

WORKS OF OCTAVIUS WINSLOW

by Octavius Winslow

A collection of devotional writings by the nineteenth-century Reformed minister Octavius Winslow, exploring themes of Christ's uniqueness, the believer's communion with God, and the riches of divine grace in the Christian life.

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None like Christ

NONE LIKE CHRIST By Octavius Winslow, 1866

"How is your beloved better than others?"

Son_5:9

The power of contrast is acknowledged by all. The poet studies it in the construction of his epic; the artist in the coloring of his picture; the logician in the arrangement of his argument; the lover of nature as his eye roves over the outspread landscape— all are conscious of the presence and power of this principle. The object of contrast is not to create the ideal, or to foster the fictitious; but to confirm the existence, and heighten the power and impression of the true. It is thus that the beautiful becomes more attractive, the grand more sublime, the good more excellent, and the object which awoke our admiration and inspired our regard, enthrones itself more firmly and supremely upon the soul.

The Word of God is replete with contrasts. In no volume is the effect more striking. How constantly, by an easy and graceful antithesis, the Holy Spirit places in contrast the vanity of idols, and the existence of God; the insignificance of man, and the greatness of Jehovah; the evanescence of things temporal, and the permanence of things eternal; the deformity of sin, and the beauty of holiness; the objects and attractions of earth, and the scenes and allurements of heaven; our waywardness and unworthiness, with God's mercy and love. With what power, beauty, and reality are the great things of God's word thus brought out!

In presenting to you, my reader, the Lord Jesus Christ, as worthy of your undivided affection, supreme confidence, and unreserved service, infinitely distancing and eclipsing all other beings and all other objects brought in competition with him, we purpose adopting this principle; assured that the result must be, with the accompanying blessing of the Holy Spirit, the supreme enthronement of Christ in your admiration, trust, and love, as the "chief among ten thousand, and the one altogether lovely one." Happy shall we be if the conviction of the truth is deepened in your soul, NONE LIKE CHRIST!

Nor could we engage your thoughts upon a subject more suitable to the new and solemn period of time upon which we have entered. You are about to add another deathless chapter to the momentous volume of your personal history. As yet its lines are untraced, its events unrecorded. What that history may be, you have no vision to guide your knowledge; nor, if you are wise and trusting, do you wish to know— calm and fixed in the assurance that it is all prearranged in the covenant that is "ordered in all things, and sure," and that, impenetrable as is the veil that conceals it from your eye, God will permit nothing to transpire but what he has shaped and tinted with just that form and hue that will the most perfectly harmonize and blend, and will the most surely promote, your greatest well-being with his highest glory.

"What is your beloved more than another beloved?" It is clear, from this interrogation, addressed to the Church of Christ, that other and rival beings, other and competing objects, were brought into comparison with Christ, asking, if not a superior, yet an equal share of homage and regard; and the Church is challenged to a vindication of the higher and superior attractions claimed for her beloved Lord. "What is your beloved more than another beloved?"

It is a humiliating fact, that there exists no object, the most trivial and contemptible, which the unrenewed mind will not place in competition with, and choose in preference to, and delight in to the exclusion of the Lord Jesus Christ! Take a brief and summary view of these claimants to man's regard— these rivals of Christ— and see how far they are worthy of a moment's consideration, when brought in contrast with the incarnate Son of God. Before we proceed, however, to particularize, let us premise that this is no new phase or development of our depraved humanity. Our world has ever been a Christ-rejecting world. From the moment the angels' song broke in music upon the plains of Bethlehem, the prediction of the Christ-exalting prophet, Isaiah, commenced its sad fulfillment— "he is despised and rejected of men."

With some individuals, SELF is the rival— self in some of its many forms. Self-righteousness, self-seeking, self-indulgence, self-worship is the acknowledged and enthroned god— the "beloved" object of the unrenewed mind's supreme affection and worship.

With others, the WORLD is preferred to Christ— its acquisitions, opinions, and pleasures. O treacherous world what myriads have you drawn within your insatiable vortex, "drowning men's souls in perdition!" Reader, are you preferring its gayeties, its riches, its honors, its religion to Christ? Pause on the threshold of this solemn period of time, and ask— "What, should I die this year, will the world I have chosen in preference to the Savior do for me when eternity stares me in the face?"

Others place the CREATURE in competition with Christ; the creature and not the Savior is their "beloved." But what a fearful crime are they chargeable with, "who worship and serve the creature more (or rather) than the Creator, who is blessed forever." The creature is the defaced, the spoiled image of God. To prefer this marred and ruined temple to the glorious Being who constructed it, is to place yourself upon a level with the idolatrous Persian, who in his blindness worships the sun as the image of the Deity.

But what superior excellence and attraction has an earthly beloved, that you should choose, love, and adore it in preference to the Heavenly One, who, as human, is "fairer than the children of men," and who, as divine, is "God over all, blessed for evermore"? God will not hold him guiltless who loves, worships, and serves the creature rather than the Creator. Thus, there is nothing earthly, base, and contemptible which the natural man will not place above God, and prefer to Christ. His estate, his rank, his talents, his reputation, his very person, is "made to sit in the temple of God, showing itself that it is God," receiving the incense of adoration and worship, which alone belongs to Jehovah.

Reader, whatever earthly object reigns supreme in your mind and affections, dethrones and supplants the Lord Jesus. It may be your daily calling, or some pleasure of memory, or some object of taste— music, sculpture, painting, literature, science— whatever the master-passion of your soul, the supreme, all-engrossing object of your life, it is your Christ, your Savior, your

beloved, your all; and with this, your only portion and preparation, you are, in a little while, to confront the bar of God "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

But we approach yet closer our subject, and proceed to unfold the preeminent place Christ occupies in the universe of life, beauty, and love— in the world of nature and of grace— showing that there is not, amid this vast assemblage of magnificent objects and glorious beings, one like Christ.

"None like Christ!" How familiar is this sentiment to the family of God. Sometimes it is the expression of gladsome joy, at others, breathed in sadness and in grief. When some beam of holy rapture has lighted up the soul, and the preciousness of the Savior is felt, then the tongue exclaims, "None like Christ!"— there is no joy like that which Jesus inspires! Or, when some scheme of human happiness is blighted, some cherished friendship chilled, some idol-god smitten from its shrine, some earthly spring dried, turning from the scene, spirit-wounded, heart-saddened, and disappointed, the soul has fled anew to Christ, its true attraction and rest, and with a depth of emotion and an emphasis of expression, the inspiration only of such a feeling, the believer has exclaimed— "Lord, there is none like yourself! I learn your transcendent worth, I experience your matchless love, I behold your unrivaled beauty, I feel your inimitable tenderness, gentleness, and sympathy in this hour when my spirit is overwhelmed within me, and my earthly treasures float a scattered wreck upon the surging waters through which I come to you!"

But follow us, dear reader, while, in a few particulars, we attempt to justify the preeminence of the Savior, and establish your believing soul in the truth that "there is none like Christ!"

I. No GLORY like His.

We begin with the statement, that there is no glory like Christ's glory. The universe is full of glory, because it is full of God. But God designed that his Son should occupy a place among created intelligences equal to himself touching his divinity, and inferior to himself only as touching his humanity; and both, mysteriously combined, constituting him "the head of all principalities and powers;" and, "that all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father," of whose glory Christ is the effulgence, and of whose substance Christ is the exact impress. The deep gloom of earth was never illumined with such a light as when the Son of God descended from heaven; and the brightness of heaven never shone forth with such a luster as when he returned back from earth, invested with the sinless robe of our nature— the divine prophet— the atoning priest— the triumphant king. Marvel not that all the hierarchies of heaven bend low before that central throne on which sits the glorified Redeemer, and that at his feet the elders cast their crowns. Surely, it is the wonder and the glory and hallelujah of heaven, that divinity could stoop so low, and not be less divine; and that humanity could rise so high, and not be less human. Oh! there is no glory like Christ's glory.

