloved.

Nothing could be more loathsome, to the eye, than the lips of the leper; such are the lips of nature to God. Leprosy is typical of the sin of our nature. The leper was to “put a covering upon his upper lip, and cry, unclean, unclean,.....he shall dwell alone; outside the camp shall his habitation be.” (Lev. 14) Such, alas, is the representation of man’s sad moral condition —before God, however fragrant the lips, or comely the speech, to our common nature. But, oh! how changed when washed in the blood of the Lamb! In place of the white scaly lips of the leper, there is the pure, deep scarlet color of the pardoned, healed, and purified believer. “And such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.” 1 Cor. 6:11.

When Isaiah saw the glory of the Lord in vision, he was brought to see himself, morally, as a leper, and exclaimed, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts. Then flew one of the Seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar; and he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.” Isa. 6.

The bright scarlet thread that was bound in the window of Rahab, invites thy meditations. It speaks loudly, and distinctly, of the power of the blood of Christ; but, for the present, it may be left. More than ever, O my soul, let thy lips be preserved from everything that would mar their living freshness to the eye of Jesus, and also, in the sight of others. “Let your speech,” says the apostle, “be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.” Col. 4:6.

“Thy temples are like a piece of a pomegranate within thy locks.” The heart of the pomegranate is chosen to represent the temples of the Bride. “A piece,” or broken part, “of a pomegranate,” is the

emblem. The fruit is said to be delicious to the taste; and when thus broken it presents a bright red color, mingled with white. This comparison, I suppose, gives us the idea of modesty, shamefacedness, or blushing. Blessed change for the house of Jacob, whom the spouse represents. There was a time when the Lord had to say, of His ancient people, "I know that thou art obstinate, and thy neck is as an iron sinew, and thy brow brass." (Isa. 48:4.) What a change, now! What has grace wrought? Now, the Lord sees in His loved one, the perfection of meekness, and lowly grace. Even her blushing temples are hidden by her flowing tresses. "Thy temples are like a piece of a pomegranate within thy locks." What sayest thou to this feature, my soul? Meditate thereon, and pray that thine adorning may "be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price." 1 Pet. 3:3, 4.

"Thy neck is like the tower of David, builded for an armory, whereon there hang a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men" The armory of David was adorned with the trophies of his victories. He was a mighty man of war. The Lord delivered him out of the hand of all his enemies, and out of the hand of Saul." He subdued his enemies on all sides, and paved the way for the reign of peace, under Solomon, his son. But what were these compared with the victories of King Messiah? The entire book of God, may be considered as the record of the victories of Christ. But the tower-like neck of the Bride, adorned with many jewels, symbolizes the trophies He has won, within the land of Judah. We read of Israel, as a stiff-necked people — as wreathed about the neck with the yoke of transgression — and as walking wantonly with stretched forth necks. Such illustrations represent a sad moral condition. But now, through the Lord's grace, the change is complete — the triumphs of His love are perfect. The yoke of transgression is broken from off the neck of the daughter of Zion. In place of being obstinate as an iron sinew, it is graceful, beautiful, and stately, like the tower of David. "Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem;.....

Loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion." (Isa. 3:1, 2.) And now the Lord delights to contemplate this beautiful feature of His Bride — graced, with many chains of honor; "Meet for the necks of them that take the spoil." The holy liberty, and perfect happiness of His people, will commemorate forever, the victories of His love.

"Thy two breasts are like two young roes, that are twins, which feed among the lilies" This beautiful feature, the seventh in number, is the emblem, 1st, Of moral development — the formation of the heart for Christ — the affections drawn out to Him. 2nd, Of nourishment — the means of growth and blessing to others. The contrast between the spouse and "the little sister," of chap. 8: 8, is marked and instructive. "We have a little sister, and she hath no breasts." It is thought, by some, that the perfect development of the Bride, and its absence in "the little sister," represent the moral condition of Judah and Ephraim, or the two tribes and the ten. When the twelve are restored, the difference will be manifest. Nevertheless, the ten tribes will enjoy the blessed results of what has been done. Ephraim, however, will be a stranger to those deep exercises of heart, through which Judah has passed, in connection with the Messiah; and, consequently, to the moral development which these experiences give. It was after the captivity of the ten tribes, that Christ appeared and was rejected and crucified. And before they are gathered out of all countries and brought into their own land, He will have made Himself known to Judah as coming again in power and glory. The remnant, when the Messiah returns, will be chiefly composed of the tribe of Judah. The twin roes

may represent the unity of mind and heart which now prevails amongst the Jews, towards their long-looked for Messiah. In feeding “among the lilies” they now find their delight, where He finds His. “He feedeth among the lilies.” The heart is drawn out, and the affections, are formed for Christ, through the manifestation of Himself to us, by the Holy Spirit. Oh! that our hearts — my heart — may desire this, more and more, that there may be a more perfect development of His love there.

Judah will thus become the means of nourishment and blessing, not only to the ten tribes, but to all the nations of earth. “Rejoice ye with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all ye that love her; rejoice for joy with her, all ye that mourn for her; that ye may suck, and be satisfied with the breasts of her consolations, that ye may milk out and be delighted with the abundance of her glory. For thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream: then shall ye suck, ye shall be borne upon her sides, and be dandled on her knees. As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you; and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem.” Isa. 66:10 - 13.

The Bridegroom, having thus surveyed, with great delight, the faultless beauty of His Bride, proposes to retire to His favorite scenes of resort — the mountain of myrrh, and the hill of frankincense. It would appear, that she accompanies Him on this occasion. But whether she goes with Him, or remains behind, He drops into her heart this blessed word, “Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee.”

“Thy warfare is accomplished.” “Christ has died!”

Thy sins, though scarlet, have been covered o’er

With His free pardon and His snow-white robes;

Cast into ocean is thy hated guilt;

Abhorring evil, cleaving unto good,

Lo! thou art fair! there is no spot in thee!”

Meditations on Song of Solomon

Song of Solomon 4:8. “Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse, with me from Lebanon: look from the top of Amana, from the top of Shenir and Hermon, from the lions’ dens, from the mountains of the leopards.” We may sometimes, in our thoughtless wanderings, be much nearer the “lions’ den” than we are aware of; yet wholly unconscious of our danger. Under the attractions of nature, may be concealed our deadliest foes. We associate with “Lebanon,” as a type, our highest thoughts of earthly exaltation. But there, that which is so fascinating to the outward eye, so charming to the senses, shelters the devouring lion, and the cruel leopard. Its very luxuriance and beauty afford a covert for the enemy. The traveler, delighted beyond measure with the gorgeous scenery of Lebanon and Herman, may be enticed to linger until it be too late to get safely to the plain. His danger thereby would be imminent, unless he had a good and faithful guide.

Here, O my soul, thou wilt do well to pause a little. Bear in mind, that the fairest scenes of earth are infested by enemies more subtle and dangerous than the lions and leopards of Lebanon. Ponder

the paths of thy feet. What of thy proneness to wander, to linger amidst the attractions of the scene around? Learn to know thine own weakness — thine own tendencies. Some of the Lord's people, thou mayest have observed, are drawn aside by conformity to the world; others, by reading books which fascinate the mind, but dry up the soul; and not a few, alas, are ensnared by following their own will, and the way that seems right in their own eyes. But they all alike lead to the "lions' dens, the mountains of the leopards," or, to scenes and occupations of imminent danger to the soul. There is one eye, and only one, that can detect the snare — one voice, and only one, that can withdraw the heart from the place of peril. "From the top of Amana, from the top of Shenir and Hermon," divine love would say, "Look unto me." Thus shall the world, as it were, underneath, and unseen, be under thy feet. "Amana," observe, signifies truth, integrity. From truth's point of view, keep looking for thy Lord's return.

Nothing can be more beautiful and touching than the way the blessed Lord here seeks to call His Bride away from the scene of danger. "Come with me," are His words of matchless tenderness. He does not say, "Go! make haste away, danger is near, thou art on the verge of the lions' dens." O, no, but, "Come!" "Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse, with me from Lebanon." He seeks to wean her heart away from Lebanon, the place of earthly delights, but of spiritual danger. What ineffable grace there is in the word "Come!" The whole sentence breathes the tenderest sympathies — the deepest solitudes of His heart! How much sweeter to the ear is "Come," than "Go," There is fellowship in the one, there is separation in the other.

"Come thou and all thy house into the ark," said the Lord to Noah. He did not say, "Go thou," but "Come thou." The Lord, in grace, entered the ark before His servant, and being there, He could say "Come;" and in this way the man of faith was assured that the Lord was with him in the ark of salvation. What a comfort to know that the Lord is with us in the ship, however much it may be tossed by the troubled waters. But further, to the rebellious house of Israel he says, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord." (Isa. 1:18.) Mark also the gracious manner of His reasoning. When the invitation "Come" is obeyed, He puzzles them not with arguments, but sweetly says, "though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow: though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Blessed way of reasoning for a guilty sinner! only the Lord can reason thus. The same grace, blessed be His name, we have displayed to the whole world, in that word of widest invitation: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." No sooner is the word here proclaimed, believed, than the rest is secured. "I will give you rest" — rest from the burden of sin — rest from your own fruitless efforts — rest with myself in the paradise of God. Blessed Lord! would that that precious "Come" were more appreciated by those still at a distance! But the glory and the praise of the grace is thine. Once more: who has failed to admire the beautiful wind up of holy scripture with its many "Comes?" "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst, come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Rev. 22:17.

But there are other two words in the Bridegroom's loving call, from which the heart may drink in the deepest joy. "With me." "Come with me." "Could words possibly be found, better fitted to remove fear, and to fill the heart with confidence, whatever the circumstances might be? Impossible! If we have heard the lion's roar, and know that he is near, we may well be filled with alarm; for what power have we, in ourselves, to resist him? But these three words of matchless grace, "Come with me" contain everything that the heart needs. With Him she is perfectly safe, however extensive the

range of mountains over which she has to pass, and whatever the danger may be. But mere escape from the lions' den, is the very least mercy these three words unfold. They express the delight He has in her company. Her presence is His joy. Wondrous— blessed truth! This is the richest thought of all. His delight in us; His desire to have us with Himself! Not, of course, that He is dependent on, or indebted to, the creature for His supreme delight, for He is God as well as man, and suffices for Himself. He is the independent — eternal, living One; the Jehovah Jesus. But, as Son of Man, in wondrous grace and love, He has made us necessary to the full display of His glory, and His eternal delight. The Church, which is His body, is His fullness. (Eph. 1:22, 23.) And to the daughter of Zion He also says, "Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house: so shall the King greatly desire thy beauty; for he is thy Lord; and worship thou him." Psalm 45:10, 11.

This beautiful passage will be brought home to the heart of the spouse — the Jewish remnant — in divine power, when the Lord returns. He is seeking here, to turn away their thoughts and sympathies from the old Jewish order of things, "the father's house," that they may be entirely conformed to the new order of things under the Messiah in His kingly glory. Israel's blessing will be on the earth, in Immanuel's land.

The Spirit of God has taken such pains to unfold this precious truth, "with Christ," that it may well invite thy meditations for a little while. It is established in the changeless purpose of God, and runs like a golden thread through every circumstance. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things." (Rom. 8:32.) What a thought! "All things.....with Christ" — in fellowship with Him. Health or sickness — poverty or riches, I am in each state with Him; and have Him in each state. According to the Apostle's reasoning, the greater includes the lesser, and the lesser is possessed and enjoyed with the greater.

Should the Christian be so reduced in circumstances, as that a dry crust and a cup of cold water were his richest repast, yet he could triumphantly say, such as it is, I have it with Christ, and Christ with it. From the lowest condition on earth to the highest pinnacle in glory, we have all with Christ, and our richest blessing is to be one with Him. So wondrous — so real — so perfect, is our oneness with Christ, the Church's head, that the Apostle says, "I am crucified with Christ." And of all Christians he says, "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him." And in different parts of scripture, he speaks of it under seven distinct aspects, which gives us the idea of divine completeness. 1. We are crucified together. 2. Quickened together. 3. Raised up together. 4. Seated together. 5. Heirs together, 6. Sufferers together. 7. Glorified together. And so precious to the heart of Jesus, is this oneness, or identity of the Church with Himself, that in each place where our future state is spoken of in scripture, it is defined as being with Christ. "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise." "Absent from the body, present with the Lord." "Having a desire to depart and to be with Christ which is far better." "And so shall we ever be with the Lord." "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." Amen! This is rest, perfect rest, to the heart forever. Refreshed, as if bathed in the ocean of His shoreless love; return to thy meditations on the beautiful Song of Songs, yet still to dwell on the volume of His heart, which only loves.

“Thy best repose on earth, is broken still;
Thy “Lebanon” invaded and disturbed
By leopard-spotted, watching enemies,
By roaring lions seeking to destroy;
But come with Me in communings divine,
And I will lead thee where destroying beast,
Nor noisome adversary can approach,
Where My redeemed, with everlasting songs
Triumphantly rejoicing, wave their palms
Of blood-bought victory around thy throne
In bliss unspeakable — where sin is not,
Nor death, nor change, nor anything but joy.
My spouse, My purchased, from Amana look.
From Shenir and from Hermon look afar!
Fixed on the basis of the promises,
Be ever gazing on Thy glorious rest.”

Meditations on Song of Solomon

“Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse; thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck. How fair is thy love, my sister, my spouse! how much better is thy love than wine! and the smell of thine ointments than all spices thy lips, O my spouse, drop as the honeycomb; honey and milk are under thy tongue; and the smell of thy garments is like the smell of Lebanon.” Matchless as were the various views from the top of Amana, Shenir, and Hermon — beautiful and enchanting to the eye as were these glorious fields of nature — fragrant with richest odors as were these spicy mountains; the eye and the heart of the Bridegroom turn from the contemplation of them all, to admire the loved one by His side. He sees in her what He can see nowhere else. The feelings and affections of his heart, reflecting back on Himself from hers. The beauties of the scene around them may be typical of those things which the men of the world esteem as most excellent, choice, and noble; but in the beauty and the love of the Bride, the royal Bridegroom finds His delight and satisfaction. He sees in her the blessed fruits of His own unquenchable love of the travail of his soul, and is satisfied. (Isa. 53:11.)

Precious truth for the heart of every believer!

A man may have a very handsome estate, and value it much, but he can never have the same feelings towards it that he has towards his wife and children. They, are a part of himself, not it. What were all the pleasures of paradise to the first Adam compared with his delight in his loved

and beautiful Eve? She was part of himself, not creation. He had been cast into a deep sleep, and from his opened side, an helpmeet was formed. When he awoke out of sleep and saw standing by his side the fair one, whom the Lord God, in His goodness, had provided for him, he exclaimed, "This is now bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh." The blank was now filled up. He had seen nothing till now to suit his heart. The fair creation — the beauties of Eden, had been, as it were, a blank to the first man, until he possessed and enjoyed the blessed fruit of his typical sufferings and death.

But what was merely typical in the first man, was real in the second man — the last Adam. He was indeed cast into a deep sleep— the sleep of death; and as the fruit of His opened side, a second Eve, as it were, has been formed, all fair and spotless in His sight, who shall, ere long, share with Him, the joys and dominion of the new — the redeemed creation; and there, amidst its glories, reflect His love which was stronger than death, and bask in the beams of His cloudless favor forever and ever. Need we wonder then, at His enraptured admiration of her likeness to Himself? Almighty power could create a world; divine love alone, through suffering and death, could redeem a lost sinner. Who can understand this love— this love to a poor worthless sinner? But were it more the subject of thy meditations, O my soul, thou wouldest wonder less at these most marvelous words, "Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse." And yet, with all that thou knowest now, or ever can know hereafter, these words must forever be most marvelous. "Thou hast ravished my heart; "in the margin, it is "taken away." Amazing truth! The heart of Christ ravished — taken away! And by what — by whom? By the attractions of a sinner saved by grace — by one who has been washed in His own precious blood, and adorned with His own peerless excellencies.

This expression of the Savior's love, stands in the center of the sacred volume, and is, in some respects, the most remarkable we have in scripture. But the entire chapter, of which it forms a part, is, in some respects, a more wonderful unfolding of His love, than we have anywhere else in the Book of God. As to details, there is nothing like the Song of Songs in any other part of the Bible. "Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse." He now takes the place of Brother as well as Bridegroom. "My sister, my spouse." Blessed relationship! Happy union! Well known, and highly praised by Him, though as yet comparatively little known by her. But the main question here, is one of heart — of feelings — of the Savior's love, not to the Jew only, but to all who believe in Him. His association with the remnant, whom He speaks of as His sister, His spouse, is the occasion of its bright and full display. Amidst all that is beautiful, she alone attracts His eye; she is the contrast of all that is to be found on earth, or amongst the angelic orders in heaven. We nowhere read of the heart of the Creator being ravished with the beauties of creation. This mystery of mysteries was left for the Redeemer and the redeemed.

Here, love may meet a kindred heart,

But not a heart like thine;

Lord, from Thy love I cannot part,

Nor can'st Thou part with mine.

Then speak the word—that gladdening word,

To bid us rise to Thee —

To bid creation own her Lord,

And all His glory see.

A question, which has exercised some, very naturally arises here. Why is it, that we have such a full, and detailed expression of the love of Christ to the Jewish remnant in the Canticles, compared with the Epistles which are addressed to the Church of God, “the bride, the Lamb’s wife?”

In the first place, the Song of Solomon may be considered as the revelation of the heart of Christ to all saints, whether Jew or Christian, earthly or heavenly. Christ’s love is perfect, and always perfectly developed according to the relationship in which we know Him. Under the allegory of Bride and Bridegroom-love, the feelings and affections of His heart are here expressed, and in perfect harmony with that position. King Solomon, in whose day there was something like a passing gleam of millennial glory, is the chosen and fitted vessel to represent these blessed realities. There is a moral application of the sayings of Christ in the Canticles, which is unspeakably precious to the Christian. Happy they who can drink at such a fountain!

The following remarks from the pen of another may be helpful to the study of this precious book, as to the character of the affections therein developed by the Jew, as compared with the Christian; and which may account for the manner of the Lord’s love in this book.

“However strong these affections may be, they are not developed according to the position in which Christian affections, properly so called, are formed. They differ in this respect. They do not possess the profound repose, and sweetness of an affection which flows from a relationship already formed, known, and fully appreciated, the bonds of which are formed and recognized, that counts upon the full and constant acknowledgment of the relationship, and that each party enjoys, as a certain thing, in the heart of the other. The desire of one who loves, and is seeking the affections of the beloved object is not the sweet, entire, and established affection of the wife, with whom marriage has formed an indissoluble union. To the former, the relationship is the consequence of the state of the heart to the latter, the state of heart is the consequence of the relationship. Now, although the marriage of the Lamb is not yet come, nevertheless, on account of the revelation which has been made to us, and of the accomplishment of our salvation, this latter character of affection is that which is proper to the Church. Praise and glory be to God for it! We know in whom we have believed.”

In the second place, the relative position of the Jew to Christ in the Canticles, and of the Christian in the Epistles, is widely different; and needs to be known, or we shall fail both in our thoughts and affections, in that which is due to Him; and apply to the Church that which relates to Israel, and to Israel that which belongs to the Church. We know the blessed truth of our oneness with Christ as risen and glorified. “He that is joined unto the Lord is one Spirit.” (1 Cor. 6:17.) Oneness in life and position with Christ glorified, goes far beyond what the apostle calls “the Jews’ religion.” Even now, at this present time, we know, that we are sitting in the heavenly places in Christ. And though here on the earth, poor, faulty, failing ones, we know that we are sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession. (Eph. 1) But what is sweeter far than all besides, we know the greatness of His love, according to the sacrifice, by which He has brought us into this heavenly position, and everlasting association with

Himself. Hence we know the complete settlement of the question of sin, full and everlasting forgiveness—perfect justification, and acceptance in the Beloved. Christ was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification. (Luke 7:4.8; John 5:24; Acts 13:38, 39; Rom. 4:25.) Our redemption is accomplished, relationship is already formed; we only wait for glory—the marriage of the Lamb. We count on His promise, “Surely I come quickly,” “For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.” But while waiting for His coming, we know and enjoy, though feebly, through the power of the Holy Ghost, the affections of His heart, which properly belong to that unspeakably blessed, and eternally established relationship.

Israel's position, in the Canticles, as brought out by the Spirit of prophecy, comes far short of this. There is no question, however, of the purification of the conscience. Pardon and justification are not touched upon. It is more a question of the heart — of the creating, forming, and drawing out of the affections for the Person of the Beloved. The knowledge of Himself, and the certainty of relationship, are not yet fully entered into, or enjoyed; and these are the very things which the heart that loves so earnestly desires and looks forward to. The Bridegroom, of course, knows the relation in which He stands to her, whom He calls, “My sister, my spouse.” Hence the wonderful unfolding of His heart directly to herself, that she may know the purposes of His love. He assures her, and reassures her, of her beauty, value, and preciousness in His sight. And even when she has failed through forgetfulness of Him and His love; He meets her with an affection that cannot be turned away from its object. Thus her heart is exercised through the manifestation of His love, grace, tenderness, and kindness; her affections are thereby deepened, He is exalted above all others in her eyes, and appreciated as the “chiefest among ten thousand..... yea, the altogether lovely.” Her heart is thus gradually formed for Himself, and that by the revelation of His. The forty-fifth psalm is the celebration of this blessed result. There, the remnant — the Jews — are greeted as the “fellows” of the King, and Jerusalem as “the queen in gold of Ophir.” The nations now honor her with their presents, and entreat her favor she is now in the closest relationship with the King; and received into the ivory palaces. But we return to our text.

“Thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck.” What the Lord here means by the words “one of thine eyes, one chain of thy neck,” may be difficult to determine. He may refer to His appreciation of each single grace, and each spiritual ornament in the believer; or, to His delight in each believer, individually, as well as in His people collectively. The least of all saints can never be overlooked by Him, or undistinguished from others, either in time or in eternity. We are loved as individuals, saved and glorified as individuals. This truth is clearly taught in Luke 15, and John also speaks much of our individual blessing, the family of God being his principal theme, as the Church of God is Paul's, and the wilderness journey Peter's, yet it is Paul who says, “who loved me, and gave himself for me.” Paul here speaks as if he were the only one that Christ loved and died for. Faith appropriates what grace reveals. It is only in this way that the heart enjoys the revelations of grace. Understandest thou this, O my soul? It is all important. This is the province of faith alone. It makes the blessing, however great, personal. No matter what grace reveals in Christ, as the children's portion, faith is sure to say, “It is mine.”

But in our happy homo above, not only shall we be known personally to the blessed Lord, but to each other. Peter seems to have had no difficulty in recognizing, on the Mount of transfiguration, which was Moses, and which was Elias. So must it be in the resurrection state, where all is perfection. A thorough distinction of persons will be manifest there. Paul will never be taken for

Peter, nor Peter for Paul; and each will have his own crown and glory. Blessed, yet solemn thought! each saint will have his own crown. All will be known there for what they are in the estimation of the Lord. Yet all will be perfect, all happy, all in the full joy of the Lord, and all shining brightly in His glorious image, which all shall then perfectly bear.

“How fair is thy love, my sister, my spouse!” Were our meditations on the Lord’s appreciation of our love, more deep, earnest, and simple, we should be more undivided in heart for Him. Love begets love. It is the fire I sit at that warms me. The nearer the fire the warmer I am. The nearer I am to the heart of Christ, the warmer will be my own, and the more intense the flame of love to Him. As well might I think of getting warmed by going out to the garden and looking at the snow, as getting more love to Christ by looking to myself, thinking of myself, and trying to increase my love for Him. But, somehow, many say, I do not grow in love to Him, and in appreciation of His love to me, and I do desire to feel more love to Him. Well, then, if it is the fire I sit at that warms me, it is also the food I eat that satisfies me. Let thy soul then feed on Christ. And a rich repast thou wilt find in this wonderful chapter. Meditate thereon. It will bear being studied, word by word. And oh! think of the heart that each word flows from. Unbelief lets the words of Christ go for nothing, faith feeds on them. But be sure and rise in thy meditations to the heart whence they flow. Ever study His words in fellowship with Himself. Beware of separating the word from the Person of Christ. Thus shall thy love increase, and thy practical conformity to Himself grow exceedingly.

