

WRITINGS OF JOHN MACDUFF - VOLUME 1

by John Macduff

A collection of theological writings, sermons, and essays by John Macduff (Volume 1), compiled for study and devotional reading.

100 Chapters

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01.00. A Book for the Bereaved

A BOOK FOR THE BEREAVED by John MacDuff, 1883

"Brothers and sisters, we want you to know the truth about those who have died, so that you will not be sad, as are those who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will take back with Jesus those who have died BELIEVING in Him. So then, comfort one another with these words." 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14, 1 Thessalonians 4:18 And I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." "Blessed indeed," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!" Revelation 14:13

"He will wipe all tears from their eyes—and there will be no more death, suffering, crying, or pain! These things of the past are gone forever! He who OVERCOMES will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son." Revelation 21:4, Revelation 21:7

"All who BELIEVE in God's Son have eternal life. Those who don't obey the Son will never experience eternal life, but the wrath of God remains upon them." John 3:36

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01.01. Introductory Chapter

Introductory Chapter

"Brothers and sisters, we want you to know the truth about those who have died, so that you will not be sad, as are those who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will take back with Jesus those who have died BELIEVING in Him. So then, comfort one another with these words." 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14, 1 Thessalonians 4:18 And I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." "Blessed indeed," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!" Revelation 14:13

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"All who BELIEVE in God's Son have eternal life. Those who don't obey the Son will never experience eternal life, but the wrath of God remains upon them." John 3:36 "Even so, Father—for so it seemed good in your sight."

—Matthew 11:26 I heard these words uttered but the other day, under affecting circumstances, at a young Christian's deathbed.

Pulpit themes should take their hue and color, if possible, from events and impressions of the hour. I have accordingly thought it might not be unprofitable to select this beautiful saying as suggestive of a few appropriate meditations. I separate it from its connection in the passage where it occurs. I shall not even regard the verse, in what is its highest and holiest meaning, as an utterance of the Savior; but look at it as it stands, the simple expression of devout submission to the mysterious decrees of God on the part of all His true people. The words necessarily, and on the face of them, imply that in this world of ours there are deep perplexities; that on human realities, there are unsolvable problems—that things do not appear "good" in our sight—that if we had the world in our own hands we would order events far otherwise—our own lot and that of others we should mold far differently. But all that concerns us is happily in other and better keeping. Falling back on the Fatherhood of the Great Supreme, in the only true sense of that paternal relation, it is for us to say, humbly and devoutly, accepting the mysteries we cannot explain—"Even so, Father—for so it seemed good in Your sight!"

These perplexities and dilemmas are manifold. The long, pining, wasting sickness; and especially, as is often seen, arresting the active and the good in the midst of careers of usefulness and beneficence; health and strength that can ill be spared; days of suffering and nights of weariness appointed—that never seems "good" in our sight.

Take another case, that of worldly impoverishment; the loss of a man's substance—not a selfish, not a penurious hoarder, but a generous giver; one alike with a full purse and an open one, whose

delight was to relieve distress, and discharge liberally the responsible stewardship of his wealth to the Great Giver. How strangely mysterious to see the cringing worshiper of Mammon permitted, unhindered and unimpeded to pile up the golden heap, while this noble-hearted almoner of Jehovah's bounty is crippled with disastrous loss and bankruptcy, for which, too, perhaps he is not personally responsible—the innocent victim, it may be, of cruel wrong and heartless deception. That cannot seem "good" in our sight! But I shall confine myself now to the one illustration which comes home to many, very many among us, and to some with exceptional impressiveness—the death of the young and promising. I do not refer to those who were so intellectually alone, but to not a few who, in addition to mere natural acquirements, had given evidence of better spiritual gifts, and felt within their youthful bosoms the throbbings and aspirations of the higher nature.

How often do lives of greatest lovableness—the best of the household—appear to be the first taken—the choicest blossoms the first prematurely to fall! Is this a mere illusion, a natural and pardonable fantasy? It may at times be purely sentimental. The bereft heart, like the shepherd of the parable, may at times be blamable in forgetting the ninety and nine, and going in longing parental fondness and partiality after "that which was lost." Yet, explain it as we may, neither can what is a very generally accepted article in the creed of the bereaved be relegated to this domain of mere sentiment. It too often really is the favorite child, or the youth of greatest promise, that is the missing one; one of those whose names are described by a pathetic writer as "always on gravestones; and their sweet smiles, their heavenly eyes, their singular words and ways among the buried treasures of yearning hearts. In how many families do you hear the legend that all the goodness and graces of the living, are nothing to the peculiar charms of one who is not!" (Mrs. H. B. Stowe.) It was an old saying, even of Pagan antiquity, "Those whom the gods love die young." Be this, however, as it may, there are few, at all events, who will not allow that among the most mysterious of Providences is the mystery of early death. When we think of the possible future of our dear departed had they been spared—their possible, their probable usefulness in the Church and in the world, we cannot see 'good' in their removal. There is little to perplex in the case of the aged Christian's death; for with him the battle is fought and life's mission fulfilled. But the young warrior, full of elastic hope and bright anticipations, suddenly to fall before he has had time to buckle on his armor—the young, it may be the boyish soul, filled with noble yearnings to make the world the better for him while he lived, and to miss him when he died! In vain, in the presence of the King of Terrors, as he lays his icy finger on the brow, do we ask, "Why is this?" But "it seemed good in YOUR sight!" There are reasons (shadowy, partial, undefined they may be); but there are such reasons for this apparently premature departure of the youthful Christian, which may lead us in calm faith and submission to breathe that "divinely taught" utterance. Let me proceed, with God's blessing, to specify one or two of these.

I. The young Christian is thereby saved many unforeseen perils. We never like to think of evil in connection with the juvenile, the innocent, the happy. And in the case of a life that has early consecrated itself to God, we can surround it only with sunshine—sunshine in the present, and with a halo of future hope and blessing. But who can tell, if this life of promise had been prolonged, what might have overtaken it? Who that knows the treachery of the human heart can forecast the coming years of the most loving and beloved? Life's shores, alas! are strewn with the wrecks of many a vessel which began its course on the early river with all that a parent's fond heart could desire! How many a father would have been grateful had his prodigal boy been summoned in

youth, instead of being spared, not as a blessing, but as a curse! In the quaint often-quoted words of an old writer, "Better David's dead child—than his living Absalom!" Better for the green and tender vine, even with its unripe or undeveloped clusters, to be transplanted, than left for "the boar of the woods to destroy it and the wild beast of the field to devour it." We cannot anticipate or foresee; but there is an omniscient Eye which can—which does! He may discern mercy and kindness in the early removal, unknown and undiscerned by us. "Even so, Father—for, so it seemed good in Your sight!"

II. The young Christian is often early taken away, because in his case the great end of existence is fulfilled. That end is not to be measured by days or months or years. "Man's chief end is to glorify God." That glorious consummation may be attained in ten years, or twenty years, as well as in fifty, or threescore and ten. The child may die "a hundred years old!" It is a promise of God given in one of the Psalms, "With long life will I satisfy him." What is truly long life? Men may survive to the age of Methuselah, and yet the life of many centuries may be a blank. They may live all the while like the men of Meroz, "doing nothing," and sink into their graves unremembered and forgotten—the world no gainer by them during their barren and profitless existence, and no tear to spare for them at their departure.

While a truly "long life"—the life which is measured and calculated not by arithmetic but by deeds—by virtue and worth, may be compressed within a few brief years. The world has its conventional time for celebrating what is called coming of age; but in the sight of God that life attains its majority when, within a far briefer period, the owner of it can lay his head on a death-pillow, and in humble reverence say, in the spirit at least of the words of the Great Master, "I have glorified You on the earth; I have finished the work which You gave me to do." Even in the case of human genius this is true. Raphael died in comparative youth, and yet, in the earthly sense of the term, he is immortal. He compressed the lives of a thousand into a few brief years, and gave an impulse to art and to the creation of all that, pictorially at least, is devoutest and purest in religious sentiment, which is felt to this day.

So, in a far higher acceptance, morally and spiritually, there are young lives, early taken, of those who, in the truest, grandest sense, have been the Methuselahs of the world; who lived briefly yet nobly here, whose existence is perpetuated in a more glorious sphere above. "He asked life of You, and You gave him a long life, even forever and ever." "Even so, Father—for so it seemed good in Your sight!" But this suggests—

III. The young Christian is frequently summoned to an early grave, in order to draw survivors and friends to heaven. He or she, the early removed, are often thus set as beacon-lights on "the farther shore." Many a heart that resists other influences—sickness, worldly loss, and similar providential dispensations, has been won to God and heaven and happiness by the glorified voices of the departed! The sheep (to use a well-known simple illustration) which no force could drive into the fold—which sternly resisted going through the wicket-gate, is induced to do so by the bleat of her own lamb. The lamb is taken first by the shepherd, and then the other follows with willing and obedient step. Ah! how many who have now reached their thrones and their crowns can testify—"But for that sainted child early taken from me, I never would have been here! It was that voice which first stole down upon my ear in the soft whisper of celestial love, and made me first listen to the words of the sublime vision in the Book of Revelation, 'Come up here!'"

Several present, have sons who are abroad in a foreign land. What a new interest their going there has given you in that distant country! Kingdoms and colonies perhaps you scarce knew of previously, and which you could not have pointed to on the map, now how familiar! So with many a bereft parent. Your child has emigrated—set sail to the celestial shores. You have an interest in that unseen world you never had before. Heaven is brought near you with all the strength of a home feeling. It is no longer "the land that is very far off." You cannot help, in thought, being drawn to those mansions from which the angel message is ever coming from a voice silent on earth—"If you loved Me, you would rejoice because I said I go unto the Father!"

"Even so, Father—for so it seemed good in Your sight!"

Once more—

IV. The young Christian is removed; but he is with you still. Though in one sense taken from your sight; in another and better sense he is not so. I speak not of heaven; I speak now of earth. Even in regard to this world he is not "gone." The poet beautifully says—

"'Tis better to have loved and lost,

Than never to have loved at all."

Yes, far better; for love is an unquenchable thing. No, love, in the truest meaning of the term, is life; and that love never dies. If you think of it for a moment, it is not the mere bodily presence of a child, or brother, or sister, that is 'life.' If that child grows up to be the prodigal I spoke of a little ago, his life and his love are alike really cut off from his parent; whereas there is true life and love in those memories which cluster round the grave of the sainted dead. That son or brother we have also just referred to, who went to the distant colony or settlement, and who with a smile on his lip and the tear in his eye, gave us the last waive of his hand when the vessel was leaving the harbor, he is not dead. Though separated from us, there is life and love still in that land of adoption. We think of him as living. It is our daydream to see him and welcome him again. On the other hand, that friend, that relative, though he may live next door, is virtually 'dead,' who by unkindness and ingratitude is estranged from us; passing and repassing in life's thoroughfares without the nod of recognition. He may be living in the literal sense of the word, but he is "dead while he lives." His personal presence is not life; he is truly "the dead one." While the other, whose memories of holy affection are enshrined in the heart, who spoke words of imperishable kindness and comfort in passing through the dark valley, and pointed, when the tongue was unable to speak, to the land and the ties which know no dissolution, he is truly the living one. The link in the one case is snapped; the other, though invisible, is a golden chain which binds and rivets, now and for all eternity.

"No longer here," says Hawthorn, in the first hours of parental grief; "she is there; gazing, seeing, knowing, loving, as the blessed only see, and know, and love. Earth has one angel less, and heaven one more, since yesterday. Already, kneeling at the throne, she has received her welcome, and is resting on the bosom of her Savior. If human love has power to penetrate the veil—(and has it not?)—then there are yet living here a few who have the blessedness of knowing that an angel loves them!"

Let bereaved fathers and mothers ponder often this elevated and elevating truth. The casket has perished, but the jewel is still safe. Just as in that appalling railway catastrophe the other day, amid the charred ashes of death the gems and diamonds were found untouched and uninjured. Yes; I repeat it. That silent portrait on the wall is not your child. That face in your photographic collection is not your child. That white bust of marble which the chisel has wrought for you is not your child. These are speechless, mute, inanimate—mere semblances, no more; loved and treasured indeed as memorials and souvenirs. But it is a nobler living image and reality on which your heart can repose; the example which was bequeathed to you, the loving thoughts and elevated motives, and the words and ways and deeds which death never can extinguish. The beautiful action of the Savior of old may become, with another sacred meaning, an habitual one with you—"And He took a child and set him in the midst." With such-like memories, and with so noble a reversion, may all sorrowing parents who have been called to mourn blanks in their households, lives of virtue and promise so apparently quenched in darkness, gather around the 'early grave;' and with these gleams of holy radiance left lingering behind, breathe the word of devout and loving submission, "Even so, Father—for so it seemed good in Your sight!"

If I have a remark in closing, it would be to the young—to those who are still spared in life and health and strength—that they might remember what life is, and how sacred is its mission, whether the period of their natural existence be long or short. You who are still in the morning of youth, try to know and to realize what a blessed thing early piety is. And if there be, now and then, those among your playmates and companions who love God and serve Him, that are cut down, may you have grace to take their places in the heavenly course. Those of you who are older may recall, that in the torchlight races of the ancient Greeks, when one young torch-bearer had finished his allotted part in the running, he handed on the lighted torch to another; this to another; and this to another still. Be it so with you in a higher, nobler race. When young torch-bearers we may be mourning today have finished their course and kept the faith, may their example animate you to follow their steps—to take the torch from their dying hands, and bear it on until you reach, like them, your heavenly crowns. The mansions are filling, the cloud of young witnesses is increasing. "So run that you may obtain!"

"Even so, Father—for so it seemed good in your sight."

—Matthew 11:26

01.02. THE DEATH OF A CHILD

THE DEATH OF A CHILD

(1 Kings 17:17-24)

After this, the son of the woman who owned the house became ill. His illness became very severe until no breath remained in him. She said to Elijah, "Man of God, what do we have in common? Have you come to remind me of my guilt and to kill my son?" But Elijah said to her, "Give me your son." So he took him from her arms, brought him up to the upper room where he was staying, and laid him on his own bed. Then he cried out to the Lord and said, "My Lord God, have You also brought tragedy on the widow I am staying with by killing her son?" Then he stretched himself out over the boy three times. He cried out to the Lord and said, "My Lord God, please let this boy's life return to him!" So the Lord listened to Elijah's voice, and the boy's life returned to him, and he lived. Then Elijah took the boy, brought him down from the upper room into the house, and gave him to his mother. Elijah said, "Look, your son is alive." Then the woman said to Elijah, "Now I know you are a man of God and the Lord's word in your mouth is the truth." The death of a child—reminding us, that, three thousand years ago, the griefs of the old world were identical with our own—the stricken hearts of mourning parents the same in the ancient homes of Palestine as in the modern homes of England—the Rachels in both "weeping for their children and will not be comforted because they are not!" From the words which stand at the head of this chapter, the prophet Elijah was now under the roof of the widow of Zarephath. A grievous famine was still raging amid the thousands around. But as each morning's sun rose on the inhabitants of this tranquil home, lo, the barrel and the cruse described in the preceding context, and which the evening meal seemed to have exhausted, were again replenished. God's mercies were "new to them every morning, and His faithfulness every night."

We can only venture to surmise how the Prophet's hours, in this secluded dwelling, would be spent. We can follow him in thought as betimes, perhaps, he wandered up the rocky ridges which flanked the town; gazing now on the everlasting snows of Hermon, now on the wood-crowned top of Tabor—thus beholding both "Tabor and Hermon" "rejoicing in God's name." Or, as at other times, he would wander along the shores of the great and wide sea, in adoring contemplation of Him who takes up the waters in the hollow of His hand, and who "gives the sea His decree." Yet again, when the barrel had yielded its evening supply, and the lamp had been lighted from the unfailing oil-cruse, we can picture him unfolding to these two dwellers in Pagan Phoenicia—the mother and her child—the name and works and divine character of the God of Israel—dwelling on the glorious promise spoken to the fathers, but in the blessings of which all the families of the earth were to participate.

We can think of them, perhaps, joining their voices together in the psalms of the great Hebrew minstrel—many of them so applicable to their own circumstances and experience—"Happy is he who has the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God; who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that therein is; which keeps truth forever; which executes judgment for the

oppressed; which gives food to the hungry. ...The Lord preserves the strangers; He relieves the fatherless and widow." Or, more appropriate still in that heathen Tyrian home—"And the daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift; even the rich among the people shall entreat Your favor. Instead of Your fathers shall be Your children, whom You may make princes in all the earth. I will make Your name to be remembered in all generations—therefore shall the people praise You forever and ever!" But a dark season is at hand for that lowly home. Perhaps it was with this widow, as with many among us still—in her state of comparative prosperity—of exemption, at all events, from the pressure of famine, so severely felt all around—she may have been beginning to forget the Hand which was filling her empty cupboard, and warding off starvation from her dwelling. Miraculously fed from day to day—seeing the barrel and the cruse each morning recruited with the needed supply—she may have begun to feel too confidently secure—that her "mountain was standing strong," and that she might safely calculate on a permanent immunity from the inroads of trial.

How apt are we, after a season of long-continued blessing—unbroken prosperity—to indulge in this spirit of boastful independence—taking our daily comforts—food—health—friends—children—as matters of course. We may see, in the case of others, these strong pillars shattered and broken; but our inmost thought and feeling is, "I am all secure—I need not fear!" So may have meditated the Sarepta widow. And the last trial she would ever have anticipated would probably be the very one that was in store for her. With appalling suddenness, the little life—the light of her dwelling—is extinguished! "There is no breath left in him."

Since this beloved and only child had been given back to her from the gates of famine and death, we may imagine her heart-strings had entwined more tenderly than ever around him; he was every day growing up more of a companion and solace to her—a pledge of unspeakable blessing in her latter years—when his arms would toil for her, his prayers would comfort her, and his hands at last would close her eyes in death. Sad, indeed, that that one lone star which twinkled in her skies should be blotted out! Better it had been if, two years ago, he had been removed, and thus been spared the pangs and struggles of many an after-hour of privation and suffering. His life being prolonged only to be taken, seemed a cruel mocking of her grief and tears. All her hopes and joys perished in that moment of woe. She could bear to see the barrel of meal yielding a diminished supply—she could endure to look on an empty, unreplenished cruse; but to gaze on that withered flower, lying cold and lifeless in her bosom—to lose HIM, this was death indeed!

We cannot, perhaps, wonder, that for a time, faith, and patience, and submission were tempted to give way. In the bitterness of her bereft soul she thus upbraids the Prophet—"What have I to do with you, O you man of God? Are you come unto me to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son?" The words were a cutting reflection on Elijah, as well as an insinuation against Elijah's God. It was as if she had said, "What have I done to provoke at your hands so terrible a calamity? Is this your recompense and requital for sheltering your defenseless head? In pity I gave you welcome to my humble roof. Have these been your answered prayers for your benefactress? Has your God come, in this fearful retributive sense, to be the 'Judge of the widow?' Have you come, a wolf in sheep's clothing, to ravish my flock—and rob me of my one lamb?"

How striking is the contrast between this agony of her impassioned grief and the calm composure manifested when she first met Elijah. Then her child's death was equally imminent, and threatened, too, under a more terrible form. Her words on that occasion, in speaking of partaking with him of her last morsel, were these, "That we may eat it and die." She had familiarized herself with the approach of the last enemy—it was the passive, silent submission of blank despair. Now, however, it was "sudden death,"—death unexpected—death when she was handling the full cup. It was her gourd withering, not by a process of slow, gradual decay—drooping leaf by leaf; but it was, as with Jonah, the luxuriant plant—coiled fresh and beauteous round her evening bower—becoming, in a night, a mass of blighted, withered leaves. In the words of the Patriarch of Uz, "The morning was even as the shadow of death." Nor can we fail to admire Elijah's conduct in the trying circumstances. We know to what course his natural character would have impelled him. Hurt at the unkind and unjust reflection, his fiery nature might have prompted him to retaliate. He might, with an angry word, have answered the unkind suspicion breathed by that broken heart. But there is no syllable of recrimination or resentment. He says nothing (as he might have done) about the blessing he had been, and brought, to her household. He makes no reference to the barrel and the cruse beside them, the silent witnesses of God's mercy and goodness. Deeply touched at the impressive sight of death—and, perhaps, with a tender love for the youthful victim—he makes kind allowance for the anguish of the childless widow.

Saying, "Give me your son," he takes the cold marble, the dead body, in his arms, and carries it to his own couch. In Eastern dwellings in these times, as at the present day, there was generally a room higher than the rest of the building, called "alliyeh," or, as it is here translated, "loft," where strangers and guests were accommodated. In the better class of houses it was regarded as the place of honor. To this upper room Elijah bears the lifeless child. That quiet chamber echoes to the voice of impassioned prayer. The Prophet, though he had controlled his feelings before the sorrowing mother, evidently felt keenly the severity of the blow. He dreaded lest the dealings of his God might be misjudged by that crushed mourner, and he cried out to the Lord and said, "My Lord God, have You also brought tragedy on the widow I am staying with by killing her son?"

Laying the corpse upon the bed, he stretched himself upon it—not for the purpose of imparting, as some have thought, natural warmth to revive and quicken the dormant physical energies, but rather, it would seem, to communicate the quickening power of God. He knew that He who had "brought the evil" could alone remove it. Three times, as he overlaid the dead body, did the importunate cry ascend, "My Lord God, please let this boy's life return to him!" The prayer is heard—the limbs begin to move—the eye dilates—the pulse beats. Back comes the departed spirit. The Prophet has rekindled the cold ashes on this desolated hearth; and carrying in his arms the living trophy of God's goodness, he hushes the sobs of the mother with the joyful announcement—"Look, your son is alive!" Her tears are dried. Her murmurings cease. Her faith in Israel's Jehovah is confirmed. "Now"—is the utterance of her bounding heart—"now I know that you are a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in your mouth is truth." From this touching and suggestive episode, we may gather, as one out of many practical lessons, that Bereavement is not necessarily a divine judgment on account of any special sin. The widow, in the first moments of her grief, as she sat with her dead child upon her lap—the hot tears coursing down her cheek—was led to form the hasty conclusion, that God had sent her this heavy chastisement as a rebuke and retribution for some previous transgression—"Are you come unto me to call my sin to

remembrance?" Many, we know, in the season of bereavement are apt to draw a similar unwarranted deduction—saying to themselves what Job's unfeeling friends reproachfully addressed to him, as they pointed to the miserable bed of dust and ashes on which he lay—"Such, surely, are the dwellings of the wicked; and this is the place of him who knows not God." But we may thus often misinterpret the reason and motive of the Divine procedure. Our Lord, in one of His great miracles—curing the blind man at the Temple gate—declared emphatically, in opposition to the false and gratuitous assumption of the Pharisees, that it was in consequence of no sin either of the sufferer or his parents that he had been doomed to grope his way in darkness at noontide, but, "that the works of God might be made manifest in him." Let us not, therefore, hastily surmise, when God at times sees fit to empty the chairs and hush the loved voices of our households, that some specific sin must have evoked that special judgment and drawn forth the arrow from the Almighty's quiver. We shall find in a subsequent page that at the very moment when the darkness of death was shadowing the home of Bethany, "Jesus loved Martha, Mary, and Lazarus."

We may farther learn from the incident before us, that no amount of good works or of active service in the cause of religion will exempt us from trial. This widow had rendered the greatest benefit which the Church of God at that age could receive, by affording shelter to its most valued servant and defender, the honored Prophet of Heaven. Yet she was smitten. Her generous pity and kindness to God's viceregent could not shield her from the assaults of affliction! It becomes us, whatever be the Divine dealings, never to ask with the voice of complaint and querulous upbraiding, "If the Lord is with us, why has all this befallen us?" Good deeds, lofty virtues, self-denying sacrifices, will not purchase for us immunity from His righteous ordination—that through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom. Whatever be our lot or portion, be it ours to "rejoice with trembling." The vessel best manned and equipped may strike on the sunken rock, as well as the lowest and most unseaworthy craft. No, God's most favored saints are often put in the foremost ranks of chastisement. Upon the most fruit-bearing trees of His garden He often uses His sharp pruning-knife. Trial, in its varied forms, has ever been employed by Him as a powerful means of leading to deeper convictions of sin, as well as a salutary quickener of spiritual graces. He knows what discipline is best fitted to draw the soul to Himself; and often does He show that none is so effectual as that which was employed in this home at Zarephath—snapping the ties which bind us to the creature—disuniting us from earthly, to bind us to heavenly things. Many can trace their first deep sense of sin—their first lively apprehension of Christ and of Divine realities—to the hour when their dwelling was rifled of its prized blessings. He breaks the heart in order to save the soul.

This, however, reminds us of what has already been noted, and which, as an ever-present reflection with the mourner, will often occur in these pages—how baffling and mysterious are many of God's providential dispensations. Amid all the homes of that region, who would have expected that the one to be so terribly smitten was that which had, for two years, kindly sheltered the exiled Prophet of Israel? Surely, we might think, if there is one dwelling more than another secure from the assaults of the dread invader, it will be that of the widow of Sarepta, and of the hope and solace of her declining years; who, if spared, might become an honored instrument in the defense and maintenance of the true religion. And yet, behold, the desire of her eyes and the delight of her heart taken away by a stroke!

Oftentimes are we perplexed and confounded by similar dealings; decayed scaffoldings, crumbling props remaining—and the strong and vigorous, the virtuous and useful, swept down in a moment! There is no key now to these dark dispensations. Many a weeping eye cannot read them through blinding tears. But the hour is coming when we shall read them—when they shall be luminous with love. "Men see not yet the bright light in the clouds;" "but it shall come to pass that at evening time it shall be light!" We may have to wait until we obtain entrance within the Gates; but then, at least, the legend will be subscribed—rather will the lips be attuned for the everlasting song—"We have known and believed the love that God has to us!"

Earth may not, as in the case of the widow of Phoenicia, give us back our dead—no prophet's voice can reanimate the silent ashes—no anguish of prayer recall the departed spirit. But we joyfully believe the day will yet dawn when we shall write under every mystic providence, "He has done all things well." Meanwhile let us rejoice, like Elijah, in the assurance that "the Lord reigns"—that all bereavements and chastisements are His appointments. "You" (the Prophet says, addressing his God in prayer)—"YOU" (the living Jehovah) "have brought this evil." Oh, comforting thought! enough to dry all tears and silence all murmurings—"Does disaster come to a city," to the cottage, to the palace—is there disaster which blights some unknown poor man's dwelling—is there disaster which clothes a nation in mourning, "unless the Lord has done it?" Amos 3:6 The narrative farther exhibits, what we have revealed in the case of many of the Divine dispensations—the energy and power of Prayer. Not when he supplicates, as he had previously done, that Heaven should seal up its rains and dews from a whole nation—not when afterwards, on Carmel, invoking defeat on Baal and his priests, is his prayer more earnest than now, in this lowly dwelling, when not the lives of thousands, but the life of one lowly child, is the subject of his intercession. He seems, indeed, to have felt, personally, deeply moved under this sudden bereavement. The strong, heroic, brave man could bear with equanimity any ills affecting himself, but he was stung to the quick under the imputation of his benefactress. He could not brook the allegation of bringing evil on the home of one who had opened her door to a friendless stranger. His prayer is an urgent appeal to God—(we had almost said a bold remonstrance)—as a just and merciful and righteous Being. "It cannot be, Lord," he seems to say; "You can not allow this reproach to descend on me and on Your great Name! You, who have made the widow's cause Your own, oh, recompense not thus, her kindness to me! Let not this heathen woman say, as she points to her childless home and buried treasure, 'Where is now your God?'"

We can imagine the Tishbite pacing up and down his little chamber in importunate, impassioned prayer. It was a mighty demand, indeed, for a mortal to make—a request that had no previous parallel in praying lips. It was nothing short of this—Victory over Death—the iron crown plucked from the head of the King of terrors. When Elijah does manifest faith, it is always of the noblest type. He would doubtless now revert to his life-motto—the first utterance of his prophetic mission—"JEHOVAH LIVES" Confiding in the "El Shaddai," he feels confident that He who provided him his brook at Cherith will restore this more sacred living brook which had been so suddenly dried in its earthly channel. Strong in faith, giving glory to God, he proceeds to the couch where the lifeless child lay. Once more he stands before us as delineated by James, "the righteous man," bearing the glorious testimony as to the "availing,"—the "much availing power"—of "effectual fervent prayer!"

Bereaved one, are your prayers in a similar hour left unanswered? Is your anguished cry rather, "Why these defeated supplications?"—the urgent plea not only left unheard, but responded to in the way you most dreaded and deprecated? Are you tempted to give way to the plaintive soliloquy—"Surely my way is hidden from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God?"—the cry of your crushed and broken heart in the well-known words of John Newton—

"Twas He who taught me thus to pray,

And He, I trust, has answered prayer;

But it has been in such a way,

As almost drove me to despair!

Yes, more, with His own hand He seemed

Intent to aggravate my woe;

Crossed all the fair designs I schemed,

Blasted my gourds and laid me low."

All we can say in reply is—"Be still and know that He is God." His thoughts are not your thoughts, nor His ways your ways. "A man devises his own ways; nevertheless, the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand." Would that we could believe that at times the denial of our prayers may be the best, the kindest, the really paternal answer to them; that when thwarted in our aspirations after what we think is for our good, we are tempted to pronounce the hasty verdict; we could trust the ALL-LOVING, to guide our steps and grant our petitions, not according to our finite and fallible wisdom, but according to the counsel of His sovereign but gracious will. I believe at times, even in this world, He discovers to us sooner or later the reason of apparently unowned supplications; bringing light out of darkness; and showing that, often in the midst of overwhelming domestic bereavements, there are undreamt-of blessings in reversion, which could not otherwise have been ours. "To think," says Lady Powerscourt, "that led by Him we are safe from everything. No evil shall ever touch us—evil at the end or evil on the way—all is paved with love." Yes, believe it. He answers prayer, not in our ways, but in His. He answers us, even though it may be, at times, "in the secret place of thunder!" (Psalms 81:7).

Finally, we have here a glimpse given us of the doctrine of the Resurrection. This was a truth dimly unfolded in Old Testament times. Its full revelation was reserved for Him who, under a more glorious economy, "abolished death and brought life and immortality to light." As the gladdening words sounded in the mother's ears, "See, your son lives!" not only was that widow herself taught that the God of Elijah had a power which no Baal ever had, in imparting life to the still ashes—reanimating the cold clay, and putting light into the rayless eyes; but it was a parable to the Jewish Church of that great gospel disclosure, that there is a day coming "when all that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear shall live." No, more; from the fact which is expressly recorded in the inspired narrative, that Elijah brought down the living child from the upper chamber into the house, "and delivered him to his mother," we have the precious thought suggested, under a significant figure, that in that glorious resurrection morning friends will be reunited to friends—there will be undying reunions of the departed in the Church of

the glorified; mothers restored to the embrace of children, and lost little ones given back to their parents. How will the happiness of that day of complete triumph be augmented and enhanced, as death-divided relatives, re-linked in bonds of purified earthly affection and love, will be able to exclaim to one another, "See my son! my parent! my brother! my beloved, long-lost child!—see, HE LIVES!"

01.03. The Death of an Only Son

THE DEATH OF AN ONLY SON

Luke 7:11-16

Soon afterwards He was on His way to a town called Nain. His disciples and a large crowd were traveling with Him. Just as He neared the gate of the town, a dead man was being carried out. He was his mother's only son, and she was a widow. A large crowd from the city was also with her. When the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her and said, "Don't cry." Then He came up and touched the open coffin, and the pallbearers stopped. And He said, "Young man, I tell you, get up!" The dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him to his mother. Then fear came over everyone, and they glorified God, saying, "A great prophet has risen among us," and "God has visited His people."

We have here another eclipse of young life in the land of Palestine. It is one that occurred not in Old Testament, but in gospel times—a memory hallowed and consecrated, too, by holier footsteps than those even of the great Elijah. On one of the descending slopes of Mount Tabor, in the vast plain of Esdraelon—the golden granary of the Holy Land and the battlefield of Hebrew history—the traveler still discovers the ruins of the city of NAIN. It is invested with imperishable interest from this one solitary but touching event, with which its name is associated in gospel story.

Jesus and His disciples, along with "many people," took this journey of twelve miles from the city of Capernaum; and as the shadows of evening were beginning to fall, they found themselves approaching the village by its one entrance on the slopes of the wooded mountain. Jewish cemeteries were always situated outside the walls of their towns, and the time of burial was at sunset. The coffin was carried on the shoulders, with the face exposed, until they came to the place of burial. Here the lid was nailed on the coffin, and the funeral rites were completed.

Funerals, to the least impressible, are affecting spectacles. None can fail to be solemnized as the mournful procession wends along the highway, or the street of the crowded city. But we often think how little uninformed wayfarers can gauge the depths of many such sorrows, or measure the yawning chasms in the hearts of those who are thus, in mute and pensive silence, passing by! The words of the sacred narrative touchingly describe to us such a burial scene. A funeral was seen emerging from the gate of Nain as the sun was setting. Bitter sobs and weeping from the midst of the crowd arrest the ear of Him whose mission it was to heal the broken-hearted. There was everything to aggravate the pangs of that lacerated heart, and make it the sorest of trials. The whole village had turned out to sympathize with the mourner. "A large crowd from the city was also with her."

But, in the deep agony of her grief, she stood alone. In more than one feature her case was identical with that we last considered. These tears of hers were not of yesterday. She could once tell of a happy home! The world to her had once been all sunshine. The exuberance of outer nature in her Hebrew hamlet, its summer fruits and purple clusters, had its reflection and

counterpart in her own joyous heart—itself a garner of cherished blessings. Her first, and, as she supposed, her most desolating blow came! The smile of gladness was all at once exchanged for the blight of bereavement. The desire of her eyes was taken away with a stroke. A thousand fond hopes and cherished dreams vanished in the twinkling of an eye, and were buried in that grave. She was left solitary, to toil on her pilgrimage path—"she was a widow." But in seasons of saddest trial God often gives supporting solaces. To this poor woman, amid her hours of sorrow, there was one object, like that in the home at Sarepta, still surviving, around whom her heart-strings were fondly entwined. The partner of her joys was gone; but he had left behind him a sacred legacy of affection! One little child remained, to cheer the lonely hearth of the widowed parent. Often, doubtless, did she clasp the treasured gift to her bosom; and as she dropped the silent tear over his cradle, or watched the innocent glee of childhood as he played by her side, would she love to trace in his countenance the image of him who was not! If the past was bitter, the future would have been darker, sadder still, but for this precious link that still bound her to life. Often, in her solitary moments, would she weave visions of happiness around the coming years of her boy, saying, with Lamech, "This one shall comfort us." In him every ulterior plan is wrapped up and concentrated; and the last thought, associated with life's close, is that of his hands closing her eyes, performing to her the final offices of affection, and bearing her to "the house appointed for all living."

How often are we brought to learn that our chief blessings may be removed just when we most need them! When was Jonah's gourd, already referred to, smitten and withered? Not when the evening breeze was fanning his brow, but "in the morning when the sun rose," and the suffocating heat beat on his fevered head. When, as we shall find in a future page, was Lazarus of Bethany taken away? Just when his sisters—when his Lord—when the Church—seemed as if they could least spare him.

One day a sudden sickness prostrates the widow's son on a couch of languishing. There may have seemed at first no cause for anxiety. It is but a passing cloud; no gloomy vision of anticipated evil dare cross for a moment that doating heart. Soon the young pulse and buoyant frame will be vigorous as ever.

Alas! the tale is soon told—that house, too, is darkened with the shadows of death—the last glimmering light in that desolate heart and dwelling is put out. He who, we may infer from the crowds which followed him to the grave, was all that a fond parent could wish him to be, lies lifeless in his chamber!

We can imagine (though we cannot attempt to describe) the succession of bitter hours the bereaved mother must have spent, previous to the time at which the sacred narrative reveals her first to view at the gate of her native town—the sorrowful night-watchings by the tossed and sleepless couch—the dread anxieties of suspense, vibrating alternately between hope and fear—the glad symptoms of revival; but these again only succeeded by the too faithful monitors of approaching dissolution. And then, when all was over—when left to herself to brood over the dream of bygone bliss and the wrecks of her happiness scattered around her—realizing the bitterness of that which, in her land and in all hearts, has passed into a proverb—the loss of "an only son;"—while the sympathy of neighbors and friends, each having some kindly word to speak of her boy, unsealed the well-springs of her affection anew, and brought fresh warm tear-drops to

her cheek. And now the tramp of the mournful crowd is heard pacing along the streets. In another brief hour, she will have to retrace her steps to a swept household, leaving the prop of her earthly existence laid low in "the long home."

They have reached the gate of the city—they have crossed its threshold. The gloomy walls of the cemetery may be already in view. But the Lord of life and the Abolisher of death is approaching! There was only ONE in the wide world who could dry that widow's tears and give her back her beloved. That ONE is in sight! To all appearance, it is but a motley crowd of wayfarers that are seen approaching from the opposite direction. They are coming along the Capernaum road, weary and worn and dust-covered, after the heat of a sultry summer's day. But, in the midst of them, there is a voice which can speak in tones of mingled authority and tenderness—"Leave your fatherless children; I will preserve them alive; and let your widows trust in Me."

JESUS approaches! He required no interpreter of the scene of sorrow—no messenger to carry the tidings of the loss sustained by that mother in Israel. "He needed not that any should testify of man, for He knew what was in man." Before He left, that morning, the shores of Gennesaret, well He foresaw, as the omniscient God, all the peculiarities in that case of sore trial. He had marked every throb of that breaking heart. He had predetermined and prearranged the apparently 'accidental meeting' at the village gate. And now, at the appointed moment, the dead man is borne in his coffin, as the Lord of the dead and the living draws near.

We need not dwell on the sequel. In other cases, the Savior's intervention and healing power are importunately solicited. There is a singular exception in the present instance. No voice pleads with Him to perform the miracle. The crowd are silent. The mourning widow is too deeply absorbed in her own grief to observe the presence of the Prophet of Nazareth. Besides, notwithstanding His other miraculous deeds, He had never yet raised the dead; so that even if she had known, or perhaps personally witnessed His ability to heal the sick and cure the diseased, she would never imagine He had power to reverse the irrevocable sentence, and unlock those gates of Hades, which for nine hundred years (since the time of Elisha) had been closed to all miracle.

Without parade or ostentation, the Divine Redeemer enters amid the crowd. But observe, it is to whisper, in the first instance, in the ear which most needed it, the balm-word of comfort, "Weep not." And even when the word of power is about to be uttered (that word which is to summon back a soul from the spirit-land), all is done in unobtrusive silence—in silence He touches the coffin. In silence He beckons to the bearers to stand still; and, as the two meeting crowds have now mingled into one—amid the same hush of impressive silence He sounds the omnipotent summons over the sheeted dead—"YOUNG MAN, ARISE!" Life's pulses begin again mysteriously to beat—well-known tones again meet a mother's ears. Oh, who would mar the touching simplicity of the inspired narrative by endeavoring to depict the burning tears of wonder, and love, and praise, which roll down these wasted, furrowed cheeks, as, in the simple words of the description—the very same with those of the former miracle—"they delivered him to his mother!"

We have heard of the joy occasioned by the sudden appearance of the sailor-boy in his native cottage, many a long year after she who had loved him best had thought of nothing but of her child in a watery grave, the wrecks of his vessel tossed on distant shores. We have heard of the soldier returning to his long-lost home, when his children were accustomed to talk of their father's grave in the far East, with the palm-trees and thick grass waving above it; and we may imagine the joy

when the sad dream of years was reversed, and he stood alive before them, locking them by turns in his embrace. What must have been the joy of this Hebrew mother when the new lease of a prized existence was granted by a gracious Savior, and as she returned, holding that hand she had never thought to clasp again on earth, exclaiming—"This my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found!"

Let us gather a few PRACTICAL TRUTHS and REFLECTIONS from this suggestive story.

I. We have here an attestation to the Savior's divinity.

We have other examples in Scripture of individuals raised from the dead. We have lately beheld Elijah, at Sarepta, raising another widow's son—we have Elisha raising the son of the Shunamite—Peter raising "the certain disciple named Tabitha." But all these cases were effected 'permissively'—by mere delegated power. These holy men stormed Death in his grim stronghold; but it was not with their own weapons. Their language was either, "Thus says the Lord," or else, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth." They ever disowned and repudiated the thought of any inherent ability over life—any usurpation of the Divine prerogative. They acted only as servants. But here there is no acknowledgment of derivative power. "As a son over His own house," Christ gives forth the mandate of uncontrolled Omnipotence, "Young man, I say unto you."

O blessed assurance! that that Being to whom I owe every blessing I enjoy—every hope for time and for eternity; who was nailed on the cross for me, and for me closed His eyes in the sleep of death—that He had infinite Godhead in mysterious union with suffering, sorrowing, woe-worn, death-stricken humanity and, now that He is upon the throne, and "all power is committed to Him both in heaven and in earth," that nothing can resist His commands, nothing baffle His behests and purposes. There is no evil but his power can ward off—there is no calamity but He can avert—if He pleases. The "I SAY UNTO YOU," He uttered over the coffin at Nain, is His omnific formula FOR all times and AT all times. "He speaks, and it is done!"

II. Let us learn the tenderness and compassion of Christ as Man.

It is striking to observe, in the more prominent events of our Lord's public ministry, how the manifestations of His Manhood and Godhead go together. There is generally a joint exhibition of majesty and tenderness, proclaiming that while He is God, He is yet the partaker of our nature.

It is the case here. We have just marked the unmistakable proofs that He who arrests that weeping crowd is indeed Divine! Omniscience brought Him there—the act of Omnipotence demonstrates His deity in the eyes of the beholders. But He is more than this. His look of compassion, His tear of sympathy, proclaim that in that same bosom where resides the might of Godhead there beats also all the tenderness of human affection. Observe, it was the sight of woe (the contemplation of human misery) which stirred to its depths that Heart of hearts. It would seem as if He could not look on earthly grief without that grief becoming His own. In the similar case of Lazarus, as we shall afterwards find, it was not the bitter thought of a lost and dead friend which unsealed the fountain of His own tears; for when He stood in the graveyard, He knew that, in a few moments, the victim of death would have his eyes rekindled with living luster. At Bethany (as here at Nain), it was simply the spectacle of those in suffering that made its irresistible appeal to His emotional nature. The Rod of human compassion touched the Rock of Ages, and the streams of tenderness gushed forth. He hears the widow's heartrending weeping in the midst of the mourners; and, as we

already noted—for it is worthy of observation—utters the soothing, sympathetic word, before He utters the Godlike mandate. Nor should we overlook the fact that it was only a word He uttered. This reveals an exquisite and touching feature in the Savior's humanity. It attests how intensely delicate and sensitive, as well as true, that humanity was. When we meet a mourner after a severe trial, we shrink from the meeting; glad, perhaps, when the sad and dreaded call of courtesy is over. There is a marked reserve in making a reference to the blank; or, if that reference is made, it is short—a studied brevity. The press of the hand often expresses what the lips shrink from uttering. In that touching picture we have of patriarchal grief, as a writer observes in commenting on this passage, Job's friends and mourners sat for seven days at his side, and not a syllable was spoken. It was so here with Jesus. He (even He) does not intrude with lengthened, commonplace condolence. With a tear in His eye, and a suppressed sob, all He says is, "Weep not."

Behold, then, the beautiful and touching sympathy of a fellow-mourner—"the Brother born for adversity." "When the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her!" We have seen that that weeping, forlorn woman had no lack of other sorrowing friends. Her case seemed to be matter of notoriety. Many went out to mingle their grief with hers. But the sympathy of all these could only go a certain way. They could not be expected to enter into the peculiarities of her woe. Human sympathy is, at best, imperfect; sometimes selfish, always finite and temporary. Not so the sympathy of Him who had just joined the funeral procession. He could say, as none else can, "I know your sorrows." The sympathy of the kindest friend on earth knows a limit—Jesus' sympathy knows none. Who can tell but, in that gentle utterance of tender feeling, and in the deep compassion which dictated it, the Son of Man, the Virgin-born, may have had in view another "Mother," whose hour of similar bereavement was now at hand, when His own death was to be "the sword" which was to "pierce her soul." "Weep not;"—that is often an unkind arrest put by man on the sacredness of human grief, as if it were unworthy to weep tears which Christ wept before us. But He (the Great Savior) who came to stem more fearful floods of sorrow, could, in His compassionate tenderness, speak His own calming word. That hour was a presage and foreshadow of a happier time, when, in a sorrowless world, "God shall wipe away ALL TEARS from off all faces."

Comforting in our seasons of trial to meditate upon this fellow-feeling of the Prince of Sufferers—that Divine compassion, in comparison with which the tenderest and best human sympathy is but as dust in the balance. The Savior and sympathizer of Nain is ever the same. He had compassion—He has compassion still. He who stopped the mourning procession on that summer's night, in the plains of Jezreel, still lives, and loves, and supports, and pities; and will continue to pity, until pity be no longer needed, in a world of light and joy—of purity and peace! "He will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax."

III. This leads us, once more—expanding the same thought—to note that the narrative before us is full of special comfort to the bereaved.

"WEEP NOT!" I repeat, He does not mean, by uttering that word, to forbid tears—He seems by it rather to say—"Do not shed tears by mistake. If you knew all the design and purpose I have in that bitter sorrow—that aching trial—you would chase these tears away. Give expression to no hasty surmises with regard to my doings."

Look at the scene here described. We read that those present at the funeral—the attendant crowd of mourners and spectators—"glorified God." Yes, and could we rend these heavens and ascend

up amid the heavenly worshipers—who knows but perhaps we might see there two glorified forms bending over the memories of that sunset hour at Nain—the Widow and her Son—telling, with tearless eyes, that it was that death-scene which had led them to their thrones and crowns!

God is ever saying to us, "Trust Me in the dark." There shall yet be a revelation of mercy and love in these your trials. That "Weep not" of Nain was intended to carry its message of solace and consolation to the myriad hearts of all time, crushed with their ever-varying sorrows—and more especially to those bearing their most cherished treasures to the custody of the tomb. He would proclaim to us, even now, that He has "power over death"—that the King of terrors must own the scepter of the King of kings. He prepares His whole Church, in this miracle, for singing the prophetic song—"O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory?" He gives to the world a pledge of the summons which will one day be addressed to its slumbering myriads—"Arise!" "Awake and sing, you who dwell in dust!" Nor is the simple statement here made with reference to the young man without its inferential meaning, "He delivered him to his mother." We may recur to it, although we have already alluded to its suggestiveness, in the narrative of Elijah's kindred miracle.

Jesus rested not with the mere summons to life; nor with beholding the young man raising himself up on his coffin and giving utterance to articulate sounds; but He takes him by the hand, and places it, like His great Prophet of Cherith, in that of the rejoicing parent! The first act, in both cases, is to restore the resuscitated dead to the hearts that mourned them, and to permit the resuming of the old joyous communion. In this, too, as in the former, may we not rehearse the same inference—borne out, too, by other Scripture statements and references? May it not lead us to cherish the joyful and delightful prospect of reunion with those we have loved? that those tender affections, nurtured and hallowed on earth, shall only be for a time interrupted by death, to be resumed in better and brighter worlds—where the pang of bereavement, and orphanage, and widowhood, shall no longer be either felt or feared! The great "ARISE!" which shall startle the sleeping dead (the sleepers in Jesus), will be followed by personal recognitions, restored fellowships—the old smiles lighting up the countenance, the voice, with its familiar tones, tuned and prepared for nobler services and loftier songs!

Meanwhile, let the bereaved and sorrowful bow with a calm un murmuring submission to the will of God—rejoicing in the present possession of the compassion of Jesus; and looking forward, with triumphant hearts, to that cloudless morning when "the sun" of earthly prosperity shall "no more go down, neither shall the moon withdraw itself"—but when (rejoined to death-divided friends, and with no tear to dim their eyes) "the Lord shall be their everlasting light, and the days of their mourning shall be ended."

01.04. The Early Death of an Only Daughter

THE EARLY DEATH OF AN ONLY DAUGHTER

Luke 8:41-42, Luke 8:49-56

And now a man named Jairus, a leader of the local synagogue, came and fell down at Jesus' feet, begging him to come home with him. His only child was dying, a little girl twelve years old. As Jesus went with him, he was surrounded by the crowds.

While he was still speaking to her, a messenger arrived from Jairus' home with the message, "Your little girl is dead! There's no use troubling the Teacher now." But when Jesus heard what had happened, he said to Jairus, "Don't be afraid. Just trust me, and she will be all right." When they arrived at the house, Jesus wouldn't let anyone go in with him except Peter, James, John, and the little girl's father and mother. The house was filled with people weeping and wailing, but he said, "Stop the weeping! She isn't dead; she is only asleep." But the crowd laughed at him because they all knew she had died. Then Jesus took her by the hand and said in a loud voice, "Get up, my child!" And at that moment her life returned, and she immediately stood up! Then Jesus told them to give her something to eat. Her parents were overwhelmed, but Jesus insisted that they not tell anyone what had happened. An only daughter!—the most sacred and hallowed link that can bind heart to heart—the theme of poetry's tenderest epics, lyrics, elegies—Can such be included in the record of early departures—the calendar of "early graves?" Alas! too true, as is the experience of ten thousand sorrowing parents. It is so in the touching incident we are now to consider. Death is here described as entering another home of the Gospel era, and evoking the wail of desolated mourners.

But, the Prince and Lord of Life draws near. He storms the Invader in his own citadel, compels him to relinquish his prey; and to every bosom in all time thus rudely rifled, bequeaths consolatory words and lessons.

Let us first rehearse the narrative, and then endeavor to gather up some of the more solemn and comforting truths which that narrative enforces.

We have no farther light thrown in Gospel story on the principal personage in this scene. He was Ruler of the synagogue of CAPERNAUM—supposed to be one of those "elders of the Jews" we find coming in a body or deputation to intercede with Jesus in behalf of the Centurion's servant, saying, that "he was worthy for whom He should do this, for he loves our nation, and he has built us a synagogue." This pious Israelite had urged his suit successfully for another—the slave of a Gentile soldier, who had been stretched on a couch of sickness, "ready to die." The Divine Philanthropist had listened to the pleadings of faith and gratitude, and immediately accompanied him in the direction of that soldier's abode. But a very different case now engrosses this Ruler's thoughts—a very different sorrow weighs down his own heart. The silent Messenger is now standing at his own door-step! An only daughter gladdened his home. She had arrived, too, just at that age when a father's heartstrings are bound fastest and firmest around his child's soul. With

her had been doubtless interwoven every thought of the future—she was the pride of the family; the prop of the present; the promised comforter of her parents' old age. Often perhaps, in the midst of other trials, they would glance at the loving spirit at their side, assured of one abiding stay and solace. But health and strength, youth and intelligence, are unable to exclude the sleepless foe of human happiness. The darkest of shadows are falling around that dwelling!

We have not detailed to us, as in other cases recorded in sacred story, the circumstantial of that hour of anxiety and sorrow; whether disease had crept imperceptibly upon her—the King of terrors coming with noiseless step—velvet footfall—the candle of decaying life burning down slowly until it reached its socket; or whether, with appalling suddenness, the arrow had sped—the sun, which perhaps that morning rose on a cheerful home, setting over the valley of death amid weeping clouds. All the entry we have in the inspired record is, "She lay dying." She had reached that terrible crisis-hour when hope's last glimmerings were being extinguished—the last tides of life were slowly ebbing. Can nothing be done to arrest the arrow in its course—to stay that sun from so premature a setting? The anguished father thinks of the only ONE voice which can say, "Sun, stand still!"

"Can that same Jesus" (he might think to himself), "who cured a humble slave, who gave back to a fond master the life of a faithful servant—can He not (will He not) pity 'one of the lost sheep of the house of Israel?' If I rush to Him in this hour of my sorrow, will He deny me His compassionate love, and the exercise of His wondrous power?"

There is no time for delay. With fleet footsteps he betakes himself to the Prophet of Galilee, and in an agony of prayer beseeches Him to follow him to his dwelling. The Savior complies—accompanied by a promiscuous crowd, among whom deeper and holier feelings and sympathies mingle with vain curiosity. An incident, meanwhile, takes place by the way, which for a time impedes His progress. A woman who had suffered from severe bleeding for twelve years, steals unobserved through the thronging crowd, touches the blue fringe of the Lord's garment, and receives an instantaneous cure. But instead of passing, as we might expect, with all haste to the more urgent case, Jesus pauses and dwells on this intermediate one. He summons into His presence the subject of His healing power, in order that He may manifest to others the victory of faith, and utter in her own ear words of encouragement and peace.

Hard, unseasonable interruption, we are apt to think! Each moment was precious to that trembling parent. The sand-glass of that loved one's young life was hurrying to its last grain. He might have reached her in time, had it not been for this. But the likelihood is that the golden opportunity is past and gone—these few minutes' delay have cost the father his child—locked her fast in a sleep too deep to be disturbed! And yet, we may well believe, there were gracious purposes in the delay, as there ever are in much which our blindness is apt to regard as untoward and unpropitious. The smaller miracle—the intermediate cure—would prepare the crowd for receiving the greater one. Above all, it would strengthen and confirm the faith of the witnessing parent—lead him to hope against hope, and in the extremity of his anguish, make him "strong in faith, giving glory to God." We hear from his lips no fretful and impatient utterances—no insinuations against his Lord, or against the other suppliant, regarding the postponement. Meekly he waits the Redeemer's time and will; and before long he shall have the promise fulfilled in his experience—"The Lord is good to those who wait for Him, to the soul that seeks Him." "It is good for a man that he both hope and

quietly wait for the salvation of God." BUT just at the moment when faith has got its pledge of Divine power—when the procession is again in motion, and joyous visions of the past are beginning to people the future, messengers from his homestead are the bearers of heavy tidings—"Your daughter is dead, trouble not the Master!" "Fatigue not (as the word means) that weary, toil-worn Savior—add not to His journey or exhaustion. Let Him have the rest He so much requires; His presence could be of no avail now, for death has put his impressive, irrevocable seal on these lips."

Ah! bitter news! Just when hope was in the ascendant—when the future was beginning again to have its rainbow hues spanning a dark sky—these tints melt and merge into a deeper darkness than before. The torch is quenched. The great dreaded blight of existence has passed over the parent's heart!

Now is the time for Jesus' utterances of comfort; for now was the moment when doubt and misgiving were most likely to rise and eclipse the hitherto unwavering trust. Now was the time for those harsh thoughts of rebellious nature, we have already hinted at, which so often, at such seasons, overmaster our nobler feelings. "If it had been but a few moments sooner, my child might have been spared! If the Lord had only deferred the performance of that other act of love until He had left my threshold, I might still have had my beloved daughter at my side! It was these moments of delay that bereft me of my household treasure! By stopping to give peace to one sufferer, He has done so at the sacrifice of all that most fondly bound me to earth!"

If these, and thoughts like these, were about to arise, Christ in mercy interposes. We read, "Jesus answered" (not that Jairus outspoke his own feelings, but He who reads the secret heart answered to what was passing in the heaving depths of that soul)—"Hush! hush!" He seems to say, "do not allow these thoughts to arise in your heart—dismiss all such unworthy doubts." "Be not afraid—only believe." And now He has reached the house. The trappings and outward pageantry of death too truthfully verify the tidings of the messengers. In accordance with Oriental custom, hired mourners and hired minstrels were already filling that silent chamber with dirges—while with these mingled the deeper and truer wailings of the smitten hearts.

"Give place!" said Christ, as in a tone of authority He rebuked these vehement demonstrations of mimic sorrow—"Why make this ado and weep? The girl is not dead, but SLEEPS." An enigmatical expression to the tumultuous mob around, but to the father it was the renewal and repetition under a lovely figure of the former pacifying utterance, "Be not afraid, only believe." The word "dead"—the utterance of the human messengers, too well calculated to annihilate the last spark of hope—is replaced by the rekindling words, "She sleeps." Man has put the terrible extinguisher on that lamp. But Jesus says, "Fear not." What is that message of death, when I, the Lord of life, have been summoned by you? You have seen My power on a suffering woman—'only believe, and I will show you greater things than these!' The irreverent thronging crowd is kept outside. The mimic mourners are all excluded. His three favored disciples (afterwards the witnesses of His transfiguration on the Mount and of His agony in the garden) are alone allowed to enter the chamber sacred of sorrow. In silent emotion the two parents are bending over their withered flower. But so also is He who gave it—who planted it—who plucked it—and who is to give it back again. In the might of His own omnipotence—in His own name (without invoking, like His prophets or apostles under similar circumstances, any higher power), death is summoned to yield his victim.

"He took the girl by the hand, and said unto her, Talitha cum—I say unto you, Arise." The sleeper awoke! The prostrate lily raises its drooping head, and sheds once more its fragrance in that joyous home! That happy Israelite might well take up the words of his great ancestor, which he had so often read in the synagogue service, but perhaps without being ever before touched by them—"You have turned my mourning into dancing; You have put off my sackcloth and girded me with gladness, to the end that my glory may give praise to You, and not be silent. O Lord, my God, I will give thanks unto You forever."

Let us ponder one or two PRACTICAL LESSONS with which this scene and passage are replete.

I. The first lesson we may gather from it is the very general and too obvious one that all are exposed to domestic bereavement.

It may seem unkind to break the trance of earthly bliss by referring to the possibility, far less the certainty, of trial. And yet it is needful, ever and anon, solemnly to repeat the warning that you and yours "will not live always."

If God has hitherto put upon your household the exempting mark—if the destroying angel has passed by your door unscathed—if you have no vacant chair at your home-hearth, no yawning chasm in your heart of hearts—you are the exception, not the rule. God knows we have no gloomy pleasure in being prophets of evil. It is a poor gospel to dwell on harrowing thoughts of death—the shroud—the grave! But we would take these as preachers to enforce the lesson daily taught us, "you be also ready!"—that sooner or later, each one of us, parents and children, will be brought to learn the solemn truth, "I am about to die." And if there be one who peruses these pages, who, like the minstrels of whom we have been speaking, is ready to have a smile on his lips, and to "laugh to scorn" a trite commonplace which every one knows and many care not to hear—if youth in its strength, or manhood in its prime, is saying inwardly, "No fear of me," "My mountain is standing strong"—we would say with deep solemnity, "You fool, this night your soul may be required of you!"

II. We learn from this passage, that we need trials to bring us near to God.

It was his child's sickness that drove Jairus to the feet of Jesus. But for that home-trial, his faith would never have been exercised, nor his love and gratitude evoked. While in health and prosperity, we are apt to take God's gifts as matters of course. It is not until the storm rises, that with these atheist hearts of ours (like the heathen sailors in Jonah's vessel), we fall upon our knees and feel that our only safety is in Him "who rules the raging of the seas." Yes! when God makes breaches in our households—when He brings home to us the truth that our existence, and the existence of our children, is a perpetual miracle—when we discover that those little lives, Pillars in our households, which we have vainly thought were pillars of iron, turn out to be pillars of dust—when the solid alabaster discovers itself to be the melting snow-wreath—then are we driven to discover what is the alone imperishable Portion!

If God is visiting you now with the deep experience of trial, it is that He may speak home to you. Never does He speak so gently, so wisely, so loudly, so solemnly—as when He asserts His right to take away what He originally gave. See, in the text, the unbelieving, laughing, mocking crowd, are disqualified to hear Jesus. They have quickly turned from their mimic sorrow to heartless mirth; simulators—actors—they are thrust out of that Holy Presence. But the stricken parents are taken

into the favored circle. They gaze upwards from the face of the dead on Him who is "fairer than the children of men." In such a Presence unbelief is hushed, and faith is ready to hear "what God the Lord has to say unto their souls."

III. Let us learn from the incident before us, as we noted in the preceding chapter in the case of Elijah and the widow's son—the comfort of prayer in the hour of sickness and death. This Ruler, we read, "fell at Jesus' feet, and pleaded with Him greatly, saying, My little daughter lies at the point of death; I beg You, come and lay Your hands on her—that she may be healed!"

Trial drove Jairus also in his hour of dreaded bereavement to prayer, and, as in the case of the illustrious Prophet, "the effectual fervent prayer of this righteous man availed much." The same blessed refuge is open for us in times of sickness. When our friends or our children are stretched on beds of suffering and death, we take their cases to God, and plead with Him in their behalf at the mercy-seat. We must not indeed dream that our prayers (as they were in the case of the Jewish ruler) must necessarily be answered, and that at our earthly bidding a miracle should follow. This would be presumption, not faith; this would be to usurp the sovereignty of God—to substitute our own wisdom for His—it would be to make our will and not His, paramount. If we had only to speak and it was accomplished, it would make man into God, and degrade God to the level of man. It would be to dishonor the Almighty—making Him the servant of the creature—not the creature waiting on in loving trustfulness as the servant of the Creator. Far, far better is it for the lowly suppliant to endorse every petition with the words, "Father, not my will, but Yours be done." And yet, let us remember for our comfort, as we had occasion also to remark in the Sarepta narrative, that prayers at a deathbed (apparently unanswered) are not in vain. They may smooth the death-pillow. They may remove from it its thorns, and put the promises of Christ in their stead. They may lead sorrowing survivors to lowly resignation, and disarm earthly reflections of their poignant sting. Yes! do not forget this, when seasons of family trial overtake you—when the best of earthly means and instrumentality prove inefficacious, and those near and dear to you are hovering on the confines of the grave. Do not sit down wringing your hands in despair, as if Jehovah were, like Baal, asleep or on a journey, and his ear deaf, when you most need His intervention. Arise, call upon your God! Plead the assurance that, if in accordance with that better Will and Wisdom, "the prayer of faith SHALL save the sick." The Patriarch David of old, is a rebuke in this respect to the lack of faith in many a Christian parent now. For seven whole days was he stretched on the bare earth importunate for his infant's life. "Who can tell," said he, "whether God may be gracious to me that my child may live?" Not until the little spark had fled, and the sad accents fell on his ear, "Your child is dead," did the prayer melt into the bright hope full of immortality.

IV. Learn the nature of real sorrow.

Jesus does not forbid tears. They are holy things consecrated by Incarnate tenderness. Let the world, if they may, condemn it as unmanly to grieve—or worse, let them seek oblivion for their trials in the giddy round of its pleasures and follies, and make the grave of their dead "the land of forgetfulness." Jesus encourages no such cold and stern stoicism. But, on the other hand, neither does He countenance overmuch sorrow. True Christian grief is calm, tranquil, chastened. The noisy, wailing, mimic crowd are spurned from the scene. If they had been the tears of affection, He would have held them as sacred; but being the hollow echoes of unfeeling hearts, He says, "Give

place; why make this ado and weep?"

Jesus, on every occasion in His public ministry stamps with His abhorrence all pretense. He dislikes unreality, what is made to appear gold which is tinsel—whether it be simulated joy, or simulated piety, or simulated tears. That is a poor sorrow which expends itself in funeral trappings—which is measured by doleful looks, and passionate words, and mourning weeds. True grief is not like the stream which murmurs and frets because it passes over a shallow bed—that which is deepest makes least noise. Inconsolable sorrow is unbecoming the Christian. To abandon one's self to sullen gloom, moping melancholy and discontent, is sadly to miss and mistake the great design of trial. God sends it to wake us up to a sense of life's realities—not to fold our hands, but to be more in earnest than ever in our work and warfare. Oh! when He sees fit to enter our households, and, as the Great Proprietor of life, to resume His own, be it ours to acknowledge His right and prerogative to recall the grant.

"The Lord loves a cheerful giver." Although it was in a trial of which God forbid either you or I should ever know the bitterness, I know not in all Scripture a more touching picture of this silent acquiescence in God's sovereign will, than we have in the case of a parent who had seen his two worthless children smitten down before his eyes, and yet of whom we only read that "AARON HELD HIS PEACE."

V. Finally, let us learn from this passage that Christ is the Great Vanquisher of death.

Up to this period of His public ministry, with the exception of the miracle at Nain just considered, we mainly, if not exclusively, trace His footsteps of mercy and power as the Healer of diseases—the savior of the body—the Lord of nature—the Ruler of the Spirit. We see Pain crouching importunate at His feet; Penitence creeping meekly at His side bedewing Him with tears; Sickness at His summons taking wings and fleeing away. But He here again breaks the chains of Death. He gathers in another sheaf of that mighty Harvest of life, of which the angels are to be the Reapers in the Resurrection morning.

Note a comforting assurance He gives us—first, regarding the Dying, and second, regarding the Dead.

(1.) He tells us regarding every deathbed—that the thread of existence is in His hands—that He quickens and restores whom He will—that unto Him as "God the Lord, belong the issues of life—and death."

"Your daughter is dead" (said bold human unbelief)—"trouble not the Master." But the message is premature. He has inverted the sand-glass. He has made the shadow, as in Hezekiah's dial, to go back!

Glorious assurance! Our lives and the lives of all near and dear to us are in His keeping. It is He who sends the Angel-messenger. It is He who marks every tree in the forest—plucks every lily in the garden. My health and sickness, my joys and sorrows, my friends, my children, are in the hands of the CHRIST OF CALVARY! We, in our blind unbelief, may regard Death as some arbitrary tyrant lording it, with iron scepter, over hapless victims. But the Gospel teaches a nobler philosophy. It tells of One in heaven who has in His hands "the keys of the grave and of death," and who, at the time He sees best, but not one moment sooner, "turns man to destruction, and

says, Return to dust—you children of men!"

(2.) He gives us a comforting word regarding the DEAD.

Christian, He says of your dead (the dead in Christ—true Christians), "be not afraid, only believe."
"Weep not—she is not dead, but sleeps!"

Stand in thought beside the great Luther, as we see him stooping first over the deathbed of his beloved daughter, Magdalene, and then follow him in the mournful sequel of that life-sorrow. "Gracious God," he exclaims, "if it be Your will to take her hence, I am content to know that she will be with You...I would gladly keep my child, for she is very dear to me, if our Lord God would leave her with me. But His will be done. To her nothing better can happen...You dear one," he exclaimed through his tears when all was over, and he gazed upon the coffin, "how well it is with you!...You shall rise and shine like a star, yes, like the sun...You should be pleased," he added to the bystanders who had come to render the last offices of affection, "I have sent a saint to heaven." As they returned from the funeral, "My daughter," he said, "is now provided for, both in body and soul. We Christians have nothing to complain of. We know it must be so. We are more sure of eternal life than anything else. For God, who has promised it to us for His dear Son's sake, can never lie." And, yet once more, in his silent darkened home—"Ichabod,"—from which the glory had departed—he thus writes a cherished friend—"I from my utmost heart crave that to me and all mine, to you also and all dear to us, may be given a like hour of departure; that is truly to fall asleep in the Lord."

It has been often noted that there is a beautiful and striking progression in our Lord's three miraculous raisings from the dead. This instance, we have been considering, was the first in point of time. The daughter of Jairus was raised immediately after death had taken place, when the body was still laid on its death-couch. Her soul had but taken its flight to the spirit-world, when the angels that bore it away were summoned to restore it. The second, in order of time, was the raising of the son of the widow of Nain. Death, as we then saw, had achieved a longer triumph. The customary time for lamentation had intervened; he was being borne to the sepulchral grotto when the voice of Deity sounded over his coffin. The third and last of this class of miracles, was the raising of Lazarus at Bethany. Death had there attained a still more signal mastery. The funeral rites were over—four days had these lips been sealed before the life-giving and life-restoring word was uttered. There is ONE OTHER gigantic step in this progression. "The hour is coming when all who are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and shall come forth!" In the first case we have cited from our present narrative, the time elapsing between the dismissal of the spirit and its recall was measured by moments, the second case by hours, the third by days; the fourth is measured by ages—centuries—millenniums! But what of that? What though we speak of the tomb as the "long home," and death as the long sleep? By Him (with whom a thousand years is as one day) that precious, because redeemed dust, shall in some mysterious way be restored. "I will ransom them," He says as He looks forward through the vista of ages to this glorious consummation—"I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. O death, I will be your plague—O grave, I will be your destruction." Blessed, thrice blessed time! As in this house of Jairus, it was his own loved daughter who, in form and feature, was again before them—as we beheld the widows both of Sarepta and Nain gazing on the unaltered countenances of their own cherished sons—as we shall before long find the sisters of Lazarus seeing in him who

came forth from the grave, no alien form strangely altered—but the brother of their hearts, so, we believe, on that wondrous morning of immortality, shall the beloved on earth wear their old familiar smiles and loving looks—retain their personal identity.

No, further, we believe that the affections which hallowed homesteads on earth shall not be dulled, quenched, annihilated—but rather ennobled and purified. Brothers, sisters, parents, children, shall be linked once more in the fond ties and memories of earth, gathering in loving groups around the living fountains of waters, and singing together the twofold anthem of Providence and Grace—"the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb!"

If we descend for a moment from these lofty contemplations, it is to utter a brief word, in conclusion, to those who know nothing of such glorious hopes—who are locked in the slumbers of a far sadder death. Yes! there is a more dreaded sleep and death than that of the grave! They are rather to be envied who have "fallen asleep" in Jesus. Faith, in her noblest musings, would not weep them back from their crowns, and deprive them of their bliss! But they are to be pitied who are still slumbering on in the deep sepulchral stillness of spiritual death. With deep solemnity let the monition be heard, "Awake you that sleep, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you life!" When we are called, as at times we are, to hear of deathbeds in every phase of existence—in every stage of the chequered journey—manhood in the sere and yellow leaf—youth in its prime—childhood in its innocence—infancy in its tenderest bud; or when these truths come home to us as arrows feathered from our own bosoms—solemn thoughts welling up from the very deeps of our being—I know not what will make a man in earnest if such impressive lessons fail to do so! Reader! If God were to meet you tonight, could you meet Him? Would you be ready for the opened books and the Great day of judgment? Nothing—nothing will be of any avail at that hour but the life of faith in the Son of God; not the wretched peradventure of a deathbed repentance, but an honest, loving, cordial closing NOW, with that great salvation.

It is but a slender thread that binds us, or our children, to existence; every moment, truly there is but a step between us and death! Oh, that we may so live, and seek that our children may so live, that that step may be regarded as a step between us and glory. And that, when the final summons comes, it may be—what weeping friends cannot see—the chariots of salvation and the horses of fire, waiting to bear us to Paradise!

01.05. The Grave of an Only Brother

THE GRAVE OF AN ONLY BROTHER

John 11:11-14

He told them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I'm on My way to wake him up." Then the disciples said to Him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will get well." Jesus, however, was speaking about his death, but they thought He was speaking about natural sleep. So Jesus then told them plainly, "Lazarus has died."

"And many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary to comfort them concerning their brother."—John 11:19 "Jesus said unto her, Your brother shall rise again."—John 11:23 The early death of an only Brother may well share the sacredness of that spoken of in the former chapters. This whole narrative has a halo of singular interest surrounding it. Perhaps there is no one single resort in the Savior's Divine pilgrimage on which sanctified affection loves so fondly to dwell as on the home and village of BETHANY. Many has been the weary footstep and tearful eye that has hastened in thought there—"gone to the grave of Lazarus to weep there!" With every reasonable probability we may infer, from the poignant sorrow of the twin hearts that were so unexpectedly broken, that he was, as just stated, a beloved and lamented only brother—a sacred, solitary prop around which their tenderest affections were entwined.

Included too, as he was, in the love which the Divine Savior bore to the household (for "Jesus loved Lazarus"), it may be that his spirit had been cast into much the same human mold as that of his beloved Lord; and that the friendship of Jesus for him had been formed on the same principles on which friendships are formed still—a similarity of disposition, some mental and moral resemblances and idiosyncrasies. They were like-minded so far as fallible nature and the nature of a stainless humanity could be assimilated. We can think of him as gentle, retiring, amiable, forgiving, heavenly-minded—an imperfect and shadowy, it may be, but still a faithful reflection and transcript of Incarnate Loveliness. May we not venture to use regarding him his Lord's eulogy on another, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit?" As yet the home of Bethany is all happiness. The burial-ground has been untraversed since, probably years before, the dust of one, or perhaps both parents had been committed to the sepulcher. Death had long left the inhabitants an unbroken circle. Can it be that the unwelcome intruder is so near at hand?—that their now joyous dwelling is so soon to echo to the wail of lamentation? We imagine it but lately visited by Jesus. In a little while the dart has sped—the sacredness of a Divine friendship is no guarantee against the fatal missile. The sisters are bowed in the agony of their worst bereavement—the pride of their existence is laid low—"Lazarus is dead!" The often-repeated lesson of these pages once more obtrudes itself—the uncertainty of earth's best joys and purest happiness—that the brightest sunshine is often the precursor of a dark cloud.

It is the touching record of the inspired historian in narrating Abraham's heaviest trial—"after these things, God tested Abraham." After what things? After a season of rich blessings, gilding a future

with glad hopes. He would teach us—while we are glad of our gourds—not to be "exceeding glad"—not to nestle here as if we were to "live always," but rather, as we are perched on our summer boughs, to be ready at His bidding to soar away, and leave behind us what most we prize.

"LAZARUS IS DEAD!" What! Lazarus—the head and stay and comfort of two helpless females? The joy and solace of a common orphanhood—a brother evidently made and born for their adversities? What! Lazarus, whom Jesus tenderly loved? How much, even to his Lord, will be buried in that early grave! We might well have expected, if there be one homestead in all Palestine guarded by the overshadowing wings of angels to debar the entrance of the last enemy, whose inhabitants may pillow their heads night after night in the confident assurance of immunity from trial—it must surely be that beloved resort—that "arbor in His hill Difficulty," where the God-man delighted often to pause and refresh His weary body and aching mind. Will not Omnipotence have set its mark, as of old, on the doorposts and lintels of that consecrated dwelling, so that the destroyer, in going his rounds elsewhere, may pass by it unscathed? How, too, can the infant Church spare him? The aged Simeon, or Anna, we dare not wish to detain. Burdened with years and infirmities, after having obtained a glimpse of their Lord and Savior—let them depart in peace and receive their crowns. But one in the morning vigor of life—one so beautifully combining natural amiability with Christian grace—one who was pre-eminently the friend of Jesus—and that word profoundly suggestive of all that was lovely in a disciple's character. Death may visit other homes in that sequestered village, and spread desolation in other hearts—but surely the Church's Lord will not allow so valued a support prematurely to fall! And yet, it is even so! The mysterious summons has come!—the most honored home on earth has been crudely rifled!—the most loving of hearts have been cruelly torn; and inscrutable is the dealing, for "Lazarus is dead!"

"He, the young, the strong, who cherished

Noble longings for the strife,

By the roadside fell, and perished

On the threshold march of life!"

"Your way is in the sea, and Your path in the great waters, and Your footsteps are not known!" (Psalms 77:19). But let us be still! The Savior, indeed, does not now lead us forth amid the scene of our trial, as He did the bereft sisters, to unravel the mysteries of His providence, and to show glory to God redounding from the darkest of His dispensations. To us the grand sequel is reserved for eternity. The grand development of the Divine plan will not be fully accomplished until then; faith must meanwhile rest satisfied with what is baffling to sight and sense. There is an undeveloped future in all God's dealings. There is an unseen "why and wherefore" which cannot be answered here. Our befitting attitude and language now is that of simple confidingness—"Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is right?" Listening to one of these Bethany sayings, whose meaning will be interpreted in a brighter world by Him who uttered it in the days of His flesh—"Did I not say unto you—that if you would believe, you would see the glory of God?" Our duty, meanwhile, is that of children, simply to trust the faithfulness of a God whose purposes of love we often fail to discover. All will be seen at last to have been not only for the best, but really the best. Dark clouds will be fringed with mercy. What are now "perplexing dispensations" will be acknowledged as wondrous parts of a great connected whole—the wheel within wheel of that

complex machinery by which "all things" (yes, ALL things) are working together for good.

"Lazarus is dead!" The choicest tree in the earthly Eden may have succumbed to the blast. Some great light in the moral skies may have been extinguished. Some 'Great Heart' may have fallen on the very eve of life's battle, before opportunity were given to prove his armor, and help to share the moral victory over earth's baseness and sufferings and wrong. But God can do without human agency! His Church can be preserved though no Moses be spared to conduct Israel over Jordan—and no Lazarus to tell the story of his Savior's grace and love, when other disciples have forsaken Him and fled.

We may be calling, in our blind unbelief, as we point to some ruined fabric of earthly bliss—some tomb which has become the grave of our fondest affections and dearest hopes—"Shall the dust praise You? shall it declare your Truth?" Believe! believe! God will not give us back our dead as He did to the Bethany sisters—but He will not deprive us of anything we have—or allow one garnered treasure to be removed—except for His own glory and our good. Now it is our province to believe it—in Heaven we shall know it. Before the sapphire throne we shall see that not one unnecessary thorn has been allowed to pierce our feet—or one needless sorrow to visit our dwelling—or one unnecessary tear to dim our eye.

Beautifully does a distinguished French orator and philosopher say—"We are all of us like the weavers of the Gobelins, who, following out the pattern of an unknown artist, endeavor to match the threads of colors on the wrong side, and do not see the result of their labor. It is only when the pattern is complete, that they can admire at their ease these lovely flowers and figures—these splendid pictures worthy of the palaces of kings. So it is with us. We work, we suffer, and we see neither the end nor the fruit. But God sees it—and when He releases us from our task, He will disclose to our wondering gaze what He, the great Artist, everywhere present and invisible, has woven out of those toils that now seem so sterile—and He will then deign to hang up in His palace of gold, the flimsy web that we have spun." Be it ours to have Jesus with us and Jesus for us in all our afflictions. In the season of prosperity, if our homes and hearts be gladdened with His footstep, then, when prosperity is withdrawn, and is succeeded by the dark and cloudy day, we shall know, like Martha and Mary, where to rush in our hours of bitter sorrow—listening from His glorified lips on the throne to those same exalted themes of consolation which, for eighteen hundred years, have to myriad, myriad mourners been like oil thrown on the troubled sea. Jesus is with us!—"The Master has come!"—His presence will extract sorrow from the bitterest cup, and make, as He did at Bethany—a very home of bereavement and a burial scene to be "hallowed ground!"

01.06. The Early Grave of a King

THE EARLY GRAVE OF A KING

"The righteous is taken away from the evil to come. He shall enter into peace—they shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness." Isaiah 57:1-2

"The righteous man perishes, and no one lays it to heart; devout men are taken away, while no one understands. For the righteous man is taken away from calamity; he enters into peace; they rest in their beds who walk in their uprightness." Isaiah 57:1-2 The early grave is not confined to any rank or station. "Both the small and the great are there" (Job 3:19). While "behold the Lord, the Lord Almighty takes away from Jerusalem and from Judah the stay and the staff,...the prophet and the prudent and the ancient"—He ever and anon rings the solemn warning-bell within palace halls—"Put not your trust in princes, nor in any man, in whom there is no help. When they breathe their last breath, they return to the ground. On that day their plans come to an end." (Psalms 146:3-4). On these last words the verse which heads this chapter is a significant comment. Young King Josiah, who ascended the throne of Judah at the tender age of eight, is considered, by most reliable commentators, to be "the Righteous one" here specially referred to. In harmony with Isaiah's prophetic instinct and anticipation, the youthful monarch proved himself to be the most godly of his royal race. Surely, no nobler eulogy could have been written than this—"Like unto him there was no king before him, who turned to the Lord with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might,...neither after him arose there any like him" (2 Kings 23:35). At the age of sixteen he was brought, by means of the perusal of a copy of the Divine Law, under the fervid power of personal piety—and from that day onwards, during a memorable decade, he became priest and king in one. He commenced as an iconoclast, sweeping away from mountain and grove and valley every vestige and memorial of the idolatries sanctioned and encouraged by his apostate predecessors, and restored the purity of the Temple-worship—"repairing the breaches of the House." His acts of public devotion culminated in what may well be considered the eventful day of his reign, when, at the age of eighteen, he summoned his people to a great convocation in Jerusalem. In more than its former pomp and impressiveness, the old feast of the Passover was kept—"all Israel," as in former days, publicly renewing their covenant to their fathers' God. The longing prayer of the hidden 'seven thousand' seemed to have obtained a gracious answer—"Will You not revive us again, that Your people may rejoice in You?" (Psalms 85:6).

But, strange, mysterious dispensation! just when in the flower of his youth, and when his people were prospering in peace and piety under his kindhearted scepter, he is brought wounded and bleeding from the battlefield at Hadadrimmon, where he had gone to stop the march of Pharaoh—and he dies in his chariot before he can reach his palace in Jerusalem. It attests the depth and intensity of the national grief, that a funeral dirge, composed by Jeremiah, was, for many years after, sung on the spot where he received the fatal wound—and the best choristers of Israel tendered annually their services in rendering the mournful strains.

We get but a snatch of these in the plaintive dirge of the prophet who wrote them—"Ah, my brother!...ah!, lord!—or, ah, his glory!" (Jeremiah 22:18). That it must, however, have been a scene and occasion of no common sorrow is farther evidenced when Zechariah uses it as a figure to describe the great future mourning and repentance of the Jews—"In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon." (Zechariah 12:11). "The righteous," says Isaiah (as by imparted foresight he sees the sudden eclipse of this bright star)—"The righteous (suddenly) perishes," and "merciful men" (or, as that word may be rendered—"the pious," "men of godliness and kindness"—those who are "good," fearing God and loving man) "are taken away."

Josiah's case is in some respects singular. From his public and exalted position, and the manifestation of singular virtues, the mystery we have already dwelt upon in ordinary examples, of early removal, seems intensified. For Jehovah to allow this "beauty of Israel to fall in high places," appears at first sight inconsistent alike with the Divine wisdom and power and love. It looks almost like the frustration of God's plans and purposes—a failure in His sovereign designs. In other respects the mystery is the same, whatever the rank or condition of life may be. It is the architect just completing his work—when that work comes with a crash to the ground. It is the sculptor putting the finishing-strokes of his chisel on the virgin marble—when the toil of months or years strews the floor of his studio. It is the gardener bringing forth from his green-house the choicest long-husbanded plants, in their freshness and beauty, to bask in early summer sun—when a frost or hailstorm unexpectedly comes, and in one night they have perished! It is the gourd of Jonah—the figure that has so often occurred to us—encircling some earth-bower of happiness; blighted, not, as before noted, when the noonday heat is over, or when the sun is westering, and when the shade could be dispensed with; but "in the morning"—when most needed; when, drenched with the night-dews, its growth was stimulated and its permanency seemed ensured. To apply to those in regal positions what we have already done to those in ordinary stations, we can understand the removal of the hoary-headed kings "who made Israel to sin"—monarchs who had grown grey in iniquity. The land was well rid of such, for they lived only like the fabled upas-tree—to diffuse around them moral corruption and death. We can understand, too, the removal of the aged Israelitish patriarchs and rulers—veteran standard-bearers, who had fought their fight and finished their work, and gone to perpetuate lofty character and service in a better world—the Abrahams and Samuels and Davids who had "served their generation according to the will of God," and who, "well stricken in years," "fell asleep, and were gathered to their fathers." But the Josiahs of early and brilliant promise—those who lived young lives of highest consecration, and diffused a hallowed influence in their age and sphere! Where is the wisdom, where is the love, in stripping the Temple of such pillars—"Beauty and Strength?" Hardly can their fellows spare them! Why is "the staff broken and the beautiful rod?" Above all (for such thoughts will, despite of better faith, force themselves on the crushed spirit—whether it be the roll of ancient Jewish kings and princes, or the everyday modern bereft British home)—WHY has God—the Great and the Good and the Loving—nurtured affections in the human bosom only prematurely to blight and destroy them? Why has He created tender ties only to be sundered? Why is the young athlete stricken down just when entering the race? Wherefore has God apparently thus made His noblest work in vain? The words of Isaiah give a twofold answer to these questions and mysteries. The one negative, the other positive.

1. "The righteous is taken away from the evil to come." Utterly perplexing at the time, as we have now seen in the case of Josiah, was that sudden summons—"Thus says the Lord God—Remove the diadem, and take off the crown" (Ezekiel 21:26)—just in the midst of his bright career, when he had inaugurated a new era of blessing among the thousands who owned his sway; a happy people rejoicing under the shadow of this young cedar of God. How strange, too, apparently, the recompense for all that pious zeal and youthful consecration, to be hurried away, in the twinkling of an eye, by the cruel shaft of an Egyptian bowman! Where was the Lord God of Elijah and of the faithful and loyal-hearted among His Israel? "Is the Lord's hand shortened, that it cannot save?"

Such might be the musing of the mourning, patriotic band who bore their young King bleeding from the fray; such may possibly have been his own musings, as his life's-blood was ebbing, and when his eyes were dimming among the distant mountains of Samaria. But ah! he and they were all in ignorance of the future. They had mercifully not revealed to them the impending invasion of the armies of Babylon, and the miseries which were to be entailed on his unhappy city and country! Well was it that God compassionately spared him these sorrows of siege and torture and captivity, plunder of holy treasure and firing the cities of his kingdom, by taking him away from the evil to come. Had his people, at the hour of his death, known of all that was about to befall their land, it would have moderated that loud wail of sorrow which rose from his death.

It is to this Jeremiah refers in Jeremiah 22:1-30 of his Prophecies, when he thinks of Josiah peacefully sleeping with his fathers, in contrast with the wretchedness and humiliation which tracked the footsteps of his exiled successor. He addresses the nation of mourners, and thus would assuage their bitter grief—"Weep not for the dead (your dead King Josiah), neither bemoan him—but weep sore for him (his unhappy son) that goes away; for he shall return no more, nor see his native country" (Jeremiah 22:10). God Himself, the Lord whom the young monarch served, does not disguise from him the reason of his early departure. For this is the special message sent to him direct from Jehovah by the mouth of Huldah the prophetess, as recorded in 2 Kings 22:18-20—"To the King of Judah, which sent you to inquire of the Lord, thus shall you say to him...Because your heart was tender, and you have humbled yourself before the Lord,...I also have heard you, says the Lord. Behold I will gather you unto your fathers, and you shall be gathered into your grave in peace; and your eyes shall not see all the evil ('the evil to come') which I will bring upon this place."

What was true of Josiah's early death is, we believe, applicable to most cases. Often when we can see no love or kindness or wisdom in these early graves, it is because the morrow to us is mercifully veiled. God, who foresees all, graciously saves a heritage of sorrow or sin by an early removal. Better the brief loan, with all its hallowed, undarkened memories, than the prolonged life with its possible evils. Better the lamb early taken, than left, footsore and fleece-torn, to pine on blighted herbage and wander amid dry and deserted channels. Blessed, truly, in the beautiful, heavenly sense, are "the undefiled," who have, by early death, escaped the corruptions that are in the world through lust; in the volume of whose heart the white leaves have their virgin purity unblotted and unstained; "taken" before impurity stirred the well of pure thought. More blessed and honored, in one sense, are those—and many such there are—who, by dint of resolute self-discipline and high principle, have bravely fought the long fight, and come out of it unwounded, unscathed; who with unabashed face can make the appeal to the great Heart-searcher, of a good conscience and a blameless life; but safer, at least, are they who, away from the sudden gusts and

hurricanes of temptation, have soared early upwards, and with unsoiled plumage, unruffled wings, have sank into the clefts of the Rock forever. If they had been allowed to remain longer on earth, who can tell but some baneful influences might have blighted fair promise and belied fond hopes? But before the storm-cloud could descend, the Great Giver, in mercy, gave the summons.

Oh, what would thousand thousands give, who are now drifting as miserable wrecks on life's sea—health, innocence, purity gone—what would such give to be as they are, inheriting in all its grandeur that best beatitude, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God"? Yes, and in the case of bereaved parents, how many a bitter tear-drop would be dried, and broken heart solaced and comforted, if, remembering all the perils of this world of sin and suffering, and with the bright retrospect of lives suddenly cut short, they would listen to the utterance of Isaiah, like a sweet chime wafted from the Temple of Heaven, "The righteous is taken away from the evil to come!" But the words of the Prophet give also a positive explanation of the mystery of early death (Jeremiah 22:2)—

2. "He shall enter into peace—they shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness." Rather, as it has been rendered, "each one walking straight before him;" or, as Bishop Lowth translates it, "he who walks in the straight path."

Josiah, the youthful, the good, the pious, when he died, "entered into peace." It is a beautiful Old Testament evidence of the immediate blessedness of the departed righteous. His body rested in the tomb as in a 'bed' or couch; his spirit—the spirit that walked so 'uprightly' on earth, with no divergence from the path of duty and piety—continues, in a loftier state of existence, this elevated 'walk.' The work cut short in this lower world is not arrested; it is only transferred. In a higher and loftier sphere he still pursues active ministries of righteousness.

There is an evident contrast between these opening words of the chapter and the terrible refrain with which it closes—"There is no peace, says my God, to the wicked;" none in life, none in death. But "the righteous," thus taken away, "enter into peace."

Another thought, too, is brought out in the original which we miss in our translation, and which suggests the same assurance of immediate bliss. It occurs in the words just quoted—"The righteous is taken away." "Merciful men are taken away;" this in the Hebrew is, "The righteous, the merciful, are gathered"—gathered to their fathers—the same expression regarding Josiah which God Himself put into the lips of Huldah—"I will gather you to your fathers"—"You shall be gathered to your grave in peace." It is not 'taken away,' as if some violent seizure, a wrench from friendship and happiness, and from all association with living souls. No! it is rather a joining of the great company, a being gathered to the gathering of the sainted dead. The early death of Josiah, and such as he, is the morning chime which summons to the upper sanctuary, to unite in the worship of the great congregation. It is the vessel entering the haven of eternal rest; but that haven not in a silent, deserted shore, but a harbor crowded with the loving and the glorified; a world not of loneliness, but rather of fellowship and communion with the great and the good, and the true of all ages.

Reader, if the death of the young was annihilation; if the orb underwent eternal eclipse; if there were even a period of intermediate suspension of consciousness and active energy—then such removal would be mysterious; the blank would be a blank indeed. But the sun has not been blotted

out from the skies; it has only disappeared amid these western clouds to illuminate some other section of God's great world; lost to earth, it shines in Heaven. Yes, more; whatever path of uprightness the departed one followed below, he or she is following that path above. Heaven is but an expansion and development of the characteristic traits of earth—"He who is righteous, let him be righteous still; and he who is holy, let him be holy still."

We can stand beside the death-bed of the young believer, and as we are musing over that touching spectacle of baffled energy, paralyzed activity, premature decay of physical and mental power, early removal alike from earth's duties and earth's joys—while on the one hand we can take hold of the negative solace, that by so soon entering the haven he has been possibly spared many a "night and day on the deep"—we can rise to nobler and better and brighter assurances. We can listen as to the whispering of angels hovering around his pillow—"He shall enter into peace—he shall walk in his uprightness."

One other thought on early death may be suggested by these words. The body rests in the 'bed' of the grave, and the spirit has entered into peace in heaven; but while that spirit is there pursuing its onward path of bliss and glory, it has not, in the truest sense, bid farewell to its earthly sphere. If I revert to a thought already dwelt upon, it is because of its elevating comfort. The lips are silenced, the music of the voice is hushed, the blank of the absent is too painfully realized. But "the righteous" survive dissolution even in this world. In their deathless memories of goodness and worth, they continue to "walk." The 'uprightness' is not laid by with their funeral shroud, or merely carved in the epitaph on their gravestones. No! it lives. The sun has vanished, but the glow still reddens the mountain-tops and glorifies the evening clouds.

Josiah died! It was in one sense the last of him, when he was borne away on that bloody coffin from the valley of Megiddo; or, at all events, when, as in great pomp, they laid him in the tombs of the Kings in Jerusalem. It is said that "all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for him." But, in the noblest meaning of the words, he lived on for generations afterwards. We read in 2 Chronicles 35:26, "Now the rest of the acts of Josiah, and his goodness (uprightness),...and his deeds, first and last, behold, they are written in the Book of the Kings of Israel and Judah." They were written in a more enduring volume. They were written deep on his own nation's heart. They are written in imperishable memorial in the chronicles of the great and good of all time. He shines, this day, as a clear fixed star in the olden skies, and will thus shine on forever!

"Early death!" That "early" is a term only relative to the body—that which rests in the bed of the grave. The young life which has shone gloriously for God, though now a fallen meteor, has left a track of radiance behind it, for which parent and brother and sister will forever bless Him who gave the transient boon!

You who may, with sad heart, be often and again tempted to mourn those thus early removed—who read that promise of long life apparently broken and stultified on the letters of an early tomb, and who think the Psalmist's words most appropriate to trace on the marble, "He weakened my strength in the way; He shortened my days" (Psalms 102:23); be comforted! God measures existence—we cannot too often repeat it—not by periods, or by decades, or jubilees; with Him character is life, not years; goodness is life, not years. "The righteous," whether he has fallen at the very threshold of existence, or in the prime of youth, or in the glory of manhood, or survived to a green old age—"The righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance."

01.07. A First Early Grave

A FIRST EARLY GRAVE "The firstling of his flock."—Genesis 4:4 "Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love."—Genesis 22:2 "As one mourns for his only son."—Zechariah 12:10 "As on whom his mother comforts, so will I comfort you."—Isaiah 66:13

Such a title, to many a child of affliction, is touchingly suggestive. Solemn is the present hour on which you have entered. The shadows of death, for the first time, are falling around you. Your dwelling has been entered and despoiled—not of the aged and decrepit and toilworn—but of life in its earliest prime. Often before have you heard of trial. You may have visited over and over again the house of mourning. You may even have dealt out lessons of comfort to others. The doors of neighbors and friends you have seen darkened, but the King of Terrors has until now passed you by. Your turn has at last come!—The invader has broken into your own fond circle. For the first time yours is a house of death—yours the bitterness of a First Bereavement. "Ah, what lessons our dear Lord is now teaching you—lessons which angels can never learn—teaching by heart what was only known before by rote!" (Lady Powerscourt's Letters.)

I know not what may be the special feature in this your early lesson in the school of trial. Possibly some darling child, who has imperceptibly been entwining its every heartstring around you, wrenched from your embrace. The trial may have overtaken with appalling suddenness. The hurricane may have swept your loved one down in the midst of brightest sunshine. The summons may have come at the time when the joy of your heart could be least spared; when most prized, most needed. It may have been a cherished life, rich with the promise of usefulness to the Church or the world. It would seem as if some anticipated piece of music had scarce its prelude or overture played, when the voices in a moment ceased; the music is hushed, the lights are extinguished; the program only begun when ended. With the drooping and blighting of that tender flower, your present feeling is—

"There's not on earth the living thing

To which the withered heart can cling."

How altered your feelings amid the world's familiar din and bustle! The unsympathizing crowd, all unconscious of what is transacting within your threshold, are hurrying by as before. They are exchanging with one another the same joyous recognitions, they are clad in the same gay attire, the same merry chimes mark the passing hour; and yet, to you, all is sicklied over with enduring sadness; every scene and association which whispers gladness to others, wakes no response but that of sorrow in your heart. The silent chamber!—it echoes to your lonely voice. The happy fireside circle!—there is a vacant seat. The favorite walk—the cherished haunt!—the smile that made it so, is gone. Ah! life has indeed become like the "flat, bare, oozy tide-mud, when the blue sparkling wave, with all its company of gliding boats and white-winged ships, the music of oars and chiming waters, has gone down." Your mind is filled with ten thousand conflicting feelings, to which you dare not give utterance; the holy visions of the past flitting before you like shadows on the

wall; the future all darkness and mystery. Your pining spirit, in the first gush of its bitterness, turns away, refusing to be comforted; the feelings of an old sufferer are too truthfully the transcript of your own—"Call me not Naomi; call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me" (Ruth 1:20). In one terrible sense is the Scripture saying expounded, "Old things have passed away, and all things have become new."

"Oh, you afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted," unschooled and undisciplined in these fiery trials—He who brought you into the furnace will lead you through! He has never failed in the case of any of His "poor afflicted ones" to realize His own precious promises. All is mystery to you now—nothing but wrecked plans and blighted hopes—a future of unutterable desolation. But He will yet vindicate His dealings. Even on earth He often leads us to see and learn "the need be." And if not on earth, at least in glory, there will be a grand revelation of ineffable wisdom and love in this very trial which is now bowing your head like a bulrush, and making your eyes a very fountain of tears. "He is in all providences," says Bunyan, "be they ever so bitter, ever so afflicting, ever so smarting, ever so destructive to our earthly comforts. Every bitter cup is of His preparing; it is Jesus, your best friend (O you poor, poor believers), who most dearly loves you, that appoints all providences, orders them all, overrules, moderates, and sanctifies them all, and will sweeten them all, and in His due time will make them profitable unto you, that you shall one day have cause to praise and bless His name for them all."

Though I have dwelt on the depth of your bereavement, I do not write to aggravate your sorrow. My design is rather to solace, and to lead you submissively to say, "Your will be done." Let me only throw out one or two simple reflections; and may "the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulations," make us able to "comfort those who are in any trouble, by the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted of God" (2 Corinthians 1:3-4) A FIRST EARLY TRIAL!—Was it not NEEDED? The world may have been becoming too engrossing; alienating your love, dimming your view of "the better country." Commune with your own heart, and say, Was not this (sad though it be) the very discipline required? Less would not have done to wean me from earth. I was lulled in self-security—living in a state of awful forgetfulness of my God—insensible of His mercies—unmindful of His goodness—taking my blessings as matters of course—a secret atheism! More than this—of the magnitude of "things not seen" I had no vivid and realizing consciousness. I felt as if death could never disturb 'my dream of happiness'. He had been going his rounds on every side, but I never could anticipate the time when the spoiler could rush upon my beloved family circle and make such a gap as this!

If such be anything of a truthful picture, was it not love and kindness in Him who woke (though with a voice of thunder) from this perilous dream? He saw it needful, "by terrible things in righteousness," to bring back your truant, wandering heart, and fix once more its affections on Himself as their only satisfying portion. "Your Heavenly Father never thought this world's 'painted glory' a gift worthy of you, and therefore He has taken out the best thing it had in your sight, that He might Himself fill the heart He had wounded with Himself." (Evans.) The threads of life may have been weaved into a bright web. He gave you prosperity—but it was that awful thing, "unsanctified prosperity"—"because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God."

He would not allow you thus to be left alone, to settle in the downy nest of self-ease and forgetfulness. He has roused you on the wing; and pointed your upward soarings to their only true

resting-place, in His own everlasting presence, and friendship, and love. "Ah! it is indeed humiliating," says the same devout man whose words we have last quoted, "that we require so many stripes to force us, as it were, to God—when there is enough in Him to draw us to Himself, and to keep us with Himself forever!" But better surely all these painful stripes than to be left unchecked in our downward career. It has been well said, "The sorest word God ever spoke to Israel was, 'Why should you be stricken any more?'" This wayward heart was throwing out its fibers on every side and rooting them down to earth. He had to unroot them from things that are of "earth, earthy," and fasten them on Himself as all in all! A FIRST EARLY TRIAL!—Had it not its GRACIOUS MITIGATIONS? At first sight this may appear a strange admission. There may seem no alleviating drop in your cup. But such there always are. "Have you ever marked," says a writer who knew well what the furnace was—"have you ever marked His gentleness when bringing a painful message? how He usually calls by name, 'Abraham, Abraham!' 'Moses, Moses?'"

Yes! I truly believe that there are few afflicted children of God but can echo the expression of the tried Psalmist, "I will sing of mercy and of judgment." (Mercy first, then judgment!) Let each of these mercies be a voice of comfort to you. Have there been kind friends sent to share the bitterness of your sorrow and give you the tribute of their valued sympathy? Ask those who, from peculiar circumstances, may have been denied this boon—who in their hour of trial have been left unbefriended to weep in silence and in solitude their first tears—if there be no mercy in this?

Again, your chief blessing may have been taken away from you; but many precious ties yet remain, and the loss you have sustained knits together the broken links in holier and more sacred bonds than before. Ask those who have carried their all to the grave—who have been left like a solitary tree of the forest, alone—if there be no blessing in having the voice of doubly-endearred survivors to mingle together common sympathy and recount the hallowed memories of the departed?

Or, better than all, is the loss you mourn the eternal gain of the absent one? Oh! ask those who have to muse in silent agony over the thought of those gone unprepared to meet their God, is it no mercy (no, rather is it not the most exalted of consolations—that which disarms death and bereavement of all its bitterness) that "the loved and lost" are the crowned and glorified? "We may not here below," says Cyprian, "put on dark robes of mourning, when they above have put on the white robes of glory." "The birds are fled away, having outgrown our care, to fill a bough on the tree of life, and charm us on to follow after them." "I have had six children, and I bless God for His free grace that they are all with Christ or in Christ, and my mind is now at rest concerning them. My desire was that they should have served Christ on earth, but if God will choose to have them rather serve Him in heaven, I have nothing to murmur at; His will be done." (Elliot.) "All our dear relations that died in Christ," in the words of Bunyan, the great Puritan, "are in the highest heavens. While we are fighting, sighing, and sobbing here below, they are with blessed Jesus above, according to His prayer for them, seeing His glory and participating in it." A FIRST EARLY TRIAL!—Is there not A SPECIALLY LOUD VOICE in it? You may have heavier trials and severer losses than this, but never will God's voice speak louder to you than now. It is the loudest knock that can be heard at the door of your heart! Felix might have heard another (perhaps even a more powerful) sermon from Paul "on righteousness, temperance, and the judgment to come"—but I believe he would not have again trembled, as he did, when for the first time these appalling realities were presented to his mind. So with a first bereavement—and therefore it has its solemn

responsibilities! Let it not die away in fainter and yet fainter echoes, like the subsiding thunder. Let it be accompanied with the response—"Lord, what would You have me to do?" Seek to feel that God has some great end in view—some wise meaning to subserve—some gracious lesson to teach. Let it be as a 'warning angel' telling you to strike your tent and pitch it nearer heaven—"Arise and depart, for this is not your rest!" As we have seen the timid bird hopping from bough to bough until it reach the topmost branch, and then winging its flight to the sky; so is affliction designed to drive the soul from perch to perch, from refuge to refuge, higher and still higher, until at last it soars upward to the heaven of its God." THE FIRST TRIAL!—Is it not the most befitting season either for a first, or for a renewed CONSECRATION to God's service? Like a vessel driven from its moorings, you may be drifting unpiloted on a tempestuous sea. Let these raging waters lead you to take shelter in the quiet haven. "Build your nest upon no tree here; for you see God has sold the forest to death—and every tree upon which we would rest is ready to be cut down; to the end we may flee and mount up, and build upon the Rock." (Samuel Rutherford,) If at this season you are a stranger to the power of vital religion, uncheered by its precious, gracious promises, you are to be pitied indeed. There is no sadder spectacle than the unbefriended, orphaned, widowed, or withered heart—ungladdened by one beam of Bible consolation—the dark valley traversed with no ray of Gospel hope to pierce its shadows!

Equally mournful if the heart be unhumbléd—if it refuses to bear the rod—if the death chamber only re-echo with your murmurings, and the chastened soul be unable to point to any "peaceable fruit of righteousness," as the result of the Divine dealings! There is a depth of meaning in what a son of consolation has said, as he mingles exhortations with solaces—"Unsanctified trials become deep afflictions." On the other hand, if you are no stranger to Him who is "the God of all comfort," or if until the present a stranger, you are ready to avail yourself of the solitary solace in such an hour, what a hallowed experience yours is! With all the unutterable, untold depths of your sorrow, I know not a time fuller of more chastened joy than the mourning Christian's chamber—when the world is shut out, and he is alone with God! The sun of his earthly happiness set; but this only allowing the clustering constellations of Divine consolation to shine the brighter—the stars of Bible promise coming out, one by one, like ministering angels—the revelation of scenes which "eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor heart conceived!" As in a time of rain and cloud the distant hills look nearer, so do the everlasting hills of glory appear, in the cloudy and dark day, nearer, more glorious—sparkling with ten thousand rills of love and covenant-faithfulness. You breathe their bracing stimulating atmosphere as you have never done before! If thus cheered, yours is indeed an enviable experience. You have One by you and with you, who can fill all blanks and compensate for all losses; who can make your solitary chamber of mourning a Patmos—bright as the Aegean Isle was to John, with manifestations of a Savior's presence and love. "If death did come alone to us," again says Bunyan, "it would be terrible indeed; its ghastly countenance would affright us. But here is the comfort—that Christ our dearest Lord will come with death to sweeten it to us, and support us under it.... Though it be the King of Terrors in itself, and a grim porter, yet by Jesus' coming with it, it shall be the King of Comforts."

Remember, affliction has always been God's peculiar method of dealing with His own people. It is because He loves them He chastises them. "I have chosen you," says He, "in the furnace of affliction." As an old writer says, "He instructs His scholars in the school of the Law, and in the school of the Gospel, but He has a third class for advanced learners, and that is the school of

Trial." A sublime dialogue between a saint on earth and a saint in heaven represents each member of the white-robed multitude as having graduated in this same school. "Who are these who are clothed in white? Where do they come from?" "These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation." Revelation 7:13-14

Seek alike to exercise simple faith in the wisdom of God's dealings—the unswerving rectitude of His dispensations, and to magnify His name by the sweet exercise of the grace of patience. This is a grace peculiar to the saints on earth. It is unknown in heaven, where there are no trials to call it into exercise. Think what a drop in the ocean of suffering is your trial, in comparison with what the Prince of sufferers underwent for you, whose exceptional experience was this, "ALL Your waves and Your billows have gone over Me!" He could make a challenge to a whole world of sufferers, which to this hour remains unanswered, and ever will remain, "Was there ever any sorrow like unto MY sorrow?" Child of God! believe it, there is not one drop of wrath in the bitter cup you are now drinking. He took all that was bitter out of it, and left it a cup of love! A little while and the night of weeping will be over, and a gentle hand in a tearless world will dry up the very source of tears. "There is no night THERE,"—no bereavement either to be experienced or dreaded! Every day is bringing you nearer that blissful reality, nearer reunion with the glorified—nearer Him who is now standing with the hoarded treasures of eternity in His hand, and the hoarded love of eternity in His heart! How will one brief moment there banish in everlasting oblivion all the pangs and sorrows of the valley of weeping! "When you have passed," says a man of God who is now realizing the truth of his own words, "to the other side of that narrow river, to the which we shall so shortly come, you will have no doubt that all you have undergone was little enough for the desired end."

Meanwhile, return to life's duties with the spirit of "a weaned child," exhibiting meek acquiescence in the sovereign will of your God. Your trial was not designed to absolve you from earth's avocations. God has given you, indeed, a season of quiet calm and seclusion during these first overwhelming hours of sorrow. He has taken you, kindly and mercifully, out from the world's noise and bustle into the secret of His own presence, that no secular, harassing earthly thoughts or anxiety may obtrude themselves upon you. In His own beautiful figure, "Behold, I will allure her and bring her into the wilderness (the silent place, the silent season), and will speak comfortably unto her. And there I will give her her vineyards and make the Valley of Achor (trouble), a door of hope. And there she shall answer as in the days of her youth, as at the time when she came out of the land of Egypt." (Hosea 2:14).

You remember how Jesus dealt with His own disciples when He first startled them with the announcement of their greatest sorrow, that is, 'that He, their beloved Lord and Master, was to die a shameful death on the cross.' There was the cessation, for a whole week, of public teaching and miracle. He and they seemed to have spent that week of superhuman sadness in meditative loneliness and abstraction from ordinary duty. For it was "after six days," says one Evangelist, that the time of seclusion and silence was broken, and He took them up to the Mount of Transfiguration (Mark 9:2; Luke 9:28). Oh, glorious result of that season of soul-sadness—the announcement to the twelve of their impending desolating bereavement!—because it ended in what? In the grand and glorious result of all trial to God's children—seeing their Lord transfigured before them!

You may, like these disciples, at first, "fear to enter into the cloud." But you need not! He takes His people still, up from the valleys of trial and sorrow to be on the Mount of glory with Himself—giving

them new manifestations of His grace and love—leading from the place of mourning up to the very gates of heaven—"they no longer saw anyone with them but Jesus only." (Mark 9:8). Yet, carefully observe, that bright, transcendent, transfiguration-scene is not to last. The week of sorrow and its elevating experiences are at an end, and they are summoned once more down from the Sabbatic mount to the old scene of trial and of conflict. Yes! return to life's duties! It is by no means the smallest part of your trial thus to go out to breathe the cheerless air of the world again—and mingle with a saddened and crushed spirit amid scenes where all is uncongenial. But impossible as it may now seem, "the waves of life," to use the words of a writer already quoted, "must and will settle back to their usual flow where that treasured bark has gone down. For how imperiously, how coolly, in disregard of all one's feeling, does the hard, cold, uninteresting course of daily realities move on! Still must we eat and drink, and sleep and wake again—still bargain, buy, sell, ask and answer questions—pursue, in short, a thousand shadows, though all interest in them be over—the cold mechanical habit of living, remaining after all vital interest in it has fled." But "as your day, so shall your strength be." You know not, until you make trial of it, all the blessed fullness and truthfulness of this precious assurance. "You are about," says one deeply experienced, "to enter into realities of consolation you have never imagined to be in God." You have heard ten thousand broken hearts tell in no pretend words, what their experience has been. "We have been wonderfully supported." And what was the secret of it? Let the Apostle Answer—"The Lord stood by me and strengthened me!" He proportions grace to trial. Your extremity is His opportunity.

"They went through the flood on foot," says the Psalmist—"There did we rejoice in Him." Beautiful picture! or rather, glorious testimony to the sustaining grace of God; a firm footing amid the threatening waves—no, more, "THERE!" (when the billows were around us; in the very midst of our affliction)—"THERE did we rejoice in Him!" He will deal tenderly, wisely, lovingly with you. He does not "pour down waterfloods on the mown grass." He considers His people's case.

There is no Bible figure on which the Christian mourner dwells with such delight as that of the Refiner of silver sitting by the furnace of His own lighting—tempering its heat—regulating the fury of its flames—quenching the violence of the fires—designing all, ALL—not to consume and destroy, but to purify and brighten. That REFINER, too, from deep-felt experience, knows your sorrows. "I have had a deep, a very deep wound," says Lady Powerscourt; "the trial has been very severe, but how would I have known Him as a Brother born for adversity without it?...He has gone through every class in our wilderness-school; He seems intent to fill up every gap love has been forced to make. One of His errands from heaven was to bind up the broken-hearted."

You can hear, as it were, the voice of the departed stealing down from the heights of glory, and thus, as Boaz said to Ruth, gently rebuking your fast-falling tears—"It is true that I am your near kinsman, howbeit there is a Kinsman nearer than I!" (Ruth 3:12). Though earthly ties have been severing, He still "lives and loves." "She was," said good old Philip Henry, when writing of Lady Puleston, who died in 1658, "She was the best friend I had on earth, but my Friend in heaven is still where He was, and He will never leave me nor forsake me."

"Whatever, whomsoever you have lost, you have not lost your Jesus, your best Friend. You have His eye, His tender, watchful, provident eye upon you still; you have His ear open to your cries still; yes, you have His everlasting arms underneath you to sustain you still, for else you would sink...To have a Friend in heaven, and such a Friend, so wise, so powerful, so faithful, so merciful,

so sensibly affected with all our misery—so tender, so able, and so willing to bear and help us!—I say this is infinitely better than all the friends that ever we had or could have on earth." (Bunyan.)

Trust Him. He will "guide you (no, He is guiding you) by His counsel—and afterward"—"AFTERWARD!"—It is not for you to scan that word! It may be one of painful significance; it may be after much discipline; it may be after a rough and rugged and thorny road—trial upon trial. Remember what follows that "AFTERWARD"—"He will receive you into Glory!" Soon the last ripple of affliction will be heard, and then its sound will die away forever! Entering the triumphal arch of heaven, you will read in living characters the history of a sinless, sorrowless future—"And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain—for the former things are passed away" (Revelation 21:4).

01.08. Second Causes

SECOND CAUSES

"Then MARTHA said unto Jesus—Lord, IF you had been here, my brother would not have died."—John 11:21

"Then when MARY had come where Jesus was, and saw Him, she fell down at His feet, saying unto Him—Lord, IF you had been here, my brother would not have died."—John 11:32 At no time more than on the occasion of early deaths and early graves does the sad brooding over 'second causes' come into painful, and sometimes unworthy conflict with the Christian's better faith and loftier confidences. The words of both the Bethany mourners, which head this meditation, the natural expression of their sorrowing spirits, may help to carry with them to the heart of the bereaved, lessons alike of tender rebuke and of patient resignation.

It is unnecessary again to rehearse the narrative, which has furnished us with the subject of a previous paper. Martha had already, in her interview with her Master, and her sister Mary now repeats in broken accents, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died." Often at a season of sore bereavement some one poignant thought or reflection takes possession of the mind, and, for the time, overmasters every other. This echo of the one mourner's utterance by the other, leads us to conclude that it had been a familiar and often-quoted phrase during these days of protracted agony. This independent quotation, indeed, on the part of each, gives a truthful beauty to the whole inspired story. The twin sisters—musing on the terrible past, gazing through their tears on the vacant seat at their home-hearth—had been every now and then breaking the silence of the deserted chamber by exclaiming, "If He had been with us, this never would have happened! This is the bitterest drop in our cup—that all might have been different! These hot tears might never have dimmed our eyes; our beloved Lazarus might have been a living and loving brother still! Oh, that the Lord had delayed for a brief week that needless journey to Perea, or anticipated by four days His longed-for return; or would that we had despatched our messenger earlier for Him! It is now too late. Though He has at last come, His advent can be of little avail. The fell destroyer has been at our door before Him. He may soothe our grief, but the blow cannot be averted. His friend and our brother is locked in sleep too deep to be disturbed!" Is it not, we repeat, the same unkind surmise which is still often heard in the hour of bereavement and in the home of death?—a guilty, unholy brooding over second causes—"If such and such had been done, my child would still be alive! If that means, or that remedy, or that judicious caution had been employed—this terrible overthrow of my earthly hopes would never have occurred—that beloved one would have been still walking at my side—that chaplet of sorrows would not now have been girding my brows—the Bethany sepulcher would have been unopened—my son, my daughter, my sister, my brother—would not have died!"

Hush! hush! these guilty insinuations—that dethroning of God from the providential sovereignty of His own world—that hasty and inconsiderate verdict on His Divine procedure.

"IF You had been here!" Can we, dare we doubt it? Is the departure of the immortal soul to the spirit-world so trivial a matter that the life-giving God takes no cognizance of it? No! Afflicted one, in the deep night of your sorrow, you must rise above "adverse coincidences"—you must cancel the words "accident" and "fate" from your vocabulary of trial. God, your God, was there! If there are perplexing accompaniments, be assured they were of His permitting! All was planned—wisely, kindly planned. Question not the unerring rectitude of His dealings. Though apparently absent, He was really present. The apparent veiling of His countenance is only what Cowper calls "the severer aspect of His love." It is not for us to dictate what the procedure of infinite love and wisdom should be. To our dim and distorted views of things, it might have been more for the glory of God and the Church's good if the poet's "beautiful bird of light," quoted in our last, had still "sat with its folded wings" before it sped so soon to nestle in the eaves of heaven. But if its earthly song has been early hushed—if those full of promise have been allowed rather to fall asleep in Jesus—be assured it was from no lack of power or ability on God's part, that they were not recalled from the gates of death.

Mourner! if the child whom you bewail is now in glory among the ingathered multitude, forever beyond reach of sinning and sorrowing, the turmoil and the battle—can you upbraid your God for his early departure? Would you weep him back, if you could, from his early heritage of bliss?

Fond nature, as it stands in trembling agony watching the ebbing pulses of life, would willingly arrest the pale messenger—stay the chariot—have the wilderness relighted with his smile, and the future radiant with the gleams which youthful intelligence and truth had promised. But when all is over, and you are able to contemplate, with calm emotion, the untold joy into which the unfettered spirit has entered, do you not feel as if it were cruel selfishness alone that would divest that sainted one of his glory, and bring him back to grapple with earth's cares and tribulations?

Yes, "You have been here!" All has been ordered, arranged, appointed. Believer! how tenderly considerate is your dear Lord! Well may you make it your prayer, "Let me fall into the hands of God, for great are His mercies!" When a father inflicts on his wayward child the severest and harshest discipline, none but he can tell the bitter heart-pangs of yearning love that accompany every stroke of the rod. So it is with your Father in heaven; with this difference, that the earthly parent may act unwisely, arbitrarily, indiscreetly—he may misjudge the necessities of the case—he may do violence and wrong to the natural disposition of his offspring. Not so with a wise Heavenly Parent. He will inflict no unneeded chastisement. Man may err, has erred, and is ever erring. But "The Lord is righteous in all His ways!"

DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY

Oh, sad are they who can observe

No higher God than destiny

Ruling this world so fair;

Who in life's loom the shuttles see

Weaving their web capriciously,

Without Craftsman;

Their bark, unpiloted, astray,
The sport of fitful winds and spray,
Like self-abandoned castaway,
Drifting they know not where!

01.09. Asleep in Jesus

ASLEEP IN JESUS "God will bring with Jesus, those who have fallen asleep IN HIM." 1 Thessalonians 4:14

Bereaved parents! here is another glimpse which Faith, while seated in the valley, takes of "the land that is very far off," but which at times, too, is brought so very near! We may first state the special occasion of the words at the head of this meditation. As the great Apostle was now at Corinth, living with Aquila and Priscilla, his beloved son Timothy had brought him from Thessalonica encouraging tidings of the Church he had there founded. But in that good report there were mingled also tidings of death—among these, doubtless, young as well as old. The bereaved were, moreover, undergoing needless sorrow because the deceased had been removed before the coming of Christ. The Thessalonians, in common with other of the infant Churches, entertained unfounded expectations regarding the imminence of the Second Advent. They imagined it so near at hand that they would live to behold it; and when they saw the beloved members of their families or fellow-Christians taken away, they mourned specially at their being deprived of sharing in the joy of welcoming a returning Lord. This Epistle, from which our motto-verse is taken, was written (among other reasons) to comfort and console the sorrow-stricken. It is interesting and remarkable that the first letter of Paul is thus a letter to the bereaved! It is an "afflicted man's companion." The Spirit of the Lord, by inspiration, was upon him. The Lord anointed him "to heal the broken-hearted." And what says he to these drooping, saddened spirits? He tells them not to despond, but to rejoice. "Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him." 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14

There is no more expressive symbol of higher and diviner verities than the sleep of the body and the subsequent waking in the morning. It is beautiful to see the surging waves of daily life rocking themselves to rest—to note, say, in some vast city, when night has drawn its curtains around, light after light put out in the windows, the street lamps paying solitary homage to the stars as they look down from their lofty mansions. What a hush pervades the recent 'stunning tide of human care and crime!' Why? Because sleep is locking up ten thousand eyes of those who are dreaming away care and sorrow, fatigue and toil. But anon, as the gates of morning open, and when from the silent monitors of fleeting time the hour summoning to labor strikes, in a moment the ring of countless hammers breaks the trance of night. All is again astir. Sleep has refreshed the workman's wearied body; sleep has put new pith and sinew in that brawny arm. The whole world has arisen like a giant refreshed, and sleep has been the elixir that has soothed its wounds and healed its pains.

We need not wonder, then, that this priceless boon to the weary, has been taken by God Himself to describe the quiet rest of His own people in the grave. David, the man after God's own heart, after he had served his day and generation, "fell asleep." Stephen, when struck down by his

murderers, "fell asleep." In the beautiful words on the frontispiece of this volume—which we have there specially associated with the death of the young—"So gives He His beloved sleep!" But what means Paul by this sleep? Is it the sleep of the soul? Is it that the spirit, at the moment of dissolution, falls into a state of torpor or insensibility, in which it remains until startled at last by the trumpet of God? No! Let us recur to the analogy of earthly sleep. We know that when the body is in a state of profound repose, when the eye is closed in seeming unconsciousness on the pillow, it is only apparently so. The mind is in a constant state of activity; all its powers are vigorous as ever. Memory is there, bringing up old and treasured scenes. Imagination is there, combining these in strange, fantastic medley. Gorgeous visions come and go—magnificent combinations, in comparison with which waking realities are dull, prosaic, and commonplace. So it is with the soul at death. While the body "sleeps" in its grassy bed, the spirit is expatiating in regions of activity and life. It departs "to be with Christ, which is far better." The words of the verse we are now pondering may bear the beautiful rendering we have before alluded to (see Wycliffe, Cranmer, and Rheims Version), "Those also who are laid asleep by Jesus!"—a rendering which, among others, suggests two comforting thoughts—two most gracious whispers from these voices of heavenly consolation.

(1.) That the hour of our death is appointed by Jesus. We are laid asleep by Him. Just as the mother knows the best hour to lay her little one in its couch or cradle—undresses it, composes it to rest, sings its lullaby—and the cherub face, lately all smiles, is now locked in quiet repose; so Christ comes to all His children, of whatever age, at His own selected season, and says, "Your hour of rest has arrived. I am to take off the garments of mortality. Come! I will robe you in the vestments of the tomb." He smooths the narrow bed, composes the pillow, and sings His own lullaby of love, "Fear not, my child, for I am with you; sleep on now and take your rest!" Be comforted with this blessed truth, that the hour of death cannot come a moment sooner than Jesus appoints. He knows the best time to bid you and yours the long "good-night." Interesting it is (and a Bible truth too) to think of troops of angels hovering over the death-pillow, and watching with guardian care the sleeping dust of the "Early Grave." But more comforting still, surely, is it to think of the Lord of angels closing the eyes and hushing to slumber—Christ Himself leading to the tomb—the robing-room of immortality—"unclothing," that His people may be "clothed upon," and that "mortality may be swallowed up of life."

(2.) A second suggested thought is, that the body belongs to Christ. The soul, indeed, is more specially His. It wings its arrowy flight up to the spirit world. Angels carry it into Abraham's bosom, and from that hour it is "forever with the Lord." But what of the material framework? What of the marble tenement? Is it left to crumble in dishonor and corruption? Now that the jewel is gone, is the casket to be disowned? Now that the vestal fire is quenched, is the temple left to moulder in oblivion? No, it is the body to which Paul in these words refers. It is the body that is "laid asleep by Jesus." Every particle of that dust of the sepulcher was purchased by His blood. The Apostle elsewhere speaks of "body as well as spirit which are His" (1 Corinthians 6:20).

You who have cherished young treasures in the tomb, come and seat yourselves under this shadow of comfort. Rejoice in the assurance that these earthly tabernacles are in His custody. The loving hand of Divine parental love was the last to close their eyes; and, in the prospect of waking on an eternal morrow, you can go to their graves, and think of them as having migrated to the Better Land, away forever from the harsh jarrings and discords and tumults of this.

(3) Once more, connect this "blessed hope" with that which imparts to it alike its blessedness and its certainty—the Resurrection of Christ. That glorious Resurrection is the pledge and earnest of your own, and that of your beloved dead. The pledges of the outer material creation are welcome and joyful. We hail with grateful spirit the first budding of early spring in grove and field, because in these we see the promise and pledge that soon nature will be arrayed in her full robes of resurrection beauty. With what feelings ought we to stand by the sepulcher of our Lord, and see the buried Conqueror rising triumphant over the last enemy! Do we not behold in Him the harbinger of an immortal springtime, or rather a glorious harvest, when the mounds of the earth and the caves of the ocean shall surrender what they have held for ages in sacred custody—"Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision"—when "this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal immortality." "Christ the first fruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming!"

Mourners, think of this! In one sad sense, indeed, you have buried your dead out of your sight. "The house of their earthly tabernacle" is a "darksome ruin." Dust is resolved into its kindred dust. The constituent elements of the dismantled framework are incorporated with new forms of matter. We do not wish to strew the dismal path with flowers. Death, from the earthly view of it, is not irradiated by one gleam of sunshine. The slow and gradual wasting and decay, the wearisome days, the long night-vigils, the mind participating not infrequently with the wreck of the body, memory often a blank, the fondest look and the fondest name eliciting no response! Then the close of all—the knocking at the mysterious gates of a mysterious future—the empty chamber, where "echo slumbers"—the noiseless footfall, the mute crowd of mourners, the grave, the return to the silent dwelling, and the vacant seat. O Death, truly here is your sting—O Grave, truly here is your victory! But the day is coming when all these memories of woe shall vanish, like the darkness before the morning sun—when the spoil of plundering ages shall in a marvelous way be all restored—when, as in the Prophet's Valley of Vision, bone shall come to bone, and sinew to sinew. The old loving smiles of earth will be seen again in the newly-glorified body—the drooping withered flower reviving, beautiful and fragrant with the bloom of perennial summer. "Why are you weeping?" was the question of the Risen Conqueror, as He gazed on a tearful eye at the Resurrection morn. The Christian's grave need be watered by no tears—for Jesus, who "died for our sins, rose again for our justification." "Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of those who sleep." He has converted the tomb into the vestibule of heaven. How different from the mournful legends to be seen and read at this hour on heathen Columbaria, as "to the final farewell" and "the eternal sleep!" How different from the inscriptions disclosed in the latest Assyrian excavations in the mounds of Kalakh; of which we are told—"In this temple were performed the mournings and lamentations for the yearly dying Tammuz, the 'Son of Life,' whom Istar went annually to recover from the House of Death, the Palace of 'The Land of no return!'" The Christian traveler searches in vain, amid the ashes of Jerusalem's desolation, for any material tomb of his Divine Lord. But if the tomb be lost in the wreck of ages, the glorious, invisible inscription still remains—"Fear not—I am He who lives and was dead; and behold I am alive for evermore, and have the keys of the grave and of death;" and "because I live, you shall live also!"

01.10. Gracious Mitigations

GRACIOUS MITIGATIONS "He stays His rough wind, in the day of the east wind."

—Isaiah 27:8 This is a comforting verse to those who, in a figurative sense, are exposed to the swoop of the desert simoom. Come, sorrowing one, and calmly meditate on the blessed promise, here given under expressive imagery, that God will never allow your trials or His chastisements to go too far.