Reader, can you, with the exulting Evangelist, exclaim— "We have seen his glory, the glory of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." Judge of the sacred vision by its hallowed effects— "We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the spirit of the Lord." This transforming, sanctifying influence of Christ's surpassing glory is real and palpable. One beam darting into your heart will pale the glory of the world, the glory of the creature, and the glory of self. And when this divine sun

has risen resplendent on your soul— a child of darkness though you are— a worm of earth hiding in your obscurity and gloom— you may emerge from your cloistered solitude and woe, bask in its warmth, sun yourself in its effulgence, and exult that, as a pardoned sinner, a justified believer, an adopted child, all this glory of Christ's is yours— your robe of righteousness and your diadem of beauty— constituting you a king and a priest unto God.

Oh! rest not, beloved reader, until this divine light has come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon you. Then, and not until then, will you arise and shine in the beauty of holiness, a child of the light, shedding its luster all around you; and henceforth, whatever be the leadings of your Savior, or the dealings of your God, the way along which he conducts you, checkered, winding, lonely, will be that of the "just, which is as the shining light which shines more and more unto the perfect day."

II. No BEAUTY like His.

Another observation naturally results from this— there is no beauty like Christ's beauty. We might expect that such divine glory, if ever it tabernacled on earth— the world's resplendent Shekinah— would be enshrined in a temple in all respects worthy of its dignity. We therefore find language like this— "When he comes into the world he says, sacrifice and offering you do not desire, but a body have you prepared me." It was a body prepared by the Holy Spirit, of real, yet sinless flesh, in which the Son of God was to dwell. Hence we find the inspired artist, in portraying Christ's beauty as man, represents him as "fairer than the children of men— grace is poured into your lips." Himself the source and author of all beauty, his own beauty eclipses all. We love to trace the creations of his beauty, in the varied and endless forms of loveliness which still linger, adorning and enriching this fallen world. Those bright constellations— Christ created them; those burning suns— Christ kindled them; those snow-wreathed Alps, those cloud-capped hills— Christ raised them; those verdant valleys— Christ spread them; that blushing rose, that graceful lily, that exquisite fern, that curious sea-flower tossed upon the shore, that wayside violet that screens the dew-drop from the sun, that winding stream, that leafy grove— Christ formed and penciled it all— Christ clad that magnificent landscape with its robe of living green; scented the air with its fragrance; and hollowed out the depth of that expanding ocean dimpled with beauty by the gentle breeze, or dreadful in its grandeur when trod by the giant storm. Truly, "he has made everything beautiful in his time." Oh! I delight to see the incarnate God, who died to save, scattering from the opulence of his own boundless resources all this jewelry, making man's sinful home so rich, so lovely, so attractive.

But his own beauty, who can describe it? His person so lovely, his nature so holy, his heart so fond, his spirit so gentle, his look so winning, his voice so soothing. His whole character, life, and demeanor so inlaid and resplendent with every human, spiritual, and divine perfection— truly, it was no imaginative picture, and it was no mere oriental imagery with which the Church, in her just and lofty conception, described him as the "Chief among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely one."

But Christ's beauty is shared with all those who have union with him. Washed in his blood, robed with his righteousness, and adorned with his graces, each believer is lovely, through his loveliness put upon him. And there is more of wonder, because there is more of God, there is more of beauty, because there is more of Christ, in that poor sinner who clings in penitence, faith, and love to the cross, looking up to God as a pardoned child, and pulsating with a life derived from the indwelling spirit, than in all this vast creation, enameled and sparkling with endless forms of loveliness.

Reader, has Christ's beauty caught your eye, and penetrated your soul, transforming you—reflecting his image in your Christ-like principles, your Christ-like spirit, your Christ-like walk, your whole Christ-like life? Then, dim and imperfect as is the copy, before long it will be complete, when you "shall see the King in his beauty," and join the faultless throng who encircle the throne of God and the Lamb. Oh! then, be it your employment to contemplate, study, and reflect the beauty of Christ, for there is no beauty like his!

"It is a finished portrait!" exclaimed an accomplished infidel, as the character of Christ was delineated to his view. It is a finished portrait—examine it, transfer it to yourself, and beware how you allow a creature's beauty— a being of human loveliness and love— to veil or shade a scintillation of Christ's surpassing beauty from your eye.

III. No LOVE like His.

There is no love like the love of Christ. The association of contrast will aid us here. God, who is love, is the author of all human affection. Love is the creation of Deity, the descendant of heaven, the reflection of God; and he whose soul is the most replete with divine love is the most like God. Paralyzed though our humanity is by the fall, tainted as it is by sin, the human heart is still the home of love in some of its loftiest and purest forms. It is impossible to behold its creations without the profoundest reverence. Who can stand, for instance, in the presence of a mother's love and not be awed by its dignity, won by its power, and melted by its tenderness?

But there is a love which equals, a love which excels, a love which surpasses it— it is the love of Christ! Institute your contrast. Select from among the different relations of life, the nearest and dearest; choose from those relations the deepest, purest, truest love that ever warmed the human breast, prompting to generous and noble deeds, to tender and touching expressions, to costly and precious sacrifices; and place it side by side with the divine love that chose you, the love that ransomed you, the love that called you, the love that soothes you, the love whose eyelid never closes, whose accents never change, whose warmth never chills, whose hand is never withdrawn— "the love of Christ which passes knowledge" and it is the very antithesis of selfishness. The love of Christ stands out in the 'history of the love', as the divinest, the holiest, the strongest of all love— unequalled, unparalleled, unsurpassed. Oh! there is no love like Christ's love! Trace its features.

1. The love of Christ is a REVEALING love. It uplifts the veil from the heart of God, and shows how that heart loves me. I would have known nothing of the love of my Father in heaven, but for the love of my Savior on earth. And that penitent, believing soul that feels the softest, gentlest pulse of Christ's love throbbing in his breast, knows more of the heart of God, sees more of the glory of God, and understands more of the character of God, than were earth and sky and sea to collect all their wonders and lay them at his feet.

2. The love of Christ is a CONDESCENDING love. No other love ever stooped like Christ's love. Go to Bethlehem and behold its lowliness, and as you return, pause awhile at Gethsemane, and gaze upon its sorrow, then pursue your way to Calvary, and learn, in the ignominy, in the curse, in the gloom, in the desertion, in the tortures, in the crimson tide of that cross— how low Christ's love has stooped. And still it stoops! It bends to all your circumstances. You can be conscious of the becloudings of no guilt it will not cancel, of the pressure of no sin it will not lighten, of the chafings

of no cross it will not heal, of the depths of no sorrow it will not reach, of the dreary loneliness of no path it will not illumine and cheer. Oh! is there a home on earth where the love of Christ most loves to dwell, where you will oftener find, yes, always meet it? It is the heart-broken, contrite, and humbled for sin!

3. The love of Christ is a SELF-SACRIFICING love. "Christ has loved us, and has given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor." What a laborious life, what a suffering death was his, and all was but the out-paying, outpouring of his love. Every precept of the broken law he obeyed, every penalty of an exacting justice he endured. The path that conducted him from Bethlehem to Calvary wound its lonesome way through scenes of humiliation and insult, of trial and privation, the storm growing darker and darker, the thunder waxing louder and louder, and the lightning gleaming brighter and brighter, until its pivotal horrors gathered round the cross and crushed the Son of God! O marvelous love of Christ! what more could you do than you have done? To what lower depth of ignominy could you stoop? What darker sorrow could you endure? Where did another cross ever impale such a victim, or illustrate such love?

4. Nor is there any love so FORGIVING as Christ's love. Forgiveness of injury is an essential element of true affection. We cannot see how love can exist at the same moment and in the same breast with an unbending, unrelenting, unforgiving spirit. Real love is so unique and lofty a passion, so Godlike and divine in its nature and properties, we can not conceive of it but in alliance with every ennobling, elevating, and worthy sentiment. Selfishness, malignity, revenge, uncharitableness, and all evil speaking, are passions of our fallen and depraved humanity, so hateful and degrading, it would seem impossible that they should exist for an instant in the same atmosphere with true affection.