To know how highly He values our love, should lead us to the contemplation of that which will nourish and strengthen it. “How fair is thy love, my sister, my spouse! How much better is thy love than wine! and the smell of thine ointments than all spices.” If such revelations of His love win us not, what will? There is no wine, no joy of earth, so pleasant to Him, as the love of His spouse. No odor so sweet, as the smell of her ointments. He tells her they surpassed “all spices.” The hospitalities of the self-righteous Jew were nothing to Him, compared with the love of the fallen one at His feet. But such fruit of the Spirit will only grow in the light of His presence. Plants never grow well in the dark. They may produce a few pale, sickly leaves, but that will be all. Fruit and fragrance will only be found when the plant has the full benefit of the light of heaven. “I am the light of the world,” says Christ, “he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.” “He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit, for without me, ye can do nothing.” John 8:12; 15:5.

The honeycomb must first be filled by patient industry before it drops. The honey must be gathered from every flower. Such should be the habit of the Christian; learning something from almost everything. But, alas, we too much resemble the butterfly, and too little the bee. The former may be seen hovering over the flower for a little, then flying off without tasting its sweetness, while the latter fastens down upon it, and sucks the honey out of it. Thus her storehouse is filled by little and little. The word must be carefully studied, and the heart well stored, before the word suited for the occasion lies ready under our tongue. As the fruit of the Spirit, the Lord is refreshed and delighted in finding it so. “Thy lips, O my spouse, drop as the honeycomb; honey and milk are under thy tongue; and the smell of thy garments is like the smell of Lebanon.” The dropping of the honeycomb may suggest the idea of a thoughtful selection, in contrast with “the multitude of words” spoken of in Proverbs. Words are like seeds, they germinate, and bear fruit; whether they be sharp and bitter, or good and wholesome words. How important then, to sow good seed. If we sow tares we cannot reap wheat; and if we sow wheat we shall never need to reap tares. “For

whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.” Oh! to be ever dropping the words of kindness, gentleness, meekness, truth, faith, hope and charity. What is purer than milk? What is sweeter than honey? What more nourishing than the one? What more healing than the other? The blessed Lord owns us in the Spirit, and not in the flesh, and here speaks of the precious fruits of the Spirit which are so delightful to Him. Into His own lips, “grace is poured,” and all His “garments smell of myrrh, aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces.” And He finds, to His supreme delight, in His beloved spouse, the perfect answer to Himself. “Grace for grace”— grace answering to grace, which is sweeter fair to His heart, than all the productions of nature. When the hills and valleys of Canaan, so redolent with “all spices,” and “flowing with milk and honey,” shall have passed away, the, loved one before Him shall abide in His presence, with increasing freshness and fragrance forever and ever.

“Songs of praise

Blending in theme with angel harmonies,
And earnest pleadings for a holier state,
And lowly mournings of humility,
And longings for Thy coming — for Thyself —
Have never yet been silent in Thy Church:
But faint, alas! and feeble are the sounds;
Lord, magnify Thy grace, and make us more
What in Thy mercy we are made at all!
Make Thy word sweetness to our inmost souls —
Open our mouths, and let it thence distil,
That all may know Thee, love Thee, and adore!
Be as the dew unto Thine Israel!
Clothe them with goodly raiment like Thine own —
Perfumed with such a fragrance from on high,
That none can come within their influence,
Without perceiving they have been with Thee,
And from Thy cedar-palaces received
Odors peculiar to those sacred heights,
Which from this lower world are separate!”

Meditations on Song of Solomon

Vers. 12-14. "A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed. Thy plants are an orchard of pomegranates, with pleasant fruits; camphire, with spikenard, spikenard and saffron; calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense; myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices." A few moments' meditation on the physical position and character of the land of Israel, will greatly help to the understanding of these beautiful, and instructive comparisons. In the center of the habitable world, the promised land is said to be situated. A chosen spot of great natural beauty and fruitfulness. It is also important to observe, that the locality of the Jews is not the result of accident, but of divine arrangement. Hundreds of years before Israel had any national existence, "the Most High," in marking off the boundary lines of the different nations of the earth, reserved for His chosen people this central place.

The following passage clearly proves this important point. "When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel. For the Lord's portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance." (Deut. 32:8, 9.) Much may be gathered from this interesting truth, as to the place which Israel occupies in the thoughts and purposes of God. This central spot has already been the scene of events, far surpassing all others in their importance and results; and it shall yet be the scene of events, for which the heavens and the earth are waiting, and to which all scripture points. The prediction which appears only as a bud in Eden, shall be displayed in its full blown glories in the promised land.

Through the failure of Israel, the land, we know, is now lying waste. It presents anything but the idea of a center; it is trodden under foot of the Gentiles; but though it has long been like a wilderness, and the shadow of death, it will not always be so. The Lord of that land is, at present, absent; He has gone to the "far country;" but He will return, and take possession of His own. (Luke 19) "The land is mine," saith the Lord; and, according to His original intention, it will become, in due time, the center of all nations — the glory of all lands — the praise of all people; and His beloved Jerusalem shall be the metropolis of the whole earth, and the center of blessing to all who dwell therein. The royal banner shall then float over its bulwarks, as the certain token that the "Nobleman" has returned — that the King of Nations is there.

From the top of Pisgah, Moses was privileged to see this goodly land before he died. The Lord Himself showed it unto His servant Moses. What grace! What condescension! What an honor conferred on Moses! "I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not go over thither." (Deut. 34) He was permitted, before closing his eyes in death, to survey the future dwelling place of the Lord's redeemed — to see its fertile valleys — its beautiful mountains — and its well-watered plains. In describing the country, under the guidance of the Spirit, he says, "For the Lord thy God bringeth thee unto a good land, a land of brooks, of waters, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills; a land of wheat and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil, olive, and honey; a land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness, thou shalt not lack anything in it; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass." Deut. 8:7, 8, 9.

From the rich and varied productions of the Holy Land, the comparisons of our text seem to be drawn. The spouse of the Lord is here likened to a "garden," an "orchard," a fountain;" so replenished is she with all that is pleasant and fruitful to Him — so varied are the graces of the

Holy Spirit in her — there is abundance for the heart of her Lord. “Spikenard and saffron: calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense; myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices.” What a truth for thy meditations, O my soul; ponder it well! Look at its different parts. The “garden,” may be celebrated for its choice collection of flowers— aromatic shrubs — and all pleasant plants. The “orchard,” for all manner of trees, bearing precious fruit, and the “fountain,” that which irrigates the whole scene. Every leaf is bedewed and moistened from the living fountain of waters. What a breadth and depth of thought this should give us, of what the people of God ought to be for Him, in this world. Like the choicest of gardens, compared with the barren, “waste howling wilderness,” should the people of the Lord be, in comparison with the people of the world. Well, how is it with thee, my soul? Is there freshness — growth — fruitfulness, in the things of the Lord? Can He come into the garden of thy heart, and eat His pleasant fruit? Known unto Him are all thy thoughts and ways.

But, further, observe, the delighted heart of the Bridegroom describes His spouse as “A garden enclosed — a spring shut up — a fountain sealed.” She is all, and only for Him. Her eyes wander not after another. She is perfectly content with her portion, in her Well-Beloved. Christ is enough. He is a complete covering to her eyes — the perfect filling up of her whole heart. No wishful, no inviting look is cast on any other. Contentment fills her soul. “I am my beloved’s, and my beloved is mine: he feedeth among the lilies.” The bloom — the fragrance — the fruit, are for Him, and Him alone. Her garden is closed against all others — the royal seal is affixed on the King’s fountain; the living waters spring for Him alone. “Know that the Lord hath set apart him that is godly for himself.” (Psalm 4:3) No stranger must be allowed to tamper with that on which the King’s seal is affixed.

“Nevertheless the foundation of the Lord 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. 2:19.) “My son, give me thine heart,” is a fair demand. O, hearken, my soul, to the voice of wisdom. When this demand is complied with, we can have no heart for the world. No man has two hearts. Although, alas! we sometimes seem to have two. Let me watch against this. If the blessed Lord has my heart, I can have none for the world. A divided heart He cannot accept. Rather, let me say, Had I two, He should have them both.

The words “enclosed,” “shut up,” “sealed,” forcibly suggest the thought of the believer’s entire and well-defined separation from the world. Like a piece of ground that has been reclaimed from the common around; well fenced, well planted, well eared for; and kept for the owner’s especial use and pleasure. Though in the world, the Christian is not of the world. As Christ Himself says, “They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.” He is there as the servant of Christ, and should learn to do all things for Him. “And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.” (Col. 3:17.) No matter what it is, from the smallest thing to the greatest, he is to do all as service to Christ. Will this be service to Christ? is the question. Not, merely, what harm is there in doing this or that? and then doing our own will in place of the Master’s.

The Apostle Paul could say, “For me to live is Christ.” As if he had said, “For me to live, is to have Christ as my motive, Christ as my object, Christ as my strength, and Christ as my reward.” This would be separation from the world, and yet rendering the best service possible in the world. When the eye is kept steadfastly fixed on the Person of the Beloved, the heart is kept full of Him —

the conscience is clear —the judgment sound, and our service fruitful. The closer we are to the fountain-head ourselves, the surer we are to become the channels of blessing to others. Like the spring in the desert, or the river in the valley, it benefits the region around. “If any man thirst,” says Jesus, “let him come unto me and drink.” “He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.”) John 7:37, 38, 39.

From the heart thus filled with Christ, through the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, a blessed testimony will be given to the risen and glorified Jesus. It should flow forth like “rivers of living water.” For this testimony the believer is responsible to his absent Lord. “He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.” (1 John 2:6.) Here we enter on the ground of true Christian responsibility. Being a Christian, I am responsible to walk as one. Not that I may become one, bless the Lord! but because I am one. What a mercy! we are not responsible to gain a place in the divine favor. The blessed Jesus has accomplished this. But being, through His precious blood, in the place of perfect favor— perfect peace, joy, and acceptance, we ought to walk according to the position in which grace has set us. Being a child of God, I ought to walk as a child of God. And being a servant, I ought to walk as a servant.

Our responsibility as men— as children of the first Adam — was perfectly met by our blessed Lord when He died for us; and now, all our responsibility flows from our relationship to Christ — the last Adam, risen and glorified. “As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.” (John 20:21.) This commission, observe, was given by the risen Jesus to the disciples, not to the apostles only. And for this mission we must give an account to Him at last. Most solemn truth! But wholesome to be known, and borne in mind. “Every one of us shall give account of himself to God.” (Rom. 14:10-12.) It may be well to make two or three remarks here with reference to the judgment seat of Christ, as we have found many souls confused and troubled on this subject.

In the first place, the person of the believer can never come into judgment. He has “passed from death unto life.” (John 5:24.) He is “justified from all things.” Christ was delivered for his offenses; and where are they? all gone, and gone forever. His name be praised. He was raised again for his justification; and what then? Being raised up together with Him, he is associated with a risen Christ, in His eternal life, and acceptance before God. “There is therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” (Rom. 4; 5; 8) The believer himself, then, can never be brought into judgment. Besides, when he appears before the tribunal of Christ, he will be in his body of glory. He shall then be like the blessed Lord Himself. “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.” (Phil. 3:21.) How far, how very far, this glorious truth removes all thought of judgment, as to the person of the believer, I need not say. He is glorified before he is called to the judgment-seat, and knows well that he is a co-heir with Christ, and in the same glory with Him.

Secondly. The sins and iniquities of the Christian can never be brought into judgment. Christ has already borne their judgment on the cross, and put them all away forever by the sacrifice of Himself. There will be no second judgment of the believer’s sins. A full end has been made of all sins, confessed by us, and borne by Jesus. (Heb. 9, 1 John 1:9.) “Who his own self bare our sins

in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness, by whose stripes ye were healed.” (1 Pet. 2:24.) So complete — so perfect, was the work of Christ on the cross, as the substitute of His people, that not the least question as to sin, was left unsettled. Every question was forever closed when He exclaimed “It is finished.” On the ground of this gloriously finished work, divine love meets the chief of sinners, in all the riches of the grace of God. And so great is this love towards the sinner, who pleads, before God, the name of Jesus, and trusts only to His precious blood, that not only are his sins and iniquities all forgiven, but they are said to be forgotten. “Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. For by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified.” (Heb. 10) Such is the power — the potency of love, over all our sins, that they are gone from the recollection of Him who loves, and can never come into judgment.

Thirdly. But although neither the person, nor the sins and iniquities of the believer, are the subjects of the Lord’s judgment at that day; his works, as the Lord’s servant, must all be brought up before the tribunal of Christ. Hence the faithful word of warning by the Apostle, “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.” (1 Cor. 15:58.) He has been dwelling, at great length, on the resurrection of the body, now he touches on what may be called the resurrection of works. “Every man’s work shall be made manifest; for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every mans work of what sort it is.” (1 Cor. 3; 4.) But this trial of the quality of our works, should not be thought of with fear and dread, but as one of our greatest privileges. Because then shall be fulfilled that precious word, “But then shall I know even as also I am known”

God is light, and God is love. He is all love — all light for His children. But His love will have them in the light as He is Himself. This will be perfect blessedness because we shall then be in the perfect light, as well as the perfect love of God. God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. Our new, our divine nature loves the light — delights in it. The least darkness would be an insupportable burden. To be in the light, is to be manifested, for light makes manifest. Nothing can be concealed there. And we would not, blessed be His name, have one moment of our history, with His tender, gracious dealings towards us, left in the dark. The heart shrinks from the very thought, notwithstanding all our own weakness, and naughtiness. “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.) When the whole course of my life is manifested in the perfect light of God — of God in Christ, “Then shall I know even as also I am known.” My judgment of all that was good and bad, in that life, will be according to the perfect judgment of God.

All that has been done for Christ, as the fruit of His grace in us, shall be approved and rewarded by Him. That which has been done merely in the energy of nature, cannot be owned, but must now be consumed as “wood, hay, stubble.” All that has been produced by the Spirit of Christ in us, shall abide forever, as “gold, silver, precious stones.” (1 Cor. 3:10- 13; 4. 1 - 5.) Much self-denying — cross-bearing service, which has been gone through by many from the best of motives, but the means used un-sanctioned by scripture, shall then be analyzed with divine accuracy. All that the Lord can own as good He surely will, and abundantly reward. And many a holy purpose of the heart, which had for its object “the Lord’s glory, but which was never accomplished, shall then be

brought to light, and have its full reward. The smallest service done for Him on earth, shall not be overlooked in that day. "For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily, I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward." (Mark 9:41.) If A. has given one, and B. two cups of cold water, B. shall have a double reward. It will also be made manifest in that day, what it was that prevented us from doing more good, considering the light we had, the opportunities enjoyed, the grace bestowed, and the operations of the Holy Spirit in us. Nevertheless, each one will have the place prepared for him of the Father. But never till that moment shall we know how much we owe the blessed Lord. Then, but not till then, shall we know what He has been for us, and what He has had to bear from us. Then will be seen, in the true light of His presence, the love of that heart which ever rose above all our unworthiness, and manifested itself in patient grace, tender love, and unwearied goodness. And then, too, will be seen the ten thousand times ten thousand instances in which we sought, in the pride of our hearts, to please ourselves, exalt ourselves, make something of ourselves, in place of serving the Lord Jesus, exalting Him, and making Him our all in all.

The long-suffering, patient, tender love of Jesus in thus bearing with us for so many years, will be known and understood in all their perfection. And the sweet recollections of a love, far surpassing all others in tenderness, shall then fill our souls with the most perfect admiration, fervent adoration, and enraptured praises forever.

And not unknown, or forgotten in that day, will be His many — His miraculous interpositions on our behalf, and wondrous deliverances during our unconverted days. Many a time when Satan had beguiled us to the very brink of hell, and thought that another push would send us in; the mighty, loving, adorable Jesus, threw the arm we were despising around us — saved us — and gently led us back from its slippery edge. Oh! with what overflowing hearts shall we retire from this privileged scene — the tribunal of Christ! Oh! what material it will have supplied for the praises of heaven! Now we shall know the use of our golden harps. And the spring of joy which has been opened there, shall flow on, with ever deepening fullness, and freshness, throughout a long, bright, and happy eternity.

There are other two distinct sessional judgments spoken of in scripture, which it may be well just to notice, to prevent confusion. 1. The judgment of the living nations, "when the Son of Man shall come in his glory." (Matt, 25. 31 - 46.) This takes place at the commencement of the millennium. 2. The judgment of the dead, before the "great white throne," when heaven and earth flee away. (Rev. 20:11-15.) This takes place at the close of the millennium, and is quite distinct from the judgment of the living nations, and from the judgment of the saints in heaven, before the tribunal of Christ. The notion of one general judgment of the righteous and the wicked, has not the sanction of scripture.

Meditations on Song of Solomon

Now, at this present time, we should walk by faith in the light of that future day. The threefold effect of this truth on the mind of the Apostle, is worthy of our special attention. "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences." (2 Cor. 5: 11.) 1. Knowing what a terrible thing it must be for a sinner to appear before God in his sins, and under a responsibility entirely his own, the Apostle is stirred up to preach the gospel with great earnestness. "We persuade men." He seeks to warn

— to impress others, with the immediate and unspeakable importance of salvation. What an awful thing it must be, for an unbeliever to answer personally for his rejection of Christ and salvation. Who would not be aroused to deep, soul-stirring earnestness, in the preaching of the gospel, by such a consideration?

2. The Apostle was already in the light — already manifest unto God. “But we are made manifest unto God.” The judgment-seat bore no terror for the Apostle. It only stirred him up to greater zeal for the salvation of others.

3. Thus walking in the light, the man of God — the servant of Christ, goes on with his work; his conscience, mean time, reflecting the light and the love of God. He commends himself to the consciences of those amongst whom he labors. “And I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.” Oh! that these blessed, precious, and practical results may flow to thee, my soul, and to many others, from thy meditations on the tribunal of Christ.

And to this end may we experience the various operations of the Holy Spirit, as referred to in the following words of the blessed Lord.

“Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out” The word “wind” is sometimes used in scripture, in reference to the Holy Spirit; and this verse, is like the Lord praying for the different operations of the Spirit, in the hearts of His beloved people. “Blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out.” There are spices — “chief spices” in His vineyard, but something is needed to cause them to flow out. He has just been walking in His garden, surveying His pleasant plants, and calling them by their names.

He knows well every plant in His vineyard — when planted — what care it has received, and what fruit should be forthcoming. They are all of His own right hand planting; “that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified.” Psalm 80:15; Isa. 61:3.

“Like trees of myrrh and spice we stand,

Planted by God the Father's hand:

And all His springs in Zion flow,

To make the young plantation grow.”

But sometimes a death-like stillness comes over the whole plantation, both old and young are affected by it. The balmy branches yield not to the breath of the Spirit, so that the rich perfume is not collected by, and carried on the breeze. “Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south;” is now the patient husbandman's cry, “blow upon my garden.” A sharp, keen blast from the north; or the genial gales of the south, may be employed, to awaken, quicken, and arouse the Lord's people from a state of sad supineness. But, Oh! sweet thought! He to whom the garden belongs, and who knows well every plant that is in it, holds in his hand the breath that fans, and the whirlwind that sweeps. And for all His tender, precious plants, He carefully adjusts the due proportion of the north and the south wind.

Happy enclosure! where the piercing gale

Nips but the budding weeds, while, kept secure,

The cultured plants are refuged from all ill,

To flourish in the soft succeeding calm!

“A little while,” and they shall all be transplanted to the more genial clime of the paradise above. There, the piercing north wind of affliction, chastening, and discipline shall no longer be needed. There will be nothing in those cloudless regions to wither the leaf, nip the bud, blight the blossom, or stunt the fruit. Enough, O enough, of all this sad and sorrowful work, have we had in this cold world of ours! Come, O, come; hail, happy day, when far, far away from the wilderness, where trial often comes like a terrible blast, as if it would up-root the feeble plant; and where sorrow often fills the heart, and shame covers the face, because we have been so fruitless in that which is good, and so fruitful in that which is evil; but then, all evil shall be done away; no grief, no canker, no worm there. Rooted in the pure soil of heaven, and continually drinking in the dews of eternal love, we shall bloom and bear fruit to the ineffable delight of our Father’s heart — the unutterable glories of our blessed Lord, through the abiding presence of God the Holy Spirit with us.

Lord grant, that now, my heart may be entirely inclined to the culture which thou seest to be the best; that my heart may bow to every breath of thy Spirit, and that there may be such fruit and fragrance in my life as shall afford thee pleasure. Oh! to be ever free to say, “Let my beloved come into his garden and eat his pleasant fruits.” These few, are the only words which we have from the lips of the Bride, in this wonderful chapter. But they are happy, blessed words. “My beloved.” She is at home, and happy in His presence. He, Himself, is hers. She knows it. She enjoys it. He is her own beloved Lord and Savior. “My beloved.” But when she speaks of the garden, she calls it “His garden.” And of the fruit she says, “His pleasant fruit.” This is true ground, as we elsewhere read; “My well-beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill. And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein.” And again, speaking of His care of that vineyard, which proved so unfruitful to Him; He says, “I the Lord do keep it: I will water it every moment, lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day.” Isa. 5; 27

In the fifteenth of John, the blessed Lord speaks of Himself as the “True Vine,” His people as the “branches” and His Father as the “husbandman” — the vine-dresser. Oh, what a wondrous sight! The Father looking down from heaven, beholds, all over the habitable world, His own beloved Son, bearing fruit to His glory, through the many branches of this goodly vine! What a wide-spreading vine! It is only through the supply of the rich juices from the parent stock, that the branches bear fruit. What a lovely sight to the Father’s eye! What a constant care for the Father’s heart! But, oh! how rewarded, when He sees the branches, thus vitally connected with His Son, “filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God.” (Phil. 1:2.) “Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit.” John 15:8.

No sooner has the loved and beautiful Shelomith invited her Lord to come into His garden, and partake of the refreshing fruits thereof, than He answers, “I am come.” He does not say, “I may, or I will,” but “I am come.” Already, while she is yet inviting Him, He is present. His heart is ever ready — waiting to attend on the cry of His beloved ones. Oh! happy spouse — oh! happy people, that are in such a case as this! To have the King of kings, and Lord of lords, waiting, ready to attend when they call. The fruits of the Spirit are always acceptable to Him. Rich and varied He now finds them, and greatly He is delighted with this banquet of love.

Chap. 5: 1. "I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse; I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk; eat, O friends, drink, yea drink abundantly, O beloved." These different fruits may represent the different results of the Spirit's operations in souls by the truth. There may be tears, bitter as myrrh, flowing from one, under a deep sense of past failure. The Spirit of God having applied the truth in power, to the conscience, the heart is broken. Its deep fountains are opened up, and bitterest tears of deepest anguish flow like a river. And now, out comes, in unreserved confession, before God, the whole matter. Second causes are lost sight of, in the searching light of God's holy presence. "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight." These are close quarters for a soul to be in with God. Though David's sin had been against his neighbor, and against the well-being of society; yet he says, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned." All sin is against God; and it is a painful thing to have to do with God about our sin. But right into the presence chamber of the Holy One we must go, just as we are, if we would get rid of the awful burden of sin. There, and there only, can we find full relief. The weeping penitent must lay down the multitude of his sins, side by side with the multitude of God's tender mercies. Only there can he learn what that word meaneth, "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." The Father meets His child, blessed be His name, in the boundless grace of His heart, on the ground of the precious blood of Jesus. As the rising wave from the fathomless ocean, hastens to meet and embrace the descending stream, and overflow all its limits; so does grace meet the penitent sinner, and obliterate forever all trace of his sin. Its course, like a river, may have been long and deep, but now, its very course and limits are untraceable.

O love divine, thou vast abyss!

My sins are swallowed up in thee;

Covered is my unrighteousness;

From condemnation I am free;

While Jesu's blood, through earth and skies,

Mercy! free, boundless mercy! cries.

Having passed through the experience of the fifty-first psalm, David could praise and worship God with a joyful heart according to the strains of the one hundred and third. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits; who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercies." Thus God's majesty, holiness, and truth have been maintained, sin judged in the light, the conscience cleared, the heart made happy, full communion restored, and the soul established in grace. The tears may have been more bitter than myrrh, but the results are sweeter than honey, and more fragrant, to the heart of Christ, than all spices.

The Lord finds every variety of fruit, in the assemblies of His people. But with all that which is of the Spirit, He has the fullest fellowship and enjoyment. "I have gathered.....I have eaten.....I have drunk." He partakes of all the variety. He slights none. In the advanced disciple He may find that which indicates the strength and vigor of wine; while in the new born babe there may be the

sweet simplicity of milk. An infidel, chafed and annoyed by the beautiful simplicity of a believing child, who was speaking about the joy and happiness of being with Jesus forever, said to her, “but what if Jesus be in hell?” “Ah,” replied the dear child, “but it would not be hell if he were there.” How simple, yet how unanswerable! How honoring to the name — how refreshing, to the heart of Jesus! What hast thou for thy Lord, O my soul? What can He gather from thee — what can He eat — what can He drink of thine? What is sweeter than humility? What is more honoring to the Lord than entire dependence on Him? What more grateful to his heart, than a daily, growing desire for the glory of God?