It is the "rough wind" and the "east wind" that may now be visiting you. Seated in thought, or in reality, by your early grave, and musing on your blighted blossom, you can too truly say, "As a flower of the field, so he flourishes. For the wind passes over it, and it is gone!" (Psalms 103:15-16). The Almighty does not conceal that it is He who sends the tempest. It is specially spoken of and designated by the prophet as "His rough wind." In the blighting of Jonah's gourd, the picture we have so often had occasion to refer to, we are told, "The LORD prepared a vehement east wind." In the bold and sublime language of the Psalmist, He is similarly represented as "walking on the wings of the wind." So too in moral hurricanes. "Who knows not in all these things, that the hand of the Lord has wrought this?" But (and this is the more special truth which claims our attention), if that east wind blows, He will not allow it to sweep too vehemently—and when it receives its mission from Him, He will not allow "the rough wind" to be let loose at the same time from its chambers. He will moderate adversity. "He knows our frame." According to the common proverb, "He will temper the wind to the shorn lamb." He did not make Israel feel at once and at the same time lack of bread and lack of water. The manna had been provided when they were suffering from the deprivation of the other priceless boon.

Look at the first clause of the somewhat enigmatical words which form part of the verse which heads this chapter—"In measure you will debate with it." "In measure!" Or, as in another place, "I will correct you in measure" (Jeremiah 30:11). God has no capricious dealings. All will be scrupulously weighed. He CONSIDERS the soul in adversity (Psalms 31:7). "When He winnows," as Matthew Henry says, "He sends a gentle gale to blow away the chaff, not to blow away the corn." Who cannot testify to the truth of the gracious assertion? Is it the hour of bereavement?—and specially the hour and experience, reader, which comes most tenderly and impressively home to you—the time when, above all others, the east wind may be said to blow, nipping early spring-buds or blighting tender blossoms? Who has not then to tell of amazing support? Some sweet solaces which have gone far to moderate the sweep of the hurricane, break the cruel blow, and disarm trial of much of its severity? Glimpses appear in the midst of the darkness—blue vistas are seen opening in the storm-wreathed sky!

We believe all can own and trace these tender mitigations—the prevention of the two winds from blowing simultaneously—God not allowing the bruised reed to be broken, just because it was bruised—laying on with one hand, comforting and binding up with the other—sending whatever wind is needed to bring to the desired haven, not one blast permitted but what is needed. "He will not allow us to be tempted (tried) above that we are able to bear, but will, with the temptation, also

make a way to escape, that we may be able to bear it" (1 Corinthians 10:13). "Blessed be God," says Chrysostom, "who permitted the tempest; and blessed be God who has dispersed it and made it a calm."

Bereaved parents! we ask again, have you not been able—in some cases more perhaps than in others—to trace all this in the dying couches of your beloved children? The gracious alleviations of pain; the tender farewell words, sacredly garnered by you, which tended to reconcile to the pang of departure; the unexpected sympathies and solaces, it may be, of friends and fellow-sufferers; above all, those Divine comforts and consolations—stars of promise—never before seen in the light of garish day, but with which the dark night of sorrow has studded your skies?

Yes! and while owning the truth of the words of our meditation regarding your beloved dead, may you not transfer, by anticipation, their comfort to yourselves? When that supreme hour which has come to them comes to you—when you, too, are laid on your death-couch—when the tent is about to be struck for prosecuting the mysterious journey—death, the hour that thousands on thousands have shrunk from and dreaded—yes! the hour which none can contemplate without profound emotion; yet when it does come—when the house of the earthly tabernacle rocks and trembles under the blasts of that inexorable 'east wind,' be assured you will find the Great Promiser true to His declaration. The 'rough wind' is stayed. You may feel the rush of the final hurricane, but you will rise above it with the glorious compensating supports and comforts then given. In that solemn season the eyes of many of God's children, dimming to human smiles, have had revealed to them a Mightier Presence, which the gathering darkness only renders more visible. When those around can think, perhaps, only of the terribleness of grappling with the tempest which in a few moments will reduce to a heap of ruins; with their last breath they have risen above the storm, and in trembling accents given some such testimony as this—"Hush your fears! I am walking through the Dark Valley, but HE is giving me dying grace for a dying hour"—"He stays His rough wind in the day of the east wind!"

01.11. The Eternal Folding

THE ETERNAL FOLDING

"He will wipe all tears from their eyes—and there will be no more death, suffering, crying, or pain! These things of the past are gone forever! He who OVERCOMES will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son. For the Lamb, who is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." Revelation 21:4, Revelation 21:7 Revelation 21:17 The valley of tears and the valley of death have been both traversed—Time's curfew-bell has been tolled, proclaiming that earth's fires have been put out and the flocks eternally folded. The bleak herbage of the wilderness—the brookless channels—the falling snows—the angry tempests—the roar of the ravening wolves—are known no more. It is a glorious glimpse of unbroken sunshine—gleaming meadows—crystal clear waters—living fountains!

Note more specially this pastoral aspect of the vision which is now in the eye of the Apostle of Patmos. We have all the accessories of such a scene. First, in the words of contrast, where the picture of a flock is brought before us—bleating amid arid wastes—panting defenseless under the fierce rays of a burning sun—and turning often their languid eyes towards waterless courses—"They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light upon them, nor any heat." And then observe his positive description of the bliss of the ransomed—those of all ages and from all ages—the sheep and the lambs—feeding on the heavenly meadows, and reclining by their perennial streams. They are "fed" on these abiding pastures—and "led" to "the living fountains of waters."

We look for the completion of the picture. We see the rejoicing flock browsing on the everlasting hills. But we gaze in vain for the great central Figure. We expect to behold the Glorified Shepherd seated on some sunny eminence overlooking "the multitude which no man can number." Jesus is there; we see Him. But, strange mixture of metaphor—it is not as a SHEPHERD, but as a LAMB He precedes His followers—feeding them and leading them! It is one of those singular, dreamlike transitions common in prophetic symbol—but which, when we come to examine them, are so significant and full of meaning.

We have in a previous apocalyptic vision (Revelation 5:1-14), a similar startling and remarkable figuration; startling from the same powerful (we had almost said violent) change of metaphor. The Apostle had been speaking of Christ as the "Lion of the tribe of Judah," breaking the seals of the prophetic roll, and unfolding the destinies of the Church and the world. In magnificent language, he further describes all heaven, redeemed and unredeemed—"ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands"—gathered in to do homage to this August Being who had "prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof." When we gaze, amid the throng, for the object of this adoration—lo! we are arrested by the sight, not of a Lion, but of a LAMB! It is the same in this pastoral vision. We lose sight, for the moment, of the Shepherd—the Evangelist at all events describes Him under a different symbol. It is the name which he himself knew so well—that

by which the Great Shepherd was first pointed out to him—he loves it still—"Behold the Lamb of God!"

You who have "folded lambs" above, think of that Shepherd's name! We shall not pursue the thought; but let it be suggestive to you of that all-comprehensive glorified human nature of Jesus in its relation to the 'early taken' from the lower pastures and valley. It is the same unaltered and unchanging humanity which of old made little children smile unafraid in His arms, while He declared that the kingdom of heaven is peopled with such. The tender command He gave to an under-shepherd on earth, may we not well believe He will continue to give to Angel-Shepherds above, as He recognizes the place of glorified little ones in the eternal fold—"Feed My lambs!"

(1.) The words suggest to us one among many thoughts—that all the joys of the ransomed flock, old and young, will be associated with the love and companionship of their Shepherd. He feeds—He leads—He wipes away all tears from their eyes—and in a previous verse (15), under a different figure, it is said, "He who sits on the throne shall dwell among them." Heaven would be no heaven without Jesus. Take Him away!—it would be to blot out the sun from the celestial skies—every star, great and small, moons and satellites as well as planets, would hide their faces—the angel would disrobe himself of his shining attire, and stand in sackcloth before the vacant throne! Take Him away! let the Shepherd leave His ransomed sheep and lambs—and you might give them heaven's choicest pastures—you might sentinel the heavenly fold with archangels—it would be no compensation for the loss. The long-forgotten cry would ascend amid the fairest landscapes of Paradise Regained—"Tell me, O You whom my soul loves, where YOU feed, where YOU make Your flock to rest at noon!" But He, the Shepherd-King, whose invitation on the throne of judgment was—"Come, you blessed,"—will be true to His word. As He was with you, His mourning people, "in all places where you were scattered in the cloudy and dark day"—so, in the bright and cloudless day of glory, in all places He will still be with you. We may take the words of a beautiful parallel passage of Old Testament, and give them a heavenly meaning—"Their pastures shall be in all high places; they shall not hunger nor thirst—neither shall the heat nor sun smite them; for He who has mercy on them shall lead them—even by the springs of water shall HE guide them." "Leading" them, "feeding" them. What figurative language could express nearer, closer, more intimate fellowship and communion?—the full vision and fruition of a Savior-God! The song lisped here, often with trembling lips and stammering tongue, will rise triumphant from an ever-present experience of its bliss—"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" "In YOUR presence there is fullness of joy!"

(2.) This description would seem to denote an infinite progression in the joys and felicities of the ransomed flock. This we have enlarged upon in a recent meditation; but it is a thought ever fresh and elevating, and is here presented to us under a new figure. The Shepherd is seen leading them from pasture to pasture, from fountain to fountain, from eminence to eminence—higher and yet higher up the hills of glory. As the loftier we ascend a mountain, the wider is the landscape that is spread before us—so the higher the heavenly pilgrim mounts in his ever-upward ascent, the wider will be the horizon and circumference of his joys. He will be attaining ever-new views of God—new unfoldings, and revelations of the Divine purposes—new motives for the ceaseless activities of his holy being. And if that song were early stilled on earth, there will be no arrest of its harmonies in that long "forever!"

Such is the beautiful delineation here given by the Prophet of Patmos. The Lamb is represented first as "feeding" His flock. They lie down at His side, in restful repose, by the green pastures of His love. Next, He is represented as "leading" them. The rest is for the time over. He leads them farther and yet farther through these sunlit meadows, along these glorified valleys, to new living fountains of water—ever advancing, yet never reaching the plenitude of bliss—satisfied to the full, and yet always new satisfaction—pastures ever greener—waters ever clearer—the sun of their joy ever climbing the sky and never reaching the meridian.

(3.) The figurative language of the Evangelist once more indicates, that there will be an unfolding of the Shepherd's wisdom and faithfulness in His earthly dispensations. Not only is the Lamb to feed them with gracious views of the Divine dealings, and to lead them from fountain to fountain of wisdom, and goodness, and grace—but by a beautiful and most expressive symbol, God is represented as wiping away all tears from their eyes. As if, when they entered glory, some remaining tears were still there. As if the eye, suffused like yours, at the couch or grave of your early dead, had not recovered from the night of earthly weeping. But, before long, no trace or vestige of sorrow will be found. As in a forest, after a drenching thunder-shower, every bough, and blade, and leaf is dripping with rain; for a considerable time after the sun has shone out, and the sky is blue, and the birds of the grove are singing—the lingering drops gem the branches and sprinkle the sward. But gradually, yet surely, his genial rays are drinking up the moisture—nature's tear-drops. One by one they evaporate, and the refreshed forest rejoices, and basks in the radiance of the great luminary. So with the Sun of Deity in heaven. One by one earth's remaining tears vanish before the radiance of that Sun of Wisdom and Love. Weeping can be no more—the fountain of weeping, the memory of weeping, are gone forever! Do you wonder, bereaved parent, at your Shepherd's dealings? Are you apt, with misgiving heart, to ask—why that desolation of the earthly fold? why that angry hurricane—that harsh night-wind—that pelting rain which maddened into foaming torrent the calm still water—sweeping loved ones down the resistless flood? Yes! and you may carry these tearful eyes with you as you enter heaven. But there is a gracious Hand waiting there to wipe each one of them away. These surviving drops will be crystal lenses, through which, as you enter glory, you will see in vivid manifestation the loving-kindness and faithfulness of your Heavenly Father. Are you wondering why these springs and rills of earthly happiness were withdrawn or dried in their channels? It was to lead you to feel and to exclaim, 'O God, all my well-springs are in You!' Do you wonder now why this lamb and that lamb of the flock was so soon taken? He emptied your home, and your heart, and your fold on earth, that He might lead you and your to the better fold above. Following the steps of the all-gracious Heavenly Shepherd, as these early lost ones will be revealed to your sight, one here, one there, reposing in the celestial pastures—when you see to what a blessed land you had early sent your children—how will the once tear-dimmed eye have its every tear wiped away—and at the contemplation of God's wisdom and love, in what appeared at the time the dark providences of earth—the ever-deepening song will ascend, "So we Your people and sheep (we may add lambs) of Your pasture, will give You thanks forever!" Your little children, or your youths of promise are in Heaven! Possibly, as here indicated, there may be a variety and diversity in its joys suited to their capacities. Observe, it is not to one fountain to which the Lamb is said to lead; they are "living fountains of waters." Like the four-branched river in the first earthly Eden, there will be, from the one great river of Deity, streams—and among these, 'little rills'—"which make glad the city of God." In their own distinctive ways, "the children of Zion will be joyful in their King."

We delight to think of the Flock of Heaven—sheep and lambs—each member of it perfect in the full measure of its own bliss; but each, under the Shepherd's eye, thus following the pasture, or climbing the mountain-steep, or browsing by the streamlet, it most loves. Yet, all the Fold, in these separate and distinctive ways, combining to glorify their Savior God.

Meanwhile, let those who are yet out in the lower valley, overtaken by the cloud and the storm, rejoice in these hopes full of immortality. He has promised to give you "grace and glory." Grace—He will support and sustain you now in the midst of your trial. He will not leave you unsheltered to the sweep of the storm. "The Lamb in the midst of the throne" loves to stoop to weakness. The royal Shepherd of Bethlehem, who laid in the dust the giant of Philistia, could also weep tears of love and tenderness over a tiny, pining flower in his own palace. So is it with the true David. He combines the might and majesty of Godhead with the tenderness of humanity. He who on earth loved children, knows the tenderness of your present sorrow. He may be leading you along the wilderness by a way that you know not, and by paths that you have not known. But trust Him—"He will feed and lead like a shepherd"—succouring the faint, carrying the weary, sustaining the burdened. This description of the people he led of old out of Egypt is still true of you, and of every member of His flock—"He found him also in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness—He led him about, He instructed him, He kept him as the apple of His eye. As an eagle stirs up her nest, fluttering over her young, spreads abroad her wings, takes them, bears them on her wings—so the Lord alone did lead him."

Make sure now of your personal and saving interest in His shepherd-love. Follow with unwavering eye His footsteps—repose on Him your burdens; confide to Him your misgivings and heart sorrows. Let life be a happy, peaceful reclining by His own green pastures and still waters. And then when the Valley of the Shadow of Death is reached, it will be like the Valley of Achor, spoken of in Hosea—"A door of hope." Achor was one of the entrance-ravines from the wilderness to the Promised Land. Death is the valley leading to that Promised Land, the true Heavenly Canaan. Let the anticipated valley-gloom be dispelled by a present and habitual leaning on the rod and staff of immutable promises—"And when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, you shall receive a crown of glory, that fades not away!"

01.12. God's Way and Leadings Perfect

GOD'S WAY AND LEADINGS PERFECT "As for God, His way is perfect."—Psalms 18:30 "And He led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation."—Psalms 107:7

There are times in the experience of not a few—and this is one especially on which you have entered—when, amid adverse and baffling providences, "the foundations of the world seem out of course," and all things appear to be rushing into wreck and darkness. The Divine, everlasting vigil seems to have ceased, and echo only answers to the wild cry of despair—"Where is now my God?" "Where is my God?"—creating affections only to wither them; severing me, in the twinkling of an eye, from those He had sent to be helpers of my faith, interpreters of His own goodness, and wisdom, and mercy—youthful priests in the domestic temple, whose removal leaves a silent, desolated altar, with incense unkindled and lamps put out, cherished memories alone surviving to read and reveal the blank! I was taught to imagine that His dealings to His own were those of a Father, not retributive or judicial, but paternal—that I could see no hand, and hear no lullaby but love. Why has the promised parental solicitude been superseded by the harsh voice and the rebuking rod? Why has the All-gracious belied His own saying, "As one whom his mother comforts?" "You, O Lord, are our Father, our Redeemer; Your name is from everlasting...Where is Your zeal, and Your strength, the sounding of Your compassions and of Your mercies toward me? Are they restrained?" (Isaiah 63:15-16).

Seek to repress these, and such like unworthy surmises. "As for God, His way is perfect." This was a lesson impressively taught to pilgrim Israel, as suggested by one of the two verses which head this meditation. They, like many of Jehovah's people still, were tempted at first to misinterpret the Divine dealings. At the very outset from Egypt, the cloudy pillar appeared to mislead them. Instead of taking them the near and direct route to Canaan, it conducted them round "by the way of the wilderness." They had the Red Sea in front and their pursuers behind. The shout goes up from the Egyptian army—"They are entangled; the wilderness has shut them in!" Even Moses yields to the panic and despondency of the hour. "Why are you lying on your face?" were the words addressed to him as he crouched a skeptic at God's feet; "speak to the children of Israel that they go forward."

Forward they did go, under the guidance of the symbol of the Divine Presence; and what was the song with which they made the opposite shores resound? It was the adoration of the all-perfect ways of God; vindicating the rectitude of His procedure; "You in Your mercy have led forth the people which You have redeemed." "O Lord God Almighty, who is a strong God like unto You? You rule the raging of the sea—when the waves thereof arise, You still them!" This loving and gracious Guide still "leads Joseph like a flock;" even although often, in a spiritual sense, He makes 'the depths of the sea' a way for His ransomed to pass over. You, too, may now be having your circuitous routes through the desert, your Red Seas of trouble, your Marahs of bitterness. His way may truly seem to be "in the sea, and His path in the deep waters, and His judgments unsearchable." But it is for you to listen in submissive faith to His sovereign mandate, and to

follow, however mysterious, the guidance of the Pillar-cloud. It is not for us to judge of the reasons for apparent harsh procedure, hidden from our gaze, and known only to the Infinitely Gracious ONE.

"God is His own interpreter,
And He will make it plain."

"Why," says one of the saintliest men of the past generation, "Why are we not amply satisfied and acquiescing in the wise management of the Great Counselor, who puts clouds and darkness round about Him, bidding us follow at His beck through the cloud, promising an eternal and uninterrupted sunshine on the other side?"

There is a beautiful saying in Psalms 94:1-23, "The Lord will not cast off His people, neither will He forsake His inheritance; but judgment shall return unto righteousness" (Psalms 94:14-15). Judgment often at times seems divorced—deflected from righteousness—never more than in sparing the ripe and taking the green. We can discern no righteousness, no mercy, no 'good' in such dispensations.

"Commit your way unto the Lord, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass." "Although you say you can not see Him, yet judgment is before Him, therefore trust in Him." "You, O God, led Your people of old by the right hand of Moses, with Your glorious arm dividing the water before them to make Yourself an everlasting name" (Isaiah 63:12).

"Awake, awake," on our behalf still, "O Arm of the Lord!" Finite wisdom has no place in Your dealings. Let us seek no other way, let us surrender ourselves to no other guidance; remembering that "all the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth unto such as keep His covenant and His testimonies." We may now be, like the panic-stricken Hebrews, confronting the barrier waves; the foe behind, the desolate wilderness around. But fear not! that sea will, in some gracious way, recede to make a dry-shod pathway; that wilderness on the other side, with dreary sand and beetling cliff, will be wilderness still; but it will provide spiritual resting-places with overshadowing palms and refreshing springs. To the eye of sense, however baffling be the ways of the Supreme, however seemingly unlike His righteous wisdom, it is not for us to judge, and surmise, and conjecture—but to believe; not to question, but, like Job, to kneel and to adore. Not venturing presumptuously to arraign the faithfulness of dispensations the most inscrutable; but rather, in reverent submission to say, amid crossed wills and adverse providences, even when we see innocent infant smiles or youthful aspirations arrested, and many a joyous parental hope buried with them underneath the sod—"I will hear what God the Lord will speak." "I know that Your judgments are right, and that in faithfulness You have afflicted me"—looking forward to the hour when, reaching "the city of habitation," the wisdom and love of the 'perfect way' will be fully revealed—when, in the true resting-places above, we shall join in the triumphant ascription, "The Lord is righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works."

"Soon," says one now experiencing the reality of her own words, "Soon our tale shall be finished; the history of our lives will be put by in the library of God as a volume of His faithfulness." Yes! and heaven will resound with the song, which on earth is often warbled with trembling lips. The present life, in its conflicting relations, its discords and confusions, is the tuning of the musical instruments before the great Hallelujah chorus—the magnificent harmonies of eternity. Then that chorus, like

the anthem of the myriads in the prophet's vision, will become a louder and yet louder ascription, deepening until its effluent waves of sound become "like the noise of mighty thunders"—its everlasting refrain of praise—the sovereignty of God—"Alleluia! for the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!"

01.13. The Loving Chastener and Sympathizer

THE LOVING CHASTENER AND SYMPATHIZER "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten."—Revelation 3:19

"For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted—He is able to help those who are tempted."—Hebrews 2:18 Let these two verses be conjoined; we shall see the reason as we proceed.

(1.) "As many as I LOVE I rebuke and chasten!" What! speak of loving dealings when "the axe is being laid to the root of the tree;" its ringing sound heard amid cherished earthly groves; the ground strewn with lopped branches, scattered leaves, yes, too, and unspared, young saplings of promise! Yes! It is even so. "The wind passes over it and it is gone, and the place thereof shall know it no more! But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him" (Psalms 103:16-17). The words of this first of our motto-verses, moreover, observe, were spoken, not by the lips of Christ the Sufferer on earth, but by the glorified lips of Christ the Exalted King. They come wafted to us from within the Heavenly gates.

"No chastening for the present seems to be joyous but grievous!" This trouble from which you are now suffering may be utterly incomprehensible. Jehovah's name to you, as it often has been to His tried and afflicted children, may be that which He gave to Manoah—"Wonderful," "Secret," "Mysterious." But, be assured, that your present place and season of bereavement is the figurative "wilderness," where He "allures" His people (Hosea 2:14); rousing them from the low dream of earth, from the sordid and the secular, from busy care and debasing solicitude, to the divine and the heavenly—leading them to exchange the mess of earthly pottage for the bread of life, perishable substance for the fine gold of heavenly gain and durable riches.

Yours is the cruel blighting of young hope and pure affection—holiest ties formed, the memory of which is all that remains; the music of the streams and rivulets which once gladdened your pilgrim-way heard no more. The rills are dried by Him to lead to the great Fountainhead; the earthly links are broken in order that stronger and more enduring ones may be formed above; the breaches have been made in the house of clay, only to render more inviting "the building of God, the house not made with hands;" stimulating to live more for that world where all is perfection, where we shall stand "without fault before the throne." A writer notes that migratory birds are carried high by contrary winds, and that, by being so carried, their flight is assisted. So is it with trial. "The wind is contrary," but it impels to an upward and a Godwards flight. It is often in the cloudy day that the mountains look near us; so often in the soul's gloomiest seasons the hills of God are brought nearest. Tribulation is the first link in the Apostle's golden chain. Dr. Trench, in his "Study of Words," tells us that "tribulation" is derived from the Latin tribulum, which was the machine by which the grain was sifted. Tribulation is the process of sifting, by which God clears away the chaff and the golden grain is retained. See, too, the gracious result of this sifting process. "Tribulation," to use the comment we have heard in applying the reference, "works," what? We might have expected the natural result, "impatience." It is the reverse; by the imparted grace of

Him in whose hands the sifter is, "tribulation works patience" (Romans 5:3).

Suffering Christian! you may well trust Him who uttered the startling saying which heads this meditation—who gave the mightiest pledge of love He could give by giving His own life—that there is some all-wise "needs be" in the trial He has laid upon you. It is designed to bring you nearer Himself. It is one of His own appointed gateways, opening up and admitting to great spiritual blessings. He rebukes and chastens just because He loves; and, contradictory as the remark may seem, we believe never is His love more tender than when the rod is in His hand and the rebuke on His lips. The rebukes of other earthly friends are often mistimed; the result, it may be, of passion or caprice—"but He disciplines us for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness" (Hebrews 12:10).

"I do not ask my cross to understand,

My way to see;

Better in darkness just to feel Your hand,

And follow Thee."

God our Maker is said to give "songs in the night." The birds of earth which sing among the branches are silent, except in the day. Not so with those perched on the Tree of Life, His true people. Their melody often most sweetly rises in hours of darkness. To change the figure, are they themselves "Trees of Righteousness"? Often in the gloom of sorrow their foliage may appear to be dripping with rain, when they are in truth laden with the night-distilled dews of heaven! Had Christ, indeed, seen fit, He might have ordained that His people's pathway was to be without gloom or darkness, trial or tear; leading along sunny slopes, verdant valleys, and bright clusters of palm trees, with sunlit fronds. But to keep them humble, to teach them their dependence on Himself, to make their present existence a state of discipline and probation, He has ordered it otherwise. Their journey; as travelers, is at times through 'mist and cloudland'; their voyage, as seamen, through alternate calm and storm. They are like the vessel building in the dockyard. The unskilled and uninitiated can hear nothing but clanging hammers; they can see nothing but unshapely timbers and glare of torches. It is a scene of din and noise, dust and confusion. But all will at last be acknowledged as needed portions in the spiritual workmanship, when the soul, released from its earthly fastenings, is launched on the summer seas of eternity. "Then shall we know," to use the words of an earnest thinker, "that the dark scenes were dark with light too bright for mortal eye; the sorrow turning into dearest joys when seen to be the filling up of Christ's; who withholds not from us His own crown, bidding us drink of His cup and be baptized with His baptism; and saying to our reluctant hearts, 'What I do you know not now, but you shall know hereafter.'" "Glory to God for all," was Chrysostom's last saying. No nobler result of trial surely than this, to lead the mourner to grope his tearful way more meekly and trustfully in search of a Savior's hand, seeking only to hear His guiding voice saying, "This is the way; walk in it."

(2.) Our second motto-verse follows the other in a comforting sequence. There can be no more gracious whisper in the ear of bereavement. What an infinitude of solace to every sorrowing one, including the sacred group of mourners for whom this book is more specially intended, is contained in the simple declaration, "In that He Himself has suffered, being tempted!" Jesus, the Incarnate God, yet "made in fashion as a man," had a mysterious identity of experience with His

suffering and tempted people, so that nothing can happen to the members but what has happened to the Head. They can feel that no sorrow shades their souls but the same darkened His. "As He is," so are they "in this world" (1 John 4:17). He Himself—the thorn-crowned King—knows every thorn which pierces them, every pang of spirit and pang of body. The loss of beloved friends, temptations to distrust God's providence, to pervert and misapply His Word, to question the rectitude and reason of His dealings. What unutterable consolation, in every hour of earthly trouble, to look up to the Brother in our nature—"the Prince who has power with God," and to say, "He has suffered, being tempted!" In His glorified state He still commiserates the case of each one of His heart-stricken woe-worn people! He tenderly feels their every wound, seeing that, as the Captain of their salvation, He was Himself "made perfect through sufferings."

Afflicted believer! rejoice that sorrow and suffering have (if the expression dare be used) assimilated Christ with you, and you with Christ, in this your trial-hour. With what a Divine significance, augmented and intensified by subsequent experience, can He say, "I know your sorrows!" If you are bleeding under some severe infliction of the rod, severe in its very tenderness, ready to say in the bitterness of your grief, "No one knows, no one can gauge the depth of my anguish"—He can—He does. "He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust." With reverence we say it—God—the Omnipotent, Omniscient God—cannot, with all the infinitude of His nature, sympathize. He can compassionate; but He cannot sympathize in the way of feeling with us. Sympathy requires, as its two conditions, identity of nature and identity of experience. "We have such a High Priest;" One who is said to be (not touched with our infirmities), but "touched with the feeling of our infirmities." The beautiful verse which now presents itself, gives more comfort still. The words affirm not merely that Christ has identity of experience—a passive sympathy with His tried people—He is also the succourer of the tempted—"He is able to support those who are tempted."

If He be summoning any of you to bear some peculiarly heavy burden, or exacting from you some peculiarly heavy sacrifice, He will not allow the burden to crush, or the fiery trial to consume. He will keep you in the crucible as long, but no longer, than He sees to be absolutely needful to test your faith and purify your graces. All that concerns you and yours is in His hands. As we see the Angels of Tribulation with their sevenfold vials issuing forth from the gate of heaven (Revelation 15:1), how blessed to know that they are marshaled, commissioned by the great Lord of Angels, the once suffering but now exalted Redeemer! In Zechariah's vision of "the man on the red horse" (Zechariah 1:8)—behind HIM were angels and providences—"the black, and speckled, and white horses." But He is between them; ordering, regulating, appointing, all that befalls His people, trusting their persons and fortunes not even to an angel's care, without His own guidance, sanction, and direction. Are you now called sorrowfully to picture and ponder the last hours of some loved one—perhaps the final conflict—the close of all—the silent death-chamber—the sadder sequel of the Early Grave? He—yes, HE—can say with the same exalted sympathy, "I know them all." To the living Christian in his season of affliction He can say, "I am He who lives." But to the dying Christian, or of the dying Christian, He can add, "I am He who was dead." I know well, through the memories of My cross and passion, that struggle-hour! I know what it is, O bereaved, to die! And because I know this, I can follow you to the brink of Jordan as well as in the wilderness! Fear not to think of what your loved ones have passed through. These buffeting billows of the Border river have swept over Me. And with the thought of Me as their precursor, you

can take up for them, as one of your "Night Songs," or you can sing it as you anticipate for yourselves the same inevitable hour—"Behold, the Ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth passes over before you into Jordan!" (Joshua 3:11).

01.14. Divine Tears over an Early Grave

DIVINE TEARS OVER AN EARLY GRAVE, and THE SLEEP OF THE DEAD "Jesus wept!"—John 11:35 "Our friend Lazarus sleeps."—John 11:11

Let us turn aside for a little and see this great sight. It is the Creator of all worlds in tears—the God-man Mediator dissolved in tenderest grief. These tears form the most touching episode in sacred story; and if we are in sorrow, it may either dry our own or give them the warrant to flow when we are told—Jesus wept!

Whence those tears? There is often, as we have remarked in a previous meditation, a false interpretation put upon this brief verse, as if it denoted the expression of the Savior's sorrow for the loss of a loved friend. This, it is plain, it could not be. However mingled may have been the hopes and fears of the weeping mourners around him, He at least knew that in a few brief moments Lazarus was to be restored. He could not surely weep so bitterly, possessing as He then did, the confident assurance that death was about to give back its captive, and light up every tear-dimmed eye with an ecstasy of joy. Whence, then, we again ask, this strange and mysterious grief? We have space only for two, among other reasons.

(1). Jesus wept out of sympathy for the bereaved. The hearts at His side were breaking with anguish. All unconscious of how soon and how wondrously their sorrow was to be turned into joy, the appalling thought was alone present to them in all its fearfulness—"Lazarus is dead!" When He, the God-man Mediator, with the refined sensibilities of His tender heart, beheld the poignancy of their affliction, the pent-up torrent of His own human sympathies could be restrained no longer. His tears flowed too. But it would be a contracted view of the tears of Jesus, to think that two solitary mourners in a Jewish graveyard engrossed and monopolized that sympathy. It had a vastly wider sweep.

There were hearts, yes, myriads of desolate sufferers in ages then unborn, who He knew would be brought to stand as you, reader, have lately been, and as He was then doing, by the grave of loved relatives—mourners who would have no visible Comforter or Restorer to rush to, as had Martha and Mary, to assuage their grief, and give them back their dead; and when He thought of this, "Jesus wept!"

What an interest it gives to this scene of weeping, to think that at that eventful moment the Savior had before Him the bereaved of all time—that His eye was roaming at that moment through deserted chambers, and vacant seats, and opened graves, down to the end of the world! The Rachels weeping for their children—the "little daughters" that "lay dying;" the young men "carried out—the only sons of their mothers;" the Ezekiels mourning in the dust and ashes of disconsolate widowhood, "the desire of their eyes taken away by a stroke;" the unsolaced sisters brooding over a sad future, with the prop and joy of existence swept down—the light of their being eclipsed in mysterious darkness!

Think (as you are now perusing these pages), throughout the wide world, how many breaking hearts there are—how loud the wail of suffering humanity, could we but hear it!—those written childless and fatherless, and friendless and homeless!—Bethany-processions pacing with slow and measured step to deposit their earthly all in the custody of the tomb! Think of the Marys and Marthas who are now "going to some grave to weep there," perhaps with no Savior's unseen, yet graciously ever-present smile to gladden them—or the desolate chambers that are now resounding to the plaintive dirge, "O Absalom, Absalom! would God I had died for you; O Absalom, my son! my son!" Think of all these experiences at that moment vividly brought before the Redeemer's eye—the long and loud miserere, echoing dismally from the remotest bounds of time, and there "entering into the ear of God Almighty," and can you wonder that—Jesus wept?

Blessed and amazing picture of the Lord of glory! It combines the delineation alike of the tenderness of His humanity, and the majesty of His Godhead. His Humanity! It is revealed in those teardrops, falling from a human eye on a human grave. His Godhead! It is manifested in His ability to take in with a giant grasp all the prospective sufferings of His suffering people.

Weeping believer! your anguished spirit was included in those Bethany tears! Be assured your grief was visibly portrayed at that moment to that omniscient Savior. He had all your sorrows before Him—your anxious moments during the tedious sickness—the trembling suspense—the nights of weary watching—the agonizing revelation of "no hope;" the pulses of that young life ebbing; the fresh green sods of that early tomb. Bethany's graveyard became to Him a picture-gallery of the world's aching hearts; and yours, yes! yours was there! And as He beheld it, Jesus wept!"

(2.) Jesus wept when He thought of the triumphs of Death!

He was treading a burial-ground; mouldering heaps were around Him—silent sepulchral caves, giving forth no echo of life. They must have significantly called to the mind of the Divine Spectator how sin had blasted and scathed His noblest workmanship, converting the fairest province of His creation into one vast Necropolis—one dismal "city of the dead"—the body, "so fearfully and wonderfully made," and on which He had originally placed His own impress of "very good," ruined, and resolved into a mass of humiliating dust! If the architect mourns over the destruction of some favorite edifice which the storm has swept down, or the fire has wrapped in conflagration and reduced to ashes; if the sculptor mourns to see his breathing marble with one crude stroke hurled to the ground, and its fragments scattered at his feet—what must have been the sensations of the Almighty Architect of the human frame, at whose completion the morning stars and the sons of God chanted a loud anthem, as He thought of that frame, now a devastated wreck, mouldering in dissolution and decay, the King of Terrors sitting in regal state, holding His high holiday over a vassal world! In Bethany He beheld only a few of these broken and prostrate columns, but they could not fail to be suggestive of millions on millions which were yet in coming ages to undergo the same doom of mortality.

If even our less sensitive hearts are wrung with emotion at the tidings of some mournful catastrophe, which occupies, after all, but some passing hour in the world's history, but which has carried death and lamentation into many households—the sudden pestilence that has swept down its thousands—the gallant vessel that was a moment before spreading proudly its white wings to the gale, the joyous hearts on board dreaming of hearth and home, and "the many ports that would

exult in the gleam of her mast"—the next! hurrying down to the depths of an ocean grave, with no survivor to tell the story!—Or the terrible records of war—the ranks of bold and brave laid low in the carnage of battle—youth and strength and beauty and rank and friendship blent in one 'red burial!'—if these and such-like mournful tales of death, and the power of death, affect at the moment even the most callous among us, causing the lip to grow pale, and demanding the tribute of more than a tear—oh! what must it have been to the Omniscient eye and exquisitely sensitive spirit of Jesus, as, taking in all time at a glance, He beheld the Pale Horse with its ghastly rider trampling under foot the vast human family, converting the globe into a mournful Valley of vision; vessels freighted with immortality lying stranded on the shores of Time.

Yes! we can only understand the full import of these tears of Jesus, as we imagine to ourselves His Godlike eye penetrating at that moment every churchyard; the mausoleums of the rich—the lowly graves of the poor; the marble cenotaph of the noble and illustrious, slumbering under fretted aisle and cathedral canopy—the myriads whose only requiem is chanted by the bleak winds of the desert or the chimes of the ocean! The child carried away in the twinkling of an eye—the blossom just opening, and then frost-blighted; the aged father, cut down like a shock of corn in its season; the young exulting in the prime of manhood; the pious and benevolent, the great and good, succumbing indiscriminately to the same inexorable decree; the erring and thoughtless, reckless of all warning, hurried away in the midst of scorned mercy—as He beheld this ghastly funeral procession moving before Him, the whole world going to the same long home, and He Himself left alone the survivor—can we wonder that Jesus wept? And yet to pass, before we close, from this scene of the Tears and the Grave—in another gladdening sense He could say, "Our friend Lazarus sleeps!" And with a still more glorious and exalted meaning than when He spoke them on His way to that Bethany burial-ground, does He utter the same to us regarding our beloved dead. Here it is that Christianity and Paganism meet together in impressive and significant contrast. The one comes to the dark river with her pale, sickly lamp. It refuses to burn—the damps of Lethe dim and quench it. Philosophy tries to discourse on death as a "stern necessity"—of the duty of passing heroically into this mysterious, oblivion-world—taking with bold heart "the leap in the dark," and confronting, as we best can, blended images of annihilation and terror. The Gospel takes us to the tomb, and shows us Death vanquished and the grave spoiled. Death truly, too well do those whose eyes trace these pages know, is in itself an unwelcome messenger at their door. It is the dark event in this our earth—the deepest of the many deep shadows of an otherwise fair creation—a cold, cheerless thing, lying at the heart of humanity, freezing up the gushing fountains of joyous life. But the Gospel shines, and the cold iceberg melts. The Sun of Righteousness effects what philosophy, with all its boasted power, never could. Jesus is the abolisher of Death. He has taken all that is terrible from it. So complete, indeed, is the Redeemer's victory, that He Himself speaks of it as no longer a reality, but a shadow—a phantom foe from which we have nothing to dread.

"Whoever believes in Me shall never die." "If anyone keeps My words, he shall never see death." These are an echo of the Psalmist's most familiar words, a transcript of his expressive figure, when he pictures the dark valley to the believer as the valley of a "shadow." The substance is removed! When the gaunt spirit meets him on the midnight waters, he may, like the disciples at first, be led to "cry out for fear." But a gentle Voice of love and tenderness rebukes his dread, and calms his misgivings—"It is I! be not afraid."

Yes! Jesus dries your tears with the encouraging assurance, "Your dead shall live; together with My body they shall arise." 'Let your Lazarus—your child, your son, your daughter, your loved and loving young companion or friend—"sleep on now and take their rest;" the time will come when My voice shall be heard proclaiming, "Awake, and sing, you that dwell in dust:"—"The winter is' past, the rain is over and gone, the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle-dove is heard in the land. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away." Soon shall the day-dawn of glory streak the horizon; and then, I shall go that I may awake them out of sleep!

"Therefore, comfort one another with these words!"

01.15. The Power of God

THE POWER OF GOD "He rules by His power forever!"—Psalms 66:7 The Power of God is a glorious theme—an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast, in the season of trial. Perhaps especially, when stooping in parental sorrow over some life passed away, we turn, by instinctive contrast, from the drooping of the floweret or the bending of the tender sapling, to the strength and glory of the Tree of Life. The Psalm from which these words are taken, is one of the many that were inspired by memories of the Sinai wilderness—the great drama of the Exodus. Our motto-verse is ushered in by the proudest of these memories, "Come and see the works of the Lord...He turned the sea into dry land. They went through the flood on foot; there did we rejoice in Him...He rules by His power forever." Varied are the figures employed by the sacred minstrel in describing the illustrious event. Jehovah had broken the meshes of the enclosing net (Psalms 66:11). From the fire of Egypt's brick-kilns He had rescued them (Psalms 66:2). Through the furnace they had emerged purified (Psalms 66:10). Through the raging flood of the Red Sea He had conducted them (Psalms 66:6). They had only to "stand still and see the salvation of God" (Psalms 66:5 and Psalms 66:12). "For You, O God, have proved us—You have tried us as silver is tried. You brought us into the net; You laid affliction upon our loins. You have caused men to ride over our heads—we went through fire and through water; but YOU brought us out into a wealthy place" (Psalms 66:10-12). An emancipation effected from Egypt—the territory of the greatest and proudest of the old-world dynasties—an enslaved people, in the might of their God, rising in a night, breaking their chains, leaving every memento of bondage and degradation behind them; and after a miraculous march of forty years, at last entering triumphantly the promised land! All this could not have been accomplished without the cognisance of the surrounding nations. Hence the Psalmist, remembering these glorious "works of the Lord and His wonders of old," breaks out into a lofty appeal to the kingdoms of his own age to recognize the hand of Israel's Jehovah. (Psalms 66:1), "Make a joyful noise unto God, all you lands—sing forth the honor of His name; make His praise glorious. Say unto God, How terrible are You in Your works! through the greatness of Your power shall Your enemies submit themselves unto You...He rules by His power forever!"

What a glorious rock-shadow in which to take shelter! What an unspeakably comforting assurance, whether to nations or to individuals, that the same mighty hand which shattered the chains of the Hebrew slaves, and smote the tongue of the Egyptian sea, may be recognized in every event which befalls His people—every public calamity, every domestic heart-sorrow. Whether it be the bondage and deliverance of a nation, or the preparing and withering of a family gourd, we can write above all, "He rules by His power forever!" Whether He smites or heals, darkens or gladdens, gives or takes away, it is ours to say, in the words of this inspiring hymn (Psalms 66:8-9), "Oh, bless our God, you people, and make the voice of His praise to be heard—who holds our soul in life." Life is His. He kindles the spark, and, when He sees fit, He quenches it. Death is but the revocation of His own grant, the lapsing of the lease into the hands of life's great Proprietor. "He turns man to destruction, and says, Return, O children of men." The Psalm is supposed by some to have been specially composed by David on the occasion of that

great festival at the end of his reign, when, after having collected material for his projected Temple on Mount Moriah, "all Israel" assembled, at the summons of their aged king, and in response to his appeal "consecrated their service unto the Lord." What could be more natural than for the minstrel monarch, at such a time, to revert in the first instance to God's wonderful transactions with them as a nation ever since the hour of the Exodus; and then to pass to a personal retrospect of His dealings with himself throughout his chequered history, from the morning of his life in the valleys of Bethlehem until now, when the sun was westering and the shadows were falling? He too had to tell of varied sorrows. He too had to tell of 'early graves,' yes, and of sadder than early graves. He too had been "tried as silver is tried;" "brought through fire and through water," and had "affliction laid upon his loins." But even in the mingled retrospect, in which all these figures of speech met—the furnace, the net, the fire, the flood, the sackclothed loins—he could see mercy—rich, undeserved mercy, mingling with and tempering judgment. The dark clouds of his stormy life-career were alternated with glorious sunshine—the dreary spots of the wilderness were far outnumbered by the green. Sheltering palm trees stood conspicuous amid stretches of barren sand. And remembering how graciously God had heard his prayers in the past, supported him in trouble, and made his earthly trials conspire for the good of his soul, we can understand how appropriately he records his votive resolve in Psalms 66:13, "I will go into Your house with burnt-offerings; I will pay You my vows which my lips have uttered and my mouth has spoken when I was in trouble. I will offer unto You burnt sacrifices of fatlings, with the incense of rams; I will offer bullocks with goats. Come and hear, all you who fear God, and I will declare what He has done for my soul." He gives to God all the glory of his past deliverances and triumphs. He takes none to himself. "Sing forth," he says, "the honor of His name—who does not allow our feet to be moved." The Psalm and its many devout and instructive sentiments was designed for the Church of God and believers in every age. Its lessons are not local but universal. The safe and triumphant passage of Israel through the Red Sea and the Jordan of old, are pledges of covenant mercy to His people in all times and in all seasons of affliction. Through every sea of sorrow and trouble He makes a passage for them; gives songs in the night, takes off their sackcloth, and girds them with gladness. It is a striking assertion, which we have before alluded to in a previous meditation, but which we may once more note in its place in the triumphant Hymn where it occurs—"They went through the flood on foot"—(the place where we might have expected nothing but trembling and terror, anguish and dismay)—"there," says the Psalmist, "did we rejoice in Him."

How many there are who can endorse this as their experience, that "there," in their very seasons of distress and sadness, they have been enabled, as they never did before, to triumph and rejoice! How near their God in covenant is brought! how brightly shine His promises! In the day of their prosperity they cannot see the brilliancy of these. Like Jacob at Jabbok, it is when their earthly sun goes down that the Divine Angel comes forth, and they wrestle with Him and prevail. It was at night, "in the evening," Aaron lit the sanctuary lamps. It is in the night of trouble the brightest lamps of the believer are often kindled.

It was in his loneliness and exile, that John had the glorious vision of his Redeemer. There is many a Patmos still in the world, whose brightest remembrances are those of God's presence and upholding grace and love, in solitude and sadness. How many pilgrims, still passing through these Red Seas and Jordans of earthly affliction, will be enabled in the retrospect of eternity to say—full of the memories of God's great goodness—"THERE"—in those dark experiences, with the surging

waves on every side, deep calling to deep, Jordan, as when Israel crossed it, in 'the time of overflowing' (flood)—yet "THERE did we rejoice in Him!"

It was when the disciples were in their hour of extremity, during the storm on Gennesaret, giving themselves up to the hopelessness of despair, that, "in the fourth watch of the night," when darkness was deepest and danger greatest, the great Deliverer appeared on the crested wave—"Jesus came unto them, walking on the sea!" It was, as we have already seen, when the bereft of Bethany had, as they imagined, consigned the fond treasure of their affections to everlasting silence; and, as they were sitting in the pillaged home, wondering at the mysterious delay on the part of the One Being who could alone have arrested that winged arrow which had laid low the love of their hearts—at that crisis-hour the great Conqueror of death appeared, to revive the smouldering ashes of their faith, and reanimate the joy and prop of their existence! "Unless the Lord had been my help, my soul had almost dwelt in silence!" And even when He does not appear visibly to support; when some treasured comfort is withdrawn; or when deliverance from some threatened earthly trial or threatened evil is not given; when cradles are emptied and youthful voices silenced, it is in order that we may the more surely find our only and all-sufficient Portion in HIM. The shelter of the canvas tent is removed. But it only the more endears to us the shadow of the Great Rock. Observe the difference between the failing of the world's consolations and refuges and joys, and those of the true Christian—When the worldly man mourns his dried-up brooks, or his stripped and dismantled tents, he has lost his all—he has nowhere else to turn; there is nothing left him but the waterless channel—the dreary outlook of blighted desert—the tear of despair—the broken heart—the grave! In the case of the believer, when one blessing is withdrawn, his God has other spiritual comforts for him in reversion. He may have too good cause to appropriate the words, as descriptive of his domestic joys—"And it came to pass, after a while, that the brook dried up" (1 Kings 17:7); "Suddenly are my tents spoiled, and my curtains in a moment" (Jeremiah 4:20). But "happy is the man who has the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God."

"Sing forth," then, to revert to the exhortation of the writer of this psalm, "the honor of His name, and make His praise glorious." There are, we repeat, seasons, those whose eyes fall on these pages only know too well, when we cannot tune this harp of broken strings—when the summons of the 5th verse is more appropriately ours, "Come, and see the works of God—He is dreadful in His doing towards the children of men;" when we have to say unto Him, "How dreadful are You in Your works!" But while justice and judgment are the habitation of His throne, mercy and truth go continually before His face. While "God has spoken once, yes, twice have I heard this, that POWER belongs unto God; also unto You, O Lord, belongs MERCY." "We went through fire and through water, but You brought us out into a wealthy place!"

Occupying now the glorious place of security, which can alone be found in Christ and His finished salvation, let us commit the keeping of our souls, and of all near and dear to us, to Him for the future in well-doing; knowing that there will be no floods or fires sent but what He appoints; and, if sent, let us seek to be able to say, "Your will be done!" That so we may come at last to stand without fault before the throne, with every flood passed, every fire quenched, every tear dried. With room found for all whom death has severed from us in that "wealthy place" above; and confident then, at least, that the Divine dispensations and dealings were for our good, we shall be able to utter the invitation of this inspired minstrel, at the close of his song—"Come, and hear, all you who

fear God, and I will declare what He has done for my soul."

02.00. A Book of Private Prayer for Morning

A Book of Private Prayer for Morning and Evening J. R. MacDuff, 1890

INTRODUCTION The verses of Scripture at the head of each prayer, are made suggestive of thought for the morning and evening prayers which follow. This, it is hoped, will secure greater variety in the subject matter of devotion. To all who have God as their Father, these aids to devotion are inscribed.

First Morning "Doubtless you are our Father." Isaiah 63:16.

"One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." Ephesians 4:6. And He said unto them, When you pray, say — MY FATHER in heaven, God over all, blessed for evermore; draw near to me in infinite mercy this morning. I laid me down and slept; I awaked, because You did sustain me. Vouchsafe now the blessing which makes rich—and adds no sorrow with it. May the conscious sense of Your love and nearness, help and guide, cheer and comfort me throughout the day; that its every duty begun, carried on, and ended in You—may redound, through Jesus, to Your praise and glory.

All Your creatures own Your paternal care. You open Your hand, and satisfy the desire of every living thing. With a still deeper reverence and filial affection, may I be enabled to look up to the omniscient, omnipresent One, and address You by the endearing name, "Doubtless You are our Father." While I love to trace Your presence and power in nature and in daily providence — the everlasting watch kept by You day and night over Your creation — I adore You especially as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in Him — MY covenant God and heavenly Father. It is to Him I owe my every adoption privilege. Through Him has been revealed the Father's heart of tenderness and the Father's home of love. By Him the gracious accents were uttered, and the truth of the gracious name confirmed, "My Father, and your Father; my God, and your God." As the Way, and the Truth, and the life — God's way to the sinner, and the sinner's way to God — I would thus dismiss all servile fear, as I now bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar.

Seal and ratify to me, a saving interest in this divine Fatherhood. Inspire me more and more with the love and confidence of Your adopted children. With some good measure of faith and trust, may it be mine to say, "MY Lord and my God!" "I know whom I have believed." Put more of the filial spirit within me — the spirit of joy and peace; of restful reliance on Your good and gracious guidance here, and the blessed assurance of Your full vision and fruition hereafter. Keep me humble and lowly; make me charitable and forgiving, pure in thought and pure in deed. May it be my habitual aspiration to walk worthy of You unto all well-pleasing, as it befits the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty.

Bless all in sorrow. In the midst of the earthquake and the fire, let them listen to the still, small voice. May every misgiving be silenced. "He who spared not His own Son" may well encourage confidence, and inspire the un murmuring word, "Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in Your

sight."

Regard in kindness my beloved friends and relatives. Watch between us when we are absent one from another; and may their names be written among the living in Jerusalem. Bless Your church universal. Lengthen its cords, and strengthen its stakes. Promote all efforts for the proclamation of Your truth, and for hastening the time when unto Him who is above all, and through all, and in all—the voice of universal adoration will be heard ascending.

Meanwhile, in reliance on a promised answer, and the bestowment of all needed present and future blessings, I would unite with Your redeemed family in calling You my Father.

"MY Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. May Your kingdom come. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, just as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

First Evening

"Your reward shall be great, and you shall be the children of the Most High: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil." Luke 6:35 I will arise and go to my Father, and will say unto Him — MY FATHER, I would seek to end another day with You, looking up for Your promised blessing. How wondrous are the words, just read, from the lips of Your dear Son! You condescend not only to invite all to draw near to You in filial trust and confidence, but you call them "children," yes, "children of the Most High." Your kindness is, like Yourself, illimitable. An earthly father would long ago have disowned and disinherited me. But I listen to the amazing assurance — "He is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil." Past evil and demerit and sin have not excluded me from hope of pardon, or involved the forfeiture of favor and love. You have "devised means by which Your banished one may not be expelled from Your presence." You are ever waiting to be gracious; not willing that any should perish, but that all should turn from their wickedness and live.

Anew would I wash, this evening, in the opened fountain. Lord, take away my unthankfulness, and attune my lips to the never-ceasing song of Your redeemed — "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift!" Deepen within me, a sense of my obligations to Christ for all that He has done and suffered on my behalf. May it be my habitual desire to love Him more and serve Him better — my soul a consecrated altar, and my life a living sacrifice"

I would thank You, too, for Your many temporal mercies, the many tokens of Your unmerited goodness in my daily lot. While other hearts and homes are clouded with sorrow, or saddened with poverty, or stricken with suffering — You have caused me to lie down by the green pastures, You have led me beside the still waters. Your goodness and mercy, like two guardian angels, are still following me, as they have followed me until now. I may well accept Your love and faithfulness in the past, as pledges and guarantees for the future. Blessed be Your name, that that future — the morrow — is unknown. Better still, that it is in Your hands; that all which concerns me and mine, is planned and ordered by You; and that You have promised strength for the day.

I pray for any who especially stand in need of my prayers: for those in the thick of the spiritual conflict, environed with many temptations; for those laid on couches of sickness and suffering; for those passing through the shadowed valley; for those mourning their "loved and lost." Make them,

severally and individually, partakers of Your own everlasting consolation and good hope through grace.

Hear these my evening supplications; and enable me to close the day by uttering, with ever-growing reverence, the filial ascription — my Father.

"MY Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. May Your kingdom come. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, just as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

Second Morning

"And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Zion, and with him a hundred forty and four thousand, having His Father's name written in their foreheads." Revelation 14:1 And He said unto them, When you pray, say — MY FATHER, I draw near to You in the name of Him whom You hear always — the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world; the Lamb now standing on Mount Zion; the center of the adoring reverence and worship of the church above, yet who is ever waiting to receive the petitions of His church on earth, and present them to You — the Father of an infinite majesty!

Gracious God, accept of me in the Beloved. Inspire me with filial love and devotion. May my prayer be set forth before You as incense, and the lifting up of my hands as the morning sacrifice. You have again dispersed the darkness of another night, and permitted me to see the light of a new day. Grant me Your blessing throughout its hours. Let me enjoy conscious nearness to You, my Father in heaven. May I covet, above all, Your favor and approval; and then, whatever else I lack, I must be happy.

Before I enter on its duties, do sprinkle the lintel and door-posts of my heart anew with the covenant-token. I rejoice to think of that ransomed multitude — the hundred and forty and four thousand — the already ingathered of the church triumphant. That same blood which has secured for them pardon and peace, still cleanses from all sin; there is still forgiveness for all, salvation for all your redeemed children. I look to Him as my only Savior. Every blessing I enjoy, temporal and spiritual, emanates from the Lamb on Mount Zion! To Him may I be enabled to give the willing surrender and homage of an undivided heart. May all I have, be elevated and sanctified by the thought that it thus comes to me through His adorable merits — the purchase of His cross and passion. O Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world, I would follow You wherever You see fit to guide me. As God, You are mighty to save; as Man, You are mighty to pity and compassionate. Your sympathetic heart is responsive to every throb of human anguish. Your grace is promised to enable me to cope with all emergencies and vanquish all temptations. Over my spiritual enemies, in You I am more than conqueror!

Bless Your whole church, the myriads of Your children throughout the world, who, whatever be the distinction of Christian creed and profession, have, better than all earthly symbol, their Father's name written in their foreheads. Hasten the number of Your elect. Prepare the world for the advent of its King. Let the year of Your redeemed come, when the shout of joyful welcome will be heard from "a people prepared of the Lord." "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of Him who brings good tidings, who publishes peace; who says unto Zion, Your God reigns!"

Look in kindness on my beloved friends. May the Father's name be engraved in their foreheads also. Bless and sanctify them in their varied duties and engagements in the world; may they give You now the devotion of filial hearts; and at last may they be presented unblamable in the day of Christ's appearing.

Compassionate Your sorrowing children. May all murmuring thoughts be hushed by the assurance — "It is the will of my Father!" At present they may feel Your dispensations mysterious — no silver lining in the cloud. But let them cherish the joyful confidence that when they come to stand by the luminous gates of glory, in Your light they shall see light; and sing together, without a jarring note, the song of providence and the song of grace — the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb.

I would sum up these my unworthy petitions, in His strength-imparting, all-prevailing prayer — "MY Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. May Your kingdom come. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, just as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

Second Evening "Will you not from this time cry unto me, My father?" Jeremiah 3:4.

"Return, O backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings. Behold, we come unto you; for you are the Lord our God." Jeremiah 3:22.

I will arise and go to my Father, and will say unto Him — MY FATHER, I thank You for sparing me to see the close of another day. Your gracious hand has been around me throughout its hours, shielding me from peril, guarding me from temptation, upholding me with the blessings of Your goodness. Before I lie down to rest, I would supplicate Your pardoning mercy.

Graciously forgive all that I have said or done amiss. If there is anything in the retrospect of the day, or of past days, which Your pure eye sees blameworthy, and which my own conscience condemns — sins of omission or sins of commission; if I feel that I have not been walking and living and acting — as seeing You who are invisible; if I have the humbling consciousness of suffering other lords to have dominion over me — may I listen to the divine voice which has just spoken in Your Holy Word, "Return, O backsliding children!" And may I be ready with the response, "Behold, I come unto You; for You are the Lord my God."

Strengthen the things which remain that are ready to die. With new self-surrender, may I answer Your own divine challenge, "Will you not from this time cry unto Me, My Father!" Saturate me with filial love. Quicken and stimulate every good resolution. May that gracious, paternal name hush all fears, and dispel all doubts, and inspire unwavering trust.

I take refuge anew at the Redeemer's cross! I plead anew the ever-faithful saying, that He came into the world to save sinners. By His grace alone — His free, sovereign, unmerited grace — I am what I am.

I have good cause, from saddening memories of my failures and faithlessness, to be distrustful of the future — on Your same sustaining, restraining, energizing grace, may I be enabled to repose. Hold me up — and I shall be safe! Let me live from day to day, and from hour to hour, alike in temporal and spiritual things — with a realizing dependence on Your bounty.

Bless my dear friends. Encompass us together now with Your favor; and, looking to You as our Father, fit us at last for the great family meeting in the home of heaven!

Compassionate those in sorrow. May they, too, be hushed to quiet rest in the assured belief, that all which concerns them and theirs, is dictated by Your unerring wisdom. Amid the loss of earthly friends and the wreck of earthly portions, may they cleave to the Friend who never wearies and never fails and never dies — "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and forever!" And now, as the curtains of night are drawn around me, I anew plead with You to wash out the defilements of the day. Blessed Intercessor — the Brother in my nature, ever-living, ever-loving Lord, the Prince who has power with God, and at all times prevails — pray for me that my faith may never fail. And so, in the words consecrated by being Yours, may I with filial confidence be able to say — "MY Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. May Your kingdom come. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, just as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

Third Morning

"He who spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall he not with Him, also freely give us all things?" Romans 8:32 And He said unto them, When you pray, say — MY FATHER, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who in Him has begotten us again unto a living hope by His resurrection from the dead — may this morning bring with it a resurrection blessing. As partaker of His resurrection life, may I be enabled and quickened to seek those things which are above, where He sits at the right hand of God. May He breathe upon me His special salutation, "Peace be unto you!" "I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and unto my God, and your God!"

Gracious Giver of all good, may all the duties of the day be pervaded with a sense of Your favor — the bright consciousness of my Father's presence, and a Father's love. Every new morning brings with it fresh causes for gratitude, and fresh materials for praise. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits!

Especially would I remember the benefit of all benefits, the crown and consummation of all other mercies, in the gift of Jesus. You did not spare Your own, Your only Son, but delivered Him up for us all. Adored be Your name, for this pledge and guarantee of every minor blessing. After so wondrous a proof and token of Your love, how can I cherish the thought that You can send one superfluous trial, or exact one unnecessary sacrifice? That mightiest blessing within the compass of Almighty to bestow, carries with it the gracious certainty of all else needful alike for the body and the soul, for time and for eternity! Standing by the cross of Calvary, and beholding there the picture of a love, which in its heights and depths, no plummet-line can fathom, I can listen to Your own voice — a Father's voice — addressing each of Your children, "All things are yours!"

Lord, forgive my manifold transgressions. You know the fickleness of my faith, and the inconstancy of my love. I mourn that I have so little humbling, abiding conviction of my guilt and demerit. May an affecting sense of my shortcomings and sins, my weakness and unworthiness, keep me, this day and ever, near the atoning Sacrifice. I flee anew to the pavilion of Your love! I take refuge anew in the clefts of the Rock of Ages! Keep me near Yourself! No earthly good can

compensate for the loss of Your friendship! While, having the sweet sense of Your favor, I shall seek to rise superior to what the world may give or take away. Strengthen me with all might by Your Spirit in the inner man. My cry would be, "More grace, more grace!"

Give me singleness of eye and simplicity of aim. Disarm my temptations; solve my perplexities. Let me hear the gracious assurance echoing afresh the words of this morning, "My God shall supply all your needs, out of His riches in glory, by Christ Jesus!"

Extend Your Fatherly blessing to my beloved friends. Seal them unto the day of eternal redemption. May every relationship be hallowed in You, and thus earthly bonds will become eternal ones. Draw near in kindness to all who are in any ways afflicted or distressed in mind, body, and estate. Send down Your Holy Spirit as a divine Comforter. May Your dealings and discipline wean from earth, and train Your children for admission into the Father's better house and enduring home above. Take off their sackcloth, and gird them with gladness, enabling them to glorify You in the day of visitation.

Direct, control, and suggest this day, all my designs and thoughts and actions. Let me live under the sovereignty of that lofty motive — to walk and act so as to please You. May its every hour of duty and of service receive fresh consecration from the ever-inspiring words — "MY Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. May Your kingdom come. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, just as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

Third Evening

"May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word." 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17 I will arise and go to my Father, and will say to Him — MY FATHER, who delights to lavish on Your children tenderest love and pity — bestow, upon me and mine, "everlasting consolation and good hope through grace." The shadows of night are again falling around me. Under Your sleepless watch I am safe from all danger! O You who are the true Aaron, the mighty Pleader within the veil, the Angel standing by the golden altar — come forth from the holy place with Your censer full of much incense! Accept the evening sacrifice of the church throughout all the world, which You have purchased with Your blood. Bless Your people with peace.

I rejoice, blessed Savior, to contemplate the glories of Your person, the completeness of Your finished work. In You, I have the all-power of Godhead, and the all-sympathy of humanity — the great I AM, yet the Brother in my nature; mighty to save, yet mighty to pity and compassionate. May I joyfully listen to Your own gracious balm-words, which have so often hushed doubt and misgiving, and calmed the fever-heats of the soul: "Come unto Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Lord, may I ever feel that my heaviest burden and heaviest cross — is the burden and the cross of sin — the cross of an erring, treacherous, deceitful heart, tempting me to stray from the living God, and to seek my happiness and satisfaction independent of You. May the great love with which You have loved me, reanimate my drooping faith, and quicken me to love You more and to serve You better!

While thankful for creature and created blessings, may they ever possess a double preciousness by being linked with Yourself, the infinite Bestower. May the temporal mercies I enjoy be elevated by the thought that they are the emanations from a Father's hand — the pledges of a Father's love! Adored be Your name, that these are crowned by spiritual mercies — "everlasting consolation and good hope through grace" — that hope which "makes not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who is given unto us." By His quickening, energizing, sanctifying influences, may I become gradually transformed into Your glorious image! May He "comfort my heart," and "establish me in every good word and work." Let it be my habitual and earnest resolution to work while it is called day, while the solemn admonition sounds in my ears, "The night comes, wherein no man can work."

Bless those in affliction. Compassionate any who are suffering unspoken sorrows — trials and heartaches that can be confided to no ear but that of the All-merciful and All-loving. May every tear-dimmed eye be turned from care and doubt — to Him who suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow His steps.

Make me and all my dear friends partakers in the gladness and glory of Christ's resurrection life. May we be one in and with Him now, so that the tenderest ties of earth may be perpetuated before the throne; and the unstable unions here, be there rendered indissoluble.

Pity and compassionate a whole world. Forgive its sins, break its chains of slavery, sheathe its weapons of war. "Give peace in our time, O Lord; for there is none other who fights for us, but only You, O God." Hasten the period of predicted glory, when the blight shall be removed from this otherwise fair creation; when, delivered from the bondage of corruption, it shall be translated into the glorious liberty of Your children.

Before I retire to rest, I would pillow my head anew on the surety work of my divine Redeemer — on the "everlasting consolation and good hope through grace" purchased by His atoning death, and sealed by His prevailing intercession. It is in His name, and in accordance with His gracious authority and teaching, that I am permitted, this night and ever, to call You, my Father!

"MY Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. May Your kingdom come. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, just as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

Fourth Morning

"How gladly would I treat you like sons and give you a desirable land, the most beautiful inheritance of any nation! I thought you would call Me 'Father' and not turn away from following Me!" Jeremiah 3:19 And He said unto them, When you pray, say — MY FATHER, the name which disarms all fear and inspires deepest confidence and trust — enable me to pronounce it with child-like reverence and love. "Like as a father pities his children," — may the earthly be a type and parable of the heavenly. Rejoicing in the sanctity of this higher and more endearing filial relationship, may it be mine to say, "The lines have fallen unto me in pleasant places; yes," with You, and in You, my Father-God, "I have a goodly heritage."

You have awakened me once more from the unconscious hours of night and darkness. Come to me this morning in the plenitude of Your mercy. Replenish my empty vessel with the oil of Your grace. As I set out anew on the pilgrim path, may I have the conscious assurance of Your presence — that He who has "set me among the children" will be true to His faithful promise, and "shall not turn away from me."

I desire to make confession of my manifold transgressions. I have nothing to plead in extenuation. They have been committed against the clearest light and the fondest love. My own heart condemns me. My own conscience, blinded though it is to the evil and turpitude of sin, condemns me. You are the heart-searching and the thought-trying God; You know all things.

Look upon me in Jesus! Look upon me on account of what He has done and taught and suffered. I rejoice in the glorious assurance that the hands that were once outstretched for me on the cross, are now, with all-prevailing power, pleading for me before the throne! Rock of eternal Ages! Let me hide myself in You. Let me know, more and more, the conquering power of redeeming grace. May every high thought and lofty imagination be brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. May I have the increasing experience, O my Father in heaven, that Your service is perfect freedom; that in doing Your holy commandments, and obeying Your gracious will, I am treading indeed "a pleasant land," and am an heir to "a goodly heritage" — better than wealth of this world! Keep me from wandering away from You, and forfeiting the joys of Your salvation. Keep me watchful and vigilant. May I exercise a jealousy over my heart and its truant affections — curbing all selfishness and passion, avoiding all that would dishonor or compromise the Christian name, cultivating a filial fear of offending One so gracious and beneficent, seeking to live more habitually under the power of that lofty motive — to do my heavenly Father's will, and accomplish with fidelity the work, however lowly, You have given me to do.

Bless my beloved friends. If separated by distance, may our prayers blend at the mercy-seat; and may we have the joyous assurance that You can watch between us, when we are absent one from another.

Comfort, sustain, and solace all Christian mourners in their pilgrimage of sorrow. Open to them wells in the valley of Baca! Enable them reverentially to acquiesce in Your dispensations, however hard for flesh and blood to bear. Stripped of other blessings, may they rejoice in You as their supreme portion! As You have promised not to turn away from them — that when father and mother and all earthly friends forsake them, that You will take them up! May they say through their tears, "Turn unto me, and have mercy upon me, for I am desolate and afflicted!" May they know that You are faithful who has promised: "He shall call upon Me — and I will answer him! I will be with him in trouble! I will deliver him and honor him."

Arise, Lord, and have mercy upon Your children! Prince of Peace, take to Yourself Your great power and reign! Go forth in Your glorious apparel, traveling in the greatness of Your strength; manifest Yourself as "mighty to save!" Let Your glorious gospel be everywhere proclaimed, with its sublime message. May it heal all wounds, and redress all wrongs; may it rescue the tempted, and save the lost!

I would enter on the day's duties and engagements, its joys and its sorrows, under the shield and shelter of the same ever-blessed name and ever-blessed words — "MY Father in heaven,

hallowed be Your name. May Your kingdom come. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, just as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

Fourth Evening

"If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there, whom the father does not chasten?" Hebrews 12:7 I will arise and go to my Father, and will say unto Him — MY FATHER, who is ever dealing with Your children in love and pity, draw near to me this evening, while I render my tribute-offering of grateful praise. I thank You for sparing me. Others in the course of today have slept the sleep of death. Some have been called without a note of warning, into the eternal world. I am preserved to this hour in the land of the living and in the place of hope.

I will praise abundantly, the memory of Your great goodness. If, in the past, You have seen fit at times to darken my heart and my home, and to visit me with chastisement; I have reason, in the retrospect, to own and acknowledge that it was the chastening of love, the wisdom of paternal discipline. When these storms of the wilderness have beaten upon me, You have graciously led me under the shadow of the great Rock, and revealed Him, who is the Refuge from the storm and the Covert from the tempest, in all His preciousness! May I trust You still. I dare harbor no suspicions of Your faithfulness. I have rather only reason to wonder at Your patience and forbearance towards me. The kindest of earthly parents often mistake; but You are the unerring Father of Your redeemed children! There may be an ebb and flow in their love — but never in Yours! In all time of my tribulation, let me hear Your Fatherly voice; let me ever see some bright light in the darkest cloud. Even when Your dealings are inscrutable — when the why and wherefore are unrevealed — may I believe when I cannot see; and confide where I fail to trace the footsteps of Your love, saying in the spirit of the patient sufferer of old, "Though He slays me, yet will I trust in Him!"

Meanwhile, as Your feeble child — may I put my hand in Yours; not afraid of the day of trial, but knowing that when the struggle-hour comes, that You will bestow the needed grace — giving power to the faint, and to those who have no might, increasing strength. Above all, I pray that whatever Your varied dealings may be, whether in the way of prosperity or adversity, that they may be the means of bringing me nearer to Yourself.

Keep me from everything that would imperil my spiritual well-being. Deliver me from the fascinations, the evil maxims and principles of the world. Break their alluring spell! While thankfully accepting and joyfully using the manifold gifts of Your love, may these never be allowed to divert me from loftier and more enduring spiritual realities. Foster within me, the virtues of the Christian character. Give me a spirit of self-sacrifice, willing, if need be, to take up my cross and follow You. Make me humble and meek, lowly and submissive, jealous of anything that would alienate my affections from You — the highest good — the only supreme, all-satisfying Portion! Let me dread nothing so much as displeasing You, in thought, word, or deed. In whatever I do, may I be animated by the fear, the holy fear, of offending so loving and gracious a Father, and dismiss all other fear. Have mercy upon those who are still far from You. Cause them in their sad and unresting hours of estrangement from You, to think of the Father's heart, the Father's home, the Father's welcome. Deepen in them a sense of the misery of alienation from You, and the happiness of a full and gracious restoration to Your favor and peace. Confirm the irresolute and

wavering, in unswerving loyalty and love.

Bless my beloved friends. If distance separate us on earth, may we look forward with joyful assurance to that blissful day when severance shall be unknown, when we shall be re-gathered in the true home of heaven, and so be with one another, and with our great Lord — forever! Be the Comforter of any that are cast down. Overrule the dispensations of Your providence, for the good of Your sorrowing children. May this thought hush and dispel all misgiving and still every murmur, "You chasten us — because You love us!" You deal with us as Your sons! Lord, what are our severest trials, compared with what they might have been, had Your justice been laid to the line, and Your equity to the plumb-line! Now glorifying You, if need be, in the fires — may we look forward, beyond the night-watch, to the morning without clouds, when You shall terminate the tears of Your weeping children, and sorrow and sighing shall forever flee away! In the realized assurance of a holier and better than earth's most sacred relationships, I will this night both lay me down in peace and sleep, saying, in words which divinest lips have taught me — "MY Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. May Your kingdom come. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, just as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

Fifth Morning "You are the children of the Lord your God." Deuteronomy 14:1 "You have one Father, who is in heaven." Matthew 23:9 And He said unto them, When you pray, say — MY FATHER, look down upon me in Your great mercy, as I draw near on a new day to the throne of Your heavenly grace. I beseech You to hallow the filial bond which unites me to You. Give me, gracious God, a holy fear, as I now lay my morning sacrifice on Your altar; not the fear of bondage, but the reverent love inspired by consciousness of my adoption into Your family. The natural sun is again shining upon me. May the beams of the better Sun of righteousness disperse the shadows of sin and unbelief. May I walk all the day in the light of Your countenance.

How wondrous has been Your paternal love in the past! No earthly parent, not the kindest and most forbearing, could have borne with me like You have done — often tracking my wandering footsteps; bringing me back to peace, and rest, and home; often and graciously accepting my confession, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before You, and am no more worthy to be called Your son!" Grant me forgiveness for the past, and grace and strength for the future.

I look anew to Christ as my only Savior, "As many as received Him, to them He gave the power to become the sons of God, even to those who believe on His name." Lord, I believe! Help my unbelief! Lord, increase my faith! As a member of Your covenant household, may I seek to live under the sovereignty of that lofty motive — to walk and act so as to please You; and with singleness of eye, and simplicity of purpose — to glorify Your holy name. Be with me throughout this day. Be my Protector from danger, my Shield and Guardian in temptation. Arm me for the spiritual conflict. Realizing my own weakness, may I be strong in You, and in the power of Your might. May all Your dealings and discipline, whether in the way of joy or of sorrow — have the sanctified effect of bringing me nearer You — the only Portion that can never be taken from me! Living or dying, may I be Yours!

Bless my beloved friends. May it be said of all of them, "You are the children of the Lord your God!" And may they, too, be able to look up to the mightiest of Beings, and call You by the endearing name, "Abba, Father!"

Compassionate all Your children who are in sorrow; and any in whom I may be more deeply interested. In their hour of darkness and desolation — it may be in the deep mystery of their trials — may it be theirs trustingly to say, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight!"

Bless Your Church everywhere. Bless the whole world. Through the proclamation of Your glorious gospel, may more and more everywhere be brought to participate and exult in this divine Fatherhood and Brotherhood, and to walk as children of the light.

I ask these requests, and requests for every other needed blessing, in the name and for the sake of Him who, when He was on earth, taught us to say — "MY Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. May Your kingdom come. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, just as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

Fifth Evening

"I give them eternal life, and they will never perish—ever! No one will snatch them out of My hand!" John 10:28 I will arise and go to my Father, and will say unto Him — MY FATHER, I thank You for these gracious words. May I take them as a pillow on which I may rest my head this night. Under their blessed and consolatory assurance, I will both lay me down in peace and sleep, because You, Lord, only make me to dwell in safety.

Blessed be Your name, that my spiritual interests, for this world and the next, are as sure as Your everlasting power and faithfulness can make them. It is Your prerogative, always to have mercy. It is not Your will that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. You, the mightiest of Beings — is the kindest and best and most condescending. You open Your hand, and satisfy the desire of every living thing. In Your unceasing watch of love, You tend the feeblest member of Your flock. When away from the fold, straying on the far mountains, You reveal Yourself as the great Shepherd-Restorer. Your words are not those of rebuke and terror, but of peace and gentleness: "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom!"

O Shepherd of the wandering sheep! O Father of the wandering prodigal! Restore my soul, and lead me in the paths of righteousness! Lead me ever nearer to Yourself, the true Home and Hospice of the weary and burdened. All true satisfaction and joy emanate from You, and are centered in You. Let me not rest satisfied with any lowlier portion. Your favor alone, is life. Rising superior to the changes of this mortal life, may it be mine to say, "My heart and my flesh may fail; but You are the strength of my heart and my portion forever!"

Give me, this evening, a renewed sense of Your pardoning love in Jesus. May my past transgressions, in all their heinousness and aggravation, be blotted out, through the blood of the everlasting covenant. Impart to me daily, a deeper and diviner sense of that spiritual peace, secured by His death and sacrifice, and perpetuated by His prevailing intercession. In myself I have nothing to lean upon, nothing to hope for. But let His own gracious reassuring words dispel every misgiving, and inspire lowly confidence and trust: "I give them eternal life, and they will never perish—ever! No one will snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all. No one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand!" My Father-God, foster within me every righteous purpose and good resolution. Let me grow ever in submissiveness to Your holy will and in obedience to Your holy commandments. Keep me from dishonoring Your

name by any unworthiness of thought, or speech, or act. Preserve me from all evil tempers, all selfish and uncharitable deeds, all that is in contrariety to Your revealed Word, all that offends the Spirit of grace. Cultivating habitually more of the pilgrim character, may I be enabled to progress in the divine life, from grace to grace, until grace is merged and consummated in glory!

Look in kindness on my beloved friends and relatives. Bless them, and make them blessings. Bring them within Your earthly fold now, and at last to the pastures of the blessed in heaven. Hasten the Savior's coming and kingdom — that happy time when the reign of suffering and of sin shall be known no more. Rescue the perishing; break the chains of slavery; sheathe the cruel sword of war; usher in the world of peace and love — that creation, so long groaning and travailing in pain, may fully participate in the liberty of the glory of Your children! And now, Lord, I wait upon You. My hope is in You. Accept of my renewed thanks for the manifold mercies of the day. Watch over me during the hours of night; and if You are pleased to spare me until tomorrow, may it be to listen to Your own assurance, "My presence shall go with you — and I will give you rest!"

"MY Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. May Your kingdom come. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, just as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

Sixth Morning "He who fears the Lord has a secure fortress." Proverbs 14:26 And He said unto them, When you pray, say — MY FATHER, I am once more invited and permitted to draw near to the throne of Your heavenly grace. You have again not allowed my eyes to sleep the sleep of death, but have awakened me to the light and the blessings of a new morning. Bestow upon me Your blessing. May I realize Your gracious presence, and feel that it is good for me to draw near unto You. May all the engagements of the day be sanctified.

I have been listening to Your voice, inviting me to a place of refuge, and unfolding Yourself as such. You are my refuge and my strength. May my whole soul, every faculty of my nature, be brought into near in delighted fellowship with You, and consecration to You. In Your fear — the reverential fear of Your filial love — may I have strong confidence. Give me the perfect love which casts out fear.

Still all my unrest — with the gracious, paternal words, "You have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but you have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father!" I would anchor myself on Your Divine veracity. All Your promises in Christ Jesus, are yes and amen to those who believe. Earth can tell of no such strong and stable confidence. The best of human refuges often prove refuges of lies — cobweb confidences, which fail when most needed. "They will all perish, but You will endure; all of them will wear out like clothing. You will change them like a garment, and they will pass away. But You are the same, and Your years will never end!"

Adored be Your name, for Him who is especially revealed as a refuge from the storm and a covert from the tempest — the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. I thank You that He is a refuge open for all, suited for all, abundant for all; a refuge to which all are alike warranted and welcome to shelter in! Blessed Savior, I have no other refuge — and I need none. My helpless soul, for time and for eternity, is safe in You. You understand the needs and necessities, the trials and

temptations of my tried and sorrowing and tempted nature. To whom else can I go? you have the words of eternal life!

Give me grace to walk worthy of my adoption privileges. Let it be my chief aspiration and yearning, not only to know, but to do Your will, O my Father in heaven. Teach me to be trustful and confiding in You. Keep me from being over-anxious and over-troubled about earth's many concerns. Preserve me from surrendering my heart and its affections, to the base compliances and maxims of this present evil world. Let me nourish a constant sense of my dependence on You — and place undeviating reliance on Your almighty support and strength! May the Holy Spirit descend upon me in the fullness of His spiritual gifts, enlightening my darkness, removing unbelief and worries, and quickening my experience of spiritual realities. Stimulate within me, every Christian principle and virtue. Let me live, and walk, and act — as seeing You who is invisible!

Reveal Yourself also to all Your suffering children as the same sure place of refuge. When trial may have shattered their own props and confidences; broken "the strong staff and the beautiful rod," may they place the more assured confidence in You who has said, "I will never leave you — nor ever forsake you!" When their hearts are overwhelmed, may they know what it is to dwell in the secret place of the Most High, and to abide under the shadow of the Almighty. Let this assurance dry all tears, "Whom the Lord loves — He chastens."

Look in kindness on those near and dear to me. Undertake for them. May we here continue heirs together of the grace of life — children of the same heavenly family. Guide us while we live by Your counsel; and at last may death take us from the fleeting fellowships of the pilgrim journey — to the heavenly rest and the unblighted home above!

Bless the means used for the promotion of Your cause and the extension of Your kingdom. Bring the world and its peoples, in Your own good time and way, under the benignant sway of the Prince of Peace. Let captive souls and captive nations come forth from their chains and servitude, walking and leaping and praising God.

Lord, be with me throughout this day. Strengthen me for the performance of every duty. Prepare me for the endurance of every trial. Feeling alive to all the unmerited proofs and pledges of Your mercy, and with the fear, not of bondage, but of "strong confidence" and filial love, may be it mine to say — "MY Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. May Your kingdom come. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, just as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

Sixth Evening

"I will be a Father unto you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty." 2 Corinthians 6:18 I will arise and go to my Father, and will say unto Him — MY FATHER, who is ever keeping watch and ward over Your children, spread Your overshadowing wings around me this night. You have been with me throughout the day, defending me from danger, guarding me from environing temptation, upholding me with the blessings of Your goodness. Be near me during the unconscious hours of sleep. Come and whisper Your own gracious lullaby: "He who keeps you will not slumber. Behold, He who keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep." The past is crowded with memories of Your paternal kindness. No earthly father could have acted towards his

child as You have done — pitying my weaknesses, compassionating my frailties, solacing my sorrows. How poor and inadequate has been my requital! How often have I proved a bruised and broken reed, bending before the blast, yielding to the seductions of sin, and the assaults of the tempter, resisting Your grace, grieving Your Spirit! I have been a wayward prodigal, neglectful of filial duty and obedience, prone to forget the home of Your love and its sacred and peaceful memories. Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before You, and am no more worthy to be called Your son. Yet, despite my disobedience and rebellion and estrangement, You have not left me to perish with hunger. There is forgiveness with You still, that You may be feared. You have, in generous keeping — robe, and ring, and sandal — above all, the voice of joyous welcome. The words of today ring their gracious chimes in my ear, as they have done in the case of multitudes in ages past: "I will receive you, and be a Father unto you, and you shall be My sons and daughters."

It is through Jesus, the divine Elder Brother, that this welcome and jubilee are granted. I look to Him as my only Savior. He is all I need, living or dying, for time or for eternity! Let me live as one who was dead and is alive again, who was lost and is found. Make me more dutiful to You. Deepen within me filial affection. Transform me by the power of Your Holy Spirit, into the image and likeness of Christ! Let me not dishonor You by unbelief, or distrust Your faithfulness. An earthly father may err; a heavenly Father cannot. If at times I am troubled with anxious forebodings, may I know that however checkered my experiences, I may regard the future undismayed — with such a Guide, Protector, Friend! What is unknown to me — is known to You! Let the thought of a Father's hand, a Father's voice, it may even be a Father's rod—check all my fears and hush all my disquietudes.

I pray for my beloved friends. Set them as a seal upon Your heart, a seal upon Your arm. May we all live under the spirit and influence of Your divine law of love.

Extend Your Fatherly compassion to Your sons and daughters of sorrow. May they be led to see and acknowledge that Your dealings are tempered with gracious tenderness. You stay Your rough north wind, in the day of Your east wind. When we cannot trace Your mysterious footsteps — may we implicitly trust Your loving heart. When we remember that You have given us, in the incarnation and death of Your dear Son, the mightiest proof of kindness which Omnipotence can bestow — may this hush all our murmurs, and attune our trembling lips to the avowal, "Father, not my will, but may Your will be done!"

I look to You anew for Your gracious blessing. Let me listen anew to Your special whisper of love, "I will be a Father unto you!" May I compose myself to rest under the sweet assurance that You Lord, sustain me; and so, when I awake, I may be still with You!

"MY Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. May Your kingdom come. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, just as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

Seventh Morning "Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ." Ephesians 1:2 And He said unto them, When you pray, say — MY FATHER, I listen in these words to Your own gracious benediction. Enable me, not with lip homage, but with true, reverent, filial devotion — to approach Your holy presence. I need have no slavish fear in thus

coming to Your footstool. You are even now offering me the twofold blessing of grace and peace — both emanating from the love of my gracious Father and my divine Redeemer. My cry would ever be, "More grace! More grace!" It is by grace I stand. I am saved by grace, sustained by grace, restrained by grace. Grace keeps me from falling. Grace — Your free, sovereign, unmerited grace in Jesus — will at last present me faultless before Your glorious presence with exceeding joy! And as the companion of grace, please impart to me peace — Your peace, which passes understanding — peace through the blood of the cross — that peace which the world knows nothing of — peace which the world, with all its riches and honors and blessings, cannot give — and which the world with all its trials and tribulations cannot take away! Feeling the yoke of sin to be grievous and heavy, entailing disquietude and unrest; may I flee now and always, to the great Peace-giver, whose yoke is easy and whose burden is light.

I rejoice that Jesus died for my sins, rose again for my justification, and is now carrying on His divine work of intercession before the throne for me. Blessed Jesus, ever-pleading on high, and never pleading in vain, draw near to me this morning in Your infinite love, and breathe upon me, as You did on Your disciples of old, and say, "Peace be unto you!" Amid my conscious weakness and infirmities, may I listen to Your assuring promise, "I will make my grace sufficient for you; I will perfect My strength in your weakness." Thus may grace and peace follow me all the days of my life; and may I realize their upholding power and soothing presence, when standing at the threshold of eternal life.

Bless Your sorrowful children. Sanctify the dispensations of Your providence to them. If they fail now to trace and recognize the mystery of Your dealings, may they anticipate the coming day, when, in the light of eternity, Your voice, gracious Savior, will be heard: "Did I not tell you, that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?" Rescue the perishing; reclaim the wanderer; solace the suffering; support the dying.

I pray for the widely scattered family of mankind. Hasten the time when the sighs of a burdened and groaning creation will be heard no more — every sword sheathed, every fetter broken; when the wilderness and the solitary place will be made glad, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose.

Lord, be with me throughout this day. Fit me for the battle of life. May I be strong in You, and in the power of Your might. And when every conflict here below is terminated, may it be mine to exchange the earthly warfare — for the eternal rest of the glorified. Meanwhile, I would sum up these my imperfect supplications with the words which Your Son's divine lips have taught us — "MY Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. May Your kingdom come. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, just as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

Seventh Evening "Like as a father pities his children — so the Lord pities those who fear Him." Psalms 103:13 I will arise and go to my Father, and will say unto Him — MY FATHER, draw near to me this evening, and teach me how to pray. Confidently trusting Your pitying love, I would unburden and unbosom to You — all my needs and perplexities, my sins and sorrows, my frailties and infirmities. Have I not the gracious promise that, casting all my burdens on You — that You will sustain me? Blessed be Your name, for the assurance given tonight in the precious Psalm of

Your servant of old. No earthly parent, not the kindest and the best, can pity like You. Your ways are not as our ways, nor Your thoughts as our thoughts. As one of Your children, thus loved and pitied, may it be my aim to hear Your voice, and obey Your wishes — having my own will in all things resolved into Yours. I rejoice to think of Your pitying love in Jesus. Thanks be unto You, for Your unspeakable gift! In this most wondrous evidence of Your paternal interest in me, may I see the pledge and guarantee of all other blessings; while I seek to give you back in return — the homage of a grateful heart and consecrated affections. May my life be, more than it has been — an effort to crucify sin and to live for You. Keep me lowly and meek, tender and forgiving. May my love to You be accompanied with love to my fellow-men. Loyal to the Golden Rule, may I do all things in love.

You have guided me throughout the day by Your good counsel; and now that the shadows of evening have gathered around me, and the day is far spent, be my unchanging Friend, still with me. Be about my bed — as You have been about my path.

Extend especially, Your same pitying love to all Your children of affliction. May they know — that Omnipotence and Love together tread the stormy waters; that You are the same in joy and in sorrow, in sickness and in health, in life and in death. Turn trial and loss, into spiritual riches and gain. Cheer every desolate heart, with the hope of immortality.

Bless everywhere the proclamation of Your gospel. Give efficacy to the power of the Cross. Awaken slumberers to the momentous realities of their souls, and eternity. May many seek with boldness, to bow to You as their God.

I commend myself to Your gracious keeping. Father, pity me! Father, shield me! Father, guide me! Father, restore and comfort me! Father, sanctify me! Father, bring me at last to the many mansions, the home of Your glorified children, from which I shall go no more out! Meanwhile, I would now, as ever, love to call You by the same endearing name — "MY Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. May Your kingdom come. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, just as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

Eighth Morning "Your Father knows the things you need, before you ask Him." Matthew 6:8 And He said unto them, When you pray, say — MY FATHER in heaven, regard me this morning with Your gracious favor. You invite me into Your presence, and with filial trust to make known to You my varied needs. I do not need to enumerate them. You are intimately acquainted with all my ways. There is not a thought in my heart, not a word on my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, You know it altogether! Yet it is my privilege thus to come and unburden — my soul's necessities, my sins, my sorrows, my weaknesses and infirmities.

There are blessings especially promised to those who frequent the mercy-seat. When "in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving" our requests are made known unto You, we have the annexed sure promise that the peace of God, which passes all understanding, shall keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

How little do I realize this privilege as I ought! How little, when approaching the throne of grace, do I feel my own urgent needs! How little am I actuated by the predominating motive of love to You, and a supreme desire to show forth Your glory! O omniscient One, graciously forgive my erring

past, and grant me strength and trust for the unknown future. Let that future be left to reveal and unfold itself. Let me not needlessly strive to predict it, or to anticipate needed help and grace; but rest in the paternal promise, that there will be strength assigned and proportioned for each day, and sufficient to meet all my necessities. Meanwhile, let me exult in the assurance, that though the lot may be cast into the lap, the whole disposing thereof is by You.

Let me know the gladness and joy of sanctified prosperity — the many unmerited blessings You have bestowed upon me. And when You see fit to revoke the gracious loan, grant that I may, in lowly reverence and submission say, "Even so, Father — for so it seems good in Your sight!" Help me in every unexpected difficulty. Arm me in every conflict. With the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, may I be loyal to You and to the dictates of my conscience; and thus be so enabled to pass through temporal things — that I lose none of the eternal things.

I pray for the whole world. Arise, O Lord, and let not man prevail. Arise, O Lord, and plead Your own cause. Give efficacy to the gospel, the glad tidings of great joy. May the leaves of the Tree of Life be for the healing of the nations.

Let Your Fatherly love embrace all in whom I am interested. Bless the aged. Make the autumn of life golden with Your presence and with the light of unsetting suns. Bless the young. Let them lay the green ears of early consecration on Your holy altar. Bless the lonely and desolate. May they look to You who sets the solitary in families. Bless and comfort the bereaved. Turn their night of weeping into a morning of joy. Bless and sustain the dying. As they watch the approaching footsteps of death, may they only recognize Jesus coming to fetch His pilgrims home — and to fulfill His own promise regarding the Father's house and the many mansions.

I supplicate anew, for Your presence and blessing this day. Strengthen me with all might by Your Spirit in the inner man. Grant me to fear You — and be conscious of no other fear. May my best affections be centered on You, my sure portion and chief joy; so that when the supreme hour of death overtakes me, I may be able to take up the triumphant song which my Redeemer has given me the right to sing, "O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory?"

I ask these, and every other needed blessing, in the name of Him whom You always hear. To You be ascribed all blessing and honor, and glory and praise!

"MY Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. May Your kingdom come. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, just as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

Eighth Evening

"They can no longer die; for they are like the angels. They are God's children, since they are children of the resurrection." Luke 20:36 I will arise and go to my Father, and will say unto Him — MY FATHER, I come to You this night, trusting in the name and merits of the great Angel-Intercessor. Into His golden censer, full of precious incense, I would place my imperfect prayers. May they ascend before You with acceptance, being sprinkled with the incense of His adorable merits. Make me Your child now by grace, that it may be mine at last to enter on all the glorious privileges and blessings of the "children of the resurrection."

O You who are Yourself the Resurrection and the Life, who has given us, in Your own rising from the dead, the pledge of our resurrection, draw near to me, as You did on the first resurrection evening of old, and breathe upon me and say, "Peace be unto you! Receive the Holy Spirit!" Risen with Christ, may I seek those things that are above, where Jesus sits at Your right hand. May my life now be hid with Christ — that when Christ, who is my life, shall appear, I may also appear with Him in glory. His finished work is my only plea for acceptance. It is by looking to Him, who having Himself overcome the sharpness of death, has opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers, that I can appropriate the gracious words of this morning, spoken by his own lips, "Neither can they die any more!" "Thanks be to You O God, who gives me the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!"

I would seek to make confession of my manifold transgressions. "If You, O Lord, should mark iniquities — who could stand? But there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared." Our sins reach unto the clouds — but Your mercy is high above the heavens. I rejoice in Your willingness and ability thus to forgive my guilty past. Being justified by faith, may I have peace with You.

Bestow upon me the power of Your Holy Spirit. Give me strength equal to my day. Left to my own resources, I would often be compelled to lose the conflict. But You have graciously promised to give adequate grace in the hour of trial or temptation. Lead me more and more to distrust myself. Reveal to me — my own emptiness and weakness and liability to fall. Keep me from doing anything that would be unworthy of my Christian profession, inconsistent with Your holy mind and will, and detrimental to my own peace. Deliver me from pride and selfishness, from envy and malice, from hatred and uncharitableness. If I see frailties in others, may I consider myself, lest I also be tempted. May I be ever ready to listen to the apostolic monition, "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me! Have mercy on the human race. Speed everywhere the proclamation of Your blessed gospel. May the cross of Christ, and the message it carries with it, loose all chains, and redress all wrongs, and dry all tears. Beautify the place of Your sanctuary.

Sanctify providential dealings to Your sons and daughters of affliction. May they come forth from the furnace, as purified gold. Spare useful and valued lives; and may those appointed to death fall sweetly asleep in Jesus, in the sure and certain hope of a resurrection to eternal life.

Anew I commend myself this night to You and to the word of Your grace. Ever hold up my goings in Your paths, that my footsteps do not stumble. Enable me to look forward to the time when, in an unsinning world, there shall be nothing to mar or impede the interchange of communion with You; but where, as children of the resurrection, we shall be one forever and ever in our living Lord and King. Watch over me during the defenseless hours of sleep. Let the curtain of Your protecting care be drawn around me! And when I awake, may I be still with You, ready anew to greet You with the words of adoring reverence — ""MY Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. May Your kingdom come. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, just as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

02.01. A Book of Private Prayer for Morning contd

Ninth Morning

"I will lead them beside streams of water on a level path where they will not stumble, because I am Israel's father, and Ephraim is my firstborn son." Jeremiah 31:9 And He said unto them, When you pray, say — MY FATHER, who has brought me to the beginning of a new day, defend me by Your mighty power; and grant that this day I fall into no sin, nor run into any kind of danger, but that all my doings may be ordered by Your governance, to do always what is righteous in Your sight. I would enter on today's duties and engagements, free from over-anxious or disquieting thoughts and cares, under the consciousness of Your love and protection.

Blessed be Your name for Your manifold and great mercies — the "springs in the desert" which You have provided still, as of old, for Your ransomed people. Cause me to walk in a straight way. Prevent me from stumbling. Have You not promised to keep Your children in the hour of temptation; and when temptation arises to give them the needed strength so that they may be able to bear it, or to resist it? You who have revealed Yourself as a Father to Your spiritual Israel, strengthen me for every duty this morning. Arm me for every conflict. Enable me, day by day, to imbibe more of the pilgrim spirit, and to pass the time of my sojourning here in fear.

Blessed Savior, You are as sympathetic and responsive as ever to the needs and petitions and trials of Your people. There is no infirmity beyond Your help, no peril beyond Your support, no sin which excludes from Your pardoning, pleading, interceding love! I would gratefully own the power which has hitherto protected me, and the grace which has restrained me. Unless the Lord had been my help, my soul would often have been devastated. When my feet were ready to slip, Your mercy, O Lord, held me up!

Let me wage a constant warfare with all that is antagonistic to Your divine mind and will. Enable me to exercise a holy jealousy over my motives as well as my actions — to live and walk as seeing You who are invisible, remembering that You who are my Witness now — will be my Judge at last. Let me take no step without Your sanction. May I be distrustful of my own wisdom. Give me a right judgment in all things. It is my comfort to know that You will mark out and decide for me — every stage in my heavenward journey. In a spirit of delighted obedience, I would hear Your voice behind me saying, "This is the way — walk in it."

Bless my beloved friends. May we be united in the bonds of Christian fellowship, and cherish the same certain hope of immortality. Let us all be taught by You, and great shall be our peace.

Compassionate the sick, the sorrowful, the bereaved, the dying. Enable them to take down their harps from the willows of sadness, and sing songs in the night; looking with submissive faith to the Brother on the throne, who notes every pang of the throbbing and sorrowing heart, for He has Himself felt them. Have mercy on Your whole Church! Pity the careless, arouse the slumbering, confirm the wavering. Bring Your true people more and more to see eye to eye and heart to heart. Hush the voice of discord and division, so that, in one glad burst of harmonious song, the universal

prayer may in due time arise!

"MY Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. May Your kingdom come. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, just as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

Ninth Evening "Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in Your sight." Luke 10:21 I will arise and go to my Father, and will say unto Him — MY FATHER, I thank You anew for Your glorious name, for all the blessed thoughts and assurances and solaces which cluster around it. As a Father You have again watched over me during the day; as a Father You have shielded me from danger; as a Father You have poured unnumbered blessings into my cup — the least of them undeserved. And even when You see fit to cloud my path, curtail my comforts, and withdraw my cherished joys — I recognize the same paternal hand. When You bring a cloud over the earth — the rainbow is seen in the cloud. Crosses and comforts both emanate from You, and our comforts are always greater than our crosses. Whether therefore You give or take away, I would adore alike — a giving and a taking God, and say, with reverential love and submission, "Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in Your sight!"

Sprinkle anew the lintel and door-posts of my heart this night, with the blood of atonement. I bring infinite demerit and unworthiness — to the worthiness of Him who is all-worthy. I would listen to the ever-gracious declaration, "I will be merciful to your unrighteousness; your sins and your iniquities I will remember no more." And while looking to Christ as my Savior, I would look to Him also as my great Example and Pattern. It was He who uttered this morning's word of filial obedience and submission. May He attune my lips to utter the same. Confidently reposing in the same heavenly Father — His Father and my Father, His God and my God — may I be enabled to say, "Do to me and with me, whatever seems good in Your sight; and forbid that what seems good in Your sight, should ever seem unacceptable in mine. This cup which You give me to drink — shall I not drink it? Not as I will — but as You will."

Look in kindness on all Your poor afflicted ones. Bless the ministry of sorrow. Soothe and sustain in every dark and perplexing hour. If Your tried people fail at times to see the bright light in the cloud, may they take comfort in the assured promise that "at evening time, it shall be light."

Let Your favor and blessing rest on every effort for the promotion of Your cause throughout the world.

Subdue all hearts and all kingdoms by the conquering power of redeeming love. Revive Your work in the midst of the years. The work from first to last, is Yours. It is You who lay the foundation-stones; it is You who lay all the subsequent stones. And when the top-stone shall be brought forth with shouting, the cry will still be, "Grace, grace unto it!" And now, Lord, what wait I for? My hope is in You. May the great Angel of the covenant come down in this, the time of evening oblation. May my imperfect services be accepted through Him who, when on earth, taught His universal Church to call You "Our Father".

"MY Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. May Your kingdom come. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, just as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from

the evil one."

Tenth Morning

"If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!" Matthew 7:11 And He said unto them, When you pray, say — MY FATHER in heaven, I beg Your blessing, as I am once more on the threshold of a new day. May its duties and engagements be undertaken and pervaded with the gracious sense of Your nearness and favor. Dispel all fear; promote and strengthen all confidence in these assuring words of the great Redeemer. He has consecrated with a heavenly meaning, the most sacred tie and relationship of earth. The love of father to child is only the feeble image, Lord, of Your love to Your redeemed people. Parental gifts, bestowed with yearning affection, are only the pledges and emblems of a divine interest in us which knows no change, no decay. Loving Your own who are in the world, You love them unto the end. You have established Your faithfulness forever.

Impart unto me all these promised "good things" — pardon, peace, justification, sanctification — crowned and consummated with the hope of immortality. I would bring my emptiness — to Christ's almighty, all-sufficient fullness. Alas! how far do I fall short of Your lofty standard of duty! How far do I come beneath my own best ideals! How much I think and say and do, when my motives are rigidly scrutinized — is mingled with humbling imperfection! But, incomplete in myself, I am complete in Jesus! Thanks be to You, who always causes me to triumph in Christ. Impart to me especially, the aids of Your Holy Spirit, that He may quicken my zeal, energize my faith, deepen my love, elevate and consecrate my whole being! Of all "good things" — of all Your promised blessings — this is the best and greatest (Luke 11. 13). Empower me with the Holy Spirit. Your Spirit, O God, is good; lead me into the land of uprightness.

Bless Your sorrowing children. May they be enabled to recognize chastisement as one of the gifts of adoption — that You chasten them because You love them. With unrepining submission, may it be theirs to say, "It is the Lord; let Him do what seems good unto Him."

Look in pity, gracious God, on this sin-stricken, woe-worn world. Unloose the chains of slavery; scatter the people that delight in war; and hasten the advent and kingdom of the Prince of Peace. Stir up Your faithful people in Your service. Raise up honored heralds of the truth to prepare the way of the Lord, and make straight in the desert, a highway for our God. Give us all grace, in our varied spheres, to be waiting and watching; to lay out whatever talent You have entrusted to our care; to work while it is called today, and prepare for the coming night, when the season of earth's opportunities shall cease forever. I ask these, and other needed blessings, in the name and through the merits of Jesus Christ, Your only Son, our Savior.

"MY Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. May Your kingdom come. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, just as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

Tenth Evening

"He prophesied that Jesus would die for the Jewish nation, and not only for that nation, but also for the scattered children of God, to bring them together and make them one." John 11:52 I will arise and go to my Father, and will say unto Him — MY FATHER, before I retire to rest, visit me with Your grace. Renew to me the blessed sense of Your pardoning love. I have the blessings of another day, with thankful heart to record. I have received throughout its hours, double mercy for all my sins. And now, as the shadows of evening are gathering around, I beseech You to be my keeper. As You have been to me a pillar of cloud by day—be a pillar of fire by night. Fulfill Your own gracious promise: "In all places where I record My name, I will come unto you and bless you." "My presence shall go with you, and I will give you rest." May every joy of life be sweetened, and every sorrow sanctified, by the assurance that, "You are my Father." May I know, in common with the whole family of God, the exceeding greatness of Your power to us who believe.

While I renew my gratitude and praise for personal mercies, for the blessings of home and kindred, health and strength, above all, for spiritual and religious privileges, my thoughts are more especially drawn, to such as are less highly favored. I would sympathetically and earnestly remember those who are sitting in darkness, and in the region and shadow of death; who have never enjoyed the opportunity of welcoming the glad revelation of Yourself as a gracious Father, and of Christ as a living, loving Savior. Lord, hasten the time when "the children of God that are scattered abroad" shall by You be ingathered; when the filial song shall arise from a regenerated world, "Behold! we are all Your children!" Make those Your people, who are not Your people; and her beloved, who was not beloved. Let Jew and Gentile, barbarian, bond and free, exult together in the liberty of the glory of the sons of God!

Own every means for the promotion of Your cause. May the divine Dove of Peace brood, as He did over chaos of old, bringing light out of darkness, and order out of confusion. May we all feel, in our varied spheres of influence, that we have some mission, however lowly, to perform for You, and for the good of others. Give the single eye, and the single aim, and the lofty unalloyed motive. Have great compassion on Your suffering and distressed children, more especially on the bereaved and desolate. May they recognize Your dealings, however mysterious, as dictated and regulated by unerring love, the appointments of Your own infinite wisdom; and look forward to that better world where all afflictions shall be ended, all tears dried — where there is no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither any more pain, for the former things are passed away!

Gracious God, I anew plead with You, in fulfillment of the gospel promise of this evening, to gather together Your now scattered children, that so the happy predicted time may soon come, when no man shall need to teach his neighbor or his brother, saying, "Know the Lord," but when all shall know You, from the least even unto the greatest; when nations and kingdoms and people and tongues shall unite with one heart and voice in calling You "Our Father"!

"MY Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. May Your kingdom come. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, just as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

Eleventh Morning "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." 1 John 1:3 And He said unto them, When you pray, say — MY FATHER, blessed be Your name, that Your children are ever permitted to enter Your presence and invoke Your favor. Let me this

morning approach the gates of prayer with filial confidence and holy reverence. Keep me from vain distractions and disturbing thoughts. Let me know and feel somewhat of that divine fellowship realized by Your servant and apostle. Make my soul receptive of spiritual influences. Open the windows of heaven, that a shower of blessing may descend. May I see everything around me transformed and transfigured in You, all wearing the print and impress of a Father's love, and gladdened with the memories of a Savior's redeeming work and salvation.

Alas! I have to own that I am the ungrateful recipient of much divine kindness. I have not the humiliating sense I ought to have of sin in general, and of my own sins in particular. My best resolutions, how frail! My best affections, how divided! My best services, how mingled! My best aims and aspirations, how far short of Your glory! Your love and patience and forbearance are as wondrous as they are undeserved. It is of Your compassions alone, that I am spared the cumberer's sentence and doom.

I would lie low at the foot of the cross, disowning all trust and confidence in anything I have done, in anything I can do. I would look alone to Him who is able to save, and willing to save to the uttermost, and through whose merits and mediation, I am now, and shall be at last, more than conqueror.

Deliver me from the dominion, as well as from the guilt of sin. Deliver me from this present evil world. Amid its legion foes, may I stand panoplied in the armor of righteousness, faithful to You through good report and through bad report; so that, at last, an entrance may be ministered to me abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of my Lord and Savior.

Deepen in me a sense of responsibility for the use of every entrusted talent. Let me seek to lay them out for the good of men, and for Your glory. Let me enter on no duty without invoking Your sanction, and seeking to hear Your voice amid all perplexities, "This is the way — walk in it." May Your gospel triumph over the pride and superstition and will-worship of man. Darkness is still covering the earth, and gross darkness the people. May the joyful mandate soon be heard, "Arise and shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon you." May trial have the blessed effect of bringing me nearer to You. Direct broken hearts and weeping eyes to that bright world where nothing shall mar or interrupt everlasting harmonies — the rest which remains for Your people. May all varied duties and engagements this day be sanctified. Fit me for work and warfare. May I ever realize that Your pure eye is upon me! And so, when the shadows of evening gather around, I may not have the saddened sense of a day lived and spent in vain, but rather of having enjoyed somewhat of this gracious fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. Leaning with a more simple and entire dependence on divine grace amid all changes and checkered experiences, may it be ever mine with filial love and confidence to say — "MY Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. May Your kingdom come. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, just as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

Eleventh Evening

"So that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe!" Php 2:15 I will arise and go to my Father, and will say unto Him — MY FATHER, the shadows of night are again gathering

around me. Abide with me; for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. Graciously forgive whatever I have done amiss in thought or word or deed. Before I close my eyes in sleep, I come anew to the opened fountain, and plead anew the all-sufficient atonement of the divine Redeemer.

Let me more deeply realize my filial covenant relationship to You, rejoicing that all which concerns me is in Your hand, and under Your divine, sovereign control. For the manifold blessings of this life, may I feel a chastened gratitude and thankfulness while I have them; and when You, the great Giver and Disposer, see fit to revoke the grant, may it be mine, with filial self-surrender, to say, "Yes, Father, because this was Your good pleasure."

Alas! O God, I have to confess how far I am living beneath my privileges and responsibilities! How inadequately I realize my spiritual deficiencies and shortcomings! How little consciousness I have of my need of the Redeemer and of His great salvation! How little have I attained to the "purity and blamelessness" of Your children! how much in my temper and conduct and daily walk is unworthy of those who are called to shine as lights in the dark world!

Lord, may this be more and more, my habitually aspiration — to shine for You; to manifest daily, the elevating, sanctifying, transforming precepts and principles of Your gospel; that I may live blameless and pure, without fault, my conduct unmarred and unblemished by inconsistency. Let me enter on no engagement unsanctioned by Your approval. Preserve my purity of thought, purity of word, purity of deed.

Whatever Your dealings and discipline towards me are, whether in the way of prosperity or adversity, may it be my single desire that You may be glorified. Thus cultivating a pilgrim spirit, may I be prepared, whenever You see fit to call me hence, to enter Your presence and home above; where, fully purged from the dross of earthliness, with no bias to evil, no contrariety to Your divine mind and will — I shall be permitted to serve You forever and ever! Have mercy on Your afflicted children. If Your dealings with them are apparently harsh and mysterious, may they hear also Your gracious undertones of love. May they trust the Father-heart of their heavenly Parent, and feel assured, whatever the complexion of their trial is, that all things, joyful or sorrowful, prosperous or adverse, are working together, and will work together, for their eternal good.

Bless my beloved friends. May they too count it their highest privilege and happiness to be among the blameless and harmless sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty, testifying for You, Your cause and kingdom and glory, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. Lord, how long shall the wicked — how long shall the wicked triumph? Save Your people; bless Your inheritance; sustain them also, and lift them up forever.

Meanwhile, I would present my evening petitions, and close them, with the conviction of a divine and gracious reality in the words — "MY Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. May Your kingdom come. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, just as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

Twelfth Morning

"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be. But we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is" 1 John 3:2 And He

said unto them, When you pray, say — MY FATHER in heaven, draw near to me this morning in Your own infinite mercy. "Sun of my soul," who has set Your glory above the heavens, eclipsing all created beams, may Your presence be an inspiration to me. I need no other blessing if I have Yours. The retrospect of life is a retrospect of Your divine love. I am a living monument of Your forbearance.

How wondrously have You borne with my ingratitude and waywardness; with my sinful omissions of known duty, and my sinful commission of known sin! I am a mere cumberer of the ground, yet You have spared me. It is of Your mercies, that I am not consumed. Unworthy to eat of the crumbs which fall from my Master's table, You are bestowing upon me token upon token of unmerited goodness, waking me up each morning to new causes for filial gratitude and praise.

I bless You for my regeneration, my preservation, and for the manifold blessings of this life. Most chiefly do I bless You for Jesus Christ, the Son of Your love; for all that He has done for me, for all that He is still doing for me. In Him I would rock my every fear and disquietude to rest. In the words of Your holy apostle just read, I would cleave to the assurance of a present sonship in the family of which He is the divine Elder Brother. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God!" This is the pledge of the inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory.

Grant that I may be enabled to walk worthy of my adoption privileges, looking forward with humble yet triumphant confidence to the full realization of the blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of my great God my Savior, when I shall be transformed into His divine image and likeness, and see Him as He is!

Meanwhile, may I have grace given me to purify myself even as He is pure. My Father-God, keep me from whatever has the tendency to estrange me from You, and to weaken the filial tie and the child-affection. Preserve me from a spirit of selfishness; from seeking alone personal enjoyment of Your gifts, instead of making thankful and generous employment of these in respect of others. From all indolence and sloth; from all hatred and envy, jealousy and malice; from all unworthy ambitions and debasing allurements; from all that would interfere with my brother's well-being; from every breach of charity, good Lord, deliver me.

Bless my beloved friends and relatives. May they too be quickened by the same animating and encouraging prospect of attaining at last, resemblance to Jesus. May they be looking for and hastening His coming; so that when the advent-hour shall strike, they may be able to lift up their heads with joy, knowing that their redemption draws near.

Promote Your cause and kingdom everywhere. May Your churches act up to their responsibilities as lights in the world, called to shine for You, and to diffuse sacred influences all around. Hasten the day when the reign of sin and sorrow and death shall be forever terminated; when Your ingathered people, out of every nation and kindred and tongue, shall welcome in the Prince of Peace to the throne of universal empire. Compassionate the sick and sorrowful. Prepare the dying for their great change. May angels be waiting by their death-pillow, to carry the departing spirit into the Savior's bosom. May all who are called to sorrow and tribulation here — who tell of vacant places and blanks in the family circle, and mourn their loved and lost — submissively trust, where they fail to understand the mystery of Your ways. Oh, that we were ever able and ready to follow You, not only in smooth places, but where the way is rough and the prospect dreary; seeing a

rainbow of promise in every cloud, looking beyond the changes and chances of this mortal life — to the Father's home of unblighted love, where we shall be "forever with the Lord."

Quicken me this day, to run the pilgrim race. Remove every hindrance and impediment. May a sense of Your favor pervade and hallow all its doings. May I be enabled to close it as I would now begin it, by calling You, "My Father".

"MY Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. May Your kingdom come. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, just as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

Twelfth Evening "You are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." Galatians 3:26 I will arise and go to my Father, and will say unto Him — MY FATHER, I would retire to rest this night, invoking Your blessing, and seeking, "by faith in Christ Jesus," more deeply and thankfully to realize my filial relationship to You. Let me dismiss all fear or worry. May every source of anxiety and disquietude be hushed to rest, that by that same faith in Him who is my only Lord and Savior, I may, in common with Your children throughout the world, commit myself to Your gracious keeping.

You have, in the day that is past, been loading me with Your benefits. May every blessing I enjoy bear the impress of Your love, and be hallowed and sanctified by the thought that it comes from You. I would exult anew in the security of Your promises. I rejoice, that nothing can touch my divine inheritance. Those whom You love at the beginning — You love unto the end. The mountains may depart, and the hills be removed; but Your kindness shall not depart from me, nor shall Your covenant of peace be removed.

You are inviting me to cherish child-thoughts of confidence and affection, in coming now to Your throne of grace. Strengthen every tie which binds me to Yourself. Yours by creation, may I feel that I am doubly Yours by redemption. May I seek to consecrate the life to Your praise, which You have ransomed at such a high price. "If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature." May I not dishonor You by departure from the path of duty or principle. Risen with Him, may I seek those things that are above, where He sits at Your right hand.

If any lukewarmness should have imperceptibly crept upon me, Lord, quicken and revive me by the power of Your Holy Spirit. Restore Your love to its place of rightful ascendancy. Subordinate all creature love to Yours. Give me grace to occupy with conscientious fidelity, whatever place in the world You have seen fit to assign to me. Let nothing dim or obscure my "blessed hope." May Your dealings and discipline fit and nurture me for the time when my present imperfect and divided love — shall be imperfect and divided no more; when the glory of God will be the motive principle interfused through every thought and action of my life — translated from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of Your children.

Bless my beloved friends. Hallow every earthly tie, by making it a heavenly one. We can ask no better blessing than in the gracious words of this evening, that we may all be the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. Be the binder-up of broken hearts, the rest for the weary, the stay of the orphan, the home of the homeless. Smooth the pillow of sickness. May those appointed unto death, be prepared for the great change. Amid the manifold uncertainties of the present, may I be so living and walking and acting by faith in a faithful Savior, that when that same supreme hour

overtakes me, I may have nothing to do but to die and to awake up in everlasting glory!

I ask every needed blessing in the name of Him whom You always hear, and who taught His disciples in all ages, to unite in the gracious invocation — "MY Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. May Your kingdom come. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, just as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

Thirteenth Morning "This son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!" Luke 15:24 And He said unto them, When you pray, say — MY FATHER, You have loved us with an everlasting love. You love us even in our prodigal wanderings, when, forgetful of the lavish proofs of Your affection, we stray into the far country. I come to You this morning, rejoicing that You have heard my cry, that You have led me to mourn over my estrangement; and instead of rejecting my yearnings for return and reconciliation have, with the outstretched arms of mercy, You have welcomed me back to peace, and rest, and home!

Grant me the gracious sense of Your presence. Let me hear the wondrous name and assurance, "This my son!" Let it banish all doubt and unbelief, all disquietude and fear. "My Father" may the consciousness of this affiance in You, lead me to deeper contrition, to more devout filial reverence and devotion. Once lost, but now found, returned to the Shepherd and Bishop of my soul, let me listen to the voice of mingled omnipotence and love, "Be of good cheer — your sins are forgiven!" Being forgiven much — may I love all the more. May genuine contrition for the past — mingle with heartfelt resolutions of new obedience for the future. As one alive from the dead, let me rise and walk with Christ in newness of life. Risen with Him, may I seek those things that are above, where He sits at the right hand of God. Elevate my affections. Enthroned His love as the ruling passion in my soul. Lead me to fight more faithfully under His banner, and to be more loyal and uncompromising in my allegiance. May this be my motto and watchword, "I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me!"

Promote His cause throughout the world. Father, glorify Your name. Hasten the day when the year of Your redeemed shall come. Cause the places round about to become a blessing. May the shower come down in its season; let there be showers of blessing.

Look down in love and sympathy on Your children of sorrow. Preserve us all from a murmuring spirit under dark and trying dispensations. May bereaved ones look forward with chastened joy, to that glorious time when tears shall no more be shed, and "death itself shall die."

Lord, be with me throughout this day. In my varied worldly work and engagements, my duties and occupations, may I seek to be a faithful steward. And when You see fit to call me hence, may I be found ready for the summons, and be able to look beyond death and the grave — to that morning without clouds when in Your light, I shall see light; and with earth's pilgrim wanderings finished, I shall be safe in my true Father's house and home forever.

Meanwhile, with childlike reverence and trust, I would look up to the mightiest of all Beings, and call You by the endearing name — "MY Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. May Your kingdom come. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, just as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

Thirteenth Evening

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort. He comforts us in all our affliction." 2 Corinthians 1:3-4 I will arise and go to my Father, and will say unto Him — MY FATHER, another evening has gathered its shadows around me. You are light, and with You there is no darkness at all. "It is not night — if You be near." Let no "earth-born cloud" arise, to intercept the sunshine of Your countenance. Before I retire to rest, I would recall with gratitude, Father of mercies, the many memories of Your great goodness. Under the shelter of Your wings I would rejoice. Enable me, with the close of day, to enjoy a foretaste of that everlasting fellowship and communion which is to be the heritage of Your people in the heavenly kingdom.

Well may I address You as "the Father of mercies!" My earthly path is strewn with mercy, loving-kindness on loving-kindness. I would set up this night anew, my Ebenezer — my stone of remembrance — and write upon it the inscription, "Hitherto has the Lord helped me!" When at times, in the retrospect of life, clouds have darkened my sky, and the bright spots of the wilderness have been mingled with dreary ones, still have I had reason to rejoice in You as "the God of all comfort, who comforts me in all my afflictions," giving me strength equal to my day, delivering my soul from death, my eyes from tears, and my feet from falling. Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who daily loads me with benefits!

I desire to make acknowledgment of my great unworthiness — the poor and inadequate returns I have made to You. How often I have requited Your mercies with ingratitude, doing the things I ought not to have done, and leaving undone those things that I ought to have done. I have no excuse or apology for these, my sins and shortcomings. My own heart condemns me, and You are greater than my heart. I look away from myself and my own mis-doings, to the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.

O Jesus, Son of David, have mercy upon me! You have an all-sufficiency in all things. I take You to be my refuge in danger, my guide in perplexity, my solace in sorrow, my confidence in death, my joy and portion through eternity. Enable me to obey Your own gracious invitation this night. Coming weary and heavy laden, may I have rest and peace for my soul — peace in the renewed consciousness of the perfection of Your atonement, the merits of Your death, the completeness of Your righteousness, the prevalence of Your intercession. Bring me to live more habitually under the constraining power of Your love; that I would regard life more and more as a mission to please You — to please You not so much in great things as in little things — in the faithful discharge of little duties, and in the calm endurance of little trials; taking up the cross when it is Your will to lay it upon me, saying with adoring filial love, "Yes, Father, because this was Your good pleasure."

Grant to me the promised abiding influences of Your Holy Spirit, as a Spirit of life and light, sanctification and comfort. Restore unto me the joys of Your salvation, and uphold me with Your free and gracious Spirit!

Bless those near and dear to me. Sanctify them in body, soul, and spirit. Seal them unto the day of eternal redemption! May all Your poor afflicted ones, be enabled to resolve their wills into Yours, rejoicing in Your covenant, paternal name, "the God of all comfort." You have said that You will send no temptation greater than Your people are able to bear. With the temptation, give them the

accompanying pledged promise of grace, that they may be able to bear it.

I retire to rest this night, reposing in Your covenant faithfulness, extracting strength, consolation, and peace from the words throbbing on the lips of so many of Your children at this hour of evening prayer —

"MY Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. May Your kingdom come. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, just as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

Fourteenth Morning "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." Romans 8:17 "He is not ashamed to call them brethren." Hebrews 2:11 And He said unto them, When you pray, say — MY FATHER, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, draw near to me in Your infinite mercy, and grant me the blessing which makes rich and which adds no sorrow with it. Rend Your heavens and come down; fill this little sanctuary with Your glory, and my heart with Your love. Let my prayer come before You as incense, and the lifting up of my hands as the morning sacrifice. Bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar. Help me to understand the privilege and glory of being an heir of Yours, and a joint-heir with Your dear Son.

I thank You anew, for that ever-gracious name which hushes all fears, and dismisses all doubts and misgivings. I thank You that He who is the Prince of Life condescended to take upon Him our nature, in all its weaknesses and infirmities, its sorrows and temptations; and that thus linked in a true and spotless humanity, He is not ashamed to call us brethren. We adore this great mystery of godliness. The ascription of earth will be the ascription of eternity — "To the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He has made us accepted in the Beloved."

I rejoice in His full and completed atonement. I rejoice that by Christ's doing and dying, every barrier of access is removed between me and Your throne of mercy; that having overcome the sharpness of death, He has opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers. I have His own gracious assurance, that because He lives — I shall live also; that as an heir of God and a joint-heir in Him — I have everything pledged for my salvation which is within the compass of omnipotence — pardon, peace, and acceptance here, and the promise of eternal glory hereafter. My earnest prayer is that strength may be given me to walk worthy of so priceless an inheritance. May it be my constant aspiration to consecrate the life redeemed at such a cost, to Your service. May I jealously watch whatever in my heart or conduct I know to be displeasing to You — contrary to the dictates of conscience and the teachings of Your holy Word.

Preserve me from sin, and from the snares and assaults of the Evil One. Keep me from all unworthy cares and worldly entanglements. Bring my thoughts and purposes into harmony with Yours; setting ever before me my Savior's example, in His kindness and forgiveness, His humility and meekness, His resignation under suffering, His unswerving resolve ever to do His Father's will. Emancipated from the bondage of corruption, may I know more and more, what it is to be translated into the liberty of the glory of Your children, and to realize, partially now, and fully hereafter, all that is comprehended in the divine beatitude, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

Give each of us grace in our varied spheres to seek to glorify You, either by active duty or by passive submission. Let us feel that if You are our portion, we are independent of every other.

Let all Your poor afflicted ones, bow to Your sovereign and all-wise appointments, satisfied that You chasten not arbitrarily, but because You love, and that nothing can come wrong to them which, as Your children and heirs — comes from Your hand. May the bereaved be able to utter over their departed, "Precious in the sight of the Lord, is the death of His saints."

Bless my beloved friends. Hallow the bond which unites us. May we enjoy now a common fellowship in You, and in the blessings of the covenant of grace. Whatever fountains of earthly bliss it may be Yours to open to us in our pilgrimage way, may we be permitted at last, in Your full vision and fruition, to drink together of the streams of Your everlasting love! May this day be begun, continued, and ended in You. And with the blessed assurance of Your paternal love in Christ, I would address You in His own gracious words, and say — "MY Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. May Your kingdom come. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, just as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

Fourteenth Evening

"They will be Mine," says the Lord Almighty, "in the day when I make up My jewels. I will spare them, just as in compassion a man spares his son who serves him." Malachi 3:17 I will arise and go to my Father, and will say unto Him — MY FATHER, draw near to me this evening, as I now draw near unto You. Let me hear Your voice saying, "Son, you are ever with me, and all that I have is your!" "I have called you by your name; you are Mine!" I thank You for Your ministrations of earthly blessing; for all that gladdens and brightens my daily existence; for food and clothing, for health and strength, for friends and home. The retrospect of my life is a retrospect of Your kindness. I will utter abundantly the memory of Your great goodness, and talk of Your righteousness. I would take Your tender, pitying love in the past, as a pledge for the future, and hear Your voice behind me saying, "Be still, and know that I am God!" "This is the way; walk in it."

Let the sense of my covenant relationship to You in Christ, dispel all doubt and hush all disquietude. Let me feel the gracious persuasion that whatever befalls me is Your ordination; that be they bright or dark, joyful or sorrowful, Your dealings are mercy and truth, the decrees and allotment of Your infinite wisdom. Where I cannot trace Your hand -- I shall trust Your loving heart! What I do not know now -- I shall know hereafter. Have You not said, "I will spare them, just as in compassion a man spares his son who serves him"? I accept the tenderness of the earthly relationship, as the symbol of diviner realities. After such an assurance, how can I dare to impeach Your rectitude or question Your faithfulness?

Lord, let me mourn nothing but the withdrawal of the conscious sense of Your favor. It is absence from You which creates the greatest blank in my heart. With You I am rich, whatever else I lack. Without You I would be poor, though I owned the wealth of worlds beside. Let me aspire after increasing conformity to Your most holy will. Keep me from imbibing false worldly maxims and becoming a prey to the fascinations of a world that disowns You. Elevate my affections, purify my desires. Make me more Savior-like. Fit me for the heavenly Fatherland. On that day when You make up Your jewels, Your precious treasures, may I be found among those who have been long

taught on earth to regard You with filial love, and who are to have that divine affection intensified and perpetuated through eternal ages.

Regard with Your sympathy and compassion, Your children of sorrow. May they too be able to look forward with childlike faith and hope and confidence, to that blessed morning when earth's shadows shall have vanished; when every mystery shall be revealed and made luminous with love, and when they shall remember with adoring gratitude, all the way by which You have led them through the wilderness, to humble them, and to prove them.

Bestow Your providential care on my dear friends, enabling them also to appropriate the elevating assurance, "They will be Mine, says the Lord Almighty!" Pour upon us the continual dew of Your blessing. May we now together rejoice in hope of the coming glory—found together, watching and waiting and working, that the final summons may not find us unprepared to enter the eternal rest and the eternal home.

Anew I thank you for the mercies of the bygone day. Watch over me during the silence and darkness of the coming night. Give Your angels charge concerning me, that they may encamp round about me; and if pleased to spare me until tomorrow, may I rise refreshed and invigorated for duty and service. Whether I wake or sleep, may I live together with You.