But a yet loftier form, a more sublime embodiment of love is presented to us in the love of God which is in Christ Jesus. God cannot love— we speak reverently— and not forgive. Those whom God loves, God pardons. That God regards every individual of the fallen race with a feeling of benevolence, is unquestionable; "for he makes his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust;" but those to whom the love of God extends his everlasting, his special, and his redeeming love— the gracious, the full, the eternal forgiveness of all sin likewise extends. God could not love a being and give that being over into the hands of a stern, avenging justice. Divine love will never lose the lowest and unworthiest object of its affections.

If, my reader, you feel conscious that you love God, though your affection be but as a smoldering ember, as a glimmering spark, be sure of this, that God first loved you; and loving, he has pardoned you; and pardoning, he will preserve you to his heavenly kingdom, that you may behold his glory, and enjoy his presence forever.

We repeat the remark, there is no love so forgiving as Christ's love. A human love may for an instant hesitate and falter; it may dwell upon the wrong inflicted, the injury done, the wound still bleeding; may, in its very muteness, speak in tones of inexpressible sadness, of confidence betrayed, of feelings lacerated, of friendship sported with, and the heart may find it difficult to take back the wrong-doer— the offender forgiven and the offense forgotten— to its embrace. But not so Jesus; he has canceled, obliterated, erased every shadow of a shade of his people's sins, and they shall come no more into remembrance. "Then Peter came to him, and said, Lord, how often

shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? until seven times? Jesus said unto him— I say not unto you until seven times; but until seventy times seven."

Contrast this love, my reader— the forgiving disciple, the forgiving Savior— and then exclaim— "Who is a God like you, who pardons iniquity, and passes by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? He retains not his anger forever, because he delights in mercy."

There is no love, too, so gentle, so patient, so enduring, as Christ's love. Again and again you have questioned it, wounded it, forsaken it; again and again you have returned to it with tears, confession, and humiliation, and have found it as unchilled and unchanged as his nature. It has borne with your doubts, has been silent beneath your murmurings, has veiled your infirmities, and has planted itself a thousand times over between you and your unseen and implacable foe. It has never declined with your fickleness, nor frozen with your coldness, nor upbraided you for your backslidings, but all the day long, tracking your wandering, winding way, it has hovered around you with a presence that has encircled you within its divine, all-enshrouding, and invincible shield. Truly, there is no love like Christ's!

Nor is there any love that so chimes with human grief as his. Born in sorrow, schooled in adversity, baptized in suffering, acquainted with grief in its every shape, it is just the love for which our sorrows pant. There is but one heart in this vast universe that can meet your case, O child of affliction! it is the divine, yet human heart of Christ. All other love and sympathy, the most intense and feeling, touches but the surface of our grief. Its trembling hand often irritates the wound it seeks to heal; or, perhaps, from the very intensity of its sympathy, catches the contagion of our grief, and sinks at our side helpless, hopeless, and despairing. Then it is the love of Christ approaches, touches us, and we are healed; speaks to us, and all is peace. "O unexampled love! Love nowhere to be found, less than divine."

How much of sacred meaning is contained in the prayer breathed by Paul on behalf of the Thessalonian saints— "The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God." The image is expressive. You have often, doubtless, trodden in pensive thought the sands which belt some expanded ocean, when the tide has ebbed, and have marked the undulating surface of reef and shallow that has traced and disfigured it. You have revisited the spot when that tide has rolled back in its majesty and fullness, and lo! not a vestige of the former scene appeared; every shallow is filled, every line of blemish is erased, and the blue waves toss their jocund heads as gracefully and musically as ever.

Such is the love of Christ! When this divine ocean recedes from your soul, you are filled with dismay at the spectacle that appears is one of emptiness, barrenness, and deformity. The love of Christ in the soul depressed, all is depressed. That ebbing tide has borne upon its receding wave the heart's last throb of gladness, and the soul's last gleam of hope, and nothing meets the eye but spiritual aridness and sin. Alarmed at the sad picture, you are roused to prayer, and you cry— "Restore unto me the joys of your salvation!" Your petition is accepted, and the response is heard, "I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies," and once more Christ's love flows back in gentle wavelets upon your soul, veiling every infirmity, and nothing but the sweetest melody breathes from your heaving bosom.

IV. No SAVIOR like Him.

There is no Savior like Christ. Sin is inventive; itself the greatest invention of all. It is Satan's infernal machine for destroying precious souls by the million! In nothing is his ingenuity and power more put forth than in constructing expedients of salvation other than the atoning sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. But Jesus is the one and only Savior of men; "neither is there salvation in any other; for there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." It is the glory of Christ's salvation that it is perfectly adapted to every condition of our fallen and helpless humanity. Christianity is the only religion that fully recognizes the natural and utter depravity of our nature, and our consequent impotence to save ourselves. Jesus, therefore, is the Savior of sinners. He has undertaken to save us just as we are. He finds us a ruin, and recreates us; he finds us fallen, and raises us up; he finds us guilty, and he cleanses us; he finds us condemned, and he justifies us— all our salvation is in him. All the merit God requires, all the help man needs, all the grace and strength our salvation demands, dwells in infinite fullness in Christ.

My reader, your everlasting future of happiness or of woe depends upon your acceptance of Christ as your Savior! Compared with this, your vital union with the Lord Jesus— churches are nothing, sacraments are nothing, religious duties are nothing, rites and ceremonies are nothing— because Christ must be all in the momentous matter of your everlasting well-being. Nothing saves you but faith in Christ, and, possessing that faith, nothing shall condemn you. You may adopt the soundest creed, may join the most apostolic communion, and may observe the most rigid austerities, and yet not be a Christian. United by faith to Christ, you may be saved in any Church; separated from Christ, you can be saved in no Church; "for other foundation can no man lay than what is laid, which is Jesus Christ." What a Savior, then, is Christ!

That there should be to us lost sinners any Savior, is marvelous; but that there should be provided for us such a Savior as Christ is, so divine and human, so atoning and gracious, so able and willing, distances all thought, and is above all praise. None will he reject, who come to him. Oh! it is impossible to exaggerate this statement. All thought droops, all words fail in their attempt to show what a Savior Christ is to poor lost sinners. He saves to the uttermost. He saves from the lowest depth of ruin, from the loftiest height of guilt, from the farthest limit of sin, from the utmost verge of the yawning precipice, from the very mouth of hell! "Where sin has abounded, grace does much more abound."

If, abjuring all human merit, bewailing and deploring all sin, you accept as a free-grace bestowment, the salvation Christ wrought in his soul's travail on the cross, you shall be saved. If you stay away from Christ, your best righteousness will not preserve you from the eternal pains of hell. If you humbly and believingly come to Christ, your worst sins will not exclude you from the everlasting joys and blessedness of heaven. But it is of the utmost moment that you clearly recognize the only character and the sole ground on which Christ will save you. He will only save you "as a sinner", and on the ground of his finished work, his infinite merit, atoning blood, and righteousness. You must stand where the tax-collector stood; must kneel where the "woman who was a sinner" knelt; must feel with Saul of Tarsus, that you are the "chief of sinners," must look and appeal to him with the true penitence and simple faith of the dying malefactor, and you shall be saved!

Cling Closer to Him! Believer in Jesus! cling closer and closer to the Savior, for there is none like unto him! Let the life you live be a daily coming up out of self, into Christ. Place no limit to your

transactions with Jesus. As yet you have but touched the edge of his ocean-fullness, you have but tasted that he is gracious, you have but crept beneath the hem of his ample robe. Oh! let this year be one of advance; your motto, "forward." The truth each day's history will but confirm you in is, "There is none like Christ." The more you trust to, and the more you draw from him, the deeper and sweeter will be your conviction and experience of this. It is a truth he intends you shall experimentally learn. He will have you prize, and love, and serve him above and beyond all others.

The process by which you reach this high and holy attainment may be trying, the path rugged and toilsome, the ascent steep and difficult; it may cost you many a severe pang, many a deep sigh, many a lonely tear, many a sad wrench; nevertheless, a clearer realization of this truth, "none like Christ, none so near, none so powerful, none so precious," will more than recompense for all. Christ, in the sufficiency of his love and grace, will come and fill the blank, and soothe the pain, and dry the tear, and you shall look up, and with more than a seraph's rapture exclaim— "Whom have I in heaven but you? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside you."