Many will partake of this royal supper, and enter into its joys. Many, very many, are the “friends” of the Bridegroom. And all, in the day of His glory, will enter into His joy. Wondrous, long-looked-for day of heavenly and earthly glory! All hearts will be reached and touched with that joyous invitation. “Eat, O friends, drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved.” The “natural branches,” long broken off from the stock of promise, shall, as the apostle says, be grafted in again. “In that day”— the day of Israel’s restoration — “the Lord shall cause them that come of Jacob to take root; Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit.” (Isa. 27) What a feast shall then be provided through restored Israel, for all nations. The face of the world shall be filled with fruit. “And in that mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people, a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined.” (Isa. 25) Again, “And it shall come to pass in that day, I will hear, saith the Lord, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth: and the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil; and they shall hear Jezreel. And I will sow her unto me in the earth.” (Hos. 2) Here the figure is changed from ingrafting to sowing, as if God was going to do an entirely new thing in the earth.

‘Now we know, from the New Testament,’ says a recent writer, that in that day, “the heavens” will be occupied by Christ and his glorified saints. Jehovah will hear the heavens, “and they shall hear the earth.” Christ, in whom all things, both in heaven and earth, will then be gathered, will be the One to whom prayer shall be addressed from all on earth, even as it will be through Him, and His glorified saints, that blessing will be universally administered. “And the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil.” No want, no scarcity even then. The voice of complaining will have ceased to be heard in the streets. Creation’s universal groan will have been hushed; yea, it will have given place to universal hymns of gratitude and praise. “And they shall hear Jezreel.” Now Jezreel, as scholars tell us, means, “the seed of God;” and this interpretation of the word is confirmed by what immediately follows, “I will sow her (Israel) unto me in the earth. There shall be one unbroken chain of blessing from the throne of Jehovah, the great source of all, down to the enjoyment, by mankind, of all the blessings of this life: and the place in this wondrous chain filled by restored Israel, is that of Jezreel, the seed of God, sown by Jehovah, and to Him, in the earth, and filling the face of the world with fruit. Jehovah — the heavens, occupied by Christ and the Church in glory — the earth — restored Israel, or Jezreel, the seed of God —universal blessing on the earth, even to the abundance of corn, and wine, and oil, while war and violence are at an end; “And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.” Praise, eternal praise, to Him who alone doeth wondrous things! Let the whole earth be filled with His glory.

Oh! what a circle of blessing is presented to us here! Mark it well, O my soul, and meditate thereon. Look forward to the happy day, when He who has been long absent shall have returned, and shall say in the ears of His waiting people, “I am come” — “I am come into my garden, my

sister, my spouse.” Then shall the promises made to the fathers, be fulfilled to their children, according to the word of the Lord. Jehovah in the highest heavens —Christ and His glorified saints, in the heavens that are connected with the earth — then restored Israel in the holy land, and all nations of the earth, thus linked together in one glorious chain of universal blessing. Oh! what a circle of glory! What a circle of “friends!” What a feast of love! And what a joyous welcome from the heart of Him who is “Lord of all!” “Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved.”

Meditations on Song of Solomon

“I sleep, but my heart waketh; it is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying, Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled: for my head is filed with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night” In this sad confession of the Bride, we have brought before us an aspect of experience, which many believers, Christian as well as Jewish, are frequently passing through, and which well deserves our patient meditation.

By far the greater proportion of Christians are more occupied with themselves, and their changeable feelings, than with the word of God. This is the fruitful source of endless troubles and perplexities to the soul. How often it happens in the history of some Christians, that when they experience a change of feeling in themselves, they hastily conclude that Christ Himself is not now what He once was to them. They judge the Lord by their own feelings, in place of believing in Him according to His own word. This is looking to self in place of Christ, and being governed by feelings in place of the unchangeable truth of God.

Only a few hours ago, as we may say, following the order of our song, the spouse was in the full joy of her Lord's presence. She was then bright and happy, like a certain class of Christians in the full current of a joyous meeting. But supper being ended, and the guests withdrawn, she retires to rest. Very soon, alas, a change comes over her feelings which greatly troubles her. “I sleep, but my heart waketh.” She is restless, uncomfortable, unhappy. The heart is breathing after Christ, but she is indisposed to exert herself for Him. What a sad, melancholy state of things, when the blessed Jesus is knocking at the door! But this is no uncommon case. The believer may be in the main right at heart, but having fallen into a low, dull, sleepy state, spiritual duties become a burden, and they are either entirely neglected, or not done heartily. This is a miserable state of soul to be in, “I sleep, but — my heart waketh.” It is well to look at both sides of this “but.” She is neither asleep nor awake. On the one side there is a slumbering conscience, on the other, a wakeful heart. No quiet rest can she find — no refreshment. And well it is so when we become careless about the things of the Lord. But what a picture of thousands, and tens of thousands, who ought to be bright, happy, and always ready girded for anything in the way of service to Christ and immortal souls.

We now turn to the bright and blessed side of this instructive scene. Has the Lord changed because she is changed? Blind unbelief would be sure to say He had; and then unworthy thoughts of Christ would follow, and no end to doubts and fears. When inward thoughts are guiding, the words of Christ go for nothing. But, really, has her coldness and indifference not changed Him in the least towards her? The love of Christ towards His spouse, never for one moment changes, notwithstanding her backsliding and inconstancy. But no better answer could be given to the question, than the words of the sleepy spouse herself. Drowsy as she is, she knows His knock, and discerns the voice to be His; and still she says “my beloved” There is a life in her soul which

must ever respond to that voice, in spite of failure. "It is the voice of my beloved" she says, "that knocketh, saying, Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled: for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night." Now thou hast, O my soul, the poor changeable believer, and the unchangeable Savior before thee, face to face, on the page of eternal truth. What thinkest thou? Are the vain suggestions of the human mind, in such a case, to be the guide, as to the mind of Christ, or the plain word of God? What could be plainer or more to the point, than the word before as? Mark it well, O my soul, and meditate thereon. And may its blessed light ever be reflected, from thy heart and conscience, in all thy intercourse with backsliding and troubled souls.

Fall of the most patient, touching love, are the words of the Bridegroom to His weak and erring Bride. In place of being influenced by her sad state of soul, and accusing her of ingratitude and indifference towards Himself, He appeals to her in terms more tender than on any former occasion. "Open to me" He says, "to me" — thine own Messiah — thy Beloved — I am Jesus — why shut the door against me?" "Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled." Never before had He called her His "undefiled," This term of wondrous grace and significance, was reserved for the day of her deep failure. And never before had He alluded to the heavy "dews," and the heavier "drops" of the night, by which He had been overtaken, in His path of devoted, unselfish love for her. Oh! what an appeal! Its deep, deep tones reecho from the darkness of Gethsemane, and from the solitudes of Calvary, the greatness of a love which nothing could turn aside from its purpose. But, alas, His appeal has but little effect on her sleep-laden conscience.

Is there anything in all this, let me now ask, that looks like a change in the love of Christ towards His backsliding one? Who can say there is? unless it be, that He now reveals His love more fully, and appeals to her more tenderly. Does He not plead with her in a way that is fit to melt the heart in listening to Him? He pleads as if it would be a great favor to Him, to be admitted under her roof? Or, like a weary traveler who has lost His way in a dark and stormy night, He pleads for shelter. It is also worthy of special note, that never before, at any one time, had He addressed her in so many terms of endearment. "Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled." Such, O my soul, is the love of Christ—the love of Christ to a wandering one. Consider it well. There is but one heart that never changes. Oh! how we should value that heart - trust in that heart — count only on that heart — and always keep near to that changeless heart of perfect love. But, oh! alas, what hearts are ours. All this patient, wondrous love, is met by the slumbering spouse with great indifference, and answered with the most trifling and frivolous excuses.

"I have put of my coat; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them? " Alas, alas, for the daughter of Zion! How insensible, through failure, to the claims of her own Messiah — her gracious Lord. What a hardening — deadening thing is sin! "It is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God." Once away from the presence of the Lord, and who can tell how far we may depart from Him, or into how many by-ways we may wander. The thought of such a course is fearful to contemplate. And the more we love our brethren, and the more spiritual our perception is, of this dreadful evil, the greater will be our sorrow over a backsliding soul. Who that has a care for souls and the Lord's glory, has not wept in secret over the too manifestly decaying zeal, and dying energy of a once earnest, fervent spirit? The pastor's heart once so cheered, so thankful, so hopeful, so delighted, to see such freshness of soul for Jesus! Early at all the meetings — the countenance beaming — the spirit joyous — every word about Christ dropping into —the soul like the oil of gladness; and only retiring from the public meeting to meditate on

some fresh truth, and enjoy deeper communion with the Lord in secret.

Those who have felt the sorrow of such a bright soul being led astray, know what it is. As the green, fresh leaf of summer, after a severe blight, looks withered and drooping — seared as if a hot iron had passed over it; so, alas, does the soul that has been led away by some subtle snare of the enemy. Everything in appearance and manner changes.

Oh! how changed! irregularity in attendance soon follows. Every one, he imagines, is changed towards him; slow to learn the change is in himself. He takes offense at some little thing, it may be, and leaves. Now his seat is empty — he is gone — to where? The Lord only, in most cases, can answer this question. Not that we should be indifferent to “where?” But the Lord only can trace the steps of his wanderings. His sleepless eye follows him everywhere; and the heart that was once pierced for his sins, can never, never, no never, cease to care for him. In the wisdom of His love, He may allow the failing one to taste the bitterness and sorrow of his self-chosen ways; thus it will be with Israel by and by; but the Lord has always within His reach the means of bringing to repentance, and of the soul’s full restoration to Himself.

“My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for him” This is a movement in the right direction. The Lord be praised. His own hand has done it. Now we have something like an answer to His love. Feeble it is, but real. The heart is moved for Him. She has never ceased to call Him, “my beloved.” There is affection for the Lord, though failure. But when the gentle, gracious knockings of a Savior’s love are unheeded, He employs other means. He knows the state of the heart, and what will effectually move it towards Himself. “Shall not God search this out; for he knoweth the secrets of the heart.” (Psalm 44:21.) Sometimes by means the most unexpected He reaches the conscience. The light coming in discovers where we are and what we are. Grace triumphs. The soul now seeks the presence of the Lord, and the happiness that is to be found alone in Him. Still, it may be some time before it fully recovers from its failure. There may be much sorrow, humbling, breaking down, before the perfect repose of His presence be found. Confused and agitated, like one just awakened out of sleep, we may run and seek the Lord where He never said He would be found. The sanctuary, not the city, is the place of His blessed and joy-giving presence.

“I rose to open to my beloved; and my hands dropped with myrrh, and my fingers with sweet-smelling myrrh, upon the handles of the lock.” Is there such a thing as sweet tears as well as bitter? and can both flow, mingled down at the same time? What more bitter to the taste than myrrh? What more fragrant to the smell than sweet-smelling myrrh? “My hands dropped with myrrh, and my fingers with sweet-smelling myrrh, upon the handles of the lock.” (myrrh, signifies, flowing, weeping.) Distinct now, and real, is the response of the Bride to the persevering love of her Bridegroom. “I rose to open to my beloved.” She is recovering from her spiritual indolence. The sense of her sin in not opening the door when He knocked, is bitterness in her soul; yet it is mingled with great affection for the one she slighted. Reaching the door at which He stood long, she finds the scene filled with the fragrance of His Person. Laying hold on the handles of the lock, “her hands dropped with myrrh, and her fingers with sweet-smelling myrrh.”

Now that she is awakened, and alive to what she has been, and to what she has done, deepest sorrow, and bitterest regret, mingled with the most adoring love for her good and gracious Lord, fill, and overflow her soul, like one who has ventured back, after sorrowful failure, to the scenes of

former spiritual enjoyment. The well-known entrance — the sight of many faces, so familiar — the sound of a voice not forgotten, and which has still an echo in the now melting heart — fill the soul with deepest emotions. The whole scene recalls to the mind many by-gone days of truest happiness. And now, mingled with the yielding up of the heart to the love of Jesus, are the smittings of an upbraiding conscience. The heart in silence breathes, "Lord Jesus, I am ashamed and blush before Thee. Miserable and unhappy have I been every hour of my wanderings. Oh! how ungrateful! how ungrateful have I been! Oh! that I should have brought this stain on Thy blessed name! My soul is bitter with self-reproach. Lord, can I be forgiven.' But oh! deepen in my soul the sense of my sin in going astray, and of Thy holiness and grace, in bringing me back to Thy fold, Restore unto me the joys of thy salvation. My soul cleaveth unto Thee."

Blessed Redeemer! I acknowledge now

How wise, and firm, and suitable thy ways

Of mercy and of judgment — each in turn —

Bright, and more bright Thy loving kindness shines,

Dark, and more dark my own depravity.

By love's most strong constraint with hands that drop

Sweet smelling odors by Thyself bestowed.

No longer in responseless apathy

I hear Thee knock: but now obedient made.

Meditations on Song of Solomon

"I opened to my beloved; but my beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone; my soul failed when he spake; I sought him, but I could not find him; I called him, but he gave me no answer." Like Joseph of old, who sought, in many ways, to exercise the hearts of his brethren, because of their guilt concerning himself: so the true Joseph will deeply exercise the hearts of His brethren, the Jews, in the latter day, because of their condition before God. But Joseph did not love his brethren the less, because he allowed them to pass through a trying, sifting process. His heart was full and ready to burst forth in expressions of strongest affection when the right moment came. What a relief to him when the flood-gates were thrown open, and when the long pent-up love of his heart had a free course. So shall it be with the Lord and Israel, just before He reveals Himself in power and glory, for their complete deliverance, and the full manifestation of His love as their own Messiah.

The point of analogy, however, which is here so striking between Joseph and his brethren, and Christ and the Jews, completely fails when applied to Israel and the Church of God. The common notion, that Christ sometimes withdraws Himself, or hides His face from Christians in order that He may try them and prove them, has no foundation in the Epistles. With the Jew, of course, under law, everything was different; God dwelt in the thick darkness — the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest — the perfect sacrifice had not been offered — the conscience of the Jew had not been perfectly purged, therefore he could not have full peace. But with Christians, the

position of things is entirely changed. "The darkness is past, and the true light now shineth." We are "accepted in the beloved." Our sins, according to the judgment of God, were all, and forever, put away by the one offering of Christ. When God's full judgment against sin was expressed on the cross, the veil was rent, and the way into the holiest of all was laid open. We, dead in sin; and Christ, dead for sin, were quickened together, raised up together, and seated together in heavenly places; God having forgiven all our trespasses. There can be no veil between God and Christ in glory, and we being in Christ, all perfect before the face of God, there can be no veil between God and us. And, moreover, the Holy Ghost has come down as the witness and power of our present oneness with the risen and exalted Christ, and to give us, by His indwelling, the conscious enjoyment of our place and portion with Christ, in the presence of God. The very thought of the Lord hiding his face from those who are in the full light of God with Himself, and as Himself, is surely utterly foreign to the whole doctrine of Scripture, about the Church. True — alas, how true — we may forget how richly we are blessed in Christ Jesus — we may forget that we are associated with Him as risen from the dead, and gone up on high — we may forget that His life is ours, and that His delights should be ours also; and forgetting these things, we may get away from Him, and sin against Him. And no sin, let us remember, can be so hateful to God, as the sin of Christians; and that, just because we are brought so near to Himself. But, alas, we must be away from Him when we fall into sin; none of us could sin in His presence. There, it is hateful to us, and we have power over it.

So dignified is the manner of the Holy Ghost, when referring to this subject, that He barely admits the possibility of the Christian sinning. "If," He says, only the possibility of such a thing is supposed. "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 2:1, 2.) Here we have divine provision for all the need of our pilgrim path. The advocacy of Christ, founded on righteousness and propitiation, secures the cleansing away of our defilements, and maintains us spotless before the face of God. How opposed to this blessed truth is the common notion, that God sometimes hides his face behind a cloud, in order to test the faith and love of His children! We may fail to enjoy this blessed truth, or we may be ignorant of it, but the truth of God remains unchangeably the same; and the position of the Church, before Him, in Christ, is as unchangeable as the truth that reveals it.

Now, if we turn from the Church to Israel as such, we find, not analogy, but the contrast to all this wondrous grace. For although, "at the time of the end," the remnant are looking for the Messiah, and longing for Him with true affection; they are still under law, and allowed to feel its pressure. Like the man slayer of old, they will be, as it were, in the city of refuge until a change in the priesthood takes place. (See Numb. 35) The appearing of the Lord's anointed, in the exercise of His Melchisedec priesthood, will be the great antitype of that ancient law. A change in the priesthood, through death, brought liberty to those who were prisoners in the cities of refuge. "But after the death of the high priest the slayer shall return unto the land of his possession." Israel, in the latter day, before the Lord appears, will pass through a deep, sifting work under law, as many scriptures clearly show. The solemn judgment of God against their sin of blood-guiltiness must be felt and owned in the conscience. And when He appears, this blessed, though severe work will be deepened, but then it will be under grace. The following passage refers to this point. "And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of

supplications; and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his own son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.” Read carefully Zech. 12, also 13 and 14.

But is it not truly beautiful, O my soul, to see the reality and fervor of affection, which “the blessed Lord has erected in the hearts of His people, even amidst all their sufferings. How sweetly the heart of the spouse breathes after her well-beloved! Indeed, this is the character of the Song of Solomon The Psalm give us more of the workings of conscience in the remnant, the Canticles, pre-eminently, the affections of the heart. This is the side which we have here, and a blessed side it is. Here we have the Bridegroom-love of Jesus manifested, and its sweet and touching reflection in the heart of His loving spouse. “My soul failed when he spake.” She could hear Him, but could not see Him, and her heart fainted within her, she had slighted Him in an evil hour, and being still on the ground of righteousness, He had withdrawn Himself, and was gone. But He loved her not the less because He did this. And if she felt keenly the hiding of His face, He felt it infinitely more. Never did the heart of Joseph burn with such an intense flame of love to his brethren, as when he was concealing himself from them. But a greater than Joseph is here! “Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and forever.” And mark, it does not read — God is the same yesterday, today, and forever; of course He is that; but it is of “Jesus Christ,” Savior and Bridegroom, that the passage affirms, He never changes. Learn then, O my soul, to confide in Him. Never doubt His love, whatever appearances may be, or distrust His grace; grace can never, never fail.

The scene which follows is a painful one. She is out of communion, and all is in confusion. The very energy and ardor of her love, bring her into all sorts of trouble. She exposes herself, as it were, to the taunts of professors inside, and to the rough treatment of the world outside. Everything for the moment is out of place as to her ways, but her heart is right in the main, and true to her Lord. “I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my beloved, that ye tell him, I am sick of love.” Oh! how few of us could say, “I am sick of love.” How seldom we expose ourselves to persecution through the fervor of our affections! May we know more of the communion which causeth the heart to burn, and the words to flow in living testimony for our absent Lord!

To those who know the Lord I speak,

Is my Beloved near?

The Bridegroom of my soul I seek,

Oh! when will He appear?

“What is thy beloved more than another beloved, O thou fairest among women? what is thy beloved more than another beloved, that thou dost so charge us?” What more grateful to the heart than to know that we are fairer than all others to the one we love best? To be well assured that this is His mind, gives sweet contentment to the soul. It is also very pleasant to hear that others, who might have been filled with jealousy, speak of us, and to us, just like Himself. Nothing beyond this can be desired.

Well, so shall it be ere long with the daughter of Zion — the fair spouse of the true King Solomon. When brought into full blessing under the Messiah, and highly honored by Him, all then will gladly

address her, "O thou fairest among women." The "daughters of Jerusalem" may represent in this scene the cities of Judah, which will have a subordinate place to Jerusalem, in the day of her coining glory; though, still in the same circle of blessing. Jerusalem and the Jews will then have the chief place of honor and glory in the earth; and all nations shall then court their favor, and seek the shelter of their wing. "Thus saith the Lord of hosts; in those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold, out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you; for we have heard that God is with you." (Zech. 8:23;) Clearly, this is still future. But further, the Spirit of prophecy, speaking of the restoration of the children of Zion, says, "And kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers: they shall bow down to thee with their face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet: and thou shalt know that I am the Lord: for they shall not be ashamed that wait for me." Isa. 49:23.

What a change for the Jew when this takes place! What a blessed change for that long down-trodden people! What a history is theirs! at least if we embrace the past, present, and future. "Go, ye swift messengers," says the prophet, "to a nation scattered and peeled, to a people terrible from their beginning hitherto, a nation meted out and trodden down, whose land the rivers have spoiled." But now, all is happily changed. Under the figure of a Bride, loved, admired, and delighted in, the remnant of Judah is spoken of. The blessed Lord Himself — the spared remnant of the other tribes — and all the Gentiles, admire her peerless beauty. "O thou fairest among women." Thus shall it be in that day with the entire nation — the ten tribes and the two. They shall all be gathered to their own land, and each tribe to its own lot.

In answer to the inquiry of the daughters of Jerusalem, "What is thy beloved more than another beloved, that thou dost so charge us?" she immediately replies, and gives a full length portrait of her well-beloved. And there is all that sharpness in the outline, and minuteness in the detail, which strong and mingled passion alone could give. Her strong affection is made doubly strong through self-reproach. Her recollection of Him is vivified through having slighted Him; and all her feelings are intensified through not finding Him. In this state of mind she portrays Him to the daughters of Jerusalem from head to foot. Oh! to be ready — always ready, on the spur of the moment, to speak of Jesus! She needed no time for pre-meditation. She asks for none. Delighted with the opportunity, all she wanted was the listening ear, and the believing heart. Like the woman at the well of Sychar, her own heart was overflowing. Her love had grown, through disappointment, into a passion. It is relief to her heart to speak of Him. She could not help being eloquent. Love is the best gift of the evangelist — love to the Savior — love to the sinner. But when that love rises into a passion, there must be true, burning eloquence. Never, never, O my soul, be content with less than this. Love to the Savior — love for souls is good, but the evangelist needs more. Seek that thy love may rise into a fervent flame. The work demands it. Art thou an evangelist? Let everything that would hinder thy work be consumed on the altar of entire consecration. Preaching is not teaching remember, neither is teaching preaching. Appeal to souls, plead with them, lay hold on them, agonize for them. It is a matter of life or death — of ineffable, eternal blessedness; or unutterable, eternal woe. Realize the future in the present, and raise a cry to the God of all grace, that not one soul may go away unimpressed, unblest, unsaved.

More temperate hearts, and wiser too, it may be, in many things, may say, "There is much of nature in such zeal, and not a little unbelief; remember, the work is the Lord's." Fully admit thine

own failure, and that the work is God's from first to last; but let nothing slacken thy zeal, or damp thy energy. May the flame of thy love be unquenchable, Oh! be in earnest; heaven is in earnest, hell is in earnest, and be thou in deep, deep earnest. The Master wept over a city, thou hast a world to weep over. Love with His love, and let his tears flow through thine eyes.

Oh! speak of Jesus — of that love

Passing all bounds of human thought,

Which made him quit His throne above,

With God-like deep compassion fraught,

To save from death our ruined race,

Our guilt to purge, our path to trace.

Oh! speak of Jesus — of His death,

For sinners such as me He died.

“‘Tis finished,” with His latest breath,

The Lord, Jehovah Jesus, cried.

That death of shame and agony

Opened the way of life to me.

“My beloved is white and ruddy; the chiefest among ten thousand” It is said of David that he was “ruddy, and of a fair countenance.” Referring, no doubt, to his youthful bloom and beauty. But in the description here given of the True David, the spotless purity of His Person, and the character of His sacrifice, may be referred to by the Spirit of prophecy. These are significant words — “white and ruddy.” The Holy Spirit delights to set forth, whether in type or allegory, the glories of His Person, and the infinite value of His blood. “Can you tell me of anything that is whiter than snow?” inquired one, who was addressing a Sunday school. “The soul that has been washed in the blood of Jesus,” was the satisfactory answer of a little girl. But, oh, if a brand plucked from the fire, blackened and consumed, as it were, by sin, can thus be made whiter than snow — pure as the light of heaven, in virtue of that most precious blood; what, we may ask, must be the essential holiness, and infinite dignity of Him, by whose blood-shedding this marvelous work is accomplished! Yes, indeed, one soul thus blest would prove the wondrous efficacy of the sacrifice; but what wilt thou say, my soul, when in heaven thou beholdest myriads upon myriads of ransomed souls, singing the song that is ever new, “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.” Oh! what exalted, adoring thoughts we shall then have of the once lowly Son of Man, but now highly exalted Christ of God!