"MY Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. May Your kingdom come. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, just as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

Fifteenth Morning

"But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons." Galatians 4:4-5 And He said unto them, When you pray, say — MY FATHER, who have in Your great mercy permitted me to see the light of another day -- defend me by Your mighty power; and grant that this day I fall into no sin, neither run into any kind of danger, but that all my doings may be ordered by Your wise governance. I would enter the inner chamber of Your presence, and in the sweet concord of covenant fellowship with the Hearer and Answerer of prayer, I would bow at Your throne of heavenly grace.

I rejoice in the assurance of Your faithfulness. Amid all the fitful changes of life -- You are the same. Heaven and earth may pass away, but the Lord lives! Blessed be my Rock; and let the God of my salvation be exalted.

I would adore especially the mysteries of Your love manifested in the mission and incarnation of the divine Redeemer — that when the fullness of the time had come, when the world by its own boasted wisdom failed to effect its own salvation, when "the world by wisdom knew not God," You sent forth Your dear Son, virgin-born, to redeem by His perfect life and meritorious death, the children of fallen humanity, and bestow upon them the adoption of sons. Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law -- by nothing short of becoming a curse for us! My earnest prayer is that these adoption privileges and blessings may be mine; that with believing trust and confidence I may be able to look up to the greatest of all Beings and call You "My Father!" Impart to me more

and more the feelings and dispositions of Your children. Give me the heritage of those who fear Your name. Make me gentle and loving, unselfish and forgiving. Father, guide me! Father, keep me! Father, discipline me by Your providence for Your service here, and for Your glory hereafter! It is by Your grace alone, that I stand. Hold me up -- and I shall be safe! How often and how easily would I have fallen in the hour of temptation, but for Your upholding hand! In all times of peril or tribulation, of weakness or vacillation, set me in the cleft of the Rock. Inspire me with purposes of new and more devoted obedience. Sanctify me in body, soul, and spirit; and present me at last faultless before the presence of Your glory with exceeding joy!

I pray for the whole Church; I pray for all Your children who are scattered abroad. Fetch home every wanderer; reclaim every backslider. Confirm Your true people in their most holy faith. May they know in their increasing experience, that Your service is self-rewarding and self-satisfying. Make their hearts sacred altars — living temples, on which the superscription is written, "Holiness to the Lord!"

Bless Your sorrowful and the bereaved ones. May they accept their trials as the dealing and discipline of infinite wisdom, designed to wean from the perishable, and allure to the imperishable. If it is night here, prepare them for a cloudless, nightless, sorrowless heaven, where trial is no longer either felt or feared.

"Almighty God, may it please You of Your gracious goodness, shortly to accomplish the number of Your elect, and to hasten Your kingdom, that we, with all those who are departed in the true faith of Your holy name, may have our perfect consummation and bliss, both in body and soul, in Your eternal and everlasting glory."

Anew I commend myself to You this day, and to the word of Your grace. Help me in the battle of life. Set a watch before my mouth; guard the door of my lips. In every duty, may I have Your presence; in every perplexity, may I have Your counsel; for every burden, may I have Your support. May each returning morning find me better prepared for the rest of the glorified, and the full vision and fruition of You, my God. Meanwhile, with the ever deepening love and devotion of Your adopted children, may it be mine to say — "MY Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. May Your kingdom come. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, just as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

Fifteenth Evening "Have we not all one Father? Has not one God created us?" Malachi 2:10 "You, O Lord, are our Father, our Redeemer; Your name is from everlasting." Isaiah 63:16 I will arise and go to my Father, and will say unto Him — MY FATHER, I come to You this night as the one God and Father of all, the beneficent Creator, the all-wise Provider, the supreme Disposer. Especially do I approach You as my Redeemer, whose redeeming name and redeeming love are "from everlasting." Teach me to feel my dependence on You; that from day to day and from hour to hour, I am a miracle of Your grace, "kept by the power of God."

I acknowledge my great unworthiness. I have sinned against You times and ways without number. I have nothing to plead in extenuation. If tried by my best hours, or best days, or best services — how condemned would I stand! How often You might righteously have left me to the fruit of my own ways and to be filled with my own devices, turning away Your face from me — and my prayer

from You. But You have not so requited me. Blessed be Your name, You do not "upbraid." Your hand of mercy and loving-kindness and longsuffering is stretched out still. Your ways are not as our ways, nor Your thoughts as our thoughts. The forbearance and longsuffering of the best of earthly fathers is only the feeble reflection of Yours. With devout filial love I would seek Your forgiveness and favor. As Your redeemed child, adopted into Your family, may it be my desire to love You more, and to serve You better. Let Your will be the controlling principle of my life. If You send me prosperity, let me accept every blessing as emanating directly from You. If You send me adversity, may it be the blessed means of promoting my spiritual growth, freeing me from the dross of worldliness and sin, and transfiguring me into the likeness of Christ.

Gracious Savior, I rejoice in Your exalted and ever-present sympathy. You make my case and my cares, Your own. Whatever troubles or perils, difficulties or temptations may environ my path, may this be my elevating consolation, that Your hand is never shortened that it cannot save, neither is Your ear heavy that it cannot hear. Quicken me in Your service. Lift me above the life of selfishness, and unsympathetic isolation. Bring me more under the dominion of that charity which is the bond of perfectness. Preserve me from overlooking and neglecting the interests of others. May this be my habitual aim — to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with You my God.

I commend to Your gracious care, all my beloved friends. May they dwell in the secret place of the Most High, and abide under the shadow of the Almighty. Let us be together sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, and able to rejoice in the common hope of the glory of God. We bless You for those eternal ties, which survive the uncertain ones of earth. May the realized sense of Your presence and love, take the sting from all our afflictions. O Brother born for adversity, speak Your own balm-word for the weary and heavy-laden — "Come unto Me, and I will give you rest." Turn the night of weeping into a morning of joy. May the cross blossom into a crown. Prepare the dying for the final hour. May they fall asleep in Jesus, to wake up in everlasting glory.

Hasten that happy day when "our Father in heaven" shall be the one universal name, owned and revered all the world over; when the love of Christ shall be enthroned in every heart, and become the theme and inspiration of every tongue!

I anew commend myself to You and to the word of Your grace. While beseeching You to be with me through the silent watches of the night, I would close my petitions and retire to rest by pronouncing the ever-blessed words, in the name of Him who first uttered them — "MY Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. May Your kingdom come. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, just as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

Sixteenth Morning "You are my Father, my God, and the Rock of my salvation." Psalms 89:26 And He said unto them, When you pray, say — MY FATHER in heaven, the God of my life, and the length of my days; may it be mine to avow, with some good measure of appropriating faith and holy confidence, "You are my Father, my God, and the Rock of my salvation."

Other portions are perishable, other confidences are unstable, other refuges too often prove refuges of lies. But my Lord lives! Blessed be my Rock; and let the God of my salvation be exalted! O You who go before Your people still, as of old, in the day-cloud and night-fire, uphold me with Your most gracious favor, and sustain me with Your continual help. Let me have increasing

experience of the blessedness of Your everlasting watch by night and by day.

"My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth. He will not let my foot slip; He who watches over me will not slumber; indeed, He who watches over His people will neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord watches over me; the Lord is the shade at my right hand; the sun will not harm me by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord will keep me from all harm; He will watch over my life; the Lord will watch over my coming and going, both now and forevermore!"

It is, above all, my comfort and consolation, my highest, holiest privilege, that the Shepherd-God of old, is the Father-God of His true spiritual people in every age; and that with filial reverence and devotion I may now this morning, approach my Father's presence and invoke my Father's love.

I acknowledge my many and grievous offences, committed as they have been against so much light and love, so much warning and mercy. I have too often resisted Your grace, grieved Your Spirit, and wronged my conscience. I have fallen a prey to the fascinations of the world, the whisperings of unbelief, and the deceitfulness of my own heart. Lord, have mercy on me! Christ, have mercy on me! Holy Spirit, have mercy on me! Remember not the sins of my youth, nor the transgressions of my riper years; but according to Your mercy — remember me.

Lead me in Your good and holy way. Deliver me from the tyranny of any secret, besetting sin. To all the seductions of the tempter, may I be ready to say, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against You, my God and my Father?"

Blessed Savior, ever-living, ever-loving Elder Brother on the throne, may it be my earnest desire to follow in Your steps as my great Example and Pattern. Like You, may I seek to be meek and lowly in heart, tender and considerate, resigned and submissive, forbearing and forgiving; so that even here I may enjoy Your own special beatitudes, "Blessed are the peacemakers." "Blessed are the pure in heart."

Look in great kindness on my beloved friends. Distance separates between us, but no distance can separate between them and You. May we together plead the same exceeding great and precious promises. May we be anchored to the same "Rock of salvation." Make us heirs together of the grace of life. Let us be able to unite in the common filial invocation, "You are my Father!"

Bless our beloved country. Protect and perpetuate whatever is likely to promote Your glory and the well-being of the people. Be a wall of fire around Your Zion. May her watchmen never keep silence, until the Your righteousness goes forth as brightness, and Your salvation as a lamp that burns.

Pity and compassionate all Your sorrowing children. Smooth the pillow of pain and sickness; grant restoration to health and strength. Point the bereaved and the lonely, beyond this land of shadows, where all is frail and fleeting — to those joys which eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither has it entered into the heart of man to conceive! Be with me throughout this day. I know not what is before me. But this is my prayer, "Lead, kindly Light. Lead, gracious Father. Lead me on. I ask not to know the distant scene. Lead me, step by step. I would not choose my own path. You choose for me. And so, with the same omnipotent Father still blessing me, who has blessed me in the past — lead me over every dark and dreary spot in the journey, until the night is gone, and I reach the gates of everlasting day!

"MY Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. May Your kingdom come. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, just as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

Sixteenth Evening

"Be imitators of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also has loved us." Ephesians 5:1-2 I will arise and go to my Father, and will say unto Him — MY FATHER, draw near to me this night, and visit me with that love which You bear to Your own people. I am once more on praying and on pleading ground. It is Your own gracious promise, that those who wait upon You, shall renew their strength. As I now commune with You from Your mercy-seat, may I be strengthened with all might by Your Spirit in the inner man. Make Your grace sufficient for me, and perfect Your strength in my weakness. Deepen the sense alike of my dependence on You, and of my spiritual responsibilities.

Forbid that I should be guilty of receiving even the least of Your mercies as matters of course. May they all be hallowed and sanctified by connecting them with Yourself, the great Bestower. I am unworthy to eat of the crumbs which fall from Your table. But You are inviting me to Your banqueting house, while Your banner over me is love. May it be my chief and habitual desire, to love You who first loved, and so loved me. Let Your love be shed abroad in my heart; and may a sense of that love and of my infinite obligations to it, quicken and stimulate me in every good word and work. "He who dwells in love, dwells in God, and God in him."

Blot out my manifold transgressions, through the blood of the everlasting covenant. Say to me, in mingled omnipotence and mercy, "Your sins, which are many, are all forgiven!" Along with the assured sense of fatherly forgiveness for the past, arm me with Your upholding strength for the future. May that indwelling love constrain me, in the time to come, to live not unto myself, but unto Him who died for me and rose again. However feeble and imperfect the resemblance, may I seek to be a follower and imitator of Him whose food and whose drink it was, to do Your holy will. Grant me to be an imitator of His meekness and gentleness, and His consecration to whatever was pure and lovely and kind.

Repress all unworthy ambitions, all selfish aims, all perilous concessions to the spirit of the world. Let me not be discouraged because of the hardness of the way — its difficulties, its dangers, its temptations. Let my path be brightened and beautified with the sunshine of His favor, who having once suffered being tempted, is able to support those who are tempted.

Lord, let this love of Yours, be an expansive principle in my heart and life. Let love to You, my Father in heaven, be accompanied with love to all. Preserve me from narrowness and exclusiveness, from unforgiving tempers and unbrotherly deeds. From envy, hatred, and malice, and all uncharitableness, good Lord — deliver me. May the well-being of my neighbor be as sacred as my own. If exposed to the shafts of slander and unkindness, may it be my habitual effort not to render evil for evil, or railing for railing; but contrariwise blessing. May I live under the influence and sovereignty of these blessed words, "Walk in love, just as Christ has loved you." May this same charity permeate churches as well as individuals. Terminate the spirit of sectarian jealousy and mutual recrimination. Quicken and stimulate the life of love. Give access in every

land, to Your faithful missionary servants; may they prepare the way of the Lord, and make straight in the desert, a highway for our God. Hasten the time when kings and princes shall cast their crowns and scepters at the feet of Him who is King of kings and Lord of lords!

Bless all Your children who are in sorrow; all who are bowed down with heavy cares and disappointed hopes and wounded spirits; all who are mourning departed relatives and friends. Let them cleave to the unforgetting love of their Father in heaven. May afflictions lead to a more complete and entire surrender of soul and life, to Him who does all things well.

Accept of my renewed thanks for the mercies of the bygone day; and when earthly mornings and evenings have terminated, may it be mine to wake up in Your likeness in everlasting glory! Meanwhile, with uplifted heart, I would utter the name and words which serve to dispel fear and to impart an ever-deepening trust — "MY Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. May Your kingdom come. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, just as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

Seventeenth Morning

"To all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God." John 1:12 And He said unto them, When you pray, say — MY FATHER in heaven, who through Your dear Son have given us power to become Your sons, help me to draw near to You this morning with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, seeking and receiving that blessing of Yours, which makes rich and adds no sorrow with it.

You are forever the same. Vicissitude may be impressed on all around me. The fondest affections may be dimmed or alienated: trusted friends may grow faithless. But You are forever the same. With gratitude and thankfulness I can trace, in the retrospect of the past, Your gracious footsteps. The way I have hitherto traversed, has been paved with kindness. May I see in every temporal mercy, the image and superscription of Your love. All which gladdens and sweetens my lot, emanates from the cross of Jesus. He who spared not His own Son, has with Him also freely given me all things. Realizing my filial relation, may I have grace given me to "believe on His name." Lord, I believe; help my unbelief! May I "receive" Jesus with a hearty and unhesitating faith in His varied offices, as my Prophet, Priest, and King — the Prophet to teach me; the Priest to intercede for me; the King to reign over and within me, bringing every high thought and lofty imagination, into captivity to the obedience of Christ.

Amid conscious weakness and infirmity, I rely on Your grace and guidance in all the diverse experiences of life; and at last to be presented faultless before the presence of Your glory with exceeding joy!

Look in kindness on those in whom I am interested, and for whom it is alike my duty and privilege to pray. Bring into the way of truth, all such as have erred or are deceived. Have mercy on those who may have fallen wounded in the battle, or who may have turned faint-hearted in the hour of conflict. Restore unto them, the joys of Your salvation, and uphold them with Your free Spirit.

Pity and relieve Your suffering and sorrowing ones, according to their several necessities. Give them the heritage of those who fear Your name. May the thought of the coming glory and its

unspeakable joys, reconcile them to the tribulations of the present world. Have compassion on the whole world. Hasten that predicted time when all kings shall fall down before You; when all nations shall serve You; when they shall bring gold and incense, and shall show forth the praises of the Lord. Saturate Your faithful ministering servants with the healthful Spirit of Your grace, and pour upon them the continual dew of Your blessing.

Help me this day in the engagements of life. May love to You and a desire to glorify Your name, be intermingled with all I think, or say, or do. Whether I live, may I live unto the Lord; or whether I die, may I die unto the Lord; living or dying, may I be Yours! Thus fitted for duty and prepared for trial, with filial reverence and confidence, I would sum up my petitions by calling You— "MY Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. May Your kingdom come. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, just as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

02.02. A Book of Private Prayer for Morning contd1

Seventeenth Evening "Blessed are the peacemakers; for they shall be called the children of God." Matthew 5:9 I will arise and go to my Father, and will say unto Him — MY FATHER, I thank You for the mercies of the bypast day. May every blessing I enjoy be hallowed and sweetened by the thought that it comes from You, and is a pledge of Your goodness. You are graciously ministering to my ever-recurring necessities. Enable me, from morning to evening, to live as a pensioner on Your bounty; to trace every gift to the great Bestower, every stream of creative and providential mercy — to Yourself, the infinite Fountain-head. Your favor alone is life; Your loving-kindness is better than life. There are many who say, "Who will show us any good?" Lift up the light of Your countenance upon me. Hide not Your face, else I must be troubled. Cause it to shine, and then I must have peace!

I acknowledge my many and multiplied transgressions. By reason of my sin, I might often have forfeited Your favor, and been left to wander as a prodigal and exile forever, far from rest, and home, and You. Blessed be Your name, the hand of parental love and mercy is stretched out still. You are waiting to be gracious. A Father's voice of reconciliation and forgiveness is ever heard saying, "I will be merciful to your unrighteousness; your sins and your iniquities I will remember no more." As partaker of Christ's resurrection life — sanctify me in body, soul, and spirit. Preserve me from the snares of the world, the assaults of temptation, and the deceitfulness of my own heart. It is my comfort to know that He who is with me, and for me — is greater far than all that can be against me. Remembering Your goodness in the past, I would entrust myself to Your keeping and guidance for the unknown future, knowing that You will be faithful to Your promise, "I will never leave you — nor forsake you." May it be my habitual desire to please You — and my sorrow to grieve You. Enable me to subdue and mortify unholy affections, and to live as seeing You who are invisible.

Hallow my relations to my fellow-men, and to the world around me. Grant me grace to inherit the blessing and beatitude of the peacemakers; ever coveting that most excellent gift of love, which is the very bond of perfectness — seeking, amid wrongs, to forgive and to forget. Alas! that there should so often be unworthy estrangements among the children of a common Father, and the professing heirs of the same heavenly inheritance!

Look in kindness on Your children who stand in need of sympathy. Be the Comforter of all who are cast down. May the breaking of earthly cisterns, only endear to them the great inexhaustible Source of consolation. Let them see; and if they cannot see, let them believe — that there is a "needs be" in their varied tribulations. May they count it their highest duty and supreme privilege, with the reverent obedience and submission of children, to bow to the will of their Father in heaven.

God of Bethel, O God of all the families of the earth, take those near and dear to me under Your loving care. May You be their keeper; their stay, and their strength at their right hand. As night now closes around me, I would for them and for myself, take shelter in the gracious promise: "When

you lie down — you shall not be afraid. Yes, you shall lie down, and your sleep shall be sweet." Let me retire to rest at peace with You and in charity to all mankind, listening to Your promise: "In all places where I record My name, I will come unto you, and I will bless you."

"MY Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. May Your kingdom come. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, just as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

Eighteenth Morning

"Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father!" Galatians 4:6 And He said unto them, When you pray, say — MY FATHER, send forth Your Spirit into my heart, enabling me, as one of Your children by adoption, fully to realize the graciousness of Your paternal name, and the tenderness of Your paternal love. I come to the footstool of Your throne, thanking You for this morning's light and this morning's mercies. Refresh me with Your blessing; revive me with Your grace. May I enjoy a season of fellowship with You my Father, and with Your Son, Jesus Christ. I acknowledge with profound thankfulness Your unwearied watchfulness and care. Sun of my soul, shine upon me with the brightness of Your rising. May each returning morning be the emblem and pledge of that glorious day, when the sun shall no more go down, neither shall the moon withdraw itself, but You shall be my everlasting Light. With an ever-deepening reverence would I say, "Give me this day, and day by day, Father, my daily bread." I would realize my constant dependence as the pensioner on Your bounty. Lift me above the unrest and perplexities of the present. Enable me to see You in everything, and everything in You. May I know and feel that Your favor alone is life, and Your loving-kindness is better than life. My heart and my flesh fails; but You are the strength of my heart, and my portion forever.

I acknowledge with sincerity and penitence of heart, my manifold trespasses. I have done those things I ought not to have done; I have left undone those things which I ought to have done; and there is no soundness in me. I have nothing to palliate or extenuate my guilt. Against You — You only, have I sinned, and done iniquity in Your sight. Father, forgive me! Father, love me! Father, save me! Father, fetch me home from every unworthy wandering!

Let me rise to a sense of my adoption privileges, with purposes and resolutions of new obedience. May Your Holy Spirit, the Comforter, the Purifier, the Sanctifier — preserve my soul pure and undefiled as His own living temple, revealing the glory of the Redeemer's person and work — taking of the things that are Christ's, and showing them unto me. It is by Your grace alone, that I stand. How often has Your interposing hand shielded me from spiritual danger, and repelled the assaults of evil! Be still my ever-present Defender. Keep me from all false ways, from treading questionable ground. If there are temptations, please disarm them. If there are difficulties, please remove or resolve them. If there are joys, please hallow them. If there are trials, please sanctify them.

Deepen in me a sense of my individual responsibility to You. May the divine principle of love, influence and govern all my actions. You love me too well to give me my own way; for in my blindness and self-will I would often choose the evil — and refuse the good. Seal me with the Holy

Spirit of promise, which is the pledge of my heavenly inheritance.

Pity Your children who are in sorrow. Bless all weepers and watchers by the couch of sickness, or the bed of death. Spare useful and valued lives. Turn back, if it is Your holy will, the shadow on life's dial; and where You have appointed otherwise, transform the gate of death into the gate of heaven.

O Lord arise, and have mercy upon Zion. Let the time to favor her, yes, the set time, soon come. May all Your churches, walking in Your fear, and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, everywhere be multiplied. Open closed eyes to see, and closed ears to hear, and closed hearts to understand Your Word. Arise, O God, and plead Your own cause.

I would seek this morning to have my mind stayed on You; living under the loving constraint of that lofty motive, "to do always those things that are pleasing in Your sight." I would be strengthened for the day's engagements, and fortified against its trials, by thus summing up my petitions with the divinely-taught words — "MY Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. May Your kingdom come. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, just as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

Eighteenth Evening

"Those who are led by the Spirit of God -- are sons of God. You received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children." Romans 8:14-16 I will arise and go to my Father, and will say unto Him — MY FATHER, I thank You for this, Your new, best name. The shadows of evening have again fallen around me. May I repose under the shadow of Your wings. With You there is no darkness at all; the darkness and the light are both alike unto You. Before I lie down to rest, impart to me the gracious sense of Your favor — of sin forgiven, of peace secured and sealed to me through the blood of the cross. Cleanse the thoughts of my heart by the work of Your Holy Spirit, that I may be enabled perfectly to love You, and worthily to magnify Your holy name.

While I thank You for the unnumbered temporal blessings of my lot, let me ever feel that of all Your gifts -- You Yourself are the crown and consummation of all Your blessings! I would bless You especially this night for the gift and revelation of Your Holy Spirit — the Enlightener, Purifier, Sanctifier of Your people. May it be mine to feel His indwelling power, His quickening, energizing influences, raising me more and more from the death of sin -- to the life of righteousness. May He bear witness with my spirit that I am Your child, and, as a child, an heir of heaven. Have You not just said, by the mouth of Your holy apostle, "Those who are led by the Spirit of God -- are sons of God"? May I thus be conducted on from grace to grace, and from strength to strength. Your Spirit, O God, is good; lead me to the land of uprightness — that land where the leading will be from glory to glory. May it be my endeavor now to attain a gradual resemblance to the image and character of the divine Redeemer, aspiring after that holiness of heart and life without which no one can see, no one can enjoy, the presence and fellowship of an infinitely pure and holy God.

I pray for any in whom I am interested who may still be far from You — those who are crying in the far country, "I perish with hunger." Gracious Father, fetch them home! Let them welcome the outstretched arms of Your love, the opened gates of mercy. Have compassion on a world lying in

wickedness, on the nations and peoples that know You not. Come from the four winds, O Breath, O Spirit of God, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live! Brood, as You did of old over the darkness of chaos, and say, "Let there be light!"

Pity those who are in tribulation, and with regard to whom deep may be calling unto deep. May Jesus come to them walking on the sea. Enable them to look forward in quiet, peaceful confidence to the time when every wave will be rocked to rest, sin vanquished, sorrow unknown, tears wiped away. Meanwhile, as Your children, may they feel that even in the floods of great waters they are "led by the Spirit of God." May He, in these "paths of the sea," reveal Himself especially to them as the Comforter.

I again invoke Your guardian care and divine blessing. Spare me, good Lord, to welcome the light of a new day. May I awake in Your favor, fitted for the discharge of all its duties.

"MY Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. May Your kingdom come. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, just as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

Nineteenth Morning "I tell you the truth, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name." John 16:23 And He said unto them, When you pray, say — MY FATHER in heaven, I approach the footstool of Your throne of grace through the merits and mediation of Him whom You always hear. O divine Redeemer, who holds in Your hand the golden key of the gates of prayer, who open and no man shuts, I trust the gracious word of promise to which I have now listened. May I be enabled to draw near to the divine Presence with a true heart, in full assurance of faith.

How wondrous Your own declaration, that whatever I ask, if it is in accordance with Your holy will — "whatever," within the bounds of Omnipotence to bestow -- will not be refused. There is bread enough in our Father's house, and to spare; none of Your children need perish with hunger. Lord, evermore give me this bread! The bread which perishes, the bread of daily provision for my earthly needs and necessities — providential care and providential guidance — but above all, the Bread of heaven for the supply of my daily spiritual needs, and which alone can stay and satisfy the hunger of the soul — the Bread, whoever eats of which, shall live forever.

Adored be Your name for this twofold revelation of Yourself as a God of providence and a God of grace. I rejoice that You are with me in every step of the earthly journey, whispering in my ear the consoling words, "In all places where I record My name, I will come unto you and bless you!" Let my heart be responsive to Your directing voice and wise appointments. If you give me the full cup, oh enable me to carry it with a steady hand. If the cup is mingled with troubles, be this my solace and comfort, that it is my Father who has added the bitter drops. Whether mine is the experience of cloud or of sunshine, may I be ready in both to say, "May Your will be done!" In the blessing promised to me this morning in answer to prayer, give me above all the blessed sense of forgiveness — peace through the blood of the cross. Pardon whatever sins I have committed against You in thought, word, and deed. Accept of me in the Beloved; heal my backslidings, receive me graciously, and love me freely.

Bless Your children in affliction. May it be their joy and privilege to pour their sorrows into a Father's ear. As one whom his mother comforts, do comfort them, and they shall be comforted. Be

the rest-giver and the rest-provider for Your weary and heavy-laden children.

I would ask You also in behalf of those near and dear to me, all connected by the ties of nature, all associated in the holier and more enduring fellowships of Your covenant children. Write every name in the Lamb's book of life. Make them Yours now, and Yours forever.

Look in kindness on our native land, in all its interests, sacred and civil. As you have blessed her and made her a blessing in the past, may she continue to realize that she is the honored instrument in Your hand for the spread of truth and the triumph of righteousness.

Compass my path, good Lord, and keep me from evil. Give me increasing purity of heart, and simplicity of purpose, and singleness of aim. Let no transaction be undertaken but what I believe to have Your sanction and approval. When the day is ended, may it be blemished with no remembrance of unworthiness in word or deed. Give me the daily grace promised for daily necessities and exigencies. May my whole nature be in harmony with Yours. Thus, in undivided and delighted consecration to You and Your sole glory, may I be enabled now and ever to call You — "MY Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. May Your kingdom come. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, just as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

Nineteenth Evening

"The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God." Romans 8:19-21 I will arise and go to my Father, and will say unto Him — MY FATHER, I would again, at the close of another day, bring to You the incense-offering of gratitude and praise. Meet me at this appointed hour of evening sacrifice. Disperse all the shadows of sin and unbelief, and impart the inner sunshine which no darkness can obscure. How unworthy am I of the privilege of approaching Your presence! There is enough of coldness and formality in my best services, to debar me from fellowship and communion with You. Touch alike my erring heart, and my imperfect petitions with the live coal from off Your holy altar.

I rejoice at the thought of the glorious liberty of Your children, and of Your gracious willingness that I should partake of the same. By nature and by practice I am tied and bound with the chain of sin! Yet You have, in Your dear Son, revealed a glorious method by which emancipation can be secured, alike from its guilt and its tyranny, its condemning and its enslaving power. If Christ makes me free, then am I free indeed. Take away all slavish and servile fear — the bondage of corruption. Put Your spirit of adoption within me, enabling me to cry, "Abba, Father!" Like the cripple laid at the temple gate of old, let me go forth with every chain of spiritual slavery unloosed and broken -- walking and leaping and praising You -- conscious of freedom from the curse of the law, freedom from the tyranny of heart-sins and life-sins, freedom from the fear of death, freedom and deliverance from the wrath to come.

Lord, I have ever need of Your grace and of the influence of Your Holy Spirit. Protect and preserve me by Your mighty power. If at times prone to spiritual declension, reclaim my truant heart from its wanderings. Give me increasing tenderness of conscience, scrupulously avoiding anything that

would compromise Christian principle, or dim the sanctities of pure thought and holy deed. And while I ever aim after a Christ-like character and life, do fill me with deeper solicitude for the well-being of those around me. Make me more and more loyal to the great gospel rule and requirement, of doing to others as I would desire that they would do to me. Let me know and feel and exemplify that love is the fulfilling of the law.

Pity a fallen world, "subjected to frustration, not by its own choice." Hasten the happy time when creation, now in mourning and sackcloth, shall put on her bridal attire, and when the invocation shall be heard, "Let us be glad and rejoice, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready!" Have mercy on the wide family of Your afflicted ones. May they take refuge in the very arms that are chastising them, feeling assured that their heavenly Father knows best, that they have need of all these things. May it be theirs to look beyond what is frail and fleeting and transitory -- and anticipate the time when every tear-dimmed eye shall wake up amid the brightness and glory of an unsinning, unsorrowing, tearless world!

Bless my beloved friends. May they, too, know, in their happy personal experience, the liberty of the glory of the children of God. Enable them to cultivate those elevating virtues which make life truly beautiful. Consecrate every family tie by fellowship with Him of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.

Anew I ask You to forgive whatever You have seen amiss in me this day. Before I retire to rest, I would wash in the opened fountain; seeking always to be living ready for the summons when it comes, "Prepare to meet Your God!" and so at last, when the night of death gathers its shadows around me, I may fall asleep in the humble yet confident assurance of a resurrection to eternal life. With these gracious hopes and promises, I would sum up my petitions at the throne of the heavenly grace by calling You — "MY Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. May Your kingdom come. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, just as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

Twentieth Morning "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom!" Luke 12:32 And He said unto them, When you pray, say — MY FATHER, draw near to me this morning with Your own gracious word and welcome, "Fear not!" You feed Your flock like a shepherd, carrying in Your arms the weak and tender, the burdened and weary. What a promise is mine, of Your Shepherd-care and Fatherly goodness — the green pastures and the still waters of the Good Shepherd, the unwearied love and affection of the Father of all mercies and the God of all grace! As I now approach Your holy presence, I would seek to be possessor of the peace which has been purchased and secured to me through the blood of the cross. I look for pardon and acceptance and the hope of eternal life to the Good Shepherd who gave His own life for the sheep. Blessed be Your name, my safety is not dependent on myself. Gracious Savior, I cleave to Your own divine assurance, which, by a double security in its twofold emblem, hushes to rest every doubting, disquieting, unbelieving thought: "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom!" I accept a Father's pledged word and immutable promise, ratified by the declaration of the great Shepherd of souls.

Hear and accept my penitential acknowledgment of sin and unworthiness, of weakness and infirmity, of defeat and failure. Grant me Your upholding, strengthening, sanctifying grace for the

future. Let me exercise a habitual jealousy over my words and actions. Purify my motives, elevate my affections. Keep me from dishonoring Your paternal goodness by doing what is inconsistent with Your will. Be my Protector in danger, my Counselor in perplexity, my Light in darkness, my Comforter in sorrow, my Guide even unto death. Have mercy on a perishing world. Sheathe the sword of war; break the fetters of the slave. May the captive nations go forth exulting in gospel freedom, made partakers of the liberty with which Christ makes His people free.

Purify the members of Your church more and more. Receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, may they have grace to serve You acceptably with reverence and godly fear. Compassionate all who stand in need of our sympathy. May Your sorrowing people experience the blessedness of sanctified affliction. Stay Your rough north wind -- in the day of Your east wind. Deep may be calling unto deep, all Your waves and billows going over them. Lead them to the Rock that is higher than they. In the midst of long and weary vigils, whether of pain or of sorrow, may they stay themselves on You.

Fit and strengthen me for the special duties of this day. Let Your love be shed abroad in my heart. May I be living in charity with all men, cultivating the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which in Your sight is of great price. Make me feelingly alive to my responsibility for every entrusted talent, however lowly. Thus may I be guided, directed, shielded -- until from being one of Your little flock below, I am folded forever with Your glorified flock above in the pastures of the blessed. Meanwhile, in the name of Him whom You hear always, I delight to call You, — "MY Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. May Your kingdom come. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, just as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

Twentieth Evening "And he said unto him, Son, you are ever with me, and all that I have is yours!" Luke 15:31 I will arise and go to my Father, and will say unto Him, — MY FATHER, anew I would cling this night to Your name and character unfolded in Your Word, as my living and loving, the faithful and unchanging Father. I would hear Your voice saying of spiritual blessings now in possession, and of everlasting blessings in prospect, "Son, you are ever with me, and all that I have is yours!" These blessings have been purchased for me, fully, freely, and forever -- by my great and gracious Redeemer! You will supply all my needs, out of Your riches in glory through Christ Jesus. Accept of my person and my services in Him.

I would put the incense of my evening sacrifice into the censer of this great High Priest. Let the fragrant cloud of His merits cover all my imperfections. Look not on me as I am in myself. My best motives are mingled with selfishness; my best actions are marred with defilement. But behold my Shield; look upon me in the face of Your Anointed Son. Let Your hand be upon the Man of Your right hand, on the Son of man whom You have made strong for Yourself. I feel the weakness of my faith, the coldness of my love, the fitfulness of my affections; that much owned and professed by the lip has not been countersigned by the life. "If You, O Lord, should mark iniquities -- who could stand? But there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared."

I cast myself anew on Him who has done all and suffered all and procured all for me; and who carries with Him the sympathies of exalted human nature to His throne of glory.

Blessed Savior, You can enter into my needs and trials, my misgivings, and perplexities, and fears. You know earth's wilderness paths, for You have Yourself trodden them. You know the hour of sorrow, the hour of temptation, the hour of loneliness, the hour of suffering, the hour of death. Son of man, pity me! Son of God, save me! I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. May I be found resolute and invincible in the hour of spiritual conflict; through Him made more than conqueror. By simplicity of trust, consistency of obedience, consecration of heart and life -- may I ever seek to glorify His holy name.

Lord, bless Your church throughout all the world. Bring many out of darkness to exult in the marvelous light of the gospel. Fetch every prodigal back from his wandering. Blessed be Your name, for the encouragement given in Your holy Word, for such to retrace their steps to the long-forfeited home; for the assurance that You will resound with songs of joy at their return.

Comfort mourners. Direct them to the Balm in Gilead -- and the Physician there. Let them recognize Your sovereign right to deal with Your children as seems good in Your sight. Every thorn in the nest is permitted by You. There is infinite wisdom in Your dealings. Driven from creature refuges and perishable joys, may it be theirs to say, "My heart and my flesh may fail; but You are the strength of my heart, and my portion forever!" May we all be enabled to look beyond human vicissitudes, to the time when sorrow and sighing shall forever flee away, and when to each ransomed one the same welcome shall be addressed, "Son, you are ever with me, and all that I have is yours!"

Meanwhile, with my eye upwards and my footsteps onwards, may I seek to run with endurance the race that is set before me, with no undue solicitude or anxiety for the future; ever asking, "Lord, what would You have me to do?" and delighting to execute Your will and mission, simply because they are Yours. As You have preceded me today with the pillar of cloud, so let the fiery pillar go before me this night. Shepherd and Keeper of Israel, let me fall asleep under the consciousness of Your unceasing vigil, while I call You by the still more endearing name —

"MY Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. May Your kingdom come. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, just as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

Twenty-first Morning

"O Lord, You are our Father. We are the clay, and You are our potter; we all are the work of Your hands." Isaiah 64:8 "You, Lord, are our Father; our Redeemer from of old is your name." Isaiah 63:16 And He said unto them, When you pray, say — MY FATHER in heaven, hallowed be Your name. I laid me down last night and slept; I awaked; because You sustained me. You who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, over the works of whose hands the morning stars of old sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy — shine into my heart with the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. May Your presence brighten all the day's blessings, and remove all its worries, and sanctify all its trials.

I flee to the sanctuary of Your covenant love, rejoicing in You as my Father, and in Christ as my Redeemer. Your conjoint name — the name revealed in the earliest ages of Your church, "the Lord, the Lord God — merciful and gracious, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and in truth" —

is from everlasting, and it is to everlasting.

Let it ever be to me a gracious and consoling thought, that "the Lord reigns!" I am but clay in the hand of the almighty Potter. All that concerns me and mine, is directed and regulated by infinite wisdom and unchanging love. Neither is there anything arbitrary in Your dealings. I would lie passive at Your feet, saying, Do to me and with me as seems good in Your sight. You do according to Your will in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. I will be still, and know that you are God.

I come to You through Him who has revealed and unfolded this paternal relationship, Himself the image of the invisible God. I thank You alike for the example of His holy life, and for the merits of His atoning death and sacrifice. I bring my guilt to the great Propitiation. O Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, have mercy upon me! O Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, grant me Your peace! Enable me to walk worthy of You, my Saviour-God, unto all well-pleasing. Prevent me doing anything to dishonor Your holy name, or injure the advancement of Your cause and kingdom. Let me ever acknowledge Your right to do with me and mine as seems good in Your sight.

After all that You have done for me — the proofs and pledges of Your love in a life of suffering and a death of shame— preserve me from the sin and ingratitude of impeaching Your rectitude or questioning Your faithfulness. Gracious Father and Redeemer, in covenant for my salvation — calm all my feverish unrest and perplexing anxiety, with the gracious challenge, "He who spared not His own Son, but gave Him up to death for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?"

It is by Your grace alone, that I stand. Keep me from the entanglements of prosperity; mitigate the pangs of adversity with Your divine solaces. Deliver me from all that would retard Your work within me, or that would quench the light of Your indwelling Spirit. And loving You, my God, may I also seek to love my fellow-men. I would sympathize with any who are in distress, whether of body or of mind. Imbue me with the tenderness of Him who would not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax.

Let all of Your sufferers glorify You in the day of visitation. As Your children, may they remember Him who prayed the submissive prayer, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me." May it be theirs to accept the cup of affliction which You put into their hand as a cup of love, saying, "Not as I will, but as You will." Take off their sackcloth and gird them with gladness.

Revive Your work in the midst of our years. Enlighten the ignorant; vivify every faint heart; rouse every procrastinator who would mock You with the wrecks of a worn and withered love. Hasten the predicted era when Your Spirit shall be poured out upon all flesh; when loiterers and lingerers and waverers, shall no longer obstruct the King's highway; when there shall be "multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision," asking the way to Zion with their faces turned thitherward.

Help me, good Lord, this day, in the discharge of every duty; and when my work is done, whether life be long or short, may I come forth in Your strength, more than conqueror.

I ask these and every other needed blessing, through the all-sufficient merits, and all-prevailing name of Jesus Christ, my only Lord and Savior.

"MY Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. May Your kingdom come. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, just as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

Twenty-first Evening "The Lord disciplines the one He loves; just as a father disciplines the son he delights in." Proverbs 3:12 I will arise and go to my Father, and will say unto Him — MY FATHER, draw near to me this evening, in Your infinite mercy. Hallow the tie which unites me to Yourself. Amid all earthly vicissitudes, and, it may be, amid adverse dealings, mysterious dispensations, may it be mine to hear the gracious message of You who are without variableness, "I will be a Father unto you, and you shall be My sons and daughters." I rejoice that the rainbow of promise spans the darkest clouds; and when I cannot see it at the time — when the cloud is apparently without the rainbow — faith can penetrate the gloom and discern behind it — all an unchanging covenant God, who corrects because He loves, and who loves as a Father.

I adore You for the rich blessings that are treasured up in Christ. In Him alone, is my trust for time and for eternity. To Him I look alone for salvation. Hide me in the clefts of the Rock of Ages until earth's calamities be overpast. Millions have taken shelter there, and yet there is room.

Lord Jesus, every cross loses its bitterness by having You at my side. Other portions may, and sooner or later must, perish. You are the All-satisfying and All-enduring portion of my soul. May the loss of every earthly prop drive me nearer to You. May this be my song in the house of my pilgrimage, "Whom having not seen, I love; in whom, though now I see Him not, yet believing, I rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory." May it be my habitual desire to follow His footsteps and to reflect His image, to live and to walk so as to do always those things that are pleasing in His sight.

Look in compassion on Your children of suffering and sorrow. May they, too, see all tempered with gracious love; reposing in the exalted sympathy of their divine Redeemer, the King of glory, yet the King of sorrows and Prince of sufferers.

Bless my beloved friends. May we be bound up as one now in the bundle of life, and be at last found together among the golden sheaves gathered by the reaper-angels for the great harvest-home above. Seal us with the Holy Spirit of promise, unto the day of redemption.

Abide with me; for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. Forgive whatever I have done amiss during its hours — in thought, word, or deed. Let me lie down to sleep with a grateful heart for all Your manifold goodness, feeling that I have abundant reason to sing of Your mercy, even in the midst of judgment. I look forward to that joyous time when, fully purified alike from sin and sorrow, I shall enter within the heavenly gates and stand faultless before Your throne!

Meanwhile, however varied the teaching and discipline of Your providence, be it mine, in unshaken confidence and with unfaltering filial devotion, to call You — "MY Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. May Your kingdom come. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, just as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

Twenty-second Morning

"Go to My brothers and tell them that I am ascending to My Father and your Father—to My God and your God." John 20:17 "I will not leave you as orphans. I will come to you." John 14:18 And He said unto them, When you pray, say — MY FATHER in heaven, draw near to me in Your infinite goodness. Last night, as in the case of many of my fellow-creatures, I might have been called to sleep the sleep of death — not permitted to welcome again the morning light. With the renewed radiance of the natural sun, may the Sun of Righteousness arise upon me with healing in His beams. Let all vain and wandering thoughts be silenced and repressed, as I now approach Your footstool. Impart to me now, in entering on the day's duties, a restful confidence in Your mercy, a sweet sense of Your favor.

Great and gracious God, I thank You for the many proofs of Your kindness. My pathway in life is strewn with Your blessings; and there are no small mercies with You, for the least of them are undeserved. Especially would I adore You for the crown and consummation of Your love — in the gift of Your dear Son, the pledge and guarantee of all other and lesser blessings. In Him I have pardon, peace, acceptance, eternal life. In Him I have a balm for every wound, a solace for every trial, and a steadfast hope. I delight to ponder the elevating thought, that He is ever living, ever loving; that from the throne of glory on which He sits, I can listen to the gracious accents addressed to every member of His redeemed family: "I will not leave you as orphans. As the Dispenser of heavenly gifts, I have ascended to My Father, and your Father; to My God, and your God."

O great Intercessor within the veil, reveal Yourself to me in my morning approach to the mercy-seat, and perfume my unworthy prayers and petitions, with the incense of Your adorable merits. May I feel the power of the indwelling Spirit. Subdue unmortified sin; quicken me in every good and holy way. Enthroned Yourself in my soul and life, as Lord of all, and bring me to live more constantly and habitually under the constraining influence of Your love. As once orphaned and homeless, but now "set among the children," may I be able personally to appropriate the assurance, "The redemption of the soul is precious." "I know whom I have believed."

Bless Your holy church throughout all the world. Let the story of grace, in its glorious fullness, be borne from land to land and from shore to shore. Baptize Your ministering and missionary servants with the filling of Your Holy Spirit.

I would plead with You, O my Father-God, for those connected with me by the ties of kindred, or affection, or grace. May we participate in all needed blessings, temporal and spiritual. Unite us in the common fellowship of the gospel. Watch between us when we are absent one from another, and preserve us safe unto Your heavenly kingdom.

Look in compassion on Your sons and daughters of affliction. Let the Savior speak to them also His own pacifying words — the words of the great Elder Brother — the Brother born for adversity — "I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you." As prop after prop that was accustomed to sustain on earth gives way — may they find in Him a sure support which cannot be shaken. Let them rely on His pure and exalted sympathy, looking to the hand which dries all tears, and the voice which soothes all sorrows. In His name I would begin the day with the ever-precious words which on earth He taught us — "MY Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. May Your kingdom come. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, just as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us. And lead us not into

temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

Twenty-second Evening

"Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." Ephesians 5:20 I will arise and go to my Father, and will say unto Him — MY FATHER, I would give You thanks for all things. You give me "all things richly to enjoy." May it ever be mine, gratefully recognizing Your hand, to say, "I bless You for my creation, preservation, and for all the blessings of this life."

It is "in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ" that I would offer this my evening tribute of gratitude and praise. Accept me in the Beloved. Draw near, adorable Savior, as You did to Your disciples of old, and breathe upon me, and say, "Peace be unto you!" Bestow upon me Your most gracious favor, and uphold me with Your continual help, that in all I think, and say, and do — I may ever have a single eye to Your glory.

Especially would my thanks arise, for the unspeakable riches of Your redeeming love — for all that Jesus died on the cross to purchase, and which He is exalted on the throne to bestow. I will sing unto the Lord a new song, for He has done marvelous things. His right hand and His holy arm has gotten the victory for Him; a victory I never could have achieved for myself. I am made more than conqueror through Him that loved me.

It is by Your grace alone, that I stand. Unless You had been my help, my soul had often dwelt in hell. If I have been successful in resisting sin and repelling the assaults of temptation, it is all Your doing. Hold me up — and then alone shall I be safe. Let me habitually realize Your presence and the supporting aids of Your blessed Spirit. I commit myself unreservedly, soul and body, to Your gracious guidance.

"Lead me on!" If it be through sunny paths, and gentle dealings, and loving experiences, may I listen to the divine directing voice, "Follow Me!" Or if it be through suffering and tribulation, may I equally confide in the unrevealed mystery of Your ways, knowing that "all things" are working together for my good! I look forward to the time when my unhesitating avowal shall be made, "He has done all things well." Have mercy on Your whole church. Visit it alike with the early and the latter rain. May the shower come down in its season; let there be showers of blessing. May those who make mention of the Lord, give Him no rest until He establishes and makes His spiritual Jerusalem, the praise in the earth.

Bless my beloved friends. May they too be set among Your children. Enable them, with lowly confidence, to look up to You as their Father, to Christ as their Elder Brother, and onwards to heaven as their everlasting home.

Regard with tender sympathy and love, those children of Yours, who are laid stricken at the gates of sorrow. May they be led to glorify You in the day of visitation. Even though it is a cross that raises them, may this be their longing aspiration, "Nearer, my God, to You; nearer to You!" Amid the fluctuations and uncertainties of this mortal life, may it be the joy and peace and security of all of us, to have our anchor cast within the veil.

I ask these, and every other needed blessing, in the name of Him whom You always hear, and who, when He was on earth, left us for our devotions the ever-precious words — "MY Father in

heaven, hallowed be Your name. May Your kingdom come. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, just as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

Twenty-third Morning

"Behold, how great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!" 1 John 3:1 And He said unto them, When you pray, say — MY FATHER, I thank You for the rest and the refreshment of sleep, and for all the mercies of a new day. Even with regard to outward things, I can devoutly say, "Behold, how great is the love the Father has lavished on me!" You are ever giving me new causes for gratitude, and loading me with the blessings of Your goodness. But chiefly would I praise You, for the revelation of Your love in Christ Jesus. I can exult in the same gracious testimony borne by Your servant of old, "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name." "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief." I look alone to the Savior's meritorious cross and passion, to the mysteries and marvels of redeeming love in its suffering and triumph, which give Him the right now to say, "I will be merciful to your unrighteousness; your sins and your iniquities I will remember no more;" and which will give Him the right at last to say from His throne of glory on the day of His appearing, "Behold I, and the children whom You have given Me!"

Anew, then, would I plead this morning, the ever-faithful saving, which has never lost, and never can lose, any of its faithfulness, that "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners!" Earth has no "manner of love" like this! The kindness of the kindest, the love of the most loving human friend, knows a limit. Your love, O gracious Redeemer, knows none.

I have to lament, heavenly Father — the proneness of my heart to depart from You, to disown Your mercies, and mock You with a divided allegiance — seeking my happiness too often in things which perish with the using. Break the world's alluring spell. Disenchant its delusive fascinations! Elevate my affections, purify my desires. May I seek to have the consciousness of Your pure, loving eye ever upon me, living under the supremacy of that elevating motive, to walk so as to please You.

Bless my dear friends wherever they are. May they, too, have many loving memories of Your great goodness. May it be their loftiest aim and ambition to be called the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty.

Bless Your wide family of the suffering and sorrowing. Keep them from all unrighteous surmises regarding Your dispensations. May Your chastisement only quicken their aspirations after nearer, closer, more confidential fellowship with Yourself, their Father in heaven. Let every doubt and misgiving be hushed to rest with the assurance, "If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons." May the bereaved look forward to joyful reunion with their beloved dead, when they shall together, and forever, be with their Lord.

Gladden me this day with Your presence. Morning by morning, as I set out on my path of duty, may it be my increasing desire to attain a nearer and closer conformity to You and to Your holy will — to have more childlike tenderness of spirit, childlike obedience, childlike fear of grieving or offending a Father so full of pitying love and mercy.

Hasten the advent and kingdom of Your dear Son, when, as the Lord our God, He shall come, and all His saints with Him, and when there shall be voices heard in heaven saying, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ!" For this blessed consummation I would unite this morning with Your children throughout all the world in saying —

"MY Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. May Your kingdom come. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, just as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

Twenty-third Evening

"For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." Romans 8:15 I will arise and go to my Father, and will say unto Him — MY FATHER, in this the hour of evening, A calling to bodily rest, do give me the better rest and repose that are to be found in Your favor, and in the enjoyment of Your love. Impart unto me the spirit of adoption. Enable me, as I now venture into Your presence, to dismiss all slavish fears, and to approach You with the trust and confidence of Your redeemed children.

You have vouchsafed to me the blessings of another day. Enable me always to accept of these renewed hours as a fresh proof of Your gracious regard, a renewed grant of Your undeserved mercy. And now, let me both lay me down in peace and sleep, knowing that it is You alone, who makes me to dwell in safety. All darkness is dispersed with the conscious sunshine of Your presence.

I come anew to the cleansing blood and the all-sufficient merits of my divine Redeemer. Wash out the defilements of the day. May the grace of adoption, bestowed as Your own Fatherly gift, lead me to aspirations after increasing holiness of heart and life, to the crucifixion of sin and the subjugation of self. May I be patient in suffering, calm under provocation, pure in motive, charitable in word, unselfish in deed. If there is any lurking or lingering sympathy with what is opposed to Your will, or inconsistent with my obligation to serve You, Lord -- remove it. Keep me from all repinings and misgivings at the rectitude of Your dealings—all angry thoughts, all unworthy envyings and jealousies, all resentments and recriminations. Let it be to me at once a precept and a promise, "Sin shall not have dominion over you." Your grace is equal for all exigencies and emergencies. Overrule the designs and discipline of Your providence in fitting me for earth's duties and training for glory, in fostering and strengthening the inner life of righteousness, and bringing my desires and affections more into harmony with Your will.

I pray for the interests of Your Son's kingdom everywhere. Give efficacy to the attractive power of the Cross. Reclaim the wanderer, rescue the perishing. Revive Your work in the midst of the years. May all Your churches share in the refreshing dews of the Holy Spirit. May no part of the fleece be dry. Arise, O Lord, and plead Your own cause!

Pity the sick, the sorrowful, the bereaved, the dying. Where human links are severed, gladden with the thought of eternal reunions. Let us all live under the salutary impression of the precarious tie which binds us to life and its blessings; and when the last night of earth shall overtake us -- may its shadows melt and merge into the brightness of eternal day!

Meanwhile, in the spirit and the language of adoption, I would close these unworthy petitions with the endearing name and devout prayer on my lips — "MY Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. May Your kingdom come. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, just as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

Twenty-fourth morning "He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be My son!" Revelation 21:7 And He said unto them, When you pray, say — MY FATHER in heaven, I invoke Your blessing upon the work of the day on which I am now entering. May I seek to nourish a constant and habitual sense of dependence on Your favor and love. To You all hearts are open, to You all desires are known, and from You no secrets are hid. Cleanse the thoughts of my heart by the work of Your Holy Spirit. I rejoice in that paternal name which disarms all fear and hushes all disquietude. Under its shelter I now draw near to the throne of the heavenly grace. Let me know the truth of the promised assurance, "The Lord is good to those who wait for Him, unto the soul that seeks Him." "I wait for God, my soul does wait, and in His Word do I hope." As Yours by adoption, I would look anew with the unwavering eye of faith to the doing and dying of my divine Redeemer. Disowning all creature merit, I am complete in Him — encouraged to draw out of His infinite fullness -- grace for grace. In Him alone, I overcome. In Him alone, I inherit all things. In Him alone, I can look up to You as my covenant God, and appropriate the heritage of Your children. May my pathway heavenward be brightened by the sense of peace through the blood of the cross, and the assured hope of eternal life in Him. Enable me worthily to live as the chartered heir of so glorious an inheritance — the life of love and consecration now begun, which is to be perpetuated and perfected in heaven. Keep me from sin. Keep me from whatever is inconsistent with the love and allegiance I owe to Christ as my divine Lord and Master. Keep me humble and thankful, grateful and submissive. Keep me from the dominion of pride or selfishness. May the remembrance of the Master's example often serve to chide, as well as to stimulate every Christian grace in me. As the child of a gracious Father, may I be daily attaining a greater fitness for that Father's house and that Father's presence, where temptations are no longer felt or feared!

I pray for all Your people. Bless those who are laboring, unknown and unrecognized, in the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom, as well as those who are conspicuous in fighting the battles of the faith. May all seek to occupy their assigned, it may be lowly trust, with fidelity, until You come to demand account of their stewardship.

Bless my beloved friends, whether near or at a distance. We can meet in sympathetic union at the mercy-seat, and rejoice in the assurance that the same Lord is near unto all those who call upon Him. Overrule the vicissitudes and changes of life in our homes and families -- for Your glory.

I commend to You, the wide circle of Your afflicted children. Let them indulge in no hard thoughts of Your Fatherly dealings. May the home of bereavement and the hour of departure be transformed into the house of God and the gate of heaven. Where life's joyous music may be hushed in death, may Your children look forward to that glorious hereafter, where there is no jarring or discordant note to interrupt the everlasting harmony, and where death is swallowed up in victory!

I anew commend myself to Your gracious keeping. Protect me from danger, guard me from temptation, lead me in the everlasting way. May it be my endeavor, day by day, to pitch my tent

nearer heaven and nearer to You. Meanwhile, with implicit trust and childlike reverence, conscious of my many spiritual blessings in possession, and with the covenanted inheritance in prospect, I would sum up my petitions by calling You — "MY Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. May Your kingdom come. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, just as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

Twenty-fourth Evening

"Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?" Matthew 6:26

"Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows." Matthew 10:29-31 I will arise and go to my Father, and will say unto Him — MY FATHER, I rejoice that all events are in Your hand, and under Your disposal. You feed the birds of the air. You watch the sparrow's fall. You feed the young ravens when they cry. Nothing can happen without Your appointment. There is no chance or accident in Your dealings. All of Your dealings are dictated and regulated by a wisdom that cannot err, and by a love that cannot change. And therefore it is that, as the shadows of evening have again gathered round me, I delight to realize Your presence and to invoke Your guardian care.

If, as Creator, the winged tribes of the earth are under Your supervision and providential rule, how much more may I, as one of Your unworthy children, repose in the faithfulness and loving-kindness of my heavenly Father! Yes, Lord, I shall trust Your heart — even when at times I fail to trace Your hand. I shall listen to Your voice of mingled comfort and rebuke — "Your Father knows that you have need of all these things!"

I come to You in the name of Him who on earth taught me these gracious lessons; who came to reveal You as "our Father," and Himself as our great and all-sufficient Savior. O Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world — have mercy upon me! Grant me Your peace! Wash away every guilty stain from my soul. Number me with Your saints in everlasting glory.

Precious Lord Jesus, while I look alone to Your meritorious work for pardon and acceptance, may it be my habitual endeavor to follow in the footsteps of Your holy life. May the same mind be in me, which was also in You. Make me the possessor of that charity which is patient, and is kind; which is not easily provoked; which rejoices not in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth. Keep me from evil thoughts and selfish desires. Let me live and walk and act — as seeing You who are invisible.

I pray for my beloved friends. Bless them, and make them blessings. May all of us be able to say with united heart, "We have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace."

Look in kindness on the whole human race. Terminate the supremacy of wickedness and oppression, and usher in the blessed reign of the Prince of Peace. May Your churches be valiant for Your truth. Revive Your work in the midst of our years. May Your Spirit come down like rain upon the mown grass, and as showers that water the earth.

Sanctify affliction to Your many sorrowing children. Manifest Yourself especially to those enduring unspoken trials. With Your tender touch, bind up every hidden wound, and dry every tear. If, meanwhile, no silver lining is to be seen in the clouds, may comfort be taken in the assurance that "at evening time, it shall be light." As You have been with me, heavenly Father, throughout the day, I commend myself to Your care during the silent watches of the night. Let me fall asleep listening to the gracious lullaby, "The Lord is your keeper; the Lord is your shade upon your right hand." And when the gates of the morning are once more opened, may it be to hear anew the benediction, "Fear not, for I am with you! My presence shall go with you, and I will give you rest."

"MY Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. May Your kingdom come. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, just as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

Twenty-fifth Morning

"Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before you, and am no more worthy to be called your son." Luke 15:18-19 And He said unto them, When you pray, say — MY FATHER, the God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in all — draw near to me this morning in Your great goodness. I would begin a new day invoking Your blessing. May the peace of God which passes understanding, keep my heart and mind through Christ Jesus. Disperse all darkness, remove all doubt and disquietude, and with reverent filial devotion, enable me to approach Your mercy-seat.

"Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and in your sight, and I am no more worthy to be called your son." Yet how great has been Your forbearance, when through much weakness and unworthiness and unwatchfulness, I have been straying from You! Too well do I truly feel and know, that in forfeiting Your favor, I have surrendered my truest peace and most abiding happiness. But, blessed be Your name, You do not leave Your prodigal children to their waywardness and estrangement. In the midst of merited wrath, You are remembering unmerited mercy. The gates of a lost Father's home, and the arms of a lost Father's love — are ever extended for the wanderer's return. The joyful words at times heard in the earthly dwelling, are the echoes of higher heavenly realities — "This son of Mine was dead, and is alive again! He was lost, and is found." "Who is a God like unto You, who pardons iniquity, and passes by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He does not retain His anger forever, because He delights in mercy."

Lord, if conscious of present coldness and lukewarmness, defection and backsliding, restore unto me the joys of Your salvation, and uphold me with Your free Spirit. Keep me from those sins which most easily beset me, and which lead me from the path of duty and of safety. May it be my greatest pain to grieve You, and to requite Your kindness with ingratitude. May it be my earnest and devout aspiration, to serve You with a willing and delighted obedience, and thus in all things to glorify Your holy name. Have mercy upon any who may have wandered to the far country, and who nevertheless in their spiritual destitution and despair, are wailing out the confession, "I perish with hunger!" Fetch Your prodigal children home to their Father's house. Assure them of the robe and ring, the kiss of welcome and forgiveness. Whisper in the ear of despondency, "God has not appointed you to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ!"

Look in kindness on my beloved friends. May they esteem it their highest honor to be the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty. May it be theirs on the great Day, to listen to the words of the divine Redeemer, "Behold, I and the children whom God has given me!" Meanwhile may grace be given them to "walk in the light, as He is in the light — that they may be the children of light."

Bless the young. Keep them in the paths of purity and peace. Bless the aged. May they experience the decline of their existence — to be the evening of their days — gladdened by Your presence. Bless the sorrowing. Cast the healing tree into the bitter waters — and their sorrow shall be turned into joy. Amid loneliest and saddest experiences may it be theirs to avow, "Though He slays me, yet will I trust in Him!"

I also bless Your holy name for all Your servants departed this life in Your faith and fear; beseeching You to give me grace so to follow their good examples, that with them I may be partaker of your heavenly kingdom.

Lord, shine upon my path this day and every day. Hallow its joys, ease its burdens, disarm its temptations. "I will go in the strength of the Lord God."

I anew present my filial petitions, with all conscious unworthiness to be called Your child, yet encouraged by Your own gracious welcome to address You — "MY Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. May Your kingdom come. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, just as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

02.03. A Book of Private Prayer for Morning contd2

Twenty-fifth Evening "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect." Matthew 5:48 I will arise and go to my Father, and will say unto Him — MY FATHER, bend Your loving eye upon me this night. The cares and duties of another day are over. I am permitted once more to draw near to Your throne of grace, and take shelter in the pavilion of Your faithfulness. If vicissitude is written on all around, with You there is no shadow of turning or change. I would abide under the covert of the Almighty, rejoicing that You are unchanging in Your Fatherhood, ever ready to support the cry of Your needy children. While they are often fainting and faithless, turning back in the day of battle -- You, the Creator of the ends of the earth, the ever gracious Parent of Your redeemed, never faint, neither are You weary. You are perfect in power, perfect in wisdom, and perfect in love. Give me now, as I approach the mercy-seat, a quickened apprehension of my adoption privileges, and enable me, with reverence and trust, to cry, "Abba, Father!"

I thank You for the glorious method of Your own sovereign devising, by which these inestimable mercies and blessings have been secured. "Thanks, eternal thanks be unto You, for Your unspeakable gift of Jesus Christ!" Blessed be Your name that sin's penalty has been paid, and Your people's debt cancelled, all through the doing and dying of our great Surety! Your kingdom of heaven has been secured to all believers. My special prayer, in the spirit of the words of this morning, is that I may attain a gradual conformity to the will of my Father in heaven. Alas! O God, You know how far short I come of this lofty standard; how, on the contrary, imperfection is stamped on my every attempt to serve You. Were I to be tried and tested by my best hours and best services -- how would I stand condemned! Yet, however distant and feeble the approximation, may it be my earnest endeavor to do Your holy will, because it is Yours.

If, under the consciousness of mournful shortcoming, I have to make the constant confession, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect," may I press on, seeking, by the quickening, energizing influences of Your Holy Spirit, to add grace to grace, and virtue to virtue, and attainment to attainment -- until I appear before You perfect in Zion. May Christ now more and more be formed within me, the hope of glory; and may this at least be my joyful anticipation, as it is that of all Your children, that when He shall appear -- we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is!

Fit me meanwhile for the discharge of every personal and relative duty. Inspire me with the love of what is lovely -- and the scorn of what is hateful. May it be my growing experience that in keeping Your commandments, there is great reward. Give me grace to feel and to fulfill my responsibilities for the use of every talent entrusted to my stewardship, that when You come -- You may receive Your own with interest.

Let Your compassionate sympathy be largely bestowed on Your sons and daughters of affliction. Let them know and feel assured that it is Your own way of dispensing blessing. Your people in every age, like their great Lord, have been perfected through suffering. Let them submissively welcome any dealings or discipline, however mysterious, which bring them nearer to You, and

which will promote in them resemblance to the Father they love. In the night of sorrow may it be theirs, through their tears, to say, "I shall be satisfied -- when I awake in Your likeness!"

O God, hasten the happy day when all shall know You. Gracious Shepherd, fetch home Your unfolded sheep! Gracious Father, fetch home Your wandering prodigals! Gracious Spirit, let the shower of Your divine influences come down in its season; let there be showers of blessing!

I commend my dear friends to Your care and protection. May it be with them also an increasing aim to attain a gradual resemblance to the image, and conformity to the will, of their Father in heaven, and thus be filled with all the fullness of God. With filial devotion, I would sum up my evening petitions in the ever-precious words — "MY Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. May Your kingdom come. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, just as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

Twenty-sixth Morning

Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us." Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father." John 14:8-9 And He said unto them, When you pray, say — MY FATHER, enable me this morning to worship You in spirit and in truth. "No man has seen God at any time." But I desire, with reverence and filial love, to lay hold on the glorious declaration that "the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him." In You, Christ, in Your divine, human person, I have the image of the invisible God. Set in this cleft of the Rock of Ages, as in the case of Your honored servant of old, You have made all the glory of the infinite Godhead to pass before me, and have blessed me with the same revelation of the divine character and attributes, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious."

I delight to follow Your footsteps on earth; to behold You feeding the hungry and clothing the naked, healing the sick and helping the helpless, calming the sorrowful, giving heart and hope to the prodigal, the wandering, the lost. And in all this mission and ministry of love, You were the great Revealer of the mystery hid from ages and generations, "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of His person." In answer to the quest, "Show me the Father," You have given the gracious answer, "He who has seen Me, has seen the Father." May it be mine to say, "From henceforth I know Him and have seen Him!"

Blessed Savior, You know my special burdens, my peculiar sources of unrest and disquiet, my cares and perplexities, the besetting sins which hamper and impede me. Make me possessor of that peace here, which is the prelude to glory hereafter. May I find that the best preservative against temptation, is realizing the infinite obligations under which I am, to redeeming love; that I am not my own, but bought with a price! Enable me with appropriating faith to say, "He loved me, and gave Himself for me!" Transform me more and more into that same image and likeness. Give me a child's obedience and submission, a child's trust and affection and love. May the divine words spoken by divine lips form the motive power and principle of life: "I must be about my Father's business!"

Bless all means and instrumentalities for the promotion of Your cause throughout the world. O Lord arise, and have mercy upon Zion, and show that the time to favor her, yes the set time, has

come. May the Holy Spirit come down on every branch of the church universal, in all the plenitude of His gifts and graces.

Bestow Your guardian care on those near and dear to me. May they too be able to say, "We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." I would leave all that concerns alike them and myself — to Your better direction, saying, "Undertake for us!"

Bless those in sorrow. Let them rejoice in the assurance that the roll of Providence is in the hand of Him who pre-eminently by experience "knows their sorrows." When the causes of severe discipline are often unrevealed to the eye of sense, may they trust "that same Jesus" who felt for them, and wept for them, and bled for them; and behold in His exalted sympathy the reflection and pledge of the Father's love, whose name and nature He came to reveal.

I invoke Your favor on this the morning of a new day. I would enter on its duties, trusting alone in the merits and mediation of the divine Redeemer, who taught us thus to call You — "MY Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. May Your kingdom come. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, just as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

Twenty-sixth Evening "As the Father has loved Me — so have I loved you! Continue in My love." John 15:9 I will arise and go to my Father, and will say unto Him — MY FATHER, let me go to sleep with this most blessed and amazing assurance falling on my ear. Reveal to me, however poorly and inadequately I may grasp the reality, the ineffable love existing between You and Your dear Son, that I may be enabled in some feeble measure to comprehend what is the height and depth and length and breadth of Christ's love to me — the interest He feels in me and in my eternal salvation. Come, Lord Jesus, as You did to Your wayward and erring disciple of old. Let me hear Your solemn words challenging on my part unreserved obedience and gratitude and heart-consecration, "Do you love Me?"

Feelingly alive to the infinite obligation under which I am laid to You, may it be mine in sincerity of purpose, and in the sight of the great Heart-Searcher, to make the avowal, "Lord, You know all things; You know that, despite of stumblings and faintings, of weaknesses and fears, departures and backslidings, it is at least my earnest desire to love You. Here is my heart. Take it this night and make it Your own. I lay afresh my vow on Your altar. Sprinkle my unworthy offering and imperfect service with the 'much incense,' that thus my evening prayer may ascend, acceptable and accepted, into the ear of my Father in heaven."

Come as You did at eventide to Your disciples of old, and breathe upon me, and say, "Peace be unto you!" May I know that there can be no unrest or disquietude to the soul that has fled to the unfailing Refuge; that there can be no discord or disharmony where the heart has responsively listened to that divinest music, "Come unto Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." May it be my habitual aspiration to walk in the path of holy obedience, listening at every turn of life, to this evening's gracious monition, "Continue in My love." Give me greater singleness of eye and simplicity of faith. May it be my growing experience that Your favor is life, and Your loving-kindness is better than life. May I seek in all things, and especially in my appointed sphere, to glorify Your holy name.

Look in great kindness on the afflicted — those who are treading with downcast spirits the pilgrim-way. Under the shadow of the cross may they too find consolation and peace, the peace which the world can neither give nor take away.

Meet my beloved friends this night on the mount of prayer. May they be able to say, "Lord, it is good for us to be here." May I and they together live conscious of a true though invisible fellowship in You; and when earth's separations are ended, may we together meet where ties can never be sundered, or friendships fail.

Anew I supplicate Your blessing. Watch over me during the unconscious hours of sleep. Abide with me, blessed Savior, for it is toward evening and the day is far spent. Thus may each day prove like an Emmaus journey with You at my side; and continuing in Your love now, may it be mine at last, through the gate of death, to be ushered into its full and everlasting fruition!

Meanwhile, in that glorious anticipation, I would repeat earth's holiest, most comprehensive prayer — "MY Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. May Your kingdom come. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, just as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

Twenty-seventh Morning "In my Father's house are many mansions. I am going to prepare a place for you." John 14:2 And He said unto them, When you pray, say — MY FATHER— the Father who has given me the manifold blessings and endearments of an earthly home — I praise You for the glad assurance of "the many mansions." If You have bestowed upon me mercies in possession, You have promised more in reversion. I thank You for the name "house and home of my Father," the house purchased by the elder Brother, and which He has gone to prepare for the final reception of His church and people.

I come to You this morning acknowledging with gratitude, the mercies of the by-past night. May the radiance of the natural sun be to me the emblem and pledge of brighter and better spiritual realities. Shine into my heart with the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Listen to my confessions of sin. How poor and inadequate the return I have made to You for Your superabounding goodness! Above all, how little have I realized and manifested the infinite obligations under which I am to redeeming love! I bless You that by Him who is the Way, and the Truth, and the Life — the gates of these many mansions are ever open, and the welcome ever ready — that there are mansions for all and crowns for all Your people. The best of earthly heritages must fail, but this is an inheritance which is incorruptible and undefiled, and that fades not away.

Meanwhile, fit and strengthen me for the duties of life and of the earthly home. May a sense of Your presence and nearness and love, be interfused with my varied occupations. May I seek to have the character of heaven impressed on me now, that so, when called hence, the Father's heavenly mansions may be no new or strange dwelling-place, but that death may in reality be a final summons and a final welcome home.

Bless all Your sorrowing children. Let them accept with un murmuring submission, the discipline of Your providence, however dark and mysterious. May they see and own that You, who has prepared the many mansions, are by these very dealings preparing them for their possession. Forbid that affliction should be unsanctified — that any should dare to impeach or arraign Your faithfulness. Let them trust the promised needs-be. When You bring a cloud over the earth, may the rainbow be seen in the cloud. Draw near in especial mercy to the bereaved. In the decay and perishing of earthly good — in mourning over vacant seats in the earthly home — may they know what it is to claim an indestructible heritage in the Father's house above. May the dying look to Him, who by dying has abolished death, and opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers.

Bless my dear friends. Make them members of that family which alone can never be disrupted or broken — linked to You and to one another in the bonds of the everlasting covenant. And now, Lord, what do I wait for? My hope is in You. I laid me down last night and slept; I awoke this morning; because You did sustain me. Be with me throughout the coming day. Keep me from, and keep from me — all that would be detrimental to my best interests, or that would assail or imperil my peace. May the petitions of the divinely-taught prayer follow me wherever I go — "MY Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. May Your kingdom come. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, just as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

Twenty-seventh Evening

"Is not Israel still My son, My darling child?" asks the Lord. "I had to punish him, but I still love him. I long for him and surely will have mercy on him." Jeremiah 31:20 I will arise and go to my Father, and will say unto Him — MY FATHER, accept of my thanks for the renewed mercies of another day. Before I lie down to sleep, I would listen to this tender whisper of Your parental love, "I still love him. I long for him and surely will have mercy on him." Lord, I can have no real blank, when I have the conscious assurance of Your presence and blessing, and the sense of Your pardoning love. You are ever remembering me. In the midst of merited and deserved wrath, You are remembering unmerited and undeserved mercy. How precious are Your thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand!

Everything in myself might well sink me in despondency and despair. Everything in You leads me to peace and hope and encouragement. Keep me near Yourself. I need daily, hourly washing at the opened fountain. I need daily, hourly supplies of promised grace. Enable me ever to be traveling between my own emptiness — and the infinite fullness treasured up in Christ. Let me live habitually in an unfaltering trust in Your guidance. May my plans and purposes be subservient to Your holy will. Preserve me from what is unworthy of the Christian name and profession — from all that is unkind and unloving, all that is censorious and uncharitable, all that would exalt myself at the expense of others. Let the same mind be in me, which was also in Christ Jesus.

Bless my beloved friends. Hallow earthly bonds by making them spiritual and heavenly ones.

Pity Your afflicted ones, those environed with trouble. Make for them a way in the sea, and a path in the mighty waters. Speak Your own balm-word of comfort, "Peace, be still" — and give grace proportioned to the hour of trial. May they harbor no unkind suspicions of Your faithfulness, owning Your hand alike in giving and in taking. The blessing is conferred by You, and the grant or loan is

revoked by You. Direct their hearts into Your love, and into the patient waiting for Christ.

Bless Your whole church. Feed every lamp with the oil of Your grace. Hasten the time when the summons shall be heard, " Arise and shine; for your light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon you!"

I would lie down to sleep this night feeling that it is You, O Lord, who alone makes me to dwell in safety. Give Your ministering angels charge concerning me and mine. Keep us, keep us, King of kings, beneath the shadow of Your wings; and when I awake, may I be still with You.

I ask all in the name of Him whom You always hear, and who, when on earth, taught me to call You — "MY Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. May Your kingdom come. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, just as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

Twenty-eighth Morning

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." Matthew 5:16 And He said unto them, When you pray, say — MY FATHER, adored be Your name for Your sparing mercy. You have awakened me again to the brightness and the blessings of a new day. Defend me today, by Your mighty power; and grant that I fall into no sin, nor run into any kind of danger, but that all my doings may be ordered by Your governance, to do always those things that are pleasing in Your sight. In the light of the sun which now shines upon me, may I have the image and emblem, the symbol and pledge, of a better radiance. I thank and praise You if You, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined into my heart. Great Sun of Righteousness, disperse the lingering shades of darkness and unbelief. Above every other mercy and blessing, may I hail, morning by morning, the brightness of Your rising. Enable me all the day joyously to walk in the light of Your countenance. In self-renouncing lowliness, I would plead the merits of Jesus. I confess anew my manifold transgressions in all their turpitude and aggravation. I have no extenuation to offer. You are justified when You speak, and clear when You judge. Father of heaven, have mercy upon me, a miserable sinner! Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, grant me Your peace. And with the righteousness imputed, bestow upon me also the righteousness that is implanted. May the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, be diffusive in my heart and life. In accordance with His divine injunction, let my light so shine before men that its reality and influence may be felt and owned. May I be more and more conscious of my responsibility and privilege, as that of all Your true believing children, to "shine as lights in the world." By meekness and gentleness, by kindness and unselfishness, by integrity and stainless purity — may others take knowledge of me, that I have been with Jesus. However lowly and restricted my sphere, may it be my humble aim and aspiration to be a light-bearer, and thus to glorify my Father who is in heaven.

Bless those near and dear to me. May they, too, be linked in close and endearing filial bonds to the same gracious Father.

Compassionate all in sorrow. May those laid on beds of sickness and suffering be found shining witnesses for You, and attest by patience and submission, the sustaining power of Your grace. Have mercy on Your church universal. Quicken and stimulate her to realize her true position as a

light set in the moral and spiritual heavens to scatter far and wide the beams of truth. Amid all the environing clouds of error, may she come forth as fair as the sun, and as clear as the moon. May many among her faithful servants be found to shine, now, as the brightness of the sun, and at last, in the kingdom of their Father, as the stars forever and ever.

I ask these, and every other needed blessing, in the name and for the sake of Jesus Christ, my only Lord and Savior, who when on earth taught me to call You — "MY Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. May Your kingdom come. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, just as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

Twenty-eighth Evening

"The father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet." Luke 15:22 I will arise and go to my Father, and will say unto Him — MY FATHER, I commit myself to Your gracious keeping this night, as unto a faithful Creator.

How wondrous are Your loving dealings toward those who, with prodigal footsteps and truant hearts, have wandered from Your home, and justly forfeited all claim on Your pity and compassion! You are God, and not man. Had Your thoughts been as our thoughts, or Your ways as our ways, long ago would we have been denied Your presence and favor — our plea rejected, our tears mocked, left to perish with hunger, unpitied and unsuccoured, in the far country of our alienation. But You have not so dealt with us. In figure and in parable, yet in gracious reality, You have ever waiting for Your prodigal child, with the best robe, the ring of adoption, and the shoes of liberty. You are ready with paternal compassion to meet, with paternal love to welcome.

It is thus, Father, You have dealt with me. The past is a long record and memorial of Your forbearance and faithfulness, mercy upon mercy, kindness upon kindness.

I thank You especially for the doing and dying of my divine Redeemer, through whom alone these badges and pledges of covenant love have been secured. My guilt, which in itself could not be cancelled, has been transferred to Him. Self-renouncing and sin-renouncing, I look anew to the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. I rejoice to think that He is now, as the great Intercessor within the holiest of all, pleading for me — the Prince who has power with God, and must continually prevail. Make me personal partaker in His first, that I may participate at last in the glory of the second, resurrection, when "the Lord my God shall come, and all His saints with Him."

Meanwhile, may it be my constant desire to copy His holy example, and to be transformed into His divine likeness, seeking the supremacy of goodness and purity, holiness and love — doing justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with You. If You send me blessings, may I ever seek to accept them with humble gratitude. If You see fit to withdraw them, let me reverently say, "Your will be done;" hearing Your voice amid the small trials and vexations of life, as well as in the midst of its great crisis hours — "Be still, and know that I am God."

Promote the cause of truth and righteousness throughout the earth. Renew the plentiful rain, whereby of old You did refresh Your heritage when it was weary.

Whatever be the outward badge of Your varied churches, may there be this common bond of hallowed union, "One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all." Hasten the time

when the song of rejoicing nations will be heard, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace," and when a Father's name will be known and adored and loved all the world over.

I pray for the sick and the afflicted, the sorrowful and the dying. To the Lord our God belong the issues from death. May those bereft of near and dear friends anticipate reunion with their loved and lost amid the unending fellowships of the better world. Amid the manifold uncertainties of existence, may I keep ever vividly before me the great hereafter; and be so living, that when the supreme hour overtakes me, it may be as an angel whispering, "The Master is come, and calls for you."

Watch over me during the hours of silence and darkness. Let me rise tomorrow refreshed for service. Meanwhile, I would retire to rest and close my eyes in sleep with the divine and gracious words on my lips — "MY Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. May Your kingdom come. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, just as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

Twenty-ninth Morning

"It will happen that in the very place where it was said to them, 'You are not My people,' they will be called 'sons of the living God.'" Romans 9:26 And He said unto them, When you pray, say — MY FATHER, the God of all the families of the earth, ever living, ever loving — draw You near to me, enabling me to exult in this gracious, paternal relationship, the thought of which is so well fitted to dismiss distrust and anxiety, and to inspire confidence and affection. Another sun has risen, another morning has dawned upon me. Let me partake also of the better inner sunshine, the sweet sense of Your covenant favor, of sin forgiven and forgotten, the soul hushed to rest in realized fellowship with You. It is by Your grace I am what I am. It is Your grace which finds us. It is Your grace which saves us. It is Your grace which keeps us. It is Your grace which enables us to appropriate the privileged and honored name, "children of the living God."

Strengthen me, good Lord, for the duties which are before me this day. I cannot forecast its perils and dangers and temptations. I implore the continuance of Your sovereign, sustaining, restraining grace to keep me from falling. Hold me up — and then I shall be safe. May I know, in my happy experience, that I can do all things, and endure all things, through Christ who strengthens me. When tempted to worldliness, or sloth, or self-indulgence, forgetting and forsaking my covenant engagements, thus imperiling my spiritual interests — may I think of Him who, as a Son, with holy, unfaltering consecration, surrendered His will to the will of His Father in heaven. Conform me to His image; mold me by His holy example. In every difficult and perplexing path, may this be my guiding maxim and direction — "How would my Lord and Master have acted here?" and knowing His will, may I delight to do it.

I would pray this morning especially for others — for all the children of God that are scattered abroad. Hasten the time when the glad ascription shall ascend, "Behold, we beseech You, we are all Your children." Fetch home the wanderer. Awaken memories of a divine home and Father in the heart of the prodigal. In the case of individuals and families and nations alike, may the promise be fulfilled, "In the very place where it was said to them, 'You are not My people,' they will be

called 'sons of the living God.'"

Pity the afflicted; comfort the mourner; sustain the dying. Be a Father to the fatherless, the stranger's shield, and the orphan's stay. May the consciousness of Your presence and favor, lessen every cross and sweeten every care.

I anew commend myself to Your gracious keeping and guidance this day. Watch over me for good; and may every power of my body and every faculty of my mind combine in devotion to Your sole service and glory. With the prayer of all prayers I would close and sum up my own imperfect petitions, saying — "MY Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. May Your kingdom come. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, just as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

Twenty-ninth Evening "Whatever you shall ask of the Father in my name, He will give it you." John 15:16 I will arise and go to my Father, and will say unto Him — MY FATHER, I desire, on this the evening of another day, to enter Your sacred presence in the name of Jesus. Where would I be, but for such a Savior! I have no plea of my own. My best thoughts — how sinful and unworthy! My best prayers — how cold and languid, requiring themselves to be prayed for! If You, Lord, would mark iniquities — who could stand! My own heart condemns me; and You are greater than my heart. You know all things. But through Him, the ever-living Elder Brother on the throne, the all-prevailing Advocate and Intercessor, I am encouraged to approach the throne of the heavenly grace. I bless You for His own assurance that no petition to the Father, presented in His name, will rise unheard and unanswered, but that whatever we ask, if it is in accordance with Your divine and holy will, shall be bestowed.

I pray this night for the pardon of sin, the gracious sense of acceptance, peace and joy in believing, support and support for the future. Blessed Jesus, let down Your censer full of incense, that my petitions may ascend with acceptance before the Father's throne, and reach with acceptance the Father's ear. Open the windows of heaven, and shower down the promised blessing. May the thought that You are ever praying for me, as You did for Your disciples on earth, that my faith fail not, keep me loyal to You, and prevent me doing anything that would be dishonoring to Your love. May I ever exercise a jealous scrutiny over my thoughts and words and actions. Preserve me from all pride and vain-glory; from all selfishness and covetousness; from all that would lead me to exalt myself; from all guilty and unworthy compromises with the world, the flesh, and the devil; from neglect of pious duty; from evading solemn responsibilities; from tampering with the leadings of Providence, the dictates of conscience, or the teachings of Your holy Word. In childlike faith, may this be my habitual inquiry: "What would You have me to do?" And knowing Your will, may I delight to perform it; seeking in this, as in all things — to follow the example of Him who was meek and lowly in heart, and whose constant, unwavering aim and aspiration was to be about His heavenly Father's business. Let this mind be in me, which was also in Christ Jesus.

Bless my dear friends; reward my benefactors. Sanctify Your dealings to poor afflicted ones. In the multitude of the sorrows they have in their hearts, may Your comforts delight their souls.

Pity a dark and benighted world. Terminate the curse of slavery; sheathe the sword of war; turn away the battle from our gates. It is You, Lord, who alone makes us to dwell in safety.

I anew commend myself to Your watchful care during the hours of sleep and darkness. Lying down to my nightly rest in Your fear, may I awake in Your favor, fitted for the duties of a new day. Meanwhile, in full and confident reliance on the Savior's own words of promise just read, I would sum up my imperfect with His all-perfect prayer, and in filial love call You— "MY Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. May Your kingdom come. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, just as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

Thirtieth Morning

"But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you." Matthew 6:6 And He said unto them, When you pray, say — MY FATHER, who sees in secret, to whom the darkness and the light are both alike — the night shining as the day — I enter this morning the little sanctuary of devotion. Draw near to me, and fulfill Your own gracious promise as the prayer-hearing and the prayer-answering God. With the door shut, and the din and distraction of the world excluded, I would wait upon You in Your own appointed way, in the still and hallowed hour. May I worship You who are a Spirit in spirit and in truth, and know what it is to dwell in the secret place of the Most High, and to abide under the shadow of the Almighty. Enable me to dismiss from my thoughts whatever is vain, frivolous, and sinful. O great Recompenser, give me that best of recompenses, the blessed sense of Your favor and love, hushing unrest and disquiet, and filling me with all peace and joy in believing.

I acknowledge with gratitude and thankfulness, the mercy which spares me from day to day — the bounties alike of creation, providence, and grace, which have been so liberally bestowed. From the humblest crumb of providential goodness, to the richest blessings of redemption, I am indebted to You. As a continual pensioner on Your loving-kindness, let me show forth my gratitude not only with my lips, but in my life, by giving up myself to Your service, and by walking before You in holiness and righteousness all my days, to the glory of Your holy name. Stimulate and quicken me in pursuing the Christian race. Let nothing in my vacillating heart within, and a treacherous world without, dim my faith or impede my progress. Let me more and more realize the possession of the rest of grace here, the pledge of the everlasting rest of glory hereafter. In all my ways guide me by Your counsel, and help me implicitly to trust Your faithfulness. Man's word may falter and fail, but the word of the Lord is tried. It is like the stars of the skies, "forever and ever." Amid the varying scenes of changeable life, give me strength and endurance, patience and submission, loyalty to truth and rectitude. Inspire me with a spirit of charity—the love which is patient and is kind, which is not easily provoked, which thinks no evil. I rejoice in Your own recorded promise for every step and stage of the journey, "I will instruct you and teach you in the way that you should go; I will guide you with My eye." To You, my Father in heaven, I commend my beloved friends. Enable them to participate in all the blessings and benefits of the everlasting covenant. May they too know the hour of prayer, with its gracious recompenses. As good stewards of the manifold grace of God, may they be made recipients of the great recompense at last — coveting, above earthly approbation, the "Well done!" of the divine Master and the righteous Judge. Have mercy on

Your afflicted ones. Recompense them also with the assurance, "Whom the Lord loves — He chastens. Let them lie passive in the arms of Your mercy, breathing only the divinely-taught words, "Even so, Father!" Other refuges may fail, other props be removed: may they find in You an unfainting, unfailing refuge and portion and friend.

Having now obeyed the injunction and enjoyed the privilege of praying to my Father in secret, I would go forth to the duties of a new morning in simple dependence on Your grace and strength. When I close the day, may I be happy in feeling that I have no saddening or accusing thought in the retrospect; enjoying rather the consciousness of having done or even desiring to do something, however lowly, in promoting the great end for which existence was given — to show forth the praises of Him who has called me out of darkness into marvelous light. So shall I now, with deepening fervor and filial love, invoke Him who sees in secret, and say — "MY Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. May Your kingdom come. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, just as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

Thirtieth Evening

"He chose us in Him, before the foundation of the world, to be holy and blameless in His sight. In love He predestined us to be adopted through Jesus Christ for Himself, according to His favor and will, to the praise of His glorious grace that He favored us with in the Beloved." Ephesians 1:4-6 I will arise and go to my Father, and will say unto Him — MY FATHER, I thank You that You encourage me with filial boldness and confidence to approach the throne of the heavenly grace. If I am received into Your family and made one of Your children by adoption — if a wanderer once, I have now received the paternal forgiveness and the paternal welcome — it is not my own deserving, but "according to the good pleasure of Your will." Salvation from first to last, is of Your free, sovereign, unmerited grace. This will be the history of Your ransomed church and people forever in heaven: "Those He predestined, He also called; and those He called, He also justified; and those He justified, He also glorified." Bestow upon me tonight the spirit of adoption, enabling me now to cry, "Abba, Father!"

I come to You in the name of Him whom You hear always, and who is at Your right hand exalted a Prince and a Savior. All I am, all I have, all I hope for — flows from Your riches in glory through Christ Jesus. Every other mercy I enjoy is hallowed, consecrated, transfigured through Him. Blessed be Your name for His all-sufficient merits and spotless sacrifice. My best actions are full of blemishes; my purest aims and motives are mingled with selfishness; my best righteousness is marred with imperfection and defilement. But He has finished transgression, and made an end of sin, and made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in an everlasting righteousness. May I stand now, accepted in the Beloved, hearing Your divine voice saying, "I will be merciful to your unrighteousness; your sins and your iniquities will I remember no more."

Give me grace to walk worthy of You unto all well-pleasing, being fruitful in every good word and work. Wean me from all that is fleeting and perishable. Let it be my highest joy to follow You — and my deepest pain to grieve You. Even when You see fit to cross my wishes and disappoint my hopes, may I accept all as the will and bidding of a heavenly Father, the doing and the dictate of Your ineffable love. Thus, whether You bless — or chasten; whether it be mercies bestowed — or mercies withdrawn, may I equally seek to glorify Your holy name.

Graciously look on Your whole Church. Graciously look on the whole world. Fulfill Your own sure decree, when You shall gather together in one, all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and in earth. Hear the perpetual cry which is ascending from suffering, sorrowing humanity. Fetch home to Your fold, wanderers from the flock, and number them among the remnant of Your true Israelites.

Bless my beloved friends. If some are separated by long distance, may we enjoy unseen fellowship at the mercy-seat; and at last, in the full vision and fruition of the beatific presence, may we be reunited in those bonds which neither trial nor death can any more sunder, where sin and sorrow are no longer to be feared. Meanwhile, may we rejoice in this hope of the glory of God.

Compassionate the sorrowful. There are unknown and unspoken afflictions cognizant alone to You. Heavenly Father, have mercy on each of Your suffering children! We all have our varied and appointed seasons of tribulation. May we feel trials to be easy, and crosses to be light, when borne in a spirit of uncomplaining submission to Your divine will. When You bring a cloud over the earth, may the rainbow of promise be seen in the cloud.

Listen to these my evening petitions, for the sake of Jesus Christ, Your only Son, my Savior, who, when on earth, alike unfolded the filial name and taught the filial prayer — "MY Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. May Your kingdom come. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, just as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

Thirty-first Morning "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." Matthew 13:43 And He said unto them, When you pray, say — MY FATHER, who has translated me out of darkness, into the kingdom of Your dear Son, draw near to me and bless me. Lift up the light of Your countenance upon me, and give me peace. May God the Lord, who has showed us light, enable me to bind my morning sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar.

You have graciously spared me to enter on the duties and engagements of another day. Be about my path all the day long. Let me resume my pilgrim journey, leaning always on Your omnipotent arm. I would dwell on the memories of Your great goodness, and accept these as pledges for the future. You have been my help — leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation! I would seek to meditate with adoring wonder, love, and praise — on Your kingdom of grace here, and on Your kingdom of glory hereafter. I rejoice to think of the countless multitudes who have already entered within the gates of Your church on earth, and the countless multitudes who have entered within the golden gates of the heavenly Jerusalem, members of the church triumphant, who are serving You day and night in Your temple, and shining forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.

Lord, prepare me for that bright future, by entering upon the privileges and possessions of a gracious present. May I know the truth of the words, "We who have believed, do enter into rest." Enable me now to stand arrayed, glorious and glorified, in the imputed righteousness of my divine Redeemer. I have no inherent nor personal merit. Whatever good I have, is a derived and borrowed radiance from Him, the all-glorious Light of the world. "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men." It is alone in His reflected beams, that I can listen to the summons, "Arise and shine; for your light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon you!" May it be mine with

deepest thankfulness and joy, to respond: God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined into my heart with the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ. In that face — under the beams of that great unsetting Sun, the full vision and fruition of God — may I live forever. Partially now, fully then, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, may I be changed into the same image, from glory to glory.

Meanwhile, reveal Yourself more and more to me as the home and refuge and resting-place of the soul. Other refuges sooner or later fail. Their memorial perishes with them. But You are the same, and Your years shall not fail. May I know this eternal shelter in the clefts of the Rock of Ages. Hide me there until all earth's calamities are overpast. I know not what entanglements may hinder me in prosecuting my pilgrim way, what temptations may overtake me, what sorrows may darken me. But He who is with me and for me, is greater than all that can be against me; so that I may boldly say, "The Lord is my helper." I will go in Your strength, making mention of Your righteousness, even of Yours alone.

Bless the means that are being used for the extension of Your cause, for the overthrow of iniquity, and for the good of mankind. Out of weakness, may Your churches be made strong, wax valiant in fight, and turn to flight the armies of the aliens.

Sanctify affliction to Your true children. Let them feel secure in a Father's tried love. May the suffering glorify You on their couches of pain. May those called to the supreme hour of all exult in death as the door leading to everlasting life. May those mourning their loved ones rejoice in the prospect of a meeting where separation is unknown, and of receiving together from divine lips the gracious welcome, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom."

Anew I supplicate Your favor. Enable me to live more and more under the powers and realities of the world to come, cherishing a habitual impression of the surpassing magnitude of eternal realities. Let me go forth to my secular occupations this day, panoplied in the whole armor of God. Let me seek to hear the divine word of the great Redeemer, "Let your light so shine before men, that they, seeing your good works, may glorify your Father who is in heaven." May I be enabled to shine forth now, however feebly and imperfectly, in the sphere, whatever it be, which You have assigned to me, striving not so much after great things, as glorifying You in all things. Let life be a uniform and habitual act of consecration to You, that so at last an abundant entrance may be ministered into the heavenly kingdom.

Meanwhile, with profound trust and lowly reverence I would call You — "MY Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. May Your kingdom come. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, just as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

Thirty-first Evening "That you may be the children of your Father who is in heaven." Matthew 5:45

"Now therefore you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." Ephesians 2:19 I will arise and go to my Father, and will say unto Him — MY FATHER, O gracious One, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, inspire me this evening with renewed confidence and trust as I approach Your presence. How wondrous are the honors of Your believing people! Once aliens from You, forfeiting all claim to Your favor, we can now listen to the voice of paternal love: "Now therefore you are no longer strangers and

foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." Who can realize the wealth of this divine patrimony? Justified, accepted, pardoned, adopted, sanctified, and finally glorified — God my Father, Christ my Elder Brother, heaven my everlasting heritage and home!

I would approach You tonight as one of Your covenant children, yet feeling how little I have been enabled to realize and appropriate such spiritual privileges — such privileges and blessings in possession, such glory in reversion. You know how far short I have fallen of my best aims and aspirations. How little have I felt the evil of sin — and of my own sin in particular! How little have I cultivated and imbibed the pilgrim spirit! How inadequately have I sought the one thing needful! How often have the allurements of an engrossing world without, fostered a procrastinating spirit within! How prone to surrender imperishable interests, for things which perish with the using!

If conscious of declension, the lack of former delight in Your service and of full consecration of heart to You, give me grace to be watchful and to strengthen the things which remain which are ready to die. "Return, O holy Dove! return, O Messenger of peace and comfort and rest!" Restore, Lord, unto me, the joys of Your salvation, and uphold me with Your free Spirit. Enable me to live and walk and act as seeing You who are invisible, realizing Your presence and nearness; ever grateful and thankful for unmerited temporal mercies, but seeking that these may not be allowed to obscure higher destinies, or thwart the great design and purpose of my being, set forth in the words of this morning by infallible lips, "That I may be a child of my Father in heaven." May the voice of rejoicing and salvation be heard in the dwellings of those near and dear to me. May they also be set among Your adopted family, and exult in the tie which unites them to the household of God.

Bless Your church everywhere. Give efficacy to the gospel message as the power of God unto salvation. Fetch home all prodigals in the far country of worldliness and sin. "Lost and found," may they be found never to be lost again. By Your omnipotent grace, may many now at a distance from You become fellow-citizens with the saints in Your church on earth, and, at last, fellow-citizens with the glorified in the church above.

Look in tenderest pity on the afflicted. May trials prove to be heart-searchers, ever leading closer and nearer to You. Comfort and sustain the sick and the afflicted. Spare those who are useful and valued. Prepare the dying for death. Calm the waves of ebbing life. May those appointed to death see the heavenly mansions looming through the mists of the dark valley. Let them pass from a death full of hope — to an immortality full of joy. And grant, gracious God, that when my time of waiting and watching and working terminates, I too may be ready at the summons to leave the earthly watch-tower, and enter within the gate into the celestial city! In this divine trust and confidence I would now both lay me down in peace and sleep, while praying the filial prayer which divine lips have taught me — "MY Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. May Your kingdom come. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, just as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

03.00. A New Testament Chapter in Providence and Grace

NOONTIDE AT SYCHAR (The story of Jacob's well) A CHAPTER IN PROVIDENCE AND GRACE
by John MacDuff, 1877 THE NEEDS BE THE WEARY PILGRIM THE DRAWER OF WATER THE
CONFERENCE THE CONFERENCE, (continued)

RIVAL RACES THE GIFT OF GOD, AND THE LIVING WATER THE WELL IS DEEP THE
CONTRAST FIRST EVASION AND REPLY SECOND EVASION AND REPLY MOMENTS OF
SILENCE THE HOME MISSIONARY THE HEAVENLY FOOD AND THE FIELD OF HARVEST

03.01. THE NEEDS BE

THE NEEDS BE "He had to go through Samaria." John 4:4 In the previous chapter we considered some of the outward accessories in this beautiful and instructive narrative of the Apostle of Love, and grouped together a number of historical associations and personal recollections which may serve to vivify the spiritual lessons which will henceforth claim our attention. John's narration forms one of those episodes in the life of his divine Master, full of circumstantial details, which are peculiar to himself. It reminds us of another and similar chapter of his Gospel—his domestic portraiture, touched with so delicate a hand, of the family of Bethany, and which, as in the present case, he alone of the four evangelists has delineated—"apples of gold in pictures of silver."

There is much interesting material to invite attention without further premise, but one preliminary incidental remark on the threshold of the Evangelist's narrative must claim our consideration in the present chapter—"He had to go through Samaria."

Samaria lay in the direct route between Judea and Galilee. There was, indeed, an alternative road by the eastern side of the Jordan valley and Perea. But the former, for various reasons, was most frequently traversed then, as it is invariably now; and that, too, notwithstanding the indignities, to which we shall subsequently allude, which the Galileans had often to encounter in the transit, owing to the hostility of the lawless mixed tribe inhabiting the valleys around Ebal and Gerizim. Josephus specially mentions that the pilgrim Hebrews from northern Palestine, in going to their anniversary festivals in Jerusalem, preferred this shorter journey, although these were the very occasions when the spirit of malignant and inveterate enmity between the conflicting races was most violently expressed. If this, then, were the favorite, most usual, most frequented highway between Jerusalem and Nazareth, does it not seem, unless for some specific reason, to be redundant phraseology, (and more especially as addressed to readers who were thoroughly conversant with the itineraries of their own country) for the Evangelist so strongly to assert in his narrative the axiomatic fact as to the "had to" or necessity laid upon Christ to go to Galilee by the ordinary route? Moreover, from a subsequent statement (John 4:40) it could not have been purposes of expedition which in His case made this route imperative, as we find He was induced so far to alter what seemed His original intention, by tarrying at Shechem for "two days."

What then was this divine constraint imposed upon the adorable Redeemer which demanded so special an entry in the narrative of the inspired recorder? We answer, it was because of an occurrence registered in an older and more majestic volume—the Book of the Divine decrees. 'By the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God,' a wandering star was, in the course of this memorable journey, to be reclaimed from its devious orbit, and a glorious testimony given as to how God's sovereign grace can triumph over all obstacles, and be independent of all place and circumstance. To no locality could the Great Sower have 'gone forth to sow,' with the prospect of more unpromising results, than to that morally and spiritually rocky and thorny wayside. "Thorns had come up everywhere, the ground was covered with weeds, and the stone wall was in ruins," (Proverbs 24:31) It had acquired an evil reputation. The very name, Shechem, had, by common

parlance, been merged into the disgraceful epithet "Sychar," which means "drunkard" or "folly." It was one of Jeroboam's cities—the wicked prince whose name has been cursed with the unenviable notoriety that "he made Israel to sin." Perhaps it may have been the dreadful depravity, and, humanly speaking, invulnerable unbelief of the Samaritan race which dictated the Savior's earliest commission to His yet untried disciples, "Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel," (Matthew 10:5-6.)

What, however, deters the servant is not to deter the Master. "Who are you, O great mountain?" Before the true Zerubbabel you shall become a plain. The wisdom of God is not "Sychar:" it is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. In the midst of drunkards and debauchees the Christ of Nazareth is to prove and vindicate the omnipotence of that divine energy which can change the vulture into the dove, the lion into the lamb, and bring the outcast of Shechem, like the demoniac of Gadara, to sit submissive at His feet. In the glowing figure of the prophet, these mountains around are to break forth before him into singing, and all the trees of the field are to clap their hands: instead of the thorn, is to come up the fir tree; and instead of the briar, is to come up the myrtle tree. His own declaration by the lips of the same seer is to receive a remarkable fulfillment in the case of the Church of Samaria, and especially in her who was the first ingathered sheaf, "I revealed Myself to those who did not ask for me; I was found by those who did not seek Me. To a nation that did not call on My name, I said, 'Here am I, here am I.'"

Need we wonder now, at the apparently superfluous entry in the Gospel narrative, "He HAD to go through Samaria?" What would the infant Church, yes, the Church in all ages, have missed, had our Bibles been stripped of this fourth chapter of John? A sweet, silver tone of the jubilee trumpet would have been lost to the trembling, the despairing, the perishing. Oh most memorable incident! Oh most honored fountain! Well may the 'Israel of God' stand round the stony margin—as did the Hebrew nobles and princes of old with their rugged staves, at Beer, on the borders of Moab, by the brooks of Arnon—and say, in the words of that oldest pilgrim song, "Spring up, O well: sing to it," for a nobler than Hebrew "prince" or "noble" has made you oracular—put a tongue into your depths—and made you speak of "living water springing up into everlasting life."

There is one special practical thought which this "had to" of the great wayside Traveler suggests: it is, the peerless value of a single soul in the sight of Christ.

It is the truth of His own exquisite parable exhibited in impressive reality: the heavenly Shepherd, when, out of the hundred sheep He had missed one erring wanderer, going amid these mountains of Samaria to seek 'that which was lost.' There were many in populous Jerusalem to whom we might have expected rather that He would have borne the water of life, crowds of far more willing and receptive hearers were in the district of Aenon, near to Salim, the scene of the Baptist's successful labors. In His own city of Capernaum were waiting responsive multitudes—many who had long sat in gross darkness, but who now saw and owned the great Light—friends of the Bridegroom, who were rejoicing greatly because of the Bridegroom's voice. But on His way there, the sigh of one lone captive is borne to His ear—the bleat of one truant of the flock, fleece-torn, and footsore, and weary, is heard under the shadow of Ebal, or rather under the shadow of those curses which of old rang from Ebal's frowning rocks—for the sake of that one, not an inspired penman, not a recording angel, but His own infinite love and mercy dictates the words, "He had to go!" Nor is this a solitary example given us in Scripture of the priceless estimate put by the Divine

Being on the worth of one soul. Take as another illustrative case, that of the Ethiopian eunuch traveling through the desert of Gaza; a case all the more suitable as having a topographical connection with the Church in Samaria, of which this woman was the honored founder. That prime minister or chief treasurer of the Queen of Ethiopia, a Jewish proselyte—like the Hadjis one meets so often still in the East coming from the shrine of the false prophet at Mecca, or like the Greek and Russian pilgrims returning from their pilgrimages to Jerusalem—was proceeding homewards from the Hebrew 'city of solemnities' (Jerusalem), where he had been doing homage to the one living and true God. Despite, however, his renunciation of the polytheism of Ethiopia; despite his formal subscription to the creed of Judaism, and the earnestness and sincerity evinced by his undertaking that vast journey from Africa to Asia, it is evident that he was retracing his steps still a stranger to peace; the deep longing of his soul had been unmet and unsatisfied. It seemed as if in vain he had braved for weeks, hot suns by day, and drenching dews by night. But unlike the hardened, indifferent Samaritan woman of our narrative, he had been in the way of duty. Unlike her, he had been seeking the living water, although he had failed to find it, and was returning in his chariot scanning the scroll of the great prophet, which was opened at the most glorious and gladdening of Isaiah's gospel visions. He had gone as a worshiper to Pentecost; and although his eyes continued blinded to those elevating verities of a new dispensation, which alone could give him light and life, he was still cherishing and manifesting the child-like spirit of a devout inquirer. This Ethiopian was "stretching forth his hands to God"—"seeking the Lord, if perhaps he might find Him." "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." At that time a new life had stirred Samaria's valley of dry bones. Living streams had reached it better than those which had made a little material Paradise of the adjoining glens of Ephraim and Manasseh: the thirsty spiritual land had become pools of water. Philip the Evangelist had been specially sent to this scene of revival. He was preaching with acceptance; hundreds were hanging on his lips: for we read, "Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed Christ there; When the crowds heard Philip and saw the miraculous signs he did, they all paid close attention to what he said. . . . So there was great joy in the city." This religious awakening, commencing in Samaria as the capital, extended among the surrounding villages and towns; Shechem doubtless participated in the shower that had come down in its season—the "shower of blessing." In the midst of his career of usefulness, an angel—a delegate from the upper sanctuary—is sent on a special mission to this greatly owned and successful minister of God. Strange to say, it is to arrest him in the field of his abundant labor, just when he is scattering the good seed with bounteous hand, and seeing it springing up under the rain and dews of heaven. It is a mandate, however, from which there can be no evasion, and he immediately obeys the summons. But what is this new sphere of more imperative duty? Why are these souls, hungering for the bread of life, left all at once without assistance? why these fields abandoned for the time by this faithful reaper, just when inviting the sickle, already "white unto the harvest?" It is, that one weary spirit may be comforted; that one stray sheaf may be gathered into the heavenly garner; and not until that solitary traveler in the Gaza desert is sent on his way rejoicing, does Philip return to his labors.

Yes, we again say, reverting to the narrative of John, beautiful testimony to the yearning personal love of the Savior. "He had to go;" and that 'necessity' was to polish one stone for the building of His temple, one gem for the embellishment of His crown—to give to one shipwrecked abandoned vessel, drifting fast to destruction amid wild tempests and wintry seas, rest and safety and repose in the haven of His own infinitely pure presence and compassion. It reminds one of what is so

often seen, and is always so touching, a mother's tender affection for her pining invalid—the weary suffering inhabitant of the sick-chamber—the caged bird of the family, with drooping wing and wailing note and ruffled plumage. The hardier plants are left to battle with the storm; but her most tender care is lavished on the sickly flower prematurely drooping. The others are for the time forgotten, as she watches the blanching of these tender leaves, the early falling of these cherished blossoms. Or more touching still, when with bated breath she speaks of the blank in her household, and how, with all her gratitude for remaining blessings, her heart of hearts wanders to the silent churchyard after that which was lost!

"My brothers, if one of you (any one of you) should wander from the truth and someone should bring him back, remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins." "In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over ONE sinner who repents."

God still "sets the solitary in families, and brings out those who are bound with chains." Is there not the richest and most tender encouragement here for the guiltiest? The "had to" which brought the Savior of the world to that wayside well of old, may bring Him still, in His ineffable compassion, to the chief of sinners—to manifest the same divine solicitude, the same personal love. Let none deem themselves beyond the pale of His divine power and sympathy and support, as if that great Central Sun had lost its sovereign control over the wandering star plunging amid the ever-deepening darkness; or as if He had altered or modified His own saying, which in this narrative passage has received so sublime an illustration—"I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Rather, as with your eye on the well of Sychar, and on the compassion and pity garnered in the divine heart, you exclaim, "Can it be that He will receive 'ME, even ME?'" go, turn the words of the simple but beautiful hymn into a prayer—

"Pass me not, O gracious Father,
Sinful though my heart may be;
You might leave me, but the rather
Let Your mercy light on me—
Even me.

"Pass me not, O tender Savior—
Let me live and cling to Thee—
I am longing for Your favor;
While You are calling, call for me—
Even me.

"Have I long in sin been sleeping—
Long been slighting, grieving Thee?
Has the world my heart been keeping?

Oh, forgive and rescue me!

Even me.

"Love of God so pure and changeless,

Blood of Christ so rich and free,

Grace of God so strong and boundless,

Magnify it all in me—

Even me.

"Pass me not—this lost one bringing,

Bind my heart, O Lord, to Thee;

While the streams of life are springing,

Gladden others—gladden me!

Even me."

03.02. THE WEARY PILGRIM

THE WEARY PILGRIM "Jesus, tired as He was from the journey, sat thus down by the well. It was about the sixth hour." John 4:6

Nothing more frequently impressed the writer while sojourning in Palestine, than a feature in the humiliation of our blessed Lord which never so much as occurred previously—the bodily fatigue which He must have constantly undergone in His often pilgrimages along arid plains and sultry valleys. If even now, with all the comforts of tent and equipage, the modern traveler finds walking oppressive and exhausting, what must it have been to traverse these, with no aid but the staff and rough sandal. The Ethiopian eunuch, referred to in the preceding chapter, traveling through the desert of Gaza, was "sitting in his chariot." We picture Abraham, or his grandson who dug the well of Sychar, as they came and went from Mesopotamia or Hebron, mounted on their camels, with "all the substance they had gotten" following in long file; but, He, whose day they saw afar off and were glad, seems on all occasions, except one, to have journeyed on foot; that one (the Hosanna entrance) being an exceptional public assertion of His theocratic and royal rights as Zion's king. While the pilgrim father of old, and the pilgrim wayfarer still, pitch their canvas or goatskin tents, this Lord of pilgrims was content to spread His garment of camel's hair under the shade of some fig tree or thorny nook; or perchance within one of the abounding natural caverns in the limestone rock, He would catch a few hours of broken slumber, either when night drew its curtains around Him, or, as is the used of travelers and caravans still, during the sultry heat of noon. Often in His own touching words, (among the most touching He ever spoke,) 'the foxes had holes, and the birds of the air had nests, but the Son of man had nowhere to lay His head.'

It is such a picture which is now brought before us in the course of our narrative—"Jesus, tired as He was from the journey, sat thus down by the well. It was about the sixth hour." Touching description! He had been traversing as already described in the introductory chapter, during the long hours of morning, the valleys of Ephraim, on His way to the Wady El-Mokhna, and then along the unsheltered plain itself, under the blaze of that Syrian sun. The ordinary mealtime of noon had arrived, when hunger was superadded to physical fatigue, and being weary with His journey and long fast, He "sat down by the well." This is an expression which, indefinite in itself, has received various interpretations. By some it has been supposed to mean that He sat there 'as best He could;' either on the hard parapet, or else on the beaten ground, making the rough curb-stone a pillow for His head. By others, and among these Chrysostom, that He flung Himself down 'as soon as He could,' upon the first seat He could find. Others, connecting the word "thus" with the word "tired," refer it to His weary position; He sat "thus"—faint, toilworn—His hand, perhaps, on His throbbing temples, shielding His head from the oppressive sun-rays. Whichever meaning we adopt, here at least, we have an apparently poor pilgrim of Galilee, companionless, hungry, thirsty, prostrated with fatigue, thankful, as we shall find, of a cup of water from a wayside well, but being unprovided with rope or pitcher or other appliance, compelled to wait for some chance visitor to supply the boon.

It is in such incidental occurrences that our Lord's humanity and the lowliness of His humiliation are most touchingly exemplified. We have other more marked and expressive illustrations of His weakness and weariness—His participation alike in the sufferings and innocent infirmities of the race He came to save. As when, amid the peculiar white limestone deserts which overhang the Dead Sea, utterly devoid of sustenance for man and beast, the arch-enemy assaulted Him through one of the avenues of our physical nature, and, on the plea of demonstrating His divinity, would make Him yield to the temptation of converting the rocks around into bread, to stay the race of hunger. Or as, after a long day's unremitting labor on the shores of the Lake of Galilee, overtaken nature asserted her claims, and on the rough planks of a fishing-boat He lay fast asleep. Or when, in the lingering agonies of the Cross, His life-blood ebbing away, He gasped forth with fevered burning lips, "I thirst."

But, we repeat, it is in the quieter nooks of that valley of humiliation which He trod, that we come often on the most affecting of such testimonies. As when His poverty is attested by His virgin mother, eight days after His birth, "when the time of her purification according to the law had been completed," unable to bring the customary sacrifice of "a lamb for a burnt-offering," she resorts to the gracious alternative provided for the poor of the people—"a pair of turtle doves and two young pigeons." Or when He has to summon a fish from the sea of Gennesaret to pay the tribute-debt He is otherwise unable to pay. Or when mind and body together shattered by the news of the beloved Baptist's cruel death, He has to suspend His labors; and seek the restorative for a wounded spirit in rest and solitude. Or in crossing Mount Olivet, when it is touchingly said, "Early in the morning as He was on His way back to the city He was hungry;" and when that bodily hunger was mocked by the pretentious leaves of a fig tree "where He found no fruit." Or when, on His way to Calvary, the agonizing strain of the preceding day and night, alike on His physical and moral nature, caused Him to fall powerless under the weight of His cross. Or yet again, as here, when we behold Him a weary, exhausted wayfarer on the Palestine highway, the sun of high noon beating on His unsheltered head, asking a cup of cold water from the poor sinner He was about to pluck as a brand from the burning! It has often been noted, that though from time to time He exercised miraculous powers to provide for the needs and even the redundancies of others, (as in the case of the wine at Cana, or the bread and fishes at Bethsaida-Julias,) He never called these into requisition for Himself. At this very moment, how easily could He, to whom belonged the cattle on a thousand hills and every bird that soared among these surrounding valleys, have summoned from the groves of Shechem and Gerizim winged messengers like those which fed of old His great prophet, to minister to His necessities. No, He had only to speak the word, and nobler ministering spirits—legions of angels—would have trooped to His side with the bread of heaven—the best fruits culled from the celestial paradise. But "in all things it behooved Him to be like His brethren." He had chosen poverty as His birthright; and His divine prerogatives, so far as regarded Himself, are never employed to mitigate the needs and woes and privations of the estate to which He thus voluntarily submitted. Even on the cross He refused the soporific offered to deaden the acuteness of pain. And now, faint and weary at the well of Sychar, He is content with the draught of water, until His disciples return from their errand to the adjoining city "to buy food."

Oh most precious and consolatory truth! That Savior to whom I owe my everlasting salvation, is the Brother of my nature—in all points tempted like as I am. It is impressively said regarding Him by the great apostle, "He took not on Him the nature of angels, but He took on Him the seed of

Abraham," (Hebrews 2:16.) In other words, it was not the Angelic, but the Adamic nature he given to assume. Why not the angelic? why not the nobler nature of these principalities and powers—the chieftains and aristocracy of God's family? We answer, for two reasons: first, The angelic nature is a spiritual essence. "A spirit has not flesh and bones:" it is incapable, therefore, of corporeal suffering. It behooved Him as the divine oblation to suffer, and to suffer in the nature—the human nature which had sinned. "Therefore," says the apostle, adverting to this very point, "we see Jesus made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death." And then, secondly, in addition to this, and more especially—had the assumption of the angelic nature been otherwise compatible with the requirements of the divine law, it would have prevented participation in feeling and sympathy with the myriads He came to redeem. An angel can sympathize only with his brother angel—the brotherhood of ministering spirits. It requires a man to sympathize with his brother man. But we have SUCH a Brother—such a High Priest "touched with the feeling of our infirmities."

Moreover, while He had it in His power to select from all the degrees and gradations of society—the mass of the human family being composed of the lowly and the poor, the children of need and poverty and suffering, He has forever sanctified and dignified POVERTY by taking it as His earthly inheritance. And thus, while those occupying the pinnacles of worldly greatness—while widowed royalty on the throne can cling to Him in this blessed identity of humanity as the Prince of sufferers, preeminently can the widow and orphan of the mine, and the hut, and the lonely garret—the teeming thousands struggling with hard toil and privation and poverty, claim the exalted sympathy of Him who, "though He was rich, yet for their sakes became poor." But it would be a poor and insufficient anchorage for the human soul, in its deathless interests, if this were all. However pure and untainted that HUMANITY was, however wide and comprehensive in its sympathies, we require something else, something more stable to lean upon, than the mere virtues of a spotless human life—the ideal of a perfect manhood nature. Blessed be God, the might of DEITY is revealed in conjunction with the tenderness of Humanity, "His name is Immanuel, God with us." And it is remarkable how often, how generally, the two natures in the one Person are associated, alike in typical prefiguration, in gospel narrative, and in dogmatic statement. The modern Socinian or Unitarian overlooks or ignores this. He takes the coin and gazes only on the side bearing the human mark and superscription—the manger, the temptation, the unsullied life, the hero-death: he has not turned to the reverse golden side, gleaming with divine attestations. He goes to the old Sinai wilderness, where that same Savior, the covenant angel, revealed Himself as the deliverer of typical Israel; but he sees only a bush—a desert shrub, "a root out of a dry ground," burning with fire—the emblem of lowly, yet pure humanity: he has failed to hear the voice emanating from that oracle of burning flame, "I AM THAT I AM!" "I am the Lord God of your fathers, the GOD of Abraham, the GOD of Isaac, and the GOD of Jacob." He goes to the gospel story. He beholds a lowly individual baptized in the Jordan, receiving a sinner's lowly rite; but he fails to see that "fulfillment of all righteousness" transfigured into a divine manifesto, by the opened heavens and the descending dove and the witnessing voice. He beholds a slumbering man breathing heavily on the deck of a Tiberias fishing boat; but he fails to hear Him rebuking, with the voice of omnipotence, the winds and waves. He beholds the expiring criminal on Calvary, thorn-crowned, scourged, naked, buffeted—a pure and innocent, but a helpless, powerless martyr, dragged to unmerited death; but he fails to note how that mysterious Sufferer evokes a tribute from the dumb earth as it trembles to support His ignominious cross—the

upheaving rocks around resenting the insults to the great Lord of all. And here, while he beholds an exhausted traveler reclining on the parapet of the well at Sychar, he forgets the omniscient glance which could unlock the deep secrets of the heart which quailed under the eye of Infinite purity, and the tongue which "told her all things that she ever did."

It is the same with regard to the dogmatic and doctrinal assertions of evangelists and apostles. The Unitarian sees proof positive of the humanity of Christ in John's unequivocal assertion, "The Word was made flesh;" but he has failed to mark the antecedent announcement, equally unequivocal, in the same page, "The Word was God." He reads the unchallenged statement of Paul in the commencement of his Epistle to the Hebrews, "You are my Son, this day have I begotten You;" but he has omitted the counterpart assertion, "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever." He reads in the declaration of the same apostle, the undoubted testimony to the lowly humanity assumed—"He made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men;" but he has eliminated from his creed and his proof the opening words, "Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God." He reads in connection with the noble pedigree of Israel, "Of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came;" but he fails to finish the sentence, "who is over all, God blessed forever," (Romans 9:5.) He looks to Christ as an example. He owns it to be the noblest, purest, loftiest, of restored and regenerated humanity; and he reads in the Epistle to the Colossians, "As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him;" but he has culpably concealed and overlooked that lofty introduction in the same epistle, "Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: for by Him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by Him, and for Him; and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist. In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily," (Colossians 1:15-17; Colossians 2:6, Colossians 2:9.)

Reader, be it yours to rejoice in the glorious combination; that He who orders the magnificent marchings of Pleiades and Orion, who guides Arcturus with his sons—took into union with the might and majesty of Deity, the lowliness and the weakness of suffering humanity; that He who had the borrowed manger at Bethlehem, and led the youth of artisan toil at Nazareth, and sat the fainting pilgrim by the well of Jacob, can enter not only into the deeper and nobler sympathies of our nature, but even into its lowliest necessities and poorest, lowliest needs—hunger and thirst and faintness and lassitude—so that we may cease to wonder that many a soiled leaf has been doubled down by the begrimed fingers of the children of poverty, at the fourth chapter of John's Gospel. May it not have been this which induced the very beggars on the streets and highways of Palestine, when they heard that "Jesus of Nazareth passed by," to cry out, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy upon us!" And He wears that humanity now. He is changed indeed in His outward estate. The wayfarer of Shechem is enthroned as King of saints amid a multitude which no man can number. But it is not the less true that the Divine Shepherd, who is now leading His flock to the living fountains of waters in heaven, is, in the sympathies of His glorified manhood, the unchanged Savior, who sat by the fountain on earth. When the loud wail of suffering humanity is borne to His ear, it gets the response of a Human heart. That noontide hour of Sychar is in habitual remembrance with Him, to whom a thousand years are as one day, for He is "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and forever!" Are there any whose eyes trace these pages, who, like

Him, are weary—wary in another sense—wary with life's journey, the sun of TRIAL beating on their unsheltered heads; weary with pain, weary with heart sorrows—the disciples gone away—left companionless and alone; that too at the noontide hour, the hour they most needed rest and refreshment and comfort? "Consider Him . . . so that you will not grow weary and lose heart." Go seat yourselves by that weary One, and hear Him whisper in your ears, in the midst of His own languor and faintness, "I know your sorrows!" Are others weary, but, not like Him, weary with SIN? who have come up through these hot valleys of temptation, and are now sitting by the poisoned wells of existence, the pitcher broken at the cistern; nothing to draw with; the zest of life gone; the hot sun blazing in the meridian; no canopy, no fig tree shade, no rocky shelter to screen them from the fierce rays? Go, seat yourselves, too, by that weary One. Like the bird long struggling with baffled wings against the storm, drop into the crevices of this true Rock and hear the word of welcome, 'Come to Me, and I will give you rest.' Are there others again—how many such are there—who have reached that period of existence which reminds them of Sychar's noontide—who are undergoing the burden and heat of the day in the very midst of life's arduous callings. Manhood's sixth hour; manhood in its prime! It is a befitting pausing place and pausing season in the journey, a blessed opportunity to seat yourselves by the well and the water of life. "About the sixth hour." One half of existence over. The morning and early hours gone. The steep valleys of early manhood, with their climbing struggles, their "hill difficulties," surmounted. But still, who that has been most successful in the past half journey—who that has reached life's midway well with least toiling effort—but has to fling himself down and confess that he is 'weary,' and if the living water be yet untasted, to cry out, in the anguish of unquenched and unsatisfied longings, "I thirst." Half way!

Oh, with many, with most, it is past the half-way journey. They have seen that sun, which has now attained its zenith, rise; but they are not to see it set. The valley of death, like the valley of Shechem, may be close at hand, its entrance within sight, while the true fountain of life is still unrepaired to. My brother, as with the pilgrim in the caravan of old, or the traveler at this day by the Well of Jacob, you are seated in a spiritual sense there, gazing either on the Ebal of curses, or the Gerizim of blessings. Which are you to choose? to go on and brave the entrance under Ebal's frowning rocks; or to drink the living, life-giving water, and begin forthwith the ascent of the true Mountain of beatitudes beyond the Valley of the shadow? Is it the Sabbath's reposeful noontide hour which you are now enjoying; in which you are invited to turn aside and "rest a while," after traversing the week's rough highways of toil—to take off the dust-covered sandals and be alone with Jesus? Convert the hour of rest into the hour of solemn meditation and prayerful resolve. Look upwards to these mountain summits which enclose the valley. Select your alternative. Behold there is set before you the blessing and the curse, (Deuteronomy 11:26.) "Who may ascend the hill of the Lord? Who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart: who does not lift up his soul to an idol, or swear by what is false." He shall receive THE BLESSING from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation."

03.03. "THE DRAWER OF WATER"

"THE DRAWER OF WATER" When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give Me a drink?" John 4:7 In the previous chapter we contemplated the Divine Pilgrim, wearied from His journey, seated by the well of Jacob. Let us turn for a little to the other visitant, at that consecrated spot, who divides with Him the interest of the narrative: "A Samaritan woman came to draw water." The first question which naturally suggests itself is, What brought her there? And the question is all the more pertinent to those who are familiar with the locality. The well of Jacob, as has been previously noted, is at a considerable distance from the modern Nablous. Indeed, if the ancient Sychar be identical with the present Shechem, it cannot be less than a mile and a half. At all events, much nearer her home were two copious fountains, Ain Defileh and Ain Balata, which must have been as old as the days of the Canaanites, besides innumerable springs within and around the city; and whatever else may have been the changes which eighteen centuries have produced, we may feel assured that the number of the wells and streams of ancient times can have undergone no diminution. There must have been, therefore, some special reason to induce this female of Sychar, in the heat of noontide, to take an otherwise superfluous and unnecessary journey to a well that is specially designated as "deep" and the drawing from which must have been accompanied with considerable manual labor. The very hour, too, was unusual and peculiar. Of old, and to this day, evening was the time at which the wells and cisterns of Palestine were surrounded with living throngs. It is only the chance wayfarer or passing caravan that are found pausing at noon for refreshment. Moreover, as has been observed by Dr. Robinson, "that is was not the public well of the city is probable from the circumstance, noted in John 4:11, that there was here no public accommodation for drawing water." The answer which we think is, on the whole, most satisfactory, is the one suggested by the same learned writer and followed by others, that it was more than likely a peculiar value set on the water—a superstitious virtue supposed to attach to the old patriarch's well—which induced this woman to protract her journey and brave the midday heat. In various parts of Europe, superstition has reared its convent, monastery or shrine around reputed sacred fountains which have borne for ages the name of their founder or patron saint, and been credited with an inherent charm for the cure of diseases alike physical and spiritual. What must have been the sanctity which, in the Jewish age, gathered round these holy relics of Israel's Pilgrim fathers at Beersheba and Sychar! no mythical saints of a mythical calendar, but the veritable spots where the tent and altar of the Friend of God and of His children's children were pitched, where the smoke of their offering ascended, and the rites of patriarchal hospitality were dispensed. An objection, however, to this surmise may reasonably occur. We can quite imagine such a motive (we could not denounce it as superstitious, we would, to a certain extent, rather commend it as hallowed) actuating a true child of Abraham and Jacob—a partaker of their faith; but we can scarcely imagine a profligate and degenerate descendant of these holy patriarchs making any such nice discriminating distinction between the distant ancestral well and one of the gushing fountains that sang its way in the valley close by her own home. This objection would be tenable, were it not for a strange peculiarity, in this composite fallen nature of ours, by which cringing superstition is not infrequently found allied with

licentiousness. It has been well observed, "There is a kind of 'religious' feeling (often possessed by people of a susceptible and emotional temperament) which, where moral principle is lacking, gives birth at once to a sensuous superstition and a sensuous life." In the most abandoned heart there is always something to utter a protest against its sin; and along with this, some false refuge or expedient to shake off the uneasy feeling of guilt and of abused and violated responsibility. As, at times, amid the wrecks of the old ruin tangled and matted with rank weed and nettle—crumbling in decay, may be discovered the piece of now marred, but once delicate sculpture, indicating and memorializing its vanished glory—so even in the soul which is a moral wreck, there is found, now and then, in the midst of its fallen capitals and moldering walls, some strange indices, so to speak, of the tracery of a diviner than human finger "on the plaster of the wall" of that once kingly palace. In the case of some, this manifests itself in a groping after higher life and truer verities. With others, as with the Samaritan woman, it is no more than a dim recognition of that moral responsibility of which we have just spoken, coupled with an undefined mysterious dread of divine retribution; but taking the counterfeit form of seeking to atone for inner heart impurity by the performance of some outer act of religiousness. In one word, counterbalancing the life of guilt, and quieting the stings and rebukes of conscience by the penance and the pilgrimage—giving the fruit of the body, or the toil of the body, for the sin of the soul.