V. No TEACHER like Him.

There is no teacher like Christ. Upon this point we can venture but a single remark. The Anointed of God, it is his office to reveal to us the great things of the Gospel. We are truly and savingly taught only as we are taught by him. Thankful for human teachers, we yet must exclaim— "Who teaches like Christ?" With immediate access to our minds, and a quick avenue to our hearts, by one text, by one trial, and by one circumstance of our history, he can, in a moment, bring us into the experience of the deepest and most spiritual truth. Who teaches with the authority, or with the skill, or with the patience and gentleness of Christ? Become his student, beloved reader, enter as a disciple his school, and the Holy Spirit, whose office it is to glorify Christ, will lead you into all truth. Oh! that this may be a year of deeper, more spiritual teaching! Oh! that we may know more of our own nothingness and insufficiency, and more of Christ's fullness, loveliness, and love! Lord that which I know not, teach me, for who teaches to profit like yourself?

VI. No FRIEND like Him.

There is no Friend like Christ. Beloved, it is possible that having many friends, you need yet one. God has, perhaps, endowed you with a nature keenly susceptible, your heart expanding to the warm and genial influence of true friendship. There is in your breast the responsive power of love, yet yearning for its object. Or, perhaps, the cold blast of sorrow has swept over the garden of your confiding affections, and the finest feelings of your nature, torn from the support to which they clung, lie broken, wounded, and bleeding. You yearn for a friend, in the wisdom of whose counsel, in the depth of whose affection, in the delicacy of whose sympathy, in the patience of whose endurance you can implicitly and ever rely; and from whose presence nothing for a moment separates. That friend is Christ! "I call you not servants, but friends," is his gracious avowal of the relation. "He is a friend that sticks closer than a brother."

There is not a friend on earth who loves you with his affection, who compassionates you with his sympathy, or is so powerful, so faithful, so near to you as Christ. Human friends do, indeed, divide our cares and double our joys; but Jesus does more. He takes all our cares upon himself, absorbs all our sorrows in himself, and makes all his joy our own. Let this be a year of closer friendship with Christ! Confide in his love, avail yourself of his power, and abase yourself worthy of so precious a

friend. Beware, in your dealings with him, of distrust, of shyness, of cooled affection. Place in him your unquestioning confidence, and give him your undivided heart. Let not the sad memories of past fickleness and failure fling their dark shadows on the future, but enter upon that future surrendering yourself afresh to Christ as your best Friend.

Oh! there is none like him. Leave him for a while, though you may, for others, you return to him again with a yet deeper conviction of his superiority, exclaiming– "I find no friend like Christ. No love soothes me, no smile gladdens me, no voice cheers me, no arm supports me as his!"

You are entering upon a year which must be one of human infirmity, toil, and trial. Remember your chief, your best, your only Friend took upon him all your human infirmities, is identified with all your desires, and is acquainted with all your lonely sorrows. Now that he is elevated to the loftiest reach of purity, to the highest degree of dignity and glory, and that that heart, once the abode of overshadowing grief, is all sunshine now, but fits him all the more exquisitely as the all-powerful, all-helpful, all-loving, all-tender, ever-present Friend and companion of your homeward path to God.

O Christ! you ever have been, you are, and you shall ever be my Friend! In adversity, I will hide beneath your sheltering wing; in sorrow, I will nestle within your loving bosom; in weakness, I will entwine around your upholding arm; in need, I will repair to your boundless resources; in sickness, in languor, and in suffering, I will enfold around me your all-divine, all-human, all-pervading, all-soothing sympathy–

"And when I die,

Receive me, I'll cry,

For, Lord, you have loved me,

I can not tell why."

VII. No SERVICE like His.

And what service can be placed in competition with the service of Christ? The profession of Christian discipleship involves a service. The Christian life must needs have scope for the unfolding of its powers, and a field for the employment of its energies. But for the activity of Christianity our religion would become paralyzed and be dwarfed. It is a wise and merciful arrangement of its Author, that for the vital forces– the muscle and nerve and life of our Christianity– there should be provided a sphere ample and appropriate for their full development and play.

The graces implanted in the soul– graces instinct with all the energy and power of the divine, before whose invincible might the fiercest assaults of the foe have been repelled, and the armies of the aliens put to flight– would become shriveled and collapsed, a moral atrophy seizing the whole soul, but for the service which summons them to action. Christ's kingdom supplies the appropriate and commanding sphere. The field of your exertion may be extended or circumscribed, just as God appoints. It may be the vast amphitheater encircled by a great crowd of witnesses, gazing intently and anxiously upon your wrestling with sin and your battle with error; or, it may be some shaded nook, secluded from every eye, unaided and uncheered by human

sympathy. Perhaps the sacred enclosure of home, or the night-watches of a sick-room, or the self-denying task of instructing a crude and sluggish class in the simple elements of the Gospel—yet is it Christ's service which engages you, and as such, it is perfect freedom and exquisite delight.

And truly there is no service to be compared with it— so ennobling, so satisfying, so joy-inspiring— or that brings with it so much of present and rich reward. Servant of Christ! keep good heart! Listen to your Master's feet behind you, upholding and cheering you on. He will soon come and pay you your full wages— will wipe the sweat of toil from your brow, and wreath it with an amaranthine crown of glory, honor, and immortality. Then comes the welcome and reward— "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of your Lord."

With such a service, and such a recompense, who, with but a spark of the love of Christ in his heart, will not exclaim— "Here, Lord, am I, what will you have me to do?" I have but one life— you have bought it with your life-blood— may it be yours— yours wholly, forever yours."

Christian reader, be up and doing— why do you stand all the day idle? Go, work in your Lord's vineyard. With a significance more profound, and with an earnestness more intense than that with which the words were uttered by the Mohammedan chief, pointing his sword to earth and then up to heaven, would we say to you— "Here is the place of labor; there is the place of rest."

'Tis not for man to trifle; life is brief,

And sin is here;

Our age is but the falling of a leaf,

A dropping tear.

We have no time to sport away the hours;

All must be earnest in a world like ours.

Not many lives, but only one have we;

One, only one—

How sacred should that one life ever be—

That narrow span!

Day after day filled up with blessed toil,

Hour after hour still bringing in new spoil."

There is no friend like Christ! The truth upon which we have been endeavoring to concentrate your thoughts, and with which we would yet a few moments longer detain you, is one of great practical influence. It chimes with every event, circumstance, and situation of your life. Let your faith deal with it as a divine verity, as a practical reality, that in whatever position God places you, he intends, by his dealings in providence, and by his teaching in grace, to bring you into the deeper experience of this the most precious of all experimental and practical truths— "No one can meet my case like Christ."

Whatever, through this year, your position may be— and I will hypothetically place it— let faith reason thus— "I am in great adversity; why should I resort to the help of man, he may fail me— there is none like Christ. I am in profound grief, my heart is melted within me; why should I repair to the soothing of human sympathy, it may disappoint me— there is none like Christ. I am in a great strait; insurmountable difficulties, inextricable perplexities weave their network around my path, and I am at my wit's end; why should I betake myself to human counsel— it may mislead me— there is none like Christ. My future looks dark and lowering— disease undermining my health— my energies failing, and the duties, responsibilities, and labors for which I have taxed my utmost powers, all lie untouched and neglected, yet why should I despond— there is none like Christ. My temporal circumstances are narrowing, resources fail me, poverty, with its humiliating attendants, stares me in the face, yet why should I yield to unbelief— there is none like Christ. My corruptions are strong, my temptations irresistible, my sins many, my doubts and fears weigh me down to the dust, yet why should I despair— there is none like Christ. I am approaching the solemn hour of death, heart and flesh are failing me, and the veil of eternity is slowly rising to my view, yet why should I fear, and tremble, and shrink back, I have committed my soul to my Savior, and— there is none like Christ."