What thou shalt then see with thine eyes, my soul, thou art now to believe with thine heart. O meditate upon it, glory in the truth; “My beloved is white and ruddy; the chiefest among ten thousand.” What so “white” — so clean — so holy, as the blessed Person of the Son of Man — Jehovah — Jesus — the root and the offspring of David? What so “ruddy” as the blood that flowed

from His immaculate veins on Calvary? Who, O who, is worthy to be the Chieftain of all God's hosts, save the Captain of our salvation?

"Oh! chiefest of ten thousand, who like thee,
Who, Lord, among the mighty may compare
With thee, the standard-bearer of the host."

Thus to know Jesus is present salvation, peace, and happiness. To know that my sins are blotted out by these "ruddy" drops — yes, blotted out, I say blotted out forever, is perfect blessedness. They have no existence now before God, the Judge of sin. Pardoned I am — I know I am, God says it. But to know that thy sins are blotted out is a deeper thought still. Christ abolished sin by the sacrifice of Himself. Like the pebble that has been cast into the depths of the sea, our sins are untraceable — they are buried in the deep waters of God's forgetfulness. And God has been so glorified in the work of His blessed Son, that it is now a righteous thing with God, as well as gracious, to bless all who believe in Jesus. He can now indulge His love, by meeting in grace the chief of sinners, who bows to the name of the once lowly, but now exalted' Son of Man.

Meditations on Song of Solomon

"His head is as the most fine gold; His locks are bushy and black as a raven." Having answered the daughters of Jerusalem in a general way as to her Beloved, she now begins to describe Him more minutely. Guided by the Spirit of God, she delights to dwell on His varied excellencies and glories, under the similitude of the human features. One word, my soul, at the threshold; seek not, I pray thee, for the mystic meaning of these separate features, beyond the limits of holy scripture. "The place whereon thou standest is holy ground." For although the Lord did not forbid Moses to draw near to the burning bush, He told him, plainly, that it must be with unshod feet. Let thine eye, then, be anointed, and thy heart worshipping, while meditating on Zion's glorious King.

In the fourth Chapter, the Bridegroom, in recounting the attractions of His Bride, enumerates seven features. Here, she points out ten, in portraying her Beloved. The significant numbers, three and seven, are united in Him. We will now briefly meditate on each feature separately.

"His head is as the most fine gold." Supreme majesty may be indicated by "the most fine gold," as in Dan. 2:33, "Thou art this head of gold." It is also frequently used in scripture to represent divine righteousness—in connection with the Person of Christ; as in Isa. 11:5 and Rev. 1:13. Of this same Jesus we read, "Behold a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment. And O, man shall be as an 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.

"His locks are bushy and black as a raven." The bushy, raven locks of the Bridegroom are evidently contrasted with the long, flowing hair of the Bride, which He compares to "a flock of goats, that appear from Mount Gilead." Youthful vigor and strength may also be indicated by the profusion of the locks. Of Ephraim it is said, Hos. 7:9, "Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not; yea, gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth it not." But of Ephraim's Lord and King no signs of decay shall ever be seen. He is the same yesterday, and today, and forever. Some believe that "the most fine gold" refers to the Godhead of Jesus; and the "bushy locks" to His manhood. No truth lies nearer the heart of faith, than the perfect manhood of

the blessed Savior; and that in connection with His eternal Godhead. "Christ who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen." Rom. 9:5 and Col. 1:15 - 19.

"Admire, adore this God immutable:

To whom alone it appertains to say

'I live forever!' and to whose vast mind,

The shadow of a turning is unknown."

"His eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of water, washed with milk, and fitly set." Margin, setting in fullness. In Rev. 5: 6, St. John speaks of "the Lamb which he sees in the midst of the throne, having "seven eyes which are the seven spirits of God sent forth into all the earth." The number seven, we know, denotes fullness, perfection, which here signifies intelligence. "For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of those whose heart is perfect toward him." (2 Chron. 16:9.) But the believer has nothing to fear from the keen, penetrating glance of that eye of sevenfold brightness; to him it is soft, tender, and affectionate "as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters." It is his happy privilege to watch its direction. "I will guide thee with mine eye." What feature so expressive as the eye! And, oh! what an eye is now before the eye of faith! Tender as the dove's — bright and lustrous as when bathed in the river: or shining, as with a passing tear of deep compassion. The white part, pure as milk, the eye itself, "fitly set." Neither too prominent nor too much sunk, but like the precious stone that is perfectly set in the foil of the ring.

"His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers." Margin, towers of perfume; or, as some render it, "mounds of balsams." Great sweetness, bloom, beauty, and fragrance, are represented by these comparisons. The face in general may be referred to by this feature. Only think of the difference between the past day of lowly grace with Jesus, and the coming day of wondrous glory. The daughter of Zion, in her blindness, despised and rejected Him because of His lowliness; and in perfect grace He submitted to the will of man, which is enmity against God. "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; I hid not my face from shame and spitting." (Isa. 1:6.) And, again, "They shall smite the judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek." (Mic. 5:1.) But for all this hatred and cruelty, the daughter of Zion will be heartily sorry then. The veil shall be removed. As it dropped from the face of Moses when he turned round to the tabernacle, so shall it drop from the heart of Israel when they look on Him whom they pierced. And then, in place of their saying of Him, "there is no beauty that we should desire him," it will be, "He is altogether lovely." The once marred, insulted, and smitten cheek, is to the heart of the nation as beds of spices — sweet flowers — towers of perfume — mounds of balsams. Oh! what has grace wrought? What the operations of the Spirit? What the triumph of God's pardoning love? Hasten! O, hasten, the coming — happy — millennial day!

"His lips like lilies, dropping sweet-smelling myrrh." The comparison may be to the beautiful red lily of the East; but the believer knows the truth of that blessed word, "grace is poured into thy lips," not dropped scantily, but poured abundantly. The lips of Jesus, and His only, can speak peace to a troubled soul. Until He, and He alone, is listened to, true peace is unknown. "The Lord God," He says by the prophet, "hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary."

“Sweet-smelling myrrh of Jesu’s holy lips.
Diffusing comfort, purity, and peace,
Where’er it penetrates — oh! waft it soon,
God! high and holy! to remotest lands;
Prepare remotest hearts to welcome it!
Yes! Thou hast promised — and what arm of flesh
Shall interpose to hinder or obstruct
What in thine everlasting purposes is sure?”

“His hands are as gold rings, set with the beryl” In general, all the works of His hands may be embraced in this feature. Works of nature, providence, and grace. Their beauty, glory, perfection, and durability, may be represented by the gold, the ring, and the precious stones. “The works of his hands are verity and judgment; all his commandments are sure. They stand fast forever and ever, and are done in truth and uprightness.” (Psalm 111:7, 8.) But faith can now say of these jeweled hands, in the language of the loved Shalamite, “His left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me.” Oh! what an embrace! Happy, thrice happy, they who are thus folded in His everlasting arms! It is everlasting —endless, like the ring itself. “Love never faileth.”

“His belly is as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires” The bowels of His deep and tender compassion may be referred to here. “My heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels.” (Psalm 22:14.) The idea of depth may be conveyed by a reference to the bowels. And the color of the sapphire stone being blue, suggests the heavenly character of His tender sympathies. “And there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness.” (Exod. 24:10.) Pure as the “bright ivory,” deep as the bowels — high as heaven, is the tenderness, pity, compassion, and love of our blessed Lord Jesus Christ. “If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels of mercies, fulfill ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.” Phil. 2:1, 2.

“His legs are as pillars of marble set in sockets of fine gold:” The walk, in general, is usually represented by this feature. “Show me thy ways, O Lord, teach me thy paths.....All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth.” (Psalm 25) By the “pillars of marble,” the strength, steadfastness, and continuance of His reign may be set forth; and by the, “sockets of fine gold,” divine righteousness as characterizing the whole of His governmental ways. Divine righteousness — Almighty power — ways of “mercy and truth,” appertain to Zion’s — to earth’s mighty King. “The government shall be upon his shoulders.” “But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever; a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.” (Heb. 1:8, 9.) “And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever.” Dan. 2:44.

“His countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars.” The spouse having already portrayed her Beloved from head to foot, she now refers, we doubt not, to His general appearance — to all His glorious features together — His full stature. And His stature “is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars.” This figure, evidently, illustrates His glorious Majesty, as the Messiah. The lofty cedars “on that goodly mountain Lebanon,” are the standing type in scripture of exaltation, glory, and majesty. Resplendent as the “most fine gold” from head to foot — adorned with every grace — fragrant with all sweetness — glorious and majestic like the cedars of Lebanon, is the Person of her well-beloved.

O Majestic King!

Thy front sublime, Thy perfect character

Is as the noble mount of Lebanon.

Clothed in magnificent solemnity;

Thy spouse adores Thy peerless excellence —

Thy towering glories.

“His mouth is most sweet.” The “lips” having been already referred to, something different from words may be indicated by this feature. It seems to refer more especially to the grace of Jesus — to the expressions of His kindness — His communications — His friendships. The spouse has often tasted of His grace, therefore she could say from experience, “His mouth is most sweet.” The grace and kindness with which He meets her, even after failure, is enough to impress her heart forever, with the sweetness of the grace of her Lord. “If so be,” says the apostle, “ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.” Some think that the melody of His voice is alluded to. But she goes on to say, “Yea, he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem” Language fails her. She is not wearied speaking of Him, but she is unable to say all that He is. Hence, she closes the description with, “He is altogether lovely.” As if she had said, All loveliness dwells in Him— all that is desirable is found in Him— and every unspecified beauty belongs to Him. In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead, and all the graces of manhood. He is lovely in His humiliation — lovely in His exaltation — “yea, he is altogether lovely.”

But, oh I is not the last note of this lovely song, the richest and sweetest of all? “My beloved.....my friend.” Some may say, “what a description this is!” But say thou, O my soul, what a conclusion this is!

“This is my beloved.....my friend.” He — Himself is mine. She is delighted to dwell on His qualities, but more delighted still, to be able to say, “He in whom all these qualities shine so brightly is mine! Therefore all His qualities, too, are mine. But the qualities are in the Person.

Thrones, crowns, scepters, kingdoms, glories, blessedness, are His, and the believer’s, in Him; but after all, these are not Himself. What would all these things avail without the Person of the Beloved? To the renewed affections, blessed as they are — a mockery. Like the heart of the fair bride that has been made desolate — that has been wrecked on the very threshold of her new home, through the affections of the one she counted on going out after another. True, the well-furnished house remains, but alas, it is evident, that his heart — all she cared for, is

elsewhere. She sees it; and all is turned into the gall and wormwood of bitterest disappointment. The shadow of a dark cloud spreads over the whole scene. Everything now bears the reflection of her own misery. Her happiness is gone. Yes, my soul, this is no uncommon thing with the loves of earth. Many a warm and confiding heart has thus been crushed and broken through the heartlessness of the one she trusted. But not so - never so, the loves of heaven. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Jesus. It is heaven on earth to know Him — to know His love — His unchanging love. His love is not in word only, but in deed and in truth. Not in a formal heartless vow, but in the eternal covenant of His grace, and sealed with His own most precious blood.

Chap. 6. "Whither is thy beloved gone, O thou fairest among women? Whither is thy beloved turned aside that we may seek him with thee." Most blessed and varied are the results which flow from the soul's entire occupation with Christ. To lose sight of self, and have Him for our one object, is immediate — certain blessing. When Christians slip into a low, dull state of soul, what will most speedily and effectually bring them out of it? Becoming filled and occupied with Christ for themselves, and speaking of Him to others. The experience of the spouse is a beautiful illustration of this truth. Her failure, doubtless, was thinking and caring about herself. Self-occupation — self-indulgence. "I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them? "But when challenged by the daughters of Jerusalem, as to the superiority of her Beloved over others, she is led to think and speak of Him only; and as she proceeds, her own soul, in the first place, is fully and happily restored. She is thus raised to a measure of communion, which she had never before reached; and she so dwells on the matchless excellencies of her Lord, that the inquiring daughters are attracted by the glories of His Person, and desire to see Him, and know Him.

But there is another fruit, my soul, of the Bride's testimony to Christ, which I would not have thee to pass over unnoticed. The daughters of Jerusalem, observe, very naturally conclude, that it must have been the Bridegroom that left His Bride; not, of course, the Bride that had left her Bridegroom. Hearing her speak of Him in such glowing terms, they could not for a moment imagine that she could ever wander from Him. One so loved — so admired — so good — so appreciated, of course, her eye could never cease to gaze on Him - her heart could never cease to delight in Him, and she could never, never, grow weary of Him. Hence they inquire, "Whither is thy beloved gone:—whither is thy beloved turned aside? that we may seek him with thee." What a sharp, cutting reproof, though indirect! And how keenly her now sensitive heart must have felt it. But in extolling her Lord, she condemned herself. So it is, and so it must always be. When the soul is out of communion, everything seems to knock unkindly against it, and condemn its ways. But when restored, all these things serve to deepen our humility, and elevate the tone of our communion. The heart that has just been overflowing with the praises of her Beloved, is now rejoicing in Him. Her eye rests on Him. She knows where He is and what He is doing. Happy moment! All is light and joy. Now she can tell her companions where He is to be found.

"My beloved is gone down into his garden, to the beds of spices, to feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies." What a lovely scene this is to the eye of Shelomith, compared with chap. 5:7. "The watchmen that went about the city found me, they smote me, they wounded me: the keepers of the walls took away my veil from me." Such is the difference between walking in fellowship with Jesus, and wandering in the world. Now, she is in the rural scenes with her Beloved, entering into the counsels of His heart, and the works of His hands. This verse presents a scene of happy

communion. The Lord is finding delight in His people; He is in His garden gathering lilies. "As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters." She enters into His thoughts about His people generally, and about herself especially. This is communion, blessed, solid communion. Her eye is single, and the light of heaven fills her soul. Now she exclaims, "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine; he feedeth among the lilies." This is a high note, but easily taken by faith. It is the key note of a soul that has lost sight of self. "I am my beloved's." It is the very opposite of a soul being occupied with itself. It is true heart-occupation with Christ. It is entering into His thoughts, His love, His grace, His delights; in place of being filled and occupied with its own thoughts, its own feelings, its own faith, or its own services. The eye, the heart, the thoughts, the lips, all are full of Christ and occupied with Him. "I am my beloved's." In chap. 2:18, she says, "My beloved is mine and I am his." There, it is the joy of possessing Christ; He is mine. Here, it is the deeper joy of belonging to Christ; I am His. Both are blessed, but the latter marks divine progress.

We can understand a newly awakened soul being full of anxieties about itself, in many ways; and, when it first receives the truth, exclaiming, do believe in Jesus now — I am sure I believe in Him — I know I believe in Him — I know He died for me on the cross — He shed His blood to wash my sins away, and now I can trust in Him!" Having watched the deep struggles of a newly quickened soul emerging from the darkness of nature, and hearing the shout of victory, as the dark clouds were rolled back, "Jesus is mine!" we have been thankful and joyful beyond measure. It is all we could expect at the time, and we were satisfied.

But, by and by, when the soul has calmed and settled down after the throes of the new birth, we look for it rising in the intelligence of truth from its own concerns to the source of its blessing. Where has this new life come from? it may well inquire. Whence its source? Why all this grace and goodness to me a sinner? Who has planted the pulse of eternal life in my once-dead soul? Learning, by degrees, that eternal life and every blessing are but the fruits of God's love in Christ to me a sinner; I am sweetly drawn to Him in the confidence of love — of His perfect love to me when in my sins. All fear departs; for fear hath torment. "God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." "Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live." (John 5:25,) Thus the soul is brought into the closest connection with the Son of the living God, in heaven; and finding that all the springs of its blessing are there, it rises to Him, like water to its level! "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine," becomes the true expression of its admiring faith.

Meditations on Song of Solomon

"Thou art beautiful, O my love, as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem, terrible as an army with banners" What a greeting this is! Consider it well, O my soul. Wouldst thou know the heart of Jesus? Wouldst thou know His patient love — His unwearied kindness — His inexhaustible goodness? Meditate on this scene. Tarry here a little.

It may be interesting to ascertain the meaning of the reference to Tirzah, Jerusalem, and an army with banners displayed. But, oh! suffer not for a moment any of these things to divert thy thoughts from the Person of the Lord Jesus. True, I admit, these comparisons may be the immediate expression of His love. Then, if so, let them be to thee as streams by which thou mayest surely reach the fountain; but tarry not too long by the stream, the spring is better. The happy effect of the true ministry of the word is to bring the soul into direct contact with the Person of Christ. The aim of

the enemy, and the effect of false teaching, is to bring in something between the soul and Christ. Tirzah is no more, Jerusalem is trodden down and Judah's banner has long been furled; but the heart that found relief in the use of these significant emblems is unchangeably the same. Seek, above all things in the universe, to know the heart of Jesus. "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." (John 17:3.) To know God's love in Christ to me a sinner is the best thing I can ever know, for then I know the source - the native fountain of every blessing. How often may Christ Himself be missed, even when the soul is delighting in truth. Watch thou, my soul, and pray unceasingly against this.

Now look once more at this unexampled greeting, "Thou art beautiful, O my love, as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem, terrible (or dazzling) as an army with banners." These words, mark, are the first He addresses to His Bride after her sad failure. His lips are opened to the restored backslider by, "Thou art beautiful, O my love." This is Jesus Himself! Who can speak of His love! Art thou at home, my soul, in this atmosphere? Art thou not riveted to the spot and lost in admiring wonder? Gaze, O gaze, on the Person who thus speaks, and see before His delighted heart a wanderer returned. Let nothing distract thy meditations — seek to profit by it, especially by understanding better the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It may be helpful to connect with the present scene His last words to her when they last parted. "Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled; for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night." Nothing could be more tender or affectionate than this touching appeal, yet it was then all but entirely unheeded by her. Consequently, she fell for a time sadly away. But now we find her fully and happily restored to her Lord. She has perfect confidence in His love. "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine," is the joyous expression of her soul. But will He say nothing to her for having wandered and behaved foolishly? Will He not be at least distant in His manner at first, that she may be ashamed before Him? Certainly not, seeing she has truly repented of what she has done. The Lord not only forgives but forgets all past offenses when we are penitent. He meets every penitent soul with the fullest expression of His grace. The moment the soul is before Him in its true place, He is unreserved, and throws open the rich treasury of His love. Witness, for example, the Syrophenician woman. (Matt, 15.) No sooner had she taken the Gentile's place than the full blessing of His heart flows out to her. He even commends her faith in the strongest terms. "O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt." He keeps nothing back. She is blessed even to her heart's content. Witness also the poor fallen one at His feet in the house of Simon, and the prodigal in the arms of the Father.

Such is grace — the grace of God in Christ to sinners. The first thing, observe, that the Bridegroom mentions to His Bride, is her faultless beauty in His sight. "Thou art beautiful, O my love." Not one word of complaint falls from His lips. He makes no allusion to where she had been, or to what she had done. His love is perfect, and His grace is like the indulgence of His love. He will be gracious according to the love of His own heart. He says she is beautiful as "Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem." Tirzah signifies pleasantness. It was the royal residence of the kings of Israel before Samaria was built, as Jerusalem was of the kings of Judah. Jerusalem, we know, is famous in Scripture for its many glories. It is spoken of as "Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, the city of the great king. God is known in her palaces as a refuge." Tirzah was the capital of the revolted tribes. But the two kingdoms, Israel and Judah, shall be united under one Head in the coming day of glory, to be separated no more forever. What we have here presented in allegory, is

taught in plainest terms in the prophets. “ Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land. And I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all; and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all.” Eze. 37:21, 22.

When the twelve tribes are restored and Messiah their king, the glory of the nation shall then be great. “One king shall be king to them all.” Then it will be “terrible as an army with banners.” This figure conveys the idea, not of that which is awful, but of that which is dazzling, brilliant, glorious — like the imposing effect of an army with banners displayed. The king acknowledges that the effect of the glory of His beloved people thus united in one, overwhelms Him. “Turn away thine eyes from me, for they have overcome me.” This is wonderful who can understand it? To understand it in measure we must know Jesus Himself. No heart enters into the blessing and joy of others like His. It relieves His heart to bless the needy. We find Him traveling far in the days of His flesh to meet and bless a fallen daughter of Samaria, or a poor Gentile from the coasts of Tiro and Sidon. It is His joy, and the joy of all heaven, when even one sinner repents and turns to His fullness. But, oh! what will be His joy, when the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem turn to Him with mourning and with weeping — when the long-lost tribes shall appear on the scene, and own Him as their true Messiah — when every eye of every tribe shall be fixed on Him — when every heart shall overflow with His praise — and when, from Jerusalem as a center, blessing shall flow forth to all nations of the earth.

Then the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, will be the material of Israel's morning song, and the expression of their weeping joy. “He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him. the iniquity of us all.” Their beloved Jerusalem shall then become the Jerusalem of God's counsels, and not of man's pride and oppression. Surrounded with mountains, encompassed with walls, bulwarks, and towers, it will be the glory of all lands. “The name of the city from that day shall be Jehovah-Shammah — “The Lord is there.” (Ezek. 48:35; Psalm 48.) The Messiah will then have things all His own way. Satan shall then be shut up in the bottomless pit, the curse removed from the earth, the power of evil put down, and the true Solomon shall reign as King over all. The effect, all over the realm of nature, of the absence of Satan, and the presence of Christ, in power and great glory, is inconceivable.

“O what a bright and blessed world

This groaning earth of ours shall be,

When from its throne the tempter hurled,

Shall leave it all, O Lord, to thee.

But brighter far that world above,

Where we, as we are known shall know;

And in the sweet embrace of love,

Reign o'er this ransomed earth below."

"Thy hair is as a flock of goats that appear from Mount Gilead. Thy teeth are as a flock of sheep which go up from the washing, whereof every one heareth twins, and there is not one barren among them. As a piece of a pomegranate are thy temples within thy locks" These same expressions occur in chapter 4, and yet, we know, the Holy Spirit uses no vain repetitions. Then why is this? Since they were used by the Bridegroom in addressing His Bride, in the fourth chapter, she has wandered and returned. By repeating to her what He before said, He assures her heart that her beauty in His sight is unimpaired. Although He says nothing about her having been away from Him, these expressions of His unchanged admiration of her, will now take a deeper hold on her heart than before. Their value is increased sevenfold on account of the circumstances in which they are again repeated. The Holy Ghost can use the same expressions, when it is for the glory of Christ and the blessing of our souls. In the present instance, no words could have re-assured her heart like these.

"There are threescore queens, and fourscore concubines, and virgins without number." This verse, we doubt not, refers to a millennial scene. It follows the union of the two nations. The cities of Judah and the nations of the earth fill up the scene of glory. Jerusalem has the first place. This truth, so manifest all through Scripture, is most fully expressed, and in the most touching manner, in the next verse.

"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. The daughters saw her, and blessed her; yea, the queens and the concubines, and they praised her." What a place she has in His heart! She is pre-eminent in His sight. None can be compared with her. There are many others, but His affection can see none but herself. "My dove, my undefiled is but one; she is the only one of her mother." In former scenes He speaks of her qualities, and describes her personal beauty; but now, He speaks of herself, and what she is to Him. "The choice one of her that bare her." The nation is here viewed in a maternal character, and the tribe of Judah in a bridal. Such, O my soul, is the Bridegroom-love of Jesus! Thus will it be with the godly remnant of Judah in the latter day — thus it is now, even now, with us in spirit. Drink, O drink deeply, of the Bridegroom—love of thy Lord. The fountain is deep, it is inexhaustible, it is free, it is open to faith until the nuptial day.

The time was when the daughter of Zion, in the pride and naughtiness of her heart, refused His love. Still, it remained the same, hut then, it was shown in the tears which He shed over her blindness. Being left by Him, she fell a prey to her cruel enemies, who sorely persecuted her. Still, His eye of love followed her in all her wanderings. Nothing could change His heart. In due time He visited her in her low estate. He found her in the condition of a poor, outcast, sun burnt slave — a keeper of the vineyards of others. His heart was kindled towards her. In His love and pity He felt as if she had "received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins." And now, "her warfare is accomplished, her iniquity is pardoned," and she is comforted in her gracious and forgiving Lord. But His love rests not, blessed truth, until He has accomplished all the desires of His heart towards her. And now, mark, my soul, what is she? Where is she? the fair and beautiful spouse of the true King Solomon — the partner of His royal throne in Zion. And not only, observe once more, is she the object of the King's supreme delight, but she is the object of universal admiration. "The daughters saw her, and blessed her; yea, the queens and the concubines, and they praised her."