We see it in the case of the Mohammedan, reveling in all that is morally debasing, yet saving the pittance of a lifetime and braving weeks and months of perilous endurance to accomplish his pilgrimage to Mecca. We see it in the case of the Roman Catholic: for in what but this consists one of the fatal charms of Romanism and of the semi-Romanism of the day, whose essence is contained in what is called 'sacramental efficacy;' and where the mere external act of worship, is made a counterbalance for the worldly or abandoned life. Such is frail, inconsistent, fallen human nature; and this too, we may add, not alone in the case of the gentle Hindu, or the sensual Mussulman, or the superstitious Romanist, or the mediaeval Ritualist; but under every phase of religion, not excepting the nominal Protestant and Puritan, where that religion is a mere form, not a regenerating power. The woman of Samaria is thus the type and representative of a by no means limited class, among whom depravity of character is found associated either with silly superstition or with hollow sanctimoniousness; a degraded citizen of Sychar, yet going at times with meditative step, and in the pride of sect and of religious ancestry, to the "Holy Well," and thereby, in spite of a life of unblushing sin, thinking she was doing the God of Jacob service! Oh, the human heart, like that well of Jacob, is "deep"—deep in its corruptions, deep in its self-deceptions. "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, who can know it?" But to pass to one other more practical reflection—the Guiding hand which brought the woman of Samaria at that particular time to draw water. We shall afterwards come to read in her brief biography a wondrous chapter in the volume of Grace: but we have here to mark a preliminary page in the book of Providence.

Nothing, in the earthly sense of the word, was more purely accidental, than the going of this citizen of Sychar that day to the well at sultry noontide. She left her home with no thought but to bring in her pitcher a draught from the well-known fountain. Never dreamt she for a moment of an undesigned meeting that was to shape, and mold, and recast her whole future. Had she come there a day sooner, or at the usual evening time for the drawing of water, amid the hum of voices and the bleating of flocks, she would have missed that "still hour" of divine musing and heavenly communion: she would have returned the heathen and reprobate she had gone. But there is a

directing, controlling, superintending Power guiding all human plans and purposes, "rough hew them as we will." Who can doubt that, all unknown and unforeseen by her, it was one of those ordinary everyday providences of God, included in the supervision "of all His creatures and all their actions," which we are compelled implicitly to believe, if we would unriddle and understand the mystery of the world. Make that journey to the well a mere happy accident—a curious and singular coincidence in which there was no divine foreknowledge and decree, and as a matter of course we write "chance" on the momentous results to which the meeting led—the founding and extension of that Church which sprang from the woman of Samaria as its nursing mother. If we stop short of the only true solution of that journey, as being one of the eternal purposes of the Most High—prearranged and predetermined by Him—we virtually dissever God from history. Accident! Chance! No; the name of that woman was written in the Book of life. The same "needs be" of the divine 'determinate counsel' which brought the Redeemer there, brought also her, who, before that noontide sun sank behind Gerizim, was to He made a trophy of His grace.

Indeed we cannot speak of such apparently trivial occurrences as "accidents" without virtually dethroning Deity, wresting the sovereignty of His own world from the hands of the Supreme. The peradventures and contingencies of men are the interpreters of His will, the executioners of His purposes, heralds sent forth to fulfill His high behests. If we deny particular providences, we must deny more special ones. If we deny God's hand in the minute events of daily life, we must, to be consistent, eliminate His overruling power in the rise and fall of empires. Minute occurrences, apparently the most trifling, have not infrequently involved the destinies of nations, and the blessing or curse of generations unborn.

Every schoolboy knows the authenticated fact in our own early Scottish history, how the fate of this kingdom hung, so to speak, on a spider's web; how the success of that tiny insect nerved the arm of her chieftain kin—as like himself, six times baffled, it reached on a seventh effort the rafters above his head—roused him from his couch of despondency and led to the victory which secured his country's independence. By refusing to recognize God's direct overruling providence in an incident so trifling, we must, as a matter of course, sever from His cognizance and supervision every subsequent historic event in our nation's annals to which that apparently trivial accident gave birth. The reader of "The Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire" may remember a similar story with a lesson: the passage wherein the skeptic writer, in the pomp of stately history, tells of the little bird of the desert which rose from the mouth of the cave, where Mahomet, the false prophet, had taken refuge from his pursuers, and by which occurrence he evaded certain death. He records, with a covert skeptic's sneer, (what the Christian may read as a great truth) that "the flight of that bird changed the destinies of the world." Yes! this is true, 'but not as the infidel would represent it—as if that winged tenant of the wilderness had usurped the place of the Great Supreme. We accept his saying, but it is with the interpretation that the almighty Ruler, the God of providence, had set that tiny warder by the cave's mouth, prepared its perch by the rugged entrance, and gave the summons to fly.

Deny God's providence as extending to so minute and trifling an occurrence, and you wrest from Him the cognizance and foreknowledge of the vast influence which that impostor was yet to exercise on the world's history. In other words, you admit the 'heathen deity of chance' into your Parthenon; you fling the reins on the coursers' necks and surrender all idea of Divine control—resolving all history into a fortuitous concurrence of chances, just as the infidel

world-maker would resolve all this fair creation, with its harmonious movements and nicely adjusted machinery, into the old fortuitous concurrence of atoms. No, no; man proposes, but God disposes. He who wheels the planets in their courses, marks the sparrow's fall. He who swept Babylon with the broom of destruction, or overthrew Pharaoh in the Red Sea, or raised up the princely Cyrus to be the deliverer of His people, conducted that female's steps that day, at the noontide hour, to Sychar's well. He who brought (in similar circumstances) Rebekah, Rachel, and Zipporah to other eastern fountains to be wedded to the princely fathers of the Hebrew people, brought their descendant to nobler and more glorious spiritual espousals—to pledge her troth to the Divine Redeemer, who was soon to ratify these espousals by the outpouring of His precious blood, and proclaim to a whole outcast world, "Your Maker is your husband, the Lord of Hosts is His name."

We see every day the same truth illustrated in our own individual histories. Events, often apparently trivial and unimportant—what the world calls accidents, form really and truly the mighty levers of life, altering and revolutionizing our whole future. The relationships of earth, the spheres of our labor, the connections of business, the bounds of our habitation, are all in one sense accidental. The merest trifles have touched the springs of action; a twig or stone has altered the direction of life's footpath; the jutting rock in the stream has altered its course in the valley; the casual meeting of a friend on the street may have led to the most important crisis in our history: the youth on the verge of sin and ruin by stumbling accidentally into some house of God, has been led to hear the word, which to him now is like the memory of that well of Sychar to the saved penitent of Samaria—associated with living streams and everlasting life.

Let us rejoice in the simple but sublime assurance that all that happens is ordered for us—that the vessel in which we sail is not like the abandoned ship of the great painter—a deserted log in the wild waters, without helm or mast or compass, driven here and there by the capricious breath of the tempest—but that rather, like the gigantic wheels in Ezekiel's vision, the wheel within wheel is propelled by Omnipotence. Better still, as in the same vision the prophet of Chebar saw "above the firmament the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone, and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it;" so it is for us to know, and to rejoice in the knowledge, that every event is in the hands of the Savior who died for us, and who has given us this mightiest proof and pledge of dying love, that all things (even the most mysterious) are working together for our good.

Oh, even over our bitterest trials let us write the gleaming words, "He had to go." Blessed for us if that "had to" result—as it did in the case of the Lord of pilgrims and the repentant sinner, in bringing us to the well's mouth, to hold close converse on the all-momentous question of our salvation, and in the thirst of the world's sultry noon to get our parched souls filled with the water of salvation. Meanwhile be this our prayer, "Show me Your ways, O Lord, teach me Your paths;" "Lead me in Your truth and teach me;" "Lead me in the way everlasting!" Whether it be amid the groves and singing streams and sunshine of Gerizim, or amid the "blackness and darkness and tempest" of Ebal, I will hear the guiding voice saying, "Follow Me. This is the way, walk in it."

"Lead, kindly Light; amid the encircling gloom

Lead me on:

The night is dark, and I am far from home,

Lead me on.

Keep my feet, I do not ask to see

The distant scene; one step enough for me.

"I was not ever thus, nor prayed that You

Should lead me on;

I loved to choose and see my path, but now

Lead me on.

I loved the glare of day, and, spite of fears,

Pride ruled my will: remember not past years.

"So long Your power has blest me, sure it still

Will lead me on,

Over valley and hill, through stream and torrent, until

The night is gone;

And, with the morn, those angel faces smile

Which I have loved long since, and lost awhile."

03.04. THE CONFERENCE

THE CONFERENCE When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give Me a drink?" John 4:7 The meeting and conference here unfolded to us with the woman of Samaria, is a graphic representation of what has occurred thousand thousand times since; when the soul is brought into real, though invisible communion with the Savior. Other moments of our individual histories may be solemn and momentous, and vast worldly issues dependent upon them; but none to compare with this. It is death coming in contact with life—the mortal with the immortal—the finite with the infinite—time with eternity—dust with Deity—the sinner with the great God. What an impressive, mysterious contrast, between those two who now met for the first time by the well of the patriarch! Frowning, lightning-scathed, storm-wreathed Ebal was confronting close by, the smiling groves and sunshine of Gerizim: but what a feeble type and image of these living beings standing face to face: impurity confronting spotless purity: a lost and ruined soul confronting its holy, yet forgiving Redeemer. It is the gospel in expressive parable. This prodigal daughter is a striking counterpart of the prodigal son in our Lord's touching discourse. Like him, she had wandered from her father's house. In all riotous living she had reveled. She had probably at that moment around her head and neck and arms, what we have seen often and again adorning the females at the wells of Palestine, strings of coins, or, it may be, jewels, (in her case the mementos and rewards of sin.) But this glittering outer tinsel screened moral beggary and misery within. She had been feeding on the garbage of the wilderness; and her inarticulate cry was the echo of his wild plaint, "I perish with hunger!" May we not imagine her in her hours of deep remorse, (for who, the most degraded and reprobate, have not these?) brought up as she must have been in the knowledge of the God of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob—may we not imagine her saying at times within herself, "I will arise and go to my Father"? We do not say that any such definite religious longing or aspiration now brought her to the Well: far from it. As we shall afterwards find, though it may have been partly dissembled, she affected rather the contrary—lightness of heart and levity of speech, to the unknown stranger. But that she had her seasons of deep soul misery and self-reproach cannot be doubted; and coming as she now did, with a superstitious feeling at least to the fountain of the patriarch, she would be so far tutored and prepared, by her approach to that holy ground, for the unexpected converse which awaited her there. At all events, if this prodigal had at the moment no thoughts of her Father; her Father—her Savior—her Brother—her Friend, had gracious thoughts of her. He "saw her afar off and had compassion upon her." He stripped the meretricious jewels off her head, and put the ring of His own adopting love on her ringless finger, and the sandals of a peace she had never known before, on her feet. Yes, and so great was His joy at finding the long-lost one, that when the disciples came afterwards from the city to their weary, hunger-stricken Master with the purchased bread, and with the request, "Master, eat;" we believe, for very joy, He could not look at the provided earthly refreshment. "I have food to eat," says He, which the world knows not of—"This my sister, my prodigal child, was dead and is alive again; she was lost and is found!" In adverting, in the present chapter, to some preliminary features of this conference, we would remark How the Lord Jesus, in His dealings with His people, adapts Himself to their peculiar character and

circumstances and necessities. This is specially illustrated in the narrative of the woman of Samaria, from its juxtaposition in John's Gospel with another recorded interview of a similar kind—that with Nicodemus. In the one case, Christ had to bear with a proud Pharisee, a member of the Jewish Sanhedrin, one at whose door probably could be laid no glaring sin—a man scrupulous in external decencies, "as touching the righteousness which is of the Law, blameless." Moreover, in the character of this inquirer there was a constitutional timidity which is manifest even in the subsequent avowal of his discipleship. Though he brings costly offerings of his affection and love for the embalming of his Lord's body, he does not share the bolder moral courage of his Arimathean brother, in demanding from Pilate the sacred treasure. Jesus accordingly deals tenderly and sensitively with him, as one who is the prey of that "fear of man which brings a snare." He meets his case and its difficulties. He will not wound either his pride or his fears by challenging him to converse in broad day; but He will open for him His silent oratory on Olivet. He will permit him and encourage him to steal there, night by night, to unburden the doubts and misgivings of his anxious, thoughtful, truth-seeking, candid soul. He who suits the soldier to his place, and the place to the soldier, who "tempers the wind to the shorn lamb," will not break this bruised reed nor quench this smoking, flax, until He bring forth judgment unto victory. "The same came to Jesus by night." In dealing with the woman of Samaria, again, with her bold spirit and blunted feelings, there were no such tender scruples to consult; there was rather a propriety in holding converse with this impure child of darkness in the blaze of day. She needed the piercing blast of the north wind, bringing with it sharp convictions of sin; barbed arrow after arrow was sent through the folds of guilt covering her heart, until that heart lay broken and bleeding at the feet of her Divine Restorer—while the other, requiring rather the south wind of tender consolation and comfort, was led step by step, from the necessity of "the new birth," up to the sublime unfoldings of the love of God in the free gift of His Son and the bestowal of everlasting life. The two form a living commentary on the prophet's description of the Almighty's dealings, "In measure, when it shoots forth, you will debate with it; He stays His rough wind in the day of His east wind."

We may gather another affecting and impressive thought from these two conjoined, yet contrasted cases. They together recall the truth, already referred to in a preceding chapter, but here brought before us under a fresh illustration—the unresting love which, while on earth, Christ had for sinners: that any personal sacrifices He would make, any personal deprivation He would endure, to save a soul from death, and to hide a multitude of sins. In the case of Nicodemus, night by night Jesus willingly surrendered or cut short His needed rest, that He might calm the perturbations of one agitated spirit. He would not give sleep to His eyes, nor slumber to His eyelids, until in that man's heart He found a place for the Lord, a habitation for the mighty God of Jacob. And in the interview with the Samaritan woman, as we have seen, the hour of greatest recorded bodily weariness is with equal willingness alienated from rest, that He may bring the wanderer to His fold. We have watched the Great Shepherd of the sheep just terminating a long and fatiguing bodily journey through the hot valleys of Ephraim. But a soul is to be saved. He suspends needed repose from toil; and, as it were, with staff in hand, resumes the journey over rock and hedge and tangled precipice, in order that when His absent disciples return from their errand to the neighboring city, He may call together these His friends and neighbors, saying to them, "Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost." Here is the true covenant Angel who wrestled with Jacob at the brook Jabbok. "He wrestled," we read, "all night with him until the breaking of the day." But when day broke, did the wrestlings of that mysterious visitant terminate with the experience of that

solitary man in the gorges of Jordan? No; daybreak is only a new summons for fresh efforts and deeds of love. Some new case requires His presence; some other pilgrim by some other brook, at that early morn, demands His aid and support. "Let Me go," He says, "for the day breaks." Immediately He takes His departure. Leaving the patriarch with a new and significant name, the badge at once of blessing and victory, He speeds His way—on, still on—saying, to this soul and that in His untiring flight, "O Israel, you have destroyed yourself, but in Me is your help!"

Another and different thought suggests itself in connection with the interview at Jacob's well. It is, that this conference of Christ, the most minutely detailed conference of the Bible, was with a Woman. This strikes us comparatively little in our land of gospel privilege; because, females have been exalted by Christianity, and Christianity's founder, to the place they were designed by their Creator to occupy. There is nothing to us strange or unusual in a woman taking part in a conference about divine things. On the contrary, it is females who now throng our religious meetings, and are the best and most effective auxiliaries in every department of practical Christian effort. But it must be remembered it was far different among the Hebrews. The same social degradation which characterized the female sex amid pagan nations, and which is the curse of Orientalism at this moment, was so far at least, and especially in the age to which we refer, grafted on Judaism. "The Rabbis forbade her instruction, deemed her incapable of it; first made her despicable, and then despised her." Even the disciples, those whom we might have thought had already been taught the creed of a nobler Christian chivalry, "marveled that He talked with the woman," (John 4:27) It was a violation of their conventional ideas talking to her at all; above all, talking to her about religious themes, the soul, "the gift of God," "everlasting life." But has not Christ, by this very conversation and interview, inaugurated a new era and warrant for the spiritual activities of woman: not only conversing with her about her own soul, but sending her forth a herald of salvation to her fellow-townsmen, and making the Church of Samaria imperishably identified with her name and labors? To all of us, therefore, that hour of converse has its sacred—with many, the most sacred memories of life. Jesus consecrating this female's mission was, in one sense, consecrating the mission of every mother as she bends over her infant's cradle, or as she gathers her children around her knee and tells them of the great salvation.

Yes, if there was one thing more than another that made Christianity stand out in bold and beautiful contrast with the debasing and sensual creed of heathenism, it was when the adorable Redeemer removed the swathing bands and fetters from the body and soul of woman, and sent her forth from her couch of degradation, earth's ministering angel, "walking and leaping and praising God." Where would have been the noblest and the best names in the Church's annals, had female influence, had a mother's tongue, been gagged, and a mother's prayers been stifled? Where would have been our Augustines and our Origenes, our Zwingles and Luthers, our Watts and Bunyans, if Christ had not stood by His vacant sepulcher in the morning of His resurrection, and asking the question before an enslaving world, "Woman, why are you weeping?" dried her tears, elevated her nature, refined her sympathies, vindicated her rights, redressed her wrongs, burst her bonds and set her free! That hour and that conversation at Sychar were the first-fruits of a glorious harvest—a prophecy and pledge of unnumbered blessings, which many a pious son has to thank God for; yes, over which many a prodigal has to rejoice through the burning tears of a dying but penitent hour. John Newton, in that dark night at the helm of his vessel, would not have remembered the hymn which his mother taught him, and which revolutionized his life, but for the

new charter which Christ put into the hands of the woman of Samaria, and such as she. And with the same reference, let us read in the touching story also a prophecy of the future; not as to what Christianity has done for us and for Christendom, but what the power of Christianity will yet do for those down-trodden lands where that new and glorious charter was first written, and where woman is still the soulless drudge, the grinding slave of unnatural oppression. In no part of Palestine more so than near and around this very spot where Christ spoke these wondrous words at Jacob's well, is woman overtaken and degraded—toil her cruel birthright; her dwelling is not on the sunlit slopes of Gerizim, but amid the frowning curses of Ebal. The cross has waned and the crescent is triumphant. Since the light of the Christianity of early apostolic days has there been extinguished—the sacred name of its Founder become a reproach and a scorn—well may the wailing words of the noblest in the early band of Jewish females be echoed by her oppressed successors, "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him!" But the day of emancipation is at hand. What Christianity has done for us, it will yet do for those sitting under the shadow of death.

It is remarkable that in many of the inspired prefigurations of Israel's glowing future in the millennial era, the equality of woman is a specified feature and characteristic, "My sons shall come from far, my daughters shall be nursed at my side." "Bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth." Who can forget that it was a woman, a Jewish woman, who was last at the cross and first at the grave? Who can forget that it was the women of the early Church whose devotion and moral heroism evoked Paul's warmest benedictions and salutations—Phoebe, Priscilla, Junia, Tryphena, Tryphosa, and others in the honored sisterhood of the faith. So, may we not expect, as one of the bright features in the ingathering of regenerated Israel that woman, Christianized, and, by being Christianized, dignified, elevated, and refined, will prove, like this female of Sychar, a herald of glad tidings—the gentle dove of peace sent forth with the olive-branch from the true ark of God. In that lofty Hebrew Alleluia, which is to blend with the Gentile Hosanna in welcoming in the King of the Jews to His throne on Mount Zion—the metropolis of a millennial earth—loud amid timbrel and harp will be the voices of the Miriams and the Deborahs, who, in higher strains than on the Red Sea, or amid the hills of Kedesh, will "sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb," and help to carry the glad strain from home to home, from valley to valley, from city to city, until the whole land will send up the shout, loud as the sound of many waters, "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Rejoice, O daughter of Zion; behold, your King comes to you!" "Loose yourself from the bands of your neck, O captive daughter of Zion." You may now be like the bird with broken wing—a caged captive, unable to sing the Lord's song in a strange land. But the day is at hand when the Gospel's soaring pinion of life and liberty will be yours again; when "you shall be as a dove whose wings are covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold."

While we are permitted thus joyfully to remember, that in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, "male nor female;" the great practical question for each of us as individuals, is not what the religion of Christ has done for the world in the past, or may yet do in the world of the future, but what has that religion done for me? Do we know anything of the converting and regenerating power which plucked that degraded Samaritan as a jewel from the crown of the prince of darkness, to irradiate the brow of Jesus? What grace can do, in changing and transforming the worst and most hopeless; quickening those who are dead; and animating the

groveling spirit with new motives, new principles, new tastes, new feelings, new aspirations! That very patriarch at whose well she stood, was himself once wily, cunning selfish, worldly-minded; his name too truly was Jacob, "supplanter." But he became a converted man; as much so, and as truly so, as his degenerate descendant standing at the brink of his fountain. From being the supplanter, his name was changed into "Israel," "the soldier of God." And what, in both cases, was the turning point in their spiritual histories? It was the sight of Christ; the revelation of His person and character and work. It was on a memorable night, (twenty years before the wrestling with the Angel at Jabbok,) on the stony pillow of Bethel, that Jacob received his earliest revelation of redeeming love. The supplanter dreamed a dream. He saw a ladder planted between himself and heaven; or, as some think, his dreams took their shape and coloring from the physical features of his nightly solitude—that these strange, white, grey stones in the desolate moorland, formed themselves into a colossal staircase, leading up to heaven; at the base of which the outcast wanderer slept, angels beckoning him upwards, and the God of Abraham smiling upon him a welcome. It was a type of Him who was to be revealed as the way to the Father; "the way and the truth and the life," conducting the most foreign and outcast into the holiest of all. He rose refreshed and comforted: "This," He exclaimed, "is the gate of heaven! "And that first and earliest revelation was completed and confirmed at the memorable night of soul-struggle, of which we have just spoken, where he wrestled, and prevailed, and saw the angel Jehovah face to face. What was revealed to him at first in type, was revealed to the Samaritan woman in visible reality and by living word. It was the manifestation of Christ in the glory of His person and fullness of His grace, which demolished in her case, too, the strongholds of Satan, and redeemed them for the service and glory of her accepted Savior! And the same mighty power, the power of the cross, can vanquish and subdue us—can transform us who were once rebels, traitors, supplanters, into "soldiers of God." How many, touched by that omnipotent grace and by the attractions of that cross, are ready to utter the same glad and grateful testimony—

"See me! see me! once a rebel,

Vanquished at His cross I lie!

Cross—to tame earth's proudest able,

Who was e'er so proud as I?

He convinced me, He subdued me,

He chastised me, He renewed me;

The nails that nailed, the spear that slew Him,

Transfixed my heart and bound it to Him;

See me! see me! once a rebel,

Vanquished at His cross I lie!"

03.05. THE CONFERENCE, (continued)

THE CONFERENCE, (continued) When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give Me a drink?" John 4:7

Each one of us must come, at some time or other, to have a personal dealing with Christ. It may be at one of those crisis-hours of existence, of which few are ignorant, when the even flow of life's current is arrested; when, to use the suggestive simile of this narrative, the pitcher is drained and emptied, and we are summoned away from our Shechem-homes and broken cisterns to seek supplies of some better 'living water.' It may be at a dying hour. It must be on the Great Day of Judgment. Blessed for us if that solemn and all-momentous conference and interview has already taken place—if we have already listened to His words of wondrous mercy—let down our vessel for the draught in the deep well of His love, and drank of that perennial stream which quenches and satisfies the soul's thirst forever! The sinner who now confronted her unknown Savior at Jacob's well, as we shall afterwards find, was not—could not, with all her simulated lightness of soul, be happy. She had no part, and knew she had none, in the blessings of the true Gerizim. If she ever recalled, in her journeys to and from the fountain, Joshua's old rehearsal of promise and threatening, more than one curse must have thundered its anathema over her head; and although the many thousands of Israel were not there to respond, her own guilty conscience must have uttered its assenting 'Amen.' But as at that same memorable scene of patriarchal days, the Ark of the Testimony was placed between the adjacent hills, so now did the true Ark stand between her and the Ebal of curses, directing and conducting her up to the Mountain of blessing, and saying, "Woman, your sins are forgiven you." Shechem, her ordinary dwelling-place, was one of the old cities of Refuge. She may possibly have seen with her own eyes the manslayer hastening with fleet foot along the plain of Mokhna, up the narrow Valley she had just traversed, to be safe within the appointed walls from the avenger of blood. That Old Testament institution and type had, in the Adorable Person standing by her side, a nobler meaning, and fulfillment. Though all unconscious at the moment of her peril and danger, He was to her the great antitypical Refuge from the avenging sword of that law which she had so flagrantly outraged in heart and life.

"Jesus said to her," briefly, abruptly, "Will you give me a drink?" That request is preferred in the first instance for Himself—uttered as an introduction to the subsequent converse. But it is evident He wishes to put it in another and far more urgent form into her lips as well as into ours. It is the call of unfulfilled humanity, in its unquenched longings after something more than perishable fountains can yield; a cry to which the world gives its ten thousand and mocking answers, all, however, telling of a thirst which, with anything short of the true answer, cannot be met or assuaged. It is the cry of the spiritually wounded or dying soldier on earth's battlefield in the rage of his moral fever—Water! water! water! "Give me a drink."

Thus does the Savior start the question. It is the keynote of the subsequent divine music. It regulates the strain throughout. It touches the chords of that tuneless soul, and waked up its latent slumbering harmonies. The long-sealed and hardened lips come to sing, (and the strange Music

impels hundreds of her fellow-townsmen to sing, too). "Will you give me a drink:" "As the deer pants after the water brooks, so pants my soul after you, O God! My soul thirsts for God, for the living God."

We may, in the present chapter, regard the interview unfolded to us in the narrative, as exhibiting several features which characterize those spiritual conferences to which we have just referred as still taking place at this hour between the Savior and the sinner.

Christ often comes and speaks UNEXPECTEDLY. When that woman of Sychar left her home, never did she dream of such an interview. No thought had she but of going to replenish her empty pitcher. If she had been a modern Romanist, she might, on reaching the "holy well," have perhaps counted her beads and muttered her 'our Father', but only to return light-hearted as she went. All unlooked for was the advent of that Divine Stranger. Still more unexpected the mysterious conversation which resulted in the change of heart and change of life. Is it not so still? How often Jesus comes to the soul unexpectedly. Sickness has with appalling suddenness struck that strong man down. It was but yesterday when he was at his desk, or pacing the exchange, or studying his ledger, in the ardent pursuit of gain and engrossing earthliness—strong in pulse and brawny in arm, no premonition of an arrest on all worldly schemings. By sudden accident, or fever, or disease, he is chained to a couch of pain and languishing; it may be a bed of death. For the first time the dreadful realities of eternity are projected on his sick pillow. He has been summoned in the twinkling of an eye from the Shechem of his earthly pursuits, secluded from the hum of busy life, 'the loud stunning tide of human care, and crime,' the excitement of secular interests, the scramble of money-making, and he is lying by the Bethesda pool of affliction, with the hot, fevered sun as of midday beating on his brow. He is for the first time conscious—unexpectedly conscious—of a Personal Presence there. "JESUS sat thus on the well, and it was about the sixth hour." A few days before, he had not so much as a thought about Christ or his soul, with its everlasting interests. If you had spoken of these, he would have resented the allusion as a mistimed and impertinent interference. But it is, in his case, as in that of the mounted persecutor of old on his way to Damascus, of whom we read, "Suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven above the brightness of the sun; and he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying to him, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?"

Take another case. It is that of a household who have until now enjoyed a happy immunity from outer trial, who have been strangers to those shadows of death which have darkened the homes of others. Theirs until now has been a Shechem Valley, musical with streams and song of birds, carpeted with flowers and fragrant with perfumes. But clouds have suddenly gathered; the streams have been arrested in their courses; the birds have ceased to sing; the blossoms have drooped and withered "Man goes to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets." At times, too, (not infrequently,) these are households where the Divine Redeemer has until now been a stranger, His name not hallowed, His love not felt, His presence not realized. But now He comes unexpectedly, as He did that night on Gennesaret, saying amid the wailings of the tempest, "It is I!" or, in the beautiful imagery of the Apocalypse, when the long-rejected voice is suddenly heard—its tones no longer disregarded—"Behold, I stand at the door and knock." Some loved one has been borne away to the narrow house appointed for all living, leaving in swept and desolate homes and hearts the irreparable blank: but in that hour of inconsolable earthly sorrow, the Divine Wayfarer of Sychar, now the exalted Sympathizer on the throne, draws near, and says, in tones of ineffable

love, 'Sorrowing one! I will come in the place of your loved and lost. Your golden goblet is emptied; your earthly pitcher is lying in fragments about the well's mouth. But trust Me. I have broken these perishable cisterns, to lead you to imperishable ones. I will be to you more and better than all you have forfeited. I am the True Well of living water springing up into everlasting life.'

Or, to take yet another illustration. That worshiper came to the House of God, if not to scoff, at all events careless and uninterested in the stale message of the preacher—a reluctant victim and martyr to the conventionalisms of the age. No tongue had he to sing; no heart to pray, no desire to listen. Let the tedious moments be dragged out, the tiresome penance completed, and the congenial world, as soon as may be, return again. Ah, but a certain one, surer and more unerring than the Syrian archer on the heights of Ramoth-Gilead, drew a bow at a venture. The arrow sped forth with its message of death and life. Again the Damascus midday scene is repeated. Suddenly "the shining light which unhorsed the persecutor brings yet another Saul to the earth; and as suddenly and unexpectedly as in that solemn moment a voice speaks: "And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom you are persecuting: it is hard for you to kick against the goads." This worshiper left his home, like the woman of Samaria, with nothing in his thoughts but the earthly pitcher and the perishable streams. He leaves the sanctuary—he leaves the wayside-well, with this new song in his lips—

"My heart is fixed, eternal God,

Fixed on Thee;

And my eternal choice is made:

Christ for me!"

Christ often comes and speaks to the sinner when he is alone. The woman of Samaria was alone when Jesus met her. Had it not been so—had she been in company with others from the city—had she come at evening hour, when the wells of Palestine are alive with herds and flocks and drawers of water—it would have rendered close and prolonged conversation impossible. But with no other eye or ear to disturb or distract, her deep-rooted prejudices would be calmly combated, her sin detected and denounced by the unerring Censor at her side, and the light of heaven admitted to her darkened soul.

It is when alone—in the solitude of the sick chamber, or in those solitudes of life already spoken of, created by bereavement and death, that Christ comes nearest to the soul, and speaks at once most solemnly and most comfortably home to it. The great questions of salvation and eternity cannot be weighed and pondered in a crowd. The ruts of busy life jostle them in confusion. The whirl of business, the frivolities of society, the oblivion-power of the world, come with their tidal wave and sweep the impressions away. Another convicted sinner of the Gospels—we trust, too, another stricken penitent—is the picture and type of many a sinner still. "Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. When Jesus straightened up, and saw no one but the woman, he said to her, . . . Neither do I condemn you: go, and sin no more." (John 8:9-10.)

Even in regard to His own people, the Savior loves to speak to them alone; when, separated from the absorbing power of outer things, (it may be even Christian activities for the time suspended,) they obey the call He Himself of old addressed to His disciples, "Come apart into a desert place

and rest a while." The ordinary occasion for such seasons of lonely silent conference is unquestionably the closet. The 'still hour' is the hour of prayer. Not even will the public services of the Sanctuary make up for this. These latter are the times for the jubilant multitudes crowding around the golden goblets of water brought up on the great day of the feast, amid hosannahs of joy, from the pool of Siloam. But this is the meditative silence and seclusion by the well of the Patriarch, when the soul is alone with its divine Redeemer. It is the brook Jabbok we spoke of in previous chapters, where Jacob was "left ALONE," and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. Had he not been alone, there would—there could—have been no such wrestling, no new name, no spiritual victory; and as a Jabbok, so still, in the words of an old divine, "the battle of the soul is lost or won in the closet." But it is not Christ's conversation with true believers to which we are now adverting, but rather to His first solemn conference with the sinner. It is often in times of loneliness and solitude that He speaks to him most loudly, most solemnly, most tenderly. How many may be able to tell of such seasons? Reader, do you not vividly call to remembrance that hour, when the very Gerizim of your worldly blessings, with its usual sunshine, was mantled in thick darkness; when, with sad heart and sorrowing step, you left the busy world behind you, and went forth, in the loneliness of your bereft spirit, (you knew not where,) in search of peace and comfort, which the once-smiling valley of life could not now give, for it had been changed into the Valley of the Shadow of Death? do you remember, when bowed to the dust in the presence of the King of Terrors, who had stamped mockery on your dearest earthly treasure, how amid the stillness and solitude of that darkened house and hushed chamber there was a new voice that for the first time broke the dreadful mysterious silence? You felt yourself alone with Jesus; and your experience was that of Job, who, not when his cattle were feeding around him in abundant pastures, his family unbroken, and his own health unscathed, but when all had passed away like a wild dream of the night, and he was left with nothing he could call his own but the bed of ashes and the broken potsherd—then, yes, then—in that hour of wondrous loneliness, these fevered leprous lips sang aloud, "I know that my Redeemer lives."

We repeat, the ear will not, cannot, give earnest heed amid the world's distractions and petty cares, and poor, flippant, superficial pleasures. Hagar of old would never have sought for the well had she not found herself in the midst of the desert. The soul would often never seek for Christ or find Him but for the solitary places of affliction. "Behold," says the Lord, in a beautiful passage in Hosea, where He speaks of Israel in the midst of utter alienation and spiritual debasement, "I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and will speak comfortably unto her," (lit. will speak to her heart,) "and I will give her her vineyards from there." In the very place where vineyards are least looked for, (the depths of the arid wilderness,) there, says God, speaking metaphorically, there, in the midst of the wilderness of trial, in these unbroken solitudes of the soul, where all green grass is burned up, no sheltering rock to screen from the flaming sun—where earthly shelters have perished, and earthly voices are hushed for the forever of time—that is the hour for my "speaking to the heart." As it was when alone with the dead, the Prophet of Cherith raised up the widow's son, "so that the soul of the child came unto him again and he revived," so, often it is with Jesus in the case of the "dead in trespasses and sins." In the loneliest, dreariest spots of the Valley of tears, with barren mountains all around, amid the desolate sense of human isolation and friendlessness, the spirit catches up the sound of heavenly music—"It is the voice of my Beloved! Behold, He comes leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills!"

Or, returning to the picture of John's narrative, how many, holding life's empty pitcher in their hand, bereft, companionless, having nothing in their unsolaced hour to draw with, for the well of their affliction is deep, have been admitted then and there into the heavenly household, and had, in their spiritual experience, the Psalmist's beautiful words to the lonely fulfilled: "God sets the solitary in families; He brings out those who are bound with chains."

We observe yet once more, Christ often speaks in the midst of the ordinary duties of life. The woman of Samaria, while she was alone, was engaged, too, in the most commonplace occupation—drawing water at a Palestine well; and while doing so, Jesus meets her, and speaks to her of spiritual verities through the earthly element. He who called one apostle while at his ordinary occupation at the custom-house of Capernaum, and four others from their nets at Bethsaida—summons here another disciple when she had gone on the everyday errand of replenishing her pitcher for household purposes. He thus beautifully, though indirectly puts His seal on the sanctity of life's daily drudgery. He speaks to a Samaritan female, not only when employed in this her most ordinary duty, but He makes pitcher, and rope, and well—these common material things she was dealing with—the vehicles, so to speak, for imparting deathless spiritual truths to her soul.

There is a lesson to God's own people in this too. We have just adverted to the desirableness of occasional seasons of loneliness and seclusion, to afford opportunity for contemplation and prayer. But we must qualify this with the counterpart and complementary truth; the "not slothful in business" must dovetail with "fervent in spirit." Men are ever apt to rush to extremes. The monkish theory and practice is religious retirement and loneliness caricatured—loneliness in its exaggerated and abnormal form, in which life, real, true life and vigor, mental and spiritual, is rendered impracticable. In the case of the man of the world again, in the sensuous and irreligious sense of the term—the man so absorbed and engrossed with the pursuit of perishable gain on the one hand, or with sinful excitement and pleasure on the other, as to leave no room or thought for higher interests—here also the only true life of the soul, is overpowered, paralyzed, strangled. In spiritual things, as in most other, the middle road is the safe one; where the active and the contemplative are intermingled and blended; where worldly work is nobly, honestly engaged in, but not permitted to exercise an overmastering, absorbent power; where there are solemn hours and moments in which the valleys of busy life are left behind; when the pitcher is set down by the curb-stone of the well, and, with folded arms, and eyes intent on the Great Teacher, the mind forgets the household care, the noontide drudgery, and the material is merged in the spiritual.

Never allow the thought to disturb you, "Can this be lawful? can this be Christian?—this constant wearing contact with dull, earthly pursuits—these poor little, lowly, petty anxieties, that are fretting away precious moments." If your complaint or confession is that yours is an idle, do-nothing life, we have nothing to say to that. There is more work for Satan in such case. But never fear healthy, invigorating, worldly occupation. God has sanctified it, because He has Himself ordained the sweat of the brow. And while He can meet His people at all times and under all circumstances, He loves to meet them in the pursuit of ordinary duties—yes, the lowliest and the humblest—with the pitcher on the head, or the draw-rope at the well, or the broom or shuttle in hand—Zebedee's children with their nets; David and Amos with their herds and flocks; Elisha with his plough share.

"We need not bid, for cloistered cell,

Our neighbor and our work farewell,
Nor strive to wind ourselves too high
For sinful man beneath the sky.
"The trivial round, the common task,
Would furnish all we ought to ask,
Room to deny ourselves: a road
To bring us, daily, nearer God."

We close, as we began, with the great question for us: Have we had our conference with the Savior of Sychar? It matters not whether He may have come to us suddenly and unexpectedly—when we were alone or in the crowd. But have we met by some of life's wayside wells; and whether prosperity or adversity were our portion—whether our pitchers have been full or empty—have we listened to His divine voice and closed with His great salvation? It was His first meeting with that Samaritan female; and never are the appeals and words of Christ so impressive as when He first speaks to the soul. If that woman had listened in vain—had she heard all His pleadings unmoved, and returned hardened and reprobate as she came—little would have been the likelihood of any subsequent impression under the same circumstances.

It was springtime around her in plain and valley; all nature was robed in its earliest green; the trees were putting forth their bud; the song of birds was welcoming the reviving earth. It was springtime in her soul. The storms of life's dreary winter had passed over her. She seemed, a moment before, a tree twice dead, plucked up by the roots. But the Sun of Righteousness was shining; as He shone, the sap, defiant in her case of nature's analogies, rushed up through the dried and wasted tissues, and the withered stem became clothed in summer glory! What if that day's convictions had been resisted, and the cumberer had despised the offered dews and heavenly radiance? My brother, see that you do not refuse not Him who speaks. See that you resist not first convictions. If it is springtime too with your soul, let not the young bud be nipped, let not the young shoot be blighted, when it is putting forth its tender leaves. But listen to the divine Pleader as He thus calls you in the words of the Son—

"Lo! the winter is past,
The rain is over and gone,
The flowers appear on the earth,
The time of the singing of birds is come,
And the voice of the turtle-dove is heard in our land.
Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away."

03.06. RIVAL RACES

RIVAL RACES

"The Samaritan woman said to him, 'You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can You ask me for a drink? For (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)'—John 4:9 "Give me a drink," said Jesus, opening the conversation that was to issue in such momentous results. An answer, probably such as He had anticipated, was returned, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can You ask me for a drink?"

These words open to us an instructive, a painful chapter in human nature. The creed-feud—we had almost said the blood-feud—existing between Jew and Samaritan, has had, alas! its thousand lamentable illustrations and repetitions in the history of the world. Though involving a brief historical explanation, it will be necessary for the comprehension of the narrative that we advert to the cause of this fierce and fiery antagonism between the conterminous races—the dwellers in the same land, whose social and religious unity seems thus to have been so hopelessly destroyed. The first Assyrian conquest of the kingdom of Samaria took place under Tiglath-Pileser. The wealth and nobility of the land of Ephraim were on that occasion carried forcibly away to Central Asia. A second and more sweeping invasion occurred under Shalmaneser; while the total depopulation of the country and the extirpation of the inhabitants, seems to have been consummated in the reign of this conqueror's grandson, Esarhaddon. He, however, in his turn repopled the now desolate territories, not with restored exiles, but with a colony of aliens from the Tigris and Euphrates. During the interim, while the nice fertile lands were evacuated and left to waste and silence, the wild animals from Hermon and Lebanon, and the adjoining jungles of the Jordan, had taken possession of the dense and rank untended vegetation of the mountains and valleys of Samaria, and, as was natural, spread terror and dismay among the new settlers. The lion, now unknown in that region, was conspicuous among these. The colonists became haunted with superstitious fears. They were Gentiles—Pagans. But on this very account, being worshipers of 'lords many and gods many,' what was to hinder them adding one more deity to those they had imported from the East? By doing homage to the local god of the new country, they might propitiate his wrath, and have these wild beasts driven away, which, they doubted not, were the messengers and executioners of his vengeance. How were they, however, to attain a knowledge of the creed and rites of the old inhabitants, so as to graft and incorporate these on their own? They adopted the expedient of asking their distant conqueror to send from among the captives by the rivers of Babylon, one of the priests of Israel, who would indoctrinate them in the worship of the God of Jacob, or, as they expressed it, "teach them the manner of the God of the land." The request was complied with; and the result was the framing of a strange, enigmatical, compound worship—a hybrid between Judaism and Paganism. The captive priest took up his abode at Bethel and having imbibed the ecclesiastical laxity of Jeroboam's age, he had probably only too readily accommodated himself to the religious presuppositions of his new disciples, and taught them to worship the one spiritual Jehovah of Israel through some visible symbol—other imported idols adorning, or rather desecrating and defiling, the sacred place. The colonists from Media and

Persia, or "Cutheans," as they were called, were subsequently supplemented by Greeks and Phoenicians at the time of the conquest of Alexander the Great. These, in their turn, brought a fresh accession of false gods to the paganized territory—Baal and Ashtaroth, Minerva and Jupiter—or, as this religious medley is described in the Bible narrative, "They feared the Lord and served their own gods." The one only portion of the old Jewish creed which seemed to have been sacredly retained, (and which, after a lapse of thirty centuries, continues intact and inviolable to this day among the handful of representative modern Samaritans,) was the five Books of Moses. Rejecting all the other prophetic writings and later Jewish traditions, the Samaritan Pentateuch has remained to this hour a sacred heirloom in their synagogue at Shechem. In later years, indeed, they had evidently shared in some of the nobler beliefs of their neighbors—notably that specified by the woman of Samaria in the course of her conversation—an indefinite expectation of the coming of a Messiah. From all we have advanced, however, it is evident that the new kingdom was essentially composed of sensuous and sensual idolaters who had no inheritance in the blood of the ancient chosen people, and to whom pertained not the adoption or the covenants. They were a heathen colony planted in the very midst of Palestine, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise. A few Hebrew women and slaves—possibly a few vinedressers and husbandmen—as we find in the case of the Jews at the time of the Babylonish captivity, were all that were left of the old inhabitants, so that their descendants could only by the slenderest links retain a claim to hereditary descent from the patriarchs of the land, Abraham and Jacob, Rachel and Joseph.

We have a remarkable proof, indeed, in the very words of our divine Lord Himself, how thoroughly Samaria was heathenized, and identified with Gentile territory. When He sent forth His seventy disciples, it could be, in His case, from no unworthy popular prejudice or antagonism of race that He gave this strict injunction, "Do not enter any towns of the Samaritans." The explanation is evident. His gospel was in the first instance to be proclaimed to the Jews alone, "to the lost sheep of the house of Israel;" and it would have alike contradicted prophecy, and marred and neutralized the exclusiveness of this primary offer, if the Gentile Samaritans, who had so little in common with the Jews, had shared in the benefits of that earliest apostolic mission. Such being their heathen descent and half-heathen creed, it is not difficult to understand how the old kingdom of Judah and Benjamin should, from the first, have entertained a rooted and unconquerable aversion to the aliens. Circumstances, year after year, tended to widen this separating gulf, aggravating and intensifying the mutual antipathy. On the return of the Jews from their captivity under Zerubbabel, these suspicious and untrustworthy Samaritans made offer of their friendship and good offices, to help the returned exiles in rebuilding their walls and temple. It was sternly refused. If the former had been the genuine representatives of the old ten tribes, the others might have overlooked past jealousies; and for the sake of the national unity have hailed them as auxiliaries. But not a stone of their sacred walls is to be touched by Assyrian and Greek colonists, who had so basely compromised and mutilated the religion of their fathers. Therefore, with reference to this very proposal to assist their southern neighbors, they are spoken of, not as "Samaritans," but under the unmistakable title of "the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin." The result showed, that patriotic far-seeing Ezra had not miscalculated their duplicity and treachery; for, stung to the quick by this rejection, they immediately set themselves by every means to impede the work of the rebuilding of the temple on Zion, and joined with the children of Edom in the cry, "Raze it, raze it, even to its foundation," (Psalms 137:7.) This they could not effect; but, to carry out the spirit of revenge and

rivalry, they determined to outdo the restored capital and temple of the south, by the erection of a still nobler temple on the top of their own Gerizim. In 420 B.C., this new and magnificent temple, arose. Alexander the Great, then with his army before Tyre, not only sanctioned its building, but sanctioned the appointment of an unprincipled Jew of priestly lineage (Manasseh) to be its first hierarch. The worship set up in this rival temple was the embodiment of all that strange jumble we have described, of heathen mythology and diluted and desecrated Judaism. It remained to crown the summit of their holy mountain for two hundred years, when it was destroyed by John Hyreanus, a Jew.

Meanwhile, however, the animosity of the northern and southern kingdoms if possible increased, as did also the moral laxity and debasement of the Cutheans. Shechem became the refuge of vagabond Jews: the unclean and excommunicated in Judah and Jerusalem—the libertines who rebelled against the needed reforms of Ezra and Nehemiah—found a ready asylum in Samaria.

Perhaps of all the religious battlefields this world has been compelled in sadness to witness, none has bequeathed such lamentable memories of exasperation and deadly hate: not even those disgraceful feuds (a scandal to Christendom) on the same sacred soil of Palestine, which the Mohammedan and Turkish soldiery at this hour gaze upon in dogged silence, as they see Greeks and Latins closing at times in mortal strife, on the occasion of their most sacred anniversary and at their most reputedly sacred place—the traditional Holy Sepulcher. The Samaritan sought, by every petty annoyance, to fret and irritate the Jew, and the Jew was not slow or reluctant to retaliate in kind and degree.

Samaria, as we have previously seen, was the nearest road for the caravans of northern pilgrims going to the feasts in Jerusalem. The Samaritans churlishly refused these the poorest rites of hospitality, and compelled them often to avoid maltreatment, by taking the circuitous and more fatiguing route by the Jordan Valley. Again, it was one of the few consolations enjoyed by the bands of exiled Jews in Babylon, to have announced to them, by means of the only ancient telegraphic communication—beacons on the mountain-tops—the appearance of the paschal moon. The first beacon-fire was lit on the summit of Olivet, and thence caught up from mountain to mountain in luminous succession, until, within sight of the Euphrates, they could, for the moment at least, take down their harps from the willows as they remembered Zion and its holy solemnities. But the Samaritans indulged the mischievous delight of perplexing and putting them out of reckoning by the use of false signals. Another wicked and successful exploit is recorded; and occurring as it did under the government of Coponius only a few years previous to the gospel era, may have tended at this time to deepen these animosities—A band of Samaritans succeeded in stealing to the courts of the Temple of Jerusalem during the Passover season, and defiling the sacred precincts by scattering them with dead men's bones; thus incapacitating the Jews that year from celebrating the great Feast of their nation.

Yet, combined with all this, there was, on the part of the Samaritan, the proudest assertion of hereditary right and ancestral glory. The Jew was but of yesterday, compared with the descendants of Jacob and Joseph, and Jerusalem was a modernized capital beside the old walls of time-honored Shechem, with its oaks and terebinths, under which the Father of the faithful pitched his tents. In the words of a graphic writer, Shechem was the city of Joshua and the Judges—Zion that of David and the Kings. Shechem was Moscow; Jerusalem was only St.

Petersburg. The Jewish Pentateuch was the handiwork of a modern scribe, unworthy to be named in the same breath with that written by Abishua, the son of Phineas, the grandson of Aaron! The Jew was in no way behind in his boastful assertions of prerogative and prescriptive right, as well as in the manifestation of malevolence. An extract from the apocryphal book of Ecclesiasticus describes the intensity of the feeling—"There be two manner of nations which my heart abhors, and the third is no nation: those who sit on the mountain of Samaria and those who dwell among the Philistines; and that foolish people that dwell in Shechem." The Jew would refuse to eat with them; to do so, was "as if he ate swine's flesh." He denounced the Samaritan as a base time-server, who would not hesitate to purchase immunity from pains and penalties by forswearing Jehovah and kissing the impious shrine of Baal or Jove. He regarded him as unclean as the evaded leper; to harbor him in his house would entail a heritage of judgments on his children. The name 'Samaritan' became a byword of reproach. He was publicly cursed in the synagogue—cursed in the name of Jehovah, by the writing on the two tables of the law, by the curse of the upper and lower house of judgment. He was pronounced unworthy of eternal life, excommunicated alike from the Church on earth and the Church in heaven. The bitterest word of scorn the Jew could hurl at the Infinitely Pure One was this, "You are a Samaritan, and have a devil." The yet untutored apostles shared the same exasperated feelings, when they asked their Lord to call down fire from heaven on some Samaritan village. All worthy of remembrance is His gentle yet sharp reproof, "You know not what spirit you are of." A new spirit of love, in which hereditary hate and malevolence were to have no place, was to be grafted on the hearts of men. And while, as corroborating all we have said, it is stated in our narrative, in a parenthetical clause, "The Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans," it is striking to observe, how in the very same breath the disciples seem to contradict the statement. For they evidently had such dealings—it being distinctly asserted that they had "gone to the city to buy bread," How can we reconcile this apparent contradiction, but on the surmise, that they had already been so far instructed and educated by their divine Master into a more conciliatory spirit; led, in these temporal interchanges, to take down the unnatural barriers of separation, preparing the way for a higher, purer, nobler fraternity, which was, in one sense, to have its birthplace that day at the well of Sychar? For the same reason, our Lord's request for water from a Samaritan, and a Samaritan woman, must have sounded equally strange. The very strangeness perhaps, of the request, and the kind tones in which it was given, may have made the astonished listener all the more ready to give heed to the conversation that followed. There was nothing remarkable, indeed, (as we see in the case of Eleazar and Rebekah, Moses and Zipporah,) for a wayfarer asking a female to draw water to quench his thirst. But what was no breach of courtesy or etiquette in Mesopotamia or Midian, was a startling violation of national prejudice when Jew and Samaritan met at Jacob's well. How beautifully is the comprehensive charity and love of the Great Philanthropist, in breaking down all these unnatural and wicked antipathies, illustrated in His own graphic parable of the Good Samaritan! Jesus rejected and condemned, as much as did His Jewish brethren according to the flesh, the half-heathen creed of the Samaritans. We shall come, in the subsequent narrative, to find Him boldly stating so to this woman, "You know not what you worship)." But He would enunciate and proclaim at the same time that great truth, which, alas! is so often ignored by all modern Churches—Greek, Roman Catholic, Protestant—that while there are errors, grievous errors, which we must deeply deplore, and against which we must manfully protest and contend, there are ever, among the adherents of these different creeds, to be found beautiful exceptions in

moral worth and in kindly deed—men who, despite of their doctrinal errors, have the loving spirit—whose creed is their character; or whose character, rather, rises above all creeds and doctrinal formulas, noble in heart and nobler in life, who may well put their orthodox neighbors to shame.

Such is His lesson in the great parable of the Good Samaritan. "A certain man" who "went down from Jerusalem," had fallen a prey to Jewish bandits, lying bleeding amid the rough stones which still line the old robber-haunt. The priest and the Levite (the impersonations of pure Judaism) strut past without a thought of aid; while a "certain Samaritan," a chance traveler, far from his own home and all the sympathies of home, dismounted his horse, bound up the sufferer's wounds, poured into them the oil and wine he had brought for his own use. (and which, as a Samaritan, he could not get easily replenished from Jewish vendors,) set him on his own donkey, brought him to the wayside inn, and shared the very contents of his scanty purse. It was at the peril of the man's life and limb. He might have been falsely branded as himself the robber and plunderer, accused of the old crime of wreaking vengeance against a helpless Jew, and letting him feel the severity of Samaritan hate. But undeterred by all such fears and false accusations, this despised outcast and alien, heretic and schismatic, whom priest and Levite would doubtless, as they passed, eye with malignant scorn, proved in time of need the real philanthropist, the brother man. With what withering sarcasm (if we can dare use in its mildest sense such a word in connection with the holy Jesus) did He turn round to the captious questioner with the query, "Which now of these three was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?"

Thank God, the principles of religious toleration are now better understood among ourselves in this age; although the monstrous records of the Inquisition of the Middle Ages, as well as the deadly strifes between Greeks and Latins, Druses and Maronites, to this day, show how deeply rooted these religious animosities are in the corrupted human heart, and how much need we have, amid all our modern civilization and enlightenment, to moderate the fervor and intensity of party and sectarian feeling. If such were the feuds between Jew and Samaritan, where, on account of the compromise of vital religious truth, there were at least substantial grounds for quarrel and schism, how should those bearing the name of their tolerant Master blush at the antipathies and party shibboleths which have no such palliation: soldiers fighting nominally under the same banner, but who, instead of cheering their comrades in the fight, are rather frowning on them with hard looks, upbraiding them with hard words, and leveling at them the curse and the anathema! There is no denying it, that one of the saddest triumphs of the Evil One is, and ever has been, this virulence of party strife, this tendency to party isolation, ecclesiastical exclusiveness. Even the Apostles, as may be remembered, were slow to relax their old narrow prejudices. It required a special miracle to enable Peter to rise above the trammels of exclusive Judaism, to teach him the magnificent truth which his "beloved brother Paul" subsequently proclaimed, that "God has made of one blood all nations of men to dwell upon the face of the earth." Be the prejudices of His disciples, however, what they might, their Divine Master at least gave no sanction to the contracted spirit.

It is instructive to observe how specially these same Samaritans were included in His last legacy of love. In oblivion of all the past, He thus frames His parting apostolic commission—"You shall be witnesses to Me, both in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and to the uttermost part of the earth." Oh, for a like spirit! not to anathematize, but to Christianize; not rendering evil for evil,

or railing for railing, but contrariwise, blessing; trusting in no boastful hereditary claims, the pride of creed or sect or ritualism, saying, in arrogant superciliousness, "It is not fitting to take the children's bread and to cast it to the dogs;" but remembering that Paul's weighty words have a Christian, as well as a Jewish meaning and significance—that holy lives are the true exponents of orthodox principles. "He is not a Jew who is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God." The case and words of the woman of Samaria tell us too plainly, how possible, how common it is, for one of scandalous and flagitious life to be a bold religious sectary, a zealous partisan; to speak glibly and haughtily on ecclesiastical differences about "Father Jacob" and "this mountain," and to wonder that there should be such a violation of religious etiquette that a High Church Jew should hold parley with a Low Church Samaritan. Lutheran may be ranged against Calvinist, Prelatist against Puritan, Predestinarian against Arminian, Baptist against Anabaptist, State Church against Dissenter. But tell us, among all, (collectively and individually) who is doing most honest, earnest work for Christ and humanity—who, amid the robber haunts of evil, are pouring most assiduously wine and oil into the wounds of this bleeding world? and the answer will not be hard to give: "Which now of these, then, is neighbor to him that fell among the thieves?" God speed the time, (yes, then, and not until then, will the Millennium dawn,) when Christendom, now mangled with a thousand wounds, will have these 'deadly wounds healed;' when Ephraim (that is, Samaria) shall not vex Judah, nor Judah vex Ephraim; when the holy word, "Brotherhood," mimicked and travestied in these modern days in a hundred base forms, will have its true and noblest meaning illustrated and vindicated, in loving hearts, in a united Church, in a converted world!

"Down the dark future, through long generations,
The echoing sounds grow fainter and then cease,
And like a bell, with solemn, sweet vibrations,
I hear once more the voice of Christ say, 'Peace!'
"Peace! and no longer from its brazen portals
The blast of dismal war-sounds shakes the skies,
But, beautiful as songs of the immortals,
The holy melodies of love arise."

03.07. THE GIFT OF GOD AND THE LIVING WATER

THE GIFT OF GOD AND THE LIVING WATER

Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked Him and He would have given you living water." John 4:10 In the preceding chapter, we considered the astonishment expressed by the woman of Samaria at having her religious scruples so tampered with, as to be solicited by a member of the rival tribe for a draught of water from the well of Sychar. We saw to what painful excesses these neighboring kingdoms had pursued their jealousies, social and ecclesiastical; indulging in mutual anathema and excommunication, such as has seldom been equaled in the war of race, and the often fiercer war of opinion. To such extremes, indeed, was this repulsion carried, that it would doubtless form matter of wonder to this female, how He who now sought the boon, unless very different from others of His countrymen, should have no conscientious scruple in touching rope or pitcher that had been defiled by alien hands. While, on the other hand, we might have expected her to repudiate the thought of these being polluted and desecrated by the fingers or lips of a Jew. His answer in the circumstances must have sounded startling. Instead of the retort and retaliation for which she was doubtless prepared, He arrests her attention, and at once softens and subdues any resentful feeling by the reply, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked Him and He would have given you living water," and He would not have refused you; He would not have been so ungracious as to reject the request given by a toil-worn traveler. Uninfluenced and unbiased by any such selfish and contracted feelings, "He would have given you;" and given you something better, nobler than that earthly element: "He would have given you living water."

Living water! The mysterious suggestive words could not fail to arrest her attention; and more arresting still, as it always is, the magic power of kindness. Who could this be, in Jewish attire, speaking in the Jewish dialect, yet in words strangely conciliatory? so different, probably, from other Judean pilgrims she may have met, time after time, at the same spot, with whom she was used to engage in virulent and fiery debate and banter, meeting and parting with expressions of mutual contempt and scornful hatred. "Living water"—The expression may have stimulated better, profounder thought. She was evidently not a stranger to religious truth. Apart altogether from her knowledge (derived from their revered Pentateuch) of Father Jacob, and the great theme of ecclesiastical dispute as to the worship on Gerizim and Zion, she expected "Messiah, who is called Christ," one greater than the greatest of the prophets, who was to "tell all things," and the blessings of whose kingdom she may have heard that these prophets had, again and again, described under the similitude of refreshing water. Be this as it may, the Divine Speaker, in rising above her sectarian prejudices, seemed at once to secure her interest. With a divine sagacity, He seizes on what was most likely to rouse and sustain her attention and gain the great end in view, her everlasting salvation. He makes nature His text. He who, on other occasions, took the sower at Gennesaret, the bread at Bethsaida, the vine on Olivet, the golden goblet and its contents at Siloam, to discourse of Himself and spiritual truths, takes the water at their side to symbolize and

illustrate the better "wells of salvation." No more is said about the quenching of His own thirst. He merges His own lower needs in the higher, deeper necessities of one who has never as yet risen above the material to the spiritual. "Living water!" How that image from that day forward must have been enshrined in her heart of hearts. It must have been to her like the never-to-be-forgotten look which the Savior cast upon Peter; or the "Do ye love Me?" on the shores of Tiberias or the pronouncing of her own name to Mary on the resurrection morn; or the "Peace be to you!" breathed on the gathered disciples. Yes, ever afterwards, when, as a new creature, she trod her native valley, the ear of faith must have caught in every murmuring brook divinest music, every stream that furrowed the mountain sides must have sang the song of redeeming love, or been like an angel whispering to her, and beckoning her nearer to her Savior-God! But giving these words a general application, let us refer more particularly to the two salient points in this reply of Christ—the two hinges, so to speak, on which this golden gate turns: "THE GIFT OF GOD, and THE LIVING WATER."

First, THE GIFT OF GOD. There is nothing in this world which is not a gift of God. Every morsel of the bread which perishes, the sunlight which gladdens us, the atmospheric air which sustains us, the fuel garnered deep down in earth's storehouses to warm us, the succession of seasons, the living streams which fertilize our fields, the waving harvests which crown the year with their plenty, the thousand tints of loveliness and beauty in garden, and dell, and forest; far more, the blessings which rejoice and consecrate social life—the wellsprings of gladness in our domestic circles; these are severally and collectively "gifts of God." "Every good and perfect gift is from above." But what are these to the gift here preeminently spoken of?—the Gift of gifts—a gift whose magnitude transcends all thought and illustration—the Son of the Highest to become of human virgin born—the lisping babe of Bethlehem's lowly cradle—the God of eternity condescending to be a pilgrim on life's highway, that He might open living streams for the lost and the perishing? "God so loved the world (and who can ever fathom or exhaust the meaning of that so?) that He gave His only begotten Son." God's "Gift"—it was unpurchasable by money, the unmerited benefaction of Heaven—free as the desert pool to the thirsty wayfarer, who has only to stoop and drink! And this greatest and mightiest Gift, moreover, consecrates and sanctifies all minor ones. As the sun glorifies with his radiance the tamest landscape and transforms the barren rock into a pyramid of gold; so are all earthly and material blessings glorified and beautified and sublimated by the beams of the Sun of Righteousness. Christ gives a new and enhanced value to every subordinate gift. He has been well likened to the numeral which, put before the unmeaning ciphers, invests them with peerless and untold preciousness. The very outer world of nature wears a new aspect when seen through eyes spiritually enlightened: all earthly discipline has a new meaning and when the minor gifts are blighted or diminished or withdrawn, there is ever the imperishable Gift remaining beyond the reach of vicissitude or decay so that we can say, as the woman of Samaria doubtless could, in all time following this devout conversation, as she looked around the beautiful valley of her habitation, "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no food; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will rejoice in the God of my salvation."

While feeling alive to God's goodness in His diverse other gifts, can we heartily join in the transcendent estimate of the apostle, "Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift!" Truly with this

gift, having nothing "we possess all things." In Christ's glorified person as the God-man mediator "all fullness dwells." No earthly gifts can compensate for the lack of this. But the Gift of God can make up for the absence of every lesser earthly mercy. "All my springs are in You!"

"Oh bounteous Giver of all good;

Who are, of all Your gifts Yourself the crown,

Give what You can, without You we are poor

And with You rich, take what You will away." The second main topic of the Savior's reply in this beautiful verse, is THE LIVING WATER. As by the expression "the Gift of God," He points to Himself, to His glorious Person and character and work—so, by "living water" He would seem to designate all purchased blessings of His salvation, beginning with pardon and acceptance here, and culminating in eternal glory and bliss hereafter. The twofold symbol or similitude seems to accord with a striking kindred figure in the closing chapter of Revelation, where this Gift of God, the glorified Mediator, is represented under His apocalyptic name of 'the Lamb,' as seated upon His throne; while proceeding from these sublime recesses there flows "living water," "the river of the water of life, clear as crystal." It is the magnificent stream of gospel salvation to a dying world, life and luxuriance and beauty up-springing wherever it wends its way. In other words, the expressive symbol of those priceless spiritual benefits which flow from the Person and meritorious work of the divine Redeemer—forgiveness, peace, adoption, sanctification, tranquility in life, victory in death, triumph in eternity. And observe, it is living water. There is no glory in anything from which life has departed. The tiniest mountain stream that sings its living song on its way through moor and rock, has more true glory and beauty than the dark, inky, stagnant lake or pool. The tiniest flower or moss, or grass, have more true glory in them than the inanimate trunk of the giant tree lying prone on the ground. Why? Because the one is living and the other is dead. "A living dog is better than a dead lion." So is it with all dead lifeless things, wherein the soul has no part, and which are of the earth earthy, springing from the earth and returning to earth, the mere accidents of this fleeting existence, such as wealth, possessions, rank, worldly honors; in one word, mere material good and prosperity. You may call them streams, but they are not living streams. They dwindle and evaporate as they flow; they warble no music in the ear in the hour of waning nature; they are only summer brooks which are congealed in death's wintry, sunless valley. But these blessings of salvation are living, they touch the immortal part, they belong to the soul, they are deathless as the God who gives them. And as the blessing of salvation (the water) is living, so also is the Fountainhead—He who is here called "the Gift of God." "If you knew the Gift of God, and who it is (the Person) who says to you, Give me a drink; you would have asked of Him." It is not dead doctrine, dry formulated dogma which the soul needs, but a living Being. "My soul," says the psalmist, "thirsts for God, for the living God." Paul, in words often misquoted, and in the misquotation their sense and beauty mutilated and destroyed, thus exults, in what may be called a dying testimony, "I know," (not "in whom") but, "I know whom I have believed." It was not sects, or creeds, or doctrines, or churches, or ecclesiastical organizations, that the dying hero clung to, in the hour of departure, but the glorious Person of the divine Immanuel, the living Presence of the ever-living, ever-loving Savior—the Brother, the Friend on the throne, whom he had learned to love more dearly than all the world beside!

Two other thoughts still claim our consideration. We have incidentally likened this verse to a golden gate on two hinges. Expanding the figure, it may be added we have here two keys to open that gate.

First, There is the key of FAITH. How was the woman of Samaria to appropriate that "Gift of God" and that "living water," symbolizing the blessings of a priceless salvation? If she had apprehended at the moment, which she did not, all the meaning of this divine utterance, how many conflicting thoughts, we may well imagine, would rush to her soul, ready to overwhelm her in confusion and despair. What a barrier between her and mercy must be her life of flagrant guilt; lock upon lock, bolt upon bolt, must exclude her from all participation in these spiritual privileges. Truly, in her case she had nothing to draw with, and the well was deep—too deep for such a sinner as she! Or, if she can dare dream of pardon and peace, what a long process of preparatory reformation and self-mortification must be undergone; how often must she climb the heights of Gerizim to load its altars with penitential offerings and costly expiatory sacrifices. It must be through long months of tears and penances before she can weave the rope of creature-merit to reach the living water!

What says that Divine Being standing before her, and who has made to her the glorious revelation she as yet so dimly comprehends? Belief in His word, in His ability, in His willingness, is all that is required. "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that says to you, Give me a drink, you would have asked and He would have given you." It was in figurative language what Paul translated into plain words in an analogous case of conversion, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." Yes, Faith can remove mountains—mountains of sin! Faith is a key which can fit the wards of every lock, the intricacies of every heart. Faith brings the soul into immediate contact with the Savior. It reveals salvation as a glorious free gift, without works, or preparations, or merits, or penances; no rope to weave, no "golden goblet or jeweled cup" to fashion, before the living water can be brought to quench the soul's thirst. As the beggar kneels by the running stream at the wayside, and bears the refreshing draught—the free gift of bounteous nature to his lips on the rough palm of his hands—so the vilest spiritual beggar in the rags of sin—nothing to draw with, the well of his own sins deep—can partake, without money and without price, of a free, full, everlasting redemption—"the gift of God which is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Like 'Christian', immediately on reaching, with the outstretched hand of faith, the cross on the top of the hill, the load of sin rolls down to the bottom. Oh for faith, simple faith, to credit the divine testimony and accept the free invitation. If not at this stage in the narrative, the woman of Samaria could, doubtless at least subsequently, and that too until her dying day, thus sing of the "living water" and the "Gift of God," in the Spirit of the Simple words of Cowper—

"E'er since by faith I saw the stream,

Your flowing wounds supply;

Redeeming love has been my theme,

And shall be until I die." And as Faith is one key here spoken of, so PRAYER is another. "You would have asked, and He would have given you."

How many blessings are forfeited by failing to use this key? How many are doomed to a life of spiritual poverty and starvation, for this reason, "You have not, because you ask not." While, on

the other hand, how often is the divine saying verified and fulfilled, "I have not said to the seed of Jacob, Seek my face in vain."

We have, in another scripture example, a beautiful illustration of the combined power of these two instrumental means—faith and prayer. Blind Bartimeus, despite of his sealed, rayless eyeballs—despite of the thronging crowd that would intervene between him and the Great Physician, and drown his suppliant cry for help, knew the Gift of God: "When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, Jesus, son of David, have mercy upon me." See how faith and prayer together arrest the ear and the footsteps of Christ! See how, together, they bring the blind soul, like this blind wayfarer, near to the Savior! In the sublime simplicity of the narrative, "Jesus stood still." "And he, casting aside his garment, rose and came to Jesus. And Jesus answered and said to him, What do you want Me to do for you? The blind man said to Him, Lord, that I might receive my sight. And Jesus said to him, Go your way, your faith has made you whole," (Mark 10:46-52.)

Faith and Prayer! Would that we may know, experimentally, this blessed composite—the two golden keys of the two-leaved gate of salvation! To use the homely figure suggested by Sychar's well, Faith is the rope and Prayer is the bucket let down for the living water. The two are joined in the briefest and simplest of creeds and confessions—"Lord," (that is prayer)—"I believe," (that is faith)—"Lord, I believe;" and deep conscious unworthiness adds the supplementary petition, "Help my unbelief!" Have we known, do we know, the Gift of God? or, sad alternative, are we among the number of those of whom it shall be said, "They knew not, the time of visitation;" over whom a despised Savior will utter the wail of rejected mercy, unrequited love, "If you, even you, had known in this your day?" "This your day." Blind Bartimeus, and the woman of Samaria, had, each in their different experiences, probably but that one day, the one chance of a Savior passing by; in the case of the former, to have the eyes unsealed, and in the latter to have the deeper blindness of the soul removed. That one opportunity, foregone and forfeited, might never have been renewed.

Doubtless, with respect to this female of Sychar, the Savior saw how all-important was her immediate acceptance of the gift of salvation. As the omniscient Shepherd, He discerned her infinite danger—how this erring sheep was plunging deeper and deeper amid the wilds of an ever sadder ruin—how a few more days or months of wandering, among these bleak mountains of sin would have made her irrevocably and irrecoverably, "the sheep which was lost." But He has followed after her "until He finds her." He pleads with her—reasons with her—tells her of her dreadful danger and peril, amid these savage deserts of her wandering, and of the peaceful pastures and living waters she was guiltily disowning. In the beautiful but expressive imagery of the Song of Songs, thus does the Heavenly Bridegroom address her—"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." And what is her experience, as, obeying His summons, these perilous mountain heights are left forever? She is enabled to exult in the Gift of God, under the very image of these verses—"A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon," (Song of Solomon 4:8, Song of Solomon 4:15.) And the same grace that was free to her is free to us; the same living water offered to her is offered to us. The gospel is replete with invitations to the Fountain of life. The vision of Jacob's Well mingles with the closing utterances of inspiration: the last accents which "He who sat on the throne" bequeathed to the Church, when the vision and the prophecy were on the point of being

sealed up, were these: "Let him who is thirsty come, and whoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." We are empowered and warranted to echo, in His name, the words of the Great Inviter—no barrier, no condition, no qualification is there in approaching that living stream:

"Just as you are, without one trace
Of love, or joy, or inward grace,
Or fitness for the heavenly place,
O guilty sinner, come.
Come, here bring your boding fears,
Your aching heart, your bursting tears,
'It is mercy's voice salutes your ears—
O trembling sinner, come.
Come, say 'the Spirit and the Bride;'
The stream is full, the channel wide;
Who wills may drink the living tide;
Your Savior bids you come!

03.08. THE WELL IS DEEP

THE WELL IS DEEP

"Sir," the woman said, "you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his flocks and herds?" John 4:11-12 This is the reply given by the woman of Sychar to the address of the Savior. It is an answer which begins, at all events, deferentially. Her previous reply was that of a churlish, uncourteous Samaritan, startled and offended at the familiarity of a hated Jew: "How is it that you, a Jew?" But now the kindness alike in the tone and substance of His language has apparently disarmed the virulence at least of her dislike and antipathy, taken the rough edge off her sectarian prejudice, and she addresses Him with the respectful title of "Sir," or "Lord." The promise, however, in the opening of her reply is not sustained. She gradually lapses into the old feeling and expression of disdain. He had designed to elevate her thoughts to everlasting verities—from the well at their feet to the water of life. But she has no spiritual discernment to raise her above the material; the human supersedes the divine; what was spoken figuratively is taken literally. His golden gate of salvation becomes, in her hands, iron and brass. So true is it that "the man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned." With no higher thought, then, than a supposed reference to Jacob's Well, she starts difficulties in her rejoinder. There is, first, the lack of any mechanical provision (rope or pitcher) to fetch up the water, this, as we previously noted, not being the public well of the city—"Sir, you have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep." And, secondly, if it were some other well or fountain he referred to which contained this living water, she repudiated the tacit claim of superiority on the part of a modern Jew over the illustrious Father who gave the well, and "drank thereof himself, his children, and his cattle." There is evidently an implied antithesis in her expression, "gave us the well," to that of Christ's words in the previous verse, "the gift of God." Could this novel gift He speaks of with such emphasis (living water), dare be compared with the patriarchal gift which had consecrated the whole valley, and around which clustered the most sacred memories of her tribe and nation? Indeed, though beginning with the courteous salutation of "Sir," she would seem, with the passionate fire of her race, to wax indignant at the slur expressed or implied on her great progenitor. After all, had this stranger only muffled his reproaches and deep-rooted antipathies under a feigned and counterfeited blandness, while there lurked underneath an unworthy reflection on Father Jacob? And yet, too, with an inquisitive nature, we note her eager curiosity to discover who this traveler was.

Question follows question. "From where have You?"—"Are You greater?" Who can this be, to dream of any other, any better fountain? The most prudent and sagacious of all the shepherd patriarchs had deemed this the best in the neighborhood. It had proved sufficient for the supplies of a vast encampment, to the cattle that browsed on the pastures around. Who is this apparently weary, exhausted wayfarer, who speaks so mysteriously of some superior well of "living water?" The second part of her reply might appropriately furnish a motto or illustration for one of the

boldest and most meaningless heresies of these our times. If not of apostolical succession, she was a bold and brave upholder and defender of patriarchal succession. "Our Father Jacob," says she, in words of suppressed indignation. That name was with her a charm. That well contained holy water, because historically identified with the ancestor of her race. She speaks as if, moreover, her Samaritan tribe had a monopoly of the grace and virtue descending from the veins of old Israel. Her words are not, "Father Jacob," but, "Our Father Jacob."

We have already treated in full, in a previous chapter, the history of that Samaritan nation which, in the person of this female, claimed the rare and exclusive prerogative and blessing of being Israel's children. As we then saw, they had neither part nor lot in this assumed inheritance. They were aliens—a mixed multitude from surrounding heathen countries, strangers in birth and blood, and more alien still in creed and practice. The Patriarch would have repudiated and disowned the illegitimate offspring. His mantle had fallen on no such degenerate seed. The claim was spurious, absurd, presumptuous. She spoke of Jacob as her Father, when alike, she herself personally and her tribe collectively, had failed to inherit the only true patriarchal succession, the legacy of his virtues and spirit. She had not heard words, uttered by bold brave lips, not far from the place where she was at that moment standing, "Do not begin to say within yourselves, We have Abraham as our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham." And what is the pretension advanced by the Sacramentarian body among the Romanists, and by a segment in a Church which otherwise we delight to honor as a great witness of God's truth, but which, were it represented by that section, would utterly forfeit and belie the name Protestant: what is the figment of 'apostolic succession,' but just the question of this Sacramentarian at Sychar—the clinging to some supposed mythical virtue descending from the Fathers and apostles of the Christian era—saying, as they address other Churches beyond their pale, "Are you greater than our Father Jacob who gave us the well?" "Our father Jacob "is their self-constituted claim—"us," to whom the well was given. Of all heresies this is alike the most preposterous and the most arrogant. What are the grounds on which those speak with such boldness and exclusiveness—unchurching and unchristianising all others, whatever be their unmistakable symptoms of a deeper and truer life? What is this boasted charm of apostolic descent? or, in other words, who is this Samaritan tribe, with its succession of golden links descending through the centuries after the age of Constantine—links which impart an assumed validity to their own ordination alone, while invalidating and negating that of all others? The ecclesiastics of the middle ages have about the same claim to the name and spirit and grace of the apostolic fathers, as the profligate and heathenized Samaritans had an exclusive claim to the name and spirit and Well of Jacob. It passes comprehension to an unbiased mind, to a plain reader of his Bible, to a plain reader of the facts of history—to a plain student of the simple stern logic of common sense, how any monopoly of virtue can be claimed through a succession, not of piety and purity and a noble heritage of Christian and primitive graces, but through a succession of apostate bishops and debased popes, many of whose private lives were so stained with every vice and crime, that to speak of them as inheriting, in any true sense, the patrimony of the apostles, were enough to stir the bones of these holy founders of the faith, like those of Elisha, to rise and mutiny at such an abuse and perversion of sacred language and sacred thought.

No! our Father Jacob gave 'the well' with no such prescriptive rights. No Samaritan body is entitled to extrude and ostracize Churches who, in simple faith and earnest zeal, are doing Christ's work,

or claim any such monopoly of that name or that free grace which belongs to Christendom—which belongs to the wide world.

There is a clause in these verses which, separated from its original connection, may be made to suggest one or two profitable reflections with which we shall occupy the remainder of this chapter. "Sir, you have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep." These words may be affirmed with regard to the insufficiency of Reason, apart from Revelation, in fathoming the deep things of God. Deep, unsearchable, inscrutable are the divine counsels. The name of Jehovah, as the covenant angel said to Manoah of old, is "secret" or "wonderful." All the vastest problems which concern the human spirit and its relationship to God, and more especially the relationship of the sinful, conscience-stricken soul to a Being of infinite holiness and justice and truth, are insolvable by reason. Reason stands baffled at the well's mouth, exclaiming, "Oh, the depth!" The world, for four thousand years, deifying Reason, strove to work out the solution. Greece, in the culture of her refinement and the wisdom of her philosophy, with all the possible data, which, apart from revelation, the human intellect could supply, addressed herself to this problem of the ages. But "the world by wisdom"—the mind of man in its highest condition of development and activity—"knew not God." All its shrewdest guesses were splendid but shadowy dreams, or rather gigantic failures. Human nature was a profound enigma. The high priests of her temple, professing themselves on these transcendental questions to be wise, became fools. There were on every side strange and puzzling aberrations, which Reason could neither explain nor reconcile—the harmony in the material world without—the disharmony in the moral world within—the glorious casing holding a broken, dislocated, tuneless instrument—the palace walls festooned and tapestried with all that is fair and lovely, enclosing a once royal, but now unscathed and uncrowned inmate, with sackcloth on his loins, and the shadows of sin and sorrow on his brow. And more perplexing than all, how is that sackcloth to be taken off and the royal insignia refurbished and renewed? How are these tuneless strings to have the old harmonies restored? In one divine word, "How can man be just with God?"

Oh, proud baffled reason, "you have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep." The solution of the mystery of ages and generations is beyond you; as far beyond you as these distant planets are beyond the range of the naked eye, unassisted by the telescopic lens. But where Reason fails—where the well is too deep, Revelation, like rope and pulley, fulcrum and lever, comes to our aid. Yes, blessed be God; in this precious Bible, deep though the well be, we have the "something to draw with." Revelation speaks where reason is silent—unfolding to us the Divine method (undreamt of by human wisdom or human philosophy) for restoring the fallen—bringing the present discords of the inner world into harmony with the order and melody of the outer, and solving in the cross of Christ that mystery of mysteries, "How is God to deal with the guilty?" The few brief words of the preceding sentence, uttered in the ears of this outcast wanderer of Samaria, had given a glorious response to a question on which all heathen and all reason's oracles had been dumb, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that says to you, Give me to drink, you would have asked of him, and he would have given you living water." Through that life and immortality which have been brought to light by the gospel, the little child, as well as the profound philosopher, can stand by that well's mouth and exclaim, "Oh, the depth!" But it is now with the apostle's addition, "Oh, the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!"

"Sir, you have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep." These words may be uttered with regard to the mystery of God's providential dealings. "The well is deep." Many a sorrowing broken-hearted one is brought to the well's mouth, and, stooping over the darkness, is heard to exclaim, "Your judgments are a great deep!" Here, in this imperfect world, there is nothing to draw with, nothing to gauge the "needs be" of the divine dispensations. The more we try, with our puny wisdom, to fathom the depths of Jehovah's dealings, the more unfathomable they are. The best, fondest, most treasured names are written on gravestones. Why is this? The vicious, the selfish, the false-hearted, the unthankful, the useless, are allowed often to live on, pampered with prosperity—the fabled horn of plenty pouring its contents into their lap; while the good, the kind, the true, the loving and beloved are either prematurely cut down, or go bowed with pain, or with penury, or with blighted affections to the grave—This well is deep! The aged, the decrepit, the suffering, are often left to drag on an apparently useless existence. The old, gnarled, decayed trunks are spared, while the axe is laid at the root of the green sapling, the pride and beauty of the forest. Why is this?—This well is deep! The careless, indifferent herald of the truth—the unfaithful watchman of souls, is left to slumber at his post and trifle with his Master's work, while the bold standard-bearer in the battle of evil—the toiling, wakeful sentinel at home, the hero-heart in the mission-field abroad—have their weapons shattered in their hands, and the Church of God is left to exclaim, through her tears, over the irreparable blank, "My Father, my Father, the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof!"—This well is deep! But why stand straining your eyes down the dark cavity? "You have nothing to draw with." Here in this imperfect state, all is mystery. All the earthly explanation of these deep, these 'great deep' judgments, is this, "Verily You are a God that hides Yourself." If you had rope and bucket, so as to descend the shaft and reach its unsounded depths, there would be no harsh verdict, no questioning the rectitude of the divine dispensations. Standing as you now are at the well's mouth, amid the glitter and glare of the world, you cannot understand or comprehend these mysteries of life and death, these baffling enigmas in providence. But the hour will arrive when you shall have the needed apparatus, when the profound secret of the divine works and ways will be revealed and unfolded. "In your light, O God, we shall see light." To use the language of Deborah's ancient song of triumph, there is at present 'the noise of archers' at the brink of the well. But the day is coming when we too shall be able to take up her joyous strain: "Those who are delivered from the noise of archers in the places of drawing water, there shall they rehearse the righteous acts of the Lord!"

There is a tradition regarding one of the other sacred wells of Palestine—the Well of the Wise Men between Jerusalem and Bethlehem—that when the Eastern Magi had at one time lost the guidance of the mystic star, while stooping over this fountain they saw it once more reflected in its waters; forthwith it guided them to the place where the young child was—"When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy." True, at all events, is this beautiful tradition regarding God's providential dispensations. At times we lose the guiding star; it is swept from our firmament; we travel on in darkness, in our unguided way—led in our sorrowful musing to exclaim, "Where is now my God?" But when on our bended knees we stoop over the well—yes, often in our very darkest night of mystery and sadness—lo! the heavenly light reappears—we see the lost star of Providence mirrored in the fountain of salvation. The work and the love of Christ explain what is otherwise often inexplicable. God our Maker—God our Redeemer—gives "songs in the night."

"Sir, you have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep." These words may be affirmed with reference to the veiling of the future. Standing by the mouth of that well, looking down its unexplored cavity, "The well is deep." The future—that dark, ungauged, unfathomed future, how many a thought it costs! Yet it is a vain musing, a fruitless conjecture. "You have nothing to draw with." Even tomorrow has no pitcher that can be let down for a draught: you know not what a day may bring forth! The past we do know about, and there are special times when it comes before us with fresh vividness. Memory follows group on group, coming through the glades of the olive-forest to draw water; some with elastic step, and ringing laugh, and joyous song; some with mourning attire, and tearful eye, and broken pitcher; yes, some, unknown to themselves, to draw their last draught, to fill their last flagon: we lose them among the twilight shades; they are never again to return. But from the standpoint of the present, who can forecast the doings at the well's mouth? who has rope or pitcher or plumb-line to fathom the depth? Some may now be gazing, as the writer did from the literal Well of Jacob, on golden vistas, bars of glorious amber clouds stretched across the luminous horizon, lighting up with parting radiance Gerizim, the mountain of blessing; but before another week or month or year measures out its course, every such vista may be curtained with mist and thick darkness, Gerizim obscured from view, and Ebal alone, with its dark, gloomy grey, meeting their eye. But it is well for us we cannot anticipate the future. Thank God for the gracious provision, "You know not what shall be on the morrow." Were the morrow unveiled, this world would be hung with curtains of sackcloth; there would be fewer happy hearts among us. Inevitable trials, of which, by a wise and kind arrangement of Providence we are kept in ignorance, would then project their long deep shadows athwart life's bright sunshine, and make existence itself one protracted period of anticipated sorrow. It is a merciful thing, when, ever and anon at solemn anniversaries, we attempt to cast a glance down the future, to hear Him who has that future in His hand saying, "You have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep."

Yes, but this is our comfort. Though too deep for us, it is not too deep for Him. He has the rope and pitcher in His hand; and whether, in drawing up the vessel from the unseen depths, it reaches safely the well's mouth, or is broken in the transit, all is appointed and ordained. "The Lord reigns." "Trust Me," He seems to say; "that Well is Mine. Trust me; that white, unwritten scroll of the future is Mine. It will be filled up by Me, whether in gleaming letters of gold, or with the dark lettering of sorrow." "Although you say you can not see Him, yet judgment is before Him, therefore trust in Him."

03.09. THE CONTRAST

THE CONTRAST

Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." John 4:13-14 In the preceding chapter and context we found the thoughts of the woman of Samaria were of the earth—earthy. Nothing but the well at her feet presented itself to her dim unspiritualised vision, as the mysterious Stranger spoke to her of "the gift of God" and "the living water." Unrepelled by her insensibility to divine realities, the Heavenly Teacher pursues His theme; not, however, by answering her challenge—in vindicating the dignity of His own person compared with that of 'Father Jacob.' He had a higher end in view. He wished to raise, not only her, but all who in after ages would read this story of the wayside fountain, above the things of earth to "the river of God which is full of water."

Again, therefore, He recurs to His text, and continues the emblem by the announcement of a startling and significant contrast. He begins His reply with the assertion regarding the well of the Patriarch at which they stood, "Whoever drinks of this water shall thirst again;" an assertion which may appropriately be invested with a wider meaning, enshrining as it does the great truth, that all creature and created-good is inadequate of itself to satisfy the yearnings of the human soul. In every breast there is a craving after happiness. "Who will show us any good?" is the sigh, the soliloquy, of weary humanity. There are many streams of created enjoyment. Some of these lawful, innocent, exhilarating, which have the blessing and favor of God resting upon them. Others are poor, vile, degraded, unworthy. But even the best and purest, viewed by themselves and apart from Infinite excellence, can afford no permanent bliss or satisfaction. They do not, cannot quench the immortal thirst. Pitcher after pitcher may be brought to the well's mouth; the golden goblet of riches, the jeweled flagon with the luscious draught of earthly glory, the brimming transparent pitcher drawn up by the silken cord of human affection. But He who knows the human heart pronounces, that "thirst again" is the property and characteristic of them all. The finite can never be a satisfying portion for that which was born for the infinite. Satisfying portion! Philosophy, with its eagle soarings, says, "It is not in me." The pride of rank—crowns and coronets, and lordly titles—says, "It is not in me." The laurel of conquest, as it withers on the warrior's brow, says, "It is not in me." Gold, with its glittering heaps, laughs its votaries to scorn, and says, "It is not in me!" The most renowned of earthly conquerors seated himself by that well. He brought the monarchs of the world to be his drawers of water; each with his massive goblet going down for the draught, and laying the tribute at the victor's feet. But the tears of the proud recipient have passed into a proverb; and if we could ask him to translate these dumb tears into words, his reply would be, "Whoever drinks of this water shall thirst again." But if such be the unsatisfactory nature of earthly happiness, the brokenness of earthly cisterns—what nobler compensations, what more enduring pleasures are there to take their place? You cannot attempt to dislodge one object of earthly affection or pursuit without having some other and better to substitute in its room. It was a dictum of the old philosophy that nature abhors a vacuum, and this is as true regarding the moral as the

material world. The dove of old with weary wing, would have retained its unstable perch on the restless billow had it not known of an ark of safety. You cannot tempt the shivering child of poverty to desert his garret or crude covering, until you can promise him some kindlier and more substantial shelter. You cannot induce the prodigal to leave off the husks of his miserable desert exile, before you can tell him of a father's house and welcome. You cannot ask him to part with his despicable rags and tinsel ornaments until you can assure him of robe, and ring, and sandals. The husks and the tatters, wretched as they are, are better than nothing. In one of the islands in our northern coasts, a daring adventurer scrambled down one of the steep cliffs which rose perpendicular from the ocean, in search of the eggs of some sea-fowl; the precarious ledge of rock on which he stood suddenly gave way, and with one giant bound plunged him into the boiling surge beneath. In a moment, the instinctive love of life made him spring from the yielding footing and lay hold on a branch of ivy which clung with uncertain tenacity to the precipice that rose sheer above him. Who would have had the madness or cruelty to shout to that wrestler for dear life, to let go the treacherous ivy branch? Worthless as it was, it was his only chance of safety; and those on the summit of the cliff, the spectators of his imminent peril, were wise, not by word or sign to disturb his grasp of what they anxiously felt might prove a brittle thread in these moments of suspense. But when a fleet foot had returned with the rope, and let it down by the side of the exhausted man, then, with no hesitating accents did they call upon him to let go the fragile support and lay hold of what brought him up safe to their feet. In the same way do we find the inspired writers dealing with the human soul. They never are content with negative admonitions. They never exhort to 'abhor that which is evil,' without telling of some objective 'good' to which the heart can cleave in stead. "Charge those who are rich in the world that they do not be high-minded nor trust in uncertain riches, BUT in the living God." "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world... The world passes away, and the lust thereof; BUT he that does the will of God abides forever." This is the procedure of the divine Redeemer with the woman of Samaria; conveying, through her and through the outer material symbol and similitude, a deeper moral lesson for 'all mankind.' He tells her, pointing to the well at her feet, that returning there day by day she would require continually to refill and replenish her emptied pitcher; but that He had nobler living streams in store which would quench her soul's thirst forever.

He says the same to us. As in her case, so also in ours, in a higher figurative meaning, He does not condemn many of these worldly streams of innocent pleasure, or forbid their being resorted to. The needs of the body, the claims of our physical and social natures are integrated with our moral and spiritual natures; for man is a complex being, with intimate relationships binding him to both worlds; and the imperious calls of the one, can as little as those of the other, be with impunity neglected or ignored. Jesus recognizes both. He who knows our frame would lay no cruel arrest on many objects of lawful earthly pursuit—many wells of earthly happiness. All He says of them is, If you restrict your journeyings to these, you will not be satisfied—you will assuredly thirst again. But I have a well of living waters to tell you of, more far lasting than all earthly sources of supply. You will not require the glow-worm and the starlight when you have the meridian sun; the shifting sand when you have the solid rock; the tiny stream when you have the infinite ocean. "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

There are many salient points presented to us here. Space will only permit touching on one leading and beautiful thought suggested by the two central words of the latter verse; where all other outer objects of perishable pleasure are brought into contrast with that which is inward, "IN Him." "It shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." The believer has an inner well in his soul—something within the renewed being which makes him independent of all external earthly good and earthly happiness. Let outer things smile or frown, it matters not. That 'source of lasting joy' is no 'summer-dried fountain.' But being fed from the everlasting hills, it is always full, always flowing, overflowing.

What though the world grow false and treacherous? What though worldly means are abridged, worldly pleasures fade, or bereavements narrow the beloved family circle? The inner sources of truest peace cannot be invaded! Of the believer, outwardly impoverished, it can be said, as of the Church of Smyrna of old, "I know your poverty, but you are rich." In these hidden sources of satisfaction and happiness imperceptible to the eye of the world, we are furnished with a key and solution to Paul's paradox, "Having nothing, yet possessing all things." How often was the reality of this inward satisfying and sustaining good illustrated in the case of this great man? Look at the closing scenes of his life when a prisoner in bonds in the world's capital. See some of the pitchers which he brings up from this inner fountain, when all other shallow rills were rapidly drying in their channels. "Not that I was ever in need, for I have learned how to get along happily whether I have much or little. I know how to live on almost nothing or with everything. I have learned the secret of living in every situation, whether it is with a full stomach or empty, with plenty or little. For I can do everything with the help of Christ who gives me the strength I need. At the moment I have all I need—more than I need!" Or see him in the same place, at a yet later period, when the earthly streams of comfort had well-near perished; lonely, deserted by man, he could yet, with the unimpaired energy of 'the life hidden with Christ,' write the glowing words, "All men forsook me. . . . Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me and strengthened me." Or again, when in the hour of sinking nature, his enemies were insulting his gray hairs, loading him with reproaches and indignities, and doing what they could to shake his constancy in his great Lord—when every other well and stream had deserted him—when his aged and tremulous arm could no longer fetch up the flagon from the failing earthly pool—when the pitcher was about to be "broken at the fountain," and the wheel "broken at the cistern"—the fountain of his soul's peace was clear and sparkling as ever. He seems to say, 'Attempt not to cloud my hopes or eclipse my faith. Dream not that I am to act the coward's part, and purchase immunity from suffering and death by base retractation. You may shut me off from all earthly streams of joy—you may bind heavier irons on these tottering limbs—you may threaten me with the horrors of the amphitheater—you may sprinkle my insulted ashes on the waters of your Tiber river, or scatter them on the wide sea, or by the winds of heaven; but "nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him against that day.'"

If you asked him the secret and spring of all this superhuman faith and magnanimity and hope, he would reply in the brief words, "Christ in me the hope of glory." Jesus, in the glories of His person, and in the fullness and completeness of His work, was that inner fountain of gladness and peace, the "spring shut up, the fountain sealed"—and "when He gives quietness, who then can make trouble?" The apostle tells the Philippians what alone would prove the secret of their heart tranquility, as it was of his own, "The peace of God, which passes all understanding, shall keep

your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Is that peace ours? After, it may be, long vainly seeking peace—a resting-place for the soul elsewhere, have we returned to the true Ark—the refuge from the storm and the covert from the tempest? Has the true Noah put forth his hand and taken us in? and are we now, with folded wings, enjoying that, without which all outer calm is vain, illusory, worthless—reconciliation through the blood of the cross? "Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ."

Reconciliation! Have you known the meaning of that word, even with regard to earthly friends; when, after years of bitter estrangement, the prodigal is locked in the arms of his father; or brother is reposed in the early love of brother; or sister is cuddled in the embrace of a long alienated sister?—what is this, compared to reconciliation with the Being of all beings, the Friend of all friends? For if God be for us, who can be against us? if God gives peace, who can give trouble? if God smiles upon us, who can really frown? If God be our reconciled covenant God and Father, then we have the sweet persuasion that all things are working together for our good; and even the very rills of creature bliss that were before in themselves unsatisfying, become invested with new elements of happiness and joy.

"I can truly say," to take the testimony of one, illustrious as a Christian, but illustrious too, among our country's scientific explorers, and who, escaping many treacherous reefs in the literal ocean, had reached the truer spiritual haven. "I can truly say, that I have found the ways of religion are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. I was never half so happy before I came to this knowledge, and never enjoyed so much of life. Pleasures or enjoyments which are sinful, have no temptations for me. But I have yet many rational enjoyments and pleasures—domestic pleasures, social pleasures, the pleasures afforded by communion with great and good men, and above all, the pleasure derived from a sense of the favor of God in the heart, which indeed passes all understanding. I used to fancy I must give up all enjoyments if I became religious. But now I find that things I used to call pleasures now disgust me, while a multitude of new enjoyments have burst upon me."

"How pleasant," says another beautiful and well-known exemplification of the Christian life, "How pleasant it is to have God for a friend, to know that He is about my path and with me. How pleasant it is to consider that nothing can hurt me, nothing can injure me, for God is my portion forever and ever. He feeds and will feed me; He supports and will support me. In Him I become independent of the world. I desire not riches, pleasures, or the favor of men. Having God I possess all things." "My days," says Doddridge, "begin, pass, and end in pleasure, and seem short because they are so delightful."

"I never knew happiness," said Wilberforce on his death-bed, "until I found Christ as a Savior." Oh, what a lever true religion is thus found to be in elevating the soul to the enjoyment of satisfying bliss! And how is it so? We answer again, because nothing finite can satisfy that which was made for the infinite. You might give to the eagle, of which we have spoken, a golden cage, and feed him by princes' hands; but this would never be to him an equivalent for his native, free-born, sun-ward soarings.

Water never rises above its own level; and so, the best of earthly joys and rills of pleasure can rise no higher than earth. They begin and terminate here. But the living water with which Christ fills the soul, springing from heaven conducts to heaven again. Flowing from the Infinite—flowing from the

throne of God and of the Lamb, from the city of the crystal sea, it elevates to the Infinite! It finds its level in the river of the water of life which flows in the midst of the celestial Paradise. And just as on earth, so long as our mighty lake-reservoirs are full of water and the channel unimpeded, the marble fountain in street or garden, sends up, on the gravitation principle, its crystal jets in unflinching constancy—so (with reverence we say it) never shall these fountains of peace and joy and reconciliation and hope cease in the heart of the believer until the mighty reservoirs of Deity are exhausted; in other words, until God Himself ceases to be God. Everlasting life is their source, and everlasting life is their magnificent duration!

We have witnessed the memorable and interesting spot at the roots of Mount Hermon, familiarly known as 'the sources of the Jordan.' There, the river of Palestine is seen bubbling out of a dark cave, and thence hastens on through its long tortuous course to lose its waters in the Sea of Death (the Dead Sea). That is the picture and illustration of every stream of earthly happiness. They terminate with the grave. But this inner fountain in the hidden man of the believer's heart flows onwards to the Sea of Life; and the hour which terminates the worldling's happiness only truly begins his! On the other hand; how awful the state of the soul continuing in guilty neglect of this 'living water.' Every well resorted to but the true well; partaking of all waters but the living waters; a stranger to the only satisfying good, feeding on husks, and starving for lack of the bread of life. You have heard of the rage of bodily hunger—what those may be impelled to in the agony of famine—in the straits of siege or shipwreck. You have heard how the very mother has been untrue to her deepest, tenderest instincts; or how the famishing crew on the wild untenanted shore have had to cast lots for nature's direst extremity. But who can tell the famine of the soul? Alas! we cannot tell it, for we cannot now feel it. There are expedients to which we can, and do betake ourselves to stop that infinite rage of spiritual hunger. We throw sops to the immortal appetite. There are husks with which we can keep it down, messes of pottage to decoy from the true heavenly birthright. But when the husks are ended, what then? When life is ended, what then? When cast on the inhospitable shores of a bleak and ruined eternity, what then? It will be an unresponded-to cry, ringing its undying echoes, "I perish with hunger!"

You have heard of the rage of bodily thirst. Here is a picture of it from a graphic pen: "Many years ago, when the Egyptian troops first conquered Nubia, a regiment was destroyed by thirst in crossing this desert. The men, being upon a limited supply of water, suffered from extreme thirst, and deceived by the appearance of a mirage that exactly resembled a beautiful lake, they insisted on being taken to its banks by the Arab guide. It was in vain that the guide assured them that the lake was unreal, and he refused to lose the precious time by wandering from his course. Words led to blows, and he was killed by the soldiers whose lives depended on his guidance. The whole regiment turned from the track and rushed towards the welcome waters. Thirsty and faint over the burning sands they hurried, heavier and heavier their footsteps became, hotter and hotter their breath, as deeper they pushed into the desert, farther and farther from the lost track where the pilot lay in his blood; and still the mocking spirits of the desert, the phantom of the mirage led them on, and the lake glistening in the sunshine tempted them to bathe in its cool waters, close to their eyes, but never at their lips. At length the delusion vanished, the fatal lake had turned to burning sand. Raging thirst and horrible despair! the pathless desert and the murdered guide! lost! lost! all lost! Not a man ever left the desert, but they were subsequently discovered parched and withered corpses by the Arabs sent on the search."

Such is life—a mocking mirage, the phantom of the wilderness! Thousands, lured by the brilliant spectre, hurry on in the chase after happiness, in hot pursuit after the vain and unreal. But all is illusive, ending in mockery and disappointment, 'as a dream when one awakens,' leaving the thirst of the deathless soul unquenched; and, unless a nobler Fountain be resorted to, this remains the irreparable doom, the unchanging destiny—"Him that is thirsty, let him be thirsty still."

But, thanks be to God, there is no such malediction now ringing in our ears. We may listen rather to one of the blissful cadences of the Bible—a sweet strain, a sublime harmony, wafted from the heights of heaven, "They shall HUNGER no more, neither THIRST any more." It is further added, in the same beautiful passage, "The Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and lead them to LIVING fountains of waters." Yes, He it is, this slain Lamb of the Heavenly Paradise, who has solved the problem of human happiness. He is the true "Fullness," the only satisfying Good, groped after by the Platonic philosophy. "In Him all fullness dwells."

It is over the portico of the Gospel Temple, not over any heathen shrine, the superscription is written, "They shall be abundantly satisfied with the abundance of Your house, and You shall make them to drink of the rivers of pleasures!" What is to be our choice? The phantom or the reality?—the substance or the shadow?—the earthly waters, with their inseparable characteristic, "thirst again"—or the 'rivers of pleasures' springing up into everlasting life? At any moment the curtain of the seen and temporal may be rent in twain, and the world and all its hopes scattered like the leaves of autumn. As we are seated in thought at Jacob's Well, listening, from holy lips, to the contrast of the earthly with the perennial stream, may it be ours to breathe the fervent prayer:

"Hear me! to You my soul in suppliance turns

Like the lorn pilgrim on the sands accursed.

For life's sweet waters, God, my spirit yearns;

Give me to drink; I perish here with thirst!"

03.10. FIRST EVASION AND REPLY

FIRST EVASION AND REPLY The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water."

He told her, "Go, call your husband and come back."

"I have no husband," she replied.

Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true."

"Sir," the woman said, "I can see that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem."

Jesus declared, "Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and His worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth."

The woman said, "I know that Messiah" (called Christ) "is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us." John 4:15-25

These opening words, "Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water," have received varied and almost conflicting interpretations. We dismiss at once, as unsatisfactory, that which would represent them as the expression of a childlike faith, a further development in the woman's dawning convictions, which were soon to culminate in perfect unwavering belief. Two other interpretations appear alone to be tenable. Her answer may have been simply dictated by stupid, ignorant wonder; it may have been the utterance of a carnal, sensuous heart, dull and dead to all spiritual apprehension—unable, as we have already seen, to rise above earthly things, or to extract any higher meaning from the sublime and gracious declaration of the stranger than a poor material reference to the well at her feet, and the economy of time and toil in being relieved of the necessity to "keep coming here to draw water." An alternative interpretation is perhaps more in harmony alike with the woman's character and with the tenor of the narrative, that is, that her response was neither the dictate of wonder nor of faith, but rather an attempt, by evasion and banter, to trifle with divine realities—that it was uttered in a sarcastic, frivolous spirit, in a tone of playful irony. As if she had said, purposely to evade the spiritual application, 'Yes, truly, this mythical living water of yours would be a good thing indeed! it would really be worth knowing and having. Lord, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither keep coming here to draw water.'

She had, it is true, in an earlier part of the conversation, given promise of better things. She had seemed, at all events, impressed with the unwonted courtesy of this Jerusalem Pilgrim, and to

have reciprocated it. But the impression, on a heart in which pride and sin were dominant, was only momentary—the wave only touched the living rock to retreat back again amid the eddying waters. The old nature and the defiant tone return and resume the mastery. She petulantly spurns a style of discourse at variance with the whole current of her carnal thoughts and carnal life. She has no belief in, no patience for, such serious talk as this. Her answer is in the taunting, skeptical, scornful spirit of the scoffers in Ezekiel's time, "Ah, Lord God, they say of me, Does he not speak parables?"

Although of comparatively little importance which interpretation we select, we are inclined to think that the latter is most in consonance with the immediately subsequent dealing which our Lord deems it necessary to employ. When He thus saw that she was trifling, or affecting to trifle, with the profoundest needs of her soul, He resorts to the use of strong means in order to rouse her from her apathy, and guilt, and awful peril. 'The wind, and the earthquake, and the fire' must follow 'the still small voice.'

He therefore breaks off the conversation abruptly, and pursues a new theme. There is nothing more said now in connection with the beautiful similitude of the well and the living water. If she cannot be approached by imagery and figure, He will come home to her hardened conscience by the use of facts from which there can be no escape. She may misunderstand and misinterpret symbolic teaching, but there can be no misunderstanding about the stern and sad realities of her own life. He drags to view her besetting sin. Suddenly terminating the figurative conversation, he sends home this arrow of conviction, "Go, call your husband, and come here!" In a light, bravado spirit—the reflection of her character and history—she replies, with no sense of shame or sorrow, "I have no husband." Or, it may be, ignorant of the omniscient Being she confronted, who then read the blotted pages of her heart, she tried to evade the truth by the utterance of a lie. But she was soon convinced that He in whose presence she stood, was one 'from whom no secrets are hidden'—the discerner of the thoughts and the intents of the heart. In one brief sentence He unfolds a terrible life-story with its crowning act of present guilt. "Jesus said unto her, You have well said, I have no husband, for you have had five husbands, and he whom you now have is not your husband; in that said you truly."

We might have supposed that after this, evasion was impossible; that, as the timid bird cowers under the glance of the falcon or the eagle, so would this convicted sinner have trembled under the revelations of that infinitely pure One, who, from the deep well of her polluted life, had drawn up the evidences of impurity and debasement; and that casting herself convicted and condemned at the feet of her Divine Censor, she would have exclaimed, "Have you found me, O my enemy?" The barbed arrow indeed could not fail to reach its mark; but even now, as it pierces her seared conscience, she makes a bold and adroit attempt to turn the subject—to evade the scrutiny. This she tries to effect by a twofold deception. The first only of these two efforts, and the manner in which our Lord meets it, we shall be able to examine in this chapter. By a dexterous shift and diversion she starts a controversial topic. It is only those who have stood by the actual spot, with all the old, unchanged surroundings of the Well of Jacob, who can fully realize and picture the scene, as, pointing upwards to the heights of the sacred mountain close by, she exclaimed, "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped in this mountain, and you say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." She had already, in the context, adverted to religious differences—the old feud existing between Jew and Samaritan. She had passed from

that, to historical and ancestral questions regarding Father Jacob. Now she invites discussion on the controversy between the rival temples of Gerizim and Zion, and their comparative claims to superior sanctity.

What does this teach; but how possible it is to talk fluently on controversial themes, to start speculative questions—points of religious debate—to fight sectarian battles, defend to the death every letter of party shibboleth, exclaiming, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are we," and yet to live godless lives. Here was one; not only outraging the laws of heaven and earth, but also utterly indifferent to her own abandoned career; and yet, apparently with a martyr's heroism, she enters the lists as a sectary; she could speak readily on semi-religious questions; she could talk, with all the fiery zeal of a partizan, of "our fathers," and gloried in being a separatist from the tribe of Judah.

Picture, alas! of multitudes still, who are living in deepest ignorance of their own guilt and danger, their corruption in heart and life; who are yet great champions in some denominational battlefield; who, with stern self-isolation, entrench themselves in sectarian pride and formalism—blow loud the trumpet of religious partisanship; valiant athletes in some debatable question of creed and sect, plying their weapons with untiring ingenuity so long as the personal and practical issues can be evaded and eliminated; very tolerant of their own frailties, but very intolerant of the frailties and short-comings of others—loyalty to party, usurping the place the gospel assigns to charity, in covering a multitude of sins. Such, then, was the woman of Samaria's first attempt at evasion.

Let us listen now to the Savior's memorable reply; the order of which, for the better elucidation of the meaning, we may somewhat transpose. He first gives a bold and decided answer to her question, and then grounds upon it some grand truths, whose comfort and consolation were intended for all ages of the future. To her query as to the rival claims of Mount Gerizim and Zion, He affirms, without hesitation, the orthodoxy of the Jewish and the heterodoxy of the Samaritan worship: "You worship you know not what; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews." He thus unflinchingly condemns the defectiveness of the Samaritan creed—their rejection of the entire succession of inspired prophets, as well as their partial toleration of the half heathen ceremonies which had been incorporated in the worship of the God of Israel on Gerizim. By assimilating their religious ceremonial to the rites of Phoenicia and Greece, they had practically set up an altar with the inscription, "To the Unknown God."

Moreover, Zion being the appointed city of solemnities where the tribes were to go up, they were guilty of breaking, unsanctioned, the old historic unity of worship. On the other hand, Jesus adds, as Himself of the tribe of Judah, "We know what we worship." The Jews were the divinely accredited custodians of the truth; "Unto them were committed the oracles of God." Apostate, in one sense, as the worshipers on Zion had become from the living faith of their forefathers, they at all events retained intact and unmutated their monotheism, as well as the ancient Mosaic and Levitical institutions. Along with the Pentateuch, they revered the authority of the prophetic voices which age after age had been preparing the way for the new Gospel era. They were uncorrupted by Baal worship. The temple courts were undesecrated by the arts of the magician and necromancer. More than that, "Salvation" (literally, in the original, "the Salvation," or, as some would render it, "the Savior," the promised Messiah, "is of the Jews." Of them, as concerning the flesh, Christ was to come. From the tribe of Judah, not from Ephraim, He was to spring. The

fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness was, in the first instance, "for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem." The Lord had chosen Jerusalem as the place to put His name there. Ezekiel's living waters, emblematic of Gospel grace and blessing, were to go forth from the Temple of Zion to refresh and fertilize earth's waste places—the moral wildernesses of humanity. No, farther, not without note and significance is the tense of the word here employed. It is not "the Salvation" shall be, but "is," of the Jews, probably indicating to the listener that that Savior or "Salvation" had already appeared, and thus forming a preparation for the more distinct and unqualified assurance which follows, when He declares Himself, without reserve, to be the promised Messiah. But having thus unhesitatingly vindicated the claims of Jerusalem and Zion, He at the same time announces two truths of world-wide interest, regarding alike the object of worship and the manner of worship. We may invert also the order in which these stand in the narrative. As to the OBJECT of worship, He gives to this ignorant woman a revelation of the Supreme Being under two distinct aspects—

(1.) "God is a SPIRIT," or "God is spirit." He may, in her case, have had a double reason for thus adverting to the immaterial nature of Jehovah. Material forms, as we have previously mentioned, had been sanctioned in the compound mongrel-worship on Gerizim, in accommodation to the tastes and propensities of the heathen colonists—forms that were of necessity localized, and which were supposed to exercise no influence save in the vicinity of their shrine or temple. Moreover, the pure faith had been farther corrupted by combining with this material, a spurious spirit-worship. The votaries of Baal had a spirit presiding over the scenes and elements of nature—woods and mountains, fire, air, and water. Jesus reveals the glorious truth, of which this latter was the debasing counterfeit.

God is a spirit. Not a local God, restricted to that neighboring hill; but the Great Universal—not presiding over any favorite haunt or segment of the globe, but according to the beautiful description of one of those Psalms which the Samaritan had rejected, "If I ascend up into heaven, You are there. If I make my bed in hell, behold You are there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall Your hand lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me." In opposition to spirit-worship—the false teaching of their magicians and enchanters—here was the glorious unseen reality. These spirits, supposed by some of them to haunt the woods and groves and streamlets of Gerizim, or, in demon form to take possession of the human soul—were the phantoms of their own brain, the forms of a credulous superstition. But here with the Jews, was the only true (the Omnipresent) Spirit, who needed no temples made with hands.

And, yet once more, the Samaritan worship, either of the material symbol or of the local spirit, had become a heartless form. Religion had degenerated into the most worthless and debasing ritualism—a round of externals, in which true worship, the worship of the heart and the obedience of the life, had no place. Not so was it in the worship of this spiritual Jehovah. "Those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." Thus, then, the Savior's declaration was a needed counteractive to false views on the great elementary truth of all religious creeds—the nature of the Supreme Object of worship. This woman may have been conversant, probably from infancy, with some of these strange, extravagant beliefs in a spirit-world. She had been surrounded by lying prophets, and credited their lying wonders. Christ directs her to the true spirit-worship. "You worship you know not what."—You have conjured up a spirit-land and a dream-land which have no

existence. But I now reveal to you the great truth you have overlaid by your demonology, and desecrated by your practice: "God is a spirit, AND those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.

(2.) He makes a second and still more glorious—still more novel and startling revelation of the nature and name of the Supreme Being. God as a FATHER. "The Father." It was a new name—a new apocalypse of the Almighty Ruler of her nation. She had just spoken in sectarian pride of "our fathers," and of Father Jacob. In emphatic contrast with this, Jesus can tell of the true Father—the eternal Father—the Father of His universal Church and people. It was a name, not indeed unknown in the books of the Jewish prophets, but it was a name which specially belonged to the new and dawning Gospel dispensation. "The hour, (that is, the Gospel hour), comes, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father." The woman of Sychar had done foul dishonor to other most sacred ties of earth. Could no muffled harp-string in her soul wake up in trembling melody, as to an old familiar strain, by the mention of this new name? Debased as she now was, might she not, amid the memories of childhood-innocence, recall the hour when she loved to lisp that word? Amid the wreck of all other human relationships, might she not think of, and cling kindly to, the oldest and tenderest of all?

God was such to her—God was her Father—that universal Spirit was the universal Parent of all who worshiped Him in spirit and in truth. The thought would bring Him near as He never was before. It would invest Him with a new attractiveness. It would unteach in a moment many of the falsities of the Baal creed; and specially, its tendency to cause the Jehovah of Israel to be regarded with repulsiveness and terror—a Being of wrath to be appeased, but not of love or beauty in whom affection and trust might repose. Of this Almighty Parent, Jesus adds, "the Father seeks such to worship Him." May not these words have further endeared to her His new name? The term "seeks" is not in the sense of 'wishes' or 'desires,' but of going after, to search and find. It is the Shepherd "seeking his flock that are scattered in the cloudy and dark day." "Behold I, even I, will both search my sheep and find them out." Was she not one of that scattered flock, the worst truant of all the fold? The Shepherd was seeking her—or rather, that Old Testament figure and simile is superseded by the more touching Gospel symbol, "The Father" seeks his prodigal child—yes, and the Father waits not in his palace halls for the wanderer's return, but he goes forth on his mission of parental love. New and glorious step in the ladder by which she was brought up out of the horrible pit and the miry clay!

'Father, my Father;' 'He seeks me.' That earthly name, as we have just said, may have been to her, a fading remembrance. One of the rocky sepulchers at the base of Gerizim may now have been all that could recall it; and she may have felt thankful that he who claimed the relationship had not lived to see it disgraced in her own immoral life. But the old and hallowed earthly tie may be revived in a new and more enduring form. The God of Gerizim, the God of Israel, the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob—He is my Father. I may cry unto Him, "You are my Father, my God, and the Rock of my salvation."

If unable yet to grasp the blessed truth, she came before long to do so. Perhaps long after this interview was over, she may have lived to read in future years, in a letter from one, who, like herself, was a monument of Redeeming grace and divine parental love, "I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty." (2

Corinthians 6:18) But it is not only a revelation of the Supreme object of worship the Redeemer makes to the woman of Sychar. He has an equally glorious and important revelation as to the PLACE AND MANNER OF WORSHIP. "Jesus said unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour comes when you shall neither in this mountain, nor at Jerusalem worship the Father," (or rather, "not in this mountain only, nor in Jerusalem, you shall worship the Father.") All local worship is to terminate; all old things are to pass away, and all things are to be made new. Hitherto, under a preparatory dispensation, God had chosen out a people for Himself. Jerusalem had been His earthly audience-chamber, the repository of the true faith; the mystic cloud, the symbol of Deity, had rested in the holy of holies within Zion's temple. But the Gospel hour has now dawned, the substance has come, and the shadows are fleeing away. Soon the symbolic veil of that Temple shall be rent, intimating not only the abolition and abrogation of all ceremonial worship, but the extinction of all exclusive religious localities, privileged "holy places"—the inauguration of an era of worldwide blessing—the brotherhood of the nations under the one universal Spirit—a church gathered out of every country, under one Father. The Great Shepherd will go forth, not as of old, on the mountains of Judah or Israel, but out amid earth's pathless wastes, from distant east to distant west, wherever the lost and the wandering are to be found. And no one spot in all the vast circuit will be more sacred than another. Gerizim—that boasted "mountain of blessing" is now to give its name to the whole earth. "In all places where I record my name, I will come unto you and bless you." The round globe, with the blue vault of heaven for its canopy, will henceforth form the stupendous temple of the great Unseen and Invisible. The true and accepted Israel—the "Father-worshippers," will be found in every corner of the habitable world—in those glorious climates of the sun where idolatry has long reigned with undisputed sway—where the mosque and the pagoda have for ages frowned defiance on the Christian sanctuary—in the distant isles of the ocean—amid the prairies and pastures of the far west, the arid sands of the tropics—or amid the icebergs of eternal winter—yes, and not more under the gorgeous church or fretted aisle, than in the crude garret of the city, the humble hovel of the country, the secluded cavern of the mountain, the pathless forest of the settler, the solitary craft or deck of the fisherman and seaman, the lonely chamber of the poor, the sick, the bedridden, the dying—

"Wherever they seek You, You are found,

And every place is hallowed ground." The woman of Samaria pointed, with the pride of sect and tribe, to the locality as if that were everything. But, in His brief answer, Jesus proclaims the great truth, that the locality is nothing. The material offering was unimportant, but the acceptable and grateful incense to this Great Spirit and Father was the fragrance of a broken heart and a holy life. All outward symbols, Gerizim and Zion, and their conflicting claims, are to be merged in the sanctities of a nobler temple, an inner shrine—"You are the temple of the Holy Spirit." "The temple of the Lord is holy, which temple you are."

Among other solemn and urgent lessons these magnificent utterances bring home to us, surely one is, the duty, not only of moderating the wild excess of religious exclusiveness, but the folly of putting external forms on the same level or platform with eternal principles of faith and obedience. When will men take down this complicated scaffolding which obscures and obstructs the grand proportions of the Temple of Truth? When will the sun arise to quench these fires of our own kindling? When will the material give way to the spiritual; the human and the incidental to the divine and the everlasting? When will individuals and Churches, as the children of one redeemed

family, come, in childlike faith and childlike love, to worship 'the Father?'

What a different world would this be, did these two eternal words—eternal 'articles'—assert their glorious sway, and be allowed to perform their limitless errand! "God is a SPIRIT"—this is the first and fundamental teaching of the missionary in overturning all idolatries and gross material forms and sensuous worship—demanding 'spirit and truth,' purity and earnestness, the homage of the heart and the consecration of the life. "God is a FATHER"—this is the Gospel's precious and consolatory message to the prodigal, the disinherited, the lost. Do we know the preciousness—do we ponder alike the solemnity and the consolation, of this twofold name? God is a SPIRIT! How soul-stirring, how awe-inspiring would be the habitual recollection of this simplest but truly greatest of elementary truths; that that august Being, that Great unseen, unknown, untraceable, intangible—is everywhere present, beneath, around, about me—the witness of all my actions, with the eye of unerring scrutiny searching the secret labyrinths of my heart! "Where shall I go from your spirit, or where shall I flee from your presence?"

God is my FATHER! The feeling of awe encompassing the Supreme Spirit melts into affection. The cloud and the darkness resolve themselves into a halo of softened tenderness. That all-seeing One is the prototype of the dearest of human relations—the earthly parent is the shadowy image of the heavenly. "The Father"—but it is the Father in Christ the Son; "My Father," and therefore "your Father." Not the Father of universal humanity, that modern travesty of the true Fatherhood of God—but the Father of that redeemed humanity which has its representative elder Brother now before the throne, and who gives, in one glorious sentence, the condition and qualification of sonship: "As many as received Him, to them gave He power (the right) to become the sons of God, even to those who believe on His name." "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that says unto you, Give me to drink, you would have asked of Him, and He would have given you living water." Could the revelation of the God of Christianity, the God of the Gospel go no farther than this? Yes; yet another name and title of the Almighty, flowing from this paternal relation, was reserved for one of these apostles (who had now gone into the city to buy food,) subsequently to unfold to believers and the Church. This woman of Samaria, now groping in the darkness, may, too, have one day read in his epistles, its letters of living light. With it, the evolution of the Divine character terminates. Heaven knows no more—can give no more. The archangel can climb no higher. It is the loftiest expression of the august Fatherhood; and Jesus leaves it to the lips, we may reverently say, next best qualified to His own to pronounce it: "God is LOVE." This bright pinnacle of faith—this third and last step in the golden ladder, may we also be enabled to reach. Rising in the sublime gradation, may it be ours to grasp the threefold name—that trinity of divine attributes, with all their elevating motives and everlasting consolations. The triple theme of meditation in the Church on earth, it will form the triple theme of adoring contemplation and immortal praise in the Church of the glorified—

God is a SPIRIT,

God is a FATHER,

God is LOVE!

03.11. SECOND EVASION AND REPLY

SECOND EVASION AND REPLY The woman said, "I know that Messiah" (called Christ) "is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us."

Then Jesus declared, "I who speak to you am he." John 4:25-26 In the previous chapter we considered the first means employed by the unknown and unrecognized Heart-searcher to rouse the dulled, torpid conscience of the woman of Samaria. We considered the evasive answer which she gave to the unexpected revelation of her flagrant life, by attempting to divert the conversation to a controversial topic about the competing claims of Mounts Gerizim and Zion. This in its turn drew forth our Lord's sublime reply, in which He announced the abrogation of all ceremonial worship, the abolition of all distinctive "holy places," the establishment of a universal Church, and proclaimed Israel's God under a new gospel name, setting forth His paternal relation to His believing people—"The Church throughout all the world does acknowledge you, THE FATHER of an infinite majesty!"

We might have expected, after the gracious and impressive words which had thus proceeded out of His mouth, (beginning with the condescending offer of the living water, passing to the prophetic cognizance of her heart and life history, and ending with the revelation of the divine Fatherhood,) that she would at once have bowed in lowly humility before Him, confessing her sin—recognizing one who, with divine intuition, "understood her errors," saying, "Cleanse me from secret faults;" at the same time adding, in a very different spirit from that in which it was first uttered, "Lord, give me this water, that I thirst not." But not so. The stricken deer tries once more to wrench the rankling arrow from the wound. The lost wanderer of the fold, thus caught amid the entangling thorns, makes yet one other effort to escape from the arms of the pursuing shepherd. Or, dropping all figure, this bold transgressor, unable to discuss these spiritual themes which her Lord had just been unfolding, tries to stifle her convictions by the new plea of procrastination. "I know that Messiah who is called Christ is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us."—"He will tell us all these things of which you have now been speaking—He will decide all controversies; He will settle all rival claims; He will unfold to us these deep and glorious mysteries about the nature and the name of God, and regarding the Church of the future.' She wished apparently with this, to break off and silence the conversation, and in the spirit of a later conscience-stricken sinner, to say, "Go your way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for you."

PROCRASTINATION, in its Proteus shapes, is the most effectual and the most fatal device which Satan has in every age employed for luring unwary and unthinking thousands to destruction. Postponing the great question of salvation to this indefinite convenient season, the cry of the convicted soul is, "Give me this water!"—but not yet.

"Give me this water!" is the cry of youth—but not yet. Disturb not my bright sunny morning; wait until I reach the threshold of manhood.

"Give me this water!" is the cry of ripening manhood—but not yet. Disturb me not in the burden and heat of the day; wait until I have leisure and breathing-time; wait until the eventide sets in, and the shadows are lengthening, and the drawers of water stand with their pitchers around life's fountains.

"Give me this water!" is the cry of old age—but not yet. Though far advanced in the pilgrimage journey, my strength is yet firm. I have a long evening before the sunset hour. I may linger yet a while amid these olive-glades, before the flagon be let down for the draught.

"Give me this water!" is the cry of the dying. But postponement cannot be pled now; procrastination merges into despair. "Give me this water!" but it is too late. It must now be an unresponded-to call. These tottering steps cannot now bear me to the well's brink; these feeble hands are unable to grasp the pitcher and quench this deathless thirst.

Oh, Procrastination! how many has your siren voice lulled, and beguiled, and ruined! How true, if it be quaint, is the well-known saying of an old divine—the sad verity it describes redeems it from triteness or commonplace—that "Hell is paved with good intentions;" or, as this is expressed in another form, in one of the sententious lines of the poet of "Night Thoughts"—

"Men resolve, and re-resolve, then die the same." But to return to the narrative. Although such was the woman's dexterous new expedient to divert and terminate the conversation, she could hardly fail to have had other conflicting thoughts also in that most momentous hour of her existence. In her very attempts at evasion, she could not shake off altogether the conviction, that she was standing in the presence of a superior Being; one who had unmasked her inner life, laid bare her ignominious past. She owns him as "a prophet." He had spoken in authoritative accents; His sayings were as strange as they were impressive. If she was perplexed and staggered at the similitude He had employed about "living water," and "everlasting life," still more unconventional were His earnest, commanding, arresting, comforting words—"Believe Me" "The hour now is" "The Father (whose lost child you are) seeks," and seeks you. He had, moreover, pointedly adverted (verse 22) to "the salvation," or "the Savior."