And, oh! what a mercy that you have never found one that could for a moment take his place; that, separated, perhaps exiled from all others, you are enclosed to Christ alone, nor wish another being to share your confidence or divide your affection with him. It is possible that you have made the experiment. You have traveled the circle of creation's good, have sipped at many springs, have gathered many flowers, have sought repose in many an embowered spot, but all have failed. You have returned to your true rest, exclaiming— "None like Christ. I find no love so soothing as his, no friendship so true, so gentle as his, no communion like communion with him. Christ is my all and in all."

Does the world challenge— "What is your beloved more than another beloved?" Your answer is at hand— "My beloved bore my sins, opened in his heart a fountain in which I am washed whiter than snow. My beloved sustains my burdens, counsels my perplexities, heals my wounds, dries my tears, supplies my needs, bears with my infirmities, upholds my steps, and cheers my pathway to the tomb. My beloved will be with me in the valley of the shadow of death, and with his presence I shall fear no evil. My beloved has gone to prepare a place for me in the many-mansioned house of my Father, and will come again and receive me to himself, that where he is, I may be also. My beloved will walk with me in the gold-paved streets of the new Jerusalem, will lead me to fountains of living waters, and will wipe every tear from my eyes. This is my beloved, and this is my Friend!"

Therefore Stand Firm. And yet have we need of constant vigilance, lest we should not always and in everything give Christ the preeminence. The rival interests, and the antagonistic forces of the world and the flesh are in perpetual play. These demand that, with the prophet, we should "stand continually upon the watchtower in the daytime, and be set in our wards whole nights." Should you discover any encroachment of your worldly calling upon the claims Christ has to your time and service, any rival affections to the claims he has to your whole heart, any secret demur to the claims he has to your unreserved obedience; should you, in a word, detect the undue ascendancy or influence of any one being or object whose presence and power tends to shade the beauty, lessen the attractions, weaken the supremacy, or share the throne of Christ in your soul— that being and that object must be relinquished at once and forever!

Oh! what competitor can stand side by side with Christ? No minister, or pastor, or church, or friend, or companion, can bear a moment's comparison with Jesus. Not one who can assist you, defend you, provide for you, or bear with you as Jesus, who when the snow-flakes of wintry adversity fall thick and fast, and its cold blast moans drearily around you, will not leave yet side, who will be first to enter the house of woe, across whose threshold the loved remains have just been borne, to speak words of comfort to your bereaved heart; who will sustain you in languor, bend over you in sickness, and when the last look, before the eye is fixed and glazed, and the last breath, before the lips are mute and immovable in death, shall come, will be with you, viewless and noiseless to the attendant watchers, sustaining your spirit in the parting hour, then bearing it in his own warm bosom to the home eternally made ready. Then cling and adhere to Christ, and in all things give him the preeminence.

"Enthroned the precious Savior in your heart,

Let all your homage unto him be paid;

Allow no idol to usurp in part

The glory due to him who all things made.

In thought, word, deed, your life to him be given,

You shall be blessed on earth, and saved in heaven."

Be Faithful to His Word. There is yet another caution I would venture to give in reference to some of the social and popular movements of the day, the tendency of which, without due vigilance on the part of the sincere and earnest friends of true religion, may be adverse to its best interests, fatally injurious to the individuals contemplated by these movements, and subversive of the supremacy of Christ and his truth. We hail with gratitude and hope all efforts to advance "social science" and intellectual improvement, provided those endeavors are sustained and sanctified by Christian principle. I am thoroughly convinced that true national advancement can only be successfully secured by the power of a living Christianity. All other modes of elevating the masses utterly fail of reaching them. It is impossible to close the eye to the fact that, after all the exertions of our literary and scientific institutions, our libraries, reading-rooms, and lectures, there teems outside and far beyond our efforts, a vast outlying population of living beings, dwelling in ignorance and neglect, each one of whom might give utterance to the exclamation— "No man has cared for my soul!"

By what agency are we to compass and by what means are we to instruct them? We at once answer, by the feet of the city and the rural missionary, and by the sole instrument of Christ's Gospel. But widely different from this is the object promoted by "social science" and its kindred associations. And what is the result? We are advancing in secular knowledge and science, but, at the same time, we are equally advancing in worldliness, luxury, and indulgence; in extravagance of dress, and modes of life that, in numerous cases, far overtop reasonable and legitimate income. The consequences must be serious! The history of nations is luminous in the testimony it bears to the fact that high perfection in art and science, in intellectual improvement, luxury, and indulgence, apart from the conservative influence of Christianity, has ever been the culminating point that has marked their decadence and dissolution. We have passed through one phase of our national

history, and "hero-worship" is nearly giving place to the worship of "social science," secular knowledge, and intellectual advancement. I can not look but with the most painful apprehension and alarm upon the unchristianized condition toward which we are as a nation fast drifting. Compromise at home, and neutrality abroad, is gradually blotting Christianity from our national escutcheon. It seriously behooves the ministers of the Gospel, our devout statesmen and senators, to be fully awake. If we are to retain the position God has given us in the scale of nations, or to rise to a yet loftier altitude of moral greatness and power, it will not be by the means of social science, worldly knowledge, wealth, luxury, and refinement— but by the influence of a living, vitalizing Christianity alone!

The Bible and its religion must be paramount; Christ and his Gospel must have the preeminence. Reason and learning must stand at the bar of Revelation, reverence its precepts, adopt its principles, and obey its voice. The moment that finds this nation glorying in her strength, in her wisdom, in her wealth, in her prowess, in her social progress, and in her high civilization, will date the beginning of her decline, and foreshadow the certainty of her downfall as a great, religious people; and her last history, like that of Greece and Rome, will be written in mourning, lamentation, and woe. Let the apostles and promoters of social science and of secular knowledge solemnly beware how, in the advancement of their objects, they ignore our Bible and abjure our God!

Be Spiritually Minded. It is an important practical deduction from the subject of these pages, that if true godliness is anything to us, it surely must be everything. There is no principle God has more closely and universally calculated in the universe than 'harmony'. And it is this nice adjustment, this perfect balance, and exquisite symmetry, everywhere pervading his works, which proves the mind that planned and the power that executed to be one and the same— divine.

Now it is this same harmony, as exhibited in true godliness, which illustrates its beauty and augments its power. How much is true religion shorn of its strength by the lack of more spiritual-mindedness in its professors! The worldly amusements to which many addict themselves— the opera, the card-playing, the ball, the gay party, the novel-reading, the luxurious living, the extravagant customs in which multitudes of religious professors, church members and communicants indulge, are sad blots upon their avowed Christianity, and effectual hindrances to the advancement of religion in their own souls and in the world. Oh! that with us vital religion— the pure, simple, self-denying, unearthly religion of Christ— might be paramount; its holy influence permeating our whole being, and giving form and tint and direction to all our engagements and conduct.

Difficulties we shall, indeed, have to overcome in the world, and, perhaps, opposing influences in our own homes; nevertheless, if Christ sees that our hearts are set upon ruling our lives by his divine precept, "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness," he will aid our holy strivings and give his grace that, in our principles, our spirit, and our conduct, yes, in all things and everywhere, Christ may have the preeminence.

My reader, what is your "beloved"? If it is not Christ, what is it? The world? the creature? wealth? self? Are these the objects you place in competition with the Redeemer, and prefer to a religious life, a happy death, and a glorious eternity? Oh! what will they avail you when Christ, the Savior you have slighted, despised, and neglected, cites you to his judgment bar? Without the experience of a real conversion, of the new birth, of a saving interest in Jesus, should you die this year, you

are forever lost! Pause, solemnly pause, upon the threshold of a new period of your probation, and ask the Holy Spirit to enthrone the Savior upon your loving, believing heart, that henceforth Christ may be the first, Christ the chief, Christ preeminent; so that for you to live or die may truly and emphatically be CHRIST; and then Christ and you will be together through eternity!