“And the daughter of Tire (type of the Gentiles) shall be there with a gift; even the rich among the people shall entreat thy favor.” (Psalm 45) She reflects the glory and beauty of the King, and all nations admire His comeliness in her. “ 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. 16:14.

“Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners!” This verse appears to be the language of the Bride’s admirers, and comes in like a chorus to the song. All are vocal in her praise. The dreary night is past; the morning breaks. “Who is she that looketh forth as the morning?” She is just, as it were, emerging from the darkness of the long, long night, through which she has passed. But now she leaves it all behind, and comes forth in the freshness, beauty, and hope of the morning. She will soon appear in noonday splendor, clothed in the beams of “the Sun of righteousness.”

Hast thou observed, my soul, in thy meditations, that the future light, glory, and dignity of Israel, are frequently represented by the heavenly bodies — the sun, moon, and stars? We see this shadowed forth in Joseph’s dreams. In the family of Jacob the whole nation is represented, and is prefigured by the sun, moon, and stars. (Gen. 37) In Rev. 12, the tribe of Judah, from which our Lord sprang, is seen invested with the same light and glory. The simile is “a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars.” The glory of the twelve seems concentrated in, and represented by, the royal tribe. There is also the idea of stability conveyed by these heavenly luminaries. “Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure forever, and his throne as the sun before me. It shall be established forever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven.” Psalm 89:35-37.

Here, pause, for a moment, O my soul, and meditate on the sure word of prophecy, as to Israel’s future glory. O what a change for the long-despised, down-trodden Jew! The admiring daughters, queens, and concubines behold the royal tribe—Bridal Judah, “looking forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners.” Invested with light, glory, and dignity, as the fair spouse of David’s royal Son, she becomes the great attraction of earth, and the object of universal admiration. Hail, happy morn! the darkness is past, “the Sun of righteousness arises with healing in his wings.” Already His beams gild the dark mountains of the holy land, and cheer its valleys. All hearts rejoice. Hosanna to the Son of David! the promise is fulfilled. “Arise, shine: for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.....And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.” Isa. 60:1, 3.

“Take boughs of goodly trees, the joyous palm,

The willows of the brook, and keep the feast;

The mourners wounds are healed with oil and balm,

The captive’s tears are dried, her sorrows cease;

Rejoice with praise; let harp and cymbal tell

‘How goodly are thy tents, O Israel.’

As willows spring beside the winding stream,

So shall thy children's offspring flourish now;
Thy long captivity becomes a dream—
A sweet memorial is that willow bough
Of all thy sorrows, of that tear-steeped bread,
On which, by Chebar's stream, thy soul was fed.
Planted in Canaan's fruitful ground,
Her streams shall nourish thy wide-spreading root;
On thee no yellow leaf shall e'er be found,
For Hermon's dew shall feed each verdant shoot.
'What hath Jehovah wrought?' the nations cry;
'Great things for us!' the ransomed tribes reply."

Meditations on Song of Solomon

"I went down into the garden of nuts, to see the fruits of the valley, and to see whether the vine flourished, and the pomegranates budded. Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib." How seldom it happens, that the husbandman is taken by surprise with the abundance and ripeness of the fruits of his vineyard. How often, alas, it is the other way. Disappointment, not satisfaction, he is often compelled to reap as the fruit of his labor. It had been always so with Israel, we may say, as the Lord's vineyard, until now. But, happily, all is changed! Grace shines — faith triumphs — the Lord prevails — the people are looking to Him, and counting on Him alone. Everything is ripe in Judah for glory and victory.

Blessed day! the Lord now sees in His people the ripened fruits of His grace. His heart rejoices — it is overpowered with the sight. It is no longer a scene in the wilderness, and His association with them there, but the fruitful garden, with its budding pomegranates, flourishing vines, and fruits of the valley. These fruits of His rich, patient grace, deeply affect Him. His love carries Him towards His now changed and willing people, swift as the chariots of Amminadib. "Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib;" or, set me on the chariots of my willing people. Margin, (Psalm 110:3.) Wondrous, blessed scene, that the heart of the Lord should be so moved — so impelled by the readiness of His people to receive Him! Is there not something, O my soul, in this aspect of the Lord's love, which calls for deep, special meditation? Surely there is. How wonderful, indeed, but how blessed, that He, who is Lord of all, should be so transported with delight, by hearts looking and longing for Himself! Oh! that every anxious, weeping, penitent believed this precious truth! When the daughter of Zion bathes His feet with her tears He will turn away from everything else, and hasten to comfort her. Her tears will be His swift chariot. The fullness of His heart will flow forth to her, and a plenary pardon, salvation, and peace, He will pour into her opened ear.

On many a page of the New Testament this sight may be seen. It has always been God's way with the penitent soul; but in the New Testament we have many scenes portrayed of the Lord's

personal love and grace. And in what scene do we not find Him more delighted than the saved sinner? Did He not turn round in the press and look for the one that had touched the hem of His garment? She might have slipped away, as quietly as she came, but His love must have the entire scene brought into view, and recorded in the book of everlasting remembrance. None were interested in what had taken place as Himself. She had touched by faith the innermost spring of His heart, and the virtue that was there flowed out to her. But the Lord wants to see herself, and hear from her own lips, the experience of her soul. This done, He cannot let her go until He has acknowledged their kindred relationship, and the blessings which flow there from. "Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague." Mark 5.

And is He less delighted, or less overcome, by the cry for mercy of the poor blind beggar? (Luke 18) By no means, He is on an important journey; must the whole procession stand still for the cry of a poor beggar from the very outer circle of the crowd? The moment the cry for mercy falls on the ear of the Son of David, He is arrested. He moves not another step. "And Jesus stood, and commanded him to be brought unto him: and when he was come near, he asked him, saying, What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee? "What a sight! O, look again A poor blind beggar in the dust, and Jesus waiting on him. "What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee? "He seeks not to hurry through His work of mercy; He lingers over the hallowed scene. It fills and moves His soul. He only knows its wondrous bearings. But what a position for a destitute soul to be in? What wouldst thou have asked, my soul, had it been thee?" It is as if the Lord had said, "Ask what thou wilt, I am waiting to serve thee —waiting to grant thy request." What will he ask, poor soul? Only what he feels the need of—his natural sight. "And he said, Lord, that I may receive my sight." But the good Lord added to his request a thousand-fold. "And Jesus said unto him, Receive thy sight: thy faith hath saved thee." The issues of this scene are glorious! He follows Jesus — glorifies God — and all the people give praise unto Him. The whole scene is like a foreshadowing of millennial times.

But of all the scenes in the New Testament, the parable of the prodigal son, we believe, most fully resembles the scene before us in the Song of Songs. The repentance of the prodigal carries the Father towards him, as on a swift chariot. He runs to meet His son. "But 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." The love of the Father's heart, and the desire of the son to return to Him, form, as it were, a swift chariot of love. But the Father taking the direction of its course, they rapidly reach their one, eternal, happy home.

Thus will it be with the Beloved in the Song. The deep and godly sorrow of His people in the latter day, and especially those of His own tribe, and their earnest desire for the Messiah to come, act upon His love, and carry Him swiftly to the scene, "Or ever I was aware, my soul set me on the chariots of my willing people." And, now, taking the direction of His people, as the charioteer in the chariot, He accomplishes their full deliverance, and speedily conducts them to glory and triumph.

"How does the sudden earnestness of prayer

From much loved Zion, on My spirit press,

And My heart speed Me forward to their aid,

Borne on the chariots of their strong desire,

As in the heavens riding for their help,
And in Mine excellency in the sky,
To thrust away encroaching enemies,
To place my dove in safety on My breast!"

"Return, return, O Shulamite; return, return, that we may look upon thee. What will ye see in the Shulamite? As it were the company of two armies" The admiring virgins again join in the chorus. They express their desire to see more of the beauty, perfection, and glory of the Bride. She is walking in the garden of nuts with the King. Precious privilege! They call to her by a new name. "Return, return, O Shulamite;" which is the feminine form of Solomon. This is significant. Union is accomplished. The long-broken relationships are reestablished. Grace has wrought a perfect work in her. Blessed be the name of the Lord! He can now make Himself fully known to her; and she truly reflects the beams of His glory, "she is fair as the moon, and clear as the sun." She is established in the favor of the King, and in the possession and enjoyment of His affections. This is rest for the heart — perfect — blessed rest. Nothing can rise above it, or go beyond it. Say, my soul, is this thy resting place? The manifested — the enjoyed affections of thy Well-beloved. He has revealed Himself — given Himself; what more can He do? We can have no such expression of His love in heaven, as we have on earth — as was manifested on the cross. The blood that was shed there is the perfect rest of the conscience — the love that was revealed there, is the perfect rest of the heart; thou hast all now. "Only believe." "We which have believed do enter into rest." Heb. 4.

Other virgins now join in the chorus, and inquire, "What will ye see in the Shulamite?" The answer is ready, "As it were the company of two armies." The beautiful Tirzah, and the comely Jerusalem, are seen united in her. Some have thought, that the company of two armies as seen in the spouse, represent the old life and the new, at constant war with each other, in the Christian. We think this a mistake. Here, it does not appear to refer to conflict at all! but, rather, to peace, unity, and glory. Does it not express the reunion of the long-divided house of Jacob, under the Prince of Peace? Judah and Israel are no longer two nations warring with each other, but are joined in one, and here represented by the loving, peaceful spouse of the true Solomon. This union is introductory to the millennium — the reign of peace. "The envy also of Ephraim shall depart, and the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off: Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim." (Isa. 11:13.) The King of Salem reigns; the twelve tribes are restored; the nations are subdued under them; all is peace. The war trumpet hangs in the hall, swords are beaten into plowshares, spears into pruning hooks, and the nations do not even learn the art of war any more. Isa. 2:3.

But apart from the allegory before us, do the scriptures countenance the idea, that Christian conflict is between the old life and the new? Certainly not! The conflict is between the flesh and the Spirit. "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh." It is not, "The old life against the new, and the new against the old." There must be a serious shortcoming in the knowledge of the cross, where this thought has a place. The apostle states, in plainest terms, "That our old man is crucified with Christ, that the body of sin might be destroyed." (Rom. 6:1-11.) It is perfectly plain, then, that in God's sight, and now to faith, our old nature came to its end on the cross. What a comfort for our hearts! We know, of course, as a matter of painful experience, that

the old nature we have, still exists, and is no feeble thing. And, further, if it be not constantly watched and judged, it will prove a source of ceaseless trouble, both to ourselves and others. Practical Christianity may be said to consist of two things. 1. In nourishing the new life through occupation with Christ. 2. In judging the old, on which God has put the sentence of death, in the most awfully-solemn manner, in the cross. But some may ask, "How are we to watch against its risings and judge it?" The apostle answers, "This I say then, Walk in the Spirit and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh." We have no power against nature but in the Holy Spirit, and in the assurance, by faith, that the flesh is a crucified thing in God's mind, and done with forever, blessed be the name of Him who bore the cross for us. It was in His cross that our old man was crucified; there it was really, fully, and finally nailed to the tree, and made a full end of; we have to believe this, and walk in the power and liberty which faith gives.

Hast thou entered, my soul, into the right understanding of this foundation-truth —this peace-giving truth to the troubled soul? Know, then, for thy perfect rest and comfort, that from the moment we have life, through faith in Christ, the whole of our corrupt nature is spoken of, and treated in scripture, as a dead thing. "Ye are dead," is the emphatic word of scripture, but that is not all, thank God, "and your life is hid with Christ in God." (Col. 3:3.) How safe! how secure! "with Christ, in God." Could our old nature, or anything that belongs to it, be hidden there? Ah, no! all that was thine is gone—gone forever; all that is Christ's remains —remains in all its changeless perfection in the best place in all heaven. By the cross we get rid of that which is ours— in resurrection we are put in possession of that which is Christ's.

Not a particle of the old creation shall ever be found in the new.

The apostle gives us a full statement of this blessed truth, as in his own case. "I am crucified with Christ," he says, "nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." Here, he speaks of himself, in one point of view, as dead; and in another, as alive. How can this be understood? By faith only. He speaks of two "I's;" the old "I," or self, as slain —or crucified. The new "I," as his new life —Christ in him. The first, he treats as dead, and forever done with; the second, as his only life now. "Christ liveth in me." The practical effect of this truth, when believed, is immense. Self, wretched self, which is the end and object of the natural man, in all he does, is gone — gone, I mean, to faith. Christ enters and takes the place of self. "For me to live is Christ" — is to have Christ, not self, for my end and object. Christ, not self, is the spring now. We know, of course, that Paul had his natural life here below — the life he ever had as a man, but the life in which he lived, was a wholly new one —Christ in him. "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."

All this is as true now, in principle, of every Christian, as it was of the apostle, though it may not be so brightly manifested. There must first be faith in the truth, then a life answering to the strength which that faith gives. However, it is plainly written, "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." Not, observe, are crucifying it, but have crucified it. But of whom is this great truth stated? Of highly advanced Christians? No, simply of "they that are Christ's." It is as true of the babe, as the young man, or father in Christ. What was it that needed crucifying on the cross? Something that belonged to Christ, or to me? It was the old and great "I," that needed to be slain — nailed to the tree, and that was done in Christ, forever blessed be His name. Oh! to believe it —to keep self where the cross has put it — to walk in the liberty and power of the Holy

Spirit, and be only, and always occupied, with the risen and glorified Christ.

His be "the Victor's name,"

Who fought the fight alone;

Triumphant saints no honor claim,

His conquest was their own.

By weakness and defeat,

He won the meed and crown;

Trod all our foes beneath His feet,

By being trodden down.

He, hell, in hell, laid low;

Made sin, He sin o'erthrew;

Bowed to the grave, destroyed it so,

And death, by dying slew.

Bless, bless, the Conqueror slain,

Slain in His victory;

Who lived, who died, who lives again—

For thee, His church, for thee!

A Striking Contrast

(Read Acts 8:5-40) We are furnished, in this passage of holy scripture, with a very vivid and instructive contrast between the magician of Samaria and the eunuch of Ethiopia. Let us contemplate these two characters, for a few moments, and seek to bear away some wholesome instruction.

The passage opens with a record of Philip's preaching in Samaria. "Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them." Blessed theme! The only one for the true preacher! "And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did..... and there was great joy in that city." Thus it must ever be. When Christ is preached, and people give heed and receive the tidings, "great joy" must be the result. The business of the preacher is to "preach Christ;" the business of the people is to "give heed and believe." Nothing can be simpler.

But, alas! all this brightness was speedily overcast with the dark clouds which self-seeking is ever sure to produce. It was all simple and happy, fresh and bright, while Christ was exalted and souls were blessed by the knowledge of salvation. "But there was a certain man called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one" Here, then, was something quite different— something which the inspired historian might well introduce with a "But." In place of the herald of salvation exalting Christ, it was a poor worm exalting himself; and instead of people made happy by the truth, it was a people bewitched with sorcery.

Simon gave out that himself was some great one, and the popular voice was in favor of his pretensions. "To whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God." It generally happens that those who put forth the loftiest claims are sure to get a high place in the thoughts of men. It does not matter how slender the basis of such claims may be; the multitude never think much about foundations — about what is beneath the surface or behind the scenes. Their thoughts are superficial. They are easily gulled by a pretentious style. The swaggering and boastful make way in the crowd; whereas the humble, the unpretending, the modest and retiring are consigned, by the men of this world, to obscurity and oblivion. Hence that Blessed One who emptied Himself, and made Himself of no reputation, had not where to lay His head — was deliberately given up for a robber and a murderer, and nailed to an ignominious cross between two thieves.

But Simon, the magician, gave out that himself was some great one, and the pompous claims of this self-important individual were readily admitted by a credulous multitude. "To him they had regard." Why? Was it because he sought to benefit them by the strenuous efforts of a large-hearted benevolence, or to elevate them by the resources of a commanding genius? Not at all. What then? "Because that of long time he had bewitched them with sorceries." Such is man — such is the world. Yes; and such are Christians, too. Harken to the following words, "For ye suffer fools gladly, seeing ye yourselves are wise. For ye suffer, if a man bring you into bondage, if a

man devour you, if a man take of you, if a man exalt himself! if a man smite you on the face.” (2 Cor. 11:19, 20.) Here is language addressed to saints, and we know, too well, alas! how pointedly it may be used in this our day. Scripture has, truly, gone before, and “there is nothing new under the sun.” Those spurious, boastful, pretentious apostles had well-nigh displaced the genuine, self-emptied, devoted servant of Christ in the affections and esteem even of the saints of God. What a forcible illustration of those words, “He knoweth the thoughts of men, that they are vain!” There cannot be anything vainer than the thoughts of men, unless indeed it be the vanity of being occupied with them.

However, the tide was turned in Samaria, by the introduction of the gospel. “But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done.”

Now be it noted here that we do not raise the question as to whether Simon was really a converted man, or only a hypocritical professor. We can learn a most practical and seasonable lesson from his history without ever touching that question. Simon was a self-seeker, from first to last. His object was to exalt Simon. At first, he made use of magic for the attainment of his end; and when the tide of Christian profession rose and carried away the pedestal on which he had raised himself, he embraced the new thing. He placed himself on the bosom of the tide, not as one seeking rest for a broken heart and convicted conscience, but as one seeking to be something. It is evident, from the inspired narrative, that Simon was more occupied with the wonders and signs by which the gospel was accompanied and confirmed, than by the consolations which that gospel was designed to impart. It was not, in his case, a heart filled with peace by the grace of the gospel, but a mind filled with wonder by the miracles that were done. “He wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done.” It was on these he fixed his wondering gaze. The things which were merely designed to call the attention of the heart to Christ were looked at by Simon as things whereby self might be exalted. In this way, Christianity might furnish materials for a more solid pedestal for self than even the magic and sorcery in which he had formerly traded.

All this comes more clearly out when the Holy Ghost appears upon the scene. “Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John; who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost; for as yet he was fallen upon none of them; only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost. And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles’ hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost. But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter; for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness; and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee; for I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.”

What a deeply-solemn picture! What a holy lesson! Self-seeking must ever lead to bitterness. It matters not whether it be exemplified in the case of a converted or an unconverted person.

Everyone who seeks to exalt self — to be somebody — to figure before the eye of his fellow, must, sooner or later, reap bitterness and gall. It cannot be otherwise. We may set it down as a fixed principle that in proportion as self is our object will bitterness be the result. Had Simon found his object in the Christ whom Philip preached, he never would have been called to hearken to Peter's appalling words. His heart would then have been "right in the sight of God." It is only when Christ is really the object that the heart is right in the sight of God. But so thoroughly wrong was Simon — so completely away from God, and from Christ, and from the Holy Ghost, that when exhorted by the apostle to pray God if perhaps the thought of his heart might be forgiven, "He answered and said, Pray ye to the Lord for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me." Instead of confessing his sin, he asks others to pray that he might not be called to suffer its consequences.

Here the curtain drops upon Simon. May the lesson conveyed in his history be engraved on our hearts! May the Lord, in His great mercy, give us full deliverance from self-seeking, and fill our hearts with the love of His name!

We shall now turn and gaze upon a totally different picture.

"And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise and go toward the South, unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert. And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopian eunuch of great authority under Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship, was returning; and, sitting in his chariot, read Esaias the prophet."

Here, the contrast strikes us at once. Instead of a sorcerer, on the strength of his magic and witchcraft, giving out that himself was some great one, we have a man of real authority, rank, weight, and dignity, looking away from himself and his position, to find the object of his worship and adoration. He was one of the great ones and had no need to give himself out as such; but instead of being occupied with himself or his greatness, his soul was thirsting after something above and beyond himself and all around. He had gone from Ethiopia to Jerusalem, to worship, and was returning, still, evidently unsatisfied.

All this is intensely interesting. We are glad to get away from the self-seeking Simon, to be in company with the Christ-seeking eunuch. It is truly refreshing to look at that earnest, solitary man, poring over the prophetic page in search of an object for his heart. We may feel assured it was a sight in which heaven was interested. As angel was dispatched to Samaria, in order to summon the evangelist from the stirring scenes of service there, and send him into the solitudes of the desert Gaza, to address himself to a single individual. How remarkable that two such men as Simon and the eunuch should be placed in juxtaposition, by the inspired penman! They form a contrast throughout. Philip found the one bewitching the people with sorcery, and giving out that himself was some great one. He found the other earnestly engaged in the study of the word of God. He found the one amid all the bustle and throng of the city, figuring before the world, and endeavoring to make capital for himself out of anything and everything. He found the other in the solitude of the desert, returning from worshipping at Jerusalem to his proper sphere of duty in Ethiopia. Thus far, they were perfect opposites.

But let us pursue the narrative of this interesting and highly favored Ethiopian. It might seem strange to Philip to be called away from such a brilliant field of service in Samaria, where such crowds flocked to hear, into a desert, where he could hardly expect to meet any one. To whom was he to preach there? Nature might reason thus; but Philip did as he was told, and he was not left long in ignorance as to his work. "Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near and join thyself to this chariot. And Philip ran thither." How simple! How sweetly servant like! It is all the same to a right-minded servant whether he is sent to a city or to a desert, to a crowd or to a single individual. The Master's will settles everything. Would that we knew more of this! Would that we tasted more of the deep and real blessedness of doing our appointed work under the immediate eye of Jesus, totally regardless as to the sphere and character of that work. We may be called to stand before assembled thousands, or to make our way, in obscurity, from lane to lane, and from garret to garret — to deliver the message in crowded halls, or drop a word into the ear of some poor dying creature in the ward of an hospital. It would be quite the same to us, were we only gifted with the true spirit of a servant. The Lord grant us more of this!

"Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him." The Lord knows how and when to make the preacher and hearer cross each other's path, and when they meet, a link is formed which can never be broken. There were those in Jerusalem who could have poured the glad tidings into the eunuch's ear; but God had so ordered it that Philip was to enjoy the privilege of conducting this stranger to the feet of Jesus, and by His gracious providence they met amid the solitude of the desert of Gaza.

And only note the passage of scripture on which the eunuch's eye was resting when Philip accosted him. "The place of the scripture which he read was this, he was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: in his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth. And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself or of some other man? Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him JESUS."

Here was the profoundly interesting question. "Who was this mysterious "He?" Blessed inquiry! The eunuch did not ask Philip to expound a text. Ah! no; he longed for something far deeper than this. He wanted to know something about this wondrous person who was led as a sheep to the slaughter. This was all he asked. Who could this person be? It was Jesus! Happy eunuch! He had, at length, reached his object. He had gazed on the precious page of inspiration, and found there the record of "the Lamb of God" led to the cursed tree, and bruised under the righteous hand of a sin-hating God.

And for whom? Why for him — for any poor burdened one who would only come and trust the shelter of His atoning blood. Such was the glorious object presented to the eye and the heart of this earnest and interesting Ethiopian. The grand foundation truth of the gospel — the doctrine of the blood — of — a sin-bearing Christ, broke, with divine fullness and power, upon his soul. There was no astounding miracle or sign — nothing outward to add authority to the truth proclaimed. There was no need. The word came with power. The ground was good and duly prepared for the

precious seed. The eunuch's earnest-seeking had issued in a joyful finding. The sinner and the Savior had met — faith linked them together and all was settled.

“And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?.....And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing.”

Now the beautiful and significant ordinance of baptism, when rightly understood and obeyed from the heart, sets forth the burial of the old man. Looked at in this light, the eunuch's question is full of interest. “What doth hinder me to be baptized?” Surely nothing. He had found Jesus, and he might well bury self. How simple. “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation.” It is not the old man made better, but put out of sight altogether, and Christ the one great object before the soul. When these things are understood — when self is lost sight of and Christ enjoyed, we can go on our way rejoicing. Thus it was with the eunuch. He came up out of the watery grave to pursue his journey along that holy, happy path which begins at the cross and ends in that bright and blessed world above.

Thus, then, we see how that, from first to last, the eunuch of Ethiopia stands in most striking contrast with the magician of Samaria. And, no doubt, those two men represent two great classes, namely, those who are occupied with self, and those who are occupied with Christ. Simon's object was self and his end “bitterness.” The eunuch's object was Jesus, and his end “rejoicing.”