She remembered the great tradition of her nation. A nobler life and hope and reality, indeed, this tradition was to the neighboring Jews, whose sacred writings were full of predictions of a mighty coming Deliverer. But their own venerated Pentateuch had inspired the same expectations. The Jews looked for the Messiah as a great temporal King; but the one prophecy of Moses was in true harmony with her present reference to the Messiah-hope as a Teacher—"When He has come, He will tell us (or teach us) all things." "The Lord your God," was the remarkable Pentateuch prediction, "will raise up unto you a Prophet from the midst of you, of your brethren, like unto me—unto Him you shall hearken." When she listened, therefore, with arrested ear and smitten soul to the divine utterances of this mysterious Jewish Rabbi, may not the thought possibly have flashed vaguely across her mind, mingling with her defiant unbelief, and with her real or pretended evasions, "Can this be Him?" It must be remembered that not the dwellers in Palestine only, but the nations of the world were, at this epoch, in dreamy expectation of some divine advent or incarnation. Across on those Trans-Jordanic hills on which she could gaze from where she stood through the opening of the valley, a strange prophetic voice had, fifteen hundred years before, taken up the parable with which her own Pentateuch may have made her familiar—"I see Him, but not in the present time. I perceive Him, but far in the distant future. A Star will rise from Jacob; a

Scepter will emerge from Israel. It will crush the foreheads of Moab's people, cracking the skulls of the people of Sheth." The caravans of travelers, passing daily Jacob's Well on the high road to Galilee, must have deepened these anticipations by their tidings of the marvelous preacher of the Jewish desert—"the voice crying in the wilderness." That voice, indeed, had in thrilling words announced the very truths to which she had now been the strange auditor—"Prepare the way of the Lord, make His paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God." And what was to her more arresting far than these general prophetic hopes, He who now addressed her had roused her slumbering conscience—the arrow was sticking fast there. If he had not "told her all things," He had, at all events, vindicated His claims to her attention and reverence by an irresistible argument—He had told her about herself. She could not stifle these aroused convictions. To use Chrysostom's quaint but emphatic words, she must have been "made dizzy with Christ's discourse." It was the crisis-moment in her spiritual history; verily but a step between either life or death. Guilty cavalier that she was, who knew not the time of her visitation—meeting overtures of grace with evasion after evasion—it might have been said of her as of the tribe of Ephraim to which she belonged, She is "joined to her idols, let her alone!" Is the divine Savior, whose forbearance she has thus been trifling and tampering with, to abandon her to her procrastination and unbelief and cherished sins? or, by one bold and gracious answer, will He lift the curtain from the glories of His divine Person, as it had not yet been lifted either in Galilee or Judea? Such a premature disclosure of His Messiah claims may be fraught with peril and disadvantage, seeing that His hour had not yet come. But the destinies of one human soul are suspended on that revelation; He will save others, not save Himself. If the inward sigh of her burdened heart corresponded with that of the Greek Gentiles at a later period, "Sir, we would see Jesus!" the glad and astounding response is now given from the living oracle—"Jesus said unto her, I who speak unto you am He."

What an unexpected rejoinder to her recent question, "Are you greater than our father Jacob?" 'Yes!' is His reply, 'I am greater. I am the Shiloh of whom he spoke. I am the true ladder he beheld in mystic vision on yonder heights of Bethel, by which the guilty can climb to the heaven they have forfeited and the God they have offended!' The triumph is complete. The darkness is past, and the true light shines—"I am He!" It is enough. The Baptist's bold words, uttered on the neighboring banks of the Jordan, have now their first echo and fulfillment at the base of Gerizim, "Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and will gather the wheat into his garner."

Whatever had been her prejudices, her sectarian bitterness, her sarcasm, her evasions, she re-traverses at a glance the glowing words of the conversation. She understands all now. The kindness, the grace, the truth, the penetrating revelations of Omniscience, the strange urgency and earnestness, the living water, salvation, everlasting life. HE, the great Giver of all, is standing by her side, and offering these priceless blessings to her! yes, to her with her legion-sins—the demon-throng that had reigned unchallenged for long years in her degraded heart. She asks, she needs no outer sign. He had told her 'all things that ever she did.' She requires no attesting angels to gather around the well—no horses and chariots of fire on Gerizim, as of old on the mountain at Dothan, to authenticate His mission. The pilgrim garb the Traveler wears, and the signs of weariness and languor, cannot in her eyes belie His claims to be the true Messiah. The "follow me," which had acted with omnipotent spell on the fishermen at Bethsaida, had fallen with like

irresistible energy on her own soul. She heard, she listened, she repented, she believed, she rejoiced! She has already let down her pitcher for the draught, and feels as if for the first time that her deep spiritual thirst was quenched forever. The sequel is unrecorded. Whether she fell prostrate adoring at His feet, exclaiming, with Thomas, "My Lord and my God," we cannot tell. Her feelings at that moment are left to our imagination. Very possibly there was nothing more for the evangelist to note. She may have been dumb with silence, unable to utter a word—dumb, it may be, with tears.

Already, too, the disciples are appearing from the city amid the olive-glades with their purchased food. But as we see this now saved one hastening with buoyant step on her mission of wonder and gratitude and joy to her native town, we can imagine the heart-song which the lips failed to embody in utterance—"I will praise You, O Lord my God, with all my heart, and I will glorify Your name for evermore, for great is Your mercy towards me, and You have delivered my soul from the lowest hell!"

"Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repents."

Let us come once more, at this climax of the story, and admire and adore the riches of redeeming grace and love. Behold Christ standing at the door of a closed heart, still waiting and knocking in wondrous patience and forbearance, though His head be wet with dew, and His locks with the drops of the night, until the response was heard, "Come in, O blessed of the Lord; why do you stand outside?" It was truly predicted of Him, "The bruised reed He will not break; the smoking flax he will not quench, until he bring forth judgment unto victory."

Seated as He now was at that well-side amid the mountains of Ephraim, His own words, uttered aforetime by the mouth of His prophet, had a new and significant interpretation: "Oh, how can I give you up, Israel? How can I let you go? How can I destroy you like Admah and Zeboiim? My heart is torn within me, and my compassion overflows. No, I will not punish you as much as my burning anger tells me to. I will not completely destroy Israel, for I am God and not a mere mortal. I am the Holy One living among you, and I will not come to destroy." The lesson may well be engraven as with an iron pen and lead on these rocks forever, that none need despair—that the first may be last, and the last first; that for Samaritan sinners, as for Jerusalem sinners, there is mercy. The vilest prodigal may come and read the superscription on the well of Jacob: "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." That day salvation had come to her house. As the first fruits of Israel's ingathering, the longing aspiration of the great Psalmist prophet was fulfilled, "Oh that the Salvation (or the Savior) of Israel were come out of Zion! When the Lord brings back the captivity of His people, Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad."

"I who speak unto you," said Jesus to the woman. Christ is speaking to us in many ways. He speaks in the mercies He bestows, and in the blessings He withholds; in life's storms and life's sunshine; in the earthquake and the fire, as well as in the still small voice. "I who speak unto you." That is His utterance, if we would but hear it, in the midst of our worldly losses—our desolate homes—our sickbeds—our deathbeds.

Blessed be God, too, as in the case of the woman of Samaria, He has one louder utterance still: "I who speak in righteousness—mighty to save!" Never is there the season, or the exigency, in which He is unable or unwilling to reveal Himself. During his ministry on earth, He seemed as if He would make every hour take up its parable as to His readiness at all times thus to "speak peace to His people and to His saints." Early in the morning, before the sun had risen on the hills of Bashan, He spoke to His disciples on the lake-shores of Galilee. At midday—with the glaring sun in the meridian—He met this sinful woman at the well of Jacob. At eventide, on the way to Emmaus, when His disciples were indulging in sorrowful musings about their absent Lord, the mysterious stranger who joined their company said to them, "I who speak unto you am He." At night, when all was hushed in Jerusalem, He spoke comfortable words to Nicodemus. Or on the sea of Gennesaret, when, amid darkness and tempest, the disciples, like this woman of Samaria, failed to recognize their divine Master—when they could see nothing but an evil spirit (as they surmised, a demon of the deep) walking on the crested waves, the voice was heard, "It is I; do not be afraid!" And if we take all these as symbolic of the varied hours in life's little day, Jesus speaks in each of them. Youth! in life's early morning, the dawn of existence, He speaks to you. Manhood and womanhood! at the well-side, in the hot noon of life, He speaks to you. Old-age! in life's evening, in mellowed sundown, He speaks to you. Dying! out in the midst of the cold dark sea, death coming in spirit-form, and extracting at first the cry of fear—He speaks to you in the gentle accents of His own love. Has He spoken to us? Like that woman at the well at Sychar, that poor wandering bird of Samaria, long having no resting-place for the sole of our feet, have we found it at last in the true Ark? Have we listened to the gracious revelation, I am He? Have we listened to these balm-words which fell of old on the ears of other similar outcasts—"Come unto me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest?"

It is said of Goethe, the great German, that in one of those dark unsatisfied hours in which his mighty intellect and soul groped after the true rest, he thus recorded his undefined longings for that which he had failed to attain—

Fairest among Heaven's daughters,

You who stillest pain and woe,

Pour Your refreshing waters

On the thirsty here below;

Where tends this restless striving!

Faint and tired I long for rest.

Heaven-born Peace,

Come and dwell within my breast!"

These words were found on a scrap of paper lying on his writing-table. A devoted friend of kindred intellectual pursuits, but who had tasted of a better fountain and therefore knew what alone could quench these unsated aspirations, wrote on the other side, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

"If you knew the GIFT OF GOD and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked Him and HE would have given you living water." And if we would add yet one word, it is that Christ, in the glories of His person and offices and work, as revealed here and elsewhere in the Gospels, with His free message of salvation, is the very Savior we need, and who alone can satisfy the soul's thirst. Christianity is to have no new phases or developments. Its glorious distinctive truths are not to be molded and metamorphosed to suit the restless spirit of the times, to adapt themselves to new conditions of thought, and to square with modern theories and speculations. Jesus, from being the adorable God-man, "Immanuel, God with us," is not to be dishonored by merely having a place assigned Him as one of many deities in the world's Pantheon—regarded simply as the human Founder of one of earth's religions or philosophies—and the doctrines of His school to take complexion and color, shape and modification, at the caprice of human opinion—the age molding the gospel instead of the gospel molding the age. Poetry is at fault when this is one of her oracular utterances, "Ring in the Christ that is to be." The Christ that 'is to be' is the Christ that is. "I who speak unto you am He." "They shall perish," may be true of all other philosophic creeds and systems, "but You remain the same." "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever." May we know Him as the unchanging Savior, the Giver of the living water, the Speaker of peace, the Bestower of rest to the soul. Renouncing and loathing our sins, and having had answered in Him the cry of thirsting humanity, "Give me to drink!"—may we be able to say, with holy earnestness and believing joy,

"Is there a thing beneath the sun
That strives with You my heart to share;
Ah, take it thence, and reign alone,
The Lord of every motive there.
Then shall my heart from earth be free,
When it has found repose in Thee!"

03.12. MOMENTS OF SILENCE

MOMENTS OF SILENCE

"Just then his disciples arrived. They were astonished to find him talking to a woman, but none of them asked him why he was doing it or what they had been discussing." John 4:27

Sacred story has on record many crisis-hours of thrilling interest. Such was the occasion when the old Judge of Israel sat by the wayside 'trembling for the ark of God'—when the liberties of his country, the safety of the sacred symbol of which he was custodian, and the fate of his own family, were all involved in the momentous issues of the struggle. Such, too, was the kindred occasion when David sat in an agony of suspense between the two gates when the battle was raging in the woods of Ephraim, and when, with parental feelings triumphing over the larger interests at stake, he inquired in eager and anxious haste, "Is the young man Absalom safe?"

Few among ourselves, doubtless, in our individual histories, have not known of similar seasons—when the telegraph flashed its unexpected message of the distant bereavement, or the appalling accident; or when in our own home we watched the herald symptoms of dissolution gathering round some loved pillow—'life balanced in a breath'—when hope and fear had for long days their alternate triumph, and when the unmistakable indication was given by skilled watchers, which quick-sighted affection too well understands, that recovery was hopeless.

Or, to take the converse of these; many doubtless can recall experiences of a different kind—life's gladder recollections—bright milestones and way-marks in the pilgrimage—momentous events enshrined in sunny memories—the birth of a child—the return of a long-absent son or brother from a far-off land—the first success in business—the triumph in some struggle of honorable ambition; or, it may be, the electric message which conveyed the cheering intelligence that the illness and danger of our friend was over, or that he had come unscathed out of the fiery tide of battle, or was rescued safe from some perishing crew. These, and such like, which each separate experience doubtless has to suggest, form the "illi dies" of the old Roman—days which he was used to mark with the white or black chalk, the symbols of joy or sorrow. But what season can be compared in its momentousness to the great crisis-hour of a soul's conversion; an hour similar to that which we contemplated in the preceding context—the triumph of light over darkness—truth over error—life over death? What return so glad as the return of the long lost prodigal to the heavenly Father's home? What day so deservedly to be marked with the white chalk of gladness as the day which records the soul's deliverance from everlasting danger and ruin? What birth compared to that of an heir of immortality? Is it to be wondered at, that such momentous epochs of our earthly histories as those of which we have spoken, should, at the instant of their occurrence thrill the spirit into silence? that the tongue in such seasons of agitating emotion should be unable to speak—that utterance should fail? Is it a time of grief, overpowering sorrow? That word "overpowering" expresses our meaning—the lips at the moment refuse to tell out the secrets of the speechless, stricken, smitten heart. Sorrow is always deepest, profoundest, where the mourners can exchange only silent glances through irrepressible tears. Job's three friends, when they heard of his

aggravated woes, sat along with him upon the ground with torn mantle and dust-covered heads for seven days and seven nights, "and none," we read, "spoke a word unto him, for they saw that his grief was very great."

Or, is it some joyful occasion? Joy has its strange, stunning moment, too. The receipt of sudden and gladdening information has been known, for the time being, to paralyze into silence the overstrung feelings, to hold fast for the instant the flood-gates of speech. Thought is absorbed in itself.

Such is the picture we have now before us. The person around whom gathers the main interest in this narrative, has owned that weary pilgrim seated on the edge of Jacob's well, to be the promised Messiah, the Savior of the world. She remains mute under the revelation which had been made to her—she maintains expressive silence, or a silence that may have had its outlet only in tears.

Jesus, her great deliverer, who had broken the bonds of a lifetime in sunder and ushered her into glorious liberty, beholds, in this signal triumph of His grace, the first-fruits of a vast spiritual harvest in Samaria—the earliest trophy among the outcasts of Israel. Absorbed in the musings to which such thoughts gave birth, He, too, preserves significant silence. The disciples have come up at the moment from their errand to the neighboring town. The last, but most momentous words of the conversation had possibly fallen on their ears—"I who speak unto you am He." They could not fail to observe the effect of this disclosure. The woman's profound but suppressed emotion; the pitchers and water-pots lying at her side, now forgotten and unheeded. But though by their exchanged glances, (still imbued with the old prejudices,) they marveled that their Master talked with this forbidden Samaritan female, there was not a word uttered—all the three parties were thrilled and spell-bound—the woman, a moment before so fluent and talkative—the disciples, with their curiosity and amazement excited at the violation of national and sectarian etiquette. But whatever might be the workings of their inward thoughts, these are suppressed—"They were astonished to find him talking to a woman, but none of them asked him why he was doing it or what they had been discussing." And the third and greatest of all, surrenders Himself more than all, to the significant stillness of that still hour. As if unaware of any human presence, His eye and His heart seem arrested by some theme of distant but magnificent contemplation. "The noise of archers in the places of drawing water" is for the moment hushed; every bow is unstrung, every rope and pitcher is at rest; the subordinate actors in the scene stand gazing on one another, while their Lord still remains seated on the curb-stone of the well, gazing on the fields of living green waving all around Him in that expanse of plain, and allowing these, as we shall afterwards see, to be the expounders and interpreters of His own heart's joy.

Very possibly the disciples, even already, were no strangers to similar moments of absorbed contemplation on the part of their divine Master; and though they understood not the nature of these mysterious communings, they felt that they dared not, or would not, intrude on their sacredness. The aged Apostle and Evangelist, when he wrote this last Gospel, seemed to have a vivid recollection of more than one such solemn spellbinding being put upon otherwise familiar and confidential communion. Amid the waste of memory, he then recalled these moments of repression and significant silence at the well of Sychar; and at the close of his history, he again records a similar inhibition put upon himself and his fellow apostles on the occasion of the final

interview on the lake-shore of Gennesaret: "None of the disciples dare ask him, Who are you?"

Thus, we repeat, it would appear as if they were accustomed, at special occasions, to put a restraint on their needless curiosity. And yet, at the same time, they had learned to repose a perfect unwavering confidence in the wisdom and rectitude of their Master's doings; they knew full well that even in these silent cogitations there were wrapped up unrevealed purposes of love and mercy. "None of the disciples dare ask him, Who are you? knowing that it was the Lord." These purposes might be mysterious. The well, like the earthly symbol at their feet, might be deep; yet no man said, "What do you seek?"

Although already led so far to anticipate the subject in a previous chapter, let us yet again draw the one great lesson from the words which head the present—the duty of silence under the divine dispensations. Often, like the disciples at Sychar, have we reason to marvel at the Lord's doings. Their marvel on this occasion arose from a poor reason, a mere sectarian and rabbinical prejudice—that their Master, who was of the tribe of Judah, should break through Jewish conventionalism by holding converse with a female, and that female one of the excommunicated Samaritans. They would, before many weeks had passed, cease their astonishment. They would have their prejudices rebuked, and their Lord's wisdom and grace vindicated.

Often have we, though in our blindness, greater reason than they had to marvel at His ways. Providence is often spoken of as a dark enigma. God's name, as He declared it to Manoah, is "Secret." He gives no account to any of His matters. "I the Lord dwell in the thick darkness." 'He plants his footsteps in the sea.' These footsteps are untraceable on the varying billows. They are like the wake of the vessel furrowing a momentary depression in the ocean; the dark waves close over, and not a vestige of love or wisdom is discernible—"Your way is in the sea; Your path in the deep waters, and Your footsteps are not known."

Blind unbelief, arraiging the rectitude of the divine dispensations, is prone to ask, "What do You seek in this catastrophe?" That sudden ruin of my worldly business and prospects—the heart would sincerely prompt the inquiry, 'What do You seek in this?' The pillaging of dearer household treasure—"What do You seek here?" "All you who know His name say, How is the strong staff broken, and the beautiful rod!" 'The beautiful rod,' the budding branch, the infant blossom—"What do You seek here?' These cradles emptied; these dimpled smiles turned into pale marble! Why has death not taken the seared and withered drapery from the autumn branch, but stripped the green sapling? Why not taken the browning leaves of the decaying rose, rather than the incipient bud, before the summer sun had fallen on its tints, or extracted its fragrance?

Or, stranger still, "The strong staff broken!" What do You seek here? The beautiful rod is missed for its beauty, but the strong staff is missed still more for its strength. Where is the wisdom in taking away the crutch from the arm of the feeble—the prop from the tottering steps of old age? Why thus lay the axe at the root of manhood in its glory? "How is the strong staff broken?" Such (say as we please) is the wailing soliloquy of many a crushed and sorrowing heart under the mystery of the Divine dealings. But the duty, the delight, the prerogative, the triumph of faith, is to be silent. "They were astonished to find Him talking to a woman, but none of them asked Him why He was doing it or what they had been discussing." To ask no reason, no "why or wherefore;" to lie in devout submission under the inscrutable chastisement, owning, though we may be unable to discern, the faithfulness of the great Chastener, who often thus hides Himself and keeps silence,

just in order to elicit unquestioning faith and implicit trust. What did David say, under a complication of dark individual and family trial? "I was dumb with silence; I held my peace even from good."—"I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because You did it." What did Aaron say under a trial deeper, sadder, more overwhelming still? He said nothing—"And Aaron held his peace." What did a Greater than earthly priest or king, say in moments of mysterious suffering? "He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth: He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opens not His mouth."

How often is this duty of silence under the dealings of God, inculcated in sacred Scripture. "Rest in, the Lord, (margin, "be silent to the Lord,") and wait patiently for Him." "Truly my soul waits (or is silent) upon God." "Be silent, O all flesh, before the Lord." Or, yet again, in the sublime and striking prophecy of Habbakuk; the prophet, though appalled by the divine judgments impending on the nation and which the divine lips had themselves uttered, resolves to be silent, and to say not, "What do you seek?" He resolves to wait for further disclosures of the divine will—"I will stand upon my watch, and set myself upon the tower, and will watch to see what He will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved." And what is God's first message to him? It is simply to continue silent—to wait. "The vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak and not lie: though, it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry." He compares and contrasts this silent, patient waiting, with the restless invocations of the heathen to their dumb idols—calling upon them not to be silent, but to speak—"Woe unto him that says to the wood, Awake; and to the dumb stone, Arise, it shall teach." But, he adds, "The Lord is in His holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before Him." And then this silence is only broken by the prophet's sublime prayer, in the first part of which he dwells on the mystery of God's dispensations, only that he may wind up with his grand profession of faith and trust and holy joy!

Blessed it will be for us, amid all these 'frowning providences,' if, instead of presuming in a spirit of unbelief and distrust, to ask, "What do You seek?"—we are ready to hear the voice of the Unknown and Invisible saying, "Be still, and know that I am God!" The dutiful servant asks no reason of his Master—he does his appointed work in silent obedience. The loyal soldier asks no reason of his commanding officer for what he may think the hazardous and fatal movement in the day of battle; he obeys in prompt and willing silence. The faithful workman asks no reason for these crude gashes in the quarry; he is content to wait until builder or sculptor fashions the unshapely block into symmetry and beauty. We are apt, with Joseph, in our blind ignorance, to say, "Not so, my Father;" but, like aged Jacob on that same occasion, God refuses our erring dictation, our unwise counsel, saying, "I know it, My son; I know it."

It is the grandest triumph of faith thus to confide in the divine leadings in the dark—when the Almighty's wings are not bright and refulgent with love and mercy and goodness, but rather projecting a mysterious shadow—then, yes, then does faith vindicate its own strength and reality, when it can utter this song in the night, "How excellent is your loving-kindness, O God; therefore the children of men put their trust under the SHADOW of your wings."

If at any time we be called to stand by some broken cistern; nothing to draw with—the rope of fond affection snapped—God's judgments 'a great deep'—be it ours to seat ourselves speechless by the brink of the shattered fountain—not marveling, not asking questions, not saying in querulous skepticism, "What do You seek?" "knowing that it is the Lord." When Jacob crossed the brook

Jabbok, (to revert, in closing, to an incident in the life of the old Patriarch, more than once already referred to,) he met, under a clear midnight sky, an angel-form—this same Redeemer. "There wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day." There was to that solitary human wrestler a strange mysteriousness in the apparition of the magnificent visitant. He had struggled with him in the darkness; put his thigh out of joint; made him a cripple for life. But in this case, unlike the disciples at Sychar, Jacob dared not be silent. In irrepressible eagerness he asked him, and said, "Tell me, I ask you, your name?" And the other said, "Why is it that you do ask after my name?" The wrestling angel did not satisfy his curiosity by revealing his history. But he blessed him there, and sent him away, with the new name of "Israel."

Oh, how often is this true! God meeting His people in the brooding darkness of their night of trial—wrestling with them; and if they, in the deep mystery of their sorrow, are tempted to ask, "What do You seek?" He does not answer directly—He does not answer as they would like Him to answer, by desisting from the struggle. But He does better. They come out from the conflict maimed and crippled and heart-stricken it may be, but with a new name and blessing—as princes who have had power with God and prevailed.

"Come, O Traveler unknown,
Whom still I hold, but cannot see,
My company before is gone,
And I am left alone with Thee;
Wrestling, I will not let You go,
Until I Your Name, Your Nature know.

"'Tis love! 'Tis love You died for me!
I hear Your whisper in my heart!
The morning breaks, the shadows flee;
Pure universal Love You are!
To me, to all, Your affections move;
Your Nature and Your Name is love!

"The Sun of Righteousness on me
Has risen, healing in His wings;
Withered my native strength, from Thee
My soul its life and support brings
My help is all laid up above;
Your Nature and Your Name is Love!

"I know O, Savior, who You are;

Jesus, the feeble sinner's Friend!
Nor will You with the night depart,
But stay and love me to the end!
Your mercies never shall remove,
Your Nature and Your Name is Love!
"Lame as I am, I take the prey,
Hell, earth, and sin, with ease overcome;
I leap for joy, pursue my way,
And as a bounding deer fly home!
Through all eternity to prove, Your
Nature and Your Name is Love!"
—Charles Wesley, 1742.

03.13. THE HOME MISSIONARY

THE HOME MISSIONARY The woman left her water jar beside the well and went back to the village and told everyone, "Come and meet a man who told me everything I ever did! Can this be the Messiah?" So the people came streaming from the village to see him. John 4:28-30 In the former chapter, we found that the disciples had meanwhile joined their Lord at the Well, while He was still conversing with the woman of Samaria. Until now, she had enjoyed undisturbed her interview with the Divine Wayfarer; but other eyes being upon her, the conversation abruptly terminates. So it is with all our most hallowed seasons of communion with the Savior on earth. They are necessarily brief. He is to His people still, in a spiritual sense, as He was to that daughter of Israel, "as a stranger in the land, and as a wayfaring man that turns aside to tarry for a night." Blessed will that time be, when no disturbing intrusive element can interrupt the bliss of fellowship whose duration will not be a transient noontide-hour of burden and weariness, but ETERNITY! The silence of that speechless group seems to have been first broken by the sudden departure of the woman. In the intensity of her newborn emotions she is forgetful altogether of the purpose which brought her to the well of the Patriarch; and, leaving her pitcher behind, she hastens to her native city to proclaim to her fellow-townsmen the astounding intelligence that she has found the Messiah. How altered her whole character and feelings since she left her home a brief hour before! She had left from the gates of Shechem a miserable sinner; she returns a rejoicing believer, with her deep spiritual thirst quenched, once and forever, at a nobler fountain.

There is something true to human nature, and truer still to the expansive, unselfish spirit of the Gospel, in seeing her thus hastening to make others partakers of her own joy and peace. The impulse is natural to communicate to others whatever may have imparted happiness to ourselves. A son who gets advancement in the world delights to take the earliest means of sending the tidings to the paternal roof. The soldier in the forlorn hope hastens to give to those who are waiting with breathless interest, the intelligence alike of his safety and of his feat of successful daring. The shepherd in the parable is represented, on finding the lost wanderer, as calling his friends and his neighbors together, saying, "Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost." The father of the prodigal is not contented with his own happiness in giving welcome to the long absent one, but his banqueting halls are thrown open, that others may have a sympathizing participation in the gladsome return.

We may recall a moment of deeper, stranger, intenser joy still—a joy which quickened the pulses of the world's life; when Mary Magdalene had not only entered the deserted sepulcher, but had listened from unmistakable lips to words of wonder and gladness—with fleet step, unable to keep the ecstatic assurance to herself, she hurried to proclaim it to those most intensely interested—"She departed quickly from the sepulcher, with fear and great joy; and ran to bring His disciples word." The two travelers to Emmaus, when their wondering eyes were opened, hastened forthwith to the eleven with the glad news, "The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon." So it was in the case of the woman of Samaria. She, too, had seen her living Lord—the Messiah promised to her fathers. Her joy and wonder cannot be unshared. It was with her as with

the brethren of Joseph: no sooner had the patriarch made himself known to them, saying, "I am Joseph," than they hastened to convey the startling intelligence to their aged father, "Joseph is alive!" The true Joseph had made Himself known to this alien sister. She cannot keep to herself the joy of all joys. "The woman left her water jar beside the well and went back to the village and told everyone, "Come and meet a man who told me everything I ever did! Can this be the Messiah?" So the people came streaming from the village to see him." And this is ever the true result of saving conversion, the necessary consequence of the reception of the truth into our own hearts—a longing desire to make others sharers and participators in our joy and peace in believing. If Christianity be real and living, it must be expansive. The work of the Spirit of God in the heart is not a fiction, not a form, but a life. To use the simile of this narrative, it is a fountain not only 'springing up,' (bubbling up,) but overflowing its cistern, and the superfluous supply going forth to gladden other waste places. Not the mass of stagnant water without outlet, but the clear, sparkling lake, discharging its rush of living streams which sing their joyous way along the contiguous valleys, and make their course known by the thread of green, beautifying and fertilizing as they flow.

Or, if we may employ another figure, let it be that whose appropriateness redeems it from commonplace—the stone thrown into the same still lake. The ripples formed are deepest in the center. Christianity is deepest in the heart in which its truths have sunk; but its influence expands in ever-widening concentric circles until the wavelets touch the shore. Religion, intensest in a man's own soul and life, should embrace family, household, kindred, neighborhood, country, until it knows no circumference but the world!

Oh, how unlike is the true spirit of the gospel to that of the world's selfishness; that selfishness which would retain all with tenacious, avaricious grasp, with no thought or care for the happiness or well being of others. Christianity breaks down these walls of narrow isolation, and proclaims the true brotherhood of the race. Selfishness closes the heart, shuts out from it the rains and dews and summer sunshine; but Christianity, or rather the great Sun of light, shines—the closed petals gradually unfold in the genial beams—and they keep not their fragrance to themselves, but waft it all around. Every such flower, the smallest that blushes unseen to the world—becomes a little censer swinging its incense-perfume in the silent air, or sending it far and wide by the passing breeze. The woman of Samaria became, as every Christian who has tasted and seen that the Lord is gracious ought to become, a home evangelist and missionary. Origen calls her "the apostle of the Samaritans." The entire words in the song of an elder sister in Israel, which we have more than once partially quoted, are beautifully true in her case with reference to the inhabitants of her city: "Those who are delivered from the noise of archers in the places of drawing water, there shall they rehearse the righteous acts of the Lord, even the righteous acts towards the inhabitants of his villages in Israel: then shall the people of the Lord go down to the gates." And her case and character are, in this respect, only in beautiful keeping and harmony with manifold examples in sacred Scripture—"going down to the gates," and proclaiming to others, "This gate of the Lord into which the righteous shall enter." Job was such a missionary. Not content himself with knowing and rejoicing in the revelation of a 'living Redeemer,' that evangelist of the Arabian desert, in words appropriate to his barren home, expresses his ardent desire that others might participate in the glorious discovery, "Oh that my words were now written! oh that they were printed in a book! that they were engraved with an iron pen and lead in the rock forever!"

David was such a missionary. The tokens of God's forgiving grace and mercy vouchsafed to himself, acted as a stimulus and incentive to convey these to others, "Then will I teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners shall be converted unto You"—"Come, all you who fear God, I will declare what He has done for my soul."

Andrew was such a missionary. For, having himself beheld and welcomed the Lamb of God, we read, "The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, "We have found the Messiah" (that is, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus."

Philip was such a missionary. Himself the recipient of the glad news, he "finds Nathaniel, and said unto him, We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth" at the same time extracting from the simple-hearted Jew, the noble avowal, "Rabbi, You are the Son of God; You are the King of Israel." The converted maniac of Gadara became such a missionary. He was not permitted to continue his posture, "sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind," a passive subject of the wondrous transformation—"Jesus sent him away, saying, Return to your own house and show how great things God has done to you. And he went his way, and published throughout the whole city how great things Jesus had done unto him." And so it was also with the greatest of all converted men. No sooner was Paul struck to the ground by the heavenly light, and heard the voice of that Jesus whom so long he had persecuted, than he "immediately preached Christ in the synagogues of Damascus, that He is the Son of God." "You," says Christ, to all and of all His people—"you are the light of the world." As little can the sun retain his heat to himself, or the moon her borrowed luster, as the believer cease to be a radiating center of holy influence. "If these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out." And if this influence, in the case of not a few, fail of being of an active nature, let all remember that there is one of another kind equally acceptable to God, and equally potent for good. The Christian, confined for weary years to a sickbed, is rendered physically incapable of the outer activities of the spiritual life; but there is a speechless eloquence and power in a holy, Christlike character. Such may prove silent evangelists, commending the gospel to others by their meek, patient, enduring, uncomplaining resignation—like the alabaster box of old, broken unnoticed and unobserved; but the whole house, (the little sphere of their influence), is filled with the odor of the ointment! To return to the narrative. The mission of this female evangelist was signally successful. For it is added, "So the people came streaming from the village to see Him." Now there is something in this statement which is remarkable, and well worthy of our attention. She has made a startling assertion in the midst of those who were only too cognizant of her character. Yet they credit her testimony; they obey, apparently with alacrity, her summons, and crowd with her to see the Judean Pilgrim. With some of these, doubtless, there may have been no higher motive or inducement than curiosity; but from the sequel, we seem warranted to infer that this was not the predominant reason. They had given a ready and hearty credence to the wondrous story of this strangest of attesting witnesses, and at her bidding, and under her guidance, they hasten without hesitation to the old traditional Well.

What could it have been which rendered her testimony so strong, so self-evidencing and self-authenticating? We may note one or two particulars which must have specially tended to conquer their prejudices, and prepare them for a recognition of these same Messiah-claims.

(1.) Her honesty and outspoken candor must have gained her a favorable hearing: "Come," she said, "see a man that told me all things that ever I did." It was the last thing we could have expected her to utter—the last message they would have expected her to deliver—to ask them to come to see one whose penetrating glance had read and revealed her blackened history. She would in ordinary circumstances have shrunk from such a revelation of herself. Indeed, when we see her leaving the well and disappearing among the old olive trees on the road to the city, the natural suggestion which occurs to us is, that she is glad to rush away from the withering glance and exposure of that Heart-searcher, saying, in the spirit of the oldest world-transgressor, "I heard your voice, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself."

We expect that if she makes any reference at all to the mysterious stranger, it would be by doing what she could to keep others from going to listen, possibly to fresh disclosures of her character and vicious life; that if she said anything to her fellow-citizens about that Jewish traveler, it would rather be to depreciate His authority and turn into ridicule His words and similitudes. But this, on the contrary, is the very point on which she emphatically dwells. This is to her the credential of His Messiahship, that He has told her all her nefarious past history—that He is fully acquainted with her life of sin. Could this honest avowal fail to carry its own moral weight to the minds of these simple, straightforward villagers or townsmen of Sychar—that despite of these disclosures, instead of evading Him—belittling Him—mocking Him—throwing discredit on His claims, or keeping the strange interview of that morning a profound secret locked up in her heart of hearts, she invites them to come and see Him, and hear for themselves His omniscient and searching words?

(2.) Another thing which must have won for her the attention of her fellow-citizens, was her earnestness. "Come!" she said, with inviting urgency. Her strange assertions might at first be met by obstinacy and scorn. She might probably at first be regarded as a raving enthusiast and fanatic—the victim of some sudden bewildering phantasm, possessed with one of the demons of their false spirit worship; or perhaps as subserving some hypocritical ends—a deceiver, and being deceived. But probably her tears and heartfelt genuine penitence, coupled with the transparent veracity of her statement, satisfied them that there was in her case no pretense, no delusion.

There was about her tale and her manner an indubitable reality, which conquered and annihilated the strength even of Samaritan prejudices. She may have appeared at first, like Lot to his sons-in-law, "as one that mocks." But in abrupt, importunate earnestness, the smitten penitent implores them to go and see—to go and judge for themselves. These pleadings are irresistible. They went out of the city, she herself probably accompanying them, "and came unto Him." What is to compare with earnestness? There is a true ring about it which cannot be simulated or counterfeited. What Christian ministry, what Christian life, so powerful as an earnest one? It is not the charm of intellect, not the subtlety of reasoning, not the magic of eloquence, that will commend the gospel to others. It is the living words welling up from the believing soul, the lips uttering and proclaiming what has been experimentally felt and tested. "I believed, therefore have I spoken."

Unsanctified intellect has often preached an unknown Savior. Strange as it may seem, unsanctified intellect has even at times not delivered its message in vain, just as the trumpet which stirs the hearts of the brave in battle may be sounded by coward or unworthy lips. But the ministry and the mission most signally owned and blessed by the great Master, is not the wisdom of human words, or the grandeur of flowery orations, but where there is the irresistible cogency of living

fervor. Men of the world are quick-sighted enough to penetrate the flimsy veil of unreality and pretension, to discover those who are the mere imposters in the great army of the brave and the true. On the other hand, where there is unction and reality, other deficiencies will be overlooked and palliated. Even intellectual superiority willingly stoops to hear the heartfelt tale, though it may be delivered with unlettered and stammering tongue. Hence, in the Gospels, the two most honored of preachers, with the exception of the Baptist, just because their tongues were touched with burning earnestness, were that converted demoniac of Gadara, and this converted woman of Samaria. Oh for an earnest Church and an earnest ministry! the baptism "with the Holy Spirit and with fire!"

(3.) We may add one other impression which must have been made upon the people of Shechem—the effect which that mysterious interview at the Well had upon the woman herself. It had made her happy. He had told her all things that ever she did. That, we might have thought, and so would they, should have had the effect of making her wretched. We know the awful feeling which another's cognizance of some crimson sin inspires. It makes the transgressor miserable. Hush-money is the well-known human quietus of a troubled conscience—the ready bribe to muffle the anguish of discovered wrong-doing—the key which locks up the terrible secret. But this woman's guilty secrets were out and disclosed—One Infinite yet human heart at least knew them all. He knew the worst of her. He was within a mile of where she now was—yet she was happy!

Among these half heathen Shechemites were there no spiritual burdens as heavy to be borne as her own? Do we think, amid these rough hewers of wood and drawers of water, there were none of the world's aching hearts to be found? Would they not willingly too pass through the same ordeal as she, if only the oppressive load could be removed? Would they not willingly brave the scrutiny of this omniscient One, and allow Him to unlock their deepest secrets, if only the storm, as in her case, could be changed into a calm by His omnipotent, "Peace, be still?"

Such, then, being the credentials of this female messenger, let us glance at the subject of her MESSAGE. This, too, is remarkable and worthy of note; for in it she tells her fellow-citizens the very fact which we might have expected she would have withheld, and she omits what we would have expected her rather to proclaim. We expect, as she enters Sychar, and gathers the wondering crowd around her, to hear her speak of what we deem alike the most beautiful and the most memorable part of her story—that, too, which would be most impressive to the Oriental mind—about the Well, the thirst, the living water, the gift of God, everlasting life. Or if not this, the mystic sayings about Gerizim and Zion, the world-wide worship, the revelation of the Great Father. Not a word is said of any of these; no, not even does she speak of the stranger's own closing avowal of his Messiahship. The one declaration—that which has stirred her heart to its depths (she seems to have room for no other) is this, "He told me all things that ever I did." As in the case of Felix, when a greater than Paul now spoke of 'temperance, righteousness, and the judgment to come,' conscience spoke, and her immortal spirit trembled! And as in speaking of the Christian ministry we have adverted to one element at least of persuasive power in the character of the messenger, so have we here the most effective and influential characteristic of his message. It is not figurative expositions, not controversial disputes, not subtle metaphysical distinctions about the nature and character of God, but the direct commending of the truth to the conscience; awakening a deep sense of sin—rousing the soul to a consciousness of the virulence of its disease, and thus preparing it for a revelation of the one glorious remedy.

It was asserted by divine lips to be the first part of the Holy Spirit's work in conversion, "He will convince the world of sin." The evidences of the schools are not without their peculiar value—but the stateliest array of these will never of themselves bring home conviction to one heart. They are not what prove most effectual in gathering in wanderers to the fold—they are not the pitchers which fetch up from the well of life its reviving draughts. That rather which wins and arrests and conquers, is the knowledge which the Bible has of myself, in telling me "all things that ever I did"—the adaptation of the Great Physician to the wounds and heart-sores of aching humanity—the adaptation of the living water to the thirsty soul. This is the history of every drawer of that water—"God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shone in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." The Great Teacher, 'the teller of all things,' the true "Word of God," is a "discerner of the thoughts and the intents of the heart." The gracious words to ancient Israel collectively, seem to have a special beauty and significance in their application to this individual case of the Samaritan woman—a comment on the later saying, "Where sin abounded grace did much more abound."—"She decked herself with her earrings and her jewels, and she went after her lovers, and forgot me, says the Lord. Therefore, behold, I will allure her and bring her into the wilderness, and will speak comfortably unto her." (lit. speak to her heart.) A gospel faith is the response of the human spirit within, to the Revelation without. The unlettered Christian can confront bold skepticism, and fight it with this "proved sword," this unanswerable argument, "Come, see a man who told me all things that ever I did!" "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see."

Let us close with one practical remark, the power of feeble influences. If it has been a matter of interest to us to watch the dealing of Christ with an individual sinner at the well of Jacob, more interesting still is the sequel we have been now considering—the crowd, appearing among the trees, of anxious seeking souls, coming to test for themselves the truth of the wondrous tidings, and to prefer the prayer—"Lord, give us this water that we thirst not!" But it is of further interest and significance to note, that this flocking of the people of Shechem to listen to the Divine Stranger was the result of the pleadings and urgency of one feeble woman. She herself had become, to use the beautiful figure of the Psalmist, as a dove whose wings are covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold. In the freshness of her heavenly plumage, this dove of Samaria flies immediately with the olive branch in her mouth to her own Shechem valley, not to seek with folded pinion some quiet perch on Gerizim, but rather to hasten her flight back again to the true Noah, the Giver of "Rest," bringing along with her a flock with weary wing and wailing cry. "Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?"

Never let us undervalue feeble instrumentality! It was the blast of rams' horns, accompanied with the shout of the army of Israel, which brought to the ground the walls of Jericho. It was the crash of three hundred pitchers and the gleam of torches by the well of Jezreel, accompanied by the battle-cry, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon," which routed the mighty host of the Midianites. It was a few pebbles from the running brook, and a sling in the hands of a shepherd boy, which laid low the giant of Philistia.

Let none make the feebleness of their efforts in the Church of Christ the reason for neglecting or abandoning them. Let none make the smallness of their talent a reason for burying it in the earth; but rather put it out to interest, that when their Lord comes He may receive His own with interest. It is by small and often insignificant means He still effects the mightiest of His purposes in His

Church on earth. He would make this still the motive to all exertion—the secret of all success—the watchword to every Faint-heart and Ready-to-halt in the day of battle—"Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord of hosts."

03.14. THE HEAVENLY FOOD AND THE FIELD OF HARVEST

THE HEAVENLY FOOD AND THE FIELD OF HARVEST

Meanwhile his disciples urged him, "Rabbi, eat something." But He said to them, "I have food to eat that you know nothing about." Then His disciples said to each other, "Could someone have brought Him food?" "My food," said Jesus, "is to do the will of Him who sent me and to finish His work. Do you not say, 'Four months more and then the harvest'? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. Even now the reaper draws his wages, even now he harvests the crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together. Thus the saying 'One sows and another reaps' is true. I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labor." John 4:31-38

The departure of the woman of Samaria to communicate her tidings of wonder and joy to her fellow-citizens in Shechem introduces us to a second scene in the shifting drama of the narrative. Up to this point the whole interest is concentrated in the conversation between her and the Savior. Now it is between Jesus and His returned disciples. They are once more alone. The verses which head this chapter are so full of material for thought, that little more can be done than to give a running commentary upon them, leaving the reader to fill in with details the outline of the suggestive picture. The adorable Redeemer, as we have previously seen, was seated on the brink of the Well, absorbed in mysterious contemplation. No one ventured to intrude on His sacred musings. "Just then his disciples arrived. They were astonished to find Him talking to a woman, but none of them asked Him why He was doing it or what they had been discussing." The disciples now resolve to break silence. They observe His wan and weary countenance. They know that He cannot fail to be hungry, with His fast unbroken since the early morning meal, and with the long and toilsome travel through the hot plain. With earnest imploring accents they asked Him to partake of their provided refreshment, "In the meanwhile His disciples urging Jesus to eat." Their request was apparently disregarded. With His eye and soul still riveted in these mystic communings, He replies in the enigmatical words, "I have food to eat that you know not of." The disciples looked at each other in perplexity. Though they may have heard the last words of the conversation with the woman, they were in entire ignorance as yet of its results; they said one to another, "Has any man brought Him anything to eat?" 'Has His hunger been satisfied in our absence?—has some passing wayfarer shared his food with Him?—or has this Samaritan drawer of water so far overcome her sectarian scruples as to minister to His needs? Or has He departed in the present case from His usual measures, and called in the exercise of supernatural means? Has He summoned, as His great prophet of Cherith, the ravens from Ebal or the silver plumaged doves of Gerizim to be His suppliers?—or have angels, as in the Mount of Temptation, been sent to Him to strengthen Him?'

Poor earthly dreamers! they had utterly failed to grasp the meaning and grandeur of His saying; the material thoughts which for the moment were occupying them, prevented them fathoming these profound musings. They had nothing to draw with, and the well was deep. His reference was to food of a far different kind—"Man does not live by bread alone." Who can wonder, as Augustine

well observes, at the 'inability of the ignorant, uninstructed Samaritan woman, in the previous interaction, to comprehend the spiritual symbol of the living water, when the Savior's own disciples manifest a similar inability to comprehend the meaning of the living bread! But He bears with their lack of spiritual discernment; He upbraids them not; but rather, we may imagine, His face suffused with joy, He continues in a tone of sublime mystery, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent me, and to finish His work."

It was another noble utterance. The whole grandeur of the scheme of Redemption seemed, as in a vision or trance of glory, to pass at that moment before His eyes—the work that was to be finished on the cross by giving Himself a ransom for the world—bringing up the living water by the golden cord of His everlasting love, in order that perishing millions might be saved forever. It was the partaking of these streams of salvation by one of these millions, (the unlikeliest unit among them all,) which had given birth to these divine meditations. We have already noted the suggestive silence which closed the preceding interview: such silence, we found, as is often the result, or attendant of strong emotional feeling. The same mental agitation has been known, not infrequently, to put a temporary arrest on the demands of bodily hunger.

There are great crisis-hours—times whether of yearning affection or of patriot valor—when the whole nature being in a paroxysm of suspense, the pangs of physical hunger are overborne and suppressed. The brave leader in the beleaguered fort or garrison, where the lives of hundreds are staked on a few hours or days of heroic resistance, is sustained by doing his duty—the cravings of the lower nature are subordinated, for the time being, to the demands of the higher. Or the mother, when her child is being rescued from the surging waves, can stand hunger-stricken for hours together on the bleak shore; the food which sympathizing hands have brought lies untouched at her side, as she watches with eager gaze the return of suspended animation—the revivifying of her withered flower—the call of hunger is forgotten until she is relieved from her agonizing vigil by the glad word, "Your child lives."

He who was "bone of our bone," partaker of our nature in all its finer and grander emotions, surrenders Himself here to the same absorbing power. He rises, in these magnificent musings of obedience and love, above the sensation of bodily hunger. The meal procured in the Samaritan town is laid at His side, but He heeds it not; another banquet of better spiritual food rivets His thoughts; another Gerizim—another Mount of imperishable blessing rises before Him—"And on this mountain the Lord Almighty will spread a wonderful feast for everyone around the world. It will be a delicious feast of good food, with clear, well-aged wine and choice beef. In that day he will remove the cloud of gloom, the shadow of death that hangs over the earth. He will swallow up death forever! The Sovereign Lord will wipe away all tears." And here we have to note a new turn in the conversation. A new object seems at this moment to arrest observation and to offer fresh food and theme for holy joy. As He gazes along the wide green plain in the direction of Shechem, a crowd appears in the distance. He does not require to be informed of whom that crowd is composed; for His omniscient eye has followed the woman in her mission to her fellow-townsmen, and He now recognizes her returning at their head, towards the spot which had so hallowed a place in her own dearest memories. He resumes His divine discourse, and secures afresh the attention of His wondering disciples by quoting a Galilean proverb to these men of Galilee.

It is worthy of note, how largely the Divine Redeemer, in His sayings and discourses, loved to use the book of nature as the interpreter of the volume of grace. We know how His parables teem with pages from that volume. He loved to make the outer natural world a consecrated medium for the illumination and illustration of spiritual verities. He had done so already in the previous part of this conversation at the well. He had taken the water to symbolize what alone could quench the thirst of the deathless spirit. He had taken the bread, which the disciples had laid on its stone margin, and made it speak of higher realities—the sustaining power derived from the consciousness of doing God's will and finishing His work. And now, as once more He looks around Him on the magnificent plain flushed with the green of early spring—an unbroken expanse of verdure—He takes this beautiful page in the same illuminated book of nature, as the exponent of the great thoughts that were burdening His soul—"Do you not say [in other words, are not you accustomed to this proverbial saying], 'Four months more and then the harvest'? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest."

He passed from the green sprouting corn all around, to the glorious fullness of a spiritual ingathering, whose first ripe sheaf in the person of the Samaritan woman had that day been reaped. As if He had said, 'In this present case of better spiritual reaping, it is not as in the natural world where development is gradual, where the grain is ripened and matured by slow invisible processes—first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear. Here is a more glorious harvest ready—a harvest of souls—a people born in a day—in the fields of unpromising Samaria the reaper-angels may already put in their sickles, for the harvest is ripe. The glory of Lebanon has been given to it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon; it has seen the glory of the Lord and the excellency of our God.' But it would be a restricted and imperfect view of these divine reflections—these ecstatic thoughts and emotions, did we regard them as evoked merely by the appearance of that handful of approaching Shechemites. He regards such only as the representatives of a vaster throng, the first-fruits of a redeemed multitude which no man can number, who are to be gathered at the great harvest of the world. He sees now a handful of corn on the top of these mountains of Ephraim, but the fruit thereof is one day to shake like Lebanon, and they of the city to flourish like grass of the earth. They are the Eshcol-pledges of a far more glorious vintage. Perhaps, in the language here employed, He may be instituting a comparison between the woman with her fellow-Samaritans, and the green fields around yet untouched with the latter rains, and on which the glow of harvest was yet far off, though it would in due time surely come. That company of human souls formed the early seed sown; but in them, as through a telescopic glass, He beheld in prophetic vista the bounteous fields of the wide world waving in their summer and autumn glory. This was the true interpretation of His enigmatical words—this was the food which those at His side knew not of. Under the shadow of the great mountain of blessing before one of the holy places of nature's gigantic temple, He, the great High Priest, waves the sheaf of first-fruits. It is the pledge and harbinger of a glorious reaping-time at the final harvest, when He, the Man of sorrows, now going forth weeping bearing precious seed, would doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing His sheaves with Him. The spectacle before His eyes inspires Him with a new longing and incentive to finish His work. He sees of the fruit of the travail of His soul, and is satisfied. A later saying seems already to stir the depths of His divine emotional nature: "But I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is completed!" But (to complete this rapid paraphrase of the verses yet remaining) though His own soul is thus full of joy—though He is Himself the mighty Sower—the Author and Finisher of the faith, in that hour of

glowing anticipation He embraced also His own disciples, and through them all His faithful harvest-men and reapers, who, to the end of time, were to be subordinately associated with Him in bringing many sons unto glory. Great also, He declares, will be their joy and reward, "And he that reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit unto life eternal."

Oh, noble thought and recompense for all Christ's true servants, struggling, toiling, baffled, and discouraged! The Master says, "He gathers fruit unto life eternal." The toiler of earth has only an earthly recompense. That recompense, moreover, is uncertain, capricious, precarious. The drought may leave the harvest sickles hanging rusting on the walls, or a sudden wave of calamity may come and sweep the harvest of a lifetime away. But the spiritual laborer sows and reaps for eternity! Reaping, too, beyond the reach of casualty or disaster. No shortcoming in the garner of immortality; no blight to mock his hopes; no failure to defraud him of his harvest joy. And, better than all, it is added, "Both he that sows, and he that reaps, shall rejoice together"—the Master and the servant, the Lord and disciple. In the great reaping day of Judgment, when every faithful harvestman will be called to receive his reward, and when fidelity, not success, will form the ground of approval, this will be the noblest—the peerless element in the recompense, "Enter into the joy of your Lord." "They rejoice before You according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil." The writer of these pages vividly recalls the last glimpse he took of the Well of Jacob, with Mount Gerizim rising behind in its sky of cloudless azure. The lines of a simple but well-known hymn, prized more on account of child memories, than for their own, intrinsic excellence, occurred at the time. Their otherwise enigmatical emblems seemed, amid these surroundings at least, to be invested with new meaning and significance. They may appropriately end these chapters, as we, too, take our last mental glimpse of the same hallowed spot, suggesting in symbol a better Fountain, and the Gerizim of truer spiritual blessings.

They are lines which might befittingly have been put into the lips of the woman of Samaria herself—the once lost, but now reclaimed 'wanderer from the fold'—as we may picture her at times stealing out alone to the place of her spiritual birth, standing by the well with all its consecrated remembrances, and with the knowledge that Gerizim and Zion were henceforth to be displaced and superseded by a nobler Mountain—that of 'God's unchanging love!'

Come, Thou Fount of every blessing,

Tune my heart to sing Thy grace;

Streams of mercy, never ceasing,

Call for songs of loudest praise.

Teach me some melodious sonnet,

Sung by flaming tongues above.

Praise the mount! I'm fixed upon it,

Mount of Thy redeeming love.

Here I raise my Ebenezer;

Here by Thy great help I've come;

And I hope, by Thy good pleasure,
Safely to arrive at home.
Jesus sought me when a stranger,
Wandering from the fold of God;
He, to rescue me from danger,
Interposed His precious blood.
O to grace how great a debtor
Daily I'm constrained to be!
Let Thy goodness, like a fetter,
Bind my wandering heart to Thee.
Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it,
Prone to leave the God I love;
Here's my heart, O take and seal it,
Seal it for Thy courts above.
O that day when freed from sinning,
I shall see Thy lovely face;
Clothed then in blood washed linen
How I'll sing Thy sovereign grace.
Come, my Lord, no longer tarry,
Take my ransomed soul away;
Send thine angels now to carry
Me to realms of endless day.

04.00. An Old Testament Chapter in Providence and Grace

EVENTIDE AT BETHEL; or,

The Night-dream of the Desert (An Old Testament Chapter in Providence and Grace) By John MacDuff, 1878 Dedicated to all on the journey of life--especially to those just starting on their pilgrimage.

1. Preface 2. Outset from home 3. Home memories and their lessons 4. Home memories and their lessons (continued) 5. The certain place 6. Night shadows 7. The pillow of stones 8. The night-dream 9. The ministering angels 10. The God above the ladder 11. Jehovah's name

12. The promise 13. The given presence 14. The waking, and waking exclamation 15. The morning consecration

16. The vow 17. The renewed journey 18. Bethel revisited

04.01. Preface

PREFACE This is intended as a companion volume to "Noontide at Sychar." 'The story of Jacob's Ladder' and 'The story of Jacob's Well,' may appropriately be conjoined in sacred interest. The one, forming as remarkable an Old Testament, as the other does a striking New Testament, 'Chapter on Providence and Grace.'

"Why select an incident in the life of a base circumventing Jew?" was the observation of a friend, on mentioning that I was engaged in writing what follows. The speaker, I felt assured, was too just and discriminating seriously to maintain so disparaging an estimate of the illustrious Patriarch. But while accepting his remark with the qualifications I well knew were implied, I answered, it was just because of the faults and failings of a very composite nature, that whether in the separate scenes of his history or as a great whole, I thought the character of Jacob formed a valuable and interesting study. In the case of such "Great Hearts of the olden time" as Abraham and Moses, we have lofty ideals of "patriarchal saintliness,"--lives which contain passages of rare and exceptional excellence. If I may be allowed the simile, they resemble Alpine peaks with their virgin snow, towering far above their compeers, inaccessible and discouraging from their very loftiness. In JACOB, on the other hand, we have an average type of frail, fallen humanity or, to follow out the figure, we have one of the lowlier eminences of a commonplace world--one, also, with its scars and blemishes only too faithfully revealed to the eye of the spectator. We trace in his half-dramatic, half-tragic history, God's dealings with one of Nature's least lovable products; a man who originally had comparatively few elements of worth to recommend or redeem him; who, had he been left to himself, uncontrolled by any higher impulses, might have become a confirmed liar, if not a wrecked and abandoned castaway. Did we seek indeed from Old Testament history, in the era in which he lived, a more winning portraiture, we do not require to travel beyond the tent-home of Isaac. In the person of Esau, even if we take him as he is often regarded, the representative man of the world, we have more engaging native excellencies. Our sympathies are all with the bold, brave hunter--his noble demeanor and manly ways and filial devotion, rather than with the deceitful equivocating brother, who has tricked him out of his patrimonial rights, and drawn down thereby a very righteous vengeance.

Add to this, there is nothing either brilliant or heroic about Jacob. Absent are those mental gifts and those courageous exploits which throw a halo of interest over the lives of some even subordinate characters in Bible story. Though we may admire a tenacity of purpose and unflinching determination, which go far to redeem baser and less amiable qualities--a certain worldly adroitness, energy of will, fertility of resource, and perhaps, more than all, patient endurance--yet he is neither philosopher, nor minstrel, nor warrior. His name is the key-note to his inner nature, "the crafty"--having a shrewd eye to business, and to self. His prosaic calling and ways are brought out in the sacred narrative, when he is briefly described as "a plain man dwelling in tents" (Genesis 25:27).

Yet there are lessons, more ample and more varied far--lessons alike encouraging and humbling, to be gathered from the less attractive and more commonplace personage, which the chivalrous yet reckless companion of his youth fails to furnish. Not to speak of the higher spiritual beauties to be found in the story of the heir of the Covenant, is there no special heart-cheer, for what, after all, must ever form the great majority--baffled, tempted, struggling humanity? Is there no "courage to take heart again," when we see this "forlorn and shipwrecked brother," sentineled by angels, followed, tended, loved, restored, by a better than earthly Father, until his name "the Supplanter" was changed into "the Hero of God," and he passed away at last triumphantly to the better Canaan? Is there no word of comfort and strength to those conscious of strong, inborn, demon-passions, which may have even developed themselves into baser deeds, in the Divine whisper--"Jacob have I loved"? (Romans 9:13)--the Being who had fed him all his life long, purging out of his soul the alloy; making him a monument of His grace; that grace triumphing over whatever was unlovely and unloving, until, after a series of strange vicissitudes, it brought him at the last to rejoice in the God of his salvation (Genesis 49:18)?

We restrict ourselves in what follows, to one solitary scene in the varied drama of the Patriarch's life; so far as we are aware (and we marvel at it), the only monograph on this sublime episode, which for sacred interest and Gospel lessons has no parallel in Old Testament Story. The writer cannot fail to remember the words of a long deceased and aged relative, from whose exalted piety and consistent walk, more than one have derived their earliest impulses for good--that 'of all passages in the Bible he most loved that night-dream at Bethel.' I can now vividly recall, how, with gleaming eye, he contrasted the monarchs of earth sleeping on their couches of down in royal chambers, with the far truer nobility and glory, which, all unconscious to them, gathered round that lonely wanderer and his pillow of stones. The great German scholar (Ewald) speaks of it as "that passage of rare grandeur placed at the beginning of Jacob's history." Be it ours, with profound reverence, to approach this Holy Ground whose very name has become hallowed. "The God of Bethel" is a title no less loved on Christian than on Jewish lips. The incidents of the Sleeper, the Angel-ladder, and the Heavenly Voice, have, with endless diversity, been cast and re-cast in sacred poetry and song. In Scottish Churches, as we can testify, the well-known lines of Doddridge inserted at the close of this preface, have led and stimulated, with their simple strains, the devotions of worshipers--more than perhaps any other scriptural 'Paraphrase.' How often have they stirred the pulse of congregations on the Sabbath eve of a Communion, or in the waning light of the closing Sunday of the year! Nor can the writer forget the last memorable occasion on which they were heard by him. It was when they rang their plaintive cadences through the aisles of Westminster Abbey over the grave of David Livingstone. Words, familiar to the illustrious traveler from earliest boyhood, and which had doubtless often cheered him amid the scorching suns and sands of Africa, were appropriately selected for the concluding solemn rite--when the 'desert dust' of the "weary Pilgrim," "all his wanderings ceased," was laid in the great church of Britain's consecrated dead--

"O God of Bethel! by whose hand

Your people still are fed;

Who through this weary pilgrimage

Have all our fathers led.

"Our vows, our prayers, we now present
Before Your throne of grace;
God of our fathers! be the God
Of their succeeding race.

"Through each perplexing path of life
Our wandering footsteps guide;
Give us each day our daily bread,
And clothing fit provide.

"O spread Your covering wings around,
Until all our wanderings cease,
And at our Father's loved abode
Our souls arrive in peace.

"Such blessings from Your gracious hand
Our humble prayers implore;
And You shall be our chosen God,
And portion evermore."

Meanwhile, Jacob left Beersheba and traveled toward Haran. At sundown he arrived at a good place to set up camp and stopped there for the night. Jacob found a stone for a pillow and lay down to sleep. As he slept, he dreamed of a stairway that reached from earth to heaven. And he saw the angels of God going up and down on it. At the top of the stairway stood the Lord, and he said, "I am the Lord, the God of your grandfather Abraham and the God of your father, Isaac. The ground you are lying on belongs to you. I will give it to you and your descendants. Your descendants will be as numerous as the dust of the earth! They will cover the land from east to west and from north to south. All the families of the earth will be blessed through you and your descendants. What's more, I will be with you, and I will protect you wherever you go. I will someday bring you safely back to this land. I will be with you constantly until I have finished giving you everything I have promised."

Then Jacob woke up and said, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I wasn't even aware of it." He was afraid and said, "What an awesome place this is! It is none other than the house of God—the gateway to heaven!" The next morning he got up very early. He took the stone he had used as a pillow and set it upright as a memorial pillar. Then he poured olive oil over it. He named the place Bethel—"house of God"—though the name of the nearby village was Luz.

Then Jacob made this vow—"If God will be with me and protect me on this journey and give me food and clothing, and if he will bring me back safely to my father, then I will make the Lord my God. This memorial pillar will become a place for worshiping God, and I will give God a tenth of

everything he gives me." Genesis 28:10-22

04.02. OUTSET FROM HOME

OUTSET FROM HOME "Jacob left Beersheba and traveled toward Haran." Genesis 28:10 The world in many of its outward phases has undergone important alterations since the era of the Pilgrim Fathers of Canaan. Its infancy has been merged in the maturity of age. And yet the heart that beat under a Beersheba tent, or under the nightly sky of Palestine, is identical in all the "unchanged humanities" which pulse and throb to this hour under a British tree in the nineteenth century. With little variations there are the same struggles of inexperienced youth, the same stern conflicts of ripened manhood. Looking, too, to the Divine side, we have to note a similar continuity of spiritual influence. The moral forces which arrested and controlled the patriarch in his flight to Haran have their repetition now. That dream was the rehearsal of Divine revelations to the individual soul ever since. Many a heart, during the intervening three thousand six hundred years, has become a Bethel, many a dwelling, the pathway of angels.

Outset from Home! How much is implied in the brief words which head this chapter! Few there are, regarding either themselves or others, in whom they do not awaken mingled recollections; all the more so, if, corresponding with the case of Jacob, it be the first blank in the tent--the first break in the magic household-circle--the first vacant chair by the fireside. At the inexorable calls of life, the cherished nest sooner or later must be broken up. Not a day passes but there are thousands of such departures--the scene in the desert and pasture-lands of southern Judah repeated amid the green lanes and smiling fields of modern England--the remnants of the long-unbroken group gathered at the door, whether of lordly castle or of thatched cottage, uttering the last farewell, and then re-entering that which will never be the same to its inhabitants again. Many an Isaac and Rebekah have thus watched their favorite boy until lost from view in the winding road or receding glades; or standing with mute tears upon the harbor, have followed the wake of the disappearing vessel until they caught the last wave of the "vanishing hand."

Each may conjure up their own remembrance of that hour; whether in the remoter past or recent present. The first entrance at school or university, waking up under the strange roof, listening to the strange voices, and noting the unfamiliar ways. The more frequent case still in humbler life, the commencement of the novel toils and duties of ordinary domestic service. How many have lain down thus in their new dream-land, to whom may have come, in visions of the night, the glow of familiar faces in the "fitful firelight" with its "shadows on the parlor wall;" or the picture of loved ones seated on the mossy turf, where childhood was used to weave its necklace of primrose and daffodil, the ringing laugh still echoing over the meadows; or while listening to the music of the tuneful brook, singing its way through rocky dell amid birch and heather. How many such have opened their eyes in early morn, with the consciousness that to them at least these cherished scenes and sounds are amid the visions and echoes of the past--"as a dream when one awakens."

"Far away a place is vacant

By a humble hearth for me,

Dying embers dimly show it,
Where I would sincerely be!
Faded Autumn leaves are trembling
On the withered jasmine tree,
Creeping round the little casement,
Where I would sincerely be!
There some simple hearts are waiting,
Longing, wearying for me;
Far away where tears are falling,
Where I would sincerely be!"

Yes, few among us can fail to recall the day, with its bygone vistas of holy sunshine (a tear may be condoned for its memories) when we went out from our Beersheba towards some unknown Haran!

"Happy, thrice happy," says one of the most illustrious secular writers of the past age in concluding one of his works, "as an after remembrance, be the final parting between hopeful son and fearful parent, at the foot of that mystic bridge, which starts from the threshold of home--lost in the dimness of the far-opposing shore--bridge, over which goes the boy who shall never return but as the man." The first home-leaving, in the case of the patriarch, was in many ways singular and exceptional. Its sadness must have been augmented by the fact that he was no youth when he thus took his pilgrim staff to begin the pilgrim life. For many long unbroken years of fellowship he had lived, either within, or at all events near, the paternal tent. His one only brother from boyhood had been devoted to a roving life. Impatient of the restraints of home, the latter despised the dull, unexciting monotony of sheepfolds and pasture lands. From dewy dawn until the sun crimsoned with its last rays the desert sand, Esau, the cunning hunter, the Nimrod of his day, loved to roam the woods and scale the rocks with his bow and quiver, rejoicing his father's heart by bringing home trophies of the chase from forest, and breezy upland; or, when marauding tribe made a foray on the peaceful tents and herds of the Hebrew settlers, we may conjecture he would be off for days with his picked band of fighters to make reprisals. For this very reason, had his been the departure from the family home, it would not have created the blank caused by the absence of the more domestic brother, whose simple tastes seem to have made him, at all events, his mother's undisguised favorite. Rebekah had kindred sympathies with Jacob which she seemed never to share with Esau. In the case of the elder-born there was nothing in common to unite save the strong bond of nature--while, in addition to other causes of repulsion and estrangement, the mother's jealousy was pronounced and irrepressible towards the Hittite wives of her nomadic son. The ascendancy of these idolatrous women over his pliable disposition, seemed to have formed her chief domestic trial (Genesis 26:35; Genesis 27:46).

There were well-known impelling reasons in Jacob's sudden outset from home which rendered it especially painful. It does not fall within the scope of these pages to rehearse the thrice familiar story of the too successful impersonation; the duped and deceived father; the wronged, and

defrauded heir; the anguish of the unscrupulous mother when she woke up to the full consciousness of the peril for which her duplicity was responsible.

All companionless and alone, this too apt pupil in the school of treachery and intrigue goes forth on his journey. Not many years before, that same route had been traversed by a trusted servant. Slave as he was, old Eleazar of Damascus was not allowed to undertake, in behalf of his young master, the long pilgrimage to Haran unaccompanied. He had ten richly adorned and well-laden camels with their drivers. While now "the heir of promise," with vast material and spiritual wealth, if not in possession at least in promise, is allowed to leave with nothing but the small bag slung on his shoulders, and the pilgrim staff in his hand. The reason of the contrast is obvious. Jacob is fleeing for dear life. The wrath of a deeply-injured brother has compelled him to dispense with all preliminary preparations, and to resort to instantaneous flight. With the thought of the fleet, vindictive huntsman tracking his footsteps, he hastens along the rugged plateau of South Palestine (scarce knowing where), with the dim purpose of reaching, after days and nights of wandering, the home of his maternal relatives on the other side of the Euphrates, a distance of 400 miles. We cannot venture with confidence to describe the precise route he would follow, nor how long time it would occupy before he reached Bethel. The distance between the latter and Beersheba would render the completion of the journey, in less than two days, at least, an impossibility. He would pursue his way through rustic stretches of hill and valley, then all void of historic renown, but which, in coming ages, were to assert for themselves a name and a place unrivaled in sacred interest. Among these, he could hardly miss skirting the gorge from which was to rise the future walls of the great capital, and whose rocky heights were at this time occupied by the strong Canaanite fortress of Jebus. On he would speed through the tortuous windings of the green hills of Judah and Benjamin, sprinkled here and there with clusters of the indigenous olive tree. Probably on the second evening, the sun which had been pouring its rays on the head of the fugitive during the noontide and afternoon hours, was fast sinking behind the mountains of Ephraim; or perhaps as he surmounted at times the higher slopes, he could see beyond the Plains of Sharon--what, after his stationary home-life would be to him a less familiar feature--the great orb dipping its disc in the western wave. Be this as it may, "the last faint pulse of quivering light" was gone; the stars were gemming the heavens, as we watch the lone figure of the exile, his body weary with fatigue, his soul filled with conflicting "home memories," seeking a halting place for the night in the dreary surrounding uplands.

04.03. HOME MEMORIES AND THEIR LESSONS

HOME MEMORIES AND THEIR LESSONS

"Up to me bright boyhood looks,
Heart and mind and soul awake;
Guide my steps, O gracious Father
For my loved one's sake.
Let Your holy counsel lead me;
Let Your light before me shine;
That he may not stumble over
Word or deed of mine!"--Whittier

"Amazingly great is the power which mothers exert over the spiritual life of their offspring. It goes to one's heart to see a young tree, which while still slender and soft might have been trained to grow straight and bear fruit and show a beautiful head, ABANDONED."--Tholuck.

"And Rebekah spoke unto Jacob . Now, therefore, my son, obey my voice according to that which I command you." Genesis 27:6-8.

"Jacob left Beersheba and traveled toward Haran." Genesis 28:10 In subsequent chapters, the unfolding of the Patriarch's dream will be suggestive of topics of highest interest, alike regarding God's providential and spiritual dealings--the soul and eternity. We may well, however, before proceeding, pause on the threshold, and gather a few lessons of a more purely domestic complexion, but not on that account less momentous or important, with which the story is replete. Moreover, though it be mainly filial calls and encouragements--filial duties and responsibilities--to which indirect reference will be made in this volume, we cannot well omit all allusion to those parental influences which so vividly challenge our attention in the opening of the narrative. To the latter we shall give the priority in this chapter, reserving the former for that which follows.

Jacob was trained for long years under the eye of his God-fearing father, who, if we may transfer modern phraseology to an age innocent of theological erudition and book-lore, had himself been a devout student alike in natural and revealed religion. He who delighted to "meditate in the field at eventide" (Genesis 24:63) would not likely allow his child to grow up to youth or manhood with that 'outer oracle' of God unread and unreverenced. No minstrel had yet arisen to sing of "the green pastures, or the still waters" where the Divine Shepherd led His flock; of "the valleys covered with corn, the little hills rejoicing on every side." But the meadows around, fringing the desert, and the oasis where we may imagine the tents were pitched, would then, as now, form a floral lesson-book for the young and enquiring mind; while the bright heavens above, whether vaulted in their canopy

of blue, or arched with the rainbow, or gleaming with oriental stars, would serve as a mighty diagram to illustrate the power, and love, and glory of the Almighty Framer.

Isaac, also, could unfold to his son more sacred revelations of Jehovah than those seen in the hieroglyphics of external nature, the penciling of desert flower, or the lighting of the burning fires in the temple of night. By that desert tent there was an altar on which, morning and evening, sacrifices were slain, and from which the incense cloud ascended. More than this, it is evident from an expression Jacob afterwards employs, that the Divine Being was so constantly realized by him, (although as yet by no outward palpable manifestations), that the "no creed," so common in apostate Christendom, never threw its malignant shadow across his early mental vision. There were other wilds on which he might roam, but not the bleak wilds of sceptic doubt. He speaks of God with the familiarity of a recognized, ever-present friend--"The Lord before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God that fed me all my life long" (Genesis 48:15-16).

These simple but sublime verities, these religious principles in which he had been nurtured from his earliest years, were further illustrated and authenticated by his parents' holy and consistent life. For although Isaac is the least prominent and conspicuous of the founders of the nation, reticent, retiring, unambitious, he never seems to have lost the impress and reward of his early faith, on that memorable occasion when he so meekly bowed his young head in unexampled self-sacrifice at the bidding of his father and his father's God. That patient, uncomplaining act of filial obedience appears to have given a tone of peacefulness to his subsequent character. The well of Lahairoi, the well of Hagar and her outcast boy, where the Patriarch occasionally pitched his tent, was well calculated, from its name and associations, to give Jacob his earliest impressions of the "all-seeing God." Nor must we forget the most venerable form in that primitive domestic circle. During the most impressible period of his existence (from childhood to fifteen years of age), he enjoyed the ever-brightening faith of his grandfather Abraham. We can think of the aged Patriarch Abraham, seated by the tent-door, listening with the subdued rapture of old-age to the ringing laugh of childhood and youth, watching with tender interest the dawn of two young lives with diverse tastes and dispositions rapidly developing. Or we can picture those sacred sabbaths when the family group were assembled, and father and grandfather, uniting the traditions of the past with the fuller Divine disclosures of the present, unfolded in the ears of wives and household-slaves, children and children's children, the earliest stories of providence and grace. "I know him," said Jehovah, speaking of the revered "father of the faithful," "that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment" (Genesis 18:19). When Jacob, indeed, at the time of which we are about to speak, sped on his journey towards Haran, Abraham, the saintly head of the race, had long been gathered to his fathers. But the memories of his life must have been fragrant as ever. The fugitive, therefore, in his flight, could not fail to bear along with him in vivid recollection, despite of counter-acting impressions to which we shall immediately refer, the beneficial influences of a godly home--influences which we may pronounce to have been unique in their kind, and which were never shared before or since by any who have left the paternal roof to pursue the world's great pilgrimage. But there was another side, another and a sadder phase to this parental example.

Mournful exception, also, was it to the general experience--the deteriorating and counteracting influences coming from the quarter which is generally the sacred one. The maternal training which, in a hundred instances to one, is so hallowed and blest, was in the case of Jacob baneful and

blighting. Rebekah (herself inheriting the deceitfulness and treachery of her father's household and race) trained her boy from his earliest years in deceitful deeds. His susceptible nature was only too open to such impressions and teachings. Strange, indeed, seems her resort to the wicked dealings which formed the impelling cause of Jacob's present flight. Strange that she should have deemed it necessary to stoop to a domestic scandal--dishonorable plottings and contrivances which she must have known to be unnecessary. She had been made personally cognizant that a future of greatness, riches, and renown, as one of the spiritual chiefs of a new divine dispensation, had been infallibly secured to her favorite son by what was equivalent to a legal bequest. She may possibly have thought that it would extenuate the guilt of thus clandestinely obtaining the blessing for Jacob, that she was thereby only taking an indirect means of accelerating and fulfilling the divine decrees--accomplishing the divine will and purpose. As if He whom she professed to own and worship could not, in manifold ways unknown to her, fulfill His own pleasure beyond any risk of miscarriage and without human help or expedient.

How different her conduct, with its rationalization and chicanery, from that of more than one of the saintly heroines of the future, whose attitude was simply to "stand still and see the salvation of God." REBEKAH is placed before us in the sacred page an exceptional beacon of warning among the mothers of Israel. What, after all, did she make of her promptness of invention and heartless, though successful, shrewdness? She had indeed obtained the coveted blessing for her son; but she had to pay for the triumph of her scheming and maneuvering, among other penalties, the life-long forfeiture of his presence and companionship. The glimpse she obtained of him that morning when he went forth a trembling, conscience-smitten impostor and outcast from her sight, was, unknown to her at the time, her final one. Their eyes never again met. She was left with a companion for the rest of her years--the son she had basely duped and whose affections she had rightly forfeited. In her solitary moments in the Beersheba tent, how terrible the reflection that the arrow which pierced her was one feathered from her own bosom! The unwritten words of a future inspired penman might in many ways ring their retributive monitions in her ears--"These things have you done, and I kept silence; you thought that I was altogether such an one as yourself; but I will reprove you, and set them in order before your eyes" (Psalms 50:21). Her own bold, reckless challenge was only too painfully and faithfully ratified--"Upon me be your curse, my son!"

Thanks be to God, the annals of Christendom are replete with nobler testimonies to a mother's sovereign power over the young heart. "The Church owes much to the glorious company of Christian mothers. They have saved and adorned it in every age. They obtain no public recognition; but they have their reward, and they are enshrined in the hearts of their sons." (British Quarterly Review.) The mother truly is the Angel of the house. The might of her beneficent sway is more than that of all other moral forces. She speaks and is listened to as the oracle of God. Silent, undemonstrative, it may be, but her influence is like the aroma of the precious nard spoken of in the Gospels, diffusing its fragrance, until the whole heart--the whole house is filled with the odor of the ointment. A father's domain is the mind--the intellect. A mother's is the will and the affections--the heart and the life. "Let France," said another, who knew the silent workings of human nature as well as the tactics and strategy of battlefields, "Let France" said Napoleon, "have good mothers, and she will have good sons."

Yes, and like that fragrant perfume of which we have spoken, these hallowed influences often survive after the casket is broken. Indeed, when the grave has closed upon her, the mother at

times wields a sovereign power which she may have failed to command in life. In her case, more than in any other, there is 'a speech of the dead'--the memory of gentle looks, and kindly utterances, and holy prayers, like the rustle of angels' wings, inciting to all goodness and deterring from all baseness.

Sad, on the other hand, when alike present and posthumous influence may be on the side of evil. When in life, by equivocating word and sinister deed, she may take the keen edge off the moral perceptions, weaken the strength of principle, dull the fires of truth and integrity within the shrine of the youthful soul. Sadder still, when life is ended, the shaft of evil still speeds on its fatal mission of ungodliness, when the hand that drew the bow is mouldering in the dust!

04.04. HOME MEMORIES AND THEIR LESSONS. (continued)

HOME MEMORIES AND THEIR LESSONS. (continued) "Oh take the green ears of an early life,
And lay them on God's altar."--Anon.

"It is one of the peculiar beauties of Scriptural narrative, that no veil is ever drawn across the frailties or the sins of those whom it describes--there is no flattery and there is no omission. In the case of Jacob, we have the whole man placed faithfully before us--his piety and virtues distinctly portrayed, that they may be imitated; his infirmities and errors as candidly avowed, that they may be shunned.--Blunt.

"Look at those who are honest and good, for a wonderful future lies before those who love peace."
Psalms 37:37 "And Jacob went out from Beersheba."-- Genesis 28:10.

If, in following the footsteps of the fugitive from the Beersheba home to the Bethel dreamland, the first lesson suggested has reference to parental duty and obligation, the next is surely that of filial responsibility--the bliss and happiness of early piety, the shame and degradation of early sin. Had it not been for Jacob's scheming of a wicked deceitful plot, he might have left his father's tent on his northern pilgrimage with light heart and elastic step. Sin compels him to steal away a coward and outcast. With all Canaan for his inheritance he is not to be envied. He speaks of it in long subsequent years as "the day of his distress" (Genesis 35:3). The iron had entered into his soul. He was filled with fear; the inward shame of guilt and self-accusation; the consciousness that he had brought this swift exile on himself by a web of falsehoods; all the time knowing the right and doing the wrong. How the flagrant dishonor, involved in the attempt to cheat and out-manoeuvre his blind, unsuspecting father--the unblushing lie, told with unscrupulous effrontery, "I am Esau your firstborn;"--the loud and pathetic wail of injury, and the glance of stifled resentment which rose from the lip and flashed from the eye of the defrauded brother--how would one and all of these memories rise up before him, as with trembling step he now pursued his way! Like Cain he had gone forth with a curse-mark upon him. All the more terrible must have sounded in his ear that despairing cry of the outwitted elder-born, when the latter asserted (Genesis 27:41) that it was only the pang which fratricide would inflict on a father's heart, which prevented him obeying the impulse of instantaneous revenge. Would even that purpose of repression be kept? Might it not before the morrow be cancelled? The thought the dread at least--of so righteous a penalty of his baseness would haunt the fugitive!

Young reader--still it may be within the curtains of the modern tent, or perchance on the eve of setting out from it--let Jacob instruct you by the reverse in his own miserable experience, the blessedness of the spirit of him "in whom there is no deceit" (Psalms 32:2). The night-winds of Bethel sighing around him, the shock of a life of isolation and solitude succeeding that of home endearment, would have been nothing had his been the inner sunshine of a pure heart and stainless soul. But a defiled conscience, far more than an injured brother, was the nemesis that was tracking his steps. He might moreover have had good reason to dread that, with the forfeiture

of human friendships, he had surrendered all claim to a better guardianship. If, in anticipation of coming night-dreams, he had thought of visitants from the spirit-land, it might only have been of avenging angels--those flaming cherubim with burning swords, of which in boyhood he had heard as having guarded the entrance to a forfeited Paradise.

He doubtless afterwards came to be, what might be called, 'a prosperous man.' He lived to see one of his sons the ruler of a great kingdom; but at the same time, in righteous resurrection, these very acts of early deceit and wrongdoing seemed ever and anon to be disinterred, and to reappear in the guilt and punishment of others of his family. It is certainly noteworthy, that his heaviest cares and sorrows arose from the repetition of his own early crimes, especially in the two points which stand out in most painful prominence in his history--unscrupulous deceit, and the violation of the sacredness of human relationships. The bold subtlety and cunning artifice of the Beersheba tent, had its counterpart and revenge in the web of falsehood and outmaneuvering woven by the grasping, hard-hearted LABAN; in the life of drudgery to which the predestined heir of Canaan was subjected, toiling as a bondsman under exasperating demands more cruel than the tyrant's lash. He tells us that his weary frame was well-near prostrated with the burning sun by day, and the chilly frost by night--sleep was banished from his pillow. His breach of filial honor and devotion, on the other hand, had its righteous recompense in the long story of family sorrow--the living trial of a dishonored only daughter; the early grave of a beloved wife; the cruel dissimulation by which jealous brothers led him to believe that his dearest son had been devoured by wild beasts. The hairy mantle with which he himself duped his own half-blind father, having its mimicked retribution in the coat of many colors--the sight of which threatened to bring down his grey hairs in sorrow to the grave.

"God," says Bishop Hall in his "Contemplations" on this passage, "comes oftentimes home to us in our own kind--and even by the sin of others pays us our own when we look not for it." Even when the end of all was near; when life's vesper chimes rang in the Patriarch's ear, there seemed to mingle solemn remembrances, like the tolling of a funeral bell, from that distant past. In the proudest hour of his waning existence he sighs out the confession, "Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been" (Genesis 47:9). Though he clung to the Rock of Ages, he heard the boom of far-off billows, or rather the waves of saddened memory chafed at his feet. He had salvation on his dying lips; but he could not, he dared not say with Paul, "I have fought the good fight!"

Those are indeed to be envied, who, at life's evening hour, are unconscious of having done anything to cause the blush of shame, or to sadden the visions of the past--who can make the grand protest of Samuel--"Here I stand. Testify against me in the presence of the Lord and his anointed. Whose ox have I taken? Whose donkey have I taken? Whom have I cheated? Whom have I oppressed? From whose hand have I accepted a bribe to make me shut my eyes? If I have done any of these, I will make it right." (1 Samuel 12:3). Doubtless one secret of this prophet's evasion of corrupt and corrupting influences, arose from the sunny memories connected with a holy infancy and childhood at Shiloh. Happy is he who can revert to similar hallowed remembrances; who can look back on the long chequered vista of life and think of the household history--the family surroundings--only in connection with lofty principle and earnest faith, loving words and kindly deeds--the FATHER who would recoil from a lie as from a demon's presence; who would scorn all sinister dealing; all deflections from the path of honor--compassing worldly

ends by base and unworthy means--the MOTHER who would rather her children should go penniless than stoop to the heartless stratagem or equivocating deed, that would compromise fidelity to God or man. When such are the bonds which unite parent with son, brother with sister, there can truly in the best, the noblest sense, be no breaches in the circle. Oceans and continents may divide you; weekdays of familiar greeting or the solemn hush of former Sabbaths may be exchanged for the hum of the city and its fevered crowds. But it is not locality which determines the true home and the true rest of the soul. It is not the grave which can destroy it. The most lasting links of dear household life survive and defy landmark and distance. Many a family are far nearer to one another, some of whom may be in different continents; than those living all unsympathetic and uncongenial under the same roof. Retain the love of the Great Father of all; and the tie of sonhood, and sisterhood, and brotherhood, go where you may, will be inviolate and unbroken. Yes, cleave if you can to such sacred retrospects, cleave to them especially in moments of fierce temptation, whether of assailed creed or assailed passion, and let them serve to beat back the adversary. You may have little or no other patrimony. It matters not. "No riches," says Lord Bacon, "are comparable to the standing upon the vantage ground of truth." By the allegiance of the soul to honor, purity, and integrity, you are served heir to that which is better than thousands of gold and of silver. These are heritages which never die, which no fire can consume, and of which no throws of capricious fortune can defraud you. These are 'treasures' which will come to your help, and may be the means of averting moral bankruptcy, in moments when you are brought to feel the weakness of all that is strong, and the insecurity of all that is human.

Beware of the false, conventional estimate of earthly riches and honors. Virtue is wealth; principle is wealth. Raise your protest against the world's perversion of a divine saying--"A man's life consists not in the abundance of the things that he possesses" (Luke 12:15). Be assured you can know no ruin and disaster, so fearful as the insolvency of character. No darkening and eclipse of your earthly sky can equal the blackness and the shame of evil-doing, the tyranny of servile vices, the hell of a heart no longer pure. Age has no such decrepitude as that of guilt.

Aye, and remember too, as in Jacob's case and experience, THE POWER OF MORAL EVIL TO LIVE ON, AND PERPETUATE ITSELF. His early failings and propensities clung to him. The foundations of truth had been early shaken, and there was much in his character of the worldly-wise and calculating, the crafty and fictitious to the very last; as if he never could get altogether disentangled from the coil of the inward foe. The foul wrong cannot be incarcerated within bars--chained to the hour or place of its committal; it cleaves with remorseless tenacity; do what you will to be rid of it. The violated conscience, like the broken mirror, cannot be pieced together again so as never to show its flaws; the chime-bell, when once cracked, can never again give forth the same clear ring of goodness. By a natural and moral law, deterioration--unless arrested by other counteractive forces of which we shall afterwards speak--becomes inevitable. After the horror of the first plunge into sin, every fresh committal becomes easier.

Thank God, however, we can assert the converse too. Just as the base, or unworthy deed leaves the slimy trace of the serpent in its path; so the resolute wrestling, the moral struggle with temptation will preserve the fruits of victory far on in life, yes even to a dying day. The impulses of good as well as those of evil send out their moral vibrations through all space and all time.

You who have the dew of youth upon you, be assured, life is no mimic, mythic battle. If you are to bear heroically the strain of the contest, to conquer the demon-horde of passion, or the dark agony of doubt, look well to your armor and lose no time in proving it. Delay may be perilous. Your safety lies in early and immediate consecration to the divine service. Be it yours, conscious of the danger of procrastination, to say in the words of one of Bunyan's heroes, as a true recruit in the a great army of the faithful--"Put my name down, sir, for I too am to be one of the host of the Lord." Say not that you are temptation-proof. No man is; and one false step, one deflection from the path, may result in the dreadful plunge down the precipices of ruin. If you try to shape your own destiny independent of God, and the soul, and eternity, be assured destruction is ahead.

How all-momentous therefore to you are the words which head this chapter--"the outset from home;" the first time alone in the great world with its bewildering surroundings; commencing, each on his own responsibility, to build the giant bridge--the infinite viaduct--which spans immortal being, linking time with eternity--and to determine whether it is to bear traces of untempered mortar and insecure foundation, or whether it be work which is to endure. However gentle and tender the restraints of the parental dwelling just left--perhaps by very reason of these--there is apt often, at this new crisis, to steal over the spirit a dangerous feeling of independence; what I might call a despotic consciousness of self-power. The youthful pilgrim feels himself reveling in a new sphere of untrammelled freedom. The old natural spontaneous obedience is at an end; he is sovereign of a new realm of his own. The world is all before him; he has his own paths to select and his own moral weaknesses to indulge. He has no other arbiter for appeal but the bidding of his own sweet will. Let him beware of too readily abandoning these home moorings, and of drifting out without helm or compass amid the perils of a treacherous sea.

Now is the time to test the strength of character and the stability of principle, when thus confronting alone, unwatched and unwarded, and with no patrol over the Trinity of the world's forces--"the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life." When the charmed Tempter lulled asleep in the tent awakes, then is the time to have courage to repel his insidious wiles, and to show that no new scenes or associations will tempt to swerve from loyal allegiance to duty and to God. The first heroic resistance of temptation, the first stern refusal to capitulate the moral fortress is a noble point gained. The first refusal to resort to the gambling table; the first refusal to conniving at fraud; the first turning away with firm step from the haunt of intemperance; the first firm and loathing recoil from the siren call of impurity. To be able, regarding one and all of these, to say in the words of good Bishop Hooper at the stake, when he had the offer to barter conscience for dear life, "If you love my soul, away with it!"

All honor to those who show, at once and unmistakably, their colors amid associates of doubtful principle or evil morals; associates who may carry moreover contagion under a fascinating exterior and congenial manners--it may even be in conjunction with culture and accomplishment. Specially would I say, in these times, be on your guard against the attempts, under many a subtle form, to tamper with the beliefs of earlier days and often of more trusted teachers; as if it were something noble to doubt, as if it were not something nobler still to believe; groping your darksome way, not to a Bethel with its angel-guarded pillow and heavenly voices, but to some defiled and desecrated portals with their 'Ichabod' of departed glory.

"I do not presume," said the late Lord Lytton, "to arrogate the office of the preacher; but believe me, as a man of books and a man of the world, that you inherit a religion which in its most familiar form--in the lowly prayer that you learned from your mother's lips, will save you from the temptations to which life is exposed more surely than all which the pride of philosophy can teach." Remember, you have no second trial. Youth comes but once. "The outset" is a solitary landmark in your life history. What would many who have been irrevocably ruined by folly and passion give to have your chance again; the shadow moved back on the dial; the white unblotted page yet to be written; the gates of an unexplored and unsaddened future yet to be opened--standing, girded athletes, with the possibilities of a glorious race before them! At my first visit to the fairest of Italian cities, I was enthralled, as all travelers are, with the two well-known colossal works of Michael Angelo, his statues of "Morning" and "Evening." Both equally challenge admiration. But there is one marked difference between them, doubtless accidental so far as the great sculptor was himself concerned, but which has conveyed to more than one spectator a suggestive spiritual lesson. The figure of "Evening" is finished. Every feature of the face has received its last touch; the chisel could do no more. It is a type, in breathing marble, of the close of existence, the completed character, the moral expression fixed forever, incapable of alteration. With the other, the figure of "Morning," it is different. The face there remains in rough outline. We can only discern the initial strokes of the master. All the delicate work of hand and chisel still remain to be completed. Equally significant and expressive symbol of Life's commencement, the outset of the journey--the moral lineaments all unhewn, habits and character, and bias unformed--the character yet to be molded.

Youthful reader, the chisel is still in your own hand. Are the features to be loving or unloving; generous or selfish; noble or base? When life's evening comes, is the living marble to take the shape of scornful look and sensual lip and lowering brow; or is it to be the calm restful "sleep of the Beloved;"--the image of the Pilgrim-dreamer who begins life's battles with the angels, the bright ladder, and the realized divine presence, and ends with the song of triumph?

Beware, we may still further venture to add, beware, above all, of your BESETTING SIN whatever that may be. Keep your eye on the loopholes that require to be specially guarded. Jacob's hereditary tendency, the vice of Laban's family which had transmitted its moral taint to his mother and himself as a fatal inheritance, was covetousness--the lust of gain, the basest, perhaps the most ineradicable of the secondary lower appetites, with its inseparable accompaniment of duplicity, unscrupulous deceit, and degrading selfishness. Let whatever you feel to be your master-temptation form the subject of wakeful vigilance and constant self-scrutiny, taking with you the Word of God as your surest weapon of defense in the hour of peril and conflict. In an after episode in the life of Jacob (Genesis 32:10) he expressly tells us that in this outset from the tent of Beersheba, he had in his hand nothing but a pilgrim staff (Genesis 32:10). Happy for those in an equally momentous epoch, when for the first time alone in the great world, brought to grapple with the stern realities of life--their head bared to the night and darkness--who have taken as the one trusted prop of their future journey what has proved to thousands better than earthly supports--"Your rod and YOUR STAFF they comfort me." "With this staff," said Dr. Marsh, near the close of a saintly life, as he greeted friends in his sick-room by holding out the Sacred Volume--"With this staff have I traveled through my pilgrimage, and with this staff will I pass over Jordan." Nor can I better close this chapter than in the weighty, earnest words of another illustrious wayfarer whose acquaintance and personal kindness will ever be to the writer a treasured

memory. "You are about," said the late Sir James Simpson addressing his students, "to pass into the busy and bustling scenes of active life. The great city of the world is already throwing open her gates to receive you. Through that city you must now pass, whether through its darkness or its splendor, its profligacy or its virtue, its misery or its happiness, and in it all the honors of time and of immortality are to be gained or lost. . . Pursue earnestly and undeviatingly the direct course of Christian and professional duty, and then you need fear not. But tremble if you allow yourself to be drawn aside from it at any one point. Temptations that may at first lure you from your path with the gentle hand of a indulgence or a pleasure, will, if yielded to, soon hold you with the iron grasp of a giant. Your future career is a matter of your own selection, and will be regulated by the conduct which you choose to follow. That career may be one of happiness and of self-regret, one of honor or of obscurity, one of wealth or of poverty. During it the present fond hopes of professional fame and fortune, that breathe in the breasts of all of you, may be won or lost, may be fulfilled or falsified, may be nobly realized or ignobly ruined."

04.05. THE CERTAIN PLACE

THE CERTAIN PLACE

"As I walked through the wilderness of this world, I lighted on a certain place where was a den, and laid me down in that place to sleep."--Pilgrim's Progress.

"Jacob left Beersheba and set out for Haran. When he reached a certain place, he stopped for the night because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones there, he put it under his head and lay down to sleep." Genesis 28:10-11

We must now follow Jacob on his lonely way, as after successive days of journeying, under the blaze of an eastern sun, the shadows of eventide were gathering round him. As the flaming orb was descending, and the hills of Benjamin were rearing their rounded crests in front, he would naturally assign a preference for his next halt to the place familiar to him by name as his grandfather's first camping ground and sanctuary. The gates of Luz had already probably been shut, like those of eastern towns, at the close of day. But it would be no strange or unusual occurrence for the exile to spend the night on a grassy couch under the canopy of heaven. He must have been familiarized to such an experience in his pastoral life at Beersheba. In the hush of that somber twilight, the spot where he was directing his steps could not surely be approached without emotion. Every relic of the tent whose image had been stored in child-memory was doubtless gone; but while the movable canvas shelter left no trace behind, the altar-stones would still be there to memorialize the devotion of him who reared them, and to revive and suggest sacred lessons to his chartered heir. These 'stones of Bethel' would be invested with an interest somewhat akin, only far deeper and intenser, to that which is associated with the Register in the Family Bible of modern times--the genealogical record of ancestral piety and worth, often the one heirloom of the Christian dwelling. While the ruins of Bethel's Sanctuary spoke of his fathers, may they not also, after the exciting and agitating events of the preceding days, have formed the first mute remembrances of his fathers' God. They may thus have rendered his mind more susceptible to those devotional feelings we shall find evoked by the vision so soon to follow. In the great pilgrim journey, of which Jacob's was the type, we are in one sense the creatures of circumstance. The Patriarch, when he left his resting place that morning, must have had a dim premonition where, as a wayfaring man, he would turn aside to tarry for the night. It is not so with us. Often, at least, the turns and windings of the earthly way are very different from those we dreamt of at life's early start. Our own anticipations how often thwarted; our sagest forecastings how often singularly reversed! Those who commenced with firm step and buoyant hope, have been arrested before noontide with the unforeseen 'Hill Difficulty,' or made to leave the sunny path to thread the gloomy ravine--while those who began faltering and in darkness, have reached, almost without impediment, the goal of their desires and aspirations.

Each, also, has to tread his own separate and peculiar road with few features of resemblance to that of others. The two youths who may leave their village homes the self-same day to enter on the stern realities of life, may be sundered ever after in their pursuits and avocations, their sympathies

and fellowships. Or, to vary the figure, they embark from the same haven, their sails are filled by the same gale; but either they part for different shores; different charts severing them on the great ocean highway; or else, for the one, there is the favoring propitious breeze, while for the other, there is buffeting storm and fatal disaster. But while all this is true, there is another experience of a different character, as comforting as it is real, which the words at the head of this chapter without any violent strain in their meaning suggest— that is, that there is a Higher Hand and, a Higher Will than our own, that directs this "reaching a certain place;" that no events in our history are fortuitous, but all form part of a divine plan. The Jews had a belief that a guardian angel waited at every birth to attend the spirit through life, its protector, defender, and guide. What may be regarded in their case as only a beautiful figment of imagination, is at least a sublime reality regarding God. He compasses our path and our lying down, and is acquainted with all our ways. In quaint oriental simile, He is said to "put our tears into His bottle," and to "keep us as the apple of His eye." There is, there ought to be, no such thing in the Christian creed as chance in the appointments of existence. Every turn in the road has a divine signboard and warning, if we would only see it, and read it, and hear it—"This is the way, walk in it." The saddest of all things is to crush ourselves on the rock of fatalism. The dreariest of all beliefs is that of an impersonal God, who has relegated His sovereignty to whim and accident; left man to a capricious destiny, to be driven by the wanton winds here and there like the leaves of the forest. The Pilgrim, day by day, follows "the certain road," and eventide by eventide reaches "the certain place." In the case of Jacob, this Almighty Guide authenticated and verified, in the after vision, His directing hand and ever-present guardianship. Each future returning night, the sentiment at least of an inspired though yet unwritten legend must have sounded in the dreamer's ears—"I will lie down in peace and sleep, for you alone, O Lord, will keep me safe." (Psalms 4:8). In one sense we err when we speak of God's 'Providential dealings;' for in doing so, we seem to limit or restrict them to some specific and exceptional experiences--some crisis-hours in life; while the simple but sublime verity is, that there is no moment when we are exempt from His paternal supervision. In the words just quoted, "He is ACQUAINTED with ALL our ways." Of course it follows that if He interests Himself in the minute and the trivial, much more may we trace His hand and own His guidance in great emergencies.

Take some other analogous Scriptural examples, illustrating what is thus called the doctrine of particular Providence. The woman of Samaria 'arrived at a certain place,' at the very noontide hour when the weary Traveler (but in truth the Son of God who had redeemed her with His blood) was passing from Judea to Galilee. Lydia, the seller of purple, 'arrived at a certain place,' when she found herself at a riverside prayer-meeting, near the European city of Philippi, some hundred miles from her own Asiatic Thyatira, just at the time when the Great Apostle was present to cheer her heart with the full revelation of God's grace and mercy. The Ethiopian chamberlain 'arrived at a certain place,' when, returning from Jerusalem through the Gaza desert, a Pilgrim Missionary confronted his chariot, and, expounding to him truths he had sought for in vain amid the rites and splendors of an abrogated ritual, sent him on his way rejoicing. Nor need we confine ourselves to Bible instances. Many a youth among ourselves has 'arrived at a certain place' immediately after leaving, like Jacob, for the first time the parental roof. The call to a secular profession or trade, the hope of promotion and advancement, directed his steps to the distant city; but it was the means of taking him to some hallowed dreamland--some Bethel sanctuary, where he had unfolded to him the plenitude of redeeming love. The words of everlasting life came home with saving energy to his soul, altering from that hour the whole current of his mental and moral history. In these and

similar cases there was apparently nothing but accidental occurrences, curious coincidences; but the true key to all, "the reading and interpretation of the writing," is to be found in the saying of Jacob's illustrious son--"So then it was not you that brought me here, but God." "The certain place" ("THE place," as it is in the original), was of His appointed choosing; "He knows the way that I take" (Job 23:10).

Reader! be it yours obediently, lovingly, joyfully to conform to the arrangement of your outward circumstances as the decree of Heaven. If conscience within, can countersign the leadings and indications of Providence without, then accept the career, be what it may, which has been opened to you and assigned you. Cast yourself without reserve or hesitation on 'the certain place.' It may be unpromising--not what you yourself would have selected or desired. Bleak and unattractive in its mere outward aspect would that moorland, doubtless, be to Jacob. Tufts of rough and rugged heather, scorched with the remorseless rays of noonday, take the place of verdant meadows with beds of anemone and fragrant thyme.

But, undeterred by the cheerless and unloving surroundings, he sets about preparing his couch. So it may be in your case as regards the surroundings of your daily life. There may be little else than what corresponds in the experience of the Bethel-dreamer to the ledge of rock and the deepening shadow, the drenching dew and the sigh of the night wind; no tent for the traveler, no hospice for the pilgrim. Like the patriarch on an after occasion, you may be tempted even to say in your moments of despondency, "All these things are against me." But, "be still, and know that I am God!" The shuttles may dart ever so capriciously to us, but the weaving of the life-web--is in the hands of the Great Craftsman.

If 'the certain place' He selects be not amid the blooming gardens of Gerar, or by the wells of Beersheba, but in the dreary uplands of Benjamin, He has some wise reason for it, and He will yet, in His own time and way, vindicate the wisdom and rectitude of His procedure. If He sees it to be well, sunlit heights may yet disclose themselves in the wilderness. The rough stones of the desert may yet, as in the case of the sleeper at Bethel, be transmuted into steps for angels. That was a dreary place in olden-time for the future minstrel of Israel, amid the rocky wilderness of southern Judah, when he was chased like a panting gazelle on the mountains, uttering ever and anon the plaintive soliloquy, "I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul;" but after generations would have been defrauded of the most touching portion of his Psalter, had he known no experience but that of "the green pastures and still waters." That was a dreary place for Paul of Tarsus, when he was flung a shipwrecked castaway on the rocks of Melita. But there was work to do even on such an inhospitable shore. So, without a murmur on his lips, he gathered his "bundle of sticks," and kindled the fire, and left the morrow, with the unfolding of its yet unknown calls and duties, to that God--whose he was, and whom he served. That was a dreary--a still drearier place for him, when immured in a Roman dungeon, the itinerant Apostle felt the chain of captivity dangling at his side--his life-work apparently arrested. How would the chafed imprisoned eagle beat his wings against the enclosing bars, and long for freedom to speed as aforesaid from city to city! It may have been so at the time, but he could write afterwards on the retrospect--"everything that has happened to me here has helped to spread the Good News." That was a dreary and cheerless exile, when a later but not less illustrious dreamer than Jacob, was confined within Bedford jail--his lips muffled, his message silenced. The Church could ill spare her humble but stalwart champion. Yes, honest Bunyan, it was hard for rough, stirring, enlightened eloquence like yours, to be thus

gagged within those silent walls. But be still! The God who sent you to that 'certain place' has work for you to do there. Dream your dream, weave your similitudes--the hundreds of Bedford miss you; but the world's millions will yet bless God, and you in Him, for that cell and that chain! That was a spot of dreary solitude, the sick-chamber of Richard Baxter, with its experience of racking, excruciating pain. It was hard, amid the cherished activities of a consecrated life, to drag about from day to day that weary body, the gates of death ever ajar, added to other heavy sorrows. But that nook in the dark valley, that gloomy niche in the Temple, was assigned and appointed for reasons unknown to the meek sufferer. These forty years of prolonged weakness and pain enabled him to dream a kindred dream for behalf of the suffering children of God in all future ages--not of the Pilgrim's Journey, but of the Pilgrim's Home. The "Saint's Rest" could never have been written but by one who, with trembling hand and tear-dimmed eye, waited in habitual anticipation of the welcome summons within the Gate into the City.

Perhaps by none are these lessons of 'the certain place' more needed, than by those who are in the thick of the great battle of life--sore pressed in the unequal fight; looking, it may be, with envious eye on fortunate comrades who have already attained victory and promotion, while they are still lagging behind--the base-born spirits of dissatisfaction and discontent, hardest of all to grapple with among a demon horde of like assailants. Even those who have little reason to complain of harassing conflicts, are often too apt to make their allotments the cause of heart-burning. They long for some better, imaginary destiny--something other, at all events, than that which they have. It is the child-allegory of the firefly that was ever moping and fretting because it was not a star; of the marigold and daisy that drooped their heads and refused the light, because they were not the rose and the lily; the spikes of grass and coils of lichen that spurned the rain, and dew, and sunshine, because they were not exalted to the rank of oak and cedar.

It is enough to say that He who 'appoints the bounds of our habitation,' knows what is best for us. The Pilgrimage is shaped not by us but for us. "The lot may be cast into the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord" (Proverbs 16:33). Do nothing that will tend to thwart the Divine plan, and by seeking some softer pillow and more curtained couch to defraud yourselves of 'the visions of God.' Believe it, it is not outward fullness and prosperity which secure the softest, balmiest rest. There is a striking verse in Ezekiel where God thus speaks of the peace enjoyed by His own chosen people, even when called to a life of outward hardship and endurance--"They shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods" (Ezekiel 34:25). If conscience be pure and unsullied, then His lullaby can hush to quiet repose amid the dews of the wilderness, or under the boughs of the forest, as well (often better) than on the couch of down. He can convert the bed of rock into the Gate of Heaven. Yes, and when the end of all is reached, and the Bethel road is retrospectively traversed, the testimony of many a Pilgrim will be joyfully re-echoed as you stand by the gate of the many mansions--"He led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation!"

04.06. NIGHT SHADOWS

NIGHT SHADOWS

"Jacob left Beersheba and set out for Haran. When he reached a certain place, he stopped for the night because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones there, he put it under his head and lay down to sleep." Genesis 28:10-11

None but those who have been in Palestine, can understand or appreciate the beauty and grandeur of an eastern sunset. The tamest of its landscapes is ennobled and transfigured with the magical light of 'Eventide.'

While many such scenes may occur to the recollection, there is pre-eminently one which, owing to its being seen from so many different points, leaves on the mental vision an ineffaceable impression. I refer to the varied tints on the mountain wall of Moab, when its dull rocks are transmuted by 'the last fires of day' into a delicate mass of purple, amethyst, and gold. These remarkable mountains of the Land of Promise would in all likelihood now meet the eye of Jacob. From the upland territory, along which he hastened, this great trans-Jordanic "bastion" is specially conspicuous. He would watch the melting hues until, one by one, they had died away, and left nothing but the cold grey mass behind. Not an inapt picture of his own inner experience at the moment; when what had given to life its best morning brightness had faded from his sight. "The sun had set!" And if a Palestine sunset is gorgeous, equally so, also, we may add, is its nightly sky. No wonder the Israelites loved to travel to their great annual celebration when the luster of moon and stars irradiated their path (Isaiah 30:29), the pensive hour of thought doubtless adding intensity to their pious enthusiasm. Possibly these brilliant galaxies spoke to Jacob as they could speak to none other. Fugitive as he was, he could not be unconscious of the fact that he had been served heir to the covenant promise. Could he fail to think of those evenings of his boyhood, at Kirjath-Arba, when his aged grandfather had led him forth by the hand, and pointing him upwards to the myriad lights gemming the skies, told him how the God he served had made them the silent prophets and evangelists of the future. "Look now toward heaven, and count the stars, if you be able to number them. And he said unto him, So shall your seed be" (Genesis 15:5). Nor is what we have now said regarding those hours of night, when "echo slumbers," to be relegated to the domain of mere sentiment. It is the season which brings God and spiritual things specially near the soul. The garish light of day is shut out. The din of the world's traffic and busy industry is hushed. Night is a great temple, in whose courts the Omniscient Presence is specially felt and realized.

"It is a season for the quiet thought,
And the still reckoning with yourself.
The night gives back the spirits of the dead,
And the heart, calling its affections up,
Counts its wasted ingots. Life stands still,

And settles like a fountain; and the eye
Sees clearly through its depths, and notes all
That stirred its troubled waters."

It was "by night" Eliphaz was startled from his couch with the Divine appearance and the Divine voice. Night was the season when the King of Judah rose to his highest inspiration. "I meditate on You in the night watches," has been the utterance of many a devout spirit, since the Great Minstrel sang "The heavens are telling." When Jacob, twenty years later, wrestled with the covenant angel at Jabbok, it was at night. The wrestling continued until morning dawn, when it ceased as if the special season for Divine communication was then over--"Let me go," said the mysterious Personage, "for the day breaks." May it not have been so with the patriarch now. The natural darkness was preparing his soul the better for the disclosure of inner light. It was the outer portico which conducted him into 'the Most Holy Place,' the haunt of ministering Seraphim. Under the gleam of these celestial altar lights, the sense of the Divine nearness and presence comes over him, and before he left that spot he would be able to add his joyful experience, "I remembered Your name, O Lord, in the night" (Psalms 119:55).

All this, however, has a higher and truer spiritual acceptation. No pilgrim is without his night season. There are moments in every life when, in a figurative sense of the words, "The sun has set."

Such a 'setting' is that, when suddenly summoned to a bed of pain and sickness, when "wearisome nights are appointed." The world, that was so lately clothed with light as with a garment, puts on its sackcloth attire, and the sufferer is made familiar only with the dim lamp, the restrained footfall, the whisper with bated breath.

Such a sunset is that, when some treasured orb in the domestic skies is quenched; when, through the long, dreary night-watches, sleep is banished, and the pulses throb like the heaving of the ocean which cannot rest. Nothing seems to fall on the ear but the dirge over buried love, and a later cry of the patriarch of Bethel is wrung from the broken heart, "I AM bereaved!" But with many, how often are these, and such like seasons, made the foretastes of the heavenly dream; the introduction to Divine realities before unthought of. It is affliction, in some one of its diversified forms, which has dictated or repeated the utterance of the Beloved disciple in his island prison--"I saw a door opened in heaven, and I heard a voice saying unto me, Come up here!" (Revelation 4:1). The discipline and strengthening of the moral nature cannot be effected amid the distractions and fascinations of broad day; but when the sun of earthly prosperity goes down, in the realized loneliness and desolation which steals over the soul, out come the clustering stars of Divine promise. These require to have the blaze of light withdrawn, in order that they may be revealed to the spiritual eye. The saying becomes true, "God, our Maker, gives songs in the night." The sorrowing come forth comforted, the weak strengthened, the doubting confirmed--yes, and often the gloomy and the selfish are transfigured into the noble, and manly, and sympathetic. "By the sadness of the countenance, the heart is made better." With some who read these pages it may be more than the shades which follow sunset--the gloom of one solitary watch. It may be, as with Jacob, a "tarrying all night." The infinity of darkness may seem gathering and deepening around you, every star swept from your stormy skies. Night-watch succeeds night-watch, but no response

of the warder is heard with tidings of the dawn.

TRUST GOD IN THE DARK. This is the highest effort and triumph of faith. Whether it be the darkness engendered by bodily affliction or by inward trouble--physical, intellectual, or spiritual; your "tarrying time," as much as "the certain place," of which we have spoken, is of His appointing. Jesus tarried in distant Perea two days after getting the urgent message from the disconsolate sisters at Bethany. How they marveled (perhaps murmured) at the apparently strange, unusual indifference with which the tidings sent by them were received; instead of hastening, as they expected, up the Jericho valley to emancipate them at once from their anguish. When He did come, His 'tarrying' elicited the reproachful remonstrance--"If You had been here, our brother had not died!" How did that Lord of life and love, however, subsequently vindicate the wisdom and righteousness of His mysterious delay? But for that 'tarrying,' what lessons would have been lost to the family of Bethany--to His own disciples at the approach of the great crisis-hour; to believers in the Apostolic age--to the Church until the end of time. His gentle rebuke to the outspoken child of sorrow is what He whispers in the ear of many still, who are ready in His tarrying seasons to accuse the love and rectitude of His dealings--"Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?" (John 11--40). To not a few, who for the present are thus dwelling on the night-watches of Bethel, instead of the sunny memories of Hebron and Beersheba, the 'needs be' may yet be made apparent even here. At all events, be assured, these gloomy experiences during the exile of earth, are designed only to lead you the more to center your desires and thoughts on "The Better Country"--to endear to you the more the home and harbor of the skies. "Commit everything you do to the Lord. Trust him, and he will help you. He will make your innocence as clear as the dawn, and the justice of your cause will shine like the noonday sun." Psalms 37:5-6.

"The way is dark, my Father! Cloud on cloud

Is gathering thickly over my head, and loud

The thunders roar above me. See, I stand

Like one bewildered! Father, take my hand.

"The day goes fast, my Father! and the night

Is drawing darkly down. My faithless sight

Sees ghostly visions; fears, a spectral band,

Encompass me. O Father! take my hand.

"The way is long, my Father! and my soul

Longs for the rest and quiet of the home,

While yet I journey through this weary land,

Keep me from wandering. Father, take my hand."

There is a gracious answer--

"The way is dark, my child! but leads to light,

I would not always have you walk by sight;
My dealings now you can not understand,
I meant it so, but I will take your hand.
"The way is long, my child! but it shall be
Not one step longer than is best for thee;
And you shall know, at last, when you shall stand
Safe at the goal, how I did take your hand."

Youth has often its own exceptional experiences of sunset and night. Not to speak of others, one phase of that darkness, often too among the noblest and most ingenuous minds, is that to which I have already incidentally alluded--the darkness and convulsion of intellectual doubt, an experience so well described by the poet, with Bethel for the foreground and imagery--

"I falter where I firmly trod;
And falling with my weight of cares
Upon the world's great altar stairs
That slope through darkness up to God:
"I stretch lame hands of faith, and grope,
And gather dust and chaff, and call
To what I feel is Lord of all,
And faintly trust the larger hope."--"In Memorium."

Religion hitherto has been accepted on trust. But the young explorer, waking up to the consciousness of fresh intellectual convictions and responsibilities, begins to test for himself the strength of the old foundations. Not infrequently, also, we must add, in the traffic with baser minds, disquieting misgivings are at times unhappily insinuated; the stable is made to seem insecure, the strong links of the golden chain seem to pulverize into dust, the vessel of faith is adrift from its moorings. Perhaps worse than all, in the sudden revulsion of family influences, the crushing secret of these devil-born doubts has to be borne alone and unshared, the hand of home sympathy and loving authority and counsel has relaxed its grasp. The future is blank--there is truly a "tarrying all night, for the sun is set!"

What is the panacea (one panacea at least), in ministering to a mind diseased like this? It is prayer to God to enlighten the eyes of your understanding. "Enlighten my eyes lest I sleep the sleep of death" (Psalms 13:3). I repeat, that very agony of doubt is not infrequently part of a tribulation through which many of God's best and truest children have to pass--"walking in darkness and seeing no light." Their cry of despondency is "Watchman, how much longer until morning? When will the night be over?" The watchman replies, "Morning is coming, but night will soon follow." (Isaiah 21:11-12). Be assured the utterance of simple faith--"Lord, I believe, help my unbelief;"

"Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Your law," will not be uttered in vain. "Unto the upright there arises light in the darkness." Who is among you that fears the Lord, that obeys the voice of His servant, that walks in darkness and has no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God" (Psalms 112:4; Isaiah 50:10). "There is, indeed," says Bishop Ellicott, an able scholar and divine, "a quick and living truth in every sentence of the blessed Gospel, and they who read with a loving and reverential spirit shall find it in its fullest measures. Oh! pray fervently against the first motions of a spirit of doubt and questioning. By those prayers which you learned at a mother's knee, by that holy history which perchance you first heard from a mother's lips, give not up the first childlike faith of earlier, and it may be purer days--that simple heroic faith which such men as Niebuhr and Neander knew how to appreciate and to glorify, even while they felt its fullest measures could never be their own. Remember that when faith grows cold, love soon passes away, and hope soon follows it. And oh! believe me, that the world cannot exhibit a spectacle more utterly mournful, more full of deepest melancholy, than a young yet doubting, a fresh yet unloving, an eager yet hopeless and forsaken heart."

Go then, pray on, trust on, believe on, hope on, and "the still, small voice" will in due time come--after the thunder, and the earthquake, and the hurricane have spent themselves. The sun is only below the horizon. "O my God! Now I am deeply discouraged, but I will remember your kindness— from Mount Hermon, the source of the Jordan, from the land of Mount Mizar. I hear the tumult of the raging seas as your waves and surging tides sweep over me. Through each day the Lord pours his unfailing love upon me, and through each night I sing his songs, praying to God who gives me life." Psalms 42:6-8 And then, in the midst of these night-watches and night experiences, whether in the case of youth, or manhood, or old age; when we think of Jacob--when we think of ourselves--can we fail to make the application which some of the early writers give to this passage, as suggestive of One, who Himself, (and that for no sin of His own) left His Father's house "a Pilgrim," and all solitary and alone traversed the desert of earth! How often did He, also, in a literal sense, stretch His weary frame under the open canopy of heaven, with no other covering but His cloak, to protect Him from the dews of night. How often had He the stone of Palestine, or the coil of rope, on which to rest His head; and at last a harder pillow even than these! In our nights of darkness and sorrow, well may we recall the Divine experience of this Prince of sufferers; the sun set, but no sanctity of stars to relieve the gloom--"My God! My God! why have You forsaken Me? I have trodden the winepress alone." Prayer was His resort in the very climax of His woe--"Father!" "O My Father!" "Being in an agony, He prayed the more earnestly." It turned His night season into a time of invigoration and strength. So also will it be in the experience of His waiting people. "The Lord is near unto all who call upon Him"--"A very present help in trouble." In every Gethsemane of life, an angel will be sent from heaven to strengthen. It is in "the fourth watch," when the darkness is often deepest, that He Himself, mightier than any angel, still comes "walking on the sea." It is when "the sun has set" on the mountains of Bethel, that, as we shall presently find--

"The sky is as a temple arch;

The blue and wavy air

Is glorious with the spirit-march

Of messengers of prayer."

04.07. THE PILLOW OF STONES

THE PILLOW OF STONES

"And will You hear the fevered heart

To You in silence cry?

As the inconstant wild fires dart

Out of the restless eye.

"You will, for many a languid prayer

Has reached You from the wild

Since the lone mother, wandering there,

Cast down her fainting child.

"You will be there and not forsake,

To turn the bitter pool

Into a bright and breezy lake,

The throbbing brow to cool!

"Until, left awhile with You alone,

The willful heart be sincerely to own

That He, by whom our bright hours shone,

Our darkness best may rule."--Christian Year.

"The wilderness and the solitary place."-- Isaiah 35:1.

"Jacob left Beersheba and set out for Haran. When he reached a certain place, he stopped for the night because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones there, he put it under his head and lay down to sleep." Genesis 28:10-11 The fugitive, having selected his resting-place for the night, would again unbind his belt and open the bag containing the few provisions with which doubtless he had been supplied on his hasty departure. After concluding his simple meal, he betakes himself to his stony pillow. In the preceding chapter, we have taken the 'night' and the 'sunset' as figuratively descriptive of a peculiar class of sorrows; such as the darkness of personal and family bereavement, or the yet denser gloom of intellectual and spiritual doubt. May we not make the title of the present chapter suggestive of a different phase of trial what may be brought under the category of the hardships of existence--the fight with adverse circumstances--the often hopeless struggle with secular things. This, with many, (though feebly realized by those in affluence and

abundance), is indeed a 'pillow of stone.' Hapless seems the destiny of such sufferers! The sun sets placidly on the hamlets in the valley--curling smoke, and gleaming lights telling of peace and serenity, while they are out with Jacob in the bleak uplands, with scanty coverlet and downless couch. Can they fail to contrast that happy fire-glow and the music of child-voices, with the cold of the rock and the sigh and sob of the night wind; perhaps the memory of some Beersheba tent, with similar loving hands and cheerful faces in the far away of life, only adding a fresh pang of bitterness to the experiences of the present hour? We have known not a few of such cases, when the cruel load, pressing like the chill of an avalanche on the soul, seems as if it were greater than could be borne, and the cry of wild despair rises unsuccoured. Why such a fate as this? Why this toiling misery? Why the rod instead of the smile? Why the pitiless rain streaming on the desert rocks, instead of the sunshine falling on the sheltering roof? Why, while OTHERS can warble of

"Lilies white,

A painted skiff with a singing crew,

Sky reflections soft and bright,

Tremulous crimson, gold and blue." Or others, of

"A shining reach,

A crystal couch for the moonbeam's rest,

Starry ripples along the beach,

Sunset songs from the breezy west."

Why should MY experience be--

"foam and roar.

Restless heave and passionate dash,

Shingle-rattle along the shore,

Gathering boom and thundering crash?"

We cannot reply. It would be presumption to attempt answering the question; and the more so, when the mysterious fact is too patent, that the rough stone seems at times the appointed lot of the brave and loving, the generous and true; while the soft bed and the fine linen are often bestowed on the selfish and grasping, the base and unworthy. It is the old startling perplexity embodied in the plaintive wail of the Psalmist--"My steps had well-near slipped. For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world" (Psalms 73:2-3, Psalms 73:12).

All we can say is, that in the case of Jacob (and is it not so in the case of many?) it was the stony pillow which was followed by the heavenly vision. If we may so express it, it was through an iron, not a golden gate, that he had revealed to him the vista of angels and the dream of God. He was not the first who was able to take up an inspired after-song--"I waited patiently for the Lord; and He inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry

clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And He has put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God--many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord" (Psalms 40:1-3).

It must be borne in mind, as a key to many enigmas deemed now insoluble, that life, with all, (but with some more than others) is a probation. "I proved you," says God, speaking of and to His Israel (Psalms 81:7). But what is the end of that probation-discipline? Is the burden always to crush? Is there to be no remission of the load, no rift in the cloud of sorrow, no escape from the hard degrading bondage? Is the "thundering crash" to boom in the ear forever? Hear other words of the Divine Speaker in that same Psalm--"Now I will relieve your shoulder of its burden; I will free your hands from their heavy tasks. You cried to me in trouble, and I saved you; I answered out of the thundercloud. I tested your faith at Meribah, when you complained that there was no water." (Psalms 81:6-7). It has been well remarked that Adam fell, not in a wilderness, but in a garden, while the second Adam conquered, not in a garden, but in a wilderness. The training to "endure hardness" is the true stuff of which men and heroes are made--

"Oh, fear not in a world like this

And you shall know, 'fore long,

Know how sublime a thing it is,

To suffer and be strong." That is the noblest victory of faith, which after protracted struggle can convert apparently crushing defeats into trophies; hard trials into material for praise. Just as we have seen a forest tree ravaged by the storm, torn up by the roots, and lying prostrate on the sward with the nests of its feathered tenants scattered pitilessly around--yet the birds, which for a time uttered their wailing cries around the pillaged home, come at last to nestle in the prone branches and to resume their warblings. The man with his head resting on the hardest stone is not to be pitied, in comparison with many whose downy pillows are only inducing a deeper sleep of apathy and forgetfulness--

"Those hearts that cower

In willful slumber, deepening every hour;

That draw their curtains closer round,

The nearer swells the trumpet's sound."

Better far to have the poet's prayer answered, for the couch of rock and the crude awakening--

"Lord, before our trembling lamps sink down and die,

Touch us with chastening hand, and make us feel You nigh."

Another thought suggested by the Patriarch and his desert pillow, is in connection with the loneliness of his present position. He, who, as the great Sheikh's son at Lahairoi, Beersheba, and Kirjath-Arba, had night after night his mat spread and his meals served by scores of willing slaves, was now absolutely unattended. So lonely was he, that these very stones which were to form the night-rest for his head, were carried by his own hands. "He took the stones of that place, and put

them for his pillows." One who was habituated from boyhood to the stir of camp life, and the sympathy of friendly voices--accustomed ever and anon to hear the well-known welcome of hospitality to the passing stranger or wayfarer, "Turn in, my lord, turn in" (Judges 4:18), while he was served up in the "lordly dishes" (Judges 5:25), is all at once plunged into solitude. The very tinkle of bells on sheep and camels, once so familiar to him, has died away in the far distance. But here, again, solitude was another factor (to use a modern term) which prepared him for the visions which followed. He entered the vestibule of silence, before being admitted into the Inner Sanctuary. His experience was in harmony with that of the most privileged saints of every age. Loneliness indeed would almost seem to be a necessary condition of receptivity in regard to the loftiest and divinest revelations of a personal God. Moses was alone in the solitudes of Sinai when Jehovah appeared to him in the midst of the burning bush (Exodus 3:1). Eliphaz was alone, (in the passage previously alluded to,) when the mysterious spirit passed before his eyes. He specially notes "There was silence" (Job 4:16). Job was alone on his bed of ashes, resting on a harder pillow than Jacob's, when the near Presence there unfolded itself--and when he thus solitary, the foundation Article in the creed of Christendom was uttered--"I know that my Redeemer lives" (Job 19:25). Elijah was alone in the cave of Horeb, when he became spectator of the great drama of the desert, which began with the mighty wind, and ended with the still small voice (1 Kings 19:12). John was alone in the Isle of Patmos, when he heard behind him "the voice of a great trumpet" and beheld his Lord arrayed in the lusters of glorified humanity (Revelation 1:9). And it was when all other lights were paled, and when, (no other footstep near,) Jacob lay in the darkness away from the trodden highway, that the path of angels was made visible and the voice of God was heard.

It is so, often, with His most favored people still. Periods of loneliness, stated seasons of quiet and retirement, are demanded for the nurturing of the spiritual nature. The finer sensibilities get soiled by constant contact with the world, its fevered heats and tempted hours, and restless turmoil. The soul needs, at times, removal to a calmer atmosphere--"the sphere of silence." The picture may be recalled of penitent Israel in future times. All the tribes are represented as mourning alone; "every family apart, every individual apart" (Zechariah 12:12). But what, are we told, is the immediate result and sequence of that season of solemn seclusion and heart probing--sitting thus alone, in meditative silence? It is the fullest revelation of Gospel grace and mercy--"In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem" (Zechariah 13:1). Not that by any means "frames and feelings" are to be made tests and interpreters of reality in religious experience. But this introspection has its genuine side, as well as its counterfeit. We never surely can suspect the Apostle Paul of being the morbid analyst of mere emotions. He was far too real and practical for that. Yet his exhortation stands recorded--"Let a man examine himself." He knew the tyranny of the secular--the constant friction which wears the wheels of the spiritual as of the physical life. He who had his own lengthened season of solitude and retirement in the desert of Arabia (Galatians 1:17), knew how wise and needful were occasional pausing-places in the journey, to enable the Pilgrim of Eternity to breathe with greater intensity the soliloquy which closes the Old Testament psalm to the omniscient Jehovah--"Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Psalms 139:23-24).