There is None like Him. Such is the truth, child of God, your heavenly Father has given you to learn through this coming year— None like Christ! Could he bring you into the experience of a truth more needful, more sanctifying, or more precious? Impossible! Strive after a closer walk, a more childlike transfer of every care, anxiety, and need to your heavenly Father, and his beloved Son, your elder brother. "He cares for you." Do not overlook today, in your anxious thoughts about the morrow. Travel not out of the present into the future. The grace that supports, the love that comforts, the resources that supply today's need, will, with tomorrow's demand, be ready at your hand. Do justice to the solemn present, and live with the same calm reliance upon God, and looking to Jesus, as if there but one second of time intervening between you and your heavenly home. Make the prayer your own of one of the earliest missionaries of the Cross to Ireland— "May the strength of God pilot me this day, the power of God preserve me, the wisdom of God instruct me, the eye of God view me, the ear of God hear me, the hand of God protect me, the way of God direct me, the shield of God defend me. Christ be with me, Christ before me, Christ after me, Christ in me, Christ under me, Christ over me, Christ at my right, Christ at my left, Christ at this side, Christ at that side, Christ in the heart of each person whom I speak to, Christ in the mouth of each person who speaks to me, Christ in each eye which sees me, Christ in each ear which hears me. Salvation is the Lord's, salvation is Christ's. May your salvation, O Lord! be always with us." (Patrick's prayer on his going to preach before the King of Ireland)

Imitating the spirit, and adopting the petitions of this remarkable prayer, your daily, happy, and holy experience and testimony will be— "None but Christ, none like Christ."

"I'll not leave Jesus— never, never!

Ah! what can more precious be?

Rest, and joy, and light are ever

In his hand to give to me.

All things that can satisfy,

Having Jesus, these have I."

Love has bound me fast to him,

I am his, and he is mine;

Daily I for pardon ask him,

Answers he with peace divine.

On that rock my trust is laid,

And I rest beneath its shade.

Without Jesus, earth would weary,
Seem almost like hell to me;
But if Jesus I have near me,
Earth is almost heaven to me.
Am I hungry? He does give
Bread on which my soul does live.
Oh! how light upon my shoulder
Lies my cross, now grown so small.
For the Lord is my upholder,
Fits it to me, softens all.
Neither shall it always stay—
Patience! it will pass away!"

The Clouds of the Christian

The Clouds of the Christian,

the Chariot of God

by Octavius Winslow

"Who maketh the clouds his chariot" (Psalms 104:3).

If God were perfectly comprehensible in his being and government to a finite mind, then either he must forego his claim to divinity, or we must cease to be human. And yet in nothing, scarcely, is the Christian more at fault than in attempting to fathom those dispensations of his government in which he conceals his purposes and enshrouds himself, and failing, he then questions the wisdom and rectitude of his procedure! But how gently does the result rebuke and confound our misapprehension and distrust. When from the secret place of thunder he utters his voice, when in his dealings darkness is under his feet, when he makes darkness his secret place, his pavilion round about him dark waters and thick clouds of the skies (Psalms 18:11), even then he is but making a way for his love to us, which shall appear all the more real and precious by the very cloud-chariot in which it travels. The believer in Christ has nothing slavishly to dread, but everything filially to hope from God. So fully is he pardoned, so completely is he justified, so perfectly is he reconciled to God, that even the darkest dispensations in which he hides himself shall presently unveil the brightest views of his character and love; and thus the lowering cloud that deepened in its darkness and grew larger as it approached shall dissolve and vanish, leaving no object visible to the eye but him whose essence and name is love. Oh, it is because we have such shallow views of God's love that we have such defective views of God's dealings! We blindly interpret the symbols of his providence because we so imperfectly read the engraving of his heart. Faith finds it difficult to spell the word 'love' as written in the shaded characters of its discipline; to believe that the cloud which looks so somber and threatening is the love-chariot of him who for our ransom gave himself unto the death because he so loved us!

The subject on which this chapter engages our thoughts presents another path heavenward for the Christian. And as this path is frequently trodden by many, we desire to present it in such an aspect as shall help onward those who are walking in darkness having no light, or around whose way the dense dark clouds of divine dispensations are gathering, filling the soul with fear and trembling. He makes the clouds his chariot; and soothed with this assurance, the beclouded, benighted traveler may be still and know that he is God. Let us view some of those clouds of the Christian pilgrimage which Christ makes his chariot.

The heavens are draped with many clouds of varied forms and hues. Such are, figuratively, the dealings of God with his people. Our Lord has many chariots. It is recorded of Solomon that his chariots were fourteen hundred; but the chariots of God are twenty thousand. In every cloud in the history of the church and in the experience of the saints is a divine chariot, and every chariot is, like the King of Israel's, paved in the midst with love. We may illustrate this by a reference to

Christ's state-chariot, or, in other words, the Lord's appearance to his people in the cloud of his essential and divine glory. It was in this cloud he entered and filled the tabernacle 'so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud: for the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD' (1 Kings 8:11). In this same cloud, too, he descended upon Mount Sinai: And a cloud covered the mount. And the glory of the LORD abode upon mount Sinai' (Exodus 24:15-16). The same glorious chariot was seen descending and lighting upon Mount Tabor, in that sublime and expressive scene of our Lord's transfiguration, when 'he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased' (2 Peter 1:17). The same chariot of state waited his ascension and bore him back to heaven, reinvested with the glory which he had with the Father before the world was; for as he went up and his form disappeared from the gaze of his disciples, 'a cloud received him out of their sight' (Acts 1:9). In like manner, descending in the state-chariot of his own glory and the glory of his Father, shall he come again. Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him' (Revelation 1:7). Solemn scene! Sublime advent! Blessed hope of those who love and look and long for his appearing! Saints of God, it speedeth on! The day of your full redemption draweth nigh. The state-chariot of our Immanuel is preparing for its descent to the world, conveying him to his church, his loving, longing bride. Lord, why tarry the wheels of thy chariot? Come, quickly come, and terminate the reign of sin and sorrow and death in the dominion of holiness and happiness and endless life, and take thy wearying church to thyself.

Come, great Redeemer, open wide
The curtains of the parting sky;
On a bright cloud in triumph ride,
And on the wind's swift pinions fly.
Come, King of kings, with thy bright train,
Cherubs and seraphs, heavenly hosts;
Assume thy right, enlarge thy reign,
As far as earth extends her coasts.
Come, Lord, and where thy cross once stood,
There plant thy banner, fix thy throne;
Subdue the rebels by thy Word,
And claim the nations as thine own.

May we not pause at this part of our subject and ask the reader, have you seen the King riding in his chariot of state? To drop the figure, have you seen his glory, as the glory of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth? Oh, it is a grand spectacle, the glory that is in Christ Jesus, the glory of his person, his atoning work, his redeemed church! Blessed are the eyes enlightened to behold it! Deem not your Christianity as true, nor your religion as sound, nor your hope as valid, unless you have seen by faith's spiritual, far-discerning eye Jesus in his divinity, the King riding in

majesty and beauty in this cloud-chariot of his essential dignity and glory. It is only in the beaming effulgence of this glory that all our demerit and deformity is absorbed and annihilated. So divine, blinding, and overpowering is the essential glory of our redeeming God that a believing sinner, enveloped by its beams, is changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. All his unrighteousness, his sins, and hell-deservings are consumed and destroyed by the divine Sun of righteousness. Jesus makes this cloud his chariot and waits to bless us with its vision.

There are, too, divine truths—the mysteries of the gospel, for example—which may be regarded as the cloud chariots of God. It is a favorite maxim with the objector to Christianity—plausible yet fallacious—that where mystery begins faith terminates. And yet never did the genius of error forge a weapon more weak and powerless with which to attack our divine and holy faith! If the Bible be the revelation of God, mysteries must necessarily form an essential part, if not its very substance. It would indeed be astonishing if God should not know more than man; or that if, in condescending to reveal to man his being, his will, and his heart, there should not be problems in divine truth man cannot solve, depths he cannot reach, mysteries he cannot unravel, and revelations he may not reconcile. Such, for example, are the revealed doctrines of the Trinity, the incarnation, atonement, election, sovereignty, the new birth, and resurrection. We own the mystery which envelops so much connected with these great verities of our faith; that there are depths too profound for reason's line to touch, modes of existence which forbid the rash doubts of the skeptic and the vain speculation of the philosopher, while they demand the unquestioning faith and profound homage of the believing mind.