May the Lord engrave these lessons on our hearts! May we be delivered from the misery of self-occupation in all its phases and degrees, and be filled with Christ, so that we may go on our way rejoicing!

The Syrophenician: Part 1

IN this very fruitful passage of holy scripture, we have two hearts unfolded, namely, the heart of man, and the heart of God. We see, in the first place, man's heart reached, notwithstanding, the thick covering of religious observances that concealed it; and, in the second place, we see the heart of God reached, notwithstanding the dispensational barriers that concealed it. In this way, the passage divides itself, very naturally, into two parts, the first including verses 1 to 20; and the second including verses 21 to 28. Let us look closely at the entire of it, and may the Spirit of God unfold its beauty, and apply its power to our souls!

In chapter 14, we see our blessed Lord engaged in His characteristic work of feeding the hungry and healing the sick — meeting all manner of human need. This was the work that suited Him. He was at home in it. He came down from heaven to do it. "And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and healed their sick." And again we read, "They came into the land of Gennesaret. And when the men of that place had knowledge of him, they sent out into all that country round about, and brought unto him all that, were diseased; and besought him that they might only touch the hem of his garment: and as many as touched were made perfectly whole."

Such was the work that suited the loving heart of Jesus. He ever delighted in meeting man's need. But at the opening of chapter 15, we meet with something totally different. There is a different kind of work altogether to be wrought here. It is not meeting man's need, but unmasking man's hypocrisy. In a word, man's heart is to be reached; and we here see the penetrating eye of Christ following man through all the windings, labyrinths, and specious coverings, by which he vainly seeks to hide his conscience from the light of the divine presence and judgment. Anything for man but exposure in the presence of God. And why? Because he can never feel at home there until he takes his true place as a needy one. The very moment I get a true sense of my need, I find my home in the presence of God. Precious truth!

"Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying, Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread." What a difference it makes whether man brings his religiousness or his need to Christ! The former is ever met with exposure and rebuke; the latter by unqualified grace and unlimited supply. Now, these Scribes and Pharisees bring their religiousness to Christ, and quote the decrees of the elders as their authority. How much better to have brought their necessities and their sins to Jesus, as detected and unfolded by the testimony of God! The very best thing a sinner can do is to bring his sins to Jesus, and thus get completely rid of their heavy load; and one of the very worst things a sinner can do is to hide his sins from Jesus under a cloak of religious observances, for it matters not how imposing or attractive those observances may be, or how well supported by the traditions and doctrines of men, the heart must be reached after all. Man's conscience must be brought, sooner or later, into the light. The covering must be removed, in order that the searching beams of divine light may pour themselves in upon the human heart, and make manifest all its

abominations.

This is a deeply solemn truth. It is no use to set about washing my hands, while my heart is full of uncleanness. It is utterly vain to be talking of washing cups and tables, while my ways are not right in the sight of God. All outward ordinances may be observed, man's traditions may be attended to, his commandments and doctrines respected, and all the while, the conscience may never have been in the presence of God, as to the great question of sin. I may be most carefully attending to the traditions of the elders, and yet living in the open neglect of the commandments of God. Thus it was with the Scribes and Pharisees. "Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? For God commanded, saying, Honor thy father and mother: and he that curseth father or mother let him die the death. But ye say, "Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, (corban) by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me, and honor not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition."

Here our Lord sets up the word of God as the only standard of morality. It is that word which will judge at the last day, and it is it which must guide and govern now. Where will the traditions of the elders be when all come to be manifested before the judgment-seat of Christ? Will they form the standard of judgment, in that day? Assuredly not. Well, then, of what value are they now? Little indeed; and when they come in collision with the word of God, they are not to be heard for a moment. Indeed, we are distinctly taught, in this weighty scripture before us, that, to be governed by the commandments and doctrines of men, instead of by the commandments of God, is the principle of hypocrisy. "Ye hypocrites! Well did Esaias prophecy of you, saying, 'This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoreth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.'"

Mark the divine complaint! "Their heart is far from me." This was the true secret of all. The Lord Jesus is fixing His penetrating gaze upon man's heart, and showing, very plainly, where it is, and what it is. "It is far from me," He says. Yes; far away from Him, and buried beneath a vast mass of superstitious observances and human ordinances. The plainest precept of the law of God was openly set aside under the specious pretext of "corban," as if God would or could accept a "gift" based upon the flagrant transgression of His eternal law. Again, they paid the most scrupulous attention to the washing of their hands before dinner, while the heart was simply a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. "What a fallacy! Hands washed, and heart polluted! Outward things attended to, and inward things totally neglected! Meats and drinks, cups and pots, dishes and tables, carefully looked after, and God's law flung overboard, and the heart brim full of lust and vanity! Such is man! His heart far from God. His religion a mass of inconsistencies from beginning to end.

"And Jesus called the multitude, and said unto them, Hear and understand." What holy dignity, what moral elevation, mark these words! "Hear and understand." These are the two words which must ever stand connected with God's word. That word is not like the vague, misty, uncertain traditions of men. Its voice is clear, its language distinct, its lessons plain and pure. It can be heard and understood by a child or a wayfaring man. Who among the multitude could fail to understand these plain words, "Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man." What an obvious, unanswerable truth! Does not the

understanding bow to it? Yes, truly, if it be not darkened by the mists of human tradition. Does not the conscience feel its edge? Yes, if not stupefied by subjection to a false authority. Do not the judgment and the moral sense acquiesce? Yes, if not warped and paralyzed by prejudice and deliberate rejection of simple truth.

But the Pharisees were offended at this plain statement. Doubtless. And why? It was the death-blow to Pharisaism. It is of the very essence of Pharisaism in all ages, to give attention to outward things and leave the heart untouched. That system ever maintains that defilement comes from without; whereas, God's truth declares that defilement cometh from within. Hence, Christ's plain statement cut up Pharisaism by the roots and gave grave offense to its adherents. But oh! the power and beauty of Christ's words! "He answered and said, Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind both shall fall into the ditch."

Solemn words! "Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up." Nothing will stand but God's work. The most luxuriant plant of man's planting shall wither and droop, and be rooted up. There may be a great show of blossom, and great promise of fruit; but unless the planting be by God's own hand, it will, most assuredly, come to naught. God's plants shall stand. They shall outlive every storm. "They that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing." (Psalm 92:13, 14.) "As the valleys are they spread forth, as gardens by the river side, as the trees of lign aloes which the Lord hath planted, and as cedar trees beside the waters." How different all this from the blind leading the blind and both falling into the ditch! Oh! the deep blessedness and holy security of being planted by the hand of God, instead of being blindly led by the hand of a blind man! The Lord in His exceeding mercy, grant that my reader may know it!

But we must remember that, in the passage of scripture which lies open before us, our blessed Lord is tracking the human heart. He has shown us where it is; and He is now going to show us what it is. "Then answered Peter, and said unto him, Declare unto us this parable. And Jesus said, Are ye also yet without understanding? Do not ye yet understand, that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught? But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witnesses, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man?"

Here, then, man's heart is reached and exposed. All the false covering of outward observances is removed, all the darkening mists with which a mere religion of human ordinances ever surrounds it are rolled back; and here it is, in all its hideous deformity and appalling wickedness — the source of all these foul and demoralizing influences that have darkened this world's horizon, for well-nigh six thousand years. We may talk of "corban;" we may quote the traditions of the elders; we may go through an imposing round of ordinances; but ah! look at the heart! What can we say to that? Only think of a human heart exposed in the light of the divine presence! How terrible! How overwhelming! Nothing could enable me to bear an insight into my heart, but an insight into the heart of Jesus — the heart of God Himself.

Now, when the heart is fully reached, when the conscience is fully convicted, there is moral preparedness for the next stage of the soul's journey. In other words, conviction and conversion

are closely connected. A convicted sinner is one who has discovered his own heart. A converted sinner is one who has discovered the heart of God. "Repent, and be converted," says Peter. Here we have another mode of expressing the same thing. There is the moral judgment of self; and there is the blessed discovery of God. I discover self and abhor it. I discover God, in the face of Jesus Christ, and turn toward Him, with a full and confiding heart, as the One who is as able as He is willing, and as willing as He is able to save me, notwithstanding His perfect knowledge of all that is in my heart. This gives full relief —perfect liberty — settled peace. It delivers me from all my guilty fears and enables me to tread, with an elastic step, that sunny path which begins at the cross and ends in the glory. I find that the One who was alone able to measure and estimate my guilt, is the very One who has blotted it all out, through the blood of the cross. "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." Isa. 43:25.

Beloved reader, say, do you understand these things? Do you experimentally enter into them? has God discovered your heart, and have you discovered His? Solemn question! What momentous results hang upon your reply! Do not be afraid to have your heart probed and searched to its most profound depths and secret recesses. Open up every chamber of your heart. Draw aside the curtains, open the shutters, draw up the blinds, let in the full light of heaven into every corner and crevice. You cannot dig too deep. Be assured of it, God has made ample provision for it all. The gospel of the grace of God announces to you this glorious, emancipating fact, that a sin-hating God met a sin-bearing Christ, at the cross, and there fully entered into, and finally settled, the great question of sin. This is the divine foundation of a sinner's peace. To know and believe this is to possess a peace which nothing can ever shake. God has gone down to the very bottom of the whole matter, and made a perfect settlement thereof in the cross. I want no more. I am satisfied. Can my conscience claim more than the justice of God? Surely not. A just God and a justified sinner meet in holy communion, on a blood-stained platform. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

In our next, if the Lord will, we shall consider our second point as illustrated in the interesting history of the Syrophenician.

The Syrophenician: Part 2

From the point at which we have arrived, it may be profitable to look back a little, ere we proceed. Man's heart, as we have seen, has been fully reached, its secret springs laid bare. The mist, with which a false religiousness surrounds it, is here rolled back by the Master's hand, and all is thoroughly exposed. "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked: who can know it? I the Lord search the heart. I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways." (Jer. 17:9, 10.) If, therefore, the question is asked, "Where is the heart?" The answer is, "Far from God." And, if it be asked, "What is the heart?" The answer is, "Deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." Thus it is as to the heart of every unregenerate man, woman, and child, on the face of this earth. The character, the circumstances, the disposition may vary; but the heart is the same. It cannot be trusted, inasmuch, as it is deceitful above all things, and, whatever be the outward appearance, it is desperately wicked. It may not have developed itself fully. Its very deceitfulness is seen in the fact of its hiding its true condition. If a person does not know that his heart is desperately wicked, it is just because of its deep deceitfulness.

But, blessed be God, there is another heart for the sinner to look at, when he has learned the truth about his own, and that is, the heart of God, as revealed in Christ. What a mercy! Had I nothing to look at, but my own deceitful and desperately wicked heart, it would be gloomy indeed. But the only One who could thoroughly search my heart, has perfectly revealed His own. This is enough. The sinner's heart searched and God's heart revealed, are the two grand and all-important points. In the former, there is nothing but evil; in the latter, perfect love — love that flows out, notwithstanding all the evil — love that has glorified itself about the evil, by executing judgment thereupon, and working out a full deliverance from its power. Hence, when any one has been led, by the illuminating and convicting power of the Holy Ghost, to take a true view of his own heart, he is just in the position to delight in the unfoldings of the heart of God.

Let us now see how all this comes out in the touching and instructive story of the Syrophenician. "Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David! My daughter is grievously vexed with a devil." Here, then, is a different atmosphere altogether. Our blessed Lord turns His back upon all the religiousness of man — upon his ordinances, his traditions, his washings, his hypocrisy; and He betakes Himself to a region where there is no pretension at all — a region where real need and wretchedness are felt. This was the place for Christ. The poor woman of Canaan knew and cared little about the traditions of the elders. Of what use could they be to her? She felt the pressure of Satan's power. Could man's ordinances touch that? Surely not? None but Jesus for her. Others might occupy themselves in washing dishes and tables, but that could never do for her. She wanted something deeper, something more real than that. She wanted Christ, and to Him she made her way.

Would that thousands, in this our day, felt as the woman of Canaan. Truly it is a day of ordinances — a day of traditionary religion — a day in the which the commandments and doctrines of men

bear sway. Fleshly pietism is putting on its ten thousand imposing forms, and exerting a potent influence over the legal and religious mind. But, with all this, the poor heart is not satisfied, the need is not met, the pressure is not removed. Oh! that thousands would only just come to Jesus, and find in Him all they want for time and eternity. "None but Jesus can do helpless sinners good."

But we have already remarked that in the passage of scripture now lying open before us, the heart of Jesus was hidden, so far as the Syrophenician was concerned, behind very high dispensational enclosures. A woman of Canaan had no claims on "The Son of David," and yet she addressed Him by that title. True, there was love in the heart of Jesus for any poor creature that came to Him in simple faith. But as "Son of David" he stood behind those lofty Jewish barriers which concealed Him from a Gentile's view. He was "a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers." (Rom. 15:8) Not one jot or tittle of those promises could ever fail in the hands of such a faithful and august Minister; and, therefore, unless the Syrophenician could view Him in a higher character than as a minister of the circumcision, He must maintain a total silence. "He answered her not a word." The Son of David had no answer for a Canaanite. He must stand for the truth of God, and confirm the promises made unto the fathers. With these promises she had nothing whatever to do. He could not help a Canaanite at the expense of the seed of Abraham.

The disciples, wholly unable to fathom the deep mysteries which were then filling the mind and being told out in the ministry of their divine Master, "came and besought him, saying, Send her away." Alas! how little they knew Him! How could He ever send away a poor oppressed creature? What! the Son of God send away from His presence one who was suffering under the crushing, grinding hand of Satan! Impossible! Though, as "Son of David," He could not answer, yet, as "Son of God," He could not possibly dismiss her. If, as the Minister of the circumcision, He had no reply, certainly, as the Minister of the grace of God, He had no rebuff. Though, as the vindicator of the truth of God, He had to be silent, yet as the expression of divine love, He could not be severe. He had blessing for her, but she must take her proper place and view Him, not merely as Son of David, but as Lord of all. "I am not sent," said He, "but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel;" and she did not belong to the sheep of Israel, but to the race of Canaan.

But faith cannot be foiled. It knows there is a full blessing in the heart of Jesus, and it will have it. Thus it was with the Syrophenician. She had set out to reach the loving, tender heart of Christ, and she was not to be put off. The dispensational barriers might be lofty, but that made no difference. They might be immovable, but it was all the same. She felt that though He could not remove them, He could rise above them. Though the glories of the Son of David could only shine within Jewish boundaries, the glories of the Son of God could shed their brilliant luster over all the earth. All this she knew. Her faith could grasp it. She felt it was utterly impossible for that blessed One to dismiss a case of need from His presence. "Then came she, and worshipped him, saying, Lord help me."

Here, we reach the grand point in this intensely interesting narrative. The Syrophenician now places herself in the divine presence as one simply needing help, and no one ever did, or ever can do, this in vain. Oh! the depth, power, and fullness of these three words, "Lord, help me!" They form a chain with three links. We have "Lord" at one end, "me" at the other, and "help" the link between. Nothing can be simpler. The moment faith forms this precious chain all is settled. The little word "help" may contain everything that the soul can possibly require here or hereafter.

Reader, let me pause here, and ask you, pointedly, have you ever really formed this precious chain with three links? Have you, by simple faith, put Jesus at one end, yourself at the other, and “help” between? If so, all is settled —divinely and eternally settled. You have put Him in His right place as the Supplier, and taken your right place as the supplied, and all you want is infallibly insured. The word “help” contains not only all you desire or need, but all that Christ is able and willing to give. Remember this. The very moment the sinner takes his true place before God, there is nothing but salvation for him. Nor is it merely such a salvation as suits him to get, but, better far, such a one as suits God to give. This is a great and marvelous fact, illustrating, most forcibly, the moral grandeur of the gospel of the grace of God. Let a sinner only take his true place, before God, as a sinner, and the whole matter is settled. God is his Savior and he is saved — saved according to the measure of the perfectness of the Person and work of Christ.

But we must be in our right place. And what is that? Lost! The moment this is seen, the question passes entirely out of our hands into the hands of God, and there it is settled in such a way as to illustrate, as nothing else ever could, the glory of God. God is glorified in being linked, by the word “help” to the poor, helpless, guilty sinner. Eternal praise be to His holy name! Who would not trust Him? Who would not accept salvation at His hand? Who would not look to Him for all needed help, when to minister that help not only glorifies His name, but also gratifies his heart? May the Holy Ghost unfold to our souls more and more of the living depths of those three words, “Lord, help me!” They do so put God in His proper place, as the Helper, and man in his proper place as the helped. There is no limit to the word “help;” it is as deep and boundless as the source from which it flows, and must therefore fully meet the most pressing exigencies of the sinner’s case. The fountain of help is God Himself, and the streams thereof come gushing forth, in ten thousand channels, to answer the varied forms of human need. Is the conscience oppressed with the heavy burden of guilt? There is help for me in Jesus — the very help I need. His precious blood cleanseth from all sin, and gives perfect ease to the conscience. Do I feel the burden of indwelling sin, and sigh for victory over the habits and tendencies of nature? I have only to cast myself upon Christ, in the spirit of these words, “Lord, help me.” Thus it is in everything. Faith links the soul with Christ, and all His fullness becomes mine, to be used as occasion demands.

All this is strikingly unfolded in the narrative of the Syrophenician. Faith put her in her true place, and the moment she dropped into that place, Christ rose before the vision of her soul, in all the moral glory of His Person and the all-sufficiency of His grace. Her faith was of the right stamp. It stood the most severe testing. She showed herself prepared not only to give up all claim upon Jesus, as the Son of David, but to take her place as a dog under the table. “It is not meet,” said Christ, “to take the children’s bread, and cast it to dogs.” This was putting faith into a most searching crucible. But, ah! my reader, it was really putting honor upon it. True faith can bear to be tried. A genuine wedge can stand the furnace. The Lord Jesus knew what He had to deal with, and He was only leading this woman to a stand-point from the which she could get a view of Him that would satisfy every longing of her soul. She had no claim on the “Son of David” she had no right to “the children’s bread;” she was a dog of the Gentiles. Was she prepared for all this? Yes, she was. “Truth, Lord; yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master’s table.”

Reader, this is divine. Surely this was a refreshing draft for the Master’s thirsty spirit. It was something very different from the traditions of the elders, the “corban” of the ancients, the washings of the Pharisees. There was nothing for the heart of Jesus like the faith of a poor sinner

who cared not what place she occupied provided it was near Him. She knew, full well, that even a dog under His table must be well cared for. True, she could not lay claim to any dispensational relationship. She would not touch a morsel of the children's bread; but was there not a crumb for a dog? Yes, blessed be God. It was impossible that Christ could refuse a crumb for a needy creature. Faith triumphed, and the treasury of heaven is flung open to a poor woman of Canaan, in these glowing words, "O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt."

This, surely, is enough. Faith has here reached the heart of God. It has made its way to that wondrous point. In the first division of our subject we were led to contemplate the heart of man; here we contemplate the heart of God. What a contrast! The eye of God rests on the heart of man and discovers it to be a fountain of evil. Here the eye of faith rests on the heart of God and finds it to be the fountain of goodness — a fountain ever fresh, ever flowing — a fountain from whence the soul may drink to its full satisfaction. "Be it unto thee, even as thou wilt." Precious word! Faith is the key to heaven's treasury. The Syrophenician held and used that mysterious key, and got access thereby to luxuries richer far than even "the children's bread."

Nothing can be more lovely than to mark the way in which this highly favored woman reaches the heart of Christ, hidden, as it was, behind those enclosures within which "The Son of David" — "The Minister of the circumcision" — found His proper range. It is truly delightful to note how she seizes the great fact that there was something in Him which could not be circumscribed by any dispensational boundary. Her faith enabled her to soar into regions far beyond Judaism and all its belongings. She did not want to touch that system, for a moment; she only wanted to touch the heart of Christ — that large, that boundless heart which could not be confined by any system under the sun. As to herself, she was prepared to take any place, even the place of a dog beneath the Master's table. It mattered not, in the least, where she was, provided she was near Him. It would have been no gain to her to be set upon Jewish ground. The aspirations of her faith carried her far beyond the ministration of "The Minister of the circumcision." It was Himself she reached, and in Him she found all she wanted. She bowed to the testimony as to her proper place, in that emphatic word, "Truth;" but she opened the very flood-gates of the heart of Jesus, by her significant "yet." What treasures of grace might she not expect to flow in through the opening made by her "yet."

How suggestive are those two little words! "Truth" is the utterance of a convicted conscience; "yet," the breathing of a converted heart. The former puts the sinner into his right place; the latter leaves room for God to come in, in all the riches of his saving grace. That abandons all claim, on the ground of personal merit; this bases all expectation on the ground of the sovereign grace and mercy of God. Nothing can be simpler. It is only just one of a thousand striking illustrations of the same grand truth which shines, like a sunbeam, on every page of inspiration, from Genesis to the Revelation, "Thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thy help."

Three Grand Realities

(Read Psalm 32)

In this lovely psalm we have God presented to us in three ways. First, we have Him as our Justifier; secondly, as our Hiding-place; thirdly, as our Guide. These surely are “Three Grand Realities.” Nor is it merely that God provides us with justification, security, and guidance, though even this were rich and abundant mercy and goodness; but there is far more than this, He Himself has become our Justifier, our Hiding-place, and our Guide. Wondrous provision! Such is the moral grandeur of redemption — such the way in which the God of all grace has met all our need. If God Himself is my Justifier, I must be perfectly justified. If He is my Hiding-place, I must be perfectly hidden. If He is my Guide, I must be perfectly guided.

Let us then, as guided by the light of Holy Scripture and in dependence upon the teaching of the Holy Spirit, proceed to consider, in the first place, GOD OUR JUSTIFIER.

“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.” “Oh! the blessedness! Transgression forgiven — sin covered.” There is deeply imbedded in man’s religious mind the thought that he has to meet God as a Judge - that he, as a sinner, has, in some way or another, to satisfy the claims of a righteous Judge who will deal with him about his sins, and exact the very last farthing. As the dying gypsy exclaimed, when told that he was standing at the very portal of the eternal world, “What! must I give afore the Judge with my sins upon me?” Tremendous inquiry! If I have to meet God as a Judge, it is all over with me. “Enter not into judgment with thy servant: for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.” (Psalm 143:2.) Hence, therefore, a soul, looking at God as a Judge, must be filled with terror, inasmuch as he cannot answer Him one of a thousand. “Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?” You cannot meet God as a Judge. Condemnation must be the issue of a meeting between a righteous Judge and a guilty sinner.

But, thanks be to God, He wears another character now. He is a righteous Justifier. Yes, a Justifier of such as cannot meet Him as a Judge. God must be righteous in whatever sphere He displays Himself. Whether as a Judge or a Justifier, He must be just. But, in this day of grace, during the acceptable year, the day of salvation, He is revealing Himself as “A just God and a Savior.” A righteous Savior-God. What a character! What a stupendous triumph of redeeming love! What an answer to Satan! What a balm for the convicted conscience and stricken heart! A Savior-God! It is the very title which suits a lost sinner. It brings God near to me in the very condition and character in which I find myself. If God is a Savior, it is precisely what suits me as lost. If God is a Justifier, it is exactly what I need as guilty. None but a lost sinner can have to do with a Savior-God. None but a guilty sinner can have to do with God as a righteous Justifier. Nothing can be simpler. It places salvation and justification on a basis as simple as it is solid, and as solid as it is simple. God

reveals Himself as a Savior; the believing sinner walks in the light of that revelation, and is saved. God reveals Himself as a Justifier; the believing sinner walks in the light of that revelation, and is justified. He is saved and justified according to the perfect standard of God's revelation of Himself. It is impossible to stand on more solid ground, or occupy a more unassailable position than this. To touch the believer's salvation and justification is to mar the integrity of God's revelation.

And let the anxious reader remember who it is that God justifies, for this point is only second in importance to the question of who is the Justifier. Who, then, does God justify? Is it good people? Where are they? Is it those who have done their duty? Are any such to be found? Is it those who have fulfilled the law? Such would not need His justification, seeing that "the man that doeth these things shall live in them." If, therefore, a man could fulfill the law, he should have no transgression to be forgiven, no sin to be covered, and hence a Savior-God — a righteous Justifier, is not for him. This is obvious. A man who has wrought out a legal righteousness does not want an evangelical one. "If righteousness come by law, Christ has died in vain." There was no use in His dying to get us righteousness, if it could be had some other way.

Who, then, does God justify? Hear it, anxious inquirer! He justifies the ungodly. Yes; such is the veritable language of Holy Scripture. "Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David also 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. 4:4 - 8.