More than this; there is an instructive lesson surely conveyed, when ONE, greater than Apostle or Psalmist--One who required no such retreat to purge His soul from sin, and who was most habitually conversant with heavenly things, said to His disciples, (and that too in the midst of their round of spiritual activities,) "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest." (Mark 6:31). No, who Himself ever preceded what may be called the great crisis-hours of His life and ministry, by silent prayer and communion--alone in the wilderness--alone on the midnight hills around Gennesaret--alone in the moon-lit glades of Olivet. "And He continued all night in prayer to God" (Luke 6:12). "Sit here" (He must be alone) "while I go and pray yonder" (Mark 14:32). The Divine breathings, "O My Father, if it be possible;" "Not as I will, but as You will," were uttered, not amid the holy fellowships of the supper table, but amid the loneliness of Gethsemane. To return to the solitary dreamer at Bethel. Would the conflict of inner feeling--the sting of bitterly-felt self-reproach--forbid him, before he laid his head on his stony resting place, to, accord with the hallowed usages of his previous life, by kneeling on the bare rock in this open Temple of the Great Universe and invoke the blessing of his father's God? We cannot tell. Perhaps the lustrous, watchful stars gleaming above him--in one sense the chapters and verses of His Bible--would suffuse a calming, re-assuring influence on his perturbed spirit. It might be as if one of the angels of the vision, preceding his fellows, had thus addressed the exile before he resigned himself to slumber--"Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who has created these things, that brings out their host by number--He calls them all by names by the greatness of His might, for that He is strong in power; not one fails. Why say you, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, My way is hidden from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God? Have you not known, have you not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, faints not, neither is weary?" (Isaiah 40:26-28.) And HOW are His people still brought into this silent, secluded contact with the God of Jacob? It is, often at least, by means we have already dwelt upon; through temporary seasons of trial; by having their hearts and homes darkened with sorrow. They are thus impelled to escape from the fever and whirl of life, the passions and interests and engrossments of the hour, and taken out on the lonely Bethel-heights to hold converse with Himself. "Behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her. And I will give her her vineyards from thence" (Hosea 2:14-15). The vineyards would have been unsought and untasted, the "comfortable words" would have been unheeded, but for the wilderness discipline, the wilderness silence--the tearful eye closing on the wilderness pillow. "Come, My people," says the same Divine Being in another place, as He beckons apart from 'the loud stunning tide of human care,' "Come, My people, enter into your chambers, and shut your doors about you" (Isaiah 26:20).

It is in such moments of often enforced retirement, that they are able to realize the littleness of the frets and annoyances of the way which have too frequently disturbed their serenity and poisoned their peace; and which, moreover, may have dimmed and dwarfed their faith. While it is at such seasons, also, that they rise from the rough stone and the night-watch with fresh incentives for holy duty, and resolutions for a nobler life. They have "seen God face to face," and a new dignity is given to human existence by vividly linking it with the divine.

"Oh for 'a desert place' with only the Master's smile!

Oh for the 'coming apart' with only His 'rest awhile!'

Yes, I have longed for a pause in the rush and whirl of time,

Longed for silence to fall, instead of its merriest chime.

"Longed for a calm, to let the circles die away

That tremble over the heart, breaking the heavenly ray,

And to leave its wavering mirror true to the Star above,

Brightened and stilled to its depths with the quiet of 'perfect love.'"

--Ministry of Song

04.08. THE NIGHT-DREAM

THE NIGHT-DREAM

"The day is done, and the darkness

Falls from the wings of night,

As a feather is wafted downward

From an eagle in his flight.

"And the night shall be filled with music,

And the cares that infest the day

Shall fold their tents like the Arabs,

And as silently steal away."--Longfellow.

"The dream of Jacob is not merely natural, but prophetic; it is the medium of Divine revelation."--Kurtz.

"Come here with your tongues and pens, all you that have them--sing and play all you that can, that so we may in some small degree comprehend the import of these words."--Luther.

"And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth and the top of it reached to heaven--and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it."-- Genesis 28:12.

"By whom shall Jacob arise," asks the prophet, "for he is small?" (Amos 7:2.) Such might well be the question prompted, as the weary traveler casts himself down at eventide on his pillow of stones on one of the heaths of Palestine. The question is now to be answered. The rocky uncurtained couch, which even a wandering child of Ishmael would have spurned, has no equal that night on earth. The Pharaohs in their palaces might well envy him. His bleak resting place is to be radiant with a vision of angels; and, while the ornate chambers of Rameses and the other Pharaoh's with their gold and purple have vanished long ago, it still retains its imperishable name.

"By whom shall Jacob arise?" There can be but one reply. He can arise from his weakness and shame alone in the might of his fathers' God. To use the words uttered by himself, at the hour of death, regarding his best loved son, "The arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob" (Genesis 49:24). It is evident the present divine revelation is one which the inspired narrator records with profound interest and wonder; for the interjection, indicative of reverential astonishment, is used no less than three times in the course of the brief description--"Behold," "Behold," "Behold!" The Lord has in all ages had different methods of communicating His will and purposes to the Church. At one time, as in the case of Abraham, it was through the vision of "a smoking furnace and a burning lamp" (Genesis 15:17). At another, it was by the oracles of the Urim and the Thummin with their mysterious flashing of spiritual illumination.

At another, it was through prophetic announcements. At another, and most frequently of all, it was through the medium of dreams. "In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falls upon men, in slumberings upon the bed; then He opens the ears of men, and seals their instruction" (Job 33:15-16). Nor was this instrumentality employed regarding His own people only. It was common alike to Jew and Gentile. Familiar Bible instances may be recalled, from the case of the young sage of Arabia, (whose words we have just quoted) and the kings of Egypt and Babylon (Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar, and Belshazzar), to the New Testament examples of the Persian Magi, and the wife of Pontius Pilate. On the present occasion, however, it is with no stranger or foreigner, but with the heir of the covenant, the head and representative of His chosen Church and nation, that God adopts the same means to reveal His presence and protecting care.

All of us know the vivid--sometimes the overpowering reality of these visions and pageants of dreamland. The mental nature seems for the time to be abnormally quickened and intensified. Long forgotten scenes are revived and re-peopled. In the silent studio of night, when the senses are sealed in slumber, long forgotten faces start afresh from the ghostly canvas, yes, and, from the intensity of revived impression, cherished smiles and sacred tones long since passed away, bring the tear to the eye, and the irrepressible sob to the heart. It is the hour when the judgment abdicates its control and imagination holds undisputed sway--

"Of all external things,
Which the five watchful senses represent,
She forms imaginations, airy shapes,
Which reason, joining or disjoining, frames
All what we affirm, or what deny, and call
Our knowledge or opinion; then retires
Into her private cell, when nature sleeps."

There are dreams, however, whose combinations are controlled by a Higher power than the caprice of the imagination; taking their rise and shape from the direct influence and inspiration of the Spirit of God. This writing of the finger of Deity on the mind's silent walls was, at least in olden time, the chosen method of the Father's disclosure of Himself to His children on earth.

Such the dream which now broke the trance of the Patriarch's sleep, and environed with divinest phantasms his desert pillow.

It would almost seem (at least we have nothing in the sacred narrative leading us to infer otherwise) that up to the present time, though very familiar with the name and the worship of Jehovah, Jacob had enjoyed no personal, individual communication with Deity. No external visible revelation had been conveyed to him of the purposes of grace, such as were again and again given to his favored grandsire. The first of a long course of devout teaching and training begins with the stony couch. It would be too strong and pronounced a statement to call it 'the night of Jacob's conversion.' But it was undoubtedly the first eventful crisis in his spiritual history--one which dominated all the subsequent ones, and carried its sacred impress to the hour of his

departure. He laid himself down, anticipating little else but feverish visions of revenge and blood, that might well banish sleep from a softer pillow. He awoke to the sublime consciousness that he was no longer the alien and the outcast, but in very deed a fellow-citizen with the saints and of the household of God. This midnight transaction has been well called "his formal inauguration by God Himself, into the high and holy position of the heir and child of the promise." Strange spot for so momentous a conference! The first place at which Paul preached in Europe was a river side; the second, a dungeon at midnight. Truly, the Lord is not confined to temples made with hands.

We need not recur to the physical features of the locality, further than to recall to the mind of the reader what was stated in the introductory chapter. These features seem to have impressed themselves on the mind and imagination of the sleeper, and to have given shape and embodiment to his dream. We can, however, have no difficulty or hesitation in discovering what may be called its spiritual coloring. We have assigned to it, indeed, a distinct heavenly origin and inspiration. But the Divine Inspirer produces these passive mental impressions through human associations and emotions. The long wistful gaze over the moaning sea, and the noise of booming billows, are known to give form and substance to the dream of the fisherman's wife, when she falls asleep in the midst of anxious vigils. It was life's waking realities, which, in a similar manner, in the case of the Patriarch, had perpetuated themselves in his hour of slumber. The predominating thought of the past days had retained its hold on his fevered brain, that he was a fugitive for dear life, with guilt on his conscience and terror in his soul. By the revered lips, alike of father and grandfather, he had frequently, from earliest childhood, been familiarized with the truth how near God is. But even the evening prayer, we have supposed, could not enable him to realize the comfort at least of that nearness now. Rather in the opening of the dream was it sadly reversed. A wide and apparently hopeless distance seemed to separate him from the magnificent Presence. The gate of heaven (the "GATE"--the place among Easterns identified with unrestricted communion between ruler and subject, monarch and people) was nowhere to be seen through the impenetrable blank which stretched from the sleeper's pillow to the starry sky. There was brought vividly and hopelessly home to him the sense of his distance and alienation--his exile and estrangement from a greater than earthly parent. But all at once, lo! from the spot on which he lay, a pathway of divine communication seemed gradually to emerge from the darkness. Whether we call it 'stair' or 'ladder,' that radiant highway seemed to stretch upwards in brightening gradations, from the head of the dreamer to the now revealed portals of glory. The base of this stony ladder "was on earth, and the top of it reached to heaven." Glorious, white-robed beings, as we shall come afterwards more specially to note, thronged it; as if they carried up and down its gigantic steps messages of peace and mercy. And more than all, a voice from the unseen God, hidden in the blaze of light at its summit, seemed to address the wanderer.

There could be little doubt as to the primary object and significance of the vision and its accompaniments. It was to confirm the Patriarch's faith in the existence and providence of Jehovah. It was to assure him that, exile and wanderer as he was, the God of his father Abraham was still with him as "the Mighty God of Jacob;" that he was under the sleepless eye and protecting rule of Israel's unslumbering Shepherd, and that on that protection he might confidently and unhesitatingly rely. 'God sees me,' 'God cares for me,' 'God speaks to me,' were the first simple yet sublime thoughts that would flash across him. 'He is not the God of the Beersheba tent only, with its throng of souls. He condescends to follow me--yes me, alone, to this lonely place,

who has forfeited all claim to His favor. For me, He sends a convoy of angels, and utters words of divinest comfort and heart-cheer!' Kurtz, a distinguished German commentator, well remarks, "Thoughts accusing and excusing one another would overwhelm him, and refused to be controlled amid the unusual solitude and loneliness of his position. The dark future before him is as yet unlit by a single ray of promise. The Dream and its Vision are the reply of God to the harassments and anxieties with which he has lain down to rest." That dream of Bethel was for all times, for all ages, for all pilgrims in a pilgrim world. And this, its primary suggestion, ought surely for each one of us, as for Jacob, to be replete with gladness and consolation--the personal love of God for every individual member of His vast family. Go where we may, we can make the inspiring strain of that song of an after age our own--"If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall Your hand lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me" (Psalms 139:9-10). The heavenly Shepherd has an individualized care for each sheep of the fold. As it utters its apparently unsuccored bleat on the lonely moorland, or amid the thorny thicket of its wanderings, He tracks its truant footsteps, as if it engrossed all His interest, restoring it to the green pastures by the side of the fold.

Yes, there is surely nothing more cheering, more sublime, than the thought of this unwearying tending of the Great Shepherd--this individual (if we can so call it, this microscopic), love of the Great Father. Not the Almighty following the majestic march of the planets in the skies, marking out their orbits--the Omnipotent One riding on the heaven of heavens, giving the sea His decree, piling the strata of the everlasting hills. But God, reading a parable to His people, as He keeps watch over the lichen on the rock, or the lily on the mountain side; tempering His wind to the fragile flower as it trembles on the lip of the Alpine glacier; following the timid bird to its cleft; feeding the young raven's brood; noting the fall of the sparrow. And then, turning from the tiniest objects in the material creation--from the grass and the lilies and the fowls of the air, to the humblest and lowest of His human family, He says, "Fear not! you are of more value." On that memorable night, when Abraham was led out to contemplate the stars of the skies as the silent expositors of Divine grace and mercy, the future words of the Psalmist might have formed the natural expression of his feelings--"Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and Your dominion endures throughout all generations" (Psalms 145:13). But the succeeding utterances in the same Psalm would be the more appropriate exclamation on the part of his grandson as he awoke from his angel vision--"The Lord upholds all that fall; and raises up all those that be bowed down" (ver. 14). But there was another higher and nobler typical verity unfolded, partially at all events, to Jacob by that night-dream. Abraham, in the scene and sacrifice of Moriah, "beheld Messiah's day afar off and was glad." Though we cannot think it possible that his grandchild--the heir of the promise--could have grasped the full and glorious reality, surely we may well believe that an impressive picture had, at least in dim outline, been presented to him of the crowning blessing of the great covenant bound up in his family, and in the faith of whose provisions he was henceforth to live and at last to die. Here, also, as in the primary lesson of the dream to which we have just referred, there was more than a personal revelation. It was a parable-vision for the Church of God in all time to come, of "the King in His beauty and the land that was very far off."

We may regard the Patriarch, in his loneliness and isolation, as a type of the sinner severed from the home of his heavenly Father; an accusing conscience within, the terrors of a violated law behind, a dark eternity before! Wide, apparently insuperable, is the distance which separates him

from God. Is there no way by which that distance can be curtailed--that intervening space abridged? Is he consigned forever to that pillow of despair, to gaze on heights hopelessly unattainable? Is he to sigh in vain for a gleam in the lowering clouds, for the whisper of a voice of love to dispel the environing gloom?

Lo! a firm pathway of communication is disclosed, with its base on the earth, and its summit in the skies--"a new and living way of access into the holiest of all." It is "Jesus Christ evidently set forth." The ladder or staircase had its BASE on the earth. He who is the Divine Antitype was, and is, partaker of our nature--"found in fashion as a man; "--"made like unto His brethren." But "the top of it reached to Heaven," and was lost in the blaze of glory--for His name is "Immanuel," "God with us." It is the connection of that bright pathway with both worlds which makes it so perfect. It would be of no avail--no comfort were it otherwise. By the union of Manhood with Godhead, Jesus is a complete Mediator--all we need, living or dying, for time or for eternity. "I am the Way," is His own gracious utterance--God's way to the sinner, and the sinner's way to God. In His Deity mighty to save; in His humanity mighty to pity and compassionate.

Let us fix our thoughts yet a little longer on these peerless truths--for they may well be regarded as the central point of the Bethel-vision--at all events as they present themselves to us in their fuller antitypical significance--"God in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself; "--suggestive alike of the divine Person of the Redeemer and the completeness of His work. There is no gap or crevice in the luminous pathway. It forms one glorious whole, stretching continuously up to its resting-place in the celestial heights. The lamentation of another Patriarch, no, the long drawn sigh of humanity itself, seems in that symbol to be answered--"Neither is there any arbitrator between us who can lay his hand upon us both" (Job 9:33).

Jesus is such a "Arbitrator." While the hymn of adoring Christendom reaches its climax in the ascription--"You are the King of glory, O Christ! You are the everlasting Son of the Father." It can add also to the loftier strain, that complementary ascription which carries so soothing a cadence to the heart of all He came to redeem--"When you took upon yourself to deliver man, you did not abhor the Virgin's womb." "A 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" (Isaiah 32:2). Had He been God alone, we would have been dazzled with His ineffable majesty; we could not have gazed unblinded on that countenance which is "as the sun shines in his strength." His immaculate holiness, His burning purity, His unbending rectitude, His resistless power, would have awed and confounded us in our dealings with One so infinitely removed. But let us rejoice! the ladder which has its top in the brightness around the throne, has its base resting on the platform of earth. He is "THE MAN Christ Jesus." The very lowliness of His humanity, also, seems shadowed forth in the type--whether that may have been the vision of a familiar 'ladder,' or the rough boulders of the desert piled one upon another. Had uninspired poetry been left to fill in the dream, and to delineate the pathway for the God of high heaven to hold converse with His creatures, it would in all likelihood have despised the commonness of the revealed symbol. Golden steps, glittering with sapphire and emerald, would have been taken as more befitting "altar stairs" conducting into the upper sanctuary. But in the vision given, we behold the significant emblem of Him, who, often like the Patriarch that night at Bethel, was houseless and homeless--no couch but the cold earth, no canopy but the sky--His unpillowed head often denied the rest of the lowest of His creation.

Yes, thanks be to God, we can grasp, in its fullness, the comforting truth which Jacob could at best have so dimly and inadequately apprehended. We can exult in the revealed assurance, that in the bosom of that lowly Christ of Nazareth there slumbers the tenderness of humanity. Not a pang can I endure, not a temptation can I encounter, but He has encountered and endured the same. The Great Being who counts the number of the stars, counts also the number of my sorrows, for He felt them all Himself. I can think in all my trials, Jesus was tried; in all my sufferings, Jesus suffered; in all my tears, "Jesus wept." I can love Him as a brother while I adore Him as a God. And then, when once more tracing the pathway up to the heights of glory, I remember that He, "who for us men and for our salvation became incarnate," was "Jehovah's Fellow" (Zechariah 13:7)--that His nature is Infinite, His years Eternity, His counsels Immutability, His arm Omnipotence, His wisdom Searchless, His love Unchanging--on that ladder I may fearlessly climb--on that ladder I may fearlessly trust my everlasting destinies. "You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich" (rich in all the attributes of Godhead--rich in all the plenitude of divine perfections), "yet for our sakes He became poor" (stooped to the lowest depths of humiliation), "that you through His poverty might be rich" (2 Corinthians 8:9). We may appropriately use the words, regarding this wondrous night-dream, spoken at a long subsequent age by one whose eyes had gazed on no symbolic vision, but on the Adorable Antitype--"The God of JACOB, the God of our fathers, has glorified His Son Jesus" (Acts 3:13).

"Unutterable love!" is the exclamation of a pious and learned traveler, as he writes in his tent pitched on the Patriarch's dreamland--"Oh, unutterable love, which has given, in the 'Son of Man,' an imperishable ladder, not only for Bethel and for Israel, but for all the ends of the earth." But the vision may be made suggestive of other great truths. It has been rightly regarded as typically unfolding the method--as well as the means of salvation.

While we never can forget that it is Jesus who is at once "the Alpha and the Omega"--"the Author and the Finisher;"--that there is none other way by which the sinner can be saved and obtain entrance within the heavenly gate; still, the ladder must be climbed. Hence the figures employed to illustrate faith in the Redeemer seem beautifully to meet in the symbol of the dream--a "fleeing" to Christ--a "laying hold" of Christ--a "leaning" on Christ--a "trusting" in Christ--a "following on to know" Christ; and at last, when the summit is reached, a "boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus." Hopelessly could we look for salvation without "the way of access;" and yet as hopelessly, with that way of access, could we attain the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls, if we neglected to make the upward ascent. True religion is no mere mystic, passive dream of devotion--a gazing in rapt reverence, and no more, on the great mystery of Godliness. Its best definition is a 'doing' as well as a 'being.' That is a spurious faith which is inoperative; which cannot stand the crucial test of "working by love, purifying the heart and overcoming the world." Indeed the more simple and real the belief in Christ, the more unmistakably will it evidence itself by earnest aspirations after holiness, and conformity to the Divine will and image. "Who is he that overcomes the world, but he that believes that Jesus is the Son of God" (1 John 5:5). The way to heaven may be beside us--Salvation is offered to us--God standing, as in the Bethel vision, at the portals of glory, addressing us with the voice of pardoning mercy; but never let us cherish the delusion that these heights may be scaled and the gates reached, by remaining, like the Patriarch, slumbering at the ladder's base.

Two ideas, more prominent than others, seem to be brought before us by the symbol. The first is that of SUSTAINED EFFORT. Later inspired writers, as if with the Bethel vision in view, thus exhort in a variety of figure--"Work out your own salvation"--"Give all diligence to make your calling and election sure"--"Let us labor therefore to enter into that rest"--"Let us not sleep as do others, but let us watch and be sober." It is the strenuousness of the combatant pressing on to the goal. It is the fortitude of the warrior with every muscle nerved for victory. It is the toil of the climber scaling the giddy battlements. It is the watchful vigilance of the sentinel who knows that one unguarded moment may be surrender and death. "The immortal garland," says Milton in one of his noble sentences, "is not to be won without dust and heat." The second idea, one almost involved in that of effort, is PROGRESS. There is no possibility of standing still in the divine life. This is, or ought at least, to be the motto of every Christian climber, "Not as though I had already attained." His eye must be upwards, and his footsteps onwards. No leisure for halting, no loitering or lingering in the ascent. Every day should find him farther from earth and nearer heaven. The history of all Pilgrims to the Celestial City should be that of the worshipers of old crowding to the earthly Jerusalem--"They go from strength to strength; every one of them in Zion, appears before God" (Psalms 84:7). A saintly patriarch of the last generation, in answer to the question 'when he would rest?' significantly replied, "I shall rest in Eternity." "Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life" (Revelation 2:10). Elijah's chariot of fire, seated in which he peacefully went up from his tempestuous career on earth to the stormless skies and scenes of "the Better Country," is a true and beautiful emblem of the believer's calm departure, when the good fight has been fought--the course finished, the victory won--repose on the night of battle. But more appropriate to the Christian's daily spiritual history, is the emblem revealed over the couch of the Bethel dreamer--an ascending pathway--demanding toil, labor, progress; a pathway not to be admired and contemplated, but to be earnestly pursued--advancing from grace to grace, from virtue to virtue, from attainment to attainment; breathing an increasingly purer atmosphere, as earth is left behind in dimmer perspective.

Reader, whether young or old, whether at life's morning or mid day, have you fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before you? Or, turning away from this glorious road, are you contented with the poor ascent by which thousands reach their ideal heaven (their only heaven), that of the present? We do not now speak of those baser ladders, scaled by not a few, who are all unscrupulous as to how their sensuous Mohammedan paradise, with its purple, and fine linen, and golden lures, is reached--it may even be by means of cringing flattery or villain imposture--their advancing steps (what is misnamed promotion) sometimes paved with the tears of the widow and the orphan. We speak rather to those who, it may be with fair moral characters and average worldly reputations, are yet indifferent and careless regarding "the one thing needful; whose sole dream is that of earthly success; who have no thought and no desire to knock at better gates, and to aspire at nobler climbings; who are lying pillowed on this cold world--dreamers like Jacob, dreaming and dreaming on, even though whispering voices from the earth itself, are heard continually proclaiming, "The world passes away." As immortal beings you are not where you should be! You have within you aspirations after the Infinite, and, with these capacities, you cannot be happy until you have found that Infinite One as your portion. We do not pity the insect creeping at our feet. It is in its native element. It was earth-born, and therefore its happiness is in earth. But the wounded eagle that has been cleaving the skies, mounting with bold pinion, if it be seen with broken wing fluttering and struggling on the ground, we pity it. Why? because it has fallen from its

native element. That child of the sun--that winged Lucifer--has been hurled, disabled to the dust from its freeborn soarings. While the worm creates no pity, that fallen monarch does!

Such, also, ought to be the sorrow and sympathy for every human soul born for God and eternity yet oblivious to its lofty destinies. "Awake, you that sleep, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you life." If yours still be early years--the starting point of existence, with the ascent still before you--all the more need and urgency to leave the fleeting, the counterfeit, the illusory, the temporal, and to aspire to the glory and grandeur of being a climber for immortality! "Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall--but those who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint" (Isaiah 40:30-31). And if any who trace these lines feel repressed by a sadder deterrent and hindrance--a consciousness of the self-forfeiture of Salvation and its blessings by reason of indulged sin; that they have thereby rendered themselves, so to speak, ineligible for attempting the heavenward ascent; let them not be guilty of seeming to create impediment when God has erected none. Rather let past misdeeds and shortcomings serve as incentives for fresh efforts and aspirations after the holy, the good, and the true. Let them listen to the words of the greatest of the Christian Fathers, as they are thus paraphrased and nobly expanded by the American poet--

"Saint Augustine too truly said,

That of our vices we can frame

A ladder, if we will but tread

Beneath our feet each deed of shame!

"All common things--each day's events,

That with the hour begin and end;

Our pleasures and our discontents

Are rounds by which we may ascend.

"The low desire, the base design

That makes another's virtues less;

The revel of the giddy wine,

And all occasions of excess!

"The longing for ignoble things,

The strife for triumph more than truth,

The hardening of the heart that brings

Irreverence for the dreams of youth!

"All thoughts of sin--all evil deeds

That have their roots in thoughts of ill;

Whatever hinders or impedes

The action of the nobler will.

"We have no wings, we cannot soar;

But we have feet to scale and climb

By slow degrees--by more and more--

The cloudy summits of our time.

"The mighty pyramids of stone

That, wedge-like, cleave the desert airs,

When nearer seen and better known

Are but gigantic flights of stairs.

"The heights by great men reached and kept

Were not attained by sudden flight;

But they, while their companions slept,

Were toiling upward in the night.

"Nor deem the irrevocable past

As wholly wasted--wholly vain,

If, rising on its wrecks at last,

To something nobler we attain."

Finally, let us all seek to be animated by the thought of multitudes who have already scaled the steps of the Heavenly stair, who are now lining the battlements of the sky, witnessing to its security and strength. Many of these were once weak and helpless and perishing as we. Yes, and by that Divinely provided way of access, the chief of sinners have reached their crowns. The thief on the cross is there--he stoops to tell that none can climb too late. The woman from the city is there--she stoops to tell that none can climb too vile. Saul of Tarsus is there--he stoops to tell what God's grace can do in transforming the blaspheming persecutor into the devoted apostle and the glorious martyr. Prophets call us! Saints call us! Departed friends who have fallen asleep in Jesus, call us! They testify that there is still an open door of welcome--room for all--grace for all--blood for all!--crowns for all! Can we decline the summons of the mighty multitude gone to colonize the many mansions? Let us not be slothful, but "followers of them (the true seed of Jacob), who, through faith and patience, are now inheriting the promises!"

04.09. THE MINISTERING ANGELS

THE MINISTERING ANGELS

"Creator of many servants who stand in the higher worlds, and who proclaim aloud with reverence the commands of the Living God, may Your Name be magnified forever! They are all of them lovely, chosen, and mighty."--Daily Jewish Morning Service.

"As he slept, he dreamed of a stairway that reached from earth to heaven. And he saw the angels of God going up and down on it." Genesis 28:12 The exile at Bethel was not a stranger to the ministry of angels. Doubtless, one of the most memorable stories of early childhood, rehearsed by the lips of his grandfather, would be that of the advent of celestial messengers at his tent door in "the plains of Mamre in the heat of the day" (Genesis 18:1). The grandson is now to become a personal spectator, in his night-vision, of these divine delegates from the upper sanctuary, thronging the staircase which rose above his couch of stone.

God has in all ages adapted the revelations of Himself to the character and circumstances of His people. To another fugitive of sterner mold, to whom reference has already been made--the bold-hearted Elijah--He manifested His presence in the earthquake and tempest, the fire and the whirlwind. To Jacob, until now the gentle domestic man, a tender home-flower unused to storms--ill-fitted, we may suppose, to grapple with the roughnesses of life, He reveals Himself in a dream of angels. Glorious spirits are sent to tend his lonely unsoled pillow. He beholds no symbols of terror. He listens only to the "still, small voice." So, also, at an after period of great strait and emergency in the Patriarch's history, when solace, comfort, and direction were greatly needed, we are told these same ambassadors of God, in double phalanx, again met him, "and he called the place Mahanaim (two hosts)" (Genesis 32:2). In the present case, a needful and merited rebuke may have been conveyed to the erring fugitive. The God of his fathers, and his own covenant God, would tell him that these messengers of Providence, with their divine ministrations, would accomplish his destiny better far than his own cunning plottings and crooked policy. How Jacob came ultimately to feel and to own this, see how at Peniel, twenty years after, he wrestled with a Mightier than any angel, though in angel-form, and would not let Him go unless he received a blessing! (Genesis 32:24.) In the preceding pages, we have spoken of the wanderer as forming in his own person, on that memorable eventide, a type or picture of fallen humanity--man lying helpless on the outcast earth; while the ladder of salvation is let down to the pillow on which he slumbers, opening up a way of communication with the Heaven he had forfeited, and the God he had offended. The present chapter brings before us a new and interesting topic for consideration. The vision would seem to intimate that the human race, in cutting themselves off from fellowship with their Maker, had also been severed from all that was good, and holy, among the loftier orders of intelligence. But Christ, "the second Adam, the Lord from heaven," has, by His incarnation and death, not only re-established a way of approach to the presence of the Holiest, and re-instated the lost in the divine favor, but He has also made, once more, the ministry of bright, pure, unfallen spirits possible to a sin-stricken world.

He Himself, in His enigmatical saying to Nathanael, is the best interpreter of the early type. For there can be no doubt that it is Jacob's dreamland and Jacob's radiant pathway which is referred to in the saying, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, hereafter (or as that may rather be rendered, 'from this time forth'), shall you see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of man" (John 1:51). The Great Apostle still further expounds the same beautiful truth, that it is alone through the mediatorial work of the Redeemer, the sinner on earth and the angel in heaven can once more resume intermitted and forfeited fellowship. It is "by Him God the Father has reconciled all things to Himself, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven" (Colossians 1:20). "Who has raised us up together, and made us sit in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (or "among the celestials") (Ephesians 2:6). It is by Christ "you are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels" (Hebrews 12:22).

Thus, then, as we see the angel shapes flitting up and down in the dream of the Patriarch, we may warrantably infer that to them is delegated some subordinate office, as agents in the economy of Redemption; or, in the words of Scripture, "Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who shall be heirs of salvation?" (Hebrews 1:14).

We learn, from the same source, the profound interest these bright spirits have taken, and are yet taking, in the gradual unfoldings of the Scheme of Grace, from the hour of creation's birth, when "the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy," down to the time when they shall gather the immortal sheaves reaped by their sickles into the garners of heaven. Behold! as He whom that ladder typified came down to our world an Infant of days, angels heralded His birth, and sang, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men" (Luke 2:14). Behold them, the attendants in His sufferings; strengthening Him after His temptation in the wilderness (Matthew 4:11); supporting Him in His agony, and watching His dreadful struggle in the garden (Luke 22:43). Behold them in glistening clothing, the guardians of His vacant sepulcher, proclaiming His work finished and the victory won--"He is not here, He has risen, as He said" (Luke 24:4). Behold them in His triumphant ascension, forming a glorious retinue, conducting Him to His throne--"God's chariots are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels" (Psalms 68:17). And once more, when the Son of man shall come in the glory of the Father; when His throne shall be set, and the Books opened, "all His holy angels are to be with Him," as assessors on the Great day; gathering in the tares and the wheat (Matthew 25:31).

It opens up a more attractive theme still, to think of them as interested in the salvation of each member of the redeemed family; the incessant attendants of each pilgrim-climber, from the hour when he first plants his foot on the ladder until they leave him in glory. It is interesting to think of them in connection with the words of the Redeemer Himself--and in harmony with the legend of the Jews we have previously noticed, as in some mysterious way keeping watch and ward over individual souls--"Their angels do always behold the face of My Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 18:10).

It is interesting to think that they are present, and no unconcerned spectators, in the mighty conflict waging, which issues in the soul's conversion--when they carry up to heaven the tidings of a sinner weeping at the cross, and which causes their brother-angels to rejoice before the throne; from that moment encamping round about him, watching his every footstep in the unseen yet stupendous

conflict with the powers of darkness. In the magnificent Temple-visions of Isaiah, they are represented as swift of wing; ever ready alike for lofty and for lowly service (Isaiah 6:2). Now they come to some humble shepherds keeping watch over their flocks in the hills of Judah; now it is to unloose the chains from a captive apostle; now it is to whisper into the ear of another in the midnight sea words of heart-cheer and safety; now it is to do battle against demon-passion and degrading selfishness; now it is to support the bereaved in their hour of sorrow, or to point to the healing virtue in some troubled Bethesda; or in the closing scenes of the pilgrimage, waiting on by the death-couch, serenading it with "songs unheard by duller ears," ready to waft the spirit into the Savior's bosom; following the body to the grave; and watching the sleeping dust until the trumpet of the archangel quickens it into life. In one of the most beautiful of modern poems, we have a succession of these "Angels of the stair of heaven" graphically depicted as descending to earth under the different designations of "the Angel of life"--"the Angel of joy"--"the Angel of pain," and "Angel of death;" and each in turn greeted with welcome on the part of the believer as the messenger of God. We can only find space to quote in a fragmentary form--

"Who is the angel that comes?

Life!

Let us not question what he brings,

Peace or strife,

Under the shade of his mighty wings.

"We will arise and go forth to greet him,

Singly, gladly with one accord--

'Blessed is he that comes

In the name of the Lord!'

"Who is the angel that comes?

Joy!

Look at his glittering rainbow wings,

No alloy

Lies in the radiant gifts he brings.

"Soon he will leave us; but though for others

All his brightest treasures are stored--

'Blessed is he that comes

In the name of the Lord!'

"Who is the angel that comes?

Pain!

Let us arise and go forth to greet him;

Not in vain

Is the summons come for us to meet him.

"Let us say still, while his bitter chalice

Slowly into our heart is poured--

'Blessed is he that comes

In the name of the Lord!'

"Who is the angel that comes?

Death!

But do not shudder and do not fear;

Hold your breath,

For a kingly presence is drawing near.

"Then let us, baring our hearts and kneeling,

Sing while we wait the angel's sword--

'Blessed is he that, comes

In the name of the Lord!'"--A. Proctor

Manifold and multiform indeed, beyond what we can specify, may be the missions and services of these divine delegates to the family of God. It is easy to give rein to imagination on such a theme as this. The prose as well as the poetry of all countries, and of all creeds, has weaved out of it pleasing conceptions and fantasies. Take one such suggestion, though purely conjectural, from an old writer on sorrow. He is discoursing on that mysterious speculation which rises before the soul in its hours of bereavement--the cognisance which redeemed saints in glory have of those they have left behind in the valley of tears. Who knows (is the hypothetical reflection to which we have referred)--but that these blessed "ladder angels" may be employed in embassies of fellowship between the still toiling and erring pilgrims below, and the ransomed friends and relatives above--bearing upwards the intelligence of all that would impart joy; keeping back all that would create sadness or dim the eye in a tearless world; carrying aloft the tidings of an earnest faith, calm resignation, loving self-sacrifice, noble strife with evil; but suppressing the revelation of unguarded moments, when the fortress may have surrendered--when the joints of the armor may have been pierced--the heavenly climber stumbled or fallen? Nor can we omit to add one other conjecture that the holy traffic between heaven and earth, at present so concealed and mysterious, may expand in future and brighter times into wider and more visible manifestations; so that the agency we speak of now, may be regarded as a mere installment of yet diviner and more frequent ministrations between these lofty beings and the redeemed tenants of a regenerated world.

We are aware that this "doctrine of angels," which has thus challenged a passing consideration in connection with the Patriarch, is regarded by some with suspicion. But although, as is well known, an interesting Bible truth has been diverted by the Church of Rome to dangerous and unscriptural uses, that is surely no justifiable reason for its being eliminated from the Protestant creed. A superstitious abuse of a revealed dogma should rather lead us to disentangle it from the perversions to which it has been subjected, and endeavor to restore it in its undoubted place in the spiritual Temple. The distortion of the doctrine was as early as Paul's time--"the worshiping of angels" evoked from him a solemn warning and protest (Colossians 2:18-19). The Gnosticism, so prevalent in that early age, sought to incorporate Pagan mythology and Athenian philosophy with the Christian system. Among the false tenets thus held, was the alleged impossibility and presumption of approaching the Deity save through the intervention of angels. It was an easy transition from this, to the worship of these as mediators; and thus was necessarily imperilled one of the cardinal and foundation truths of the Gospel--the all-sufficiency of the intercessory work of the ONE only mediator. The Dream of Bethel puts the doctrine into its right place in "the proportion of faith." The angelic part of the vision is a mere accessory, not for a moment eclipsing or overshadowing the far loftier and grander verities therein set forth. Those burning spirits are no more than heavenly sentinels and messengers, pointing to the true means of ascent, and saying, "This is the way, walk in it." They are the mere satellites of the Great Central Sun--Christ Himself, the all and in all. The same Scripture indeed, which sanctions belief in angelic agency, expressly prohibits the offering to them, in any shape, divine honors. It will be remembered that, when an inspired Apostle, in a moment of pardonable impulse, fell down in an act of worship at the feet of the angel, the offered devotion was at once rejected and repudiated--"Don't do that! I am your fellow-servant--(worship not me)--worship God" (Revelation 19:10). Oh! it is not angels that can give comfort to a sinner. Mary of old, as she entered her Lord's sepulcher, found herself in their presence. They found her weeping; and, as has been well remarked, "how did they leave her? Weeping still." Yes! a Mightier than angels' hand is required to save a sinner's soul, and dry a sinner's tears, and speak peace to a sinner's bosom, and smooth a sinner's death pillow. The highest and holiest among the created "Sons of God" could not wipe away the guilt of a single transgression.

Let us close with the elevating, inspiring thought suggested by the foregoing considerations, the greatness and grandeur of the human destiny--the magnificence of the human temple even in its ruins. Sad, indeed, is humanity's fall! Terrible is the sinner's isolation! But it is the very contrast between the sleep on the desert boulder and the vision stretching overhead in vistas of golden light, which reveals the transcendent glory of salvation--the "translation" (as it is well called) "out of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son" (Colossians 1:13); while the steps, rising to infinite heights, would seem to indicate the soul's capabilities for endless growth and expansion.

If there be one reader of these pages who sees in the lone Patriarch and his surroundings, only a too faithful picture of himself--exile, self-forfeiture, and outward gloom--it may be, even inward shame bordering on despair--here is a Gospel vision disclosed in the midst of earth's most desponding seasons. These bright inhabitants of the World of spirits, who, when the sun had set, rang the vesper chimes of hope in the ear of that one lone worshiper in his desert sanctuary, are waiting to do the same for you. With holy vigils and holy eyes they are looking down upon you; the sentinels of your slumbers. They tell, that you are not, as you suppose, disowned, unwatched,

forgotten--still less surrendered to the spell and sway of the powers of darkness. No, rather, that the God they serve has given them "charge concerning you, to keep you in all your ways." They are commissioned, in the supreme crisis-hour of danger, to track your steps to the brink of the giddy precipice, down whose serrated rocks you might inevitably be hurled, but for their loving supervision. They would unfold to you the horror of the downward road, with its deflection from honor and virtue, and the bliss of that pathway of divine light and love, by which countless multitudes which no man can number have already entered within the gate into the heavenly city. By loving, and by doing, what is "true and honest and of good report;" by cultivating and maintaining purity of heart, integrity of purpose, unselfishness of aim, consecration of life, you are thereby "entertaining angels unawares." Moreover, if, like the Pilgrim of Bethel, you have existence, with its struggles and emergencies, mainly still before you; the greater is the call to forestall these, by appropriating the divine realities of the vision.

It is a beautiful idea, which either poetry or painting has somewhere embalmed, the Angels of human life represented as standing, not by the brink of the full-volumed rushing river, but rather at its earliest fountain-head, as it trickles through the reeds and moss and gleaming pebbles of its source, there helping the youthful travelers to gird up their loins and to ease themselves of their burdens. Begin your pilgrimage, not, as with many, by an ignoble descent to darkness and death, scaring away the angels that are ready to beset you with their environing wings; but rather, by a glorious climbing of an upward path lined with immortal forces, who are doing battle, and will continue to the end to do battle for your soul against the powers of evil. "The angel of the Lord encamps round about those who fear Him, and delivers them. O taste and see that the Lord is good--blessed is the man that trusts in Him" (Psalms 34:7-8).

"God's own children pure and holy,
You the messengers He sends;
'Tis an ever sweet remembrance
That you are our guardian friends--
That you watch our life-long journey,
That, unseen, you often are near,
Holy thoughts and deeds to strengthen,
Or to dry the mourner's tear.
"Who would not retreat in terror
From the evil yet undone;
Who not turn with shame and mourning
From the evil course begun;
Who would e'er be found forgetful
Of his calling and his vow,

If the thought had only risen,
'Angels are among us now'?
"Rise, my soul, in heart to meet them
When this world would claim you fast;
Rise among these freeborn spirits
When her coils are round you cast.
Be courageous! 'tis your journey
Out of darkness into light;
God and angels are around you--
Tremble not, but rise and fight."
--Hymns from the Land of Luther.

04.10. THE GOD ABOVE THE LADDER

THE GOD ABOVE THE LADDER

"Jacob sleeps in the open field, exposed to the attacks of wild beasts and marauders, protected only by the Guardian of Israel."--Kalisch.

"God found him in Bethel, even the Lord God of Hosts; the Lord is his memorial."-- Hosea 12:4-5. At sundown he arrived at a good place to set up camp and stopped there for the night. Jacob found a stone for a pillow and lay down to sleep. As he slept, he dreamed of a stairway that reached from earth to heaven. And he saw the angels of God going up and down on it. An behold, at the top of the stairway stood the Lord, and he said, "I am the Lord, the God of your grandfather Abraham and the God of your father, Isaac. The ground you are lying on belongs to you. I will give it to you and your descendants. Genesis 28:11-13

There was something grander, more glorious still, awaiting the Patriarch than a heavenly staircase, and the footsteps of celestial messengers. "Behold a ladder!" "Behold the angels!" But, yet another "Behold" is added, to reach the climax. The Lord of angels, in some majestic, mysterious form, was seen by the desert-dreamer at the summit--"And, behold, the Lord stood above it." At another eventful occasion of his history, delegates from the spirit-land met him. But in the present instance, in the remarkable words of the prophet Hosea, quoted among our motto-verses, "GOD found him at Bethel!"

Delightful and comforting, indeed, must have been the first part of the dream to the weary, downcast fugitive--the luminous ascending way thronged not with avenging angels, but with radiant forms keeping loving watch over his pillow. Now, however, he receives proof that he is the object of a love and regard mightier far than that which ministering seraphim could render. The guardianship of the heavenly host is eclipsed by "a brightness which excels,"--the vigils of the great Jehovah Himself--"The Lord is your keeper." It is not the white-robed Levites of the upper sanctuary on whom he now gazes. The true Holy of Holies is unveiled to his enraptured gaze. He sees what Onkelos renders in his paraphrase, "The glory of the Lord." If we have spoken of the angels' visit on the plains of Mamre as one of the stories to which childhood listened in the tent at Kirjath-Arba--another, more memorable still, rehearsed by the same revered lips, would now rise before his mental vision--that of the averted sacrifice on Mount Moriah; when no mere created angel's voice was heard arresting the sacrificial knife, but the magnificent accents of Jehovah Himself--"Abraham, Abraham!"--when, in token of heart gratitude for his loved one's deliverance, the aged man called the place Jehovah-Jireh; as it is written, 'in the Mount of the Lord it shall be seen.' (Or, as that is rendered in the Septuagint, On the mountain Jehovah appeared.)

Jacob could now say the same. These heights of Bethel were, in his heart's holiest sanctuary of thought, consecrated for evermore; for he had for the first time "seen God face to face, and his life was preserved." "He heard the words of God and saw the vision of the Almighty" (Numbers 24:16). Often before, in gazing on this beautiful world both by day and night, he had assuredly thought of

it, in some magnificent way, as roofed in and canopied by the Divine Presence and protection. But that Presence had not as yet been fully realized by him as that of a personal God. Had it been so, he would doubtless have lived and acted very differently. The base-born plots and deeds of earlier and recent years would have been more scrupulously shunned. The concept of the heart-searching and thought-trying Jehovah, ever near, and very near, gazing down upon him, "spying out all his ways," would have rendered former sophistries and sinister dealings well-near impossible. From this hour onwards, however, there is a new page in his spiritual history. Not that the evil tendencies and passions of his nature were eradicated and destroyed. Far from it. Those who choose to trace his after life will find the old giant forces ever and anon reappearing--manifesting their latent and perilous sway--the subtlety and finessing; the keen, shrewd eye for outwitting, and "making the best of both worlds." But new counteracting principles now asserted their influence. The sight of the Invisible formed henceforth a deterrent power in many a season of strong temptation. In his times of weakness and lowliness and recurrent worldliness, the stony stair of the desert would rise to view, alike as a rebuke of his lapses, and an incentive to nobler and heavenlier ways. He would doubtless say of Bethel and its vision, what the Psalmist, in an hour of spiritual depression, said of localities specially associated with experiences of the Divine favor, "O my God, my soul is cast down within me; therefore will I remember You from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar." "Why are you cast down, O my soul? and why are you disturbed within me? hope you in God; for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God" (Psalms 42:6, Psalms 42:11).

Solemn, in the case of each one of us, as with the Patriarch, is our first meeting with the Almighty. We do not refer to the revelation (always to be reverted to with reverence) made of Him in the nursery, or on the mother's knee--but we speak of subsequent seasons--crisis-hours in life, for which these earlier teachings may have paved the way; when summoned, it may be by startling providential dispensations, into "the secret of His tabernacle," and led to cry out with another old-world Pilgrim of the desert, whose name has more than once been already mentioned--"I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You" (Job 42:5).

Hitherto (as probably with Jacob), God has been no more than a distant abstraction--an incomprehensible Being, invested with certain august attributes which only seemed to render Him more dreadful and inapproachable. We have had our dream of Him; but not the dream of the Psalmist David, or of the Evangelist John, as with eagle wings they seem to soar into divine fellowship. We thought of Him, it may be, as childhood is at times unhappily taught to picture Him, with His dwelling above the stars, the thunder His voice, the clouds the dust of His feet, walking on the wings of the wind, shrouded in the dread mystery of Eternity. But now we have had disclosed to us the present God, actually in view; standing above the ladder in His glorious personality--the living One, the controlling One, yes, the loving and sympathizing One--"the Shepherd of the Stone of Israel."

"Clouds were Your chariots, and I knew them not,

They came in solemn thunders to my ear;

I thought that far away You had forgot,

But You were by my side, and heaven was near."

"Most men," as it has been expressed by Robertson in "Sermons," in words of great force and pathos, "know nothing beyond what they see. Their lovely world is all in all to them; its outer beauty, not its hidden loveliness. Prosperity, struggle, sadness, it is all the same. In all this strange, deep world they never meet, or but for a moment, the Spirit of it all, who stands at their very side. And it is exactly the opposite of this that makes a Christian. Move where he will, there is a Thought and Presence which he cannot put aside. He is haunted forever by the Eternal Mind. God looks out upon him from the clear sky, and through the thick darkness--is present in the raindrop that trickles down the branches, and in the tempest that crushes down the forest. A living Redeemer stands beside him, goes with him, talks with him, as a man with his friend. The emphatic description of a life of spirituality is, 'Enoch walked with God;' and it seems to be one reason why a manifestation of God was given us in the flesh, that this Livingness of God might be more distinctly felt by us." We may be content, while the world is bright, and plans are prospering, and the pulse beats strong, with the mere superficial creed--acknowledgment of the existence of the God with whom we have to do. But each one of us must be brought at some time into close contact--face to face with Him. Whatever dim and uncertain meaning the patriarch of Uz attached to his own words, we assuredly may say--shall it be with joy or with trembling?--"Yet in my flesh shall I see God."

Other hours of personal dealing with the Almighty One we may evade. There is one we cannot. It is that most solemn--that most lonely of times and seasons, the dreadful meeting-place between the irreparable past and the eternal future; when we come to be wrenched from all created objects of interest; when earthly voices grow fainter, and earthly presences dimmer; when, the feverish distractions of the world over, we stand waiting to have the gates of death unbarred, and to pass into the Infinite vision! What will avail us, if we have never, until then, reverently listened to the voice of Him, who, through long misspent years and forfeited opportunities, has been addressing us from the heights of glory? On the other hand, how happy are they who, through all the events and vicissitudes of chequered life, have been able to keep the eye of faith firmly fixed on this God above the ladder--God at the summit of His own creation, directing and controlling all that befalls both His Church collectively, and believers individually.

You that are just commencing the all-momentous life-journey, seek especially to carry that lofty elevating truth with you from the very outset of the pilgrimage, that high above the stony stair is the searching eye of the All-Seeing One. The angels of the Patriarch's dream, (if we make them, as they are sometimes considered, the types and symbols of Providence,) are in His hand, under His control, doing His bidding, "hearkening to the voice of His word." It recalls a kindred vision, given at a later time of Hebrew history, to the prophet Zechariah--"I saw by night, and behold a man riding upon a red horse, and he stood among the myrtle-trees that were in the bottom (of the valley); and behind him were there red horses, speckled, and white" (Zechariah 1:8). What is this motley retinue, but providences--the varied dealings of God with His chosen; varied in their hues, "red, speckled, and white"? White--those whose meaning is clear. Speckled--those whose design is not so patent or easily discerned. Red--those which seem to suggest deep gashes, bleeding wounds--dealings which are mysterious and incomprehensible. But mark, they are all "behind" the divine Horseman of the vision. HE marshals, arranges, controls these subordinate retainers. They can lop no branch of the myrtle-trees. They can discharge no dart of affliction, until He gives the commission. He comes between the myrtle trees (His own people) and these "ministers who do

His pleasure." He is, to all that myrtle-grove in the earthly valley, "a shelter from the storm and a covert from the tempest."

Oh, joyous assurance! God foremost among the horsemen; God high above the ladder! No, represented in Jacob's symbolic vision as not 'seated' but 'standing!' He whose dwelling and watch-tower is in the everlasting hills, tracking our Pilgrim way in the upward toilsome climbing; warding off the demon foe who would seek to find us off our guard, and hurl us down; cheering us with the assurance, "I will not fail you nor forsake you." In dark and mysterious dispensations, He reveals Himself as holding the balances in His hands; proclaiming that He has not surrendered the rule of His world to chance or fate, the accidents of nature or the caprice of fortune; but that He has a wisely-ordered plan in all He does, however unexplainable and inscrutable to us. No more, that He personally loves us; and that when He chastises He chastises because He loves; making the true philosophy of Christian resignation that which was breathed of old from the depths of a crushed and broken heart--"I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because YOU did it!" (Psalms 39:9.)

"Know well, my soul, God's hand controls

Whatever you fear;

Round Him in calmest music rolls

Whatever you hear.

"And that cloud itself, which now before you

Lies dark in view,

Shall, with beams of light from the inner glory,

Be stricken through."

"Let us seek to grasp," says a master in Israel, "the true notion of Providence, for in it there is peace and deep repose of soul. Life has often been compared to a drama. Now in a good drama there is one plot, variously evolved by incidents of different kinds, which, until the last act, show only entanglement and confusion. Vice has its temporary triumphs, virtue its temporary depressions. What of that? You know it will come right in the end--Life is God's great drama--It is on a gigantic scale--There seems to be entanglements, perplexities, interruptions, confusions, contradictions without end; but you may be sure there is one ruling thought, one master-design to which all these are subordinate--You know that the mind which organized this drama is Wisdom. You know more, you know that it is Love. Then of its ending grandly, wisely, nobly, lovingly, infinitely well for them who love God, there can be no doubt."

Let every climber of the ladder, (all the more so if youth be still nerving the arm, and years have ploughed no furrow on the brow) take home these thoughts of surpassing comfort. Believe it--even what may at first sight be regarded as hindrances and impediments in the upward ascent, may only, after all, be part of the plan and purpose of which I have spoken, of that "Shepherd of the stony pillow." Trust Him. The very voices of the night, sounding like the moan of the tempest, may turn out to be the disguised yet tender "voices of God," calling away from all earthly props, to

mount with greater singleness of eye and ardor of aim the alone ladder of safety and peace--upwards, onwards, heavenwards, homewards!

"Not yet, you know how I bid

Each passing hour entwine

Its grief or joy, its hope or fear,

In one great love-design. Nor how I lead you through the night

By many a various way,

Still upward to unclouded light,

And onward to the day."

04.11. JEHOVAH'S NAME

JEHOVAH'S NAME

"O my Father! it seems to me sometimes, as if You forgot every other being, in order to think only of my faithless and ungrateful heart!"--Madame Guyon.

"And those who know Your name will put their trust in You."-- Psalms 9:10. At the top of the stairway stood the Lord, and he said, "I am the Lord, the God of your grandfather Abraham and the God of your father, Isaac." Genesis 28:13 The theme of our last, forming as it does the climax of the vision, was suggestive of truths so solemn and momentous, that we may be pardoned for prolonging and expanding, under this new heading, the same topic. It admits of a still higher Gospel and spiritual application.

"What is Your Name?" was the urgent interrogation of Jacob, twenty years later, when he was alone at midnight grappling with the mysterious Presence, in the deep gorge of the Jabbok. Doubtless it was the same question which rose now in the mind of the Dreamer as he beheld the majestic Form at the summit of the stony ascent. The long familiar, and yet, in another sense, the only partially realized, God of the Tent and the Altar was now before him in the revealed majesty of His glory. How natural the silent promptings of the newly-illuminated soul, even though he gave no audible expression to them. 'Who are YOU?' "Tell me YOUR Name?" The answer, or rather the voluntary declaration, was immediately given--"I am the Lord God of Abraham your father, and the God of Isaac." It is worthy of special note, that it is the incommunicable name of JEHOVAH which is here used. More than that, this holy designation--so holy, that the Jews came scrupulously to avoid, as they still do, the very mention of it as too dreadful and hallowed for mortal lips--is only on this and on one other occasion employed by God in the revelation of Himself--that other, being at one of His earliest interviews with Abraham, when He ratified to the patriarch His grant of the covenant land (Genesis 15:7). In subsequent personal revelations, the title of El-Shaddai (God Almighty) is adopted; the same word which last fell on Jacob's ears, on leaving the Beersheba home, when his father's voice was heard pronouncing the parting benediction "God Almighty bless you" (Genesis 28:3).

It is of great importance and interest to advert to this specific name employed by the God above the ladder, as it gives a beautiful unity and consistency to the type we have been unfolding. Some learned writers hold, we think on substantial grounds, that the designation of Jehovah, employed in patriarchal communications, has reference to the first Person in the ever-blessed Trinity; while the El-Shaddai (the Almighty One, invested also with the attributes of Deity) denotes the delegated "messenger of the Covenant." In harmony with most; indeed nearly all ancient expositors, we have assumed the vision of the Patriarch to be a prefiguration of the great coming Redemption; and while the ladder forms a symbolic representation of the El-Shaddai as the Divine Way to the Father--in the Jehovah standing at the summit, we have the similar figurative representation of the adorable Father Himself--the glorious "Revealer;" the supreme "I am:"--"God in Christ."

How cheering to Jacob would be the first accents emanating from the Being on whose Form he now gazed in trembling emotion, and who announced His name as the "Jehovah-God of Abraham your father." And it was not only Jehovah, made known as very near--looking down upon the very pillow on which he slept--but the God also who had a tender cognisance of those nearest and dearest to Him--the Lord whose eye was at the same moment on the heath of Bethel and on the tents of Beersheba--"The God of Abraham your father." How, at once, would memory begin to re-traverse the hours and scenes of childhood and youth, and recall the manifold story of Divine grace which must often have fallen from the lips of his saintly grandfather--that grandfather whose body slept in the cave at Machpelah, but whose spirit seemed to be still in the presence of that Almighty One he had so faithfully served on earth. For the words of the Divine Speaker are not 'I was,' but "I AM the God of your father Abraham." "The God" (as Christ's own interpretation expounds it) "not of the dead, but of the living" (Matthew 22:32). Could Jacob wish for more? The whole vision was a reassuring one--just at the time, also, when he urgently needed such help and invigoration. At the later, darker experience of his history, it was God--the 'Dreadful,' the 'Mysterious,' with whom he came in contact, wrestling with Him as if in a life and death struggle; indeed leaving him maimed in the conflict. Now, it was God the Protector--God the Forgiver--the God who, by varied personal acts of condescension and kindness, had showered blessings on the household of his relatives--the Jehovah of the "everlasting Covenant, well ordered in all things and sure;" "the Shepherd of the stone of Israel:"--the same God who was most fully revealed to him at the close of all; when, with the word 'Salvation' on his tongue, and probably reverting to this earliest vision of it, he was ready to die.

All that, has been noted now regarding the Patriarch and this 'revelation of Jehovah,' may be transferred to ourselves. Most beautifully, and with a deep insight into human experience, has it been said, "We move through a world of mystery, and the deepest question is, 'What is the Being that is ever near, sometimes felt, never seen--that which has haunted us from childhood with a dream of something surpassingly lovely, which has never yet been realized--that which sweeps through the soul at times as a desolation, like the blast from the wings of the Angel of Death, leaving us stricken and silent in our loneliness--that which has touched us in our tenderest point, and the flesh has quivered with agony, and our mortal affections have shriveled up with pain--that which comes to us in aspirations of nobleness, and conceptions of superhuman excellence.' Shall we say 'It,' or 'He'? What is It? Who is He? Those anticipations of Immortality and God, what are they? Are they the mere throbbings of my own heart, heard and mistaken for a living something beside me? Are they the sound of my own wishes, echoing through the vast void of nothingness? or shall I call them God, Father, Spirit, Love? A living Being within me or outside me? Tell me Your Name, you dreadful mystery of Loveliness; that is the struggle of all earnest life." (Robertson's Sermons, Vol. i p. 51.) The revelation is made to us--

I. "I AM"--"I am Jehovah." Jehovah bending down from the heights of heaven over this ladder of salvation; every step in the ladder (rock-like) an inviolable promise. JEHOVAH your covenant God! Not like the fabled king of gods and men on Olympus, only on rare occasions coming down to mortals from his realm of drowsy light, armed with the lightning and thunderbolt. Not like the God of the modern philosopher who has stamped on His world certain immutable, though profound laws, assigning pathways and orbits to the planets, filling the quiver of the sun with golden arrows, giving the sea its tidal decrees, painting the prismatic colors on the rainbow, piling earth's strata

upwards from primeval granite, appointing the seasons to be the four evangelists of nature; but who, as "the Great Unknowable," has retired behind the visible curtain into a pavilion of awe and darkness, and left the vast machine to its own complex evolutions and revolutions. Not the God (though that be true also) who holds the scroll of the future in His hand, in which are inscribed the destinies of nations, but who has no time to care for the individual need, or to support the solitary soul trembling on the verge of temptation. Not the God of many a modern Church system--the inexorable avenger, the stern taskmaster "reaping where he had not sown, and gathering where he had not strewed," exacting impossible sacrifices, and imposing unrighteous burdens. But, the ever-present, never absent; ever-living, ever-loving, personal Jehovah--who "dwells in light, and with whom is no darkness at all;" "our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble;" whose supervision is not fitful, capricious, inconsistent; but faithful as that of a father, and tender, "as one whom his mother comforts." "He that keeps you will not slumber; behold He that keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep." Truly "the name" of this Lord (Jehovah) "is a strong tower" running into which we are eternally safe (Proverbs 18:10). We can echo the refrain of Hezekiah's great hymn of victory--"The Lord of hosts is with us, the God of JACOB (the God of the Bethel-dreamer), is our refuge" (Psalms 46:7). But we have not to deal on this peerless subject in mere vague statements and generalities. We can understand, in more unmistakable language, what God means, when He says, "I am Jehovah," "Your God." A full unfolding of His character has been given to us. The question has been answered--"What is Your Name?" That manifestation, need I say, was made in the cities and villages and plains of Palestine, by a gracious Being, eighteen centuries ago, clothed in mortal form. That covenant land, on a portion of which Jacob slept, received, in diverse ways, an ampler revelation than by dream or vision of Jacob's God. Now it is at Cana with its associations of joy. Now it is at Nain with its memories of sorrow. Now it is on the Mount of Beatitudes with its mingled code of inflexible ethics and loving benedictions. Now it is while calming the disciples tossed on the stormy lake; now it is when feeding the hungry seated on the desert grass. Now it is at hallowed Bethany; now in the hush of the Paschal Supper room; now in the moonlight of Gethsemane; now amid the mysterious pangs of Calvary; now in the farewell words breathed on the Mount of Ascension.

Yes! To the eager cry of inquiring humanity, "What is God?" "Show us His face;" "tell us His name;" "disclose to us His moral attributes;"--the dark, uncertain, unsatisfactory guesses of heathendom are not what we have to rely upon, with their incarnations of terror and vengeance, often of impurity and sin. These queries are answered by listening to the utterances and beholding the deeds of Him who is 'the Image of the Invisible God,' the covenant El-Shaddai of Jacob's vision--"manifest in the flesh"--"Immanuel"--"God with us." As we track His holy footsteps, we hearken, indeed, ever and anon to words of warning and vengeance against the persistent scorers of grace and mercy. But His pathway is truly, from first to last, one of gentleness and goodness. He scatters blessings wherever He goes--giving sight to the blind, and hearing to the deaf; calling the shunned leper to His side; wiping the tear from the eye of penitence; whispering forgiveness in the ear of the sin-stricken; breathing hope into the weary of life; healing the broken in heart; reclaiming the fallen, the despairing, the lost. Even when disciples would send away with the churlish word and the rejected petition, He opens wide the arms of His mercy. The Good Samaritan of His own parable, He finds humanity lying bruised, wounded--half-dead. Stooping over the mangled frame, He pours in wine and oil.

Such is GOD! "In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." "He is the brightness of the Father's glory, the express image of His person." "No man has seen God at any time, the only-begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father He has declared Him." "We beheld His glory," says the most favored of all the spectators of Incarnate Deity, "the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

Both the closing statements of this latter verse unfold a name unrevealed to the patriarchal dispensation, and reserved for us, on whom the ends of the world have come. Christ is the revelation of the FATHER. "My Father and your Father, My God and your God." "He that has seen Me, has seen the Father. From henceforth you know Him and have seen Him." Jesus, in His longing to allure the world back again to the God it had either misapprehended or rejected, seems to delight in interweaving that paternal name with parable, and miracle, and intercessory prayer, and last agony, and first Resurrection words. It was something more comforting and endearing still, than "the Shepherd of the stony pillow."

How many forfeit the joy, at all events of their spiritual privileges, by entertaining hard, false, unscriptural thoughts about the Almighty. In the case of not a few, it is to be feared that unjust and repelling views of the character of God (to repeat the remark made in the preceding chapter) are imparted in early training! By an inversion and perversion of Bible teaching, must not the well-meaning mother, in order to deter her child from sin, at times be convicted of revealing more of the 'shadow' than of the glorious 'brightness' of Him "who is light and in whom is no darkness at all"?

We do not, indeed, (God forbid), in the spirit of many modern systems, discard from our creed one cardinal aspect of the divine character--God the Holy, the Just, the Righteous, the True--the Guardian and Dispenser of laws based upon principles of everlasting rectitude. We dare not divest Scripture of its plainest meaning, by eliminating all that is retributive in the government of the Great Supreme. But we speak now of those who, like Jacob, are gazing upon the God standing on the summit of the Heavenly stairs--God seen through the appointed way of salvation, "reconciling the world unto Himself." We speak of those who, in accepting the free and gracious offers of the great Redemption, behold every attribute of His nature magnified, and every demand of His law "made honorable" in the cross of His dear Son; those who can look up with confidence and hope to the mightiest of all Beings, and call Him by the endearing name of Father; who from the clefts of the Rock of Ages, like Moses in his mountain watch-tower, have seen a sublime vision and heard a sublime voice which can inspire no servile terror--"The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious" (Exodus 34:6). The thought of God may be dreadful to those who habitually despise or dishonor Him; but the realization of that Father, speaking through the Elder Brother--this union of ineffable paternal and filial love, is the most comforting doctrine of Scripture, and takes the sting out of all the sorrows of life.

Jehovah--the Omnipotent One--yet Jehovah the Loving One. Oh, to feel in your dreams of DARKNESS and SUFFERING that you have God in Christ, and Christ in God, your constant though Invisible Guardian! Many are the crushing trials with which your kindest friend dare not intermeddle--his best-meant words only grate on your sensitive spirit; you know too well that he cannot probe your wound or measure the depths of your agony. But when, as in the case of Jacob at Bethel, the lonely hour, the desolate hour overtakes you (shall we call it the hour of the

mourner's watch?); when you hear no footstep of angel on the ladder but the Angel of Death; when you are unwillingly wrenched from all that made life happy--the festal timbrel exchanged for the muffled harp and the silent chamber, there comes back from the Lord of angels the gentle reproof, as if borne on seraph's wing, to every such tearful dreamer--"Not alone! for the FATHER is with you!" 'and I, the Brother-man, the Son of the Highest'--"I know your sorrows!"

Father! Brother! how it puts the rainbow of calm trust into the darkest future, and rocks the angriest waves to rest. The key-note of the divinely taught prayer is--"Our FATHER who is in Heaven, hallowed be YOUR NAME!" Christendom, in the best known of her uninspired utterances, responds--"You are the King of Glory, O Christ; You are the everlasting SON of the FATHER!"

Take another experience of a different kind, in perhaps a sadder, gloomier hour still--the hour of your SIN. You who are painfully conscious of being wounded in the strife--shall we suppose some young pilgrim with a stain on the once spotless armor of early innocence--a blot on the hitherto white page of the early life-history, which all your tears cannot wipe out--the inward wail rising in the silent corridors of conscience, "My sin is ever before me!"--how little can you often depend on help or commiseration from others in the carrying of your burden. If you unbared your heavy secret even in friendly ears, in many cases you would receive nothing but the settled frown in return. The conventional world is harsh and unrelenting in its judgments--slow to make allowance for sudden temptation. Thousands have never felt the sweep of the hurricane themselves, and they cannot understand how others should succumb to it. Like the Jew, who, having incurred defilement by accidental contact with the dead, was cast out as unclean, so many still, who have bent before the storm, have the similar brand of society put upon them. Simon of old, is still the type of those who would remorselessly crush the tendrils of the broken flower beneath their feet, spurn penitence from their presence, break the bruised reed, and quench the smoking flax!

You are in better hands with the God of the Heavenly highway. "He heals the broken in heart, and binds up their wounds." "HE knows our frame, He remembers that we are dust." Of the Prodigal--the self-exiled, the feeder on husks, the hunger-stricken, the perishing it is said, "he arose and went to his father." God's thoughts are not as man's thoughts--as it is written "Jacob" (the crafty, the deceiver, the unworthy one, the supplanter, whom man would have denounced as unfit for Angelic tutelage and guardianship); "Jacob," says the great Being who came to him in these Bethel night-watches, "Jacob have I LOVED! (Romans 9:13). "Let me fall into the hands of God, for great are His mercies; but let me not fall into the hands of man."

Sinning one--abandoned one, despairing one, Trust HIM. In the darkness and isolation of your spirit, lift your drooping soul, like the battered sunflower, to the great Giver of light and life, saying, "When I am afraid I will trust in You:" taking refuge with one of the later prophets in the elevating assurance--"The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; and HE knows those who trust in Him" (Nahum 1:7). And yet, before we close, let us not lose the beauty and comfort of another part of Jehovah's name, in this tender and loving revelation--"The Lord God of Abraham your father, and the God of Isaac." "Our FATHER'S God," the God of our families--The God whose name and love are associated with the sleeping dead--with the Great and the Good who have been gathered to their kindred--with those who served Him in their lives; and who have left behind them, as the dearest legacy, that of an undimmed faith and a priceless example.

All of us have such memories. Indeed no heirloom in our households is so precious as those holy traditions of the departed--the Fathers and Mothers, Fathers and Grandfathers--who first unfolded to us the blessed verities of the Patriarch's dream, and who themselves, having reached the radiant summit, are beckoning us to follow after. O God of our fathers! let us not live--let us not die--unworthy of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises! But rather, like the Athletes of old in the Grecian race, who caught up the smouldering torch of the exhausted runner, let us snatch up the torch of faith and hope and glowing deed, which sainted ones have let drop from their death-grasp, and bear it for their sakes bravely on, until we too sink in the contest, and hand it to our successors.

Let this, moreover, be our comfort and encouragement, that the God above the Heavenly stair has promised, whether it be figuratively to run the race, or scale the stony steep, to "make His grace sufficient for us." If you have too good reason, amid the vicissitudes of all that is human, to weave the mournful soliloquy, "Our Fathers, where are they?"--the God of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, "the GOD of our Fathers," is still the same--infinite, immutable. We can make our appeal from the past to the future. "We have heard with our ears, O God, our Fathers have told us, what work You did in their days, in the times of old." "Our Fathers trusted in You." We can write over the vanished tents of Beersheba and Hebron, over the Bethels of our wandering--over the Machpelahs of our dead--"They shall perish, but YOU remain!"

04.12. THE PROMISE

THE PROMISE

"He has not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither has He seen perverseness in Israel--the Lord his God is with him."-- Numbers 23:21.

"And I will bring forth a seed out of Jacob, and out of Judah an inheritor of My mountains; and My elect shall inherit it, and My servants shall dwell there."-- Isaiah 65:9.

"The ground you are lying on belongs to you. I will give it to you and your descendants. Your descendants will be as numerous as the dust of the earth! They will cover the land from east to west and from north to south. All the families of the earth will be blessed through you and your descendants." Genesis 28:13-14 The voice of Jehovah having been heard at the summit of the bright stairs, announcing His Name as the God of faithful Abraham, we wonder what will form the tone and subject of further communication! It cannot surely be, that language of unqualified encouragement and heart-cheer is to be addressed to one, whose past life has so abundantly evidenced that neither natural nobility of character, nor spiritual grace are hereditary; on the contrary, who has proved himself all unworthy of his illustrious pedigree. Can these words of the Almighty fail to be mingled at least, with merited reproof, answering and echoing the thoughts and accusings which must have haunted the dreamer himself, when he laid his head on his pillow? Indeed, could we be greatly astonished, (after the tale of previous falsehood and treachery, plotting and counterplotting) had the Being he had dishonored now been heard canceling, by one righteous sentence, every covenant blessing hitherto promised; reversing the oracle of the younger son's predicted greatness, and reinstating the wronged and injured Esau in his right of first-born?

"I am the Lord, I change not, therefore (JACOB and) you sons of Jacob are not consumed!" (Malachi 3:6.) "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure" (Is. 46:10). "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion" (Romans 9:15). All the unworthy past of that unpromising, and unlovable wayfarer is to be consigned to oblivion; and without a word of reproach he is to be reclaimed, strengthened, cheered, comforted. The words of the Prophet, descriptive elsewhere of the retributive dealings of Jehovah, are in his case reversed--"For all this, His anger" is turned away, "and His hand (of mercy and loving-kindness) is stretched out still!"

Although the lesson has run, like a golden thread, throughout the whole preceding narrative; this may be a befitting place for us to pause, and more specially to admire and magnify the Sovereignty of God's Grace.

Many other sleepers there were that night in the Holy Land, who could have asserted a better claim on the divine regard than the wanderer from a home which he had embittered and disgraced--a home in which, as we now know well, he had left passions smouldering, which deceit and treachery had kindled, along with stifled purposes of revenge. We might have expected,

therefore, the Keeper of Israel, in His universal watch, to have piled the Angelic stair over some worthier recipient alike of His temporal and spiritual blessings--leaving the wayward fugitive of Beersheba--(the "Underminer" as his name has been literally rendered)--to be haunted in the night with visions of anguish and terror; in which, prominent would be, a duped father, an incensed brother, and, worse than all, the alienated face of the Infinite Being he had offended. But here, as in manifold other cases, the Lord would show that the divine and the human methods are often in conflict. "It is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God who shows mercy." The Patriarch dreamer's is the old, old story, that "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." At that hour, this man of like passions is pronounced, by the lips of Jehovah Himself, to be the chosen recipient and inheritor of honors such as no mortal ever shared before or since. We have vividly recalled to us the story of the erring sheep in the New Testament parable. Instead of that truant of the fold being left to its own estrangement, to plunge ever deeper into the thorny thicket of its wanderings, the unwearying shepherd follows after it "until he finds it;" and, "when he has found it," there is no anger in his look, no displeasure in his voice. In silent love "he lays it on his shoulders rejoicing." Such, in the later Gospel delineation, was a picture of God's present dealings with this exile on the bleak wilds of Bethel. He rehearses nothing in his ear, but the wondrous favors he had for him in future possession and enjoyment; anew proclaiming that he was the appointed heir to the Abrahamic covenant; recognized as the representative of the chosen seed--above all, that he was the selected ancestor of the Messiah of Israel, the Savior of mankind. The promise itself is so far couched in the same terms previously employed to Abraham and Isaac. But it embraces also a wider sweep. It tells of the cosmopolitan character of the wondrous race that was to spring from his loins, as stretching "westward, and eastward, and northward, and southward."

Strange destiny, for that lonely wanderer on that lonely moorland! to be father of the multitudinous people, who, in addition to past annals of peerless interest, are at this hour found by the banks of every river, and within the walls of every city in either hemisphere; unmingled and unassimilated with Gentile blood and Gentile customs, and with a proud and noble destiny still to be unfolded for their children's children. "The land you are lying on belongs to you. I will give it to you and your descendants. Your descendants will be as numerous as the dust of the earth! They will cover the land from east to west and from north to south. All the families of the earth will be blessed through you and your descendants." (Genesis 28:13-14).

It has been well noted, God accommodates the very words in which the promise is couched to the condition of His servant. Not only does He say, 'I will give you the land;' but, "The land you are lying on." 'The land, all of which you can tonight claim as your own, is the stony pillow on which your head reclines--this land, as far as eye can reach, is your predestined and covenanted heritage. That stone you are about to leave behind you will remain a pledge of My word--"I am the Shepherd of the stone of Israel!"' In the words of Matthew Henry, "He seemed to be plucked off as a withered branch, yet he is to become a flourishing tree that shall send out his boughs unto the sea." "Who can count the dust of JACOB?" (Numbers 23:10.) On leaving the Beersheba tent, his own father had pronounced on him a similar blessing, almost indeed in identical words (Genesis 28:3-4). It is now endorsed by his father's God, and has put upon it the sign and signature of Heaven. Although, therefore, he had neither by priority of birth nor elevation of character any title to so magnificent a spiritual possession, yet Jehovah seems literally to address to him the

after-words of the Great Prophet--"But now thus says the Lord that created you, O Jacob, and He that formed you, O Israel, Fear not--for I have redeemed you, I have called you by your name; you are Mine" (Isaiah 43:1). And well might he have responded in the words used by himself at a later period--"I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which You have showed unto your servant" (Genesis 32:10).

It is specially deserving of still farther note, that whatever were the vicissitudes and trials of his subsequent life--the name of this erring fugitive, far more frequently than in the case even of the nobler and saintlier Abraham, is identified with that of Jehovah--"the God of Jacob"--"the mighty God of Jacob." He lives, through long subsequent years, the chartered inheritor of unparalleled blessings. He dies, at last, "the Soldier of God." This was the distinctive name by which the Jewish nation were to be known--"You seed of Israel His servant, you children of JACOB, His chosen" (1 Chronicles 16:13). "All you seed of JACOB glorify Him and fear Him" (Psalms 22:23). The beatitude, not of the Hebrew people alone, but of 'the Church throughout all the world,' runs thus--"Happy is he that has the God of JACOB for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God" (Psalms 146:5).

How continually in the inspired pages are we reminded of God's absolute sovereignty in the calling and election of His people--a truth so contrary and antagonistic to human dealings and experience! Limiting ourselves to New Testament examples, is it not the woman of Samaria, the despised tax-gatherer of Jericho, the fierce demoniac of Gadara, the felon on the cross, the fiery Cilician bigot and persecutor, who form the conspicuous trophies and monuments of the Redeemer's love and power and compassion? "The chief of sinners," they "obtained mercy."

Such, also, are God's dealings with multitudes still. "I loved Jacob" (Malachi 1:2), is the strange legend written under many a name conscious in itself of having forfeited all claim to the divine favor. Still He meets the exile in the far country--the prodigal at a distance from his Father's house, when character is blighted, principle shaken, purity lost--the soul apparently surrendered hopelessly to some demon power. Oh, even then, at times, a voice is heard amid the maddening hurricane of passion--it is the lullaby of Everlasting love--"Come unto Me, you weary and heavy-laden one, and I will give you rest!" The Lord above the ladder suddenly reveals Himself; the closed heavens seem mysteriously to open; the dreamer has suddenly flashed upon him the long-deadened--the almost extinguished sense of his high original destiny. He feels within him, in a moment, the yearnings after a nobler, truer, diviner life--wakes up to the consciousness of the irresistible presence of some divine Influence or Power hitherto evaded, fought against, resisted; which, as with the grasp of a giant, has now "apprehended him." It is the veritable touch of the Invisible God. The wandering star is reclaimed from its devious orbits, and set within the sphere of the divine regards. The loaded cloud breaks, not in storm, but in a shower of benedictions! And what is the avowal and confession accompanying such visions of the Almighty? whether it be in rousing the sinner from his sleep of indifference and death, or awakening the backslider from his season of torpor and lethargy; when faith and hope have been burning with a feeble flame, and the consciousness of God's presence has been forfeited by indulged sin or omitted duty--whether, also, the means employed be by startling providences or by feeble instrumentalities? "This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes." "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Your name we would give glory." "By the grace of God I am what I am." "So slow is He to anger," says an earnest believer of the past generation, in speaking of this wondrous theme--"so ready to

forgive, that when His prophets lost all patience with the people so as to make intercession against them; yet even then, He could not be made to cast off His people whom He foreknew, for His great name's sake." (Lady Powerscourt's Letters.) The beautiful words which inaugurated the Gospel era, may well be written as the motto and superscription over many a life-history from that of the Patriarch-dreamer to the present hour--"Through the tender mercy of our God, whereby the Day-Spring from on high has visited us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace" (Luke 1:78-79).

Yes, here is the only possible solution and explanation of these mysteries of grace in the case of each individual soul--"The Lord has appeared of old unto me, saying, Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love--therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn you" (Jeremiah 31:3). Listen to one, not of life's dreamers, but of her noblest workers, when laid indeed on his pillow of outward darkness, but irradiated and encircled with a diviner light than the constellations above the Bethel Pilgrim--"The text, 'God is love,' has kept me thinking for the last twenty-four hours; and the more I think of it the more wondrous and marvelous it grows. In some of our clear northern nights, the heavens above sparkle with countless numbers of bright and beautiful stars. The pages of the Bible sparkle with countless numbers of bright and beautiful texts. But I fancy, for the future, I shall deem the text "God is Love" as the greatest and grandest in the great and grand skies of texts; a kind of pole-star, around which, as around the pole star in our heavens, the other starry messengers and sayings of the Bible revolve." (Sir James Simpson's Life, p. 416.) The Hebrew of future ages, in bringing to the Tabernacle or Temple his offering of first-fruits, was to accompany the dedication with words which kept in perpetual remembrance the sovereign grace of Jehovah to Jacob--"You must then say in the presence of the Lord your God, 'My ancestor Jacob was a wandering Aramean who went to live in Egypt. His family was few in number, but in Egypt they became a mighty and numerous nation.'" (Deuteronomy 26:5). How many, in bringing their eternal thank-offering into the heavenly Temple above, will accompany it with the confession and ascription--"Unless the Lord had been my help, my soul had almost dwelt in silence." "I will praise You, O Lord my God, with all my heart; and I will glorify Your name for evermore; for great is Your mercy toward me; and You have delivered my soul from the lowest hell" (Psalms 86:12-13). The magnificent promise God here given to the Patriarch, is delivered in a grander and more enduring form to us. There is a better Canaan in reserve for those who are spiritually "the seed of Jacob." As believers in Christ, we have already partaken of the closing portion of the Bethel blessing, the blessing promised through the Divine Messiah to all earth's families; and with this in present possession, we have the other in future promise.

There is a solemn exhortation addressed, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, to "look diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God." And the special example of warning is taken from another member of the Beersheba tent with whose name we are already familiar. It is the case of one who made light of temporal advantages, and suffered by their rejection irremediable and irreparable loss. Let us see to it that ours be not the self-forfeiture of Esau. His is the picture of those who dally and trifle with their soul's best interests--who, in the absorbing love of the present, are willing to barter their immortal felicity, for a bowl of earthly pottage; degraded votaries of the Epicurean creed, "Who snatch the pleasures of the passing hour."

How vividly are such characters reflected, in the brief but most graphic delineation of the elder brother, by the inspired pen--"Then Jacob gave Esau some bread and lentil stew. Esau ate and

drank and went on about his business, indifferent to the fact that he had given up his birthright!"
Genesis 25:34

Young pilgrims on the way to Zion! seek to be ready with the reply to all earthly solicitations, "If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. Instead, they were longing for a better country--a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them." (Hebrews 11:15-16). As from this outset hour at Bethel, onwards through the future years of his pilgrimage, the promised birthright blessings are ever before the mind of Jacob, stimulating him in all his efforts, raising him superior to his sorrows, cheering him in his exile, sustaining him in his bereavements, softening the harshness of his character, bracing him to noble endurance--So be it with you. Take, as your watchword and motto, "We look for a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God;" remembering that "what He has spoken He is able also to perform."

And, whether young or old, let us ever seek joyfully to recall and rehearse the ground of our title-deed to "the Better Country"--"the smiling fields" beyond Jordan. It is ours alone through Him who is "the Way, and the Truth, and the Life." "If you be Christ's (if you have found the true antitypical ladder of the Patriarch, by which you can to the Gates of the city) then are you Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Galatians 3:29). Striking and beautiful are the words of the psalmist as he invokes the blessing of "the God of Jacob," and names Him as such. On what does he found and urge his plea at the mercy-seat? He supplicates that the eye of the great Jehovah, averted and repelled by his unworthiness, may rest on the alone All-worthy ONE. "O Lord God of Hosts, hear my prayer--give ear, O God of JACOB. Behold, O God, our shield, and look upon the face of Your Anointed" (Psalms 84:8-9). As we hear the God of the Patriarch saying from the ladder-summit, "To you will I give it," let us lay hold of the promise in all the grandeur and magnificence of its spiritual meaning. Be it ours as the children of Jacob (the inheritors of that great covenant of grace ratified on the heights of Bethel), in reverent faith to say, "I will hear what God the Lord will speak--for He will speak peace unto His people and to His saints" (Psalms 85:8).

04.13. THE GIVEN PRESENCE

THE GIVEN PRESENCE "And behind the dim unknown

Stands God within the shadow,

Keeping watch above His own."--Anon.

There is a promise to particular saints—"I will never leave YOU, nor forsake YOU."--Philip Henry.

"By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged; and this is all the fruit to take away his sin."-- Isaiah 27:9. With this news, strengthen those who have tired hands, and encourage those who have weak knees. Say to those who are afraid, "Be strong, and do not fear, for your God is coming to destroy your enemies. He is coming to save you." Isaiah 35:3-4

"I will be with you, and I will protect you wherever you go. I will someday bring you safely back to this land. I will be with you constantly until I have finished giving you everything I have promised." Genesis 28:15

Jehovah had addressed Jacob not only as heir of Promise; but He had coupled his name with the other two representative fathers of His covenant people. That promise, however, glorious and comprehensive though it be, was of a general kind. It related to the number of his offspring--their marvelous extension; the yet more marvelous blessing which in them was to embrace "all the families of the earth." The question therefore still remained with the dreamer, 'How is the Almighty Speaker to deal with me? What share am I individually to expect in His divine guardian care? Am I, the fugitive wanderer, included in this magnificent spiritual heritage which is in reserve for coming generations?'

God proceeds thus to assure him--"I will be with you, and I will protect you wherever you go. I will someday bring you safely back to this land. I will be with you constantly until I have finished giving you everything I have promised." It is the Father of the prodigal giving to his lost son the most unmistakable pledge of welcome and affection, by bringing forth robe, and ring, and sandals; and making the paternal halls echo with festal jubilee. The banquet of divine love is now spread personally for the Pilgrim in the desert. An unknown future was before him--a future whose dramatic changes he, at present, happily little anticipated. How cheering to have the conviction, that, whatever these tragic pages might be in his yet unwritten history, the Omniscient One above the ladder knew them all. The vision and the voice together would, like a panoply of armor, strengthen and prepare him for every subsequent vicissitude. With the assurance, "I AM WITH YOU," the fugitive could rise, as we shall find him doing, from his stony pillow, and say, in the buoyant spirit of one whose experience was singularly identical with his own, "I will go in the strength of the Lord God." Have we not reason to believe that, in the most trying scenes of his after life, those moments, for example, of deepest emotion, when he gazed on the blood-stained evidence of his beloved Joseph's violent death--he would recall the present tokens and visible assurances of the divine nearness and protection--the glorious appearance and the sustaining

words--not only, "Behold, I am with you," but "I will not leave you"? And this is the way of dealing on the part of "the Keeper of Israel" with His people still. By special communications of His grace, He often nerves them for their hours of unexpected trial. He gives them the vision of the ladder, before the perilous journey across the border-mountains--their Gethsemanes are often preceded by Transfiguration glimpses--they are caught up into the third heavens, to prepare them for the buffeting "thorn in the flesh." Even when their Isaacs are called to the Mount of sacrifice, the summons is given in words of paternal tenderness--"Abraham! Abraham!" "He calls His own sheep by NAME, and leads them out!"

It was specially important for Jacob to receive these assurances at an early stage of his journey--before his hands began to hang down and his knees to be feeble. Perhaps at no time is the conviction of the gracious personal interest and supervision of God more valued--more needed, than in those circumstances to which we have often previously referred, as corresponding with the Patriarch's--the outset in life. When home ties are sundered--yes, and when the bright hope of revisiting the old hallowed haunts goes far to repress the tear and mitigate the struggle on leaving the threshold, what words are these, just quoted, to "brace and cheer!"--they seem to meet every aspiration of the young heart. This method and sequence of God's dealings, also, is in accordance with human experience. He manifests Himself, to youth specially, as the Forgiver, the Comforter, the Father. In after years, Jacob had a different revelation. Not the luminous ladder, the heavenly sunshine, and the loving accents--but in the deep valley of Jabbok he meets with the wrestling Angel. He is maimed moreover in the struggle--a combat all night until the morning dawned. These are some of the entries at a long subsequent period of his history. "Jacob tore his clothes;" "Jacob put sackcloth on his loins;" "Jacob's heart fainted." Reader! before that wrestling time and that sackcloth time, which in one form or other are sure to come, take firm hold of this tender revelation of the divine character, as "the Shepherd of the stone of Israel." He does not put the youthful recruit all at once in the forefront of the battle. He does not expose the shorn lamb to the untempered wind. He reverses Elijah's desert experience. The still small voice precedes the sterner symbols--"He shall feed His flock like a shepherd; He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young" (Isaiah 40:11). Seek to climb now the upward ladder-way, high as you can, that when the after-tempests of life are raging, you may be found above the warring elements, bathed in the light of God. Hear His own divine words for your encouragement--"I will go before you, and make the crooked places straight--For Jacob My servant's sake, and for Israel My elect, I have even called you by your name" (Isaiah 45:2, Isaiah 45:4). And surely, whether for young or for old, it is, as in the case of Jacob, a gracious provision of your Heavenly Father--"You know not what shall be on the morrow." The morrow and all its changes and trials are mercifully screened from view. Had it not been so, many a pilgrim would falter on the very first step of the rough, rocky stair; and recoil, fearful and dismayed, from the dizzy heights above him. But while happily our futures are unrevealed--wrapped in impenetrable mystery--we can take comfort, not only in the assured truth that Jehovah and His angels are with us, but that that gracious Covenant God will make our strength equal to our day; enabling us to cope with all exigencies, surmount all difficulties, endure all trials, and finally be made more than conquerors. The promise of the Bethel-dreamer was thus translated to another, whose eyes had just been opened to similar heavenly visions, but who also at the same moment realized his position as a struggling climber--"My grace is sufficient for you; for My strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9). Note, in the case of the

Patriarch, the varied links in the chain; the successive assurances of continual as well of individual care and supervision. "I am with you," "I will keep you." "I will bring you again." "I will not leave you until I have done." He might well have appropriated the future words of a great descendant—"There is no one like the God of Israel. He rides across the heavens to help you, across the skies in majestic splendor. The eternal God is your refuge, and his everlasting arms are under you. He thrusts out the enemy before you; it is he who cries, 'Destroy them!' So Israel will live in safety, prosperous Jacob in security, in a land of grain and wine, while the heavens drop down dew." (Deuteronomy 33:26-28). But how, it may be asked, can these glorious truths, in the case of others, be realized? How can this vision of God be seen? How can this voice of God be heard? How can these utterances of God be brought to vibrate like chords of music in the soul, and cause it to thrill with the consciousness of a present Deity? What we have been contemplating is beautiful in sentiment; or as an inspired patriarchal picture. But is it not altogether abnormal--removed from the region of the possible and the actual? If not, tell us how can it be brought within the category of ordinary spiritual experience.

We answer--There is one at least, among other ways, by which you can make these 'voices of God' as real as in the case of Jacob. You can do so by PRAYER. You can go, in the same way as patriarchs, and saints, and holy men did of old. You can resort to the mercy-seat; and pointing your finger to the divine, immutable promises, can thus invoke the Hearer of prayer--"Remember the word unto Your servant upon which You have caused me to hope." In the well-known and appropriate lines of Cowper--

"Prayer makes the darkened cloud withdraw,

Prayer climbs the ladder Jacob saw;

Gives exercise to faith and love,

Draws down all blessings from above."

All the more encouraging thus to approach a God of grace, and a throne of grace, when we remember that the dreamer of the desert, on whom these blessings were showered, was the representative of the spiritual wanderer--fugitive and sin-stricken. God's promises are not alone for the good, and the virtuous, and the well-doing; but, in their full and royal amplitude, are for all penitent souls who have the humbling consciousness that they have forfeited every claim on the Divine consideration. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts--and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon" (lit. 'multiply to pardon') (Isaiah 55:7). In this 'divine portrait' of the ladder-vision, the God of Heaven seems to stoop over the sinner as he lies forlorn and outcast in the sleep of death, saying, "Prove Me now herewith, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour out a blessing for you, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." The Lord's blessings, indeed, in answer to prayer, at times may not appear to be blessings. The very reverse. He seems to blight our hopes; to cross our schemes; to blast our gourds. He leaves vacant seats in our households, and yawning chasms in our hearts. We are forced to ask, 'Can the God of the olden dreamland--the God who spoke to Jacob these words of surpassing tenderness--can He be other than the God of Baal "asleep, or on a journey?"--has He not "forgotten to be gracious?"' Trust Him. The voice may, like that of Jacob's beloved son (Joseph) to his brothers, appear to be

rough, but it is the voice of disguised kindness. Be it yours to accept His dealings, and all His dealings, as appointed discipline for the soul's life. The description of the inspired annalist of "His ways to Israel," is as true regarding "the spiritual seed of Jacob" as it ultimately came to be of the exiled Patriarch, when the pillow of stones and the bleak moorland were memories of the distant past--"He found them in a desert land, in an empty, howling wasteland. He surrounded them and watched over them; he guarded them as his most precious possession. Like an eagle that rouses her chicks and hovers over her young, so he spread his wings to take them in and carried them aloft on his pinions. The Lord alone guided them." (Deuteronomy 32:10-12). The day at last arrived when Jacob came to turn over the varied leaves in the volume of his life, with incidents and entries that might well have crushed hearts even of a sterner mold. His long and wearying servile labor as a Mesopotamian shepherd; the feverish anticipation and dread, through all these years, of exile and bondage, of fraternal vengeance for early wrongs--this danger scarcely over, when the deeper pang of a family disgrace had to be endured; then the tender sorrow in losing his beloved wife; then the severance from the two main solaces of his widowhood and old age--when first Joseph and then Benjamin were wrenched from him, and he himself was taken away, from the land he loved, to die! Sad and mingled as the retrospect was, doubtless he would be brought to own all, as needed parts in the plan and purposes of Infinite Love. It seemed to require no ordinary instrumentality to root out the baser elements in his nature--the outgrowths of early subtlety and worldly wisdom. Milder, less stern and severe discipline might have done for others, not for him--"I will not leave you," was the divine promise of his Almighty Leader and Guide, "until I have done what I have promised you." Genesis 28:15. By implicitly surrendering ourselves to God's leadings, and His blessing accompanying us, we must be safe, we must be happy, independent of all place, all circumstances, all changes. Let us realize Him too, as the words we are now pondering specially suggest, as ever present. Let us see His loving form, and hear His loving voice not only in the midst of great sorrows and emergencies--the "fever-heats" of existence--its solemn passages and pauses, but "in all places where you go." That directing and overruling Hand should be recognized even in what may be deemed the trivialities of existence; its petty scenes, and petty duties; the daily journey, the daily business, the daily walk, the casual meeting. Not only amid the broad highways and thoroughfares of life; but in its hidden nooks, its bypaths, and byways--not amid its "loud stunning tide" only, but in its silent valleys, and lonely recesses, and solitary shores.

He has a corresponding comfort in His treasury for every thought of His people, be these thoughts great or small--"In the multitude of my thoughts within me, Your comforts delight my soul" (Psalms 94:19). The feeblest, as well as the strongest, form the objects of His solicitude and care. "Fear not, you WORM-JACOB, and you men of Israel; I will help you, says the Lord, and your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel" (Isaiah 41:14). Without Him, you will tread the journey with a desolate heart. With Him, however dreary that path, you will have what will fill all blanks, atone for all sacrifices, supply all losses. Without Him, no worldly advantages will avail you. They will not minister to a soul diseased. They will cure no heart-wound. They will dry no tear. They will smooth no pillow either of pain or of death. But with Him, you can envision yourself heir to the Apostles' paradox, "having nothing, yet possessing all things"--peace of conscience; the blessed sense of forgiveness; calm contentment with your lot--under the glad assurance that the Great Ruler is alike a rich Provider and a wise Sustainer, in whose hand you need have no anxious thought for the future.

Yes, and anticipating the closing hour of all--when human scenes are dimming, and human voices are growing fainter; when human aid falters and fails, and the hour of supreme loneliness has come--you can hear the unfaltering, unfailing voice, whose music has been heard (fitfully it may be, yet breathing its sympathetic cadences through all the years of the pilgrimage). It is the voice of the God above the ladder--the Lord standing by the opened gates of glory and saying, "I will bring you (I have brought you) into this land, for I will not leave you until I have done that which I have spoken to you of!"

04.14. THE WAKING, AND WAKING EXCLAMATION

THE WAKING, AND WAKING EXCLAMATION

"The Pilgrim laid down in a large upper chamber, whose window opened toward the sun-rising--the name of the chamber was Peace. There he slept until break of day, and then he awoke and sang."--Pilgrim's Progress.

Why do you say, O Jacob, and complain, O Israel, "My way is hidden from the Lord; my cause is disregarded by my God"? Isaiah 40:27 "When I awake, I am still with You." Psalms 139:18.

Then Jacob woke up and said, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I wasn't even aware of it." He was afraid and said, "What an awesome place this is! It is none other than the house of God—the gateway to heaven!" Genesis 28:16-17 This is an interesting transition and turning-point in our sacred chronicle. Among the group of Biblical illustrations in the Memorial chapel at Windsor, which magnificently enshrines and illustrates the virtues of England's departed Prince, is included that of the Patriarch and his dreamland. The point of time, however, selected, differs from the usual treatment. It is not, as generally, when the wayfarer lies fast asleep on his pillow of stone, with angels over his head. The artist has chosen rather the moment which we have now reached—that is, when, waking from his sleep, he looks wistfully and hopefully upon the clear heaven, as if in the act of uttering the exclamation which precedes this chapter.

We can picture and realize the scene--the tender light of a Palestine morning when the sun was just purpling the sky above the somber wall of Moab--the dew lying thickly on the grass around him--the last of the night-stars just vanishing from the sky, and the last of the night-breezes fanning his brow.

"The dawn--the dawn has died away,
And east and west, without a breath,
Mixed their dim lights, like life and death,
To broaden into boundless day."

He rises from his pillow; and with no eye or thought for the unfamiliar landscape around, the one fresh memory, or rather the present vivid and overpowering impression, inspires the first words which break upon the solitude--"Surely the Lord is in this place! I laid me down last night, lonely and joyless, sad and fearful. I saw no friendly form, I heard no friendly voice. Bleak wasteland and desert-stones appeared to be my sole silent companions. But I am conscious now that I had Divine watchers. I thought the God of my fathers had only His special consecrated haunts and His saintly favorites; that, though condescending to reveal Himself by the tent and the altar, He never would have deigned to own common-ground like this, on which I sought repose for my weary body. But, surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not. This place! I supposed it only the rough couch of a wayfarer--lo! I find it a habitat of Angels, as if Eden were spread out around me,

and the God of early Paradise talked with me. This is none other but the House of God, and this is the Gate of Heaven!"

Thus was the evening dirge of the exile turned into a morning of praise. And yet, how natural, also, were the feelings of the moment, and the farther utterance they prompted! It seems, from his waking words, as if he could hardly realize all he had seen and heard. Though it be only momentarily, he is in a state of strange bewilderment, no of positive fear. "He was afraid." We are reminded of other Bible instances descriptive of similar emotions, under similar circumstances. Gideon, on first waking up to the consciousness of having seen a heavenly visitant, exclaimed, "Alas, O Lord God! I have seen an angel of the Lord face to face" (Judges 6:22). The Greatest of the Prophets had suddenly revealed to him, in the Temple-courts underneath the winged seraphim, "the Lord sitting upon a throne high and lifted up." Overpowered with the splendor of the vision, he breaks forth with the utterance, "Woe is me! for I am undone—my eyes have seen the King--the Lord of hosts!" (Isaiah 6:1-5.) Another favored Israelite of a more distant day, as he beheld an angelic form standing by the altar of incense, "was troubled, and fear fell upon him" (Luke 1:12). The beloved Disciple, when in the opening vision of the apocalypse he gazed, in His ascension-glories, upon the Christ on whose bosom he had leaned on earth, "fell at His feet as dead" (Revelation 1:17). But in the case of the Patriarch, as of his descendants, the first moments of fear were speedily displaced and superseded by very different feelings. As he starts up from his couch, the words of the no longer trembling Zacharias scarcely seem inappropriate in his lips--"Through the tender mercy of our God, whereby the Dayspring from on high has visited us!" (Luke 1:78.) No more sense now of loneliness and friendlessness--no more cause, for the present at least, to cherish emotions of dread. No need of the oblivion-power of sleep to cancel sadder memories--no more anticipation of feverish visions of revenge and blood, which might well banish slumber from a softer pillow. After the shock of amazement and wonder is past, all such agitations rock themselves to rest. Better still, as the assured child of the covenant whose inalienable blessings have been ratified to him, there is an end to further plottings and counter-plottings--to questionable human devisings and subterfuges. He has ONE with him, above him, around him, with resources mightier than if all the tents of Kedar had mustered sword and bow on his side--"The Lord of hosts" is with him, "the God of JACOB" is his "refuge." The Patriarch's experience has its parallel and counterpart in that of many still, who can tell of their times and crisis-hours of "revival"--an intensified religious fervor--when, as with him, there is a quickening of spiritual apprehensions; a waking up to a more vivid consciousness of the realities of life; and more especially of the Great Unseen Presence in whom we live, and move, and have our being. The emotions of such could not be better delineated than by the picture of a dreamer rising from his pillow and exclaiming, "surely, the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not!"

These solemn memorable wakings come in various forms and with various accompaniments. At times they are the result of DELIVERANCE FROM GREAT TEMPTATION--owing to some sudden but successfully resisted invasion of a spiritual foe. The soldier, made alive to the vigilance of the enemy and the imminence of danger, rises from his perilous camp-slumber, exclaiming, "It is high time to awake out of sleep"--"Let us put off the unfruitful works of darkness, and be clothed with the armor of light."

Take, without figure, the season specially dwelt upon in these pages--YOUTH'S OUTSET IN LIFE--the commencement of the Pilgrim path--when some of those legion foes, under the garb of

pleasure, have presented themselves--done their worst to assault and enfeeble the soul, and then to crush and ruin it. The antagonist forces of right and wrong, good and evil, vice and virtue, confront one another. They have joined in the clang of battle--the hot and deadly strife. But virtue has come off triumphant. Trembling on the verge of the precipice, the imperilled one has been graciously rescued--the keel of the vessel was just grazing the rocks when, by a timely turn of the helm, it was saved. Then comes the grateful realization of deliverance. From that hour the charter of duty, "the solemn league and covenant" of obedience to God, loyalty to conscience and honor, is anew signed and sealed. "One will say, 'I belong to the Lord'; another will call himself by the name of Jacob; still another will write on his hand, 'The Lord's,' and will take the name Israel." (Isaiah 44:5). That crisis-hour puts into the lips a votive hymn of praise and new obedience. "He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my foot upon a rock, and established my goings. And He has put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God" (Psalms 40:2-3) "Gracious is the Lord, and righteous; yes, our God is merciful. The Lord preserves the simple--I was brought low, and He helped me. Return unto your rest, O my soul; for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you. For you have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, and my feet from falling. I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living" (Psalms 116:5-9). But most frequently such soul awakenings are produced by means and instrumentalities already more than once referred to--those SORROWS and AFFLICTIONS which, in every stage of life, occur in the course of God's all-wise but often mysterious Providence. How many a child of trial can bear testimony! Existence, and its solemn responsibilities, had previously been feebly and imperfectly realized. Immortal truths had lain dormant. As barren creeds--dead dogmas, into which true vitality had never been breathed, they exercised no influence on the character. In the case of some they met only with the incredulous smile, or sceptic sneer. But by reason of sickness, worldly disappointment, personal or family disaster, there has been a new and before undreamt-of apprehension of the sanctities of life and the grandeur of its destinies--along with this, a kindling up of faith, and hope, and spiritual aspiration. The awakened dreamer looks with a new eye on all around. What before were absorbing earthly interests, now dwindle into nothing compared with the interests of the Soul and Eternity. Emancipated from the tyranny of the present, he is undisturbed by trifles which formerly were used to vex and annoy. He has no ear for the little waves furrowing the sands and murmuring at his feet--his eye is on the wide horizon and the gleaming distance which the mist had hitherto obscured. A new atmosphere enwraps his being. He has "seen God." Long content to be outside divine influences, or to hover in the dim twilight, he is now, like the Apocalyptic Angel, "standing in the Sun." The instincts of immortality have been roused within him. To that immortality he now belongs as he never did before. Enlisted in the army of great souls, "all old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new."

Take the most common and startling of these messengers of God sent to rouse the spiritual sleeper--BEREAVEMENT. Hitherto the world was paramount--its vanities, its ambitions, its hopes. His vision was bounded by its haunts of pleasure, and marts of gain; his life-motto was, "This is my rest forever." But, "he awoke, and behold it was a dream!" Like the man opening his eyes in the dull grey morning-dawn on the festal-hall, recently brilliant with gay lights and floral devices, now silent, deserted; its floor strewn with withered bouquets--"the fashion of this world passes away!" He has been touched to the quick; but these incisions he feels to be the living, loving probings of his Heavenly Father. He has learned by that sore discipline the secret of true existence. "My flesh and my heart fails--but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion forever" (Psalms 73:26).

Yes, and bereavement too may have appealed to his human, yet immortal instincts, in still another form. His spiritual waking-time may have been, when he saw those he loved vanishing from sight within the gates at the radiant summit! The severing of dear earthly ties may have been the means of opening up the first vista-views of a glorious future--an infinitude of being and of bliss undreamt of before. One of the angels on the ladder has pointed on high to those once mourned as 'loved and lost,' but now thought of only as loved and glorified; or lost from sight only to be found again.

"Oh what were life, if life were all? Your eyes

Are blinded by their tears; or you would see

Your treasures wait you in the far-off skies,

And Death, your friend, will give them back to thee." The mourner's citizenship is transferred to heaven. He is like the imprisoned flower in the dark cellar, turning its blanched leaves towards the crevice in the roof above. Where the treasure is, there will his heart be also.

Reader! If God has roused you from your perilous dream, even though it may have been by "terrible things in righteousness," be grateful for it. You have reason only for joy, whatever be the means employed, if you have woke up with the great "Eureka! I have found Him whom my soul loves!" If you can say with the Psalmist, be the cost what it may at which such an awakening was secured, "I awake with Your likeness."--"When I awake, I am still with You," then your pillow may be the rock; your food may be weeping--the cherished ones in the Beersheba tent may be far removed; some of them--the Abrahams, and Isaacs, and Rebekahs of your early love and reverence--may have vanished for the forever of time. It may not be Beersheba, but Machpelah, where thoughts and memories now most fondly center. It matters not. That angel of sorrow has led you to the vision and fruition of God; and though on a couch of tears on earth, you are truly at "the Gate of Heaven". But an important practical question, similar to that of last chapter, here suggests itself. How do we know when we can, with some good measure of lowly confidence, appropriate the words of Jacob and breathe his waking exclamation--"Surely the Lord is in this place"?

There might be many answers. A first and prominent one which may be given is this--We may conclude that we are in the enjoyment of God's presence and nearness, when we are conscious of an aspiration after the holiness and purity He loves, and a corresponding aversion to the sin which He dislikes. "Walk in light;" "Be the children of light." "Walk before me and be you perfect," was the patriarchal direction to insure being thus habitually encircled in the felt presence of the Holy One. That "God is with you of a truth" you will discover by your higher, better lives; by the increasing agreement of your wills with His. "You are the temple of God, and the Spirit of God dwells in you. If any man defiles the temple of God, him shall God destroy--for the temple of God is holy, which temple you are" (1 Corinthians 3:16-17). The "God-frequented temple" will be known by the subjugation of self, mastery of passion, purity of thought, nobility of purpose, unswerving loyalty to truth; love of love, and hate of hate; the humble walk, the mellowed temper, the tender conscience; in one word--by the holy life--making the beatitude of the Great Teacher your constant aim and aspiration--"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." With these upright aspirations--fusing the secular and the spiritual; protesting against the divorce of what God has joined together, when He wedded the duties and demands of earth to the sanctities of Heaven, you will be visited with the Dreamland Voice and Presence, go wherever you will. Not within

consecrated walls alone; but in the every-day place of business; the realm of duty, wherever it is--the field, the office, the counter, the lonely lodging. What a preventive against temptation--what a stimulus to the performance of whatever is true and honest, and just, and lovely, and of good report, is the Psalmist's directory for daily walk--"I have set the Lord always before me--because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved" (Psalms 16:8). The heart, the thoughts--even in the midst of the world's activities--gravitating ever towards Him as the central Sun of being and blessing.

Oh! noble souls, young or old, whether in a higher or a humbler lot, faithfully battling with evil, and having earnest strivings after what is righteous--keeping your hearts as an inviolate shrine--rejoice in the assurance that the God you love is very near you--not dwelling only in the habitats of nature--aloft on the everlasting hills, or in sublime solitudes beyond the stars--but anywhere--everywhere. "You compass my path" (in the day-time), "and my lying down" (in the hours of darkness and its silent vigils). The duties of earth thus blended and united with heaven, it will be no mystic or dreamlike stair that connects you with the upper sanctuary. You will see that Gate of glory standing open before you, in all you do, and wherever you go. Common places will be transfigured into Bethels. And whether you close your eyes on your nightly pillow, or open them in the morning light, you will be able, not in figure of speech or with the thought of exile, to say, "Surely the Lord is in this place."

Young Pilgrim (if I may again, in passing, address to you a special word), there is but one spot, one occasion when you need to exclaim "How dreadful is this place!" It is when by evil influences; when, yielding to the momentary feebleness or indecision of the will, you are decoyed into the border-land of temptation; stifling conscience--perverting your capacities for goodness--when, allowing yourself to cancel better memories and resolves, you drift from the old, safe, and happy anchorage. This part of Jacob's waking exclamation may well be taken as the handwriting on the wall, which, unless timely heeded, is prophetic of doom and disaster.

Remember how many vessels, once freighted with promise, are now lying with splintered spars and gaping sides on the sands or rocks, hopelessly sundered from the retreating wave that might still have borne them buoyantly to sunny shores! Believe me, (to return to the symbol of the Dreamland,) if you thus abandon yourself to spiritual slumber--if you surrender the intellect and conscience and will to be drugged and stupefied with moral narcotics, the time will come when you will have no eye for the ladder and its angels, no ear for the heavenly voice! Lying on the edge of a volcano--"How dreadful is this place!"

Time, the prelude to an undying existence, is rushing on like an arrowy river. In some cases (possibly in your case) that river may be nearing the Eternal ocean, the boom of whose billows may already be falling on your ear; and with the thought of these great waves ever nearing, and no shelter yet sought or found for the frail bark--"How dreadful is this place!" And when death overtakes the irrevocable hour, and you feel that the world you had made your home and rest and portion is being wrenched from your grasp--"How dreadful is this place!"

Awake! arise! chase away these dreams of indifference, presumption, and procrastination. An old writer well says "indecision is a dreadful place"--living in a border-land, half-way between the regions of light and darkness. If bygone memories be those of sin, departed goodness, defiant unbelief, ungodly companionship, or unholy haunts--"Come out from among them, and be

separate." Above all, do not for a moment allow yourself to lapse into a state of hopelessness. Never allow that word from the abyss "Too late" to grapple with efforts to rid yourself of an unhallowed past, and an unhappy present. Exorcize the devil-born thought of abandonment to fatalism and despair. There are bars of gold in yonder eastern sky which tell you, as they did Jacob, of a coming dayspring. If yours be the fear and dread of a first awakening, hear the voice of Him who never discourages, but ever stirs the pulses of the languishing soul by bracing to nobler deeds--"Be watchful and strengthen the things that remain which are ready to die."

Accept unhesitatingly and without delay the gracious overtures of ONE who loves to meet the outcast, the exile, the fugitive. Your trooping images of terror will gradually vanish before faith's steadfast musing on the stair of heaven, the footsteps of Angels, and the voice of God. With these, you will rebuild the collapsed purpose, the half-surrendered fortress; and out of weakness may yet be strong, "wax valiant in fight and turn to flight the armies of the aliens."

There is one other blessed and hallowed means here suggested of recruiting spiritual strength, and consolidating your resolutions of new obedience. The words of Jacob would seem to recall and enforce the Apostolic injunction--"Not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is." "The House of God"--the earthly Temple--is made, in the experience of many, as 'the Gate of Heaven.' And as the forfeiture and abandonment of the means of grace is not uncommonly the first step in the decay of the spiritual life, (neglected weeds allowed to grow up and choke the unfrequented footpath to the Sanctuary)--so is the return to the Place of Prayer and its stated services, often the first symptom and token of revival. The response once more to the Sabbath bell and its thousand memories is frequently the first means of re-awakening--stirring the decaying embers of the soul and fanning them into a flame. These Angels of the Patriarch's ladder, beckoning the dreamer upward, may be regarded as no unfit emblems of God-appointed instrumentalities to help us on our heavenly way. "The Lord loves the gates of Zion, more than all the dwellings of Jacob." It is on "the mountains of Zion" the dew of His grace and blessing specially descends--"There I will meet with you." "There He commands the blessing, even life for evermore." The name of every Temple-court, where there is a gathering of holy hearts, is "Jehovah-Shammah--The Lord is there." Who among us have not hallowed remembrances of these 'Hills of blessing'? Drawn there, not for any poor conventional reason; but leaving, dusty and travel-stained, the hot and sultry highway for the bracing mountain air, to plead common needs, to bewail common infirmities, to obtain strength for daily duty and the endurance of daily trial. As we listen to the deeds of 'the Great ones of the olden time,' to realize what the sanctity of life is; to think of our departed--those who have dreamt their dream, and scaled their ladder, and who, endowed with immortality, are bending over those still left behind amid the desert stones and the wilderness path, to battle with windy storm and tempest. Above all, to ponder the mighty truths gathering around our own everlasting futures--that great Eternity for whose shores, following the wake of others, we must sooner or later set sail--"the land that is very far off," but which Psalm and Prayer and Litany bring to the eye of faith very near!

Fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God! Members of a brotherhood extending to all countries, and embracing all time, bear witness! Is not this oftentimes your experience and testimony? "A day in Your courts is better than a thousand"--"My soul longs for You in a dry and thirsty land where no water is, to see Your power and Your glory so--as I have seen You in the Sanctuary"? Yes, and if the Gate of Heaven be thus blissful and glorious, what will Heaven itself

be? If these angel-visits of earth be thus hallowed, what will be that Temple of which the earthly courts are the feeble emblem and reflection?--the House not made with hands--the Sanctuary of holy hearts in a celestial world, where there is no recruiting of exhausted energy, no flaw or discord in the seraphic music! May it be ours to attain these glorious heights of the symbolic ladder.

04.15. THE MORNING CONSECRATION

THE MORNING CONSECRATION

"The next morning Jacob got up very early. He took the stone he had used as a pillow and set it upright as a memorial pillar. Then he poured olive oil over it." Genesis 28:18 The Patriarch had fully realized the solemnity of the occasion, and the holiness of the ground which he had made his couch of repose. He felt it was no mere illusion of which he had been spectator. At all events the assurance grew with his waking thoughts, that his dream manifested divinest spiritual verities, of which he was himself the privileged partaker.

He obeys the first and natural impulse of these moments of mingled joy and dread. God has spoken to him; and, as the recipient of wondrous and undeserved mercy, he now makes preparation to address his divine Sustainer in return. He rises at dawn of day, when the fleecy clouds are still skirting the hill-tops and the earth around is "sown with orient pearl." The northern journey must before-long be resumed. Before, however, taking up his staff, he proceeds to erect a memento of this night of hallowed memories. Not only does he desire to set up a pillar of consecration; but, on the expectation of return from his distant pilgrimage, he would by this means also identify the spot whose associations would ever be the most sacred of his life. With the stones so abundantly lying around he would have wished, perhaps, to rear a commemorative "heap" of larger dimensions and worthier of the occasion. Being, however, alone and without aid, he must defer any permanent memento. Meanwhile, all he can venture to accomplish is to take the boulder which he had used for his pillow, and place it, as best he could, in an upright position. This crude monolith will be the pledge of some more conspicuous and enduring monument in time to come. No chisel had he to carve any inscription, even had the stone admitted of this. As it was customary, however, for all travelers in the East, as it is to this day, to carry with them a flask of oil for mixing with their food, as well as for external use, he pours some of the contents of his "skin bottle" on the extemporized pillar. It is the first consecration of notable places of which we read in sacred story--the setting apart of the rough rock of this upland from a common, to a holy use. If the grateful dreamer can engrave no lettering on its unhewn base, he can at least pronounce over it the name that has ever since sent its multiplying echoes through all ages--all lands--all believing hearts--BETHEL--"the House of God." It was the Jehovah-Shalom (Judges 6:24), or the Ebenezer (1 Samuel 7:12) of a future period--a STONE of everlasting remembrance. It was specially in connection with this incident, that the God to whose name and glory it was erected, had added henceforth to His other venerated titles that to which we have already made more than one allusion--the "Shepherd of the stone of Israel."

It may be worthy of remark in passing-- that, whether borrowed from the example of Jacob or not, the employment of 'commemoration stones' became common in all countries. "Crude stones and posts were the first memorials of the Phoenician people. Near Cadiz, heaps of stone used to be indicated as the famous 'Pillars' which are said to have commemorated the expedition of Hercules to Spain. The ancient people of the North preserved the memory of events by placing stones of

extraordinary size in particular places, and this method is still used by the American savages, among whom writing is unknown. The manner in which such monuments were made subservient to this purpose is clearly described in Joshua 4. Parents explained to their children the object of such memorials, and instructed them in the facts which gave occasion to them. In this way tradition supplied in some degree the place of written records." (Pictorial Bible.) The custom was specially prevalent in the East. Sacred spots and events were identified and memorialized by one--or it may be a group of stones; while oil, sometimes combined with wine, sometimes with blood, was poured for a libation on the top, as the symbol of dedication to God. "I had often observed," to quote still further not only the words but the personal observation of Dr. Kitto, "such stones, without being aware of their object, until happening one day to overturn one that had been set upon another, a man hastened to replace it, at the same time informing me that to displace such stones was an act unfortunate for the person so displacing it, and unpleasant to others. The writer afterwards observed, that the natives studiously avoided displacing any of these stones 'set up for a pillar' by the wayside."

Let us note the instantaneous assent given by the Patriarch to the first impulse of his revived and reinvigorated soul. The voice of God begets an immediate and willing response. No time is wasted that might endanger the displacement or absorption of waking thoughts! No question or wonderment as to whether all he had seen was fantasy or reality until the very vision itself had been dreamed away and passed into nothingness. Neither was there any needless moping over a guilty past; no questioning of the sincerity of the divine assurance of forgiveness and mercy. He resembles the prodigal of the later parable, of whom it is said that when he came to himself "--in the first flash of conviction--the first dawn of nobler purposes--"then he arose and went to his father." Or it recalls the prompt resolve of the royal Psalmist--"I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto Your testimonies. I made haste, and delayed not to keep Your commandments" (Psalms 119:59-60). In this we see one of the compensating features even in the natural character of Jacob, that of energetic purpose combined with immediate action. It accords with his vehement wrestling, in after years, with the Angel at Jabbok. He was resolute of will, alike in spiritual and in secular matters, and that despite of every hindrance and discouragement. These are qualities which go far to make alike the noble and the successful man. Many a fair life of promise is ruined by irresolution and procrastination. The iron cannot be welded which is allowed to cool. The waverer, driven by the wind and tossed, seldom reaches the "Fair Havens." The men who climb to the pinnacle are alike prompt in deed and undeterred by difficulty. Not infrequently with a covert sneer they may be called impulsive. Be it so. It is they, nevertheless, who thus make thought germinate at once into purpose; who are the true heroes in the strife; for whom the world has been the better while they lived, and whom the world has honored when they died. Yes, we repeat, the victorious and laurel-wreathed in higher than earthly battles, are those who, acting on impulse if you will, the voice within responding to the voice without, have sprung resolute from the pillow of sentiment and ease and drowsy contemplation, to erect their stone and vow their vow. David was conspicuously, of all Bible characters, a man of impulse--(the Peter of Old Testament story). See how he resolves on rearing his pillar, and pouring upon it consecrating oil--"He swore unto the Lord and vowed unto the mighty God of Jacob; Surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house, nor go up into my bed; I will not give sleep to my eyes, or slumber to my eyelids, until I find a place for the Lord, an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob" (Psalms 132:2-5). Our Patriarch's conduct seems to teach farther, that each great crisis of our life should be sanctified and hallowed

by the invocation of the divine blessing. Whatever be the new path we are to pursue, the new relation we are to form, the new duty on which we are to enter, the new scheme we are to undertake, whether it be domestic or public, personal or relative, let it be 'consecrated,' by at once seeking the Divine guidance, and hearing the Divine voice saying, "This is the way, walk in it." Let youth especially bear in mind that Jacob's was a morning dedication. There is little fear of the later period in one's life, if the altar-stones be reared and the anointing oil poured upon them in life's early dawn, before the great journey be undertaken. It was a noble motto and watchword bequeathed to us by the great Psalmist--"I shall be anointed with fresh oil" (Psalms 92:10). Thus anointed, in the very grappling with evil and temptation, you will become morally strong; just as the oak, in wrestling with the tempest, moors its roots all the firmer and deeper in the rock. Other inspired words form an appropriate invocation in beginning or renewing your pilgrimage--"Your Spirit is good, lead me to the land of uprightness." "Take not Your Holy Spirit from me." You can look undismayed along life's vista, when you have this all-glorious triple benediction to gladden the way--"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit." And what Jacob did one morning, be it yours to do every morning--setting up the pillar and pouring upon it the consecrating oil. "My voice will You hear in the morning, O Lord! In the morning will I direct my prayer unto You and will look up!" Seek to wake, day by day, with the consciousness of the grandeur of life; armor yourself for its spiritual battles. The allegorical idea of a great painter of the Middle Ages is one specially appropriate for every Pilgrim commencing or renewing the spiritual journey. In Giotto's well-known picture in the Arena Chapel of Padua, Faith is represented at morning dawn with a cross in her right hand and the creed in her left. A key is suspended at her belt, while she stamps under foot the horoscope of the astrologer. The thought conveyed by this religious teacher of his day may be thus interpreted in words--Christ crucified the young believer's hope; the word of Jesus his trust; all false confidences disowned and trampled upon the key of prayer ever at hand to open the rich treasure house of the Promises and make them all his own! And oh! be it remembered, as we had occasion to note in last chapter, that there is, on the other hand, such a thing as the desecration of life's early morning--when the vision is given, the dream dreamed, the voice of God in childhood heard and unfolded by a mother's lips--but the Bethel-land is left, and the early perilous road is traversed without erection of pillar or consecration of holy oil. Can we wonder, when such is the case--when the knee is unbent in prayer--when religious opportunities are shunned and evaded; when every dream of heaven is blotted out with low counterfeit dreams of earth--that the moral courage falters, and moral strength becomes enervated--that the dark doubt displaces the simple faith; and the departure of child innocence is before-long detected by the restless eye and the lowering brow; the familiar, open, innocent countenance--the fellowship with true and faithful souls--exchanged for the embarrassed look and the questionable companionship. Can we wonder, that, caged in darkness, away from the light of Heaven and God, the eye of the young eagle should film and his wing droop--that the clear ringing voice should come gradually no longer to tremble at a falsehood, or to startle at the name of wrong-doing or impurity?

One other thought suggests itself at this part of the vision--that "every place is hallowed ground." This Bethel dreamland was the first spot which was actually named "the House of God;" and in this sense, though preceded by other Patriarchal altars, it may be regarded as the earliest church of the Jewish nation, the prototype of the churches of future Christendom. How destitute it was of all ecclesiastical accessories and attractions we have already seen--a single stone--a crude monolith

in a bleak sheep-walk!

We are not of those who discard all that is chaste and befitting in places of earthly worship, or who venture to denounce such as a return to the Jewish "beggarly elements." On the contrary, we never can see that true piety or genuine devotion is incongruous or incompatible with grandeur of form, or loveliness of ritual. But it is a comfort and consolation also for those who, from local, geographical, or other circumstances, are denied these external "beauties of holiness," to see in the case of this lonely exile, that the Divine Being is "not confined to Temples made with hands." The true Temple is not the 'holy building'. To that place belongs the real consecration where souls are saved and God is glorified. On the one hand, a man may worship in a cathedral, with all the accompaniments of embossed aisle--cloistered seclusion--luscious music--intoned litany--and yet remain cold and unmoved as the speechless unimpassioned stone or pillar at his side.

While on the other hand, some humble worshipers may be gathered in lowly mission-tent, or Highland barn; in African Kraal, or Australian log-house. They may show, by look and garb, that they are able to claim poverty as their only birthright. To cultured eye and ear, their ritual may be unadorned and repelling; their music may be dissonance. But yet, in the eye of God and angels, the latter may be the truer Bethel of the two--its "pillar" not the less accepted, because it is composed of rough stones instead of marble--its oil not the less holy, because it is not contained in golden vessels.

No, more--there may, and often is, a danger in the one which is not in the other. True devotion may be counterfeited and travestied. There may, by mere outward attractions, be the perilous appeal to imagination and sensuous emotion. An idol may be made of gaudy forms, voluptuous sounds, and 'dim religious light.' The evening rock of Jacob may be, in truth, the better and safer altar-stone. At all events, we repeat, that we may gather from this record of the world's earliest Sanctuary, that the House of God--the most honored and hallowed Bethel--is where God Himself is, and where the Gospel-ladder is most faithfully set up before the spiritual eye. In other words, where Christ, the one only Way to the Father, is most fully proclaimed in the united Majesty of His Godhead and the tenderness of His humanity. The Temple He loves is that whose fumes of incense are heart-breathed prayers and praises; whose true font is the invisible baptism of the divine Spirit; whose true apostolic succession is the succession of Christian virtues; whose altar-fires consist of devout desires kindled, and noble life-purposes formed; whose most radiant altar-lights are glimpses, revealed by the torch of faith, of the better Church above.

Let every 'sick one whom Jesus loves'--every lonely bed-ridden child of weakness and suffering--remember, that it is not within earthly Sanctuaries alone, or to the summons of the Sabbath-bell, that Cowper's well-known lines apply--

"Here we may prove the power of prayer

To strengthen faith and sweeten care,

To teach our faint desires to rise,

And bring all heaven before our eyes"-- but that in the darkened chamber, and by the pain-stricken pillow, if there be a sincere believer there, there is a prayer-hearing, and a prayer-answering, and a covenant-keeping God. Loneliest vigils may themselves thus form the truest worship. Unseen

choristers from the upper Sanctuary may be gathering within these curtains and hovering around that aching head. The Lord of Angels can make the house of mourning, and the bed of languishing, as the 'House of God' and as the 'Gate of Heaven'!

04.16. THE VOW

THE VOW

"The purified righteous man has become a coin of the Lord, and has the impress of his King stamped upon him."--Clement of Alexandria.

Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me and will watch over me on this journey I am taking and will give me food to eat and clothes to wear so that I return safely to my father's house, then the Lord will be my God and this stone that I have set up as a pillar will be God's house, and of all that you give me I will give you a tenth." Genesis 28:20-22

We left Jacob, in the preceding chapter, setting up a memorial-pillar. He now proceeds to make it a votive one. God had spoken to him in wondrous mercy and grace, he now desires to make a return-avowal to his Almighty Protector and Friend. It is the voluntary declaration of new and devoted obedience on the part of a son to the loving Father who has tracked his wandering steps, and spoken to him "comfortable words." In this recorded vow which accompanied the erection of the stone, the Patriarch has been much misunderstood. He has been credited with entering into the unworthy compact with his gracious Benefactor, that only on certain conditions of temporal good bestowed, he would "take the Lord for his God." Moreover, that on the same stipulation, (the fulfillment of this guarantee of divine guidance,) he will make corresponding acknowledgment and restitution. In other words, that his resolve does not take the shape of the free spontaneous offering of a trusting heart; but is expressed rather in the terms of a selfish contract, containing certain specified conditions, the deal of the old bargain-making, worldly-wiseman. He vows a vow, but it is only on the presumptuous understanding that the Divine Being will first of all redeem His own pledge. Add to this, that his mind is so engrossed with the thought of temporal good and personal protection, that all reference is excluded to the more glorious spiritual blessings promised to his posterity.