And yet are we then to reject them? We may, we do, believe a thousand things in nature which the mind cannot fully comprehend. Our very existence is a mystery; every movement of the body, every action of mind, every volition of will, every emotion and affection of the heart encompasses us with mystery. Yet on that account do we doubt our own existence? My being confounds, but does it transcend my reason? And are we not at every step confronting mysteries in nature and in providence which we accept as credible, which otherwise we must reject as incomprehensible? If, then, my reader, your mind is perplexed, agitated, and distressed respecting these clouds which veil so much connected with the revealed truths of the gospel, learn this lesson—that Christ makes these very clouds his chariot. In each and all of these profound yet glorious verities of our faith, these great and precious doctrines of the gospel, Christ is revealed Christ is embodied, Christ travels. The gospel is the vehicle in which Christ makes his constant advent to our souls; and if our reason may not be able perfectly to comprehend all the parts of the vehicle, let it content our faith that Jesus, the revelation ' the substance, and glory of all divine truth, occupies it; and that ere long the cloud of mystery into which we entered with trembling will, as in the transfiguration, dissolve into light and splendor, pure and soothing, and we shall see Jesus only.

Regard it as one of your chief mercies that your salvation depends not upon reason but upon faith. You are not called upon fully to comprehend, but unquestioningly to believe and love. You are not the less saved because your faith deals with obscurity, nor is your faith less real, precious, or saving because it abjures the wisdom of the sage for the docile spirit of the child, and the learning of the philosopher for the humility of the disciple. Let your great study be the mystery of Christ's love to sinners—the mystery of Christ's love to you. The apostle was content to leave all mysteries to the day of perfect knowledge, if he could but attain unto love. Though I know all mysteries, and

have not love, I am nothing. Study that grand truth, 'God is love', as embodied in the cross of Christ, and you can well afford to refer all that is obscure and hard to understand in revealed truth to the day when we shall know all, as we also are known. Cease to dispute, cavil, and speculate on the subject of religion and revealed truth, and receive the gospel and enter into the kingdom of Christ as a little child.

In the momentous matter of your future destiny, you have but to deal with two specific and distinct facts - your sinnership and Christ's Saviorship. What if you solve all the problems of science, and fathom all the depths of learning, and unravel all the mysteries of truth, and yet are lost! What will your speculations, and researches, and discoveries avail, if at last they be found ineffectual to distil one drop of the water of life upon the tongue, now caviling and profane, then fevered and tormented in the quenchless flame? Are you not, by your present persistent course of unbelief, pride, and rejection of truth, in danger of finding yourself there? Oh, it is of infinite importance to you that you come as sinful to the blood of Christ, as condemned to his righteousness, as ignorant and unlearned to the feet of Christ. The great problem you have to work out is your own salvation. The grand mystery you have to unravel is the mystery of your union with Jesus. The momentous questions you have to decide are the place, the society, and the employment of your endless future! Where, with whom, and how will you spend your long eternity? Compared with these grave considerations, all your doctrinal hair-splitting and your religious speculations, your vain disputes and your dreamy hopes, are as the follies of driveling idiocy, or the aberrations of a mind insane.

Shakespeare portrays his 'Lear' as gathering straws with the hand that had wielded a scepter, and devoting to childish thoughts a mind which once gave laws to a kingdom. With a yet more powerful hand the sacred historian describes the monarch of Babylon quitting the occupation and abodes of men and betaking himself to the pursuits and companionship of irrational animals. But what are these sad pictures of a mind diseased, wrecked, and ruined, compared with the moral madness of the man who disbelieves the gospel, cavils at truth, and perils the eternal interests of his soul—who employs the rational powers with which God has endowed him in attempting to subvert the foundations of Christianity, to extinguish the beacon light erected on the headlands and the shores of time to guide the spiritual voyager safe to eternity, involving in the destruction of others his own personal salvation?

The clouds of God's providential government are no less his chariot. 'Clouds and darkness are round about him' (Psalms 97:2), and in these dispensations of his government he moves among men, and especially his saints. It is by a 'cloudy pillar', sometimes turning towards us gleams of light, at other times casting deep and dark shadows on our way, that God is conducting us heavenward. Oh, how many and how varied in form and in hue are the trying, afflictive, and disciplinary dealings of our heavenly Father! How soon the bright blue sky smiling down upon us may be wreathed with the drapery of clouds, each one dark and portentous. God blows upon wealth and it vanishes, touches health and it droops, smites the creature and it dies, and we exclaim in the words of David, 'I am weary with my groaning; all the night make I my bed to swim; I water my couch with my tears' (Psalms 6:6). But the night of cloud and gloom is to the kingdom of grace what the darkness of night is to the kingdom of nature. Darkness possesses the twofold property of concealing and revealing; and it would perhaps be impossible to say in which it most excelled, whether it does not reveal as much, if not more, beauty and wonder than it veils. Those clouds of providential dispensations which turn our day into night bring out to view such

constellations of divine promises, discover such perfection of the divine character, and present such discoveries of divine love, as to make even night more wonderful and resplendent than day. Ah, beloved, we should know but little what Christ's chariot of love was, but for the clouds in which he comes to us! Are cloudy dispensations gathering around you? Are God's ways such as fill you with fear and foreboding, agitation and alarm? Does sickness threaten, do resources fail, friendships chill, changes in the relations or social position of life approach? Is separation feared, death anticipated, followed in its gloomy wake by weakened dependencies, closed channels, sundered ties, the sad farewell to a parent's society, the home of childhood, and the dearest, sweetest ties of earth? Oh, these gathering clouds are but the Lord's chariot, in which he rides to thee in all the wisdom of His dealings, the faithfulness of his covenant, the tenderness of his love, and the righteousness of his procedure.

Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take,

The clouds ye so much dread

Are big with mercy, and shall break

In blessings on your head.

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,

But trust him for his grace,

Behind a frowning providence

He hides a smiling face.

But consider who it is that rides in this chariot. It is the Lord your God. Many of God's people are so absorbed in their contemplation of the chariot as to overlook the one who sits in it. Their emotions vary according to the appearance which it presents. If the cloud is bright and promising, their feelings and hopes are correspondingly so; but should it wear a somber, threatening appearance, faith sinks and fears rise. But faith has nothing to do with the chariot, whatever may be its magnitude, shape, or hue, but with Christ in the chariot and with God in the cloud. For example, with regard to divine truth, it is not with the vehicle of truth itself, but with Christ as revealed in the truth, that our faith must deal. I may not be able to comprehend and understand all the parts of the chariot—its complexity may baffle, its gorgeousness may blind me—but I may be able to see and understand who is enthroned upon its seat.

If the mystery of the doctrine of the Trinity, and of the incarnation, and of the atonement, and of election, is so profound that I cannot explain or comprehend it, I still may discern in them one glorious object, and discerning that object, it were enough for my salvation. I can see Jesus in the Trinity, Jesus in the incarnation, Jesus in the atonement, Jesus in election, and this will suffice until the night of divine mysteries gives place to the meridian sunshine of a perfect and eternal day of knowledge and glory; and then I shall as fully understand the mysterious construction and comprehend all the different parts of the chariot as my mind will be capable of knowing, and my heart of loving him, whose name is Wonderful, who rode in it to my salvation. Then shall we know even as also we are known. Oh, how fully and blessedly shall we know Jesus then! How gloriously will this great mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh, unveil to our enlarged and sanctified

intellect. We shall no more see the King in his beauty as through a glass darkly, nor the good land very far off. With souls perfected in holiness, how clear will be the vision, how transparent the medium, how glorious the Object! There shall be no more night of mystery, no more night of obscurity, no more night of sin, no more night of weeping. No disease shall shade the intellect, no prejudice shall warp, no shock shall unhinge it. No adversity shall touch the heart, no bereavement shall sadden, no changed and chilled affection shall collapse it.