Here then we get our answer, full, clear, distinct, and conclusive. Two characters are placed in contrast, namely, "him that worketh," and "him that worketh not," and this contrast completely upsets all man's thoughts. It never could have entered into man's mind to conceive that righteousness was to be had without working for it — that God could justify the ungodly. And yet this is the very doctrine of Scripture. If man could get righteousness by working for it, then clearly it would not be divine righteousness, for the simplest of all reasons, that this latter is to "him that worketh not." If God reveals Himself as the Justifier of the ungodly, then is it a sheer denial of the revelation for man to come before Him in any other character. If I, as a sinner, bring my duties to God, I must meet Him as a Judge, for surely He must judge my duties to see if they are all right. But if I bring my sins to Him, He meets me as a Justifier with a full and free forgiveness and an everlasting righteousness. The peculiar glory of the gospel is that it reveals God as the righteous Justifier of poor ungodly sinners.

This is a marvelous truth. And if it be asked, as surely it must, by every exercised conscience, on what ground does this grand reality hold good? The answer is as clear and satisfactory as the most anxious soul can possibly desire. It is this — God, as a Judge, dealt with my sins at the cross, in order that God as a Justifier might deal with me at heaven's side of the empty tomb of Jesus. The death of Christ, therefore, forms the ground on which God can righteously justify the ungodly. A righteous Judge condemned sin on the cross, that a righteous Justifier might pardon and justify the guilty. What a profound mystery! Well may angels desire to look into it, and well may sinners, whom it so blessedly concerns, bless and praise Him who has counseled, revealed, and wrought it all for them through the accomplished atonement of Christ.

And here we would pause a moment in order to put a plain, pointed question to the reader. Dear friend, do you know God as your Justifier? Or, are you still thinking of meeting Him as a Judge? Are you looking forward to the judgment-seat as the place where the question of your justification is to be settled? If so, you must be miserable. You can never enjoy true peace until you know and believe that God as a Judge has nothing against you as a sinner anymore, that He Himself is your Justifier; that, in the death and resurrection of Christ, He has revealed Himself as a just God and a Savior to you, an ungodly sinner. This is the solid and unassailable ground of peace; and we most earnestly pray you to ponder it. If you are really anxious about your soul's salvation, you need not lay down this paper until you possess divine certainty that you are justified, and that God is your Justifier. Blessed certainty! May you know it now, through simply believing on Him who justifieth the ungodly, and you will then be able to follow us, with intelligence and comfort, while we dwell, in the second place, on

GOD OUR HIDING-PLACE.

It is a remarkable fact, that so long as the sinner is at enmity with God, he is at peace with himself; at peace with the world; at peace with the devil; but the moment he is brought into full peace with God, he is at war with himself, with the world, and with the devil. Hence, no sooner do I know God as my Justifier than I have to cope with a host of spiritual enemies, within and around. This makes me conscious of another need; I want a hiding-place into which I may retreat at all times, nay, rather out of which I may never venture to show myself. Now, God is this Hiding-place. "Thou art my hiding-place; thou shalt preserve me from trouble; thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance." What a difference between the condition of the soul here and in the third and fourth verses! "When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer." What a contrast between the "roaring" of a sin-burdened soul-fearing judgment, and the "songs of deliverance" of a justified soul, hidden in God! And yet it is far better to roar in disquietude of spirit, than to cry, Peace, peace, where there is no peace. True anxiety is vastly to be preferred to a false peace. But the believer has neither the one nor the other. His anxiety has been hushed into truthful repose by the knowledge of God as his Justifier and his Hiding-place; and therefore instead of the roarings of disquietude, he can sing songs of deliverance. Blessed exchange! Instead of crying out, "Oh! the wretchedness!" he can sing aloud, " Oh! the blessedness!" "Thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance." "If God be for us, who can be against us?" "Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." "Now thanks be to God which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savor of his knowledge by us in every place."

These are some of the "songs of deliverance" with which a Savior-God doth compass about His justified and hidden ones. Would that we were more filled with them! Alas! that we should be more characterized by murmurings and complainings, than by songs of triumph. Surely, if we would but ponder our mercies and blessings more deeply, our songs would be more abundant. Who have such reason to be glad as those who are justified by, and perfectly hidden in, God?

But we must close this paper by a brief reference to the third point in this lovely scripture, namely, GOD OUR GUIDE.

This we may truly say is a grand reality. Yes, and we want it as we pass along through the labyrinths of this wilderness-world, in this day of perplexity and confusion. We want a Guide, and God has undertaken to fill that office for us. "I will instruct thee, and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye." What precious grace! It is as though our God would meet us at each stage of our path, and manifest Himself in the very character in which we need Him. When bowed down with guilt, and roaring in disquietude, our bones waxing old, and our moisture dried up, He shines before us as our Justifier — our Savior-God — pardoning our transgressions, and covering our sins. When surrounded by hosts of spiritual enemies, who would crush us in a moment, He opens His bosom to us, and invites us to find, in Himself, a retreat and a hiding-place from them all; so that, instead of feeling ourselves compassed with foes, we are compassed with songs. And, finally, when called to pass through scenes of confusion and perplexity, He, in infinite grace, stands before us and says, "I will guide thee." What grace! What nearness! What intimacy!

And mark the way He guides. "I will guide thee with mine eye" This, as we know, is the most tender, delicate, and affectionate description of guidance. We must be very intimate with a person, and very near him, in order to be guided by the movement of his eye. It is a far more refined and exquisite sort of guidance than the movement of the hand, or the sound of the voice. I must be gazing directly into a person's face in order to catch the glance of his eye; and I must be intimately acquainted with his wishes and his ways, in order to interpret the glance and act upon it.

O that we entered more fully into all this! Would that the guidance of our Father's eye were ever sufficient for us! Would that we could just place our hand in His, and, gazing up into His countenance, be ever guided by the movement of His eye! Then would our path be clear and safe, simple and happy. We should not, like the impetuous "horse," or the obstinate "mule," require the "bit and bridle" of circumstances; but through communion with His mind we should know His will. How often are we at a loss as to our path! How often are we ill at ease! And why? Because the guidance of the eye is not understood. We ask God for guidance in reference to movements which He does not want us to make, and as to paths in which He does not want us to tread. "I don't know which way to turn," said someone lately to a Christian friend. What was the reply? A very simple one. "Don't turn at all." Just so. If you don't see your way as to moving, it is very obvious you should stand still.

May all the people of God be enabled, by His Spirit, to walk as justified ones, to abide in their hiding-place, and follow their Guide!

Trusting in Jesus

I know, O Lord, though all around is dark,
I need not fear,
Rough are the waves that toss my little bark,
But Thou art near.
The stormy winds Thy word alone fulfill,
Their rage shall cease,
And when Thy voice shall give the charge "Be still;"
All will be peace.
Yes! I shall see (soon as this storm has passed
Across the soul)
That He, who slumbers not, held every blast
In His control;
And though, o'ershadowed by the present woe,
The heart may quail,
Strong in the grace, the strength
Thou dost bestow, I shall prevail.
What though long cherished hopes, like autumn leaves,
All scattered lie,
Knowing Thy love divine, this scarcely grieves,
For spring is nigh;
New hopes, God given, shall then arise and bloom
In beauty bright,
Therefore, in hope rejoicing, 'mid the gloom
I wait for light.
Thou precious Savior, by whose life I live,
Lighten my eyes!

Let me not miss the lessons Thou dost give,
O make me wise!
Keep me, whilst tempest-driven on life's dark sea,
Close to Thy side,
There, anchored safely by sure hope in
Thee, Let me abide.
Jesus, Thou art my all. What can I lose,
Since Thou art mine?
Guide me, O best Beloved, my portion choose,
For I am Thine.
To the desired haven let me come
In Thine own way:
There will be no more night in that fair home,
But endless day!

The Two Worlds

What an unworldly chapter, if I may so express myself, this is! At the opening of it, believers are taught not to let their condition in the world avail itself, or make profit of, the fact that they are believers, brethren in Christ. The believing servant is instructed to be still a servant in the honor that he owes his master, and not, in anywise, to avail himself of the fact of his brotherhood in Christ with his master. This is an admonition excellent in itself, and worthy indeed, as this chapter speaks, “of God and his doctrine.”

Thus, in the progress of this same chapter, those who have, and those who have not, the wealth of this world are, severally, exhorted to be unworldly, letting go this present world and grasping the world to come, or eternal life, by the one class being liberally active, and by the other being thoroughly content.

These are good and suited words, admonitions and exhortations, on the subject of unworldliness.

But beside this, or in the midst of this, there is a striking commentary on the two worlds, the present, or man’s world! the future, or Christ’s world — and this too, in connection with the Lord Jesus Himself.

In the present world, Timothy is exhorted to fight the good fight of faith, to flee the desire of being rich, and to cherish the graces and tempers of the christian character; and he is exhorted to keep this commandment as “in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and of Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession.”

But this exhortation tells us, or reminds us, that Jesus, in this world, was a Confessor. He was such a One in the presence of the Roman Governor. He there disclaimed this world. “My kingdom is not of this world,” He said to Pontius Pilate. This was a part of His good confession. He surrendered everything He might have had, or could have had, in man’s world. The prince of it had nothing in Him. But God, “who quickeneth all things,” has prepared a world for Him. He gave up this present world, and God will make Him His representative in power and majesty in a future world. He Himself, dwelling in light which no man can approach unto, will put forth this good Confessor as the Holder and Representative of His dignities and authority as “the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords.”

There is something very excellent in this, very fine and admirable indeed. The present world was the scene that witnessed a poor humbled Confessor at the peril of His life standing to answer for Himself in the presence of the powers of it — the future will be the scene where this humbled Confessor shall shine as the glorious reflection of God in majesty and authority all the world over.

This is a great sight to see to. But let me speak a little further.

This same Lord Jesus has already in this present world been a Representative One, a Representative of the Father. “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father” — the Lord has already said, though He hath not as yet shone as the image of “ the Potentate, King of kings, and Lord of

lords.” He has already witnessed grace, but not power — grace in God, but not power in the earth. He has already witnessed righteousness in humiliation and suffering; He is to witness it, by and by, in exaltation and authority. When the day of Rev. 19 comes, we shall have Him as a manifestation of the King of kings and Lord of lords.

And one other thing that makes distinctions for our profit, and has practical value in it, let me notice. Speaking as from the bosom of the Church, or the family of heavenly strangers on the earth, the Spirit will say to us through one apostle, “Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted, but the rich in that he is made low.” (Jas. 1:9, 10.) But here, 1 Tim. 6:1, speaking as from the place of “God and his doctrine,” through another apostle, He will warn the saint not to let his place and relationships in the earth take advantage of his connection with the saints, his brethren in Christ.

How beautiful is everything in its season! How perfect, like gold refined seven times in the fire, is every word that has proceeded out of the mouth of our God!

The Well of Bethlehem

“And David longed, and said, Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate!” Such was the breathing of David’s heart — a breathing which met with a speedy and hearty response from three members of that devoted and heroic band which flocked around him in the cave of Adullam. “And the three mighty men brake through the host of the Philistines, and drew water out of the well of Bethlehem, that was by the gate, and took it and brought it to David.” There was no command issued. No one in particular was singled out and commissioned to go. There was the simple utterance of the desire, and this it was which afforded the opportunity for genuine affection and true devotedness. Had there been a specific command given to any one, it would merely have afforded an occasion for ready obedience; but the utterance of a desire developed that ardent attachment to the person of David which is so lovely to behold.

And mark the actings of David in this most touching scene: “Nevertheless he would not drink thereof, but poured it out unto the Lord. And he said, “Be it far from me, O Lord, that I should do this: is not this the blood of the men that went in jeopardy of their lives? Therefore he would not drink of it.” It was a sacrifice too costly for any save Jehovah Himself, and hence David would not permit the sweet odor of it to be interrupted in its ascent to the throne of God.

How little did those three mighty men imagine that their act of loving devotedness should be recorded on the eternal page of inspiration, there to be read by untold millions. They never thought of this. Their hearts were set on David, and they counted not their lives dear unto them so that they might gratify him or refresh his spirit. Had they acted to get a name or a place for themselves, it would have robbed their act of all its charms, and consigned it to its merited contempt and oblivion. But no; they loved David. This was the spring of their activity, and they proved that he was more precious to, their hearts than life itself. They forgot all in the one absorbing object of serving David, and the odor of their sacrifice ascended to the throne of God, while the record of their deed shines on the page of inspiration, and shall continue to shine so long as that page endures.

Oh! how we long for something like this in reference to the true David, in this the day of His rejection. We do greatly covet a more intense and self-sacrificing devotedness as the fruit of the constraining love of Christ. It is not, by any means, a question of working for rewards, for a crown or for a place, though we fully believe in the doctrine of rewards. No! the very moment we make rewards our object, we are below the mark. We believe that service rendered with the eye upon the reward would be defective. But then we believe also that every jot or tittle of true service will be rewarded in the day of Christ’s glory, and that each servant will get his place in the record, and his niche in the kingdom according to the measure of His personal devotedness, down here. This we hold to be a great practical truth and we press it as such upon the attention of the Christian reader. We must confess we long to see the standard of devotedness greatly raised amongst us, and this can only be affected by having our hearts more entirely consecrated to Christ and His cause. O Lord, revive thy work!

The Well of Sychar

(John 4)

It has been frequently observed that our blessed Lord is presented, in the Gospel of John, in the very highest aspect in which we can contemplate Him, namely, as the Son from heaven— the eternal Word — the Creator of all things — the Revealer of the Father. In Matthew, He is presented as a Jew — Son of David, Son of Abraham - legal heir to the throne of David, and the land of Israel. In Mark, we have Him as the Servant, in the various fields of ministry, pursuing, with a holy diligence which nothing could distract, his course of service. In Luke, He is seen as Son of Man, having His genealogical line traced, without a break, up to Adam.

But, the moment we open the sublime Gospel of John, we are introduced to Him who was from the beginning — before all worlds — by whom were all things — the Eternal Word —who was in the bosom of the Father from all eternity — who was made flesh and tabernacled amongst us. And yet, there is not one of the Gospels in which this glorious Person is so frequently presented alone with the sinner, as in this very Gospel of John. Surely there is divine purpose in this. We see Him alone with Nicodemus, alone with the Samaritan, alone with the poor convicted adulteress, and alone with many others. Indeed, we may say that, the Son of God alone with the sinner, is one special feature of the Gospel of John.

Now, we purpose, in dependence upon divine teaching, to dwell, for a little, upon one of those touching scenes in which Jesus and a poor sinner are seen in company, “at Sychar’s lonely well.” The woman of Samaria stands in very striking contrast with Nicodemus, in chapter 3. The latter had standing, reputation, and character; the former had nothing of the kind. He was at the top of the wheel; she, at the very bottom. You could hardly get anything higher than “a man of the Pharisees, a ruler of the Jews a master in Israel;” and, on the other hand, you could hardly get anything lower than a Samaritan adulteress. And yet, as to the real, vital, fundamental, and eternal question of standing in the sight of God, of fitness for His holy presence, of title to heaven, they were both on a level.

This may seem, to some of our readers, a strong and a strange statement. “What! do you mean to say that the learned, pious, and, doubtless, amiable Nicodemus was no better, in the sight of God, than that wretched woman of Sychar?” Not a whit, as to standing in His presence. “There is no difference, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” And, hence, Christ’s first word to Nicodemus is, “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” This brief utterance completely swept the foundation from under the feet of this master in Israel. Nothing less than a new nature could avail for a man of the Pharisees, and nothing more was needed for the adulteress of Sychar. It is clear that crime could not enter heaven; but neither could Pharisaism. A criminal and a Pharisee can, blessed be God, enter heaven, because both can have eternal life through believing in the Son of God.

It is of all importance for the reader to seize this grand foundation truth of Christianity. He could not possibly have a more graphic or striking illustration of it than is presented in the history of Nicodemus and the woman of Sychar. Had our blessed Lord spoken to the woman about becoming good, and to Nicodemus about becoming better, then indeed, there would be some foundation for the notion that there are some samples of fallen humanity better, and nearer to God, than others, and, moreover, that it is quite possible so to improve nature — to improve self — as to make it fit, at length, for the presence of God. But when we find Him at once sweeping away the whole legal platform on which the Jewish ruler stood, by declaring the absolute necessity of a new birth, then we are forced to the conclusion that human nature is incurable and incorrigible.

In the case of the poor woman of Sychar, there was no legal platform to be swept away. Her moral character and religious standing had all been swamped long since. Not so Nicodemus. He evidently felt he had some capital, something to count upon, something to glory in. He was a person of some standing, and he therefore needed to learn that it was all worthless — perfectly worthless, in the sight of God; and in no words could that need have been more pointedly or forcibly expressed, than in Christ's brief utterance, "You must be born again." Do what you will with nature; educate, cultivate, sublimate it as much as you please; raise it to the loftiest pinnacle of the temple of science and philosophy; call to your aid all the appliances of the legal system, and all the resources of religiousness; make vows and resolutions of moral reform; add ceremony to ceremony; wear yourself out with a round of religious duties; betake yourself to vigils, fastings, prayers, alms, and the entire range of "dead works" and, after all, yonder adulteress of Sychar is as near the kingdom as you, seeing that you as well as she "must be born again." Neither you nor she has one jot or tittle to present to God, either in the way of title to the kingdom, or of capacity to enjoy it. It is, and must be, all of grace, from beginning to end. We must be born again.

But what is this new birth? Is it nature made better? By no means. What then? It is eternal life possessed through simple faith in the Son of God. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." This is the new birth, and this is the way to get it. God loved — God gave — we believe and have. Nothing can be simpler. It is not nature made better — fallen humanity raised, educated, and improved; but an entirely new life possessed — even eternal life through faith in Christ, to be possessed by the poor woman of Sychar, just as fully, and in the self-same way, as by the ruler of the Jews. "There is no difference, for all have sinned." And "There is no difference, for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him." Looked at from a human point of view, there is no difference, for all have sinned; and looked at from a divine point there is no difference, for God is rich unto all. The roaster in Israel and the woman of Sychar are put on a level, and God's rich grace flows down, through the blood of Christ, to both the one and the other, to bestow upon each eternal life as the free gift of God.

Now, this eternal life is something entirely new. Adam, in innocence, had not eternal life. He had an immortal soul; but the immortality of the soul, and eternal life, are two distinct things. The very feeblest lamb in all the blood-bought flock of Christ is better off by far, than Adam, in the day of his innocence. He has gotten indestructible, victorious, eternal life in Christ. Adam knew nothing of this amid the fruits and flowers of Eden. It was when all was in ruins around him—himself a ruin in

the midst of ruins — that the first faint glimmer of light fell upon his soul, in the early promise made, not to him, but to the Second Adam, the Lord from heaven, “The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent’s head.” In the faith of this, Adam escaped from himself and the ruin around him, took refuge in Christ, the Head of the new race, the new creation, and called his wife’s name “The mother of all living.” No life apart from the seed of the woman.

And be it further noted, that when the Jew was put under law, it was not, by any means, with a view to his getting eternal life, even if he had kept it. The language of the law was this, “The man that doeth these things shall live in them.” It never spoke of eternal life, at all. A man was to have life so long as he kept the commandments. It was temporary and conditional life; and, therefore, the woman of Sychar would have had no business going to Sinai. She, having offended in one point of the law, was guilty of all, and, as a consequence, was under the curse. She had no title to life, either temporary or eternal. Nicodemus might fancy he had a claim; but her case was hopeless, so far as she was concerned. Moses had no helping hand for her, at all events.

But, then, this brazen serpent, what could it mean? For whom was it intended? Why for any poor bitten creature, just because he was bitten. The wound was the title. The title to what? To look at the serpent. And what then? He that looked lived. Yes; “look and live.” Precious truth! True, for Nicodemus — true, for the woman of Sychar — true, for every bitten son and daughter of Adam. There is no limit, no restriction, no fence drawn round the precious grace of God. The Son of man has been lifted up, that whosoever looks to Him, in simple faith, might have what Adam in innocence never possessed; and what the law of Moses never proposed, even “everlasting life.” Mark, it does not say, an immortal soul, for that Adam had before as well as after his fall — that all have, believers and unbelievers. But “He that believeth on the Son of God, hath everlasting life.” This is what the Lord Christ saith, and saith it, too, with a double “verily” Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment; (κρίσιν) but is passed from death unto life.” John 5:24.

There is no middle ground. It is either “death” or “life.” Men may talk as they will, about the power, the capacity, the dignity of nature, the education of the human race, the progress of man, development, and such like. The few weighty words, just quoted, settle the whole question. It is either life in Christ, or death out of Christ. All man’s progress, until he gets to Christ, is, and must be, progress in death. It matters not, who he is, or what he is, Pharisee, scribe, or publican, learned or ignorant, pious or profane, moral Or immoral, savage or civilized, if he be not in Christ, he is in death; but if he be in Christ, he “hath everlasting life;” and then all progress will resolve itself into a growth in grace, growth in knowledge, growth in moral and practical conformity to the image of Christ, the Second Man, the risen Lord, the Head of the New Creation.

Reader, pause here, we entreat you, and ponder this solemn subject. There is a great deal more involved in it than many imagine. This new life in Christ cuts up by the roots all man’s pretensions. It sweeps away, as so much worthless rubbish, all man’s religiousness, all his pietism, all his legal righteousness. It shows him that until he gets Christ he has gotten absolutely nothing, but that, having Him, he has all. Yes, it is even thus, Nothing in self — all in Christ. It may be a so-called good-self, like the ruler of the Jews, or a rightly called bad-self, like the woman of Sychar; it is all the same. Both are dead — spiritually dead. There was no more spiritual life in Nicodemus, when he came to Jesus by night, than there was in the Samaritan, when Jesus came to her by day.

True, there was a vast difference morally and socially. It is unnecessary to assert this. No sensible person needs to be told that morality is better than vice, that it is better to be sober than drunk, better to be an honest man than a thief.

All this is plain. But it is equally plain that honesty, sobriety, and morality are not everlasting life. Nor are they the way to get it, either. These things, in their genuine character, will be the fruit - the sure and necessary fruit — of the new life; but they are neither the new life itself nor its procuring cause. "He that hath the Son hath life. He that hath not the Son of God hath not life." This is conclusive. There is no middle ground between "Hath" and "Hath not." There is no room for progress between these two points. The writer and reader are, at this moment, under one or other of these two divisions. Solemn thought! We deeply feel its solemnity and grave importance in this day of man's proud pretensions, when even Christianity itself is taken up as an agency for the advancement of fallen and corrupt humanity — as part of a system of education for the improvement of the race. It really comes to this, according to the teaching of some of our modern doctors. Paganism, Judaism, and Christianity, are only so many influences brought to bear upon man to raise him in the scale and make him out to be somebody. Fatal delusion! Soul-destroying error! May the Holy Ghost open the eyes of many to see it, and enable them to escape from it! May the Gospel of Christ go forth with fresh power, and stem the rising tide of rationalism and infidelity, in this dark and evil day!

We shall, with the Lord's blessing, pay another visit to the well of Sychar; indeed, as yet we have hardly reached it, but the train of thought we have been pursuing, will enable us to appreciate more fully, the deep and holy lessons to be learned there.

The Well of Sychar: Part 1

There is a peculiar charm about the narratives in the gospels, arising from the fact that they present the Lord Jesus Himself, immediately to the heart. They do not give us so many abstract truths or dry doctrines, or occupy us with the establishment of certain principles. They unfold a Person, and that Person is none other than God manifest in the flesh. We see Him in intercourse with sinners of every grade in society, and every shade of character — high and low, rich and poor, religious and irreligious, scribes and Pharisees, publicans and harlots— all sorts. We behold Him in company with the vilest sinners, as at the well of Sychar, and we find Him dealing with such in perfect grace. We discern in Him a holiness which is above and beyond all sin, and yet grace which can reach down to the deepest depths of the sinner's need. In a word, God has come down to earth, and we can see Him in the face of Jesus Christ.

Now, this is a stupendous fact. God has revealed Himself. He can be known — yes, known with all the certainty which His own revelation of Himself is capable of imparting. “The darkness is past and the true light now shineth.” There is no need, now, to pour forth Job's pathetic accents, “Oh! that I knew where I might find him.” We can repair to the well of Sychar, and there behold the Creator of the universe, in the person of that dust-covered, weary, thirsty stranger who seeks to make Himself a debtor to a Samaritan adulteress for a drink of water. Amazing fact! Profound, unfathomable mystery! God over all, blessed forever, speaking through human lips, asks an adulteress for a drink!