We concede that such a harsh interpretation would not be altogether out of harmony with Jacob's antecedents. But we dismiss the thought of his thus degrading and desecrating the noblest moments of his life. Surely that ladder-dream and its accompaniments had taught him little, if, on his first waking moments, he were led thus to mock the divine Revealer with a requital like this. We may well cease, then, to regard the words as the compact of a hesitating man, doubtful whether he could, after all, take Jehovah as his Divine Benefactor, offering a loyal allegiance only on certain stipulations and contingencies. No; we are abundantly warranted to take them rather as the utterance of unswerving trust; the simple acquiescence in God's own terms; the recital of God's own declaration. As it has been, in brief, expressed by a scholar--"the saying of Jacob was not a promise for the future, but a reasoning upon the past."

If we might venture to give a paraphrase in modern language, the whole might read thus--'Lord, I take You at Your word. Your pledged promise, given by this wondrous vision, I know is faithful and true. I stagger not through unbelief. You have Yourself signed this charter of temporal good and

spiritual blessings. You have said that You will be with me; that You will keep me in all places; that You will bring me again to this land; never leaving me until all Your promises and purposes regarding me be fulfilled. Be it so--I insinuate no doubts; I accept the terms, and joyously subscribe article by article of Your covenant. Since You will, indeed, in wondrous love thus be with me--thus keep me in my pilgrimage-wanderings; thus feed me with food and clothe me with clothing; above all, bring me back again from my exile, first to this dream-land and then to my father's tent in peace, thereby enabling me to call You and rejoice in You as 'my God,'--THEN I shall, even more than now, be in a position to utter the memory of Your great goodness by erecting on this spot an enduring monument of Your faithfulness. The pillar I have now set up will meanwhile remain a pledge of what is to follow. I shall rear on the spot, at some future day, an altar of sacrifice, whereon with burnt-offerings I will pay You the vows my lips have uttered and my mouth has spoken when I was in trouble. Yes, and as a further testimony to Your mercy and loving-kindness, "of all that You shall give me, I will surely give the tenth unto You." "O Lord, truly I am Your servant; I am Your servant, and the son of Your handmaid; You have loosed my bonds. I will offer to You the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows unto the Lord" (Psalms 116:16-18). "It was not, then," says Mr. Blunt, "as has been falsely represented by the enemies of revelation, the shrewd compact of an avaricious man to bind the Deity to his interests; but the overflowing of a grateful heart anxious to bind itself to its God." Or, to sum up with the words of Matthew Henry, the best of commentators, as he thus briefly expresses all we have said, "Jacob had now a gracious visit from heaven. God had renewed His covenant with him; and the covenant is mutual. When God ratifies His promises to us, it is proper for us to repeat our promises to Him." Nor is this all. We still further fail to see the mercenary spirit which has entailed such heavy censures on the character of the Patriarch, when we note the moderation and simplicity of his desires. He just had had ratified to him the wondrous promises of the covenant. He had awoke with the intensified conviction that he was heir of the Holy Land. Yet the whole boon he asks is humble pilgrim's fare. No superabundance; only food and, clothing--willing to submit to any other privations. A divine lesson to many among ourselves who are apt to give way to peevish fretfulness and discontent in the midst of abounding mercies and even luxuries. "If God gives us much," says the same devout commentator last quoted, "we are bound to be thankful, and to use it for Him. If He gives us but little, we are bound to be content and cheerfully to enjoy Him in it." In the future there would be many vicissitudes and trials now unforeseen by Jacob; but he lets the unknown ills of tomorrow slumber quietly until tomorrow comes; knowing that the God who guides him and feeds him will give the morrow's grace for the morrow's emergencies.

Moreover, it is of special moment and interest to observe the effect which the consciousness of "having the Lord for his God" had upon him. It braced him for duty. He was not content with the first effect of the vision--simply rousing his religious emotions, causing him to speak of the House of God and the Gate of Heaven. Sentiment, in his case, as in the case of all God's true Israel, passed into deed. Half the glory and grandeur of this desert-revelation--the most useful part of its lessons, would be lost to us, if there had been no more than the bright staircase and the heavenly visitants. We like to ponder the sequel, when we see the soldier of God, as he awakes from his camp, putting on the spiritual armor, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, the sword of the Spirit, "praying always." That is an unhealthy atmosphere in which to move where sentiment and contemplation form the staple of the spiritual life--where there is the weekly Sunday vision of the

Most High, accompanied with appeals which rouse the sympathies and sensibilities, but when, for these awakened emotions, there is no practical vent or outlet. Feeble resolutions are allowed to filter through the soul. Truth and duty are listened to, but not fulfilled. Existence is resolved into a mimic battle--a mimic pilgrimage. There is the Bethel dream-land with its dream, but without its pillar of consecration and its votive resolves. "Good and faithful servant" will never be spoken regarding what was "well seen" or "well purposed," but what was "well done."

What pillar can I set up? ought to be the question of each heaven-bound traveler. It behooves each faithfully to find out what is his peculiar vocation; in what sphere or direction he can best serve his Lord and Master. There is "to every man his work,"--to every servant his stewardship. Happy is he who finds out what that work is, the peculiar and allotted place in the Temple to which he can consecrate a portion at least of time and talents. Few can be engaged in the more conspicuous services of the altar. To most must necessarily be allocated the humbler duties of hewers of wood and drawers of water. But what a nobility is given to life, when each, recognizing his peculiar sphere and gift, can say--"This stone I have set for a pillar!" God will not reject the offering because of its lowliness. In a beautiful passage in the Epistle to the Hebrews, hear what the Apostle says regarding one form, among many others, which that pillar may assume--"For God is not unrighteous, to forget your work and labor of love, which you have showed toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister. And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence, to the full assurance of hope unto the end that you be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises" (Hebrews 6:10-12). To all who have thus ministered to the needs of the needy, or given other practical illustration of their faith, the words are equally applicable which were uttered to the Patriarch twenty years after the night of his dream--"I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed the pillar" (Genesis 31:13). That visit to the sick bed; that gift to the widow and orphan; that word of comfort to the bereaved; that salutary reproof to the scorner or the careless; that text taught to the lisping child in the Sabbath-school--these lowly pillars are all remembered by Me. "These stones shall be for a memorial"--"A book of remembrance was written, for those who feared the Lord and that thought upon His name." Nor must we omit to emphasize (what, indeed, is the special topic of this chapter), that Jacob embodied all these utterances and resolutions in the form of a vow. The pillar he set up was a votive pillar; the anointing with the oil was, as it were, the subscription with his hand to the covenant-deed.

Few there are among us who cannot recall similar seasons; times of emergency, imminent peril, threatened misfortune, or apparently impending death; when the solemn vow is recorded, though, it may be, unlike that of Jacob, without any conspicuous outward symbolism.

Some who read these pages may remember the hour of sickness, when wearisome days and nights were appointed--when excruciating pain or wasting fever were threatening to rend the earthly tabernacle, and they had the solemn possibility brought before them of being laid on a couch from which they were never again to rise. When life was then "balanced in a breath," and the herald symptoms of dissolution were gathering around your pillow; do you not recall the vow then recorded, that if existence were spared and prolonged, by God's mercy it would be dedicated to His praise? Or, is the retrospect rather in connection with the critical illness of some beloved friend--when the sand-glass seemed to be hurrying to its final grain, and you had all the unutterable sadness before you of anticipated bereavement--an empty chair, a broken heart, a

desolate home? Do you remember how you then vowed the vow, that if God would bring back the shadow on the dial, and renew the lease of a valued life, future years would become one thank-offering to the Great Restorer? In both cases the vows were accepted, the prayers were heard, the solicited blessing was graciously given!

How have the vows then registered in heaven been kept on earth? Ewald, a distinguished writer, from whom we have more than once quoted, speaks in connection with a subsequent passage in the life of Jacob, of "the erection of a watchtower (Mizpah), as if for a watchman, on the part of that God who looks down from His height to keep watch over oath and covenant." What shall the Watcher of Israel, in His searching scrutiny, have to say regarding your covenantings? If He were to appear now, as He did on that future occasion to Jacob, after the lapse of a score of years, and confront you with the words then employed, what would be your response? Would it be, that soul and body have been presented ever since as living sacrifices? that, amid much conscious unworthiness and shortcoming, you have been true to your solemn engagements? Or would it be the reverse? Would it be to tell that passions which should have been quenched have been pampered--that besetting sins which should have been slain have been nurtured--that you have refused to hear the voice at the ladder's summit--spurned from you the good angels thronging its steps, and invited a horde of demons in their stead--the fragments of the broken pillar--the smouldering ashes of the desecrated votive altar lying scattered around? In a word, that your vows have been like the morning cloud and the early dew--resolutions vanished like snowflakes falling in the wintry sea, or "as a dream when one awakens"?

Even Jacob, when he stood on that Bethel ground again, had reason to mingle tears of self-reproach and humiliation with grateful offering. The recollection of God's goodness was dimmed and darkened by the memories of his own defections and shortcomings. If such should be our experience--if we be waking up to a sense, it may be, of long and blameworthy failure, let us listen to the solemn admonition of Him 'who walks in the midst of the golden candlesticks,' as He points to the far-reaching vistas of existence with their fleeting opportunities and solemn responsibilities--"Remember therefore from where you have fallen, and repent, and do the first works" (Revelation 2:5). With new thoughts--new resolutions of obedience, be it ours to say--"In God have I put my trust--I will not be afraid of what man can do unto me. Your vows are upon me, O God--I will render praises unto You. For You have delivered my soul from death; will not You deliver my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of the living." (Psalms 56:11-13).

Jacob added yet one more substantial evidence of the practical character of his faith and trust--"And of all that You shall give me, I will surely give the tenth unto You" (ver. 22). This TITHING of substance was in accordance with primitive Jewish practice. We find Abraham, as he met Melchisedek, on coming up from the slaughter of the kings, making over to him a tenth part of the spoil which he and his courageous band had taken from the aggressors. In the patriarchal age, it would seem to have been a free-will offering--a voluntary obligation. Under the Mosaic dispensation, the Tithe, as it was called, was rendered obligatory for the support of the Levitical priesthood. In Gospel times, the proportion of giving is left to an enlightened conscience--"as God has prospered us." Not, indeed, that it should be made casual, fitful, precarious--a matter of mere impulse, evoked by emotional appeal and momentary caprice; but in harmony with the other requirements of the spiritual life, regulated by plan and system. The Apostolic rule and principle is

thus briefly enunciated, "Let every man, according as he purposes in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:7). Christ's own rule and direction in His great ethical discourse should be paramount as to the mode as well as principle of giving. "But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you" (Matthew 6:3-4). Secret giving meets with no open reward; but it has a better, deeper, richer, than any conspicuous recompense in the face of the world. The brazen trumpet is carried and sounded before vaunting, self-glorious givers, "the hypocrites"--in that they have their poor reward. But the true, acceptable, and accepted donor has his reward--in what? In nothing visible; but in the silent testimony of a good conscience, the unnoticed approving smile of "the Father who sees in secret."

You who are going forth, or who may have lately gone forth, on the great pilgrimage of life, I close this chapter, as I have done others, with a word to you. Take as your model, alike the simplicity of the Patriarch's requests and the practical form in which his waking thoughts were embodied, as he set up his pillar and recorded his vow--not aspiring after great things; thankful if a gracious Providence puts them in your way; but rather feeling that true happiness (truer than you think) is found in the limited aspiration of Agur, whose ambition, like Jacob's, was bounded by a modest competency--"Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me." On the other hand, seeking to embody religious sentiment and creed in some substantial form; embarking your youthful energies in some object of religious or philanthropic interest that will please God and do good to men; desirous, with reverent hand and effort, to disentangle the world from some of its elements of discord and confusion; lifting the burden off some of its aching hearts, and helping to redress some of its crying wrongs. Depend upon it, these practical ends of religion will aid you all the better in the fulfillment of the early vow 'to be Christ's servant and soldier unto your life's end.'

If, like Jacob, you trust God in little things, He may answer you by great things. He is a bountiful as well as a wise Provider. Many years later, in the retrospect of this very hour, the Patriarch could say, "He answered me in the day of my distress." And how did He answer him? "With my staff," said he, "I passed over this Jordan; and now I have become two bands" (Genesis 32:10) What an encouragement to prayer! Jacob asked little--God gave him much. Jacob's aspirations were bounded by daily bread, and common clothing, and immunity from danger and assault--God gave him riches and blessings beyond what he could have conceived. He made the fugitive Dreamer a lordly Prince of the land. So may it be, in a better sense of "prosperity," with you. Spreading out your petitions at the Mercy-seat, He may not answer them in the form given to the Patriarch, but He is as able and willing now, as ever, to give to His waiting, believing children "exceeding abundantly above all that they ask or think." His are no miser fountains that feed the clouds. "The shower shall come down in its season, there shall be showers of blessing." It may not be "openly;" it may not be in accordance with the recompense most valued and appreciated on earth. Wealth may rear no golden ladder. Fame may sound no blast of clarion. But "the Father who sees in secret" will reward you with "the riches of His glory by Christ Jesus."

04.17. THE RENEWED JOURNEY

THE RENEWED JOURNEY

"Arduous is the conflict, but abundant the strength--hard the toil, but glorious the reward. O forsake not me, Your child, when walking through the great tumultuous crowd, who know not Your Name. Wide is the sea through which I have to steer my course, and high its swelling waves; but grace is the breeze that fills the sails; my compass is faith, and my pilot, Christ."--Tholuck's "Hours of Devotion."

"Let me set forth anew, O Lord, as a pilgrim on the earth, with my rod and staff, and so set my heart on You, that in all places You may be my dwelling-place and home, until I return here to my last resting-place."--Memorials of a Quiet Life.

"Then Jacob went on his journey."-- Genesis 29:1.

We cannot do better than begin this chapter in the words of Christian in the "Pilgrim's Progress"--"Who can tell how joyful this man was when he had gotten his roll again! For this roll was the assurance of his life, and acceptance at the desired haven. Therefore, he laid it up in his bosom, gave thanks to God for directing his eye to the place where it lay, and with joy and tears betook himself to his journey." So it was with the Pilgrim Dreamer of Bethel. "He went on his journey," or, as these words literally mean, "he lifted up his feet." They are rendered in the Jewish Commentary--"His heart lifted up his feet." The waking dread and terror had given way to reassured peace and joy. Vows of covenant love having been interchanged between him and his God, like a desert wayfarer of Apostolic times after a similar Gospel revelation--"he went on his way rejoicing" (Acts 8:39). The spirit and sentiment of the unwritten 121st Psalm might well, from first to last, be his. Indeed, there is strong ground for surmising that when that "traveler's Psalm" was composed, the inspired Singer of a future age must have had "the Keeper of ISRAEL," "the Shepherd of the stony pillow," before his mental vision. The night scene, the name of the Divine speaker, the very words of the Divine promise, have their echo and reflection in the glowing strain--

I lift up my eyes to the hills--

where does my help come from?

My help comes from the Lord,

the Maker of heaven and earth.

He will not let your foot slip--

he who watches over you will not slumber;

indeed, he who watches over Israel

will neither slumber nor sleep.

The Lord watches over you--

the Lord is your shade at your right hand;

the sun will not harm you by day,

nor the moon by night.

The Lord will keep you from all harm--

he will watch over your life;

the Lord will watch over your coming and going

both now and forevermore.

"Jacob went on his journey."--These words, in connection with the Patriarch, may suggest to us, in an emblematic form, some further practical thoughts regarding the life-journey which each of us is pursuing.

I. It is in the active prosecution of the journey--in other words, the earnest spirit in which we discharge our various duties and obligations to God and man--that we go either with "lifted up" or with lagging feet and heart. Life is, or ought to be, at least, no dreamland. It is the idle, purposeless existence which breeds morbid thoughts, and moping feelings, and peevish reflections on the Divine dealings. "Go," said God to another Wayfarer, whose case has already suggested more than one parallel with that of Jacob--"Go on your way; Return to duty. Leave juniper-trees and deserts behind you. Go anoint Hazael; Go anoint Jehu; Go anoint Elisha; and in the resumption of assigned life-work, languor and misgivings will take to flight" (1 Kings 19:15-16). The cobwebs of unbelief and incredulity, discontent and melancholy, are swept away by opening the windows of the soul to let in the breath of heaven. And this is as much a spiritual as it is a natural law of our being. It was in proportion as Paul "pressed toward the mark for the prize" that he "forgot the things that were behind," the brooding memories of sins and shortcomings--vain, remorseful regrets over a vanished forfeited past. He braced himself for present duties. He had no time to waste, counting his lost paces and feeble pulse-beats and fatal stumblings, when the goal was still to be reached. He does better than weep over irreparable bygone days, by redeeming the moments of a yet available future--the pettinesses and shortcomings of his former aims and aspirations are lost in the truthfulness and earnestness of present purposes. Laying aside every weight, he runs with patience the heavenly race. In starting on your journey, or rather, to carry out the parallel of Jacob, recommencing a journey already begun, resuming it with new and nobler resolves of duty and obedience, get yourself thoroughly indoctrinated with the same truth we sought to enforce in last chapter, that whatever your future be, whatever your lot and sphere in life, it will have its opportunities, however lowly and inconspicuous, of doing good to your fellows, and of glorifying Him in whose name you have vowed your vow.

We repeat, the humblest duties may be exalted, elevated, transfigured. Motive dignifies action. "Whatever you do, do it heartily as to the Lord and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord you shall receive the reward of the inheritance, for you serve the Lord Christ." Above all, whether much

or little, strive to perform it worthily; to give the talent if you can; the mite if you have not the talent; and the willing heart and pure purpose if even the mite be not possessed. God has room in His kingdom for the "feeble folk" as well as for giant souls; for the infant learning to walk as well as for the swift-footed Asahel. "When Israel was a child, I loved him as a son, and I called my son out of Egypt. It was I who taught Israel how to walk, leading him along by the hand." (Hosea 11:1-3).

"Thus I with faltering footsteps journey on,

Watching the stars that roll the hours away;

Until the faint light that guides me now is gone,

And, like another life, the glorious day

Shall open over me from the empyreal height,

With warmth and certainty and boundless light." With none of us, that journey should be a lounge, a summer day's walk. Life is an tremendous talent; and duty, as connected with life, is measureless. It has a center, but it knows no circumference. Its center is in God; its emanations reach into infinitude. Cease to imagine that you are an isolated planet, lost in the great system--a star dwelling alone. Rather feel that hour after hour you are circling round a glorious center, which not only gives you light, but expects you to reflect back light in return. Depend upon it, in the recognition of obligations, perhaps before renounced, now discharged with faith and courageous trust, you will acquire not only nobler views of duty, but of real happiness. The proverbial 'leisure with dignity' has a ring of reality in it, but it has a deeper dirge of falsehood. Among other discoveries the day of fresh spiritual awakening makes to receptive minds is, that the true dignity of life is not ease and luxurious rest--the poor artificial existence which consists in quaffing from hour to hour and from day to day the bowl of pleasure--but in that angel-work of traveling up and down the ladder, doing the will and fulfilling the purposes of the Father who loves you and the Savior who died for you. How many there are who spend their early days in irreverent and defiant independence of God and the soul--a poor Epicurean life; the 'absorbing present' all in all; and then, when the evening shadows begin to lengthen, there is an effort to assume the Pilgrim garb and begin the Pilgrim journey. In other words, they give the best of their strength, and the best of their time, and the best of their hearts to sin and self and the world; and then presume to offer to God the crumbs and the sweepings of an existence from which the zest is gone.

How can there be "the lifted-up feet," how can there be joyous harvests or vintage, when the soul has thus scorned its spring-time--when the young furrow has closed its pores against "the early rain" and reviving sun; the seed scattered either in the drought of the ended summer, or amid the chill blasts of the waning year? Be it yours to make another Pilgrim-prayer of the Psalmist your own on each returning day or at each fresh milestone of the road--"Cause me to hear Your loving-kindness in the morning; for in You do I trust--cause me to know the way wherein I should walk; for I lift up my soul unto You. Deliver me, O Lord, from my enemies; I flee unto You to hide me. Teach me to do Your will; for You are my God--Your Spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness" (Psalms 143:8-10). Thus, with the feet 'uplifted' in God's strength, will trials be made easy and burdens light. "It is God that girds me with strength, and makes my way perfect. He makes my feet like hinds' feet" (Psalms 18:32-33). "Though he fall, yet shall he not be utterly cast down--for the Lord upholds him with His hand" (Psalms 37:24).

Nor, in speaking of helps for "the prosperous journey by the will of God" (Romans 1:10), can we forget the promise so specially brought before us in the ladder-vision.--"For He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways. They shall bear you up in their hands, lest you dash your foot against a stone" (Psalms 91:11-12). Who are the leaders in that viewless band? May we not think of each angel, excelling in his own peculiar strength, specially delegated on his allotted mission to the several Pilgrims to Zion? The Angel Faith, with gleaming eye; the Angel Courage, with fiery wing and burnished shield and flaming sword; the Angel Ardor, with fleet foot urging the wayfarer upwards and onwards; the Angel Patience, with gentle visage and white vestment and folded arms, sent to whisper resignation in the hour of sorrow; the Angel of Victory, high above all, holding in one hand a palm, and in the other a crown. Shall we add a beautiful conception of an old Florentine painter--two gleaming Angel-warders at the gates of Paradise, putting garlands on the heads of the saints as they enter the Celestial City!

Another and very different lesson and reflection may be gathered from Jacob's resumed journey. It is suggested by connecting his present with his future experience. The dreamland and its time of blessing was in strange contrast with the dreary, servile years of drudgery and discipline (must we add of spiritual retrogression), in Mesopotamia. As with him, so with us. Our seasons of Divine elation and ecstasy, Bethel-visions, are not to always last. The booths are not allowed to be permanently pitched on the Mount of Transfiguration. Peter and his brother-Apostles had to descend the hill at dawn of morning for stern duty and trial; alas! too, as it proved, for the manifestation of faltering and unwatchfulness, and the surrender of holy trust! Even Paul had to return from his heavenly "revelations" to "the thorn in the flesh," to the arduous race--the fierce battle-field. And there are occasions which come to all of us, when with pain and sorrow we have to subscribe to the truth and reality of his recorded experience--"There is a law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Romans 7:23). God does not change towards us, but we may be too conscious of a change towards Him. There may be fluctuations, no, sensible reductions, in our peace and joy in believing, and that, also, by reason of our own unfaithfulness and shortcomings. Like the sunlight dying from the mountains--the everlasting hills are the same; but the glow upon them for a time has faded; the roseate hues have paled into the cold grey. "Bunyan's Pilgrim," says Dr. Cheever, "in going up his Hill Difficulty set out almost with running, so full was he of zeal and hope, of animation and impulse; but he soon got to walking, and thence fell to climbing on his hands and knees, and that with such weariness that it seemed as if he could not go on." Not infrequently, also, as in Jacob's case, it is after times of great spiritual enlargement that there is special danger of reaction and slumber. There is often but a brief way between the clear visions of the mountain and the mists hovering in the valleys. That very day of the Patriarch's renewed journey was itself emblematic of the spiritual history of his own future years. He must have had many a sigh for rest, as with blistered feet and beaded brow he sat on the lonely rocks by the wayside, or, after quenching his lips by scanty pools, he pursued his way over the stretches of burning sand. At night he had to descend the gorges of the Jordan and grope with his pilgrim-staff through its bristling bushes and rushing waters. Such also is the experience of every spiritual pilgrim. As an old writer has it, his way lies "uphill, downhill, to the city which has foundations." Not only has he, at times, great trials to encounter--heavy shackles to impede the "lifted-up feet"--but his faith is daunted; his peace and joy are impaired and rudely shaken by mere trifles--little things (what might be called life's undignified worries)--which in the retrospect he is ashamed he so allowed to fetter him, but

which have nevertheless proved hindrances and stumbling-blocks--the infirmity of temper; the fretful word; the hasty speech; the peevish murmur; the uncharitable reflection; some old habit reasserting its vicious claim, whether that be allied to sloth or covetousness, to frivolity, or selfishness, or passion.

It is melancholy to think how this renewed and re-awakened Patriarch (whom we have found at eventide at Heaven's gate, then at break of day 'lifting up his feet'--bounding along with elastic step, as if the physical frame participated in the joy that filled his inner nature)--was so soon drawn within the old coils of the Beersheba tent--giving way (the last thing he ought to have done) to distrust in the fidelity of a promising God. Alas! we see too plainly the lack of that lofty element in his grandfather's steadfast simple faith, "accounting that God was able" (Hebrews 11:19). In sinful forgetfulness of this ability, we find him tempted to resort occasionally to former human and unworthy expedients, revealing the "ruling infirmities" of his earlier life--or what may apologetically be called his "constitutional bias." While manifesting, indeed, high-principled submission under aggravated provocation, we discover at the same time the familiar scheming, bargain-loving nephew, trying to outwit the bargain-loving uncle, "a trial of wits," as Ewald expresses it; "wherein subtlety is fitly matched against subtlety." A further course of discipline, extending over twenty years, was needed, before the 'Supplanter' is finally driven out of him, and he comes forth the fully-armored "Prince of God." The first stage, at least, of that discipline seems completed at Jabbok. Until then, he refused to altogether let go of his old, crooked, distrustful policy. But on that occasion he thus proclaims the unconditional surrender--"I will not let YOU go." He has no boon now to ask, but one--that an undefined spiritual blessing may be given to him by the God of the heavenly ladder. In the spirit of a later wrestler on the same territory he seems to say, "My soul longs for YOU in a dry and thirsty land where no water' is!"--"Lord! O Shepherd of the stone of Israel! show me a token that You are my Shepherd and I shall not lack. Reveal Yourself to me as my portion, and I shall need no other!"

Thus was he brought to see and to own that the Jehovah of Bethel to whom he had erected the pillar and vowed his vow, was the only Being and Friend who could truly prosper his way and bring him in peace to his Father's house. We know, indeed, that the Divine discipline did not end even with Jabbok. God saw that there was still much needed, before the education could be complete. Accordingly He dealt with him as He speaks of doing with the figurative Jacob of the Prophet. Though "redeemed" and "called by his name," he was to pass through varied and diversified trials, under the expressive figure of waters, rivers, floods, fire, flames (Isaiah 43:1-2). In another sense the Bethel words were true, "I will not leave you until I have done that which I have spoken to you of!" And so it is in His probation dealings with all His spiritual Israel. The rod is required in some, more than in others, to subdue the defiant and obdurate will, to put an end to all schemings and compromise, and gain the heart to an unconditional surrender. "If Jacob," says Bishop Hall, "were willingly consumed with heat in the day and with frost in the night to become the son-in-law to Laban; what should we refuse to be made the sons of God?" "He has his tools," Rutherford says, "on the stones He wishes best polished for His Temple." To carry out the latter emblem, the Divine Sculptor, with each successive stroke of the chisel, has the great end in view of bringing out His own image in the soul, deepening in it the love of goodness, truth, purity, kindness. And while not one stroke of that chisel is an unnecessary one, He will not cease nor intermit His work until the spiritual marble has been fashioned so as to reach perfectly and forever His own ideal--

"No sign that the marble was white,
'Twas only a block at best,
But the artist with inward sight
Looked further than all the rest;
And saw in the hard, rough stone
The loveliest statue the sun shone on.

"So he set to work with care,
And chiseled a form of grace,
A figure divinely fair,
With a tender, beautiful face;
But the blows were hard and fast
That brought from the marble that work at last.

"So I think that human lives
Must bear God's chisel keen,
If the spirit yearns and strives
For the better life unseen;
For men are only blocks at best,
Until the chiseling brings out all the rest!"

Go then, spiritual Pilgrim! on your journey--cheered with the memories of your night-vision, and with the given and promised strength of your God. Seek to make life henceforth (and all the better if from its earliest morning hours) a consecrated thing--that so, when the sunset is nearing, with its murky vapors and lowering skies, the very clouds of sorrow may be fringed with golden light. Then will you feel in the conscious possession of God's presence and blessing, that you are in fellowship, not with a stranger--but with a familiar gracious Friend; whose bounteous hand has given you the daily bread of temporal mercy, and the better bread which endures to Eternity. Thus will the song in the house of your pilgrimage be ever in truest harmony. It will be composed of no jarring discordant notes--but with all its varied tones will form one sustained, life-long melody--dropped for a moment in death only to be resumed with the angels, and blended with the everlasting cadences of your Father's house.

"Traveler! faint not on the road,
Droop not in the parching sun;
Onward, onward with your load,
Until the rest be won.

"Swerve not, though your weary feet

The pilgrim path would leave;

From the burden and the heat

You shall rest at eve.

"From the petty cares that teem

Turn from with prophetic eye,

To the glory of that Dream

Which shall never die!

"Hark! it is the Father's voice;

Welcome, Pilgrim, to your rest,

Now within the gate rejoice,

Sealed and bought and blest!"

04.18. BETHEL REVISITED

BETHEL REVISITED

"Grants of mercy call for returns of duty; and the sweet communion we have with God ought ever to be remembered."--Matthew Henry.

"Therefore fear not, O my servant Jacob, says the Lord; neither be dismayed, O Israel--for I am with you, says the Lord, to save you."-- Jeremiah 30:10-11.

God said to Jacob, "Now move on to Bethel and settle there. Build an altar there to worship me—the God who appeared to you when you fled from your brother, Esau." Genesis 35:1

We revisit with emotion localities which have been consecrated to us in early years; all the more so, after a long period of absence. Whether it be the lowly cottage of the hamlet, or the residence in the busy city, or the more splendid ancestral dwelling. Some one special scene or haunt, also, may have its more hallowed memories; the tree whose shade vividly recalls childhood's playful hours; the murmuring stream and pendent willow where youth's first aspirations were formed; "the upland lawn" or "accustomed hill" where in the company of some cherished friendship "the early dews were brushed away;" the Church whose walls listened to the silent vows of a new spiritual life--the room where those now numbered with the dead spoke tenderly and lovingly of filial duty, and who have left behind them imperishable examples of holy living and happy dying. The human heart is the same in every age--and akin, therefore, to the emotions just described, must have been the feelings with which Jacob once more stood among the stones of his former couch at Bethel. For the previous nine years, he had encamped at Succoth and Shechem. At the latter place he set up an altar "in the grove of Moreh." In connection with it, however, he had no divine personal remembrances. It was sacred to him only as associated with his grandfather's primitive altar, erected 160 years previously, on the occasion of first receiving the Covenant promise. It was different altogether with the spot which had awakened within his own breast his deepest religious fervor, and witnessed his own earliest vows of heart-consecration. What a change had passed over his history during the three decades! To how many vicissitudes had he been subjected since that never-to-be-forgotten morning, when, with elastic tread, he went forth fresh from the voices and visions of heaven on his unknown pilgrimage!

Then he was all alone--no companion but a bag and a pilgrim staff--now, he returns, the head and center of an imposing Eastern caravan. Whatever these varied experiences had been, one thing he could gratefully testify, that the Great Being who had spoken to him had been true to His promises. He had not failed him. He had 'kept him in all places where he had gone,' and had 'brought him again into that land.' It was a retrospect of covenant faithfulness. What Moses, in an after age, said in his dying admonitions to Israel, might have been appropriately addressed now to their illustrious progenitor--"You shall remember all the way which the Lord your God led you--in the wilderness, to humble you and to prove you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments, or not" (Deuteronomy 8:2). In accordance with the divine

direction, the Patriarch now willingly returned to the old votive ground, anew to pledge his faithfulness to the God who had 'answered him in the day of his distress.' Nine and a half years previous to this, the recollection of the ladder-dream had been vividly brought before him. On the other side of the Jordan, just as he was approaching the borders of Canaan, the Angels of that heavenly Stair had again appeared. We may perhaps infer, that not during the twenty years of his exile, had they been visible to the outward eye of the Pilgrim Shepherd; but in that night of awe and trembling at Jabbok, an angelic revelation was again given. The exile "went on his way" from Mesopotamia, and (on reaching Canaan) the "angels of God met him" (Genesis 32:1).

Standing now upon the spot where formerly these radiant Beings had revealed themselves in a dream above his pillow of stone, he would gratefully recall, in addition to the bestowment of positive mercies, the evasion of many and great perils. There would be his escape across the Euphrates from the morose and exacting Laban. There would be the averting of the anger of his once vengeful and vindictive, but, as he had proved, high-minded and generous brother. There would be the deliverance from more recent reprisals at the hands of the Canaanites, in consequence of his son's breach of faith in the exterminating massacre of the citizens of Shechem (a treacherous and perverse deed in which he himself had no complicity). Above all, there was Jehovah's own gracious meeting with him at the frontier river; a meeting which might truly be called the second birthday of his soul. He had been spiritually born at Bethel, but he might be said to have been born again at Jabbok. A soldier before, he was there panoplied with new armor. From that memorable crisis-hour, indeed, we note that he becomes truer, more real, more unselfish, more affectionate, more God-fearing. Ewald graphically remarks, "Then was accomplished the true spiritual triumph of the great hero, made a new man through such superhuman conflicts; though as the chronicle finally concludes, he receives a lameness, a memento of the mortal combat he has passed through, and a reminder of bygone weakness; as if the moral deformity of 'The Crafty' had passed into the body, and were henceforth to attach to that only." A new altar we are told was erected on the dreamland, apparently by his own hands, and the name bestowed on the place twenty years before received a fresh and solemn confirmation. "He called the place El-Bethel" (Genesis 35:7). Jehovah once more appeared to His servant. In all probability that appearance on the present occasion was in visible form. The same voice, however, which of old spoke from the stair-summit, again addresses him. First renewing the covenant blessing; and then farther signaling both the place and the occasion by the reiteration of the new name bestowed at Jabbok. Jacob "the Supplanter" is changed into "Israel"--"the Prince of God." "And God said unto him, Your name is Jacob--your name shall not be called any more Jacob, but Israel shall be your name; and he called his name Israel" (Genesis 35:10). As a fresh motto and watchword for the pilgrimage, the honored Patriarch listens to the additional announcement from the lips of his gracious Protector, "I am God Almighty!" (Ver. 11.) After certifying to him that the promise previously made on the same ground is to be made good, "to you and to your seed after you will I give the land"--farther, that he was to be the father of a company of nations and of a line of kings; (ver. 12); we read "God went up from him in the place where he talked with him" (13). Another, probably more carefully built pillar was then erected to commemorate this new revelation of the Divine Being--"a pillar of stone," on which the customary libation was poured, consisting of a "drink-offering and oil" (Genesis 35:14). This scene and occasion has perhaps been truly called, "the time of Jacob's greatest happiness." His cup certainly was full as it had never been before. It was the pride of the wealthy sheep owner with his vast

flocks and herds--of the chief surrounded with his clansmen--the Sheikh by his servants--the joy of the exile returning to his native hills; of the father in the midst of his numerous family and dependants. There was the lively recollection of the divine condescension and kindness in the past; and the renewal of the divine promises for the future. We may even picture his household, who had lately renounced their idols (Genesis 35:4), assembling around the votive pillar, and uniting in the simple rites of worship. No anticipation of coming trial broke the trance of present bliss--Bethel, during these memorable days, must have appeared, even in an earthly sense, as the Gate of Heaven. The "Goodness and Mercy" of the future Psalm (as if two of the radiant Angels of the ladder) would seem about to follow him all the days of his life.

Alas! for the instability and insecurity of earth's best blessings! Jacob knew not (as we know not) what a day may bring forth. This solitary Shepherd of Palestine, like the laurel-crowned victors of a later age, must listen in the hour of blessing and prosperity to the needful monitory word reminding of vicissitude and mortality. In his present moments of elation, little did he forecast coming events. Little dreamt he, that only a few days later, after striking his tents, the impending cloud of bereavement which darkened his whole future was to burst upon him; that he would reach his father's encampment, now pitched at Mamre, a broken-hearted widower! His beloved Rachel he laid in her early grave at Bethlehem. Even the aged nurse, who formed the tenderest link which bound him to his mother's name and memory, was left with tears at Bethel under the "oak of weeping"--a name which surely carries with it a touching testimony alike to the fidelity of the servant and the irrepressible grief of the master.

Meanwhile, however, in calm confidence, though all ignorant of that unknown morrow, he erects his altar and vows his vow. What was said of a great descendant may with equal truth have been said of him--

"Bold to bear God's heaviest load,

Dimly guessing at the road--

Rocky road and hard ascended

Though his foot was angel-tended.

"Soon came heartache, care, distress,

Blighted hope and loneliness--

Sad success, parental tears,

And a dreary gift of years."

Here by rights this volume should end. And yet, may we not well include in our pages still another and more solemn 'Eventide at Bethel'? Are we not warranted to believe that there was yet one other occasion when the Dreamland came conspicuously before the eye of the Patriarch? He was indeed, at the time we speak of, at a long distance from Canaan. Very different scenes had for seventeen years risen before his eyes. He was no longer among the sunny hills and pastoral valleys and lowly altars of Palestine, but far away amid the stretches of glowing sand and the colossal Temples and Pyramids of Egypt. We are summoned in thought to his death-chamber in

that strange kingdom. The season has now arrived, the solemn hour in his, and in every history, when life is lived over again, and its most momentous incidents are recalled to impressive remembrance. As the princely Joseph and his sons stand by his bedside to take their last farewell, lo! it is the memories of the stony pillow which are first upon the lips of the dying Patriarch.--When Jacob heard that Joseph had arrived, he gathered his strength and sat up in bed to greet him. Jacob said to Joseph, "God Almighty appeared to me at Luz (Bethel) in the land of Canaan and blessed me. He said to me, 'I will make you a multitude of nations, and I will give this land of Canaan to you and your descendants as an everlasting possession.'" Genesis 48:2-4

Then, after recounting some touching reminiscences of his pilgrimage, he farther proceeds to pronounce a special blessing on his favorite son, and his two grandchildren. But even in doing so, the vision of Bethel seems anew to rise up vividly before him. He sets his dying seal to the veracity and fidelity of the divine promise which, it will be remembered, gave birth to his own responsive vow--"The God which fed me all my life-long unto this day, the Angel which redeemed me from all evil" (Genesis 48:15-16). May we not, moreover, well suppose, that the ladder-dream had its own due share in impelling the urgent and reiterated request regarding his own burial plans? He wishes no stately Pyramid or Sarcophagus reared over his ashes in the land of the Pharaohs. "Bury me not, I beg you, in Egypt, but I will lie with my fathers--in the land of Canaan." We are thankful for the record of this quiet eventide, after a stormy and troubled day--the peaceful migration of this great Shepherd-Patriarch to 'the Better country.' We hear of triumphant deathbeds. This surely is one of them. Like a glorious sun bursting from a bank of clouds in an evening sky, he seems to illuminate all around. Not Joseph and his sons only, but all his family are gathered round his couch to receive his benediction. And such a benediction! It has been well called a "grand lyric." The religious fervor which dictated the morning vow and prayer and which reared the altar on the upland at Bethel, seems to return in these waning hours. Not in the prosaic imagery we generally associate with age and weakness, but in strains of loftiest poetry the spirit of the old man passes away. "Who," says Toplady, "that reads this chapter, would imagine, that elevated strains like these--strains that would have done honor to the genius of Homer, warbled from the lips of a dying man--of a man, also, laboring under the utmost decays of age, and over whose head no fewer than one hundred and forty-seven years had passed!

All the dross, from that complex soul of his, had now been burnt out and removed in the smelting furnace. He comes forth from his life of great mercies yet of great tribulation, refined as the gold. He seems transfigured before he is glorified. What could not have been said for many a long year of trial and discipline can be averred with confidence now, "Behold an Israelite indeed in whom is no guile."

We hear no more of murmuring at calamities--no more mourning over failures--no more rash impugnings, as once there were, of divine wisdom and faithfulness. The "all things" he once thought "against him" are now owned to have been for him. He seems wrapped up and absorbed in the contemplation of the goodness of that Redeeming Angel-God. God's hand alone he traces in the varied events of his pilgrimage. His bounty had fed him, His Providence had shielded him, His presence had cheered him and He who had given him sustaining grace for a living-day, now gave him dying grace for a dying-day. And if we might, for yet a few moments, linger at that death-scene, it would be to note one other minute particular in the narrative (trivial in itself), but not without its interest as the last link with the Dream-land. We have noted in its place, in a preceding

chapter, that the solitary possession of the shepherd-pilgrim specially mentioned in connection with that lone eventide at Bethel, was his pilgrim staff. Nor indeed need we speak of this reference to the staff of the patriarch as 'trivial;' when it is not deemed to be so by an inspired penman of a long future age. It is surely remarkable, that the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews in his roll-call of worthies, should, in illustrating Jacob's faith, specially single out for mention the circumstance that in blessing the two sons of Joseph in the hour of his departure, "he worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff." As we associate Moses with his rod, and Elijah with his mantle, so do we associate Jacob with this pastoral crook. The same staff, perhaps, had been familiar to him in life's bright morning among the flocks at Beersheba--the same had been at the side of the Bethel-dreamer when he became spectator of angelic footsteps and auditor of the heavenly voice--it was probably the first thing his hand grasped in early dawn, when he raised himself from his stony pillow. It had been the companion of his pilgrimage ever since; the silent witness of his covenant-vows; the memento and souvenir of many loving-kindnesses and interpositions of the God he had served--with him in his joys, with him in his sorrows; on which he had leaned when bowed with grief at his subsequent trials, when "Joseph was not and Simeon was not," and they threatened to "take Benjamin also." The blind old man, as he strengthens himself on his bed, leans reverently on the same cherished support, absorbed in thought. He can no longer see it. His eyes are dimmed with the haze of years and of death--but his aged hands can grasp it. That death-grasp would seem to help him to gather up the tangled threads of memory and to retrace all the varied steps in the ladder-dream of existence. No more; the humble prop which had guided him through the fords of Jordan (Genesis 32:10) would seem to suggest a nobler Shepherd's crook, leaning on which, he would pass safely at life's eventide through the deep gorges and rushing waters of a deeper and darker valley. He could anticipate gracious words which have cheered countless millions in the same hour, "Yes, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil--for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff they comfort me" (Psalms 23:4).

We almost forget the once trembling fugitive and scared dreamer on the uplands of Benjamin. We can hardly recognize the timid traveler at Jabbok. The mists and clouds that obscured his early morning have passed away forever. The rustic wanderer has risen to the dignity of Prophet. Before these eyes, dimmed to earth, but already kindling with the light of an opening heaven, there rises, in the far-reaching vista of a grander future, the vision of a Great coming Conqueror--the Messiah of his race. He even hails Him by names, in what Luther well calls "a golden text," as the SHILOH. He sees nations and peoples gathering around His standard; kings and princes casting their crowns and scepters at His feet, and welcoming Him to the throne of universal Empire.

Then, as if rejoicing in his own assured personal interest in these transcendent predictions, he puts his dying seal to the faithfulness, in a dying hour, of "the Angel who redeemed him." As if at last fully realizing the glories of the Bethel vision--"I have waited," said he, in a rapture of gospel triumph--"I have waited for Your salvation, O God!" With that Dreamland before his closing eyes, and the angels of the heavenly stair tracking his footsteps, he boldly crosses the border-river, and the noblest part of the Bethel promise is fulfilled, "he is brought to his Father's house in peace." "When Jacob had finished giving instructions to his sons, he drew his feet up into the bed, breathed his last and was gathered to his people" (Genesis 49:33). May such a tranquil Eventide be ours--the vision, the promise, the staff, the Angel-convoy, the memories of divine goodness, the

song of salvation, the abundant entrance! May we be among the privileged number, who, having gazed with the eye of faith on the Dreamland ladder, are able at a dying hour to grasp its sublime spiritual and everlasting verities, and who shall at last "sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and JACOB in the Kingdom of our Father!"

"Complain not that the way is long--

What road is weary that leads there?

But let the Angel take your hand,

And lead you up the misty stair--

And then with beating heart await

The opening of the Golden Gate."

"Beyond the stars that shine in golden glory,

Beyond the calm sweet moon,

Up the bright ladder saints have trod before you;

Soul! you shall venture soon.

"All finished! all the conflict and the sorrow,

Sin felt and feared no more;

There dawns the radiance of a dreamless morrow

On the Eternal Shore!"

"Nearer, my God, to Thee,

Nearer to Thee;

Even though it be a cross

That raises me;

Still all my song shall be,

Nearer, my God, to Thee,

Nearer to Thee.

"Though like the wanderer,

The sun gone down,

Darkness be over me,

My rest a stone;

Yet in my dreams I'd be

Nearer, my God, to Thee,
Nearer to Thee.

"There let the way appear
Steps unto Heaven;
All that Thou sendest me
In mercy given;
Angels to beckon me
Nearer, my God, to Thee,
Nearer to Thee.

"Then with my waking thoughts
Bright with Thy praise,
Out of my stony griefs
Bethel I'll raise;
So by my woes to be
Nearer, my God, to Thee,
Nearer to Thee.

"And when on joyful wing,
Cleaving the sky,
Sun, moon, and stars forgot,
Upward I fly;
Still all my song shall be,
Nearer, my God, to Thee,
Nearer to Thee."

05.00. Choice Excerpts

Choice Excerpts from

Family Prayers The Christian Pathway The Gates of Prayer Thoughts for the Quiet Hour by James MacDuff (1818-1895)

05.01. FAMILY PRAYERS

FAMILY PRAYERS BY John MacDuff, 1885

CHOICE EXCERPTS

We look forward with joyful hearts to that better world, where we shall have no contrariety of mind to You, when we shall be with You, and like You; serving You without distraction; and where sin and sorrow will be no more felt or dreaded.

* * * * * The shadows of night have again fallen around us in peace. We thank You for the continuance of health and strength, and many outward blessings. We thank You for the crowning mercy of all--Jesus, Your unspeakable gift! Thousands of needy, outcast sinners have repaired to Him, yet still the Fountain of His grace is as free as ever. This is still His name and memorial, "Mighty to save!" Lord, we come to You, with all our sins, casting ourselves on His infinite and all-sufficient righteousness. Wash every guilty stain away.

* * * * *

There is not a corruption we have within us, which Your grace is unable to subdue. There is not a cross or trial, or care, but Your grace will enable us to endure. It is Your all-powerful grace alone which, from hour to hour, averts from us temptations we could have no strength in ourselves to resist. Hold us up--and then alone we shall be safe. To You we look for everything.

* * * * * May we view every dark providence as an errand of love in disguise--a messenger sent from the Eternal Throne, to minister to us, who are heirs of salvation. May we live as pilgrims on the earth.

* * * * *

Whatever Your leadings may be, let us cheerfully confide in their wisdom and faithfulness. We are poor judges of what is good for us, but we can trust You in all things--in what is great and what is small; what is dark and what is bright; what is joyous and what is grievous. We rejoice that all is in Your hands, and all is for the best!

* * * * * May we ever regard sin as our greatest trial. When temptation assails us, grant us power to resist it. May our lives, our tempers, our affections, our desires--be regulated by the example of our divine Lord and Master. Give us His meekness of spirit--which no provocation could ruffle. Give us His forgiveness of injuries--amid ingratitude and scorn. Give us His calm, un murmuring submission to Your holy will.

* * * * *

We bless You especially for the tokens of Your mercy in Jesus. We bless You for His full, free, everlasting Redemption. Oh set us in the Clefs of the Rock—and hide us there! Let us feel the all-sufficiency and security of His covenant love. For our infinite need--there is Your infinite

fullness! For our infinite danger--there is Your infinite salvation! Lord, give us grace to live worthy of our high calling. Enable us to adorn the doctrine of our God and Savior. Let His love be the animating principle in our actions. Let our chief delight be to serve Him. May our greatest pain be to vex and grieve Him. May our affections be more elevated--our eye more single--our lives more consistent--true religion more the one thing needful.

* * * * * May we rest in the confident persuasion that You do all things well--and nothing but what is well. Enable us to exercise a child-like acquiescence in all Your dealings. These may at times be mysterious; but when Your purposes of love are at last unfolded, we shall dwell with adoring gratitude on all the way by which You have led us. Give us grace, meanwhile, to be living as dying creatures. Let us never forget our pilgrim character, nor dream away, in guilty unconcern, our fleeting moments. Enable us to take You as the strength of our hearts and our portion forever. Keep us from the absorbing power of earthly things. May . . .

Your Spirit be our teacher;

Your Word be our guide;

Your sovereign will be our motive;

Your glory be our ultimate end.

* * * * *

Enable us to rely on Your guiding arm, and to merge our wills in Yours. Hold us up--and we shall be safe. O God, forbid that, in the midst of earth's cares and pursuits, we should ever lose sight of our immortal destinies. Let us imbibe more of the pilgrim spirit; having our eye upwards, and our footsteps onwards. Give us grace to manifest the power of a holy life.

* * * * *

We desire to make acknowledgment of our unworthiness and guilt. We will not cloak nor disguise our manifold and multiplied transgressions. Discover to us the depths of our depravity; unveil to us the secret pride and selfishness and worldliness of our hearts. Deliver us from our besetting sins. Let us see our vileness--in the cross of Your dear Son.

* * * * *

We renounce all dependence on ourselves. Wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked--we take Jesus as all our salvation and all our desire.

* * * * * May we seek in every providence to hear Your voice; and in every event to read Your will. May we live conscious of the predominating motive of love to You. May we feel Your favor lightening every cross and lessening every care.

* * * * * May all our duties be gladdened with a sense of Your presence and love. May we have a single eye in all we think, and say, and do--to the glory of our adorable Redeemer. As pilgrims and strangers on the earth, may we declare plainly that we seek a better country.

* * * * *

We rejoice to believe that we are entirely in Your keeping. If You send us prosperity, Lord, hallow it. If You send us adversity, Lord, sanctify it. May all things work together for our good. We put ourselves, blessed God, into Your hands.

* * * * *

Sanctify affliction to all in sorrow. Let Your suffering people rejoice in the assurance that Your chastisements are the dealings of a Father; that the furnace is lighted to purge away the dross, and refine and purify for glory. Direct, control, suggest, this day, all our thoughts, purposes, designs, and actions—that we may consecrate soul and body, with all their powers, to the glory of Your holy name. And all that we ask or hope for, is for the Redeemer's sake. Amen.

* * * * *

We come, acknowledging, that it is of the Lord's mercies we are not consumed. We are nothing and we have nothing. By nature and by wicked works, we could expect nothing but indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish. Each day is a witness against us. We confess our proneness to depart from You, the living God. We confess our reluctance to render to You the tribute of our undivided homage and love. Lord, we bring our sins and lay them on Him, who, as our Surety-Substitute, was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities. We bring our weakness to His Almighty strength. We bring our insufficiency, that we may receive from Him, the promised "all sufficiency in all things." We rejoice, blessed Savior, to think of You, as sympathizing with us in all our trials and perplexities and temptations; keeping us as the apple of Your eye, and feeling what is done to Your people as if it were done to Yourself.

* * * * *

Enable us to repose in the infinite fullness of Your grace and mercy; to experience the blessedness of an unreserved, unwavering trust and confidence in Your dealings. Let us confide to You the allotment of all that befalls us. Let us harbor no suspicions of Your faithfulness or love. Let us commit the unknown future to Your better wisdom, saying, "Teach us the way wherein we shall walk, for we lift our souls unto You."

* * * * * May we walk in the light of Your countenance. Your favor is life. Nothing but the possession of Your infinite love can satisfy the longings of our souls. Whom have we in heaven, O God, but You? and there is none upon earth we would desire besides You.

* * * * * The Lord reigns! Nothing befalls us but what is the dictate of infinite wisdom and everlasting love! Let every heavy-laden one know that it is Your gracious hand that appoints every burden. Often would we choose what would be detrimental to our best interests. You choose for us. Let us rejoice in You as a rich Provider, and an all-wise Provider; who will give us nothing, and deny us nothing, but what is for our good. May all Your poor afflicted ones take refuge in the assurance that You are the God of Providence; that whatever befalls them is Your doing; and that the sunshine of Your countenance can make up for every loss. O Source of all consolation, draw near to the afflicted. Abundantly sanctify Your dealings.

* * * * *

We desire anew this night to repair to His cross. We disown all trust in ourselves. Other refuge, other righteousness, we have none, and we need none. We cleave, in simple dependence, to the work of Jesus. We are safe only when clinging to the horns of the blood-besprinkled altar.

* * * * *

Every blessing, temporal and spiritual, we desire to connect with Your favor. Every rivulet of providential or gracious mercy--we would trace to Yourself—its great fountain-head. Every cross and loss we would submit to—as the appointment of Your wisdom. We would tread the roughest path--if You lead us there! May all Your dealings toward us issue in our sanctification. May our hearts be becoming holier and purer. Transform us more from day to day, and from week to week—into the image of Your Son.

* * * * *

Through another night, be pleased to grant us Your guardian care. Shepherd of Israel, may Your wakeful, sleepless eye be upon us. May the shadows of this night's darkness be to us only as the shadow of Your wings. Shield soul and body by Your mighty power. Lying down in Your fear, may we awake in Your favor, fitted for the duties of a new day. All this we ask for the sake of Jesus Christ, our only Savior. Amen.

* * * * *

Preserve us from the snares of a wicked world.

Strengthen us in seasons of weakness.

Protect us in the hour of temptation.

* * * * *

Never for a solitary moment, have You withdrawn Your hand of love from us. Take these hearts of ours and make them Yours. May our inmost thoughts, and desires, and purposes—be dedicated to Your glory. Pour Your rich grace into our hearts. Let us not fall a prey to the allurements and enticements of this present evil world; but may we walk as seeing You, who is invisible.

* * * * *

God of all consolation, bind up their wounds. Keep them from a murmuring spirit, under dark dispensations. Let them know and believe—that infinite love is in all Your arrangements—that finite wisdom has no place in Your chastisements—that He with whom they have to do, cannot do wrong. Lord, give us all this lowly spirit of submission to Your will. Whether You chasten us, or gladden us; whether prosperity or adversity be our portion--oh bring us nearer Yourself! May Your dealings serve to trim the lamp of faith and keep it brightly burning.

* * * * *

O Lord our God, we desire to bow this night at the footstool of Your Throne, adoring You for all Your great goodness. What are we--that we should be permitted to come into Your presence, or take Your thrice blessed name into our sinful and polluted lips? You have not dealt with us after our sins—but according to Your rich and undeserved mercy. What mercy it is in You—to bend

Your ear to our feeble lisplings of praise, and to listen to the pleadings of such unthankful and unholy hearts. We could not have ventured to approach Your footstool--but for Your great love to us in Christ Jesus. Through Him alone it is, that the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts are rendered acceptable in Your sight! In Him we are pardoned, justified, adopted, saved! In Him we are kept, sanctified, sealed. In Him we shall at last be presented without fault before Your throne. Blessed Savior, we may well entrust our eternal all to Your keeping. Our needs are numberless, but Your help is infinite! You are waiting to dispense needed grace, for every time of need. Lord, we feel that we require grace for everything! There is not the hour or moment we can live independent of You. Carry on Your own work within us. Hold us up--and then alone we shall be safe.

* * * * *

Most Blessed God, You have again permitted us to see the beginning of another day. We desire to accept every new morning as a fresh gift of Your love. We are the constant beggars on Your bounty. If Your sustaining arm be withdrawn--we instantly perish. We rejoice to look back on the way by which You have hitherto led us; protecting us from danger, supporting us in trouble, disappointing our fears, and realizing our hopes.

* * * * *

It is our desire, blessed God, to lie passive in Your hands. Whether prosperity or adversity be ours, whether You chasten us or gladden us--oh bring us nearer Yourself. When we cannot understand Your dealings--may faith repose in Your unchanging faithfulness. May we feel assured that all things are working together for our good; and that what is mystery here--will be unfolded and unraveled hereafter. Now, we see through a glass darkly--but then face to face. Meanwhile, may we walk less by sight and more by faith. May we bow to Your will. Let us see no hand in our trials but Yours; while we say, in lowly submissiveness, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has a sovereign right to take away." May we cheerfully submit to whatever You see fit to appoint. May we murmur at nothing that brings us nearer to You. Loving You supremely, take what You will away--we must be happy.

* * * * *

Make us like Jesus--patient and meek, thankful and forgiving. Take away all pride, vainglory, and hypocrisy--all absorbing love of the world. Set our affections on things above.

* * * * *

O Lord, we desire to draw near into Your gracious presence, in the name of Him whom You hear always, and in whom You are ever well pleased. Give us grace to approach You, under a deep sense of our unworthiness. We have nothing to plead in extenuation of our guilt. We have sinned against light and privilege, warning and mercy. We mourn our deep-rooted depravity, our constant proneness to depart from You, the feebleness of our faith, the coldness of our love, the imperfection of our best services, the mingled motives in our holiest duties. We come anew, casting ourselves on the infinite fullness of our adorable Redeemer. In Him is all our hope. Give us, out of His inexhaustible treasury, grace upon grace. Transform us into His image. May we seek to walk in His footsteps, and to copy His example.

* * * * *

All that we are, and all that we have, is derived from You. There is nothing we possess that we have not received from You. Oh give us grateful hearts; feeling that the least blessing we enjoy—is unmerited on our part, and a gift of free grace on Yours.

* * * * *

Enable us to feel our sins—to have a deep and heartfelt consciousness of their heinousness in Your sight. We are apt to cloak and mask them; we are reluctant to make a frank and unreserved confession of them all. Lord, give us grace, in true penitence and contrition of heart, to cast ourselves—all unworthy—on the infinite worthiness of Him who is all-worthy. For His sake, receive us graciously--love us freely. We rejoice to meditate on the love which He had for us from all eternity. We rejoice to think that it is the same at this hour that it was then—unchanging, everlasting.

* * * * *

Lord, subdue within us whatever is inconsistent with Your mind and will. Put a sanctified restraint on our thoughts. Repress all vain imaginations. Crucify every remaining sin. May our hearts become holy temples, and our lives living sacrifices.

* * * * *

We commend all belonging to us to Your sovereign care. May Your love reign paramount within us--may there be no competing affection. May we seek to show by our pure lives and consistent walk—that we have been imbibing the Savior's spirit. Take these unworthy, erring hearts—sanctify and seal them for Yourself. Make them Yours—Yours only, and Yours wholly, and Yours forever!

* * * * *

Let us live as the expectants of a glorious immortality. Lord, may we habitually remember, that here we are pilgrims and strangers. Oh be our constant Guide in all our journeyings. Let us never go but where You direct. Let us never hesitate when and where You call us. Let us not arraign the allotments of Your infinite love. May we feel that all the circumstances of life---its joys and its sorrows--its comforts and crosses--are ordained by You in adorable wisdom. Our way might have been hedged up with thorns, but it has been full of mercy.

* * * * *

Lord, we mourn over our dullness, and coldness, and lukewarmness. We look forward to that day, when there shall be nothing to mar the joy of entire and undivided devotion to you, and consecration to Your service.

* * * * *

O God, we come into Your blessed presence this evening, anew to thank You for the unmerited tokens of Your love and mercy. On You we are dependent for all the temporal bounties of our lot, and for all our higher and more enduring spiritual privileges. If we have been enabled this day to resist temptation, and to fight against sin, it is Your grace which has enabled us to do so. We are

weak and helpless. Our hearts are ever dealing treacherously both with ourselves and You. The good that we would do--that we don't do. And the evil that we would not do--that we do. Nothing else but the merits of our blessed Redeemer can save us. We take refuge in the fullness of His grace—in the completeness of His finished work. Our souls would magnify the Lord, our spirits would rejoice in God our Savior; for He who is mighty has done great things for us--holy is His name.

* * * * *

We take refuge anew at the foot of Your cross, bringing our infinite unworthiness to Your infinite merit and all-sufficiency. Wash us, blessed Savior, in the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness. Receive us graciously. Love us freely. Preserve against the world's snares, and dangers, and temptations.

* * * * * May all worldly thoughts, and cares, and disquietudes, be laid aside, that we may enjoy a foretaste of the everlasting blessedness which is at Your right hand. We come, gracious Lord, relying on Your mercy and love in Jesus. We would direct the undivided eye of faith to His finished salvation; rejoicing that it is as free as ever, and as efficacious as ever.

* * * * *

Fill us with a deep and humbling sense of our guilt. May we mourn an erring past, and receive grace for an unknown future. We would seek this day anew to enkindle our love at Your holy altar. Inspire us with resolutions of new obedience. May we no longer live unto ourselves—to the world—to the creature—to sin. May the great Creator and the adorable Redeemer occupy, without a rival, the throne of our affections!

* * * * *

We approach You, acknowledging our great unworthiness. Fill us with a deep sense of our guilt. We have not the humbling consciousness we ought to have of our exceeding vileness. We are apt to plead vain excuses for our sins. Forgive us, O Lord—forgive us all, for Your dear Son's sake. Wash these crimson and scarlet stains away, in the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness. Blessed Lord, make these unworthy hearts of ours Your temple—holy altars of gratitude and love. May our lives form a continued thank-offering for Your manifold mercies. May we count it our highest privilege, as well as our sacred duty, to walk so as to please You.

* * * * *

Almighty God, we desire, on this the morning of a new day, to approach the footstool of Your Throne of grace. You are glorious in Your holiness, fearful in praises, continually doing wonders. Your eternity, no finite mind can fathom. Your purposes no accident can alter. Your love no time can impair. We adore You as the God of our life; moment by moment we are dependent on Your goodness; if You withdraw Your hand, we perish. And yet, O Lord, we have not been living habitually mindful of You. We have too often taken our blessings as matters of course. We have had unthankful hearts in the midst of Your daily tokens of unmerited mercy. Above all, we have been living in guilty forgetfulness of Your dear Son. We have not been remembering as we ought, that but for Him and His wondrous grace, we must have perished everlastingly! We have not felt, as we ought, the attractive power of His cross. Other lords have had dominion over us. Your love,

which ought to have reigned paramount, has been displaced by other affections. We have been "minding earthly things;" too often anxious, and troubled, and concerned—about things that will perish with the very using. Lord, have mercy upon us. Melt our hard and obdurate hearts; renew them by the indwelling of Your gracious Spirit.

* * * * *

All our hope is in Jesus. Help us, blessed Savior, else we die! Give us to see the adaptation of Your character and work to all the wants and weaknesses the trials and difficulties—the sorrows and sins of our fallen and suffering and tempted natures. There is infinite merit in You to meet all the magnitude of our infinite guilt. May we exhibit more willingness to renounce all dependence on ourselves, that You may be enthroned in our hearts, as Lord of all. Make us more heavenly minded—more pilgrim-like. Our graces are feeble—Lord, sustain them. Our affections are lukewarm—Lord, revive them. Search us—try us—lead us. Use whatever discipline You see best: may it all result in our growing sanctification, in endearing to us Your favor, and bringing us to live under a more constant and realizing sense of the things which cannot be shaken.

* * * * *

O Lord, our Heavenly Father, by whose good providence we are spared from day to day—enable us to come this night into Your presence, with hearts filled with gratitude and thankfulness for all Your mercies. We would be deeply humbled on account of our unworthiness. What are we—that we should be permitted to take Your name into our polluted lips? We have sinned—what shall we say unto You, O preserver and Redeemer of men? We have erred and strayed from Your ways like lost sheep. We have followed too much the devices and the desires of our own hearts unto evil. We have been rebellious, and wayward, and selfish, and unthankful. We have been living in the enjoyment of countless blessings without any due acknowledgment of Your giving hand. Your kindness has too often been abused, Your grace resisted. We have been worshiping and serving the creature more than the Creator, who is God over all, blessed forevermore. Lord, we flee anew to the clefts of the Smitten Rock—hide us there, from that wrath and everlasting condemnation which these our manifold sins have justly merited.

* * * * *

What encouragement we have to trust Your love and mercy! We can fear no evil when You are with us. We rejoice that we are in Your hands; that all that our concerns are at Your disposal. Enable us to rest, in calm composure, in Your infinite wisdom. Give us lowliness and gentleness; kindness and unselfishness. May our own wills be merged in the higher will of our Father in Heaven. Whatever be the discipline You employ, may we meekly submit to it. May we watch all Your varied teachings, and get profit and sanctification out of them all. May they bring us nearer Heaven and nearer You.

* * * * *

O Lord, we desire to draw near into Your blessed presence on this the beginning of a new day. Accept of our morning sacrifice. Enkindle our souls with a live coal from the inner sanctuary. Throughout the day may our minds be stayed on You. May a sense of Your favor and love be intermingled with all its duties—hallowing all its pleasures, and softening all its trials. Lord, we

have received our being from Your hands; may the lives imparted by You, and sustained by You, be consecrated to Your praise. May we feel the happiness of Your service, and regard nothing that this world can give, as comparable to the enjoyment of Your friendship and love. We thank You, above all, for the provisions of the everlasting covenant. Gracious Savior, Shepherd, Guide, and Portion of Your people—give us the assured sense of pardon and forgiveness through the blood of the Cross. May we have no trust in anything but in Your matchless work. May simple faith be followed by holy obedience. May we know the blessedness of a holy life; of affections once alienated from God, now alienated from the world. May no spiritual foe be permitted to obtain the victory over us. May no idol to usurp Your place in our souls.

* * * * *

We adore You, gracious God, as the source of all our happiness—the Author of all our blessings. Forbid that we should allow any created good to dispossess Yourself from the supreme place in our affections. May our one animating wish and longing be—to live, and walk, and act, so as to please You.

* * * * *

What are our lives—but testimonies to Divine faithfulness? We look back with gratitude and thankfulness on a wondrous past—the innumerable mercies which have been showered upon us, and that, too, in the midst of our ingratitude and sin. Bless the Lord, O our souls, and forget not all His benefits! Where would we now have been, but for Your great love to us in Christ! On Him our every hope of pardon and acceptance is built.

* * * * *

Lord, enable us to manifest our love to You, by a holy walk and life, adorning the doctrine of God our Savior in all things. Give us a tender conscience, a broken spirit, filial nearness, purity of heart, consistency of conduct, uprightness of life. Bring us under the power of renewed natures and purified affections. May all that is earthly and carnal, all that is unamiable and selfish, all that is unkind and unholy—be displaced by what is pure, elevated, lovely, and holy. Above all, may we live under the influence of unseen realities. With our faces Zionwards, may we feel that our true home is above.

* * * * * May Your sorrowing people be enabled to trust You in the dark. May they look forward to that joyous period when they shall come to stand in Your presence, and trace for themselves all the wisdom of Your now inscrutable dealings.

* * * * *

Most Blessed God, we desire to approach Your sacred presence on this, the close of another day. Let our prayer come before You as incense, and the lifting up of our hands as the evening sacrifice. Enable us to have a realizing view of Your Divine Majesty. Glory be to Your Holy Name, that though Heaven is Your dwelling-place, You condescend also to make every lowly heart Your habitation. Though You are the greatest of all Beings, You are the kindest of all, and the best of all. We come, weak and helpless and burdened, to that cross where alone there is shelter and peace for the guilty. We will not cloak nor mask our manifold sins and wickedness before the face of You, Almighty God, our Heavenly Father. We would confess them with a humble, lowly, penitent, and

obedient heart. May Your love exercise a paramount influence over us.

* * * * *

We come, poor and needy, pleading Your own gracious promise, to give "all sufficiency in all things" to those who seek You. We have no offering of our own to present at Your footstool—we have everything to receive. There is nothing between us and everlasting destruction—but Your mercy in Jesus. Wandering in the wilderness, in a solitary way, hungry and thirsty, our souls fainting within us—we would drink of the streams of abundant grace which flow from the Smitten Rock. Bring us to live, more and more every day, under the constraining influence of Your love.

* * * * *

Give us fresh victories over our secret corruptions. May the power of evil wax weaker and weaker; and the power of Your grace wax stronger and stronger. May we know, by joyful experience, the happiness of true holiness.

* * * * *

Give us reverential and child-like submission to Your will. The lot may be cast into the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord. Finite wisdom has no place in Your dealings. Not only are all things ordained by You, but ordained in ineffable wisdom and love. May the end of Your dispensations be our growing sanctification.

* * * * *

O God, You are great—and greatly to be feared. Your greatness is unsearchable. Heaven is Your throne—the earth is Your footstool. Before You, cherubim and seraphim continually cry—'Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty!' Heaven and earth are full of the majesty of Your glory. You are the sovereign controller of all events. You do according to Your will in the armies of Heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. The Lord reigns. Man proposes—but You dispose! And You dispose wisely and well.

* * * * *

Whatever be the sphere in which Your good providence has placed us, may it be our earnest endeavor to use our time, and talents, and opportunities for You. May it be our highest desire—to walk so as to please You. May it be our heaviest cross and trial—to incur Your displeasure. In the performance of every-day duties, let us seek to make this the directory of our conduct, "How would Jesus have acted here?"

* * * * *

We come anew to You this night, weary and heavy-laden, beseeching You to grant us the blessed sense of Your forgiving mercy. We lament that we do not feel, as we ought to do—the burden of sin. Bring us in poverty of soul—in self-denying, self-renouncing lowliness, to cry out, "God be merciful to us, sinners." Show us the infinite adaptation of the Redeemer, in His Person and work, to meet all the necessities of our tried and tempted natures. May His name be as ointment poured forth. May His blood be our only plea—His love our animating principle—His glory our chief end.

* * * * * In Christ we are as secure as everlasting power and wisdom and love can make us!

* * * * *

How, Lord, shall we come into Your presence? Our very prayers are enough to condemn us. Our purest services, if weighed in the balances, would rise up in judgment against us. We come anew in the name of Your dear Son, confessing, and desiring deeply to feel as we confess—that we are sinners and the chief of sinners. We look to Your grace abounding over all our sin—to Your infinite merit abounding over our infinite demerit—to the everlasting righteousness and faithfulness of a tried Redeemer, coming in the room of our imperfections. We would place all our sins on the head of the immaculate Substitute. He alone can bear them away into a land of oblivion, so that they can rise up to condemn us no more. We bless You that He ever lives and reigns for our justification. We rejoice to think of Him as our Great High Priest, with the names of His covenant people engraved on His heart, bearing them along with Him in His every approach to the throne. All power in Heaven and in earth is entrusted to His hands!

* * * * *

We desire anew to bless and praise You for Your unspeakable gift—Jesus, the Son of Your love. There is not a ray of hope which visits our souls—but emanates from His cross. He is the channel of every blessing. We rejoice to think that at this moment He is bending upon us a gracious eye from the Throne, and, with undying and undiminished love, pleading our cause. Lord, we come, casting ourselves on the fullness of Your grace in Him.

* * * * * May even trials and crosses become easy to us, when borne in a spirit of tranquil submission. Let us be living as pilgrims on the earth—weaned from what is uncertain and transitory here—and having our affections fixed on the things which cannot be shaken, but remain forever. Oh that Your love might be enthroned more than it is, as the ruling passion of our souls—and Your glory more the end and aim of our being. We adore you for Your free, sovereign, unmerited love in Jesus!

* * * * *

We often confess with the lip—what the heart does not feel. We often appear to be humble, when we are not humble—when our hearts are full of self, and pride, and vainglory. We desire to come anew into Your presence, casting ourselves on the free grace, and love, and mercy of Jesus. We rejoice that in His cross all Your attributes have been magnified.

* * * * *

Known unto You are all our varied circumstances, our peculiar trials, and temptations, and perplexities. Our every burden we cast on a faithful God. Our souls, our lives, our cares—we leave entirely in Your hands, saying, "Undertake for us."

* * * * *

It is in the name, and trusting in the merits of Your dear Son alone, that we can have any confidence in approaching You. We rejoice that we have always a safe shelter at the foot of His cross. We rejoice that there, every attribute of Your nature, and every requirement of Your law,

have been vindicated and magnified. Myriads are now in glory to bear witness to the power and love of an all-gracious Savior. Save us, else we perish! There is not a sin but You can cancel—there is not the unsanctified heart which Your promised Spirit is unable to convert into a Temple of the living God. Keep us from evil; preserve us from temptation.

* * * * * May our weakness drive us to Almighty strength. Keep us, by Your grace, from an uneven walk, from inconsistency of conduct. May we be gentle, and lowly, meek, and forgiving. May we overcome evil with good.

* * * * *

We pray for all in sorrow—may they look to the hand which was pierced for them, to bind up their bleeding wounds. May He who graciously said of old, "I know their sorrows," be near, with His own exalted sympathy, to minister to their varied experiences of trial.

* * * * *

Give us grace to look away from our guilty selves and our guilty doings—to Him who has done all and suffered all, and procured all for us! Give us a deep and abiding sense of our vileness and unworthiness. May every sin which has usurped the throne of our affections be cast down, that God Himself may be our all in all. May we seek to imbibe more of the spirit, and to copy more of the example, of our Divine Redeemer. May we feel it to be our joy to serve Him, our privilege to follow Him, our sorrow to vex and grieve Him.

* * * * *

O Lord, we desire to approach the footstool of Your Throne, adoring You as the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, who neither faints, nor is weary. Your wisdom never fails. Your resources never exhaust. The kindness of the kindest knows a limit, but Your kindness knows no limit. With Your friendship, and favor, and blessing—we are rich—whatever else You may take away.

* * * * *

We come unto You this morning in the name of Your dear Son. Our sins reach unto the clouds. Blessed Savior, we would bury all our transgressions in the depths of Your forgiving mercy. We seek no other refuge, and need no other refuge—but You. Relying on Your finished work, we can look calm and undismayed on the unknown future. We can cast all our cares, as they arise, upon You, feeling not only that You care for us—but that You make these cares Your own.

* * * * *

During the past day, You have been compassing our path—shielding us from danger, and guarding us from temptation. None is so able, none is so willing, as You are—to befriend and guide us in every perplexity. We can experience no real deprivation, and mourn no real loss—if we have You. May we ever be near the atoning fountain; continually hidden in the clefts of the Rock.

* * * * *

We have nothing of our own but our sins; all that is good in us comes from Jesus. Have mercy upon us, for His sake, in whom You see no iniquity.

* * * * *

We desire to take Jesus as our pattern in all things. When in need of direction or guidance in any duty, or under any perplexity—may this be ever our inquiry, "How would the Savior have acted here?" May we imbibe His unselfish spirit. May life be a more constant effort than it has been, to crucify self and to please God.

* * * * *

Sanctify sorrow to the sons and daughters of affliction. Let them not murmur under Your Fatherly chastisements. Let them own Your Sovereignty, and take comfort in the thought that You do all things well; seeing no hand but Yours in the bestowing and removing the gifts of Your bounty. "The Lord reigns, let the earth be glad!"

* * * * *

How unworthy are we to come to Your footstool. There is enough of coldness in our prayers, of insincerity in our repentance, of imperfection in our best attempts to serve You—that were we tried by these, we must have perished forever! Our prayers themselves require forgiveness. In You alone are our persons and our services rendered acceptable. We flee to the foot of Your cross. Here we are safe, though everywhere else we be in danger. Let us exercise a simple confidence and trust in Your completed work. We bring every sin to Your atoning blood. May we have You in all, and for all the duties and difficulties and trials of life.

* * * * * Your thoughts are not as man's thoughts. Had they been so, the sinner, with all his deep depravity, and unutterable vileness, and base ingratitude, would not have been thus welcomed, pardoned, accepted, loved. Bring us to live more constantly and habitually under the constraining influence of Your Redeeming love. May these souls of ours, ransomed at such a price—be dedicated to Your service.

* * * * * Keep us from pride—the master passion of our fallen and corrupted natures.

* * * * * Our wishes, our desires, our interests, our joys, our sorrows, our friends—we leave entirely to Your sovereign care and disposal.

* * * * * May we be melted under a sense of our own great unworthiness, and of His amazing love.

* * * * * May sin be more dreaded, and holiness more loved.

* * * * *

Lord, break the world's alluring spell; strip it of its vain fascinations! May we give evidence to all, that we are living under the power and influence of gospel principles and renewed affections. And even though trial and sorrow should at times be our allotted portion, may we seek to show that the grace of God can impart an inner sunshine which no outward darkness can obscure. May we increasingly experience—that the way of holiness is the way of happiness.

* * * * *

O Eternal, Everlasting God, Fountain of all happiness, God of all grace--we desire to acknowledge anew with grateful hearts, Your undeserved mercies. You have made our cup to overflow with blessings. From the very threshold of our being, You have been our Protector and Guardian. You have shielded us from unknown dangers. You have warded off unseen calamities. No earthly friend could have loved us and cared for us, like You! Helpless, hopeless, friendless, portionless by nature, we cast ourselves on Him who is help and hope and friend and portion--to all who seek Him. We have no trust but in His work. Sprinkle these polluted hearts with His pardoning, peace-speaking blood. Hide us in the clefts of the smitten Rock. Safely sheltered there, we can make the triumphant challenge, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" We mourn our distance and estrangement from You, our guilty departures, our coldness and insensibility. Let Your wondrous patience and kindness lead us to repentance. Turn us, Lord, and we shall be turned! Draw us and we shall run after You! May every thought, and affection, and feeling, and temper--be brought into captivity to the obedience of Jesus. May we love what He loves, and hate what He hates. May we know the happiness of true holiness; and rejoice in doing Your holy will.

05.02. The Christian's Pathway

The Christian's Pathway

John MacDuff, 1858

CHOICE EXCERPTS

Let your light shine!

"Let your light shine before men, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven." Matthew 5:16

There are many things connected with the Christian's pathway—which worldlings cannot comprehend. They know nothing of the high and hidden walks of spiritual experience. What is said of the workings of the divine life in the soul—is regarded by them as foolishness and fanaticism. Its internal principles, its constraining motives and impulses, its heavenly aspirations, its rapturous bliss, and its agonizing struggles—are things which these strangers cannot comprehend!

But still, there is much which they are able to understand—such as . . .

whatever is consistent in character;

whatever is honest and straightforward between men;

whatever is kind and compassionate in behavior;

whatever is forbearing and forgiving under insults and injuries. Such features, when unostentatiously exhibited—excite their attention, and, generally, call forth their praise. The manner in which the ordinary duties of life are discharged, is something so tangible—that it lies within the province of their own observation. These things they can understand; and it is of the highest importance that all who profess to be Christians, should be distinguished by an exhibition of these practical fruits of righteousness.

What if a small band of Christians were placed in some locality, by whom the principles of the gospel were fully lived out. What a powerful effect, we may suppose, would their simple presence produce! Let them be connected with those around them—by the ordinary engagements of life; but without employing any direct means to promulgate their Christian views. There they are—"blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation." Their hearts are filled, not merely with love to God—but with sincere and ardent affection for all by whom they are surrounded. Selfishness, pride, resentment, censoriousness—have no place among them. Their entire spirit and deportment are influenced and controlled by those noble, and generous, and god-like sentiments and

feelings, which Christianity inculcates and inspires. The holy religion they profess, would appear in its true character and beneficent tendency; and men would be constrained by the good works

which they beheld—to glorify God.

May the Lord strengthen you with all might, according to His glorious power—"that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please Him in every way—bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God!"

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I am with you always

"Don't be afraid, for I am with you. Do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you. I will help you. I will uphold you with My victorious right hand." Isaiah 41:10

The Divine presence is . . .

the believer's strength in weakness;

his support in suffering;

his consolation in the hour of death.

The blessed assurance, "I am with you," is sufficient to enliven every scene, and sweeten every condition. Its realization opens springs of joy in the cheerless waste of this desert world. The Divine presence . . . dissipates the thickest darkness, soothes the anguish of the keenest affliction, and lightens the heaviest load of poverty and distress.

Reader, be anxious to possess an abiding consciousness of the great truth—that the eye of God is ever upon you! Wherever you are, and whatever you are doing—set the Lord always before you. Having Him at your right hand, whatever difficulties and dangers may surround your path—you shall not be moved.

"Be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Matthew 28:20

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All this, and unspeakably more!

"Receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of your souls." 1 Peter 1:9

The full and final salvation of our souls, embraces the whole of what God has in reserve for His people

through eternity! It includes the enjoyment of those pleasures . . .

which no sin can ever pollute,

which no sorrow can ever becloud,

which no time can ever impair,

which no change can ever affect,

which no calamity can ever destroy!

The full and final salvation of our souls, includes . . .

whatever the infinite wisdom of God can devise;
whatever the infinite love of God can prepare;
whatever the infinite power of God can secure;
complete deliverance from the bondage of corruption;
entire emancipation from the power of every foe;
the body of sin and death forever left behind;
every grace, grown to perfect maturity;
all the ineffable treasures of eternal glory;
all this, and unspeakably more!

Welcome shame and sorrow—if such an end shall at length be ours! The ungodly world may despise us; even our nearest friends may forsake us. Yet we can well afford to bear their opposition without a single murmur, if we are only permitted to cherish the hope—that our course will eventually terminate in so blissful a consummation!

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We shall be sure to find something to annoy us!

"But godliness with contentment is great gain." 1 Timothy 6:6

The believer is frequently exhorted to cultivate contentment, and there are many considerations by which the duty may be enforced.

One thing is very evident—that there is no condition in the present world, which is free from trouble! Let us pitch our tent wherever we may—we shall be sure to find something to annoy us! And if there is no situation without some inconvenience—had we not better make up our minds to be satisfied with

that condition in which we are now placed?

We are too much in the habit of judging by outward appearances. But things are often very different in reality—to what they appear to be.

If we judge according to appearance, we shall be led to regard the most prosperous—as the happiest individuals. But we are assured by universal experience—that to be great is one thing, and that to be truly happy is altogether another thing! Under the glittering robes of the proudest nobilities—there are hearts pierced with anguish, and wrung with grief! In splendid palaces—there are many broken hearts to be found. To sit upon thrones may seem to be something very fascinating; but, "uneasy lies the head—which wears a crown!" This is a truth which receives fresh confirmation, from every passing year.

Let us not then, regard those who occupy the high places of the earth, with feelings of envy. Instead of envying them—it befits us rather to pity them and pray for them!

Reader, learn to distinguish between things that differ; and be well assured that things as they appear outwardly, and as they really are—do often differ, and that very substantially! Such knowledge will tend, under God's blessing—to make you more contented with your present lot, notwithstanding its trials and privations.

It is not unusual—to be exposed to things which are grievous and hard to be borne. This is not some strange thing which is happening to us alone. Let us lay aside, therefore, all murmurings and complainings—and ever remember that God's arrangements are the wisest and the best!

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His chastising hand

"I know, O Lord, that Your judgments are right, and that You have afflicted me in faithfulness."
Psalms 119:75

Christian, cherish high thoughts of God in all His dealings towards you. Should your trials be great, still hold fast your confidence, and yield not to a complaining or desponding spirit. Remember that it is for the profit of His people, that God afflicts them; and, however hard to be borne at the time,

they have been brought to see at length, that they had cause to reckon their severest sorrows—as the chief of their mercies! By afflictions: they were weaned from the world; their affections were more ardently fixed upon heavenly things; their souls were purified, even as gold in the fire; the preciousness of Christ was realized as it had never been before; they were led to live, not merely nearer to Him—but more entirely upon Him, and also much more for Him!

May our afflictions produce such happy results! We shall then have abundant reason to bless God for His chastising hand.

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Grey hairs

"Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of my God." Revelation 3:2

The personal piety of many, there is great reason to fear—is in a very feeble and languishing condition. It has lost much of its hold upon their hearts and consciences—as an elevating, purifying, and satisfying reality. How few there are, who know what it is—to delight in God, to rejoice in the dying love of Christ, and to exult in a clear and unclouded prospect of heaven! How little is there of spirituality of mind, of mortification of sin, of habitual watchfulness, and of wrestling prayer! There may be no gross or glaring immorality—but in the absence of what would be deemed publicly disgraceful in religious professors, there is, in instances not a few, a manifest decline in vital and experimental godliness.

There is something exceedingly insidious, pertaining to a state of spiritual declension; and hence it is a common thing, for those who are under its influence—to be in a great measure unconscious of the fact. It is said of Ephraim, "Strangers have devoured his strength—and he knows it not! Yes, grey hairs are here and there upon him—yet he knows it not!" Hosea 7:10. So it is, alas! with many a professor in the present day. Instead of his soul being in a vigorous and thriving state, there has

been a woeful decline—yet he knows it not. Others know it; they cannot fail to observe what an altered man he is now when compared with what he was a few years ago. They clearly perceive that the world has been gaining the ascendancy over him; that the conversation and company of the people of God are now but little relished; and that he is far less attentive to his pious duties than he was formerly. But while this is so palpable to others, it is, if not altogether, yet to a considerable extent—unknown to himself.

This may be accounted for by the fact, that declension generally comes on in a gradual manner. Had the person passed all at once into such a state, the transition would have been so great that he could not fail to perceive it. But it stole over him imperceptibly, and thus he knew it not.

Another cause of this ignorance, is the neglect of self examination. There are very few who rigidly scrutinize their own hearts, and it is, therefore, no wonder that their piety should decline without their knowing it. It is with many in spiritual things, as it is with some in reference to their temporal affairs; they take it for granted that all is going on well. Many a tradesman, had he examined his books in time, might have been preserved from bankruptcy; and many a spiritual bankruptcy might have been avoided, had the secrecies of the inner man been thoroughly scrutinized, with a full determination to know how matters really were.

Reader, seek to know yourself—for all wisdom centers there. Be honest with yourself, and do not allow plausible appearances to impose upon you. Be continually jealous over yourself, and that with a godly jealousy. The fruits of self-confidence have been truly disastrous; while a befitting dread of self-deception has produced the happiest results. With the Royal Psalmist, then, let your daily prayer be, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends You, and lead me along the path of everlasting life." Psalms 139:23-24
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It will not matter a single straw!

"We labor, that we may be accepted of Him." 2 Corinthians 5:9

Reader, it will matter but little what you may possess—if you live and die destitute of this great blessing! Were you to attain everything that mankind regard as enviable; were all the treasures of the globe to be heaped upon you; were you endowed with all knowledge, so that the wisest sages would think it an honor to sit at your feet; were the most magnificent titles to be conferred upon you, and your fame to ring to earth's remotest bounds; were you raised to the heights of universal empire, having all the nations of the world as your willing subjects; in a word, had you all that the most unbounded ambition in her loftiest heights and most extravagant wishes ever panted after—what would the whole be if, instead of being accepted of God, you were disowned and rejected by Him, and exposed to His everlasting wrath!

But, enjoying His favor, which is life; and His loving-kindness, which is better than life—it matters but little whether we are rich—or poor; whether the sun of prosperity shines—or the clouds of adversity lower; whether we are reveling in health—or stretched upon beds of languishing; whether we are toiling as slaves—or wearing crowns and diadems. After a few more rising and setting suns—it will not matter a single straw—what our earthly lot may have been! The only matter of importance then—will be whether we have been accepted of God!

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Communion with God

"And truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." 1 John 1:3

It is said of Moses that "the Lord spoke to him face to face, as a man speaks to his friend." Now there is an important sense in which the words may be applied to every true believer. He is favored with intimate and endearing fellowship with his Heavenly Father. View him on his bended knees, in the secrecy of his closet, having shut out the world for a while, with its manifold anxieties. How sweet the privilege he enjoys—that of making all his requests known by prayer and supplication unto God!

Is he conscious of his own weakness, of the temptations which surround him, and the many foes which beset him? His earnest cry is, "Hold me up—and I shall be safe!" Well, God is there, being ever near to those who call upon Him in truth, and says to him in return, "Do not be afraid, for I have ransomed you. I have called you by name; you are Mine! When you go through deep waters and great trouble, I will be with you. When you go through rivers of difficulty, you will not drown! When you walk through the fire of oppression, you will not be burned up; the flames will not consume you. For I am the Lord, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior!" Isaiah 43:1-3

Does he feel sorely perplexed as to the course he should pursue, when conflicting claims are pressing upon him? He looks upward, and says in the language of the Psalmist, "Teach me Your way, O Lord; and lead me in a plain path because of my enemies." And what answer does God unto unto him? "I will instruct you, and teach you in the way which you shall go; I will guide you with My eye." "I will lead you in paths that you have not known; I will make darkness light before you, and crooked things straight; these things will I do unto you, and not forsake you."

Is he oppressed under a deep sense of his exceeding sinfulness, his iniquities being set in fearful array against him, staring him in the face, and covering him with shame and confusion? He knows, however, what it is to look to Him whom he has so often found to be gracious; he therefore prays, "Hide Your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities!" And God remembers him with the favor which he bears to His people, and in the plenitude of His compassion He proclaims, "I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake, and will not remember your sins!" "I will be merciful to your unrighteousness, and your sins and your iniquities, will I remember no more."

Sometimes the child of God is in great trouble concerning his temporal needs, his earthly prospects being dark and gloomy. But knowing that He who is the God of grace, is also the God of providence, he draws near to the divine footstool for himself and family, and he there cries, "Remember us, O God, for good; oh! leave us not destitute." And He who hears the young ravens, hears him, and says to him, "Fear not, My poor child; no evil shall befall you, and no plague shall come near your dwelling. Even strong young lions sometimes go hungry, but those who trust in the Lord will never lack any good thing."

Sometimes, looking forward to the future, he says, "Do not cast me away when I am old; do not forsake me when my strength is gone." And the voice from heaven proclaims, "I created you and have cared for you since before you were born. I will be your God throughout your lifetime—until

your hair is white with age. I made you, and I will care for you. I will carry you along and save you!"

And so with all his needs, and all his wishes—he draws near to God, and God draws near to him, and thus sweet fellowship is enjoyed between them!

There are some who are disposed to sneer at the idea of spiritual communion with God. But let them sneer as they may; let them regard it, if they are so disposed, as a dream of enthusiasm. The believer, however, is not to be laughed out of his enjoyments. Fellowship with God is a privilege with which he would not part for ten thousand worlds! Of all precious things, it is to him the most precious. He regards it as the dawn of eternal day, and feels it to be glory begun below! Fellowship with God is to him, like the grapes of Eshcol which were brought down to the wilderness; it is a draught from those crystal streams which make glad the city of the Most High; it is a flower plucked from the amaranthine bowers of the Paradise above. In a word, fellowship with God is the prelude and pledge of the fullness of joy which is at God's right hand, and in which consists the very essence of that transporting bliss which will be realized by saints and angels forever and ever! And while he gazes upon the toilsome pursuits of men for the things which perish in their using, his language is—

"Let others stretch their arms like seas,

And grasp in all the shore;

Grant me the visits of Your grace,

And I desire no more!"

Christian, is there any ambition in your breast? Here is a noble field for its display! O how unspeakable the honor of holding familiar fellowship with the King of kings! And this honor has, not only the more favored servants of God—but all the saints! This is the hidden manna they have to eat—of which the world knows nothing. This is the joy they possess, which a stranger cannot understand. This is the honor they realize, which comes from God alone. They may be poor and afflicted; they may be frowned upon by an ungrateful and ungodly world; but this makes amends for all—"they have fellowship with the Father, and with His Son, Jesus Christ."

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Love to God

The various graces which dignify and adorn the Christian's character, are only so many modifications of his love to God. What is repentance—but love giving vent to its emotions in tears of godly sorrow. What is faith—but love receiving the testimony that God has given concerning His Son, and resting implicitly upon it for life and salvation. What is zeal—but the fire of love, the Christian being led, under the influence of redeeming love—to live no longer to himself—but to Him who died for him, and rose again. What is holiness—but love assimilating the whole character to the likeness of Him who is its great object. What is resignation—but love receiving the cup of sorrow from a Father's hand, and saying in gentle accents, "May Your will be done." And so with all the other fruits of the Spirit; we behold in them a living embodiment of this crowning grace, of love to God, and a practical manifestation of its diversified operations.

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Too short to speak His praise

Who can think of the sacrifices Christ made, of the sufferings He endured, and of the cruel death which He died—without consecrating talents, opportunities, wealth, influence, all the faculties of our souls, and all the members of our bodies—to the service of Him who displayed love so amazing, so divine; love which originated the whole interposition of mercy on our behalf; love which still glows in His breast, uncooled by distance, and undiminished by the matchless splendors which now surround Him; love, concerning which, when imagination is wearied, and all language is utterly exhausted—we can only say that it is—as ancient as eternity, as boundless as eternity, as endless as eternity. "Eternity is too short to speak His praise, or fathom this profound of love to man!"

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"My beloved is mine—and I am His," is the language of the Christian in the book of Canticles. How great is the blessedness involved, in such an assurance! "My beloved is mine"—

mine in the dignity of His person;

mine in the suitability of His offices;

mine in the immensity of His love;

mine in the efficacy of His atonement;

mine in the riches of His abounding grace!

His righteousness is mine to justify me!

His Spirit is mine to sanctify me!

His power is mine to defend me!

His wisdom is mine to guide me!

His heaven is mine to receive me!

And what does Christ say to the believer in return? He says, "I am yours—and all that I have. I have boundless and unsearchable riches—and those riches are for you! I have happiness to bestow, such as the mind in its largest grasp has never been able to conceive—and that happiness is for you! I have crowns and scepters at My disposal—and all those dignities are for you! Yes, to him who overcomes, I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, even as I also overcame, and have sat down with My Father on His throne."

Death, which quenches every other love, kindles that of the believer for Jesus—into a purer and intenser flame! Death, which snatches every other object from our grasp, brings us to the full enjoyment of Him, who is the fountain of life, the great center and source of all being and of all

blessedness.

Christian, rejoice in your union with Jesus! The changes of time cannot touch it; the storms of life cannot injure it; the sword of persecution cannot sever it; the damps of death cannot affect it; the malice of hell cannot move it. It is a union which will last forever! If you are a partaker of it—you will be . . .

rich forever,

safe forever,

dignified forever,

blessed forever!

~ ~ ~ ~ ~ From its ruthless grasp

It is appointed, by the irrevocable decree of heaven—that all men must die. There is no discharge in that war, no release from that mortal struggle. Wealth has no bribe which death will receive; wisdom has no art by which it can be avoided; power has no defense, and even religion has no security from its stroke. Beauty has no charm to its eye; the voice of eloquence is lost to its ear. Here the mightiest conqueror is vanquished, and the proudest of monarchs finds himself a slave. From its ruthless grasp—no age, no condition can escape. Those who are in the bloom and freshness of youth cannot, for "man, at his best estate, is altogether vanity." The great and prosperous cannot, for "the rich man also died and was buried." The wicked cannot; he is driven, yes, dragged away in his wickedness; the most fearful of all deaths is his—that of dying in his sins. Neither can the righteous escape; he must go the way of all the earth, and become a tenant of the silent grave.

But, at that solemn season, it shall be well with him. When the last sands of the numbered hour will be running out; when his earthly friends will be compelled to leave him; when the cold dews of death will be standing in large drops upon his pallid brow; when every nerve and vein may be racked and wrenched in fearful agonies by the irresistible power of the grim tyrant; even then it shall be well with him. The dying strife will soon be over, and through death's gloomy portals—he will enter upon that blessed state where all is peace and assurance forever!

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Beset with difficulties

"Conflicts on the outside, fears within." 2 Corinthians 7:5

Says Peter, "if the righteous is saved with difficulty." The words clearly show that the Christian's pathway is beset with difficulties; and that it is not that easy work, which many seem to imagine, to get to heaven.

How startling is the announcement—"For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms!" Christian! all the armed legions of hell are against you! And if, with all their combined energies, they can keep you out of heaven—out of heaven you will assuredly be! No diligence will be lacking on their part to draw you astray, and prevent you from ever reaching that blessed abode. And were you properly to realize the solemn fact that such

mighty and malicious foes surround you, and that their sleepless aim and object is to effect your destruction—it would be impossible for you to be lukewarm or unconcerned!

And then there is the flesh, with its deceitful lusts, which war against the soul. There is the world also, with its pomps and pleasures, its smiles and frowns! The world in various ways endeavors to win our affections; or by its cares to engross our thoughts. And saved we cannot be—unless we overcome the world, unless we crucify the flesh, and unless we resist and defeat the devil.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

At all times, and under all circumstances

"God has said—Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." Hebrews 8:5

All the promises of God are faithful and true, and have never been forfeited yet. They are called precious promises, and while there are many particulars which render them such, their absolute certainty is one of the chief.

"God has said"—He is not a man that He would lie, or change His mind. He with whom saying and doing, promising and performing—as far as sureness is concerned—are one and the same. Man, weak, fickle, faithless man—may deceive us; but if we make the Great Unchangeable our trust, disappointment is a thing altogether impossible.

But what has He said? "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." The believer is thus assured that God will be with him at all times, and under all circumstances, and that He will especially be with him in every time of need. His presence shall go with him when he is called to the performance of any arduous duties; it shall go with him when he has to pass through the furnace of affliction; and, above all, it shall go with him when he has to enter the dark valley, and bid a final adieu to all things here below. "Don't be afraid, for I am with you. Do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you. I will help you. I will uphold you with My victorious right hand." Isaiah 41:10

We might confidently conclude that God will be then with the Christian, even had no express intimation been given us on the subject. It is not likely that He who was with him during the whole of his voyage, to preserve him from the winds and waves, the rocks and quicksands—will forsake him when the vessel is entering the port. It is not likely that He who shielded him during the heat of the battle—will desert him when the victory is about to be won. It is not likely that He who was with him through his wanderings in the desert, supplying all his needs, delivering him from all his enemies, and directing him during the entire course of his pilgrimage—will abandon him when he treads the verge of Jordan, and beholds beyond its foaming billows the brightness and the beauty of the promised land. The thing is not for a single moment, to be supposed! God's love and compassion, as well as His faithfulness and truth, forbid the entertainment of such a thought!

05.02A. The Gates of Prayer

THE GATES OF PRAYER by John MacDuff

CHOICE EXCERPTS

Heavenly Father, Almighty and Everlasting God, I approach Your gracious presence. In the extremity of my own weakness, may I lean on Your Almighty arm—hold me up, and I shall be safe. Preserve me from the world's insinuating, seductive power, and from the treachery and deceitfulness of my own evil heart. Order my steps in Your word, and let no iniquity have dominion over me.

* * * * *

Waiting on You afresh, may I receive strength and courage for all the duties of a new day. I would confide to Your ear every need, every care, every sorrow, every cross.

* * * * *

Inspire me with devout acquiescence in Your will, knowing that whatever You appoint must be for the best. Preserve me from peevishness and fretfulness—from petulance of temper and hastiness of speech—from covetousness and selfishness.

* * * * *

Lord, I come, owning my great unworthiness. I come with my poverty and helplessness, my doubts and conflicts, my foes and fears, my difficulties and perplexities, my sorrows and my sins. I would lay the heavy burden of them all, at the foot of the Redeemer's cross. In that cross alone I would glory. I look away from myself to His completed work. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.

* * * * *

I have too often sought for happiness in objects and pursuits which fail to satisfy the yearnings of the immortal spirit. Lord, have mercy upon me! Save me from the sins which most easily ensnare me. From the love of the world which alienates my affections from heavenly realities—from the love of self which interferes with the entire consecration of the heart to Christ—from the covetousness which hardens—from the impurity which debases and enslaves! From every evil lust and passion and temper—good Lord, deliver me! Conscious of my own utter weakness, I would look for the supplies of Your promised grace. By it alone I stand. If I am enabled this day to resist temptation, it is all Your doing. It is You who uphold me by Your right hand. Human power is impotent to break the chains of sin and Satan.

* * * * *

I bless You that, as the Good Shepherd who gave Your own life for the sheep—the weakest, the weariest, the most burdened of the flock can claim Your regard. You mark out our pasture for us. You know Your sheep by name and lead them out. If at times I am unable to understand the mystery of Your dealings—if at times You lead along the thorny path—teaching by crossed purposes and baffled and thwarted expectations—may it be mine to confide in Your unerring wisdom. May I implicitly trust Your faithfulness; glorifying Your holy name by unquestioning submission, saying "Lord, here am I—do to me, and with me, as seems best in Your sight." "Though You slay me, yet will I trust in You." Strong in Your grace, may I strive to live under the sovereignty of that loftiest motive—that whatever pleases You shall please me; that whatever be Your holy will shall be mine.

* * * * *

If the path of prosperity should be chequered—if human props fail—if human refuges reveal themselves to be refuges of lies—if worldly substance be impaired—if earthly love dies—may that which is perishable and corruptible only drive me nearer to the incorruptible—to seek closer and more intimate fellowship with Him in whose presence there is fullness of joy. Thus, trusting You and loving You, let me rise superior to all that is fleeting and fluctuating around.

* * * * *

O Father, I bring all my needs and sins, my difficulties and trials and perplexities—and pour them into the loving ear of my most loving Father-God. Keep me from living as if this world were my final rest, and home, and portion. May I seek, rather, to live from day to day as one whose true home is above. May I trust a Father's love, a Father's hand, a Father's heart, a Father's rod; regarding Your dealings as needful discipline; and honoring You by simple, confiding, unreserved submission.

* * * * *

Adorable Redeemer, give me grace that I may be more and more assimilated to Your holy image, and more and more molded in conformity to Your holy will. Impart to me Your meekness, Your humility, Your gentleness, Your forgiveness of injuries—Your tender consideration for others; that patience under provocation which made You stand as a Lamb silent before Your shearers. Make me more lowly and loving—more resigned and submissive. May I live under the power of renewed affections. Raise me above all fretting cares and timid fears, above all morbid anxieties and solitudes about trifles.

* * * * *

O unchanging Savior-God, lead me to Yourself—the Rock that is higher than I. Whatever is the cause of my trials, may I be enabled, in un murmuring, uncomplaining submission to say, "Even so, Father!" In the midst of impaired health, and thwarted schemes, and disappointed hopes, and broken hearts, and voices hushed in death—may it be mine exultingly to exclaim, as I look to the One who survives all blanks and losses, "They shall perish, but You remain; as a vesture shall You fold them up, and they shall be changed; but YOU are the same, and Your years shall not fail."

* * * * *

O God, who is the refuge of all who seek You, may I know this day the blessedness of those who dwell in the secret place of the Most High, and who abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I rejoice that I am never a solitary moment away from Your guardianship and care—that You compass my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways. Amid all changes—You are the abiding One. The world's joys are shadowy and fleeting—they mock the hand which grasps them; the world's refuges are refuges of lies. But in the pavilion of Your love I am ever safe and secure. Hide me there until earth's calamities be over and past. I adore You as the Supreme Disposer of all events. Your purposes no accident can change—Your faithfulness no time can impair—Your counsels no created being can question or resist. Blessings and trials, comforts and crosses—come alike from You. You send the gourd. You send the worm. Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? I adore You especially as the God of Salvation, and praise You for the riches of Your sovereign grace in Jesus.

* * * * *

I come to You, Blessed Lord, thanking You for all Your mercies. How manifold have been the proofs and tokens of Your kindness and faithfulness! The past has been paved with love. There is no friend in the world who has been like You, and none so willing to befriend me. You have showered me with the blessings of Your goodness. While others have been laid on beds of sickness or cut down by sudden death, I am still among the living to praise You. Above all, You have bestowed upon me the Gift of gifts—that Gift which in magnitude and preciousness dwarfs and absorbs all others. Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable Gift! Life may well be a perpetual hymn of gratitude for all Your unmerited mercies, alike temporal and spiritual. I am unworthy of the least of them. It is to Your free Sovereign abounding Grace I owe them all. Not unto me O Lord, not unto me, but unto Your name I would give glory—for Your mercy and for Your truth's sake.

* * * * *

Lord, I have to mourn my constant proneness to depart from You—the instability of my best resolutions—the fitfulness of my best frames and feelings—the sordidness of my best motives. I confess, without reservation, my heart-sins, lip-sins, life-sins—omitted duties—abused mercies—unsanctified warnings—love of the world—love of ease—love of self—taking Your gifts and forgetting the Giver. Blessed Savior, have mercy upon me. I confide in Your infinite power and wisdom. There is a potency in Your name to soothe every fear and to hush every sorrow. Say in the might of Your mingled omnipotence and love—"Your sins are all forgiven!" I cast myself on You, alike for time and in eternity. In life, may I feel the power of Your sustaining grace; in trouble, the support of Your tender consolations; and in death the all-sufficiency of Your exceeding great and precious promises.

* * * * *

Fit me this day for the battle of life. Trusting to the promised aids of Your Spirit, may I be enabled to resist the world, the flesh, and the devil. Keep me from absorbing love of this world—from all forbidden paths—from all doubtful and debatable ground. Preserve me from the lusts which debase, the selfishness which hardens, the anger or malice which, if unchecked and unrepressed, may grow into malevolence.

* * * * * May the joys of the way and the trials of the way alike bring me nearer heaven and nearer to You.

* * * * *

"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." I go forth this day into a world of trouble and trial and conflict. In no armor or power of my own am I proof against the enemy—but I take refuge in the elevating assurance that I can do all things, and suffer all things, and overcome all things—through Christ who strengthens me.

* * * * *

Heavenly Father, Almighty and Everlasting God, You are the Supreme Disposer. There is no such thing as accident or chance in Your providential rule. Each varying scene in this varying chequered life is from You alone. In all difficulties and perplexities, enable me to commit my way implicitly unto Your better direction—hearing Your voice behind me saying, "This is the way, walk in it"—rejoicing in Your wise orderings, Your beneficent purposes—and willing to tread, if need be, the roughest path, because it is Your sovereign will and wisdom to lead me there. Teach me ever devoutly to follow the leadings, and to imbibe the spirit, of the divine Redeemer. Keep me . . .

from the manifestation of unholy tempers,

from the pride which elates,

from the worldliness which hardens,

from all unkindness and uncharitableness.

* * * * *

Heavenly Father, Almighty and Everlasting God, keep me from the absorbing love of the world; from coveting earthly good rather than heavenly riches. Keep me from all that would dim, to the eye of faith—the glories of the future. Enable me to live habitually, as I would wish I had been living, when the Son of man comes. Let me also anticipate with joy that day when . . .

all mysteries will be unfolded,

all wrongs redressed,

all sufferings removed,

all corruptions vanquished,

and death itself swallowed up in eternal victory!

* * * * *

I adore You, especially, for the mightiest proof which You have given of Your benignity and kindness, in the person and work of Your dear Son! Herein indeed is love! If at times unable to trace, in Your mysterious providential dealings, the footsteps of mercy—if at times tempted, under baffling dispensations, to say, "Your judgments are a great deep"—"Truly You are a God who hides Yourself"—seated at the foot of Calvary's cross, we can joyfully exclaim, "We have known

and believed the love God which has to us."

* * * * *

Man's love is changing—Yours is unchanging; man's love is finite—Yours is infinite; man's love is the result of kindness, the return of love for love—but You commend Your love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us! Thanks, eternal thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift!

* * * * *

Before I engage in my daily duties, I would implore Your guidance and protection. I cannot forecast the circumstances in which I may be placed today—what temptations may beset me—what troubles may oppress me. Let a sense of Your presence hallow my labors—that so, begun, carried on, and ended in You—all may redound to Your praise and glory. Let me use, with a glad and grateful heart, the many enjoyments You have given me in this beautiful earth; but abolish the evil dominion of self and selfishness. Keep me from the beguiling and seductive love of pleasure, on which Your approval cannot rest. Write the law of kindness on my heart. Let it be my happiness and joy to minister to others. May I feel that it is better to give than to receive; better to be last than to be first. Keep me pure—preserve me from false living—from all artifice—all underhand and dubious dealings—all crooked and covetous ways. May my conversation be sincere, my conscience clear as the noonday. Serving You cheerfully here, may I become more and more fitted for the full consecration—the perfect spontaneity of the heavenly world.

* * * * *

Teach me ever to realize what a needy pensioner I am, from day to day and from hour to hour—on Your grace. Hold me up! Keep me, guide me, protect me, undertake for me. In temptation support me—in danger defend me—in sorrow comfort me. If You send prosperity, enable me to carry the cup with a steady hand. If You send adversity, enable me to glorify You in the midst of the fires—adoring a 'taking' God, as well as a 'giving' God. As a member of the Christian priesthood, may it be my desire to offer on Your altar the continual sacrifice of a humble spirit, and a holy, pure, consistent life. Keep the lamp of faith and love trimmed and burning. Let me aim, more and more, at the crucifixion of sin and self. Should You speak at times by crossed dealings and mysterious dispensations, reading the impressive lesson of earth's corruptible and defiled and fading inheritances—may I harbor no guilty suspicions of Your faithfulness, or seek to arraign the appointments of Your paternal wisdom. Let me bear, with patience, whatever You see fit to appoint. Put into my lips the prayer, divinely taught, "Your will be done." Seeking to have no jot or tittle altered in the allotments of infinite love, may I look forward to that morning without clouds, when in Your light I shall see light, and when every shadow which now dims and darkens—shall forever flee away!

* * * * *

Deliver me from the enthralling power and bondage of sin in every form. As a temple of the Holy Spirit, may I be kept from whatever would defile or desecrate its hallowed courts. Preserve me from the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life—from the power of all carnal appetites and corrupt affections. Guard the springs of thought and will. Prevent me from harboring

or indulging unrighteous desires. In all I do, may I put on love, which is the bond of perfectness. Having the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, may I sit at the feet of Him who pleased not Himself.

* * * * *

Even when the footsteps of a God of love fail to be traced—may there be implicit trust in the wisdom and rectitude of inscrutable dealings.

* * * * * Gracious Redeemer, You have a balm for every wound; an antidote for every sorrow.

* * * * *

Give the quickening energy of Your Holy Spirit, to disarm the power of temptation—to dethrone self—to deliver from the seductive influences of the world. Keep me from the intoxication of success—and the pride of prosperity. Keep me from undue depression—and guilty murmuring in adversity.

* * * * *

While I bear about with me continually the dying of the Lord Jesus, may the life of Jesus be made manifest in my mortal flesh. May it be my habitual aspiration, that my character be a reflection of His—in its gentleness and meekness—its purity and unselfishness—its benevolence and sympathy.

* * * * * As the tree falls—so must it lie. As death leaves us—so will judgment and eternity find us.

* * * * *

Lord, I have reason to mourn my manifold sins—my disobedience and unbelief—my ingratitude and rebellion. I am a wonder to myself—self-destroyer that I am—that You have spared me—that You have not, long before now, pronounced against me the cumberer's sentence, and executed against me the cumberer's righteous doom. It is because You are God and not man, that, despite of all I have done to merit Your just displeasure—Your anger is turned away, and Your hand of mercy and love and compassion is stretched out still.

* * * * *

You are willing to bestow every needed blessing—pardoning grace—sustaining grace—strengthening grace—sanctifying grace—comforting grace—grace, until grace is no longer needed, but is lost and swallowed up in glory! O You who gives "more grace," hide me deeper in the clefts of the smitten Rock! Other refuge I have none—my helpless soul depends entirely on You. Lord, save me—else I perish! Save me, I beseech You, not only from the guilt, but from the power of sin. Save me from the corruptions of my own heart—from the seductive influences of the world—from the temptations that may be incident to my secular duties and engagements. Save me from the sin that most easily besets me—save me from bringing dishonor on Your holy cause and Your holy name, by my inconsistent conduct or uneven walk. Save me, oh, save me, from the wrath to come!

* * * * *

I come pleading that Name which soothes all sorrows, heals all wounds, dries all tears; which is manna to the hungry soul, and rest to the weary. How many are now in Glory, testifying to the boundless stores of grace hidden in Christ!

* * * * *

I desire to acknowledge my great unworthiness—my constant and grievous departures from the path of Your commandments. I have gone astray like a lost sheep, following too much the devices and the desires of my own heart. You might have righteously excluded me forever from the green pastures and still waters, and left me to pursue my own devious wanderings. But blessed be Your name, in the midst of abounding sin there is abounding grace—the Good Shepherd—He who gave His own life for the sheep, is still waiting to be gracious—not willing that any of His sheep should perish, but that all should come unto Him and live. Cause me to know the way wherein I should walk, for I lift up my soul unto You. May I have the habitual feeling that I am only safe when following the footsteps and leadings of the Great Shepherd of the flock. May the realizing sense of His presence and nearness, sweeten all joy and alleviate all sorrow.

* * * * *

Lord, reveal to me, more and more, the infinite evil of sin—the ingratitude of such requitals of Your love and resistings of Your Spirit. Keep me pure—protect me from temptation—preserve me unspotted from the world. Give me the habit of a holy life. May my affections be more entirely surrendered to You.

* * * * * The thread of my life is in Your hand. I am no judge of what is best for me—often would I choose the evil and refuse the good. But You are ever faithful and unerring. O lead me, not in my own way—but in the way that I ought to go. May it be mine, amid every vicissitude, to recognize infinite wisdom in all Your allotments—to sit at the feet of the Great Teacher, contented with the assurance, "This also comes from the Lord Almighty, who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working." Blessed be Your name for Your wise teaching in the past—for all the deliverances You have given in times of danger—for all the help in times of trouble—for all the support in times of temptation. I would desire implicitly to trust You in the future. There is no corruption but what Your grace will enable me to subdue—there is no cross but what Your grace will enable me to carry—there is no foe but Your grace will enable me to conquer.

* * * * *

"As for God, his way is perfect." I thank You, Heavenly Father, that from day to day, and from hour to hour, I am under Your wise and loving direction—that it is You who set up the waymarks, and appoint the bounds of my habitation. The lot may be cast into the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord. If left to my own self, I would often choose the evil and refuse the good—I might select what was selfish and perilous and sinful—what might compromise my peace of conscience, and endanger my spiritual interests. I have often erred in the past, pursuing at times devious paths on which Your blessing could not rest. I would desire to take You more as my guide and counselor for the future. Let me follow You wholly—trusting Your heart, even where I fail to trace Your hand—amid all vicissitudes and perplexities, hearing Your voice behind me saying, "This is the way, walk in it"—and writing over every dubious path—every mysterious Providence—"As for God, His way is perfect."

* * * * *

I know that all Your dealings are dictated by unerring wisdom and unchangeable love. I would look forward, with joyful confidence, to that great Day of disclosures, when the now sealed roll shall be unfolded, and when every tongue will be brought to confess, "The Lord was righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works." Meanwhile, with the fear of God within me, and the eye of God above me, and the Heaven of God before me—may I prosecute steadfastly my pilgrim-way—going up through the wilderness leaning on Your arm. And then, though an army should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear—for greater is He who is with me, and for me—than all those who can be against me. Amid the changes of the world and the instability of earth's best props and refuges—amid the tossings and heavings of this treacherous sea of life—may I cling to the sure anchorage—"As for God, His way is perfect."

* * * * * My every sorrow is numbered and appointed by the Man of Sorrows. May I feel how light and trivial my bitterest cup is—compared with the cup of suffering He so willingly drained for me.

* * * * *

I have to confess and mourn my great unworthiness. How far short have I come of that holiness of heart and purity of life, without which no man can see the Lord. How many sinful thoughts have I harbored—how many guilty words have I spoken—how many duties have I omitted, or carelessly and perfunctorily performed. How little gratitude have I shown for blessings—how little patience under crosses. How much pride has there been in my humility—how little childlike trust in Your dealings. How have even my best resolutions to serve You, been erased by the world's oblivion-power. How often have I returned to those very sins I had solemnly sworn and covenanted I was to part with forever. Lord, have mercy upon me! I come anew, guilty, polluted, helpless—to Him who is help and hope and portion—to all who seek Him. My own repentings and tears cannot cleanse away the guilt of a single transgression. But the blood of Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, cleanses from them all.

* * * * *

Deliver me from the enthralling power and bondage of sin in every form. I anticipate with joy that day when all mysteries will be unfolded—all wrongs redressed—all sufferings removed—all corruptions vanquished—and death itself swallowed up in eternal victory!

* * * * *

Even when the footsteps of a God of love fail to be traced—may I have implicit trust in the wisdom and rectitude of Your inscrutable dealings.

* * * * *

While I bear about with me continually the dying of the Lord Jesus, may the life also of Jesus be made manifest in my mortal flesh. May it be my habitual aspiration, that my character be a reflection of His—in its gentleness and meekness—its purity and unselfishness—its benevolence and sympathy.

* * * * *

Let me trust You in the dark. Amid all tossings and tribulations, may I see in every trial, only the appointed billow to waft my bark nearer the haven, and may I sing amid the storm—"So gives He His beloved rest."

* * * * *

Most Gracious God, how insensible have I proved to the multiplied tokens of Your love and kindness. Your mercies have been unworthily requited; my duties have been perfunctorily performed. Corruption within has responded to temptation from without. There has been too often pride where there should have been humility—resentment where there should have been forgiveness—unbelief where there should have been trust—murmuring where there should have been submission and resignation. For Your name's sake, O Lord, pardon my iniquity—for it is great. A sinner to the uttermost, I rejoice that, in Your dear Son, there is salvation to the uttermost. I rejoice in Him as the very Savior I need. Though omnipotence slumbers in His arm, He is touched with a fellow-feeling for all my infirmities. He can enter, with tender sensitiveness, into every temptation that crosses my path, and into every pang that rends my heart. I would lay hold anew on the blood besprinkled horns of the altar; and listen to Your voice of power and grace and love saying, "Your sins which are many are all forgiven you!" Give to me, I beseech You, salvation from the power, as well as from the guilt, of sin. This is Your will concerning me, even my sanctification. Keep me from all hardness of heart and contempt of Your holy word and commandment—from envy and malice—from pride and vain-glory—from vanity and lies—from tampering with temptation in any form, and thus endangering my present peace and imperiling my soul's everlasting interests. Guard every loophole by which any spiritual foe might enter. Give me resolute energy of will, to resist and to endure—as seeing Him who is invisible.

* * * * *

Give me grace to look beyond the cloudy present—to the stormless skies of that better land, where the pang of sorrow can neither be felt nor feared. Lying passive in Your hands, may it be mine through my tears to say, "Father, glorify Your name!"

* * * * * As a suppliant at the gates of prayer, may I feel it to be a privilege to draw near unto You. Give me filial trust and confidence. Enable me to unburden, without reserve, into Your ear—all my trials and difficulties.

* * * * *

How unworthy, Lord, I am of Your paternal regard and patient forbearance! How much have I done to forfeit Your favor! I have been rebellious and wayward—unthankful and unholy—leaving too often Your countless mercies unacknowledged—dethroning You from my affections, and giving to others the loyalty and allegiance which should be Yours alone. Give me deep contrition for an erring past. Graciously give me Your help. Lord, I feel that this struggling with sin, this conflict with temptation, is a hopeless contest without You—without Your strengthening, sustaining, restraining grace. Hold me up—and I shall be safe.

* * * * * Let it be my habitual aim to imbibe the meek, lowly, patient, unworldly spirit of Jesus.

* * * * *

I know not what difficulties, or trials, or temptations, may be before me this day. Prepare me whether for duty or for conflict. Knowing the treachery of the heart, I desire this morning, and each morning, to receive fresh supplies of Your grace.

* * * * *

Bring me to act more habitually under the influence of unseen spiritual realities. From the dominion of Satan—from the enslavement of lust and passion—from the absorbing love of the world—from the deceitfulness of riches—good Lord, deliver me! May the law of love, which has its highest exemplification in the life of Your dear Son, find expression in my daily walk. May I be molded, more and more, in conformity with His will, and copy more of His example—in His meekness and gentleness, in His unselfish and tender consideration for others. I have no ability in myself to carry out one good or holy resolution. Undertake for me. If there is any indication of spiritual quickening or vitality within me, it is derived from You, the source and inspiration of all energy and goodness. I can do all things through Christ strengthening me. "More grace! more grace!" may this be my constant prayer. Hold me up, and I shall be safe.

* * * * * I confide in Your wisdom which never errs, and Your love which never changes.

* * * * *

I look forward to that glorious land, where there is no sin to crucify—where there is no corruption to subdue—where there is nothing to be delivered from—where the joy and the presence of the Lord will be my eternal strength.

* * * * * May Your children, who are laid on couches of sickness, manifest a spirit of uncomplaining submission to Your will; recognizing Your hand, and Your hand alone—remembering that You are never arbitrary in Your dealings—that even "wearisome nights are appointed." Give them strength to be silent ministers of the truth, by exhibiting the power of Your sustaining grace; looking beyond the cloudlands of earth, to the better country, where the inhabitant shall no more say, "I am sick." Thus patiently bearing their cross, may they anticipate, with calm and joyful expectancy, that blessed hour, when all the sorrows and tribulations of earth will be forgotten in the words of welcome, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world!"

* * * * *

O Lord, forearm me by Your grace. In the battle with evil, around me and within me—I would overcome alone by the blood of the Lamb. Give me grace to live under a sense of Your All-Seeing Eye; rejoicing that no distance and no locality can separate You and I.

* * * * *

You can enter with tender sensitiveness into the keenest woes of humanity. I can think of You, the Prince of Sufferers, feeling for me—weeping for me—bleeding for me—dying for me. There is no extremity of distress, in which Your hand is shortened, or Your ear is heavy.

* * * * *

It is by Your grace alone I stand. Hold me up and I shall be safe. Shield me from the snares of a seductive world; fortify me against the assaults of temptation. Pray for me, as You did for Your erring disciple, that my faith fail not.

* * * * *

It is You alone who can whisper forgiveness, quiet misgivings, quicken faith, subdue corruption. Feeling the yoke of sin heavy and grievous, I come to You, whose yoke is easy and whose burden is light. Weary and heavy-laden—in Your cross I would find rest for my soul. May I lean upon You with unfaltering dependence—may I be consecrated to You in unswerving allegiance. Enable me more and more to crucify sin. May its power be subdued and its love mortified. May I set watch at every avenue by which temptation may gain entrance.

* * * * * When every other source of comfort fails—may all my springs be in You. When in deep distress, may I adore Your sovereignty, and own Your wisdom, and trust Your love. May Christ be magnified in me whether by life or by death. May I find Him the one way to consolation and peace.

* * * * *

"Everyone who has this hope in Him, purifies himself just as He is pure." Having this hope in Him—the blessed hope of seeing Him as He is, and of enjoying His everlasting fellowship—may I purify myself even as He is pure; daily imbibing more of His meek, gentle, unselfish, unworldly spirit; withdrawing my affections from things which are of the earth, earthy—and consecrating them to His service. Enable me to exercise a vigilant jealousy over my thoughts, words, and actions; seeking to renounce whatever is displeasing to Him, and that would mar my peace of conscience.

* * * * * In every difficult and perplexing duty, may this always form the testing question and final appeal—"How would my Lord and Savior have acted here?" And knowing His will, may it be my delight to do it. Strengthen the things which remain and are ready to die. Let the power of sin wax weaker and weaker, and let the power of Your grace within me wax stronger and stronger. Thus, blessed Savior, whatever may be the changes and sorrows I experience in this precarious, uncertain existence; with the conscious assurance of Your presence and love, I must be happy. If You are near to me—if You abide with me—there can be no terror in trial, no bitterness in tears, no sting in death. With You for my portion, I am independent of every other. In all Your dealings towards me, may I recognize the gracious purpose and design of making me more and more fit for that glorious world, where obedience to You shall never falter, and consecration shall never fail; where every thought and wish shall be in unison with the divine.

* * * * *

O You, whose heart beats responsive to the smallest sorrow of Your stricken people, look down in great mercy on Your sons and daughters of affliction. May they know that You have a wise and holy end in all Your discipline. May they come to feel that their greatest trials are the ladder-steps to their greatest blessings—links in the chain which draws them to heaven. Whether You chasten or gladden, may they be enabled to say, "Even so, Father, for it seems good in Your sight."

* * * * * Day by day are You loading me with Your benefits, and giving me unceasing cause for gratitude and praise.

* * * * *

I acknowledge with deep humiliation my unworthiness and guilt. Each day, as it brings with it the memory of Your great goodness, brings with it also the memory of my multiplied offences. I confess my sins, alike of omission and commission; that I have done the things I ought not to have done, and have left undone those things I ought to have done. I have often no affecting sense of the enslaving power of sin. I have too often resorted to false and unavailing refuges for satisfaction and happiness. I have too frequently sought to slake my thirst at the world's polluted cisterns, and failed to remember that all my fresh springs are in You. Lord, have mercy upon me! Christ, have mercy upon me! It is by free, sovereign, unmerited grace, I am what I am. If I stand at last accepted before Your throne, this will be my plea, my confession, my eternal avowal—"Being justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." May I live under the elevating consciousness that I stand clothed in His righteousness, and that nothing can ever separate me from His love. Once within the fold, I am in the fold forever. Loving His own at the beginning, He will love them unto the end.

* * * * *

Keep me from conformity to the evil maxims and practices of the world. Enable me to use its blessings without abusing them, and to live under the powers of the world to come. May I know the conquering, transforming influence of Redeeming love—raising my affections, purifying my desires, elevating my life.

* * * * *

Whatever the cross be, which Your suffering people are called to carry, may they enjoy the assurance, that the same Lord who died for them, lays it on, and keeps it on—that no unnecessary thorn is in their chaplet of sorrow. We look forward to a sinless, sorrowless, tearless immortality!

* * * * *

Blessings innumerable have been poured into my lap, but they have often been received with an unthankful heart. Shadowing palms and wells of refreshing have studded my pilgrim path; but I have too frequently reclined under the shadow, and partaken of the refreshment, without any breathing of gratitude to the Bountiful Provider.

* * * * *

Defend me from every snare and danger which may beset my path. Be my Shield in prosperity—my Refuge in adversity—my Comforter in sorrow—my Light in darkness—my Hope in death—my Defender and Vindicator in judgment—my Joy and Portion through all eternity.

* * * * * May the Holy Spirit, the Sanctifier, expel whatever is unholy, and transform me more and more into the image and likeness of Your dear Son.

* * * * *

I have to mourn the poverty of my faith—the lukewarmness of my love—the fitfulness of my obedience—the perfunctory performance of my religious duties. How little the precepts of Your sacred Scriptures have been treasured in my heart, and reduced to practice in my daily walk and

life. How often I have indulged in tempers and feelings inconsistent with Your revealed will, and with the character of Him who was meek and lowly in heart. I have too often yielded to the power of temptation—bent like a brittle reed in the storm; dishonoring Your name and grieving Your Spirit. You might righteously have left me to reap the fruit of my own ways and to be filled with my own devices—saying, "Ephraim is joined to his idols, let him alone."