That there will be gradations of knowledge and degrees of glory, I think is probable. There are so in the Church of God on earth; I see nothing to exclude the same from the Church of God in heaven. But this will not in the slightest degree affect the happiness or glory of the saints. Is there less beauty in a tuhp-bed, or in a conservatory of flowers, because there is so rich an assemblage of varied colors? Or, is there less splendor in the heavenly bodies because there is so great a variety of magnitude, effulgence, and orbit? And will there be less enjoyment, or less beauty, or less song amidst the countless numbers who throng the temple above, because 'One star differeth from another star in glory' (1 Corinthians 15:41)? Oh, no, the glory and the happiness of each will be full and perfect! Every spirit will possess a happiness and reflect a glory equal to its capacity. As two luminous bodies in the celestial system may shine in perfection, though in widely different orbits and with different degrees of splendor, and as two streams, the rivulet and the river, may course their way through landscape, the one gliding in simple, pensive beauty, the other rolling in majestic waves, and yet each filling its channel, both equally charming the eye and declaring the glory of God; so the 'spirits of just men made perfect' (Hebrews 12:23) shall each be a differing, yet full, vessel of happiness. The image of God will shine with full-orbed splendour in both, though with different intensity, and by each one shall Christ perfect to himself endless praise.

Oh, beloved, if we but reach that world of purity and of bliss, we shall be so satisfied with the orbit we roll in, the glory we emit, and the happiness we feel, as never to question the goodness or the righteousness of God in the sphere assigned us! Christ will then be all in all to us, and we shall be satisfied with all that Christ has done. I think that our bliss will be so complete, our joy so full, and our glory so resplendent, we shall scarcely be conscious that there is another saint fuller, happier, or more glorious than ourselves. Blessed world of glory, we long to be within thy walls! Open, ye everlasting doors, and admit us, that we may eat of the tree of life and recline upon the sunlight banks of the crystal river that makes glad the city of our God.

Salem, city of the holy,

We shall be within thy walls:

There, beside yon crystal river,

There, beneath life's wondrous tree,

There, with nought to cloud or sever,

Ever with the Lamb to be!

Heir of glory!

That shall be for thee and me!

The Lord, too, is equally in all the providential clouds which unfold his government and trace our pilgrimage heavenward. It is our wisdom and our happiness to know that there is not an event or circumstance, a cloud or a sunbeam, in our personal history and experience that is not a vehicle of Christ. He makes the clouds his chariot; and his providential dispensations, whatever their form or their hue, are his means of approaching and visiting us. 'The LORD hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet' (Nahum 1:3). Fear not, oh Christian traveler, that dark, lowering cloud rising above thee. It grows large, and it looks threatening, and thou thinkest it will overtake and consume thee before thou hast crossed the plain and reached the shelter. Tremble not, it will roll no thunder, it will flash no lightning! The cross of Christ is the great lightning conductor for the Church of God. Around that cross, law and justice met in awful array, the thunderbolt struck and the lightning scathed the Son of God, and upon him they spent their force. And now beneath the shelter of that cross, the penitent sinner may safely stand, and the darkest cloud, and the loudest thunder, and the most vivid lightning that gathers and verberates and illumines above shall pass him by untouched, for there is now 'no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus' (Romans 8:1).

Why, then, fear the dealings, and the readings, and the chastenings of God in providence? That somber chariot that appears at thy door, enters thy abode, mounts into thy chamber, is the chariot of love, the chariot of Jesus. Christ is in that adversity, Christ is in that loss, Christ is in that bereavement, Christ is in that sickness; in a word, that cloud, whatever may be its nature, its form, and its darkness what it may, is one of the twenty thousand chariots of God in which he rideth to thy help, in his excellency, on the sky. Oh, learn to see Christ and to deal closely with God in all his dispensations and dealings with you. No enemy bent on destruction, no foe armed with vengeance, sits in the cloud chariot that approaches you—it is your Father, your covenant God, your Redeemer. It is he to whose heart you are more precious than the universe, in whose eye you are more beautiful than angels, and on whose ear the accents of your voice fall with a melody infinitely surpassing the sweetest cherub before the throne.

Look not, I beseech you, at the somber hue of the chariot, but rather at the love and loveliness and graciousness of him who sits within it. It is your beloved Lord! His person is white and ruddy, human and divine. His countenance is brighter than the sun shining in its strength. His voice is gentle, tender, and winning, uttering the speech and the accent and the words of love. Then be not afraid. Christ will never send an empty chariot to his people. When his chariot lights at our door, we may be assured that he is in it. No angel, no ransomed spirit shall occupy the seat, but he himself. Welcome, then, the visit of your gracious King. He comes laden with the 'sure mercies of David', freighted with covenant blessings and bearing the sweet grapes and the fragrant flowers gleaned from the vineyards and the paradise of heaven. He comes in this cloud to talk with and to manifest himself to you and to make you more intimately and personally acquainted with himself, with his truth and his love. Welcome him to your dwelling, receive him into your heart, and bid him abide with you there, never to leave you again. Be not satisfied unless you discern the Ying in the chariot. This only will dispel your fears and reconcile you to the dispensation, however dark and painful it may be. The moment you realize, 'Thou art near, O Lord'—that moment your heaving, panting bosom will be at rest. The disciples feared as they entered into the cloud upon the Mount of Transfiguration, but discovering the Lord in it, their trembling was changed into confidence, their apprehension into joy, and they desired to build their tabernacle on its summit and no more

descend to the toil and the strife below.

Beloved, are you entering some overshadowing cloud trembling and apprehensive? Fear not! Thy Lord is in it, and a Father's voice of love shall speak to thee from out of its veiling shadows, saying, 'When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the LORD thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Savior' (Isaiah 43:2-3). Glorious cloud that enshrines the form of my redeeming God! Welcome, thou coming chariot, that brings Jesus near to my soul. Thy vesture is dark, thy form gigantic, thy appearance threatening, but my heart shall not fear, nor my faith falter, for in this will I be confident, that he makes the clouds his chariot, and in this chariot comes my Savior to shelter, to soothe, and to bless me. Truly, 'there is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heaven in thy help, and in his excellency on the sky. The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms' (Deuteronomy 33:26-27). Ere long another chariot will appear at your door, the chariot sent to bear you home to God, to Christ, to heaven. We know not what form this messenger will assume, whether it will be Christ's state-chariot, which shall convey him in person to us, or whether it shall be Christ's chariot of death, which will convey us to him; but this we believe and are assured of, that in a very little while we shall see the Lord and be with him forever. The chariot is preparing for us, let us be preparing for the chariot. Let us so live detached from, and above, the world, and creatures, and earthly delights; let us so live in fellowship with God and in communion with divine and eternal things, that when the Lord's chariot gently knocks at our door, we may have nothing to do but to step into it and away to heaven! Aged saint, art thou looking through the window and the lattice of thy frail tabernacle, exclaiming, 'Why is his chariot so long in coming. Why tarry the wheels of his chariots?' (Judges 5:28).

Be patient and trustful; the Lord's time is best, and ere long thou shalt exclaim, 'It is the voice of my Beloved that knocketh! The Master is come and calleth for me. Earth, farewell! Friends, farewell! Parents, kindred, wife, children, home, farewell! Sorrow, suffering, trial, sin, farewell! I go to be with Jesus forever!' And then a cloud of glory shall receive you out of their sight, and so shall you ever be with the Lord.

Forever with the Lord!

Amen; so let it be,

Lifefrom the dead is in that word,

'Tis immortality.

Here in the body pent,

Absent from him I roam,

Yet nightly pitch my moving tent

A day's march nearer home.

My Father's house on high,

Home of my soul, so near,

At times, to faith's far-seeing eye
Thy golden gates appear!
Yet clouds will intervene,
And all my prospect flies,
Like Noah's dove, I flit between
Rough seas and stormy skies.
And the clouds depart,
The winds and waters cease,
While sweetly o'er my gladdend heart
Expands the bow of peace.
In darkness as in light,
Hidden alike from view,
I sleep, I wake, as in his sight,
Who looks all nature through.
Forever with the Lord!
Father, if 'tis thy will,
The promise of that faithful word
Even here to me fulfil.
Be thou at my right hand,
Then can I never fail,
Uphold thou me, and I shall stand,
Fight, and I must prevail.
Knowing as I am known,
How shall I love that word!
And oft repeat before the throne,
Forever with the Lord!
Forever with the Lord!
Amen; so let it be,
Life from the dead is in that word,

'Tis immortality.

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