Where, we may lawfully ask, amid the wide fields of creation, could we find aught like this? Nowhere. We may look there, and behold the marvelous exhibition of wisdom, power and goodness; but we do not and cannot see God, in the likeness of sinful flesh, in the form of a weary, worn, dust-covered, thirsty man, sitting by a well, and asking a poor sinful woman for a drink of water. We may turn to the opening pages of the Pentateuch, and behold God, as the Creator, coming forth from His eternal dwelling place, and calling worlds into existence, by the word of His mouth. But we see no weariness here, no thirst, no asking for a drink. We can trace the footsteps of the Creator, as He passes, in His majestic career, from field to field of His glorious work; but the glories that shine upon us “at Sychar's lonely well” are brighter far than aught that meets our view in the opening pages of the book of Genesis. “Let there be light,” was glorious; but, “Give me to drink,” exceeds in glory. In the former, we discern a majesty that overawes, and a brightness that dazzles us; but in the latter, we see grace that wins our confidence, and tenderness that melts the heart.

Again, we may ask, where, throughout the entire Mosaic economy, can we trace anything like the scene at Sychar's well? Could the Lawgiver have asked an adulteress for a drink of water? Impossible. Had the woman of Sychar stood before the fiery mount, her lot would have been cursing and stoning, without mercy. Such an one had little to expect from “the ministration of death and condemnation.” And yet, strange to say, there are some who tell us that, “If you take away the law from the gospel you leave nothing behind worthy the name of a gospel!”

Say, reader, what do you think of such a statement as this? How does it look when viewed in the light that shines upon us at the well of Sychar? What a strange statement! Who would have thought that in this day wherein an open Bible is so freely and so widely circulated, such a statement should drop from the lips or the pen of a so-called Christian teacher? Take away “the ministration of death and condemnation” from “the ministration of life and righteousness,” (2 Corinthians 3.) and you leave nothing behind worthy the name of a gospel! Take away that which curses, and must curse, the sinner, from that which pardons, saves, and blesses him, and you leave nothing behind worthy the name of a gospel! Take away that which “worketh wrath” from that which unfolds the fullness of divine love in the Person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ, and you leave nothing behind worthy the name of a gospel!

But we shall not lose our time in dwelling upon the gross ignorance and absurdity of such a statement. We shall do far better to return and linger in the vicinity of the well of Sychar, and hearken to the marvelous conversation between God manifest in the flesh, and a poor degraded woman of Samaria.

Our blessed Lord, “knowing that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, (though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples) he left Judea, and departed again into Galilee. And he must needs go through Samaria. Then cometh he to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Now Jacob’s well was there. Jesus therefore, being weary with his journey, sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour. There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink.”

Here, then we have this marvelous scene before our eyes — a scene which neither Creation, nor the Law, nor Providence, could ever present to us. The Lord of glory came down into this world, to taste, as Man, weakness, weariness, and thirst — to know what it was to be in need of a draft of spring water. “Jesus being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well.” This world was a dry and thirsty land to Jesus. The only refreshment He found was in ministering of His grace to poor, needy sinners, such as that one who stood before Him at the well.

And let us carefully note the contrast in His style with the woman of Sychar, and the master in Israel. He does not say to her, “You must be born again,” though surely it was true in her case, as in his. Why is this? We have already glanced at the reason. The Jewish ruler stood at the very summit, as it were, of the hill of legal righteousness, moral excellence, and traditionary religion. The poor Samaritan was away down in the deep pit of guilt and moral pollution. Hence, inasmuch as the blessed Lord had come down to meet man at the very lowest point in his condition — as He had come to give life to the dead — as He had come to deal with man as he was — all this being so, He must bring Nicodemus down to this point by telling him he must be born again— He must remove from beneath his feet the entire platform on which he stood — He must show him that, notwithstanding all he possessed in the way of religiousness and fleshly standing, he must give all up and enter the kingdom as a new born babe — that he had nothing which could, by any possibility, be placed to his credit in that new position of which the Lord was speaking. If new birth is essential, then the Jewish ruler was not one whit better off than the Samaritan sinner. So far as she was concerned, it was plain that she wanted something, she could not bring her sins into the kingdom, and hence the Lord begins, at once, with her to unfold His grace. Nicodemus might

imagine that he had something. It was plain and palpable that the Samaritan woman had nothing. To him, therefore, the word is “You must be born again.” To her, the word is “Give me to drink.” In the former, we discern the “truth” in the latter, the “grace” which came by Jesus Christ — “truth,” to level all the pretensions of a Pharisee, “grace” to meet the deepest need of a Samaritan adulteress.

But, it is not a little interesting to observe that there are points of similarity as well as of contrast between Nicodemus and the Samaritan. Both meet Christ with a “How?” When “truth” fell upon the ear of the master π Israel, he said, “How can these things be?” When “grace” shone upon the woman of Sychar, she said, “How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? “We are all full of “Hows?” The truth of God, in all its majesty and authority, is put before us; we meet it with a how.” The grace of God, in all its sweetness and tenderness, is unfolded in our view, we reply with a how? It may be a theological how, or a rationalistic how, it matters not, the poor heart will reason, instead of believing the truth, and receiving the grace of God. The will is active, and hence, although the conscience may be ill at ease, and the heart dissatisfied with itself and all around, still the unbelieving “how?” breaks forth in one form or another. Nicodemus says, “How can a man be born when he is old?” The Samaritan says, “How canst thou ask drink of me?”

Thus it is ever. When the word of God declares to us the utter worthlessness of nature, the heart, instead of bowing to the holy record, sends up its unholy reasonings. When the same word sets forth the boundless grace of God, and the free salvation which is in Christ Jesus, the heart, instead of receiving the grace, and rejoicing in the salvation, begins to reason as to how it can be. The human heart is closed against God — against the truth of His word, and against the love of His heart. The devil may speak, and the heart will give its ready credence. Man may speak, and the heart will greedily swallow what he says. Lies from the devil, and nonsense from man will all meet a ready reception from the poor human heart; but the moment God speaks, whether it be in the authoritative language of truth, or in the winning accents of grace, all the return the heart can make is an unbelieving, skeptical, rationalistic, infidel, “How?” Anything and everything for the natural heart save the truth and grace of God.

However, in the case of the woman of Sychar, our blessed Lord was not to be put off with her “how?” He had answered the “how?” of the man of the Pharisees, and He would now answer the “how?” of the woman of Sychar. He had replied to Nicodemus by pointing him to the brazen serpent, and telling him of the love of God in sending His Son; and He replies to the Samaritan by telling her, likewise, of “the gift of God.” “Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.”

Now, the little word “gift” opens a vast range of most precious truth to the soul. The Lord does not say, “If thou knowest the law, thou wouldest have asked.” Indeed, had she known it, she must have seen herself as lost under it, instead of being encouraged to ask for anything. No one ever got “living water” by the law. “This do and thou shalt live,” was the language of the law. The law gave nothing save to the man that could keep it. And where was he? Assuredly the woman of Sychar had not kept it. This was plain. She had offended in one point and was guilty of all. (James.)

“But why,” it may be asked, “be continually placing the law and the gospel in contrast? Are they not both parts of one grand system whereby God is educating man and fitting him for heaven?” We reply, our reason for placing them in contrast is that the Holy Ghost so places them, again and again. Let the reader ponder Acts 15, Gal. 3, and 4., and 2 Cor. 3, and say what he has found therein. Is it not the most vivid and striking contrast that could possibly be presented? Can anyone read those magnificent passages of inspiration and say that the law is a necessary, an integral part of the gospel; and that if you take away the law you leave nothing behind worthy the name of a gospel? That the law was a school-master to the Jew from the time it was given, until Christ came, the apostle tells us in his epistle to the Galatians. That the law is good, if a man use it lawfully, the same apostle tells us in his epistle to Timothy, where he also tells us that the law is not made for a righteous man at all. (See 1 Tim. 1:7 - 9.) That the law slew him, he tells us in the seventh of Romans. That the law, so far from being an integral part of the gospel, came in by the way between the promise made to Abraham and the accomplishment thereof, in a dead and risen Christ, he tells us, in the third chapter of Galatians. But to assert that the law is a necessary part of the gospel, is not less preposterous than to assert that cursing is a necessary part of blessing, wrath a necessary part of favor, death a necessary part of life, condemnation a necessary part of righteousness. May the good Lord deliver souls from the baneful influence of law-teaching!

How well it was for “Jacob’s erring daughter” that the Lord had something for her besides the thunders of the law! He could talk to her of, “gift,” and surely requirement formed no integral or necessary part of gift. “The gift of God is eternal life,” not through the law, but “through Jesus Christ our Lord.” The law never even proposed such a thing as eternal life in heaven. It spoke of “long life in the land.” But the gospel gives us eternal life here, and eternal glory hereafter in heaven. Two widely different things, and not two parts of the same thing. “If thou knowest the gift of God,” that is Christ Himself, “thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water” — that is the Holy Ghost. Thus, as under the law, it was nothing but prohibition, requirement, and curse, under the gospel it is all gift, grace, and blessing.

How was this? The Law-giver had come down from the lofty summit of your fiery mount. He had laid aside His thunders and clothed Himself in humanity. Thus come down, thus clothed, He sat beside the well of Sychar in weariness and thirst, and though He could lay His hand upon all the treasures of the universe, He nevertheless asks a poor outcast adulteress for a drink. Ah! my reader, could you say, while gazing on the matchless scene which meets your view “at Sychar’s lonely well,” “If you take away the law from the gospel, you leave nothing behind worthy the name of a gospel?” “What should we think of the man who could stand up and say, “If you take away the seventh commandment from the fourth chapter of John, you leave nothing behind worthy the name of a gospel?” Do the thunders of Mount Sinai form an integral part of the moral glories which shine upon us at Jacob’s well? Alas! for the man that can think so.

(To be continued, if the Lord will)

The Well of Sychar: Part 2

As we pursue our meditations on this wonderful scene at the well of Sychar, we are struck with the mode in which the woman urges her questions. No sooner does she receive an answer to one, than she brings forward another. The Lord had replied to her first “how?” by telling her of “the gift of God,” and she makes His very answer the foundation of another question. “The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water?”

Poor woman! How little she knew, as yet, of the One she was addressing! The well might be deep, but there was something deeper still, even her soul’s deep need; and something deeper than that again, even the grace that had brought Him down from heaven to meet her need. But so little did she know of Him, that she could ask Him, “Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle?” She knew not that she was speaking to Jacob’s God — to the One who had formed Jacob and given him all he ever possessed. She knew nothing of this. Her eyes were yet closed, and this was the true secret of her “How?” and her “Whence?”

Thus it is in every case. Whenever you find people raising questions, you may be quite sure they want to have their eyes opened. The rationalist, and the skeptic, and the infidel are blind. It is their very blindness that causes them to raise questions, make difficulties, and create doubts. They seem to be very learned; but it is amazing what silly questions they raise. A child, in spiritual knowledge! might well smile at the questions of profound and hoary headed infidels.

However, in the case of the Samaritan, the questions were not so much the fruit of a hold infidelity as of nature’s blindness and ignorance, and therefore the Lord patiently waits on her. There were times when He knew how to silence and dismiss a querist, in a very summary manner. But there were also times in the which He could, in condescending grace, and perfect patience, wait on the poor ignorant inquirer, for the purpose of answering his questions, resolving his doubts, and removing his fears.

Thus it was at the well of Sychar. He was determined to make Himself known to this poor guilty one, and hence, He follows her in all her questionings, removes, one by one, her difficulties, and leaves her not until He perfectly satisfies her soul by the revelation of Himself. She thought the well was deep, and wondered if He were greater than her father Jacob. She could not conceive how He could get this water of which He spoke. “Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again.” Deep as the well was, it was shallow, after all, when compared with the thirst that had to be quenched. Earth’s deepest and fullest well can be fathomed and drained, and the soul remain thirsty after all. The inscription written by the hand of Jesus on the well of Sychar, may be written on all the wells of this poor passing world: “Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again.” The rich man, in Luke 16, had drunk deeply of this world’s wells; but he thirsted again. Oh! yes; reader, he lifted up his eyes in hell, being in torment, and craved, hut craved in vain, a single drop of water to cool his parched tongue. There is not so much

as a drop of water in hell. Solemn thought! Solemn for all; but perfectly appalling for the sons and daughters of luxury, ease, and grandeur, who spend their time in running from well to well of this world, and think not of an eternity of burning thirst in the lake of fire. May God, by His Spirit, arrest such, and lead them to Jesus, the Giver of that living water of which whoso drinketh shall never thirst!

How refreshing is the thought! "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." Here the soul is satisfied. It has gotten a well of living water within, ever fresh, ever flowing, ever springing up toward its native source; for water always finds its own level. Our Lord here speaks of the Holy Ghost who dwells in all true believers, and is the power of communion with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ. In John 3:5, the Holy Ghost is spoken of in His quickening operation. In chapter 4:14, He is the power of communion; and, in chapter 7:38, He is the power of ministry. It is by the Holy Ghost, the soul is regenerated; by Him we are enabled to hold fellowship with God; and by Him we become channels of blessing to others. It is all by the Spirit who connects us, by an eternal link, to Christ the Head of the New Creation, in whom and through whom we enjoy all the blessings and privileges with which it hath pleased the Father to endow us.

But let us mark how all this comes out in our narrative. "The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw." She is still in the dark. Nothing seems to reach her heart. Her eyes are closed, her understanding darkened. The Savior of sinners was before her, but she knew Him not. He was speaking words of grace to her, but she understood them not. He had asked her for a drink, and she replied with a "how?" He had told her of God's gift, and she replied with a "whence?" He had spoken of an everlasting well, and she seeks only to be spared the trouble of coming to draw. What remains? Just this, "Go call thy husband and come hither."

Here, we reach the grand turning point. Our blessed Lord is compelled, as it were, to take an arrow from His quiver and aim it directly at the woman's conscience. She says, "Give me this water;" and He says, "Go, call thy husband." It is as though He had said to her, "If you want this living water of which I have been telling you, you must get it as a poor convicted, broken-hearted sinner." Wonderful! Truly wonderful! Who can attempt to fathom the depth of those two words "Go" and "Come?" She was not merely to go and call her husband, but to come back to Christ in her true character. And this was the way to get the living water. "Go, call thy husband." Here truth shines in upon the woman's conscience, in order to make manifest her true condition. But, "come hither" was the blessed expression of grace that could invite such a poor sinful creature to come to Him, just as she was, to receive the living water, as a free gift from His hand.

Now, the most cursory reader must see the powerful effect produced upon this woman by the entrance of the sharp arrow of conviction into her conscience. She now says, for the first time, "Sir, I perceive" This was something. Her eyes are beginning to open. She sees something. She finds herself in the presence of some mysterious personage whom she takes to be a prophet. It was through her conscience that the first faint beams of divine light were forced in upon her moral being. She discovers that the One who had asked her for a drink knew all about her, and yet He had asked her, and talked with her, and had not despised her. This, truly, was a turning point in her spiritual history.

Reader, have you ever yet reached this point? Has your conscience ever been really in the presence of that light which makes "all things" manifest? Have you ever seen yourself as a poor, lost, guilty, Christless, hell-deserving sinner? Has the arrow yet entered your conscience? Christ has various kinds of arrows in His quiver. He had an arrow for a man of the Pharisees, and He had an arrow for the woman of Sychar. They were different arrows; but they did their work. "He that doeth truth cometh to the light" was the arrow for a man of the Pharisees. "Go, call thy husband," was the arrow for the woman of Sychar. Quite different, no doubt, but each did its work. The conscience must be reached. The question of sin and righteousness must be settled in the presence of God. Say, reader, has your conscience been reached? Has this great and all-important question been settled between your soul and God? If so, you will be able to understand the remainder of this charming and inexhaustible narrative.

We may, at this point in our subject, remark that there are three things to be seen in the history of the Samaritan woman; namely, a detected sinner; a revealed Savior and a devoted saint. The words, "Go, call thy husband" detected the sinner. But do we not often find that when the conscience of a sinner is brought under exercise as to his sins and the claims of God, he is very apt to get occupied with questions about places of worship? Has it not been thus with most of us? Doubtless. There are few who have trodden the earlier stages of what is called religious life, without some exercise of heart as to the conflicting claims of churches or denominations. Where ought I to worship? To what denomination should I attach myself? What Church ought I to join? Which is the most scriptural body? These are questions which most of us have sat down to canvass, in our day; and that, too, long before our souls had found rest in a revealed Savior. Just like the poor woman of Sychar. No sooner had she given utterance to the words, "I perceive" than she begins to speak about places of worship. "Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." Some worship here; some worship there; where ought we to worship?

Now, without wishing to detract, in the smallest degree, from the interest of such questions, we do most distinctly declare they are not questions to be discussed by a detected or convicted sinner. The grand and all-engrossing point for such an one is to find himself in the presence of a revealed Savior. Yes; we repeat it, and that with emphasis, what a detected sinner needs is not a place of worship, a sect, a church, or a denomination; but a revealed Savior. Let this be deeply pondered, clearly understood, and carefully borne in mind. A convicted sinner can never become a devoted saint, until he finds his happy place at the feet of a revealed Savior.

We crave permission to urge this upon the serious notice of the reader. Immense damage has been done to souls and to the true interests of practical Christianity, by the heart being occupied with churches and denominations, instead of with a Savior-God. If I join a church before I have found Christ, I am in great danger of making the church a stepping-stone to Christ; and it too often happens that stepping-stones to Christ, prove, in the sequel, to be stepping-stones from Christ. We want no stepping-stones to Christ. He has come so very near to us as to leave no room for any such thing. What stepping-stone did the Samaritan adulteress require? None. Christ was at her side, though she knew Him not; and He was patiently dislodging her from every lurking-place in which she had ensconced herself, in order that she might see herself as a great sinner, and see Him as a great Savior, come down, in perfect grace, to save her, not only from the guilt and consequences of her sin, but also from the practice and the power thereof. What could "this

mountain” or “Jerusalem” do for her? Was it not obvious that a prior, a paramount question claimed her serious attention, namely, what she was to do with her sins — how she was to be saved? Could she “Go, call her husband,” and betake herself to the mountain of Samaria, or to the temple at Jerusalem? What relief could those places afford to her burdened heart, or her guilty conscience? Could she find salvation there? Could she worship the Father, in spirit and in truth, there? “Was it not plain that she wanted salvation, ere she could worship anywhere?”

To all these questions we have a full and faithful answer in Christ’s words. “Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.”

Thus, then, our blessed Lord plainly showed the woman not only that she was a sinner, but also that it was useless her occupying her mind with questions about places of worship? She wanted salvation, and this salvation could only be had through the knowledge of God revealed as Father, in the face of Jesus Christ. Such was the ground of all true and spiritual worship. In order to worship the Father, we must know Him, and to know Him is salvation and everlasting life.

Christian reader, let us bear away with us from the well of Sychar a holy and much-needed lesson as to the right mode of dealing with anxious souls. When such cross our path, let us not occupy them with questions about sects and parties, churches and denominations, creeds and confessions. It is positively cruel so to do. They want salvation—they want to know God—they want Christ. Let us seek to shut them up to this one thing, and charge them not to move one hair’s breadth thence, until they have found Christ. Church questions have their place, and their value, and their interest; but clearly they are not for anxious souls, thousands, we fear, have been kept from “digging deep” and “laying their foundation on the rock” by having church questions injudiciously forced upon their attention just as their eyes were being opened to “perceive,” and before they could say, “Jesus is mine.” We are all so foolishly anxious to swell the ranks of our party, that we are in danger of thinking more about getting people to join us than we are about leading them simply and fully to Christ. Let us judge this evil. Let us ponder the example of the Master, in his dealings with the woman of Sychar, and never lead precious souls to be occupied with the place of worship instead of the ground, the object, and the spirit thereof.

Mark the blessed result of His dealings. The woman is plainly shut up to one thing now. She is ready for a revealed Savior. “I know that Messiah cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things.” She seems to be done with her questions. She had asked “How?” and He had answered her. She had asked “Whence?” and He had answered her. She had asked “Where?” and He had answered her. And, now, what remains? I want Christ, she says. You have Him, He replies. “I that speak unto thee am he.” This is enough. All is settled now. She has found her all in Christ. It is not a mountain, nor a temple, Samaria, nor Jerusalem. She has found Jesus — a Savior-God. A detected sinner and a revealed Savior have met, face to face, and all is settled, once and forever. She discovered the wonderful fact that the One who had asked her for a drink knew all about her — could tell her all that ever she did, and yet He talked to her of salvation. What more did she want? Nothing. “She left her water-pot, and went her way into the city, and saith to

the men, Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?"

Here, then, we have a devoted saint. The work was a thorough one. How could it be otherwise when the Master's hand had wrought it? He had probed her conscience to its deepest depths—shown her herself — driven her from every lurking place and false refuge — taught her the fallacy of being occupied about places of worship — made her feel that nothing but Christ Himself could meet her need —finally, He revealed Himself to her, took full possession of her soul, and caused her to prove, in her blissful experience, "the displacing power of a new affection." She had left Sychar that morning, a poor degraded adulteress, and she returned a happy saint, and a devoted servant of Christ. She left her water-pot behind her, and returned to the scene of her crimes and her degradation, to make it the sphere of her brilliant and decided testimony for Christ: "Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did." Precious testimony: Precious invitation!

Christian reader, be this our work, henceforth. May our grand object be to invite sinners to come to Jesus. This woman began at once. No sooner had she found Christ for herself, than she forthwith entered upon the blessed work of leading others to His feet. Let us go and do likewise. Let us, by word and deed — "by all means," as the apostle says, seek to gather as many as possible, around the Person of the Son of God. Some of us have to judge ourselves for lukewarmness in this blessed work. We see some rushing along the broad and well-trodden highway that leadeth down to eternal perdition, and yet, how little are we moved by the sight! How slow are we to sound in their ears, that true, that proper gospel note, "Come!" Oh! for more zeal, more energy, more fervor! May the Lord grant us such a deep sense of the value of immortal souls, the preciousness of Christ, and the awful solemnity of eternity, as shall constrain us to a more urgent, faithful dealing with the souls of men!

The Well of Sychar: Part 3

Sweet was the hour, O Lord, to Thee,
At Sychar's lonely well,
When a poor outcast heard
Thee there Thy great salvation tell.
Thither she came: but O, her heart,
All fill'd with earthly care,
Dream'd not of Thee, nor thought to find
The Hope of Israel there.
Lord! 'twas thy power unseen that drew
The stray one to that place,
In solitude to learn from Thee
The secrets of Thy grace.
There Jacob's erring daughter found
Those streams unknown before:
The waterbrooks of life that make
The weary thirst no more.
And, Lord, to us, as vile as she,
Thy gracious lips have told
That mystery of love, reveal'd
At Jacob's well of old.
In spirit, Lord, we've sat with
Thee Beside the springing well
Of life and peace — and heard
Thee there Its healing virtues tell.
Dead to the world, we dream no more
Of earthly pleasures now;

Our deep, divine, unfailing spring
Of grace and glory, Thou!
No hope of rest in aught beside,
No beauty, Lord, we see,
And, like Samaria's daughter, seek
And find our all in Thee.

A Wounded Conscience and Its Remedy

Conscience. (Pro. 18:14.)

Go gather the down which floats on the wind,

And the leaves from ev'ry tree;

Can ye find a couch for the troubled mind?

Can ye find a rest for me?

Go gather the honey-dew from the leaf,

And the labor sweet of the bee;

Can ye 'suage the bitter tongue of grief?

Give a drop of sweet to me?

Let the cold wind blow through the midnight rain,

And the breeze flutter over the sea;

Can it breathe one chill on a burning brain?

Can it cool my brain for me?

Let the gale which springs in the morning cloud,

Give life to all that be;

Can it quicken again my murdered mind?

Give back my mind to me?

Let the spring-time shine, with its sunny hours,

And the merry birds all in glee;

Can ye gather amidst ten thousand flowers,

One bud that blooms for me?

Atonement

(Heb. 9:26.)

Ah! there is a bed that was hewn in stone,

Where lie lay that was nail'd to the tree!

'Twas there my Lord lay all alone,

And there's the rest for me.

And there was a dew all silvery bright,

It fell on plain and Ice;

They gathered it fresh at the morning light,

And sweet's its taste to me.

And there was a rushing mighty wind,

It blew o'er a bloody sea,

It breathes a calm for my troubled mind,

A Comforter for me.

And there was a gale when the Day-star rose;

Its shining clear I see;

My mind, in his beams, revives and glows,

And all is life with me.

And there was a flower, which sprung from the tomb.

When the days had number'd three;

Upon my heart that flower shall bloom,

Eternal joy for me.

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