* * * * *

I desire to repose on Him who alone can speak peace to the sin-burdened and sorrow-burdened. Looking to His glorious, completed work, I can triumphantly say, Return unto your rest—your peace—O my soul, for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you.

* * * * *

"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid." I would seek to have no wish, and no will, and no way of my own. Do to me, and with me, as seems good in Your sight, only make me possessor of this best blessing—the peace of Yours, which passes all understanding—that peace which the world knows not of—which the world with its riches and pleasures, its blandishments and fascinations—cannot give; and which the world, with all its troubles and anxieties, its sorrows and its trials—cannot take away.

* * * * *

"Whom the Lord loves He chastens." May this prove a quietener to all fears, lull all misgivings, and repress all murmurs.

* * * * *

Anew I commend myself to Your gracious keeping this day. Guide me by Your counsel—guard me from temptation—lead me in the way everlasting. May every unloving thought—every unworthy aim and aspiration—give place to what is pure and unselfish and kind.

* * * * *

Lord, I would plead for increased communications and supplies of Your grace. Strengthen me with all might by Your Spirit in the inner man. Keep me from all that would be detrimental to my spiritual interests—all that would weaken or impair this filial confidence, and lead me to restrain prayer. Whatever be my dominant sin—ease or pleasure—pride or passion—covetousness or ambition—enable me by the promised help of Your Spirit, to subdue it—nailing it to the Redeemer's cross. Enable me to follow His meekness and gentleness; to be kind and forgiving—tender and charitable towards all. Conscious of the supreme enthronement of Your love, may life be, more than it has been—an effort to crucify self and to please You. Even when there may be mystery in Your dealings, let me not wrong Your goodness and wisdom with one shadow of suspicion. Whether by giving or by taking—by smiting or by healing—by the sweet cup or the bitter—may it be mine to say, "Father! glorify Your name!"

* * * * *

"The Lord God omnipotent reigns!" O God, I adore Your sovereignty. Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom. All space is Your dominion. You do according to Your will in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth. You count the number of the stars, and name every one. You heal the broken in heart and bind up their wounds. The sparrow's fall is appointed by You—the young raven's cry is heard by You—the very hairs of our head are numbered by You. From the drop of the forest leaf, to the departure of the soul in death—all is known to You and ordered by You. You appoint the bounds of our habitation. Man proposes, but You dispose; and You dispose all things well. Let it be thus ever a joyous thought—that whatever concerns me, is under the control and direction of infinite wisdom and unchanging, everlasting love. I cannot forecast the future—but it is in Your hands. Even if there be cloud and tempest, it is You who walk upon the wings of the wind. Omnipotence treads the stormy waters. Omnipotence directs the roll of every billow and, when it is fit, Omnipotence utters the mandate, "Peace, be still!"

* * * * *

O God, I have to acknowledge that I have not always thus realized Your constant supervision, and taken the comfort I ought to have derived from Your sovereign rule. I have too often practically forgotten the Great Supreme, by dwelling on second causes. I have allowed myself to be disturbed and harassed with little vexations—anxious thoughts for the present, and misgivings and forebodings for the future. Enable me to cast all my cares, great or small, on You; knowing that You care for me.

* * * * *

Forbid that I should offer at the shrine of self, or pleasure, or mammon—my best; and be content with giving the remnants of worn and wasted affections to You. May I beware of any and every deviation from the straight path. Hold me up and I shall be safe. This day, guard me from whatever would be detrimental to my soul's good. Preserve me from the guilt of wasted hours and slighted opportunities. Enable me to renounce all evil habits—all debasing compliances. May every idol that would usurp Your place be overthrown. May no corrupt thought pollute my heart—no unworthy utterance defile my tongue—no unholy action stain my life.

* * * * *

Adored be Your name, that all events are at Your disposal and under Your righteous ordination and control. I rejoice to know that Your dealings, though sovereign, are never arbitrary. You are my Father. Give me trust, and confidence, and filial reverence. Like as a father pities his children, so You pity those who fear You—for You know our frame—You remember that we are dust. Your way is sometimes in the sea, and Your path in the deep waters, and Your judgments unsearchable; but the day is coming when You will vindicate the rectitude of Your procedure, and bring every tongue to confess that You have done all things well. Let my will be resolved into Yours. Then will the trials of life be disarmed of their sting—when I view them as part of Your own plan of infinite wisdom.

* * * * *

Alas! the love which ought to have reigned paramount, has too often been supplanted and superseded by other affections. I have to lament my bias to sin—the latent principles of

corruption—the evil heart of unbelief which is ever tempting me to stray from the living God—the burdens and impediments which clog the wings of faith and prevent me soaring heavenwards. Lord, elevate my affections, purify my desires, quicken me to new obedience. May my life become, more than it has been, an offering of gratitude—a sacrifice of praise for all Your many mercies. Keep me from the absorbing power, the benumbing influence of earthly things!

* * * * *

If You send me blessings, may I connect every gift with the Great Bestower. If You give me the full cup, may I be enabled to carry it with a steady hand. If You appoint crosses, may I have strength to bear them. If You appoint afflictions and bereavements, may I regard them as Your own special messengers sent on a mission of wisdom and mercy.

* * * * * All I ask or hope for, is in the name, and for the sake, of Jesus Christ—my only Lord and Savior. Amen.

05.03. Thoughts for the Quiet Hour

THOUGHTS FOR THE QUIET HOUR

by John MacDuff, 1895

A treasury of godly wisdom, suitable for personal or family devotions.

Building air-castle upon air-castle!

He who goes about whining all day long about some imaginary drawbacks in the sphere which Providence has assigned him—when all the while he is situated so much better than thousands around—is a suicide of his own happiness! He is also impeaching the faithfulness of the Supreme Ordainer and Disposer.

One half of life's enjoyment is eaten out by this sinful craving after what cannot be obtained—the desire for something supposed to be better. Yes, but when "the better" is reached, there is the yearning for an imagined "better" still. This is building air-castle upon air-castle!

If in these days there be one household demon more than another which needs to be exorcized—it is the demon of discontent!

Oh, for the spirit of Paul—poor and lonely prisoner in Rome as he was—an apparent bankrupt in all that the world deems wealth and affluence—yet who could make this entry in his letter to his Philippian friends—"I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. At the moment I have all I need—more than I need!"

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One throw of the dice and the great game of life is lost!

How many there are with whom the labor of long years is a failure! They are engaged building some favorite edifice, material or mental, literally or figuratively. They dream not that it rests on shifting sands, or on the edge of a muffled volcano!

A teacher bestows his fondest assiduous care on a pupil—a young life full of high intellectual promise. A sudden illness comes and sweeps him away!

A parent lavishes his tenderest love and affections, thought and time and money, in raising his child; but, by-and-by, the life of his prodigal son, is to the parent, worse than death.

Yes, often are fondest hopes, best laid plans, glad aspirations, thwarted; the glowing visions of success clouded with misfortune—calamity—ruin—the grave! One throw of the dice and the great game of life is lost!

Not so with imperishable riches—"the hope laid up for you in heaven"—bliss beyond the accidents of capricious fortune, bonds that can know no dissolution. "My flesh and my heart may fail, but

God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever!" Psalms 73:26

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The golden key that fits all locks!

"If I have not love, I am nothing." 1 Corinthians 13:2

What a magic spell there is in love!—the absolute devotion of a beautiful soul that loses itself in the hallowed mission of radiating peace and joy and sympathy all around.

Many dull, unsusceptible ears, when other charmers have failed to charm, have been arrested and won by the music of kindness. By it . . .

old-age renews its youth,

sick pillows are smoothed,

burdens are eased,

tears are turned into smiles,

dirges are turned into songs.

Love is, of all magical charms, the most irresistible.

Love is the golden key that fits all locks!

"If I have not love, I am nothing." 1 Corinthians 13:2

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This most beautiful grace

"All of you, clothe yourselves with humility." 1 Peter 5:5

You who are young, with life's hopes and hazards, its risks and failures before you, let the possession of this most beautiful grace be your habitual aspiration. It is a garment beautiful for all, but whose folds droop with a special propriety and loveliness on the youthful pilgrim just entering on the great journey.

Beware of rash, self-assertive ways, petty jealousies, sinister dealings; above all, tampering with servile vices which may end in their tyrannical sway.

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Don't grumble!

"Don't grumble against each other!" James 5:9

What an unhappy phase and condition of soul that of the chronic grumbler!—moping over petty troubles, magnifying worries; to use the common but expressive figure, "making mountains of molehills"; seeing no sunshine in existence, while, in reality, there are only a few clouds floating on an otherwise clear horizon!

Poorly will such be able to grapple with life's real and sterner troubles when they come.

"Don't grumble as some of them did, for that is why God sent his angel of death to destroy them. 1 Corinthians 10:10

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Over-sensitiveness

Over-sensitiveness to supposed injury and wrong, has wrecked many a fair life, and doomed it to unsympathetic isolation.

"Be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you." Ephesians 4:32

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That heathen marksman

In vain had Ahab disguised himself. He was borne in his chariot bleeding from the fray—for "an Aramean soldier randomly shot an arrow at the Israelite troops, and the arrow hit the king of Israel between the joints of his armor!" 1 Kings 22:34

No, not in the true sense of the word "randomly."

That heathen marksman was only an instrument in accomplishing the fulfillment of "the word of the Lord which He spoke by the mouth of Elijah the prophet." A Greater had feathered the fatal shaft, and sent it home!

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Grievously wounded in the spiritual battle

"A bruised reed He will not break, and a smoldering wick He will not snuff out." Matthew 12:20

Never deal too harshly with those who, in some unguarded, unsuspected moment, have fallen out of the ranks, or by their own folly or cowardice have been grievously wounded in the spiritual battle.

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Encircled in the consciousness of His love

Eternal summer canopies the soul which is at peace with God. Happy those who are thus encircled in the consciousness of His love. Even when there are passing clouds and shadows, the sun is always behind them.

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A parent's lip kisses all fear away

Trust—what is it?

Go to that child's couch when the storm is raging, moaning among the tree-tops and strewing branches on the lawn, the blackened sky echoing with the artillery of heaven. A parent's hand draws the curtain and smooths the ruffled pillow; a parent's lip kisses all fear away.

Such is the trust and confidence of His children inspired by their Heavenly Father in the hour of anxiety and dismay, "In the fear of the Lord is strong confidence, and His children shall have a place of refuge." Proverbs 14:26

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As each part does its work

"From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work." Ephesians 4:16

In a gigantic piece of machinery the small wheels have their place and purpose as well as the large ones. God gives His weak ones work to do, for which even His strong ones are unequal.

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Troubles and perplexities

In the tumult and discord of human troubles and perplexities, how blessed are the balm-words of Christ, "Your heavenly Father knows that you have need of all these things!" Matthew 6:32

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Vapid, superficial, selfish pleasure

Thousands live their whole life for vapid, superficial, selfish pleasure; a wanton and wasteful expenditure of available strength and purpose. How far better to work for God and for the good of men! Not the exacted toil of the fretted and fettered slave, but the consecration of the willing heart, the service which is perfect freedom—life, animated by the inspiring motto, "This world is fading away, along with everything it craves. But if you do the will of God, you will live forever!" 1 John 2:17

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A dirge of superhuman anguish

"Who in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears." Hebrews 5:7

There are three distinct pictures given us of the tears of Jesus.

We see Him weeping in the family, with the sisters of Bethany. We see Him weeping on the mount of Olivet over a ruined city. We see Him, last of all, weeping in the moonlit shades of Gethsemane—but now it is "strong crying and tears"—a dirge of superhuman anguish, not over families or cities, but over mankind!

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But we see a more favored spot of grass

As the sheep of His pasture, He has allotted our portion for us. But we see a more favored spot of grass on the opposite valley. The sunbeams are playing upon it. We imagine the herbage is greener and more luxuriant. We cross to the other valley. The sun gets behind a cloud. The bright patch is found to be in reality no better than that which we had left!

What divine philosophy there is in the Apostle's injunction, "Be content with such things as you have; for He has said, I will never leave you nor forsake you." Hebrews 13:5

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The father's halls, and heart, and home

"The boy became so hungry that even the husks he was feeding the pigs looked good to him." Luke 15:16

Garbage could not stop the rage of hunger in the "far country." The father's halls, and heart, and home—the "bread enough and to spare"—alone could do that.

"I will go home to my father!" Luke 15:18

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The Infinite overcome by the finite

"You have struggled with God and with men and have overcome." I know not a more wondrous incident in Bible story—Omnipotence overcome with the pleadings of weakness; the Infinite overcome by the finite; a mortal man wrestling with Deity in prayer, and that prayer prevailing—"I will not let You go, unless You bless me!"

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Happiness

Happiness is not dependent on place, or locality, or social position—but on the state of the heart and its relation to God.

As the bleakest field is ennobled by the sunshine, so, in spite even of hampered circumstances and adverse surroundings, that soul must be radiant, which enjoys an habitual response to the prayer—"Lord, lift up the light of Your countenance!"

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There are no great things and small things with God

"He made all the stars—the Bear, Orion, the Pleiades, and the constellations of the southern sky." Job 9:9

There are no great things and small things with God. He who guides the constellations in their magnificent marchings, watches the sparrow's fall.

"Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered." Matthew 10:29-30

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Morbid, sullen, panic-stricken

"He will not break the bruised reed; He will not quench the smoking flax." Matthew 12:20

See the Prophet Elijah, so recently a hero of heroes, confronting, unabashed, the savage yells of Ahab's myrmidons and the crowd of Baal priests, now seated, with moping countenance, under the desert juniper-tree or amid the rocks of Horeb—away from duty; morbid, sullen, panic-stricken; oblivious of the encouragements of Carmel and the miracles of Cherith—indulging in the ungrateful soliloquy—"It is enough; take away my life; God has forgotten me; I am no better than my fathers."

Does Jehovah take him at his word? Does He leave or commission the desert whirlwind to extinguish the expiring flame of former consecration? No! "What are you doing here, Elijah? Go, anoint Jehu; go, anoint Hazael. Back to your appointed work and labor. I will yet make you a burning and shining light in Israel."

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The fall of a leaf—or the destruction of kingdoms

Whether it be the fall of a leaf—or the destruction of kingdoms, it is "God over all."

"You alone are God over all the kingdoms of the earth. You alone created the heavens and the earth." 2 Kings 19:15

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What a magic, magnetic power

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness." Galatians 5:22

What a magic, magnetic power there is in kindness!

How it smooths furrows from the brow!

How it raises the soiled blossoms of the battered flower!

How it carries music to the heart of the lonely and sorrowful, and makes old age for the moment forget its infirmities!

Many a little child has thus proved a seraph in human form!

"Be kind and compassionate to one another." Ephesians 4:32

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Found in the shady nooks of the valley

"Clothe yourselves with humility." 1 Peter 5:5

The greenest, tenderest, loveliest graces are found in the shady nooks of the valley.

"Clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience." Colossians 3:12

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Past faintings and falterings and failures

"But one thing I do: Forgetting the past, and straining toward what is ahead" Php 3:13

Let past faintings and falterings and failures only stimulate to increased ardor in the race. With the goal in view, press on!

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

O dreamer of vain dreams

"Be content with such things as you have." Hebrews 13:5

"My own vineyard I have neglected." Song of Solomon 1:6

Let us accept the allotments of Divine Providence—our varied spheres in life—at the hands of Him who fixes the bounds of our habitation.

How many there are who have a strange, perverse satisfaction in looking out from their window, with longing eyes, on one or other of the varied modern shapes which Naboth's vineyard assumes! Their soliloquy is—'Were it mine, what a vintage I would have there! What oil and wine I would have from these grapes and olive trees; and what a prudent and bountiful use I would make of them, which their present possessor never does!'

God says to such—'No, O dreamer of vain dreams, remain no longer gazing through a false and distorted medium. Envy no longer your neighbor's choicer territory. Go cheerfully down to your own assigned, though more restricted, garden-plot. It may have neither vines nor olives. It may be devoid of floral wealth. It may be possessed of nothing but the commonest plants. But there is your place! It may be "little among the thousands of Judah." It is that, nevertheless, which I have staked and fenced out for you. I have not made you keeper of others' vineyards; see that your own vineyard you do keep. You can serve Me and glorify Me with the one entrusted talent, as well as with the ten. On the Great Day there will be as ample a recognition of faithfulness over the few things as over the many things.'

By Him the mite is accepted; and the heart—when there is no mite to give.

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Beware of wasted moments!

The marvels and triumphs of the printing-press have now made accessible to peasant and laborer, the wondrous blessing of Christian literature! Neither Croesus nor Plato—the two old-world representatives of wealth and thought—had a library to compare with what is readily available to us.

Let the young especially prize this splendid inheritance, making it alike a privilege and obligation to devote some hours to reading and garnering mental stores. Let them beware of wasted

moments—golden ingots—too often mortgaged to . . .

sloth,

frivolity,

idleness,

voluptuous ease and degrading passion.

"Redeeming the time, because the days are evil." Ephesians 5:16

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Eternal pleasures

"You have made known to me the path of life; You will fill me with joy in Your presence, with eternal pleasures at Your right hand." Psalms 16:11

Why walk through life with an aspect of sadness, as if religion and gloom are identical? Every true believer should have in this world, his foretastes of coming bliss.

Sips, at the Fountain here.

There, "eternal pleasures."

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

My creation!

How the love of nature survives and lingers despite of the decrepitude of age, growing indeed stronger as years advance, and taking no heed of the dimming eye!

It recalls the testimony of a gentle poet—"It seems to me, the world was never so beautiful as now, when I am about to leave it."

"Be glad; rejoice forever in My creation!" Isaiah 65:18

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That demon scramble for riches!

That demon scramble for riches! Generally speaking, "Meaningless! Meaningless!" is the disappointed confession when the hoarded wealth is secured!

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Little more than a creed of sanctified selfishness

It is a poor religion—little more than a creed of sanctified selfishness—which regards salvation mainly as an escape from divine punishment, and the assured getting into heaven at last.

True religion is an active, transforming principle. Salvation is a present triumph over the forces of evil and powers of temptation. It aspires after obedience to the divine will—assimilation to the divine image and character in its truth and purity and love.

Yes, that is a stunted utilitarian faith—the faith of the Koran rather than of the Gospel—whose hopes and prospective blessedness are all for an eternal sensual paradise.

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Flaws on the sculptor's white marble

Listen to the bell, warning off submerged rocks and perilous whirlpools. Beware of tampering with the fine edge of conscience, and blunting moral perceptions. These are like the flaws on the sculptor's white marble—scars which cannot be easily erased.

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The irreparable past

Do not mope with morbid spirit over the irreparable past, but gird yourself with heroic resolution for a future in which lost hours and lost opportunities may yet be redeemed.

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A November drizzle

A November drizzle is often the cause of soul-depression. Do not treat spiritually what, in a thousand cases, is purely physical. Take the most brilliant of our flowers out of the sunshine and set them to confront the east wind. They will be certain to mope. There is an amazing harmony and analogy between the natural and the spiritual.

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Ignoble wounds in life's battle?

"I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more!" Hebrews 8:12

Who among us, in the retrospect of existence, have not the memories of unworthy thought and unworthy deed, it may even be of ignoble wounds, in life's battle? What of that? Are we for a moment to allow these sins, grievous as they may be, to create an insuperable, impassable gulf between us and the Great Forgiver? Thoughts, far more merciful than our own, are expressed and reiterated in the divine words, "I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more!"

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An instinctive love of the beautiful

Happy those who have an instinctive love of the beautiful—the beautiful in nature, the beautiful in grace; and far transcending these, the beautiful in Him who was Himself incarnated Beauty—the chief among ten thousand, the Altogether Lovely one!

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A chequered life

Each of our lives is a plan of God. Let us be thankful for the thought that our own plans—crude, faulty, mistaken, sometimes sinful—are not infrequently counteracted and superseded by His. "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end" Jeremiah 29:11

Often in the retrospect of a chequered life is the glad and grateful avowal made, and the Psalmist's experience endorsed, "He led them forth also by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation." Psalms 107:7

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If the golden prize has eluded our grasp

God is a God of equity. He will exact according to what a man has, not according to what he has not. He will not look for figs or grapes where He has only given common herbs. He will not expect pounds where He has only given pence—talents where He has only given mites. If we have little—limited and restricted means and opportunities—let us remember it is because He has withheld more. If the golden prize has eluded our grasp, it is because He saw we would be better without it. His gifts and benefactions are many and diversified. Let it be our endeavor to be "good stewards" to the extent of our responsibilities.

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The world's joys

"Whoever drinks of this water shall thirst again." John 4:13

The world's joys are fitful, uncertain, precarious—brooks which dry in their channels—their silver ripple ceases often just when they are most needed.

Gospel streams provided for the refreshment of God's pilgrims, are, on the other hand, fed from the eternal glaciers—the hills of heaven. They are fullest when all others are emptiest.

"He will refresh her as a river in the desert and as the cool shadow of a large rock in a hot and weary land." Isaiah 32:2

"I will make rivers flow on barren heights, and springs within the valleys. I will turn the desert into pools of water, and the parched ground into springs. I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert." Isaiah 41:18-19

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An Infinite Friend

How it would, with us, hallow every season of prosperity; how it would take the sting from every season of sorrow, and the bitterness from every trial, to have at all times the sublime consciousness that an infinite Friend is with us who joys with us in all our joys, and metes out for us all our woes!

"Be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Matthew 28:20

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The sweetest of life's curfew chimes

The sweetest of life's curfew chimes is the closing one—"To depart and to be with Christ."

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It is a sad thing

It is a sad thing when lives and friendships once in harmony become sundered—drifting from their old sacred moorings—the little breach gradually, but fatally, widening, until it is irreparable.

"Be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you." Ephesians 4:32

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The uncaging of the spirit

At death there is no interruption in the continuity of life. It is simply the uncaging of the spirit to permit its free, unhampered soarings. There is a wonderful comfort and significance in the words of Christ, "I assure you, anyone who obeys My teaching will never die!" John 8:51

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The distinctive message of the Gospels

God's love of the loveless is the distinctive message of the Gospels.

"When we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly." Romans 5:6

"While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Romans 5:8

"For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son." Romans 5:10

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Yes, you are in a mazy labyrinth

"My Father! If it is possible, let this cup of suffering be taken away from me. Yet I want your will, not mine." Matthew 26:39

Yes, you are in a mazy labyrinth. But keep fast hold of the thread—the golden thread of your Divine Father's love. Thus will you, in due time, come forth to breathe again the fresh air, and welcome the blue sky of heaven!

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He died fighting for His enemies!

What a contrast between the unselfish consecration of Jesus in His great work and ministry on earth, and the selfishness and self-seeking so often characteristic of the race for whom He died!

There are many in this world, embarked in gigantic enterprises. Stand in one of our busiest thoroughfares; see the crowd hurrying past, each with deep-furrowed lines of care on his brow.

These are builders; not builders in stone or steel, but figuratively rearing some huge pyramid with unremitting labor.

One is toiling at the Pyramid of Riches—tier on tier riveted with silver and golden clamps.

Another is engrossed with the Pyramid of Ambition—heedless of the intervening work that he may reach more speedily the coveted summit, and crown it with Fame blowing her bronze trumpet.

Another is busy at some Intellectual Pyramid (choicest of all), raising piles of mental treasure—laborious thought.

How few among these could say with an honest heart, "I have no ulterior motive in all my labors. I have no selfish interests to subserve—I am doing it all, neither for the good of myself nor my family, but for others."

It would be a happier world if the use and design of our pyramids had not been like those of Egypt—built to glorify himself while living, and to cover his dust after death.

Different, how different, was the retrospect of Jesus! "Christ pleased not Himself." Unselfishness in its noblest type and form was the characteristic of His Redemption. From the infancy in Bethlehem's cradle, to the expiring prayer on the bitter tree, all was the purest unselfishness of a loving heart. "He saved others, Himself He would not save!" On His cross was engraved, not the superscription of earth's boasted heroes—"He died fighting for His friends"; but, "He died fighting for His enemies!"

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Temptation

Temptation may be biding its time for the unguarded moment. Do with it as you would do with the place you know to be haunted by ravenous beasts of prey—"Avoid it, do not travel on it; turn from it and go on your way." Proverbs 4:15

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Absolute and flawless perfection!

"One who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens." Hebrews 7:26

When one sees, so often and so painfully, the shortcomings and imperfections of the best of people—how far they fall beneath even their own aspirations—irresolution and inconsistency, indolence, self-seeking, and vainglory in some; lack of patience, lack of courtesy, lack of zeal, lack of love and sympathy in others; in a word, the too evident traces of fallible and fallen human nature—how it magnifies the absolute and flawless perfection of the Great Master!

As we all thus mourn, too truly and self-consciously, our defects and deficiencies, our blots and failures—what a wonderfully inspiring thought is that given by John, that the day is coming when perfection shall be attained! "Yes, dear friends, we are already God's children, and we can't even

imagine what we will be like when Christ returns. But we do know that when He comes we will be like Him!" 1 John 3:2

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Personal tastes

How varied are the types and temperaments of the human family—from the nervous to the lethargic!

Let us make ample allowances for those not cast in the same mold as ourselves, and kindly recognize those who may not share our personal tastes and sympathies.

This lesson is embraced in the Apostle's widely inclusive exhortation, "Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble." 1 Peter 3:8

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Fascinating dreams

Many of the world's old religions and philosophies are fascinating dreams, brilliant coruscations, beautiful webs of thought, which the best intellect and purest devotion had laboriously spun. We dare not depreciate them. But there is only one philosophy that is from God. "The wisdom of God is wiser than men."

Greece had her Mysteries, with their esoteric doctrines. But these could shed no real ray of light on the awful problems of life and of the future. The longed-for "mystery hidden from ages and generations" was fully revealed and manifested in the person and words of Incarnate Wisdom—"I came that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."

"Don't let anyone lead you astray with empty philosophy and high-sounding nonsense that come from human thinking and from the evil powers of this world, and not from Christ." Colossians 2:8

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Love-shafts

God's words are not bolts of volcanic fire, but golden arrows—love-shafts from the quiver of His promises.

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What is the lesson?

Unexpected calamity, sudden death, as we have seen this week within palace walls, comes often like an lightning-bolt from the calm blue of the heavens; or like the earthquake shock when all is lapsed in security, when birds are singing and fields are waving with plenty.

What is the lesson?

"Prepare to meet your God!" Amos 4:12

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I have no key to God's hieroglyphics

"There are secret things that belong to the Lord our God." Deuteronomy 29:29

You say, "Interpret the mystery." I have no key to God's hieroglyphics now. Eternity will read and decipher all.

"For just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts higher than your thoughts." Isaiah 55:9

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Wounds from a friend

"Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses." Proverbs 27:6

The true friend is not the honeyed flatterer. He who possesses the hall-mark of that noblest of relationships is rather the confidential adviser, or, it may be, the faithful censor, who, with delicate tact and yet bold freedom, can point out the peril or shortcoming to which we ourselves are blind—the undiscovered weak joint in the armor.

Inestimable is the worth of such outspoken, unselfish, trusted sincerity; faithful the wounds of such friends.

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Serfdom and beggardom to Satan?

You have often seen, in the sky of opening summer, the struggle between sun and cloud. One or other comes off at last victorious. Is it to be sun or cloud with you? Is the higher or lower nature to conquer? Is it to be the ground turned into a crop of noxious weed—the thorn and the thistle? or that which gives birth to fragrant flower and golden grain? Is the future to be purity or passion, loyalty to God or serfdom and beggardom to Satan?

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Child of sickness and pain!

Child of sickness and pain! whose eyes for long weeks have been unable to endure the garish sunlight, by whose sleepless pillow the dim lamp has been flickering with weary monotony, be still!

God has His own methods of mysterious dealing and discipline. He can make that chamber of suffering a Bethel. A ladder is oftentimes there set between earth and heaven, traversed by the angels Faith, Resignation, Hope, and Peace.

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A lurking assassin

Envy is the basest of human passions. It might well be impersonated as a lurking assassin, dagger in hand, haunting the darkest chambers of the soul; disguised, too, with iron mask, to conceal, as

best it may, its own vile features and malignant thoughts.

The Bible speaks of envy as one of a dastard, unlovely triad—"envyings, murders, drunkenness."

It is a miniature hell wherever the foul fiend of envy has been allowed to intrude. Hence no nobler moral victory, yet no more difficult one can there be, than exorcizing this demon of the abyss, tortured and maddened by the sight of goodness it cannot reach, its impotence to tear the wreath honorably won from brows better and worthier than its own, and turn it into ashes.

"From envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness, Lord, deliver us!"

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Foul fiends or beneficent angels?

Words are impalpable couriers of good or evil. They may be foul fiends or beneficent angels.

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The prayer of Agur

There is a true and deep philosophy in the prayer of Agur—"Give me neither poverty nor riches! Give me just enough to satisfy my needs." Proverbs 30:8

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The soul's best music

"From the depths of despair, O Lord, I call for your help." Psalms 130:1

It seems contradiction and paradox, but the soul's best music often comes from a broken harp, its best incense from the broken vase of alabaster.

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Every turn in the pilgrimage path!

"Show me the path where I should walk, O Lord; point out the right road for me to follow." Psalms 25:4

Unfold and interpret for me every turn in the pilgrimage path!

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Running out like the grains in a sand-glass

What! these hours of a limited, vanishing existence running out like the grains in a sand-glass, and nothing yet done for Christ or those for whom Christ died!

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There are many loveless things in the world

There are many loveless things in the world, but few more so than that of unkindness—the gall and wormwood of injured and unrequited friendship, a cold cynicism the recompense of beneficent

deed or generous gift.

How easy, how gracious, on the other hand, is "that most excellent gift of love!" While it "seeks not its own," it is a deposit paid back in compound interest. No other forces of the soul can compensate for the lack of love. Amiability and courtesy, benevolence and sympathy, outlive the more heroic virtues.

"In her tongue is the law of kindness." Proverbs 31:26

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The soul's hardest lesson

"Not my will, but Your will," is the soul's hardest lesson; and, when learned, it is its highest achievement.

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Kind words and holy deeds

I like to think of the perpetuity of moral and spiritual influences. Kind words and holy deeds cannot perish. Goodness is indestructible. That man you speak of died twenty years ago. No! he still lives in the hearts of those his character brightened and refined!

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Nothing but a gentle, sympathetic soul

Let none say, "There is no work for me to do, in my limited and restricted sphere. I cannot aspire to a position of conspicuous usefulness. I am no Asahel, swift-footed in the race. I am dwarfed in means, destitute of all claims to intellect. I am but a common soldier in the great army—a mere hewer of wood and drawer of water."

Accept the assigned position. Never despise nor minimize "the power of littles." Do what you can. God asks no more, and expects no more. With Him, lowly work is worship. Only, what you do, do it heartily, cheerfully. Be not repelled by the smallness and insignificance of the mite you cast into the treasury.

You can teach a child its letters. You can read to a poor invalid. You can carry a ray of sunshine with you into the hospital ward. You can send a posy of violets or rosebuds to the bedside of the invalid. You can give a word of heart cheer to the struggling youth, and aid him in entering the stern battle of life. You can indite a letter of wise counsel and warning to the tempted child of poverty, and help to fetch back the prodigal from his or her wanderings.

You can do the most Godlike and Christlike thing in the world—that which needs neither purse nor learning—nothing but a gentle, sympathetic soul. In ministering to the broken and lacerated heart, torn, it may be, with bereavement too deep for tears, you can give "beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for a spirit of heaviness."

"Who has despised the day of small things?"

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True, genuine friendship

"A friend loves at all times." Proverbs 17:17

You cannot force a half-hearted friendship into life. Where there is incongruity of character, feeling, and ways, let it simply lapse into acquaintanceship; and if even this be an effort, let it, without either violence or discourtesy, die a natural death.

True, genuine friendship must not only be spontaneous, but, to be lasting, it must be based on congeniality of tastes, pursuits, interests, as well as on affection.

"There is a Friend who sticks closer than a brother." Proverbs 18:24

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You hypocrites!

"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean." Matthew 23:25-26

The Jerusalem Pharisee is not extinct. He has his true representative and descendant in our time. He still in spirit makes broad his phylactery. He has his trumpet sounded before him. He has his unctuous shibboleths. He is punctilious in creed and tradition. He refuses to speak to a Samaritan.

Yet that man's inner life and home, as was the case with his ancient prototype, confute and confound his pretensions. There, he is often cold, cynical, selfish, moody, morose, imperious. He would keep all the world right, but he is himself like the sepulchers he whitewashes. It is outer garnish and no more. God save the Church, from such a travesty as this! Oh for genuine, transparent, unmistakable reality!

"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean. In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness." Matthew 23:27-28

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Truth that leads to godliness

"The knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness." Titus 1:1

Doctrine is nothing, dissociated from deed.

Abstract truth is poor, compared to living principle.

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The tiny glowworm and the shining star

The eye of the Almighty takes in at a glance—the tiny glowworm and the shining star, the blade of grass and the towering Alp.

"He covers the heavens with clouds, provides rain for the earth, and makes the green grass grow in mountain pastures." Psalms 147:8

"He determines the number of the stars and calls them each by name." Psalms 147:4

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Remove the Bible from school and university

God help this nation if it be drifting to secularism! Our people may be made giants in intellect; but severed from the religious element, divorced from religious training, the chances are they may become demons in depravity!

Where, moreover, are remedy and panacea to be found for the anguished heart in its time of sorrow?

Philosophy and science, noble factors as they are, can never heal the wounds of humanity, erase the furrows from the woe-worn brow, or light up the shadows of the final valley. They can never curb the madness of the nations, subjugate the demon of war, and "ring in the thousand years of peace."

Remove the Bible from school and university, and in that saddest of battles, the struggle of conflicting principles, where the godless and Christless creed is the triumphant one, there can be nothing but the death-knell.

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This spirit from the pit

How SELF in its protean shapes—

self-will,

self-seeking,

self-elation,

self-assertion,

leaves its dents and stains on the shield of faith! Happy the day when this spirit from the pit shall be exorcized forever!

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Old Testament history

Taking the Old Testament history alone, how suggestive are its names and memories of the Christian's varied and chequered experience!

Here is his Bethel—the rough, stony pillow of hardship and suffering; but it is at the base of a heavenly ladder, passing up and down which are angels of consolation.

Here is a Marah—the bitter pool of sorrow, but wherein the divine healing Tree is cast.

Here are Palms and Wells of Elim, symbolic both of shadow and refreshment in pursuing life's wilderness march.

Here he has reached Rephidim, also with its double emblem and significance; the combination of the two factors in the believer's life—the active and the passive—work and prayer—Joshua fighting in the valley; Moses, Aaron, and Hur in supplication on the mountain summit.

Here is the gloomy border-river; but through its flood the true Ark of the Covenant precedes the hosts of Israel, conducting in safety to the land of promise.

We can write over all, "They shall abundantly utter the memory of Your great goodness." The last of these memories is sung in heaven—"They went through the flood on foot—there did we rejoice in Him!"

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Living sacrifices

The Christian's heart should be a holy altar, and his life a living sacrifice.

"Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship." Romans 12:1

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The house collapsed, and all your children are dead!

"Suddenly, a powerful wind swept in from the desert and hit the house on all sides. The house collapsed, and all your children are dead!" Job 1:19

The wind is often contrary, and God means it to be so.

"He let loose the east wind from the heavens and led forth the south wind by His power." Psalms 78:26

"He causes the clouds to rise over the earth. He sends the lightning with the rain and releases the wind from His storehouses." Psalms 135:7

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The grandest picture in the Gospels

The grandest picture in the Gospels—let us hang it up on our deathbeds—is the father clasping the prodigal and welcoming him home.

"And while he was still a long distance away, his father saw him coming. Filled with love and compassion, he ran to his son, embraced him, and kissed him." Luke 15:20

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The loveliest plants of the Gospel

The loveliest plants of the Gospel grow in the valley of humility.

"Be completely humble and gentle." Ephesians 4:2

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Little sympathies and little kindnesses

We need not always be on the outlook to do great services. Little sympathies and little kindnesses are always possible.

"Since God chose you to be the holy people whom He loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience." Colossians 3:12

"Finally, all of you should be of one mind, full of sympathy toward each other, loving one another with tender hearts and humble minds." 1 Peter 3:8

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Amid the discords and disharmonies of life

Amid the discords and disharmonies of life, the fitfulness of human friendships, the wreck of fond hopes, the havoc of death and the grave, we can cling with unfaltering confidence to the fidelity of God. Here is safe anchorage that defies all storms.

"All the ways of the Lord are loving and faithful." Psalms 25:10

"Your unfailing love, O Lord, is as vast as the heavens; Your faithfulness reaches beyond the clouds." Psalms 36:5

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The gauntest of all gaunt spectres

The gauntest of all gaunt spectres is that of cold ingratitude and unrequited love—sacred altars of friendship turned into a pile of dead ashes.

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A series of strange surprises

"Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow!" James 4:14

Life consists of a series of strange surprises—a constantly shifting complex succession changes. Nothing so sure as the unexpected.

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What is earth's greatest joy and privilege?

"Comfort, comfort my people," says your God. "Speak tenderly to Jerusalem. Tell her that her sad days are gone and that her sins are pardoned." Isaiah 40:1-2

What is earth's greatest joy and privilege? It is to bring a ray of comfort to the broken heart.

"He comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others. When others are troubled, we will be able to give them the same comfort God has given us." 2 Corinthians 1:4

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The old, the weak, the decrepit, the bedridden

How prone we are presumptuously to calculate on the continuance of life! "My pulse is vigorous. My eye is undimmed. My natural strength is unabated. The race is to the swift—I am one of them. The battle is to the strong—I am one of them. The old, the weak, the decrepit, the bedridden, will and must before long be swept down like the seared leaves of autumn. But I am as a green fir tree. The spring's verdure is only now clothing me. The summer's zephyrs have yet to fan me. The autumn skies have yet to canopy me. The axe may be laid to the root of others, but I shall bring forth fruit in old age—I shall be fat and flourishing. The morrow shall be as today, and much more abundant!"

Now listen, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money." Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes! James 4:13-14

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I will go home to my Father

"I will go home to my Father." Luke 15:18

In your moments of deepest darkness and alienation, never lose sight of the truth that God is your Father. The prodigal, in his season of dejection and despair, speaks of his "Father" still.

"I will go home to my Father." Luke 15:18

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Trust God in little things

Those who trust God in little things are often answered by Him in great things. "Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek His will in all you do, and He will direct your paths." Proverbs 3:5-6

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Praise Him, all you twinkling stars!

"Praise Him, all you twinkling stars!" Psalms 148:3

These myriad stars in their luster, have been spoken of in poetry as "sparks from God's anvil." There is a defect in the figure. Sparks, brilliant as they are, are momentary, evanescent scintillations—a flash of atoms, which die in the darkness and are seen no more.

The starry host of heaven are glorious worlds, which move, not capriciously, but in obedience to great cosmic laws—tenants of a realm, not of confusion, but of design and order. Let science speak of this as "laws of nature." Call, rather, these thronged illimitable spaces—the domain of a thinking, living, intelligent Creator and Sustainer; replete with evidences of His sovereignty and omnipotence.

No modern speculations, be what they may, can ever dim the brilliancy of those gems in the Almighty's diadem!

"Praise Him, all you twinkling stars!" Psalms 148:3

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And he went outside and wept bitterly!

"I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "this very night, before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times."

"No!" Peter insisted. "Not even if I have to die with you! I will never deny you!" Matthew 26:34-35

Look at Peter! Who stronger than he? the honored and trusted Companion of Incarnate Love, filled with sincere loyalty to the gracious Master. "What! others may deny You, but I—never! Never shall 'traitor' be branded on my brow, or the guilty denial tremble on my lips!"

See, before long, the presumptuous boaster in an anguish of remorseful tears, a moral and spiritual shipwreck. "How the mighty have fallen!"

"And he went outside and wept bitterly!" Luke 22:62

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What will heaven be

What will heaven be, but the development of present character? "He who is righteous let him be righteous still" Revelation 22:11

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Helping struggling souls in the battle of life

We wish that ministers of Christ, who wield the marvelous power of the pulpit, instead of pursuing, Sunday after Sunday, the round of purely doctrinal sermons, would understand the necessity of sympathetically helping struggling souls in the battle of life; teaching them how to fight the good fight of faith when the hour of conflict comes. The Sunday discourse ought to impart strength and heart-cheer to the combatants, young and old, in the spiritual arena.

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Like a bird parting with its wings

To neglect prayer is like a bird parting with its wings.

"Devote yourselves to prayer with an alert mind and a thankful heart." Colossians 4:2

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The gates of death

To the true Christian, the gates of death open up the magnificent vistas of eternity.

"Write this down: Blessed are those who die in the Lord from now on. Yes, says the Spirit, they are blessed indeed, for they will rest from all their toils and trials!" Revelation 14:13

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Commonplace, everyday experiences

"The Lord's unfailing love surrounds the man who trusts in Him." Psalms 32:10

God is with His people, not only in the crisis-hours and great emergencies of life, but in its commonplace, everyday experiences.

"Just as the mountains surround and protect Jerusalem, so the Lord surrounds and protects His people, both now and forever." Psalms 125:2

"And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." Matthew 28:20

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It is not the cuckoo-cry of alarmists

It is not the cuckoo-cry of alarmists when we say that our age seems to emphasize the warning words, "In the last days perilous times shall come."

We are walking on a muffled volcano—faint mutterings are heard in the hollow beneath our feet. Happy those patriots, philanthropists, governments, that can wisely read the signs of the times, help to open safety-valves to prevent the sudden and, when it comes, uncontrollable outburst—maddened forces direr than Nature's direst.

Strange that the jets of sulphurous smoke here and there polluting the moral atmosphere carry with them so little premonition. We seem to have no eye but for the green grass, the enamel of flowers; smothering prophecies of disaster. Other words of Scripture have a political as well as a spiritual meaning—"When they are saying, Peace, peace—then sudden destruction comes!"

Helpless seafarers! indulging in mirth and song, when their ears should be open to the roar of the breakers!

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That man only begins to live

That man only begins to live, in whom self dies.

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Orthodoxy "falsely so called"

Let us beware of an orthodoxy "falsely so called"; verbose and often pretentious—the orthodoxy of upturned eye, and conventional phrase, and dead dogma—the orthodoxy which is at no pains to be

authenticated by . . .

living faith,

loving word,
gentle deed,
generous service.

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Home and rest in the ocean of Infinite Love!

That mountain rivulet, released from the iron shackles with which winter has bound it, goes onward, singing in concord of sweet sounds, to the sea—its final goal of rest. It owes its emancipation to the beams of the sun of early spring.

Picture of the Sun of Righteousness, shining on frigid hearts, waking up slumbering forces, melting icy indifference, reviving generous impulses, transforming life into a joyous, beneficent stream, whose waters find at last their haven—home and rest in the ocean of Infinite Love!

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Undying music

Posthumous influence! There can surely be nothing more solemnizing than this—that a man may continue to live on—no, does live on—after death, either as a curse or a blessing! Happy those who survive to make undying music in the world.

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Through the agonies of great trial

"You, O God, have purified us like silver melted in a crucible." Psalms 66:10

As the olives must be crushed for the oil to flow; as the grapes must be bruised in the wine-press that the vats may be filled; as the gold comes out refined from the furnace—so, through the agonies of great trial, the best Christian graces are developed.

"I have refined you in the furnace of suffering." Isaiah 48:10

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The Great Craftsman

God is permitting us to work the shuttles of life apparently as we may. But He, the Great Craftsman, in His own calm world, is supervising all.

"He does as He pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth." Daniel 4:35

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The sob of universal humanity

"I am the Lord who heals you." Exodus 15:26

Christ was the true Jehovah Rophi. What diverse crowds flocked to this Divine Physician of old, and "He healed them all"! No numbers baffled Him; no variety bewildered Him. The inquiring

Nicodemus; the rash Peter, boisterous as the waves of the sea; the loving and meditative, yet impulsive John; the

strong-willed, skeptic Thomas—each had a niche in the Great Living Temple.

Penitents crept abashed to His feet, and wept out their shame and sorrow. Blind men on the wayside called aloud for help. Lepers in piteous tones—outcasts, spurned and evaded by all others—claimed Him, and found in Him a brother. Hearts crushed and broken with bereavement were in His presence conscious of a combined sympathy and power which dried their tears and restored their "loved and lost."

There was thus response in His bosom to the sob of universal humanity. Every bird of weary wing and wailing cry, abroad on earth's waste wilderness of waters, "seeking rest and finding none," had shelter and safety and peace in this Ark of God!

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A wonderful satisfaction

There is a wonderful satisfaction in the consciousness of one good deed done. How happily do you close your eyes at night when you have helped during the day to lift a load of sorrow, calm a palpitating heart, or heal a wounded spirit! Such deeds are their own recompense and their own reward.

"I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of Mine, you did for Me."
Matthew 25:40

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The epitome of the Christian life

"Enoch walked with God"—the epitome of the Christian life.

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Desolating bereavement

At the first moment of desolating bereavement, the eye is too dimmed to see either God's wisdom or love in the chastening. But the ear of faith in due time is enabled to catch the word and to cleave to it—"Be still, and know that I am God!" Psalms 46:10

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The raft of God's promises

Lashed, like the drowning mariner, to the raft of God's promises, you will ride out the storm.

"Hold me up, and I shall be safe!" Psalms 119:117

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Gold, silver, jewels

Now anyone who builds on that foundation may use gold, silver, jewels." 1 Corinthians 3:12

There is a variety of work, and of capacity for work, in the Christian Church.

"Gold"—pure, noble-hearted and open-handed men, of position and influence, who use that influence for the highest ends; holy in thought, word, and deed.

"Silver"—True men, not so talented, or wealthy, or influential, but who do their part faithfully and unostentatiously.

"Jewels"—Those of special gifts, brilliant attainments, whose endowments of nature and grace are consecrated to their great Lord.

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The choicest of the Gospel's crown jewels!

"My Father!" That is the choicest of the Gospel's crown jewels!

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The first deflection

The first deflection from the path of virtue, or honor, or duty—how prophetic of further doom and disaster!

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What a temple for adoration and praise!

Who does not esteem the manifold teachings of Nature?

Who does not love . . .

her forest haunts, tremulous with music;

her flowers, swinging their censers of incense;

the brooks and streams and birds her choristers;

the blue dome of heaven her magnificent canopy?

What a sanctuary of holy thought!

What a temple for adoration and praise!

"The heavens tell of the glory of God. The skies display His marvelous craftsmanship. Day after day they continue to speak; night after night they make Him known." Psalms 19:1-2

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The inheritance of the believer

The inheritance of the believer—"All things are yours!" 1 Corinthians 3:21

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The angels of affliction

From that dull, dead block of marble, there is evoked by the artist's tools a form radiant with beauty.

The angels of affliction are often God's best sculptors. By their sharp chiselings, stroke after stroke, loveless lives have been made lovely, common people have become great, dead lives have been quickened into the likeness of Christ—transformed into His image.

No! not, as we have said, "angels." The Lord of angels delegates this work to no subordinates. And when the shaping and molding and fashioning are completed, the legend is inscribed—"Made perfect through suffering!"

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Our life-ministries

"Each with his assigned task." Mark 13:34

Never let us quarrel at the lowliness of our tasks or the limitations of our life-ministries. The still pond does not complain because it has not the music and ripple of the stream or the swell and surge of ocean. It is content, in its simple way, to supply the needs of the cottage home, or refresh the weary toiler in the field, or give drink to the thirsty beggar.

The violet blushing unseen in the woods does not envy the cedar with its evergreen foliage or the oak with its giant limbs and mighty shadow. It is content to occupy its assigned place, away, it may be, amid the loneliness of forest aisles.

God has given to each of us our positions and appointed our tasks—humble as well as conspicuous, lowly as well as mighty. Little-hearts as well as Great-hearts are "ministers of His to do His pleasure."

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Habitually to realize

How it would soothe in trouble, nerve for duty, make difficulties easy and crosses light, elevate above the fretting anxieties of life and lead to calm uncomplaining submission, were we able habitually to realize, in all its fullness, the assurance, "God is my Father, and I am His child."

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War!

Happy the nations who are exempt from "the grievousness of war"—its inherent cruelty, its often demon selfishness; who are delivered from the tyranny of those who make the crouching nations a perch for their ambition—dragging the innocent from their ploughs and vineyards, their peaceful employments of life, their intellectual avocations, their homes of affection, in order to reap a misnamed "glory" they seldom or never share, set in deadly array against those towards whom they feel no hostility.

Never is responsibility greater than that of rulers who, in wanton recklessness, nurture the war-spirit. "The roll of conquering drum" is no music in the ears of the widow and the orphan. Well

may the cry ascend to heaven to exorcize the foul fiend—the direst curse that can visit a country or afflict humanity.

"Give peace in our time, O Lord!" The day will surely come when, with sheathed sword and reversed spear, the prayer will no longer be heard, because no longer needed, "Scatter the nations who delight in war!" Psalms 68:30

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Demon or angel?

We are all sculptors, with the soft, pliant, formative clay molding into shape our own futures—demon or angel.

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In the great game of existence

Sad the case of those who had the possibilities of a good and useful existence, but have lived fatally and hopelessly given up to . . .

sloth, or

flippant pleasure, or

engrossing selfishness.

Those fugitive, precious moments we are forgetting and wasting, cannot be recovered.

In the great game of existence many are staking all and losing all—drifting to hopeless, irremediable bankruptcy. That is a solemn word—a dreadful truth—the irreparable past!

Death will dissolve many a 'fairy vision' that has lured and charmed us. Death will sweep down many 'flimsy cobwebs of earth' that we have laboriously weaved—poor tawdry things we have so often clung to and clutched!

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God's dealings

God's dealings are . . .

sometimes penal,

sometimes disciplinary,

most often remedial,

always loving.

06.00. CLEFTS OF THE ROCK

CLEFTS OF THE ROCK

The Believer's Grounds of Confidence in Christ by John MacDuff, 1874

In a quaint but powerful way, MacDuff presents various aspects of the person and work of Jesus, as various 'clefts in the rock' in which the believer can hide himself for protection, comfort, and strength in his pilgrimage to his heavenly home.

Preface 1. The Deity of Christ The Deity of Christ (continued) 2. The Humanity of Christ 3. Christ the Surety-substitute 4. Christ the Propitiation 5. Christ the Manifestation of the Father 6. The Immutability of Christ 7. The Sympathy of Jesus 8. The Tenderness of Jesus 9. Christ the Peace Giver 10. Christ a Savior to the Uttermost 11. Christ Risen 12. Christ Ascended 13. Christ the Intercessor 14. Christ the King 15. Christ the Judge 16. Christ Reigning over His Church Forever

06.00p. Preface

Preface

"O my dove, which is in the Clefts of the Rock."

– Song of Solomon 2:14

Rock of Ages, cleft for me,

Let me hide myself in Thee!

Let the water and the blood,

From Your riven side which flowed,

Be of sin the double cure,

Cleanse me from its guilt and power.

Not the labors of my hands

Can fulfill Your law's demands:

Could my zeal no respite know,

Could my tears forever flow,

All for sin could not atone:

You must save, and You alone!

Nothing in my hand I bring;

Simply to Your cross I cling;

Naked, come to You for dress;

Helpless, look to You for grace;

Foul, I to the fountain fly–

Wash me, Savior, or I die!

While I draw this fleeting breath–

When mine eyelids close in death–

When I soar to worlds unknown–

See You on Your judgment throne–

Rock of Ages, cleft for me,

Let me hide myself in Thee! –Toplady

The name of this Volume will best interpret the design of its pages. They purpose, however inadequately, to set forth the leading grounds of safety and security, comfort and peace, which are to be found in the adorable character and completed work of the Divine Redeemer--"Clefts," to the shelter of which we can repair, alike "in all time of our tribulation and in all time of our wealth,"--in the prospect of "the hour of death and of the Day of judgment." To every believer, the words of Balaam's parable in a nobler sense may be applied, "Strong is your dwelling-place, and you put your nest in a rock," or those of the great Prophet, as rendered in the Septuagint translation, "His place of defense shall be in a lofty cavern (or cleft) of the strong Rock." It is the complex Person of "IMMANUEL, God with us"--the might and majesty of Omnipotence in conjunction with the tenderness of humanity--"Our God, yet our Brother--our Brother, yet our God," which makes Him the sure and unassailable Stronghold He is. The 'Clefts,' where His people are invited to flee, are in a Rock--but, that Rock is "THE ROCK OF AGES!" Contemplating His Deity, they can utter the Psalmist's challenge, "Who is a ROCK like OUR GOD?"--yet they can add, "A MAN shall be as a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land."

It was the consciousness of being sheltered in these divine clefts, that enabled the great Apostle to say, in his own name, and in the name of all in every age who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them--"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Tribulation--Distress--Persecution--Famine, and the other adverse forces included in his enumeration, are so many waves dashing against THE ROCK--trying to 'separate,'--gathering their united strength to sweep from the secure shelter. But in vain. They are beaten back in succession with Faith's challenge--the reproof, not of bold haughty presumption, but of lowly believing confidence and heavenly trust--"In the name of a Mightier, we bid defiance to your might!" "Who shall separate us?" "I stand upon a Rock," says Chrysostom, "let the sea rage, the Rock cannot be disturbed." "My flesh and my heart fails," says an older saint, "but God is the Rock of my heart and my portion forever."

"It has pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell." As on the head of Christ, under the emblem of a King, there are represented "many crowns"--so, under the metaphor of a ROCK, there are represented many clefts. One Rock, but diversified grounds of confidence and trust; each one uttering a silent response and invitation to the quest of the weary soul--"Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest." The emblem of a Rock, as thus applied to the Divine Redeemer, is at once sublime, beautiful, and appropriate--suggestive as it is of strength, durability, shelter, safety. It speaks of nature's noblest monumental columns--concurrent with creation--as fresh as at first sculptured by the great Craftsman--older, grander, and more lasting than obelisk or pyramid, or most colossal work of human power. Over these rocks, have the winds of heaven continually swept. Age after age has the sun discharged upon them his quiver of golden arrows--but resisting all changes--defying all elements--outliving all political convulsions--no wrinkle can be traced on their majestic brow--now in sunny robes of

roseate light--now gleaming in the moonbeams with silver mantle--now swathed in white garments of cloud--now curtained in raging tempest--now their echoes awoke with the trumpet of peace--now with the clarion of battle--but every hoary peak remaining immutably the same. Such, is "The Rock of our Salvation!"

Each Reader will doubtless have his own associations with the figure; derived from some memorable scene in nature. The Writer may be forgiven a personal reference, if he venture to allude to the spot where his own thoughts invariably revert when the imagery of "The Rock of Ages" is before him. It is in one of those magnificent valleys among the Alps of Piedmont, visited in early youth, sacred to the heroic sufferings and triumphs of the Vaudois. There, a mountain, clothed at the base with varied fruit and forest trees, is crowned with a wonderful rampart of natural rock. Castelluzzo is pointed out to this day, by the descendants of the martyred Waldenses, as the place into which, during successive persecutions, when the adjacent valleys were desolated by fire and sword, their fathers often fled with their wives and little ones for safety. All the deeper was the impression made by this singular stronghold, from having been first seen, in descending the Italian side of the wild pass of La Croix, when the whole valley beneath was shrouded in fog. It towered in solitary grandeur above the sea of mist, and seemed, from its height, like an island suspended in mid-air. It has, or rather had, several remarkable peculiarities--as if the God of nature purposely upreared it to be a rampart for His oppressed people. Though of lofty elevation, it was rendered so accessible, that even mothers and their infants, with the aid of stronger hands, could avail themselves of its shelter. It had a cleft or opening on one side, by which alone it could be entered. It contained a spacious cavern, in which, fuel from the adjoining forest was readily stored, and at times corn and wild fruits were garnered from the neighboring productive slopes--while, in the center of the cave was a never-failing spring of water, which, in the hour of peril, completed the necessary supplies of the rocky citadel. The Divine promise was thus more than once literally fulfilled in the case of many noble sufferers for the truth, "He shall dwell on high; his place of defense shall be the munitions of rocks; bread shall be given him, his waters shall be sure." Once within it, the weakest felt secure. A handful of men, stationed at the entrance, by rolling down masses of stone (easily disintegrated from the sides and top of the cavern), could defy the assault of disciplined soldiers. The loftiness of the Rock--so often, seen wreathed in glorious cloud--the cleft--the one cleft--the accessibility--the spaciousness of the cavern--the secure shelter--the "fountain opened"--might well suffice to suggest mental pictures of a Greater and sublimer reality--"Lead me to the rock that is higher than I!"

We shall end these prefatory words with an appropriate anecdote--may its concluding utterances be our own in a similar hour. It is the well-authenticated story of a Highland mother, who, at the close of spring, was suddenly overtaken, in a wild glen among the mountains, by what was long recalled by her fellow-villagers as "the Great May storm." After attempting in vain, for some time, with her infant in her arms, to buffet the whirling eddies, she laid the child down among heather and ferns, in the deep cleft of a rock; with the brave resolve, if possible, to make her own way home through the driving sleet, and obtain help for her little one. She was found by the anxious neighbors, next morning, stretched cold and stiff on a snowy shroud. But the cries of the babe directed them to the rock-crevice, where it lay, all unconscious of its danger; and from which it was rescued in safety. Many long years afterwards, that child returned from distant lands--a disabled soldier, covered with honorable wounds. The first Sabbath of his homecoming, on repairing to a

city church (where he had the opportunity of worshipping God "after the manner" and in the cherished language of his forefathers), he listened to an aged clergyman unfolding, in Celtic accents, the story of redeeming love. Strange to say, that clergyman happened to be from the same Highland glen where he himself had spent his youth. Stranger still, he was illustrating the Divine tale with the anecdote, to him so familiar, of the widow and her saved child! A few days afterwards, that Pastor was summoned to visit the deathbed of the old soldier. "I am the son of that widow," were the words which greeted the former, as he stood by the couch of the dying man. "Lay my bones beside hers in the churchyard among the hills. The prayers she used to offer for me have been answered. I have found deliverance in old age where I found it in my childhood--in the cleft of the Rock; but it is--THE ROCK OF AGES!" May He, who of old attested with a voice from Heaven, "This is my Beloved Son," add His own blessing to this feeble attempt to direct the inquirer's eye to these glorious "Clefs"--to unfold and illustrate the grandest of all revealed truths--"the mystery of godliness--God manifest in the flesh." May the perusal of what follows, enable both reader and writer to subscribe with greater confidence to the Prophet's exhortation--"Trust in the Lord forever; for in the Lord Jehovah is THE ROCK OF AGES!"

06.01. THE DEITY OF CHRIST (part 1)

THE DEITY OF CHRIST (part 1)

"The Word was God."-- John 1:1

"Let no man go about to entertain the thoughts of the Great Mystery of Godliness, but with a ravished heart. You who are a Spirit, and therefore immaterial and invisible, to expose yourself to the view of earthen eyes; You who are an infinite Spirit, to be enwrapped in flesh; You an all-glorious Eternal Spirit, to put on the rags of human mortality; You the great Creator of all things, to become a creature; You the Omnipotent God, to subject Yourself to miserable frailty and infirmity; O mystery transcending the full apprehension of even glorified souls! Cease, cease, O human curiosity, and where you cannot comprehend, wonder and adore." –Bishop Hall, 1574. So spoke one who had folded his wings, as none other ever did, in "The Clefts of the Rock," who, as none other before or since, had obtained response to the invocation of the great Hymn– "Let me hide myself in You!"

Sheltered in these sublime crevices during three privileged years on earth, overshadowed and canopied, as it were, by that mighty Presence, he could utter the testimony, not as hearsay evidence, not as a dry theological dogma, but as a blessed experimental truth, gathered from divine lip and look and heart, during the enjoyment of the closest contact and fellowship with his living, loving Lord--"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life. For the Life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that Eternal Life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us. That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you." The cardinal foundation-truth of all theology thus stated in the prologue alike to the Gospel and the Epistles of the Beloved Disciple, is the supreme Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ. Other shelters would be worthless and unavailing without this. Indeed, it is not so much a "Cleft in the Rock," as THE ROCK itself, on which the Church of the future, and with it the hopes and aspirations of world-wide humanity, are built. It is the keystone of the arch. Remove it, and the whole superstructure collapses. More than ever, Luther said regarding justification, is it "the doctrine of a standing or a falling church." Take Deity from the tree of life, and its every leaf withers. Take Deity from the Rock, and its majestic places of refuge are turned into sand-clefts; it ceases to be a "Rock of Ages."

It is fit that we should commence themes which in future pages are to engage our thoughts, with what thus gives to that Rock its most glorious and distinctive title. There are special eras in the history of the Church, when truths we have been accustomed to receive with implicit unwavering trust, are either openly assailed, or sought to be shorn of their proportions and strength by the covert negations of a destructive criticism. Surely of all forms of apostasy and error, that is incomparably the greatest, which would tend in any way, whether by bold assertion or evasive statement, to shake and undermine the believer's faith in the Godhead of his adorable Lord. Doctrinal subjects such as this may not possess the interest of others. We may prefer themes,

such as several of those that follow, which come home to the conscience, and stir the affections and the heart. But it is needful, surely, and profitable also, at times to remove the debris--expose to view the great foundation of the Christian temple, and vindicate the peerless dignity of Him who to us as His people, ought to be, and we trust is, "fairer than the children of men."

What more sacred thing is there on earth than to defend the name and honor of a beloved friend? If a parent's worth and goodness were assailed, his honor impugned--who that has the spirit of a son would not rush to beat off the unworthy thrust, and to throw the shield of protection over injured goodness and worth? What shall be said when the glory of Him is tampered with, who is better than the best and dearest of all earthly relatives? Who dare be silent, when Arianism and Socinianism are endeavoring to pluck the regal crown from Immanuel's brow, making this very Bible (the mirror of His glory) to reflect unworthy humanitarian views of His official character and Divine Person? If these "foundations are destroyed, what will the righteous do?"

Let us, then, obey the summons of the Prophet, and adopting his words, "go into the clefts of the Rock," to behold the glory of the Redeemer's Majesty.

"What do you think of Christ?" "Who is this Son of man?" "All the city was moved, saying, Who is this?" "Is He no more than the first of the shadows of the past--the first of memories--the first of biographies--the most perfect of human ideals? Is He only an ideal after all? Does He reign only in virtue of a mighty tradition of human thought and feeling in His favor, which creates and supports His imaginary throne?--or is He a super-angelic Intelligence, sinless, and invested with judicial and creative powers, but still separated from the inaccessible life of God by that fathomless interval which parts the first of creatures from the Everlasting Creator? Can He save us from our sins? Can He blot out their stains and crush their power? Can He deliver us in our death-agony from the terrors of dissolution, and bid us live with Him in a brighter world forever?" So states Canon Liddon, an able writer, the momentous problem that is now for a little to occupy our attention. Be it our endeavor to approach, with chastened reverential spirit, the sacred oracles, as the great and only court of appeal--the sole arbiter on this as on all other doctrinal questions. With the assent, alike of an enlightened intellect and sanctified heart, may we be prepared to subscribe to the comprehensive article first promulgated by the Nicene Fathers, and now for long centuries incorporated in the creed of Christendom--"I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only Begotten Son of God--Begotten of His Father before all worlds--God of God, Light of Light, VERY GOD OF VERY GOD!"

Let us begin by rehearsing a few of our blessed Lord's own declarations regarding His divinity, and then see how these are borne out and supported by the inspired penmen. In other words (although we use the simile with all reverence), let us hear His own divine assertion of claims to supreme dignity, and then summon witness by witness to substantiate these. In doing so, we have to go over ground which has been often previously traversed. Farther, from the necessarily brief and inadequate treatment of which our space admits, we can do little more than quote some of the leading proofs in support of the great doctrine. May He whose special divine office it is to glorify the Redeemer, take of the things that are Christ's, and show them unto us!

Let us listen, first, to one or two of the testimonies which Christ Himself gives regarding His Divinity. We may premise, however, that His own utterances constitute by no means the strength of the argument. On the contrary, while on the one hand He does not shrink from a bold manifesto,

or vindication of His divine prerogatives, when the occasion imperatively demands it, there is, at the same time, a marked and peculiar reticence in the assertion of His personal claims. And this itself forms a strong and direct testimony to the forcefulness of these. So unlike an impostor, who would have taken every opportunity of loudly enforcing his pretensions. "I speak not of Myself." "Believe Me for the works' sake." In the 8th chapter of the Gospel of John, Jesus was addressing the Jews in the Temple Treasury, and meeting their virulent cavils and carnal prejudices, as they boasted of their pedigree, and challenged what they deemed His blasphemous assumption of superiority over the great Father and founder of their nation. He makes the distinct announcement, not only of His pre-existence, but of all that was implied in the possession of the Divine incommunicable name of JEHOVAH. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, before Abraham was, I AM." Not "I was," but "I AM"--the Great Underived, whose lifetime is Eternity--that Eternity comprehending a dateless past--a changeless present--a limitless future--ever living in the sublime consciousness of His own Being. From Everlasting to Everlasting--the same!

Again, at the Feast of dedication in winter, when walking in Solomon's porch, He was interrogated by the same skeptic auditory as to His pretensions. While declaring His prerogative to confer on His sheep the gift of eternal life, He concludes with the assertion, "I and My Father are one." The Jews present had not misapprehended His meaning. They viewed it as being "blasphemous." On remonstrating with them for their threat to stone Him, their reply was, "For a good work we stone You not, but for blasphemy; and because that You being a man make Yourself God." Doubtless He would have disclaimed and corrected their impressions had He considered them erroneous. So far from this, however, He only adds confirmation to His previous testimony. "If I do not the works of My Father, believe Me not. But if I do, though you believe not Me, believe the works, that you may know and believe that the Father is in Me, and I in Him." "All things are delivered unto Me of My Father, and no man knows the Son but the Father; neither knows any man the Father but the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him." "My Father," He again says, "works hitherto, and I work"--anew, explicitly claiming coequal power and parity of working in nature and providence with the Eternal Father. Could there be such an assumption of jurisdiction, identifying and associating Himself as One with the Supreme Maker and Sustainer, "the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, who fains not, neither is weary," if He were not divine?

If there was any locality or object more than another associated to the Jew with deepest sacredness, it was his Temple. The Temple!--the former abode of the Shekinah, the visible dwelling-place of deity. Hear how the divine Redeemer speaks of Himself in presence of Jews, and under the very shadow of the imposing temple--"Verily I say unto you, that in this place is One greater than the Temple."

Listen to some of His last divine utterances, when, in the words of the beloved evangelist, "knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God, and went to God" "I am in the Father, and the Father in Me." "He that has seen Me has seen the Father." How strange would the assertion have been (on the supposition of mere creatureship), when He speaks of the boon of His indwelling presence, as being of equal value and preciousness with that of the Father! Had the vast interval existed which must always sever the holiest created from the Uncreated, would not His language rather have been this--'I, your Lord and Master, will dwell with you; but the boon of My indwelling will be nothing to the Greater presence of the Supreme God'? But what says He?--"If a man loves Me, he will keep My words--and My Father will

love him, and WE will come unto him, and make OUR abode with him." His sublime intercessory prayer is an indirect, but continuous attestation to the same great truth. What striking and remarkable words these were, in connection with the time He uttered them! They were the words, not of a conqueror, but of, apparently, a doomed man, one about to die. Yet, how the halo of Deity seems to encircle His devoted head, as He speaks--"And now, O Father, glorify Me with Your own self with the glory which I had with You before the world was." "All Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine; and I am glorified in them." "Holy Father, keep through Your own name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one, as We are." "That they all may be one; as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You." "I have declared unto them Your name, and will declare it; that the love with which You have loved Me may be in them, and I in them." His works are the works of God; His will is the will of God; His glory is the glory of God. To dishonor the Father is to dishonor Him. To love the Father is to love Him. "Could we have heard Him forgiving sins; asserting His right to do so; summoning the world to yield up its heart to Him; to make its homage to the Father a pattern of its homage to Him; could we have heard this without feeling that God must be present in the person of the mysterious Speaker; that the throne of deity must be, in a sense, come from heaven to earth?" (Harris' Great Teacher) When His work is finished, and He is on the eve of leaving this world, He departs, asserting and claiming the attribute of omnipotence--"All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth." When He returns to the beloved disciple in Patmos, as "one like unto the Son of man" in His glorified humanity, He wears the unmistakable symbols of deity--"His head and His hair are white, like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes are as a flame of fire." He rides triumphantly in vision through the heavens, having on His vesture, and on His thigh, a name written, "King of kings, and Lord of lords;" while these are some of His sublime utterances to the trembling and awestruck worshiper, regarding His omniscience, His eternity, and His power--"These things says the Son of God, who has His eyes like unto a flame of fire, 'I am He that searches the reins and hearts.'" "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, says the Lord, who is, and who was, and who is to come--the Almighty." And once more, carrying our thoughts onwards, to the consummation of all things--the end of His mediatorial reign over the Church militant--in one of His most sublime parables, He claims the dignity of Supreme judge of mankind at the great assize, "When the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory. And before Him shall be gathered all nations, and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." To the same effect He declares in John, "For as the Father raises up the dead, and quickens them; even so the Son quickens whom He will. For the Father judges no man, but has committed all judgment unto the Son, that all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father." "It is not incredible that God should raise the dead; but it is absolutely incredible that any other being should." (Dr. Pye Smith.) In looking forward to that Day, when the Almighty "shall judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He has ordained," do we ever think of what is implied and involved in the complex, superhuman task of being Judge of all? It assuredly demands the possession of qualifications centering in One, 'to whom all hearts be open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden;' who, with unchallenged supremacy and discriminating wisdom, which Omniscience alone possesses, can weigh all the thoughts and purposes, the motives and actions, the subtle springs of conduct, the extenuating

circumstances in each individual case and life; and that too extending over countless millions of souls--whole centuries thronged with living and accountable beings; none able to resist His might, or to evade His scrutiny. What created power, what angel or archangel from the ranks of loftiest intelligence, could undertake such a judgement as this? Who but the Great Being who sways the scepter of universal empire--in other words, JEHOVAH--could claim and challenge such peerless prerogatives? "Our GOD shall come, and shall not keep silence. He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that He may judge His people."

Such are some of the Savior's own declarations regarding His Divine claims.

Before proceeding, as proposed, to gather some of the more important attestations of the inspired writers to the great truth, it may be well for a little to advert, from the early place they occupy in Old Testament story, to those indirect but still remarkable testimonies, known as "Theophanies," or God-appearances; the anticipatory advents of Messiah to the Patriarchial and Jewish Church, under the title of the "Angel of the Lord," or "the Angel the Lord," the Angel JEHOVAH. "This Person claims an uncontrolled sovereignty over the affairs of men. He has the attribute of omniscience and omnipresence. He performs works which only omnipotence could. He uses dreadful formulas, by which the Deity on various occasions condescended to confirm the faith of those to whom the primitive revelations were given--'He swears BY HIMSELF;' His favor is to be sought with the deepest solicitude, as that which is of the highest importance to the interests of men. He is the object of religious invocation. In the most express manner, and repeatedly, declared to be Jehovah." (Dr. Pye Smith.) The earliest of these "apparitions," or personal manifestations of Jesus, is recorded in the life of Abraham, when the patriarch was seated at his tent-door in the plains of Mamre. "The Lord" (that is, JEHOVAH, as the Hebrew word means) appeared to him. "He lift up his eyes," we read, "and looked, and lo! three men stood by him; and he bowed himself toward the ground," in customary obeisance. Though in angelic form like the others who accompanied Him, we are left in no doubt as to the superior and preeminent dignity of one of these three. Two of the heavenly messengers, after partaking of a patriarchal meal, withdrew on their mission to Sodom. The third, however, tarried with the patriarch. But of Him we read, "And the Lord (JEHOVAH) said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?" "Abraham stood yet before JEHOVAH." "Behold now," says the Father of the Faithful, "I have taken upon me to speak unto THE LORD, who am but dust and ashes." And again, "Shall not THE JUDGE OF ALL THE EARTH do right?" And then we read, "The Lord (JEHOVAH) went His way."

We find the same Angel appearing to Jacob in a dream, and reminding him thus of the most memorable hour of his earlier history, when in visions of the night, above his stony pillow at Bethel, troops of angels seemed to line a celestial ladder; and a voice, more magnificent and divine than that of angels, addressed the wanderer from the heights of heaven, "I am the GOD of Bethel, where you anointed the pillar, and where you vowed a vow unto me." At a future crisis-hour, He revealed Himself to the patriarch at Peniel, where "there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day." That mighty Wrestler changed the name of the Pilgrim-Father from Jacob to Israel; and He assigned as the reason, "For as a prince have you power with GOD and with men, and have prevailed. And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel, for I have seen GOD face to face, and my life is preserved." That incident, with its sacred recollections, years on years afterwards, rose up before the dimming eye of aged Israel, as on his deathbed he summoned Joseph and his two sons to impart to them the farewell blessing. Thus does he advert to that mysterious

personage at Jabbok, "GOD, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the GOD which fed me all my life long unto this day, the ANGEL which redeemed me from all evil." The Prophet Hosea adds this comment on the same memorable occurrence in the life of Jacob--"By his strength he had power with GOD--yes, he had power over the Angel, and prevailed; he wept, and made supplication unto Him--he found Him in Bethel, and there He spoke with us; even THE LORD GOD OF HOSTS; The Lord is his memorial." Observe, this majestic Being, who first appeared in the gloom of that midnight hour as a man, is here designated not even an incarnate angel, but as "God," and "THE LORD GOD OF HOSTS."

Passing to the next era in Israel's history. To a careful reader of the whole story of the Exodus, and the wanderings, it will be manifest that the divine Being who preceded the camp, by day in a pillar of cloud and at night in a pillar of fire, was none other than this same Covenant-Angel of the patriarchal Church. Out of the midst of the flaming bush it was the Angel JEHOVAH who spoke to Moses, and gave him his commission to the court of Pharaoh. That bush was itself a significant symbol of the twofold nature of the promised Redeemer--not a giant cedar or graceful palm, but a stunted desert tree, "a root out of a dry ground, having neither form nor loveliness." Yet glorious as an emblem of Deity--for "the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed." Moses said, "I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt. And when THE LORD (JEHOVAH) saw that he turned aside to see, GOD called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon GOD. And THE LORD said, I have surely seen the affliction of My people who are in Egypt (for I know their sorrows); and I have come down to deliver them, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land." But how, it may be asked, are we authorised to identify the God who spoke here to Moses, with the Covenant-Angel, the Lord Jesus Christ? If we turn to the Acts of the Apostles, and read the historical defense of Stephen before the Jewish Sanhedrin, we shall find the first Christian martyr thus referring to the same incident. "There appeared to Moses, in the wilderness of Sinai, an Angel of the Lord in a flame of fire;" and again, "Moses was in the church in the wilderness with the Angel, which spoke to him in the Mount Sinai." It is plain from these passages, taken in connection, that the living God--the JEHOVAH of the burning bush, and "the Angel (of) THE LORD"--are one and the same; moreover, that this Covenant-Angel announces as His purpose not only to deliver Israel, but by His personal guidance to conduct them to Canaan--"I will bring them up out of that land to a good land." So that all the subsequent manifestations of divine power in that unparalleled march--the rebuking of the Red Sea, the giving of the law on Mount Sinai, the final dividing the waters of the Jordan, were the doings of Him who, in answer to the interrogation of Moses as to the name and authority of their august Deliverer, replied, "And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM. Thus shall you say unto the children of Israel, I AM has sent me unto you." Blessed testimony! that the Angel of the pillar-cloud--the eternal God, who thus declares His ineffable name "I AM"--whose chariots, as described by the Psalmist, were "twenty thousand, even thousands of angels in Sinai, in the holy place;" before whom "the earth shook, the heavens also dropped at the presence of God, even Sinai itself was moved at the presence of God, "the God of Israel;" is the very Savior of whom another thus speaks, in reference to that same great epoch in Israel's history--"In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the Angel of His presence saved them; in His love and in His pity He redeemed them, and He bare them and carried them all the days of old." Our limits forbid tracing, with any minuteness, the references to this Covenant-Angel on other occasions and periods

throughout the theocracy. We need only allude, without comment, to the familiar instances of His appearances to Hagar, who named the place where the angel of God called to her out of heaven, "God, You see me"--to Joshua, as "the Captain of the Lord's host"--to Gideon, at his wine-press, when the names "God," and "Angel of God," given to the mysterious visitant, are also significantly interchanged--to Manoah, who dreads instant death from seeing "the Angel of the Lord" face to face--that Angel subsequently revealing his name as "Wonderful" or "Secret" to Zechariah, "as presiding over the affairs of the world; directing the ministrations of superior intelligences; protecting, vindicating, and interceding for the oppressed Jewish Church; the Messiah, the Savior, the Priest upon His throne, the Intercessor; and not less certainly described as possessing the attributes, exercising the sovereignty, and wearing the holy and incommunicable name of Jehovah." Who else, in these varied cases can this be, but the divine Redeemer anticipating His incarnation--Jehovah in very deed dwelling with man upon the earth--a few favored members of redeemed humanity permitted to entertain, not angels, but the God of angels at unawares? But it is time we now hasten to gather a few of the more prominent testimonies to the divinity of our Blessed Lord, furnished by the inspired penmen alike of Old and New Testament Scripture.

Among many Old Testament assertions, we may begin with that remarkable passage in the Book of Proverbs, where Incarnate WISDOM is represented as speaking of His own eternal subsistence with the Father; dwelling alone with Him in the yet unpeopled solitudes of Immensity, before throngs of worlds and intelligences had occupied space. Who can read the following sublime passage, and resolve the Divine Being there described, as hostile critics would do, into an Eastern metaphor or poetic impersonation? "Jehovah possessed me in the beginning of His way, before His works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, before ever the earth was. When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled; before the hills was I brought forth--while as yet He had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world. When He prepared the heavens, I was there--when He set a compass upon the face of the depth--when He established the clouds above--when He strengthened the fountains of the deep--when He gave to the sea His decree, that the waters should not pass His commandment--when He appointed the foundations of the earth--Then I was by Him, as one brought up with Him--and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him." (Proverbs 8:22-30.)

Passing to that which is known peculiarly as the 'prophetical era,' let us listen to the strains of the evangelical Prophet. While he speaks, in one sentence (respecting the future Incarnation,) of "the Child born" and the "Son given;" he adds, "His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father" (margin, 'the Father of Eternity'). Again, "Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son, and shall call His name IMMANUEL, (which, being interpreted, is God with us)". It was this adorable Immanuel--Christ as God--whom the same Prophet beheld in magnificent vision--"In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple." He describes the seraphim with veiled wings crying one to another, "'Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory,' and the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke." And then the awestruck prophet is represented as exclaiming, "Woe is me! for I am undone, for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts." The inference that this "Jehovah of Hosts," to whom the seraphim bend in lowly adoration, is the Lord Jesus Christ, is no gratuitous

assumption. Appealing to the Gospels as our authority, we there find the apostle John, after quoting the passage, making the distinct declaration--"These things said Isaiah when he saw His (Christ's) glory, and spoke of Him."

Listen to the testimony of Jeremiah, "Behold, the days come, says the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In His days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely, and this is the name whereby He shall be called, JEHOVAH our Righteousness." Zechariah, in a verse of sublime but terrific poetry, represents the sword of justice as awaking from its scabbard to "smite the Shepherd." But to that Shepherd is applied the term, 'Equal of the Lord of Hosts,' "the man who is my Fellow." Hear the testimony of one of the minor prophets--that most interesting and comprehensive of Old Testament predictions which Micah gives regarding the Person of Christ, embracing alike His divine and human nature. While pointing to Bethlehem-Ephrathah as the honored birth-place of the incarnate Son, in language whose meaning can admit of no doubtful interpretation, he proclaims, in the same breath, His eternal existence--"But you, Bethlehem-Ephrathah, though you be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall He come forth that is to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."--(Marginal reading "from the days of eternity").

We may close these emphatic attestations with the striking words of Malachi, who seals up the Old Testament vision--"Behold, I will send My Messenger, and He shall prepare the way before Me--and JEHOVAH, whom you seek, shall suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the Covenant, whom you delight in, says the Lord of Hosts." In this concluding prophecy, the promised Messiah is again brought before us as the Covenant-Angel--the Angel of the old Theophanies; the same divine, mysterious Being who, at the dawn of the Mosaic dispensation, announced Himself as the "I AM," "the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob."

We proceed from the Prophecies to the Psalms. Many of these in their literal--most of them in their secondary meaning--refer to Christ--not a few form an ascription of praise to the Messiah-King in His supreme divinity. To attempt even an enumeration of such would be quite beyond our limits. We must restrict ourselves to three, in which special and undoubted references to the Redeemer are made by writers in the New Testament. The first of these is the application by the Apostle Paul (in Ephesians 4:8) of a verse in the 68th Psalm--"Wherefore, He says, when He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men." Now, it would be obviously doing violence to all principles of fair interpretation, forcibly to isolate this verse from the preceding and following context, so as to make it stand alone in its reference to Messiah, and regard the rest of the psalm as alluding to another. If this verse speaks of Christ, it is only reasonable to apply all the other portions to Him. Let us hear, then, the ascription to this same majestic Being, with which the sublime "Song of Victory" alike opens and closes. "Let God arise, let His enemies be scattered--let them also that hate Him flee before Him." "Sing unto God, sing praises to His name--extol Him that rides upon the heavens by His name JAH, and rejoice before Him." "Sing unto God, you kingdoms of the earth; O sing praises unto the Lord--To Him that rides upon the heavens of heavens, which were of old--lo, He does send out His voice, and that a mighty voice. Ascribe you strength unto God--His excellency is over Israel, and His strength is in the clouds. O God, You are glorious out of Your holy places--the God of Israel is He that gives strength and power unto His people. Blessed be God." A second proof, gleaned from the same ample storehouse, is in the Pauline

reference to that grand oration which closes the 102d Psalm. If there be an allusion, as unquestionably there is, in the first instance, to the individual case of the inspired penman (conjectured to be some pious Israelite at the era of the Babylonish captivity, bewailing alike his personal afflictions and those of the Church of God), there is doubtless throughout the psalm a secondary reference to a Greater. We have a foreshadowing alike of the true Humanity and true Deity of the world's coming Redeemer. There is the wail of the suffering Man, in conjunction with the majesty of the everlasting God. In the verse of the psalm immediately preceding the apostle's quotation, we listen to the prayer of the Sufferer, the appeal of the Savior's sinking human nature to His Father--"He weakened My strength in the way; He shortened My days. I said, O My God, take Me not away in the midst of My days." The reply of the Father follows. It is the sublime assertion of the supreme Godhead of His divine Son, as the unchanging and everlasting--"Your years are throughout all generations. Of old have You laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the work of Your hands. They shall perish, but You shall endure; yes, all of them shall wax old like a garment--as a vesture shall You change them, and they shall be changed--but You are the same, and Your years shall have no end."

One other similar proof from the Psalter, is that, for which (in applying it to Christ), we have the express authority of the same apostle in Hebrews 1:1-14. It is contained in Psalms 45:1-17; in which the writer speaks of the things "touching the King;" and indites, in glowing metaphor, a royal "wedding song,"--on the bridal day of Messiah with the Church, His betrothed spouse. While with reference to the humanity of the "mighty One," he speaks of Him as full of grace, "fairer than the children of men," having "grace poured into His lips;" he proceeds immediately to celebrate the glories of His deity in language of reverential homage and adoration, "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever!" At the risk of breaking the continuity of the subject, we shall reserve the remainder of the proof for next chapter. What has been already advanced, indeed, independent of other testimony, might well lead us to repose in calm confidence in this majestic 'Cleft of the Rock;' and to appropriate with unwavering trust, as alike the foundation article and the crown and consummation of our faith, the opening invocation of the noble Hymn of the ancient church; (are we wrong in saying the grandest uninspired Hymn ever penned?) "We praise YOU, GOD!"

06.01a. THE DEITY OF CHRIST (part 2)

THE DEITY OF CHRIST (part 2) "The Word was God."-- John 1:1

"That Christ is truly God is manifestly declared, in that Paul attributes the same things equally unto Him, which he does unto the Father, that is, divine power, as the giving of grace, the forgiveness of sins, peace of conscience, life, victory over sin, death, the devil, and hell. Now to give grace, peace, everlasting life; to forgive sins, to make righteous, to quicken, to deliver from death and the devil, are not the works of any creature, but of the Divine Majesty alone. The angels can neither create, nor give these things. Therefore these works pertain only to the glory of the Sovereign Majesty--the Maker of all things. It must needs follow that Christ is truly and naturally God." --Luther. In the preceding chapter, a rapid survey has been taken of the more important scripture attestations (and more especially those contained in the Old Testament), to the supreme Godhead of the Redeemer.

We proceed to complete the proof, by referring to a few of the leading assertions of the inspired writers in the New Testament, in support of the same cardinal truth of the Christian system. We must refer the reader, who wishes more minutely to prosecute inquiry, to those ampler treatises compiled by masters in Israel, wherein the faith of the Church in the Divinity of her Lord has been nobly vindicated. To begin with testimonies contained in the GOSPELS. We shall not attempt to enter on the proof from miracles; although to these, our blessed Lord Himself pointed, as special attestations to His divine mission. When the Baptist sent some of his own disciples from the prison of Machaerus with the query, "Are You He that should come, or do we look for another?" what was the Savior's reply? With what proofs did He confirm and authenticate His Messiahship in the eyes of these wavering and misgiving followers? He stretched forth His hands on the surrounding groups stricken with sin and suffering--the palsied with their tottering limbs--the blind with their sealed eyes--the fever-stricken with their burning lips--the demon-possessed with their wild and vacant stare--"He healed them ALL;" and then, pointing the messengers to the masses thus restored by His omnipotent touch and word--the closed eye opening to the light of day--the halting cripple leaping with joy--the dull ear of the deaf unstopped--the fevered couch emptied of its tenant--the wild raving maniac led gently as a child--"Go," said He, "Go your way, and tell John what you have seen and heard."

Let us, however, rather restrict ourselves to a few of the direct statements contained in the Gospels and Epistles.

We may begin with another testimony of that same great Forerunner to whom we have just alluded. "John bore witness of Him, and cried saying, This was He of whom I spoke, He that comes after me is preferred before me, for He was before me. He must increase, but I must decrease. He that comes from above is above all."

More explicit still is the witness of the other John. When he wrote his Gospel, the venerable Saint of Ephesus was the last survivor of the apostolic band. Well might the eagle, with its strength of

wing and soaring flight, be deemed by the early Christians his most appropriate emblem--reaching, as he did, altitudes attained by no other in the regions of uncreated light and glory, as if basking in the very beams of the unveiled Sun of Righteousness! "Impatient," says Augustine, "of setting his foot on the earth, he rises, from the very first words of his Gospel, not only above earth and the span of air and sky, but above all angels and invisible powers, until he reaches Him by whom all things were made." Surely if there had been no other proof in Scripture, this sublime epitome of the teachings of the favored apostle (part of which heads this and the former chapter), would of itself suffice to settle the question--"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made."

What language could be more forcible or conclusive? "This passage," to take the testimony of Griesbach among those of a hundred scholars, "is so clear and so superior to all exception, that by no daring efforts of either commentators or critics can it ever be overturned, or be snatched out of the hands of the defenders of the truth." There is, in these utterances of the beloved Disciple, nothing figurative--nothing parabolic. They consist of a series of simple propositions--the articles of a creed, which John, in an age when heresy was rampant, left as a sacred legacy to the Church of the future as to the supreme divinity of the Incarnate Word--the "Image of the Invisible God." But we cannot linger on the testimonies of the Gospels. Eliminate from these the fact of His absolute Deity, and they become incomprehensible. You try to quench the radiance which beams out on every page. As it has been well said, "Reduce Him to a mere teacher like Plato, or a Prophet like Isaiah, and it is as if the Gospels were emptied of their meaning. The very substance of the doctrine is gone--the teaching of Jesus is little more but a tinkling cymbal. All that sublime mystery which has nourished the souls of saints in all time, is then rightly pronounced the most defective portion of His teaching. If He is not God, the divinest side of His doctrine becomes the most vulnerable. It can only subsist, if beneath the formulas is felt the throb of a life which is truly of God."

Passing from the Gospels to the EPISTLES. Although not directly a proof of absolute Godhead, let us begin with Paul's assertion, "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might be rich." "Though rich"--what could this mean on the supposition that Christ was a mere man? His lowly birth--His manger cradle--the carpenter's home at Nazareth--all these render the reference surely to His "riches" inappropriate. He was, in earthly condition, the poorest of the poor; a Galilean peasant; who had at times not where to lay His head! Moreover, on the supposition of mere manhood, how could there be "grace" manifested by Him in assuming our nature? Where would be the condescension in a man taking upon him the common garb of humanity? The whole force of the apostle's words is lost on such an hypothesis. But take the true view of this noble passage. Regard the writer as speaking of the mighty stoop of Infinite Godhead, and all becomes plain!

We may select as our next reference, that contained in the same Apostle's Epistle to the Philippians, in which he clearly and indubitably claims for Christ the possession of a nature and perfections immeasurably superior to the most exalted and glorious of dependent existences--in other words DIVINE. "Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God." "God also has highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under

the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Stronger and more emphatic still is the Apostle's language in another sublime passage, where he anticipates the very heresies of later centuries, and controverts the erroneous views of those who would assign to Christ no more than an exalted place in the ranks of creatureship, making Him 'an inferior workman, creating for the glory of a higher Master--for a God superior to Himself'--a passive instrument rather than an original and originating agent. He vindicates His dignity and glory as Lord, 'in His creative power, His eternal existence, His heirship over the universe--that universe, the theater on which He is to accomplish His purposes and display His perfections...ascribing to Him, therefore, infinite power, infinite wisdom.' "Who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature. For by Him were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions or principalities or powers--all things were created by Him and for Him and He is before all things, and by Him all things are held together."

It has been well observed, that "while the Epistle to the Hebrews lays almost more emphasis than any other book of the New Testament upon Christ's true humanity, it is nevertheless certain that no other book more implicitly asserts the reality of His divine prerogatives." Let us listen to the impressive exordium--"God, who at sundry times and in diverse manners spoke unto the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds, Who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, and UPHOLDING all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; being made so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. For to which of the angels said He at any time, You are My Son, today have I begotten You? And again, I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to me a Son? And again, when He brings in the first-begotten into the world He says, And let all the angels of God worship Him. And of the angels He (only) says, Who makes His angels spirits, and His ministers a flaming fire. But unto the Son, He says, Your throne, O GOD, is forever and ever."

We have already listened to the apostle John in the opening of his Gospel. Let us now hear the same honored disciple in the opening of his Epistles. We may repeat the introductory words--"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life. (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us.)" Again, "And we know that the Son of God is come, and has given us an understanding that we might know Him that is true; and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and (the) eternal life."

Another indirect class of evidences is furnished conjointly, by passages, contained in gospels and epistles, in which adoration is rendered to Christ. We know that worship or adoration is given to God alone. We know, moreover, from various statements in the Old Testament, how jealous the Divine Being is of giving His glory to another. "It is written, You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only shall you serve." When John, also, fell at the feet of the angel, and was about to render him an act of homage, he was rebuked by the words, "Do not worship me. ...worship God."

The very fact, therefore, of the Son having adoration ascribed to Him, forms surely the strongest testimony, that not only is He higher than any angelic being, but has a title to deity itself. We have already heard our blessed Lord Himself claiming the prerogative, "That all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father." "That at the name of Jesus," says the Apostle, "every knee should bow." More than once in the apostolic benedictions, He is put on an equality with the Father, as if entitled to receive parity of homage--"The grace of our Lord Jesus, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit." And if we pass from the Church militant to the Church triumphant in heaven, described in the Book of Revelation; as an appropriate close to all, we listen to the divine ascription of the "ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing." No testimony or tribute to the Savior's supreme Divinity can go beyond this, in its impressiveness and sublimity. We behold, in wondrous vision, concentric circles of worshipers in the upper sanctuary--"angels, living ones, and elders." They are represented as gathered, in devoutest adoration, around a slain and wounded Lamb, gazing on these mysterious symbols of suffering in a place where suffering is unknown--The Rock of Ages furrowed with mysterious clefts and crevices! From one of these circles (the inner favored group of redeemed humanity), there comes the ascription which they alone are qualified to utter, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain." But the key-note thus struck by the white-robed band, is taken up by teeming myriads, reaching to the outskirts of illimitable space. All creation becomes vocal with the hymn to the same enthroned Lamb, once more associated and identified with the Supreme God--"And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing and honor and glory and power, be unto Him that sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever. And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four-and-twenty elders fell down and worshiped Him that lives forever and ever." "And the four living ones said, Amen. And the four-and-twenty elders fell down and worshiped HIM THAT LIVES FOREVER AND EVER."

Such then, briefly and imperfectly summarized, are some of the leading scriptural attestations to the Savior's Divinity; and we would say to all readers on the retrospect, "As wise men, judge." Are we prepared to bow with reverence before Him, and to say in words of more emphatic adhesion and acknowledgment than those of Nathaniel, "Rabbi, You are the Son of God, You are the King of Israel?" or, like one who loved Him as her son, but adored Him as her God--"My spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior? or with the once doubting, but now convinced and believing Thomas--"My Lord and my God?" Let us seek to grasp and realize the full grandeur of this Truth of truths; to have it more frequently before us as a subject of devout contemplation--that the Christ of Nazareth, the Savior of Calvary--He who bled for me as Man upon the cross, and pleads for me on the throne, is the Mighty Jehovah; that He was before all things; that He reared every arch and pillar in the Universe Temple. "Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who has created these things, that brings out their host by number--He calls them all by their names." Before these stars were made, before these altar-fires were lighted in immensity, before man or angel or seraph, throne or dominion or principality or power existed, this all-glorious Being lived--one in essence and substance with the Eternal Father.

Any lowlier view of the nature and dignity of Christ would not suffice. It would be like blotting out the sun from these visible heavens to attempt to erase the supreme divinity of Jesus from the

creed of Christendom. No angel, no creature could save me. The incarnation of the highest archangel before the throne, and his voluntary substitution as a sacrificial offering for my sins, would be a simple impossibility. No creature of God can atone for the sin of a fellow creature. The fact of creatureship would vitiate the work of such a surety. As a creature, though the loftiest and purest, his life is not his own. He is himself a pensioner on God's bounty. In dying for me, and forfeiting his life, he would be forfeiting that which was not his to give.

Add to this, if Christ be no more than the first and most exalted of angels, He would necessarily be devoid of the attributes and prerogatives of Deity. Divest Him of these, and how dwarfed and limited immediately become His capabilities, alike as Intercessor and King. If a mere creature, even though on the pinnacles of creature-being, how could He be omnipresent with His Church? He could listen afar, so to speak, to the hum of the world's swarming population, as we do from window or balcony, on some great festal occasion, to the multitudinous voices--'the loud stunning tide' of the surging throng beneath, without being able to catch or discriminate one articulate utterance. But He must be God--He must have the attributes of omnipotence and omniscience, to enter into every separate home and take cognizance of every separate heart, and have an ear for the music of every separate prayer, and a hand to wipe every falling tear. As our Great High Priest on the throne, He is said to wear the breastplate gleaming with the names of all His covenant Israel. But how could He thus bear them, in the sense of knowing each individual name, if that heart of His did not throb with the pulses of Deity? How could He control the destinies of the Church and of the world if "all power" had not been His of right? How could He be "unchangeable" if His own will and purposes were dependent on a Higher? Christ a mere man! Then what a mockery to say to slumbering millions, "Awake, you that sleep, and arise from the dead, and CHRIST shall give you life." Oh, if He be but a creature, though the highest in rank in the heavenly peerage, I cannot confide to Him my eternal destinies. If He who bowed His head on that cross be a mere man and no more, I cannot look to Him as the Rock of Ages! A creature! as well pillow my head on the unstable wave. But blessed be God, I can plant my foot upon the living Rock of His deity. I can trust in Him, not as a prince, or as the son of man, in whom there would be no stay--but I can "trust in the Lord forever, for in the Lord Jehovah is THE ROCK OF AGES." Invoking Him as such, I can with devout confidence of a gracious answer, join in the prayer, "O GOD the Son, Redeemer of the world, have mercy upon us, miserable sinners!"

Indeed, independent of the imperative need of Deity to qualify Him to be a complete Savior, we cannot read the record of His own wondrous life, without seeing in it the element of supporting Godhead. What but Deity could have upheld Him in His own trial hour? Look at His temptations in the wilderness and the garden! What but the Rock of His Godhead could have stood, as wave after wave rolled against it? Adam was a pure and glorious creature. But when these same billows swept over him, he was borne away like a reed on the waters. Satan was once a pure and glorious creature (supposed to have been at the head of all created intelligences), a chieftain and lord amid principalities and powers. The billows of temptation in his case, also, came--he was driven with his legions down into the fathomless abyss. If Christ had been only a creature, how can we dare predicate of Him that He could have better withstood the assaults of evil? But as these crested breakers surged against 'the Rock,' we know how they receded, chafed and buffeted. The Prince of this world came and had nothing in Him!

Reader, enter this glorious Cleft! Come, adore the mystery of godliness, "God manifest in the flesh"--the Divine Being who created by His word--who sustains by His providence--who, as the God-man, redeems with His blood. Come, contemplate His nativity, with its mystic star and shining hosts of angels, the silence of night made vocal with celestial song. Come, behold His wondrous works. See, as we have just been beholding, sickness taking wings at His word. See demons crouching rebuked in His presence, and yielding reluctant admission to His claims. See Him reading the inmost thoughts of an outcast sinner at the well of Samaria. See Him claiming power to forgive sin by the palsied couch at Capernaum. See the waves of His own Gennesaret having their turmoil quelled--rocking themselves to rest at His omnipotent "Peace be still." See Death casting his iron crown at the feet of the Lord of life--its fettered Victim bursting the bands that swathed him. Does the Socinian say, Who but man could shed these tears at Bethany? Yes, we reply, but who, save God, could speak these words, "Lazarus, come forth!" Come to the cross of Calvary. See the sun hiding his face at the death-throes of his Almighty Maker, and earth heaving convulsive to her core! See the mysterious Sufferer encircling with a halo of glory the brows of a dying malefactor, and in the hour of His own deepest humiliation, opening the gates of Paradise to the vilest and most miserable of sinners! Come to His own grave, the sepulcher at Golgotha--behold the crowning proof of His divinity, when "declared to be the Son of God with power, by His resurrection from the dead." See Him standing as the God-man with His vacant sepulcher behind Him--with all the chains and bonds and missiles of Satan, meant for His destruction, now gathered as trophies of victory. Come, see the pictures drawn of His future universal reign, by psalmists and prophets--"the Great jubilee of pardoned humanity," when welcomed as Prince of Peace, King of kings and Lord of lords, to the throne of universal empire--Midian, Ephah and Sheba--(the Bedouins of the desert--the children of the far east), hastening on dromedaries with their gold and incense--the ships of Tarshish, the symbols of the civilization of the west, bounding over the waves with their costly offerings of fidelity and adoration. The glory of Lebanon on the north, and of Ethiopia in the south, is laid tributary at His feet--the wealth of the material creation, beautifying and adorning the place of His sanctuary--His dominion extending "from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth." That dominion secures deliverance, redemption, peace--the numbers of His spiritual adherents--the members of His Church, are likened to doves flying to their windows--flocks of living souls, "whose wings are covered with silver, and their feathers with yellow gold," speeding for shelter and repose into the clefts of this mighty ROCK--and yet room for all! See kings and princes casting their crowns and scepters before Him, esteeming it an honor to be servants and vassals of a Mightier--His name enduring forever--continuing long as the sun--"the whole earth filled with His glory" the voice of a great multitude heard in heaven--increasing until it is like the voice of many waters--deepening into the voice of mighty thunders, saying, "Alleluia, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigns." And then, as the Drama of Time is in the act of closing, behold Him coming "with clouds" (clouds, the invariable symbol and emblem of deity,) every eye seeing Him--behold Him seated "as the Ancient of Days"--His garment "white as snow, and the hair of His head like the pure wool,"--His throne like the fiery flame, and wheels as burning fire; thousand thousands ministering to Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand standing before Him. Yes! let the Unitarian take His Gospel without Godhead in it--let Infidelity attempt to reduce the Person and mission of the adorable Immanuel to that of the mere Founder of a new system of divine philosophy, a new Head of a religious school--be it ours to pay a nobler and truer homage to Him who is unveiled to us in sacred story as

"the Word," "the Life," "the Light," "the Truth," "the Omnipresent," "the Heart-searcher," the "Beginning and the ending," the Creator of worlds, the Redeemer of souls--the Wonderful--the Adored of angels--the appointed judge--the enthroned King--the I AM of eternal ages! Be it ours to testify that the struggles and toils of 1800 years have not been made, to defend and vindicate a monstrous delusion--that thousands of crowned martyrs now in heaven have not shed their blood to uphold a lie. Be it ours to see in Him, the Creator who has plenished the universe with worlds--the glory of illimitable Godhead enshrined in a human tabernacle--aye, and better still, be it ours to be able to say in reverential faith, as we fall adoring at His feet, "This God shall be our God forever and ever!"

We would only imitate the example of the Psalmist, and in conclusion, call upon all creation to rise and do homage to this its Incarnate Maker. Praise Him in the heavens! Praise Him in the heights. 'O Sun of this great world, both eye and soul,' reflect His glory! Moon! take your silver lyre--strike your harp in the praise of your God! Stars, gather your brilliant gems as a coronal for His brow! Floods, rise and thunder forth His praise. Every flower that blooms, come and waft your fragrance around the rose of Sharon. Lispering infancy, come with your Hosannahs. Penitence, come bathed in tears. Sorrow, come in the extremity of anguish to this Divine Sympathizer, this living God yet your Brother. Youth, come with your green ears of consecration. Manhood, come in your strength. Old age, come leaning on your staff. Come, saints and prophets of olden time! Come, noble army of martyrs! Come, you heavenly hosts! cherubim and seraphim, gather in to the universal homage! Let the Church triumphant echo back the strains of "the Church throughout all the world"--"YOU ARE THE KING OF GLORY, O CHRIST--YOU ARE THE EVERLASTING SON OF THE FATHER!"

06.02. THE HUMANITY OF CHRIST

THE HUMANITY OF CHRIST "So the Word became human and lived here on earth among us."
John 1:14

"The Word of God, Jesus Christ, on account of His immense love, became what we are, that He might make us what He is." –Irenaeus, 169.

"There is no room in the inn for the Child miraculously born--the earth does not receive its God. He has no suitable dwelling-place in all the world. He whom heaven and earth cannot contain, lies in a manger!" –Simon de Cassia.

"If Jesus were God only, and not man, He could not suffer anything whereby to satisfy Divine Justice. If man only, and not God, He could not satisfy Divine Justice, even though He suffered. If man only, His satisfaction could not be sufficient for God. If God only, it would not be suitable for man. And, therefore, to be capable of suffering for men, and able to satisfy God, Himself must be both God and man." –Bishop Beveridge.

"The one true and perfect Flower which has ever unfolded itself out of the root and stalk of humanity." –Trench. In the previous chapters; the endeavor was made, as fully as our limits would admit, to adduce scriptural proof in support of that foundation-article of our most holy faith, the supreme divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ--"The Word was GOD." Let us, with a similar devout and reverential spirit, now turn our thoughts to another great cleft in the Rock of Ages, the correlative doctrine of the Savior's Humanity; when (adopting the translation or paraphrase of the apostle's words, made by an exegetical writer of the fifth century), "hiding His own dignity, He took the condition of extreme humiliation, and clothed Himself in the human form."

"So the Word became human and lived here on earth among us!" What a transition! What a stoop for that Infinite Being whom we found proclaiming Himself the Alpha and the Omega, writing His name on the Palace-walls of Eternity, "I AM THAT I AM!" for "The Ancient of days" to assume the nature and take the form of a cradled infant, sleeping on a virgin mother's breast!--the Plant of heavenly renown to become "a root out of a dry ground," without beauty or loveliness! We have no plumb-line to sound the depths of that humiliation--no arithmetic by which it can be submitted to any process of calculation. To use an illustration, which has been pertinently employed; if we can entertain for a moment the startling supposition of the loftiest created spirit in heaven abjuring his angel-nature, and (suddenly metamorphosed,) becoming an insect or a worm, we can, in some feeble degree, estimate the descent involved in the transformation. But, however great the disparity, they are both creatures of God, though at the opposites of being.

But, for the Illimitable, Everlasting Jehovah, Himself to become incarnate; the Creator to take the nature of the created; the Infinite to be joined with the finite; Deity to be linked with dust--this baffles all our comprehension! We can only lie in adoring reverence, and exclaim with the apostle, "O the depth!"

If such an idea had been suggested to reason, how it would have been rejected as impossible and inadmissible, a wild and unwarrantable dream of imagination. What we have to deal with, however, is not a matter of vague theory or speculation, but a marvelous historic fact; for, "Wonder, O heavens, and be astonished, O earth," God has "in very deed dwelt with men on the earth!"

We shall not consider it necessary to occupy space in quoting passages of Scripture in proof of the Savior's Humanity; for the present is not (in our days at least), like the theme of last chapter, a disputed, controverted one--a keenly contested question in polemical divinity, demanding that we sift scripture by scripture, text by text, in vindicating and defending it. Assuming its truth, let us proceed to offer a few general remarks, on the nature of that humanity which the adorable Redeemer took into union with His Godhead.

I. It was a REAL Humanity. Notwithstanding what has just been said, as to the general acceptance, in the present age of the Church, of orthodox views on the subject of this great collateral doctrine of the Christian system, the reader may doubtless be aware, that one of the earliest phases in which Antichrist revealed himself in the primitive Church, and one of the forms of error which the Apostle John was called specially to combat, was a denial of the veritable assumption on the part of the Redeemer, of the nature of man. "Many deceivers," says he, "are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist." They regarded His Incarnation as a mere phantom or illusion; that His sufferings were not real, but apparent; because His Godhead-nature made the endurance of agony impossible. Their conception of these sufferings seems to have resembled the impression produced in gazing on the desert mirage--the feeling of a reality, though it be no more than an optical deception. But the language of the sacred writer is implicit and incontrovertible--"So the Word became human and lived here on earth among us," (or, as that expression means in the original,) "tabernacled among us." He pitched His tent like a Pilgrim in the midst of human encampments; and it was beneath the curtains, so to speak, of a true humanity, that Deity in His Godhead-nature resided. With one notable exception, to which we shall presently allude, that tent was exposed, like the others which surrounded it, to the violence of the moral elements. "He suffered, being, tempted." "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same." "He bore our sins" (not by 'simulating sufferings' which He did not really endure)--"He bore our sins in His own body on the tree." In speaking, however, of the Savior's real humanity, we must be careful to avoid another heresy of the early Church, and to MAINTAIN THE DISTINCTION OF THE TWO NATURES. There was no intermingling of these two natures. The Godhead was not merged in the humanity, neither was the humanity blended with the Godhead. There was no alteration of the divinity in its appropriation of the veil of flesh; neither was the human element transmuted by its union with supreme Godhead. "He was God in all that was godlike, and man in all that was manlike." In a word, He was the infinite Jehovah; and yet the Brother-kinsman in distinction of nature, but in the unity of an all-glorious Person. In the words of Owen, "Each nature does preserve its own natural essential properties entirely into and in itself; without mixture, without composition or confusion. The deity, in the abstract, is not made the humanity, nor on the contrary, the nature of the man Christ Jesus is not deified; it is not made a God; it does not in heaven coalesce into one nature with the divine by a composition of them. It is exalted in a fullness of all divine perfection, ineffably above the glory of

angels and men. It has communications from God in glorious light, love, and power ineffably above them all; but it is still a creature."

It is unnecessary for us to dwell on the evidences borne in the Redeemer's earthly history to the reality of His human soul. Going back in reverential thought to the secluded home at Nazareth, we see, both in His physical and mental development, accordance with the ordinary laws and conditions of our nature. Mentally, we see Him "subject to His parents," "advancing in wisdom." Physically, we see Him "growing in stature," progressing from the helplessness and dependence of infancy and childhood to matured youth--yes, and in order that even in this respect He might fulfill all righteousness, Himself paying by His daily toil the penalty of the original curse--"In the sweat of your brow shall you eat bread."

It is indeed a wondrous thought, and one which must forever dissociate humble labor from dishonor or disgrace, that in union with the infinite, incomprehensible nature of Him who planned the worlds--who of old, from everlasting, set rule and compass on the face of the deep, meting out the heavens with the span of His hand, and "without whom was not anything made that was made,"--might be seen the lowly Son of the lowly Mary, busied at His reputed father's bench in a peasant's cottage--shaping the instruments of farming--the drops of labor falling from His forehead!

There is a well-known authentic instance of an earthly monarch, entering in the disguise of a craftsman one of our own dockyards; laying aside, for the time being, royal attire for the artisan's rough garb. But what was that? Merely the dimmest shadowy type of this mystery of Incarnate Love--of Him, who though in the form of God, and thinking it not robbery to be equal with God, yet made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant of servants! And through all the incidents of His future life, may His veritable humanity be traced. Take one example--His "creaturely dependence" on God, as manifested in His habitual habit of prayer. We see Him rising "a great while before day," and resorting alone, either to the depths of some grove on Olivet, or to the solitude of the higher and more secluded mountain retreats above Bethsaida and Capernaum--there pouring out His soul, now in calm thankfulness and praise, now in strong crying and tears, into the ears of His Father in heaven; and finally, with the same breath of supplication, commending into that Father's hands His departing spirit.

Reader, rejoice in the testimony afforded in the life and ministry of Jesus, to His real assumption, of our nature. "In all things it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest." In your sorrows, you can think, Jesus sorrowed. In your temptations, you can think, Jesus was tempted. In your tears, you can think, Jesus wept. In the anticipation of your very death-hour, you can think, Jesus died!

"In every pang that rends the heart,

The Man of sorrows had a part."

II. It was a PURE and SPOTLESS Humanity. In speaking of the Word made flesh and tabernacling (or tenting) among us, we have already incidentally remarked, that there was only one respect in which that mysterious tabernacle differed from the surrounding human encampments. It is this--that the Son of Man was "yet without sin." "He was holy, harmless, undefiled." "He wore the manacles of the curse entailed by the apostasy of men"--but no more. Amid ten thousand

contaminating influences around--mingling in the midst of scenes of temptation, "He did no sin, neither was deceit found in His mouth." As the ray of light falling on what is either physically or morally polluted--the noisome marsh--the plague-stricken city--the abode of villainy, still retains its purity; so this divine Life which was "the Light of men," moved amid sin's robber-haunts--a world of moral debasement and pollution, and yet remained undimmed and untainted. His was not the mere outward drapery of goodness, which sometimes is seen to screen the realities of the fallen and corrupted heart; not like the verdant ivy which, with its graceful festoons, often conceals the crumbling ruin; not the apparently clear well, which, when stirred, reveals the sediment of its miry, slimy depths; not the apparently translucent lake sleeping before you in summer mid-day in calm loveliness, but which, on the storm being let loose, becomes a wild inland sea of turgid mud. But rather a golden goblet filled with living water--with no deposit or admixture of evil. His soul no wicked passion ever disturbed; His brow no anger ever clouded; His serenity no insults ever ruffled. He could make the triumphant challenge, "Who of you convinces Me of sin?" Every pulse of that stainless nature beat responsive to the will of a Higher, and gloried in this conscious subjectivity. And it was in every way needful, as the Surety and Substitute of His people, that He should be so. As one chip or flaw in a statue vitiates the work of the sculptor; as one speck--one grain of sand in the telescopic lens, renders it worthless to the optician; so, one taint of pollution in the soul of the incarnate Redeemer--one flaw in the beautiful moral image, would have vitiated His whole work as our Surety. The true paschal sacrifice must be the immaculate Lamb of God. "You are not redeemed with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish, and without spot."

III. And yet, let us carefully note, that though a sinless, it was a SUFFERING humanity which the Savior of the world assumed. And we may begin with what, to a holy and elevated Being, is ever the intensest form and experience of suffering--the suffering arising from moral causes; the continual presence of moral evil, and the subjection to fierce temptation; for "He was in all points tempted even as we are." We have just seen that He was incapable of sin, and therefore incapable of yielding to the assaults of evil. But why such exemption? Was it because of the immaculate earthly nature? We cannot think that this would be in itself sufficient to account for His immunity from succumbing to temptation; for if it had, then, as has been well remarked, Adam, as a perfectly pure and sinless creature in Paradise; and Satan, with all his host of once pure and sinless angels, could on this supposition never have fallen--never have swerved from their allegiance and love. In the case of the adorable Redeemer, it was the Godhead which sustained the humanity, and made it impervious alike to the malignant assaults of human agents, and to spiritual wickednesses in high places. The very fact, however, of this untainted purity, made Him exquisitely sensitive to all contact with sin! We cannot wonder that it was so. Imagine, even on earth, a virtuous and elevated mind cast by circumstances into constant companionship with the vile--the debased--the degraded--those whose every thought and utterance is pollution--what refined torture, beyond any pang of mere physical suffering, would it be to such to be doomed to a lifelong association like this! How intense, then, beyond what imagination can conceive, must His sufferings have been, whose sinless nature had to encounter, day by day, every varied phase and form of evil; the baseness and treachery of man, the malignity of demons, and of the father of lies! Nor was it moral suffering alone to which He was subjected; His physical nature inherited all the innocent frailties of humanity. As Isaiah says, "Himself took our infirmities, and bore our sicknesses." He was "the Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief." He hungered, and thirsted, and wept. He felt fatigue of

body, as well as anguish of soul. He was thankful to rest, a weary pilgrim, by a well on the wayside. He was glad to sleep on the ruffled bosom of the lake, with a coil of ropes for His pillow. Though with a moral grandeur superior to earth's noblest heroism, He "set His face steadfastly" to encounter the hour and power of darkness--yet it was accompanied with deepest soul distress and mental perturbation--"I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I held in anguish until it be accomplished." When the trial hour arrived, He needed, as we do, the prop of human presence and sympathy--"My soul is exceeding sorrowful"--"tarry here, and watch with Me." Drops of blood, the symbol of His agony, fell from His brow, before that brow was wreathed with thorns, or His body pierced with iron nail or soldier's spear. If He had been exempt from all this, He would have lacked one of the great qualifications of a complete Surety-Savior, that is, the capacity of entering with tender sympathy and compassion into the sorrows and sufferings of His people. But "we have not an High Priest, who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities." There is not, as we have already noted, the trial which afflicts His brethren, which did not in an inconceivably intenser form afflict Him. Ridicule, unkindness, the abandonment or treachery of trusted followers--bodily pain--mental anxiety--man-desertion and God-desertion--the bitterness of bereavement--the decease of beloved friends--death itself.

Yes, and there was, in all these sufferings, one ingredient from which we are mercifully exempt. Our sufferings and sorrows come upon us generally by surprise--unknown, unanticipated--in His case, all were marked out, by the foreknowledge of His Godhead, to His omniscient eye. How comforting and consoling, is our divine Redeemer thus identifying Himself with our tried, tempted, woe-worn humanity!

Moreover, in stooping to assume our nature, He selected not the exalted condition, but linked Himself rather with poverty and distress and dependence. The poorest and the humblest, the most wretched and forlorn, might catch balm-words of comfort from the lips of Him who often had not where to lay His head. How different, in this respect, from the mythical incarnations of pagan story! When the favored gods of Olympus come down to earth, it is in some shape or form which leaves their subject-mortals awestruck and crouching at their feet. Such was the incarnation, also, of the Messiah expected by the Jews. Owing to His lowly birth and circumstances, the Christ of Nazareth was not their ideal Savior. He was not the "Angel-God," who spoke to their Fathers in the wilderness, or who came in vision to their exile prophet on the banks of Chebar. In their dreams of His advent, they thought of Him as some ineffable Being with "the paved work of sapphire under His feet, and as it were the body of Heaven in its clearness;" or speaking to them out of the cloudy pillar, or under the overshadowing wings of the cherubim.

We repeat, had He appeared thus, He could not have identified Himself with His people nor they with Him. But when He comes, it is leading a life of poverty and humiliation. His heart bled for every form of human wretchedness. The feeblest cry of human suffering never reached His ear in vain. He wept over obduracy of heart, as well as sorrow of spirit. What a fountain of love is His soul as His last hours drew on! With what majestic utterances does He plead, in the sublime prayer of the upper room, in behalf of the Church throughout all the world! With what exquisite pathos did He comfort the disciples in the prospect of separation! With what tender sympathy did He speak to a sorrowing mother in farewell accents from the cross! The words of Isaiah are a truthful commentary from first to last on His earthly pilgrimage--"You have been a refuge for the poor, a refuge for the needy in his distress, a shelter from the storm and a shade from the heat." "Yes, it

was written long ago that the Messiah must suffer and die."

IV. This leads us to observe still further, that the Redeemer's was a BROAD and COMPREHENSIVE humanity. It was so in several respects. One of these may be best illustrated by contrast with the character of His precursor, John the Baptist. Of its own peculiar type, John's was a remarkable specimen of a consecrated nature--bold, heroic, earnest, unselfish, self-sacrificing, he was quite the man needed for the times. But he was abnormal. His life was not the pattern or mold which was to shape that of the average Christian of the future. The desert was his home. Austere, unsocial; severed from the world's stir and bustle, and from family claims and amenities, he initiated the existence adopted by thousands of recluses in after ages. The ascetic, however, is not the noble side or type of humanity. That better phase Jesus adopted. The towns and cities and villages of Galilee and Judea were His places of residence. He subjected Himself to no extravagant self-mortification. He mingled in the world. He cared not for the stigma that He was "a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber, the friend of tax-collectors and sinners." He sanctified with His presence occasions of joy and domestic communion. He was found, now at a tax-collector's house, now at the feast of a rich Pharisee, now at a marriage scene--a festive gathering, and taking His disciples along with Him--now in the bosom of a Bethany home, clinging to congenial hearts--Himself, the Dove of Heaven, loving to fold His weary wing, from time to time, in these human rock-clefts--there escaping from the windy storm and tempest.

He would thus reveal Himself as a Brother, not in the false acceptance of the recluse, away from the haunts and sympathies of men, but One mingling (as He knew the mass of His people in all coming time would do), in the throng of a work-day world, and the rough contacts of common life; moving in the midst of human hearts and homes, ministering to human sorrows and grappling with human temptations. Yes! let us think of that lowly nature of His, in its capacity of identifying itself with every class and every phase of being; embracing in its amplitude those who had hitherto been neglected and disowned.

ROME was accustomed to deify the manly virtues alone--Strength, Courage, Heroic endurance. GREECE wreathed her chaplets around the brows of her intellectual heroes, her poets and philosophers, her sculptors and painters; but the weak, the ignorant, the oppressed, had none to vindicate their cause until He came, who pronounced "Blessed"--not the great, or rich, or powerful, or learned--but the meek, the lowly, the poor in spirit, the persecuted, him that had no helper! Hence, as we have already seen, groups composed of every diversity of character tracked His footsteps and hailed in Him a Brother. Stern, strong men like Peter; intellectual, thoughtful men like Thomas; loving and meditative men like John. 'Penitence' crept unabashed to His feet, and bathed them confidingly with tears. 'Sorrow' came with sobbing heart and speechless emotion to be comforted. The 'poor' came with their tale of long endured misery. 'Infancy' came stretching out its tiny arm, and smiled delighted in His embrace.

While He rejoiced with those who rejoiced, He wept with those who wept. The fainting multitudes moved Him to compassion; the one suppliant in the crowd who touched His garment-hem, arrested His steps and evoked His mercy. Every weary wandering bird, with drooping pinion, seemed to come and perch on the thick branches of this mighty Cedar of God! Or, to change the figure, we have pictured to us, in living spiritual reality, a Fountain of infinite mercy--a vast pool of Bethesda--its porches crowded with every diverse type of character, bearing the superscription,

"He heals them all."

See Him at last on the cross, with His arms extended, as if in this same comprehensive humanity He would embrace mankind--or, when rising silently from the Mount of Ascension, with outstretched hands He poured His benediction on a receding world! Little had earth imagined the blessing when 'Incarnate Mercy' walked her ungrateful soil! If the princes of this world had known it, "they would not have crucified the Lord of glory!"

"O my Dove, who is in the clefts of the Rock." O Believer, who have sought and found shelter in the glorious crevices, come and anew take refuge in the contemplation of the perfect Manhood of the adorable Son of God! Delight often to think of Him as a Brother in your nature. It is because they come welling from the depths of a human heart--because their music vibrates on a human lip--that the words are so unspeakably tender, "Come unto me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Exalted, indeed, and full of comfort is the truth unfolded in the preceding chapters--transcendently glorious is that cleft of the Rock, the Supreme Deity of Christ; but in one sense more comforting to downcast, fearing, aching hearts, to think of Him as "God with us!" Hence, when the old Prophet, looking down the vista of ages to the glorious gospel shelter, would single out the element in the contemplation most precious and consolatory, what does he select? Is it that JEHOVAH, in the might of His omnipotence, is "a refuge and strength, a present help in trouble?" No! But "A MAN shall be as a hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest, as rivers of waters in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." A MAN!

Man is not always so. Earthly friendships are not thus stable and enduring. Often have we to write, under the sense of bitter estrangement, over the memories of bygone fellowships, "Cease from man, whose breath is in his nostrils." "Cursed be he that trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm." But here is one glorious exception. You that are out buffeting the storm, exposed to the whirlwind blast of the desert, battling with care, harassed with anxiety, prostrated with bereavement, stricken with conscious guilt, longing for safe rest and anchorage from earth's sins and sorrows--can understand the deep meaning of the central words in the importunate prayer of blind Bartimeus at the gate of Jericho--"Jesus, O Son of David (O Elder Brother), have mercy on me!" And that Humanity, as we shall have occasion more specially to observe hereafter, is now on the Throne, and will be FOREVER. We have noted in the opening chapter, that he who loved on earth to pillow his head on the bosom of his Lord, when he subsequently saw that Divine Savior in the splendor of His ascension glories, "fell at His feet as one dead." But he knew in a moment, by the touch of the gracious hand, and the tones of the unchanging voice, that it was "that same Jesus,"--"I am He that lives!" Oh blessed truth, Jesus lives--as a glorified MAN! For me, in human nature, He once walked and wept and bled on earth. For me, in human nature, He now pleads in heaven! It will be from glorified human lips the welcome will at last be given, "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom!" Can we echo the prophetic utterance of a saint who lived long antecedent to the Prophet of Patmos; and who, through a glorious vista-view of the future, was able triumphantly to exclaim, "I know that my Redeemer (lit. My Kinsman) lives, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth, and that though after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." The shadowy patriarchal creed of a distant age and dispensation, was subsequently translated into the personal experiences and hopes of a New Testament apostle. Entering into this

new cleft of the Rock of Ages, can we make Paul's fervent words our own?--"I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day!"

06.03. CHRIST THE SURETY-SUBSTITUTE

CHRIST THE SURETY-SUBSTITUTE

"Christ has also once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." – 1 Peter 3:18

"The Lord redeemed us with His own blood, and gave His life for our life, and so effected our salvation." –Irenaeus, 169.

"To the sinner, doomed to eternal punishment, and unable to redeem himself, God the Father says, 'I take My only begotten Son and give Him for you.' The Son says, 'Take Me and be redeemed.'"

"Holy Father, look down from the height of Your sanctuary, and behold this mighty sacrifice which our great High Priest, Your Holy Child Jesus, offers for the sins of His brethren, and have mercy on the multitude of our transgressions." –Anselm, 1093.

"By His passion which He suffered, He merited, that as many as believe in Him, shall be as well justified by Him, as though they had never done any sin, and as though they had fulfilled the law to the uttermost. He changes places with us. He takes our sins and wickedness from us; and gives unto us His holiness, righteousness, justice, fulfilling of the law, and so consequently everlasting life." –Latimer, 1549.

"My debt is very great, and I am not able to pay anything thereof. But I trust in the riches and bounty of my Surety. Let Him free me who became Surety for me, who has taken my debt upon Himself." –John Gerard, 1606.

Mysterious, but most precious Cleft in the Rock of Ages--the VICARIOUS work of Christ as our Substitute and Surety!

It seems incumbent on us, thus early, in the consideration of our great theme, to contemplate the Divine expiatory Offering taken "outside the camp, bearing His reproach"; placing upon His own head the crown of thorns, that He might place upon ours a crown of glory; having, in the might of His glorious Person overcome the sharpness of death, that He might open the kingdom of heaven to us and to all believers.

We concede, at the outset, that such a method of atonement is quite beyond the suggestion of mere reason. Tried by the boasted "verifying faculty," or "principle of congruity" of some modern theological thinkers, it would at once be rejected as unsatisfactory and untenable. Natural law dictates, as the ordinary and equitable course of justice, that for personal guilt there must be personal retribution--"The soul that sins, it shall die." Fatal and destructive, however, would it be to the reception of all revealed truth, were the inquirer to demand summary rejection of every doctrine, at variance with preconceived idea or natural law. What God has unfolded and recorded, it is for us meekly, and with unquestioning docility, to receive. And if there be one truth more vividly

and expressly dwelt upon in Scripture than another, it is that of a Surety-Savior, suffering in our room and stead. If there be one utterance more frequently proclaimed than another, from Genesis to Revelation--from Abel's first sacrifice, to the last song of the ransomed, as they gather round the slain Lamb in heaven--it is this, that "without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin!"

Socinianism, and its modified rationalistic theories, in exalting the goodness and boundless beneficence of God, overlook or discard two great cardinal truths, which, despite their attempted rejection, everywhere assert themselves in the pages of Revelation--that is, that SIN is an infinite evil, entailing and demanding an infinite penalty; and that GOD, the Almighty One to whom we are responsible, is a moral Governor, requiring the vindication of His violated law. While "mercy and truth go before His face," "justice and judgment are the habitation of His throne." Not that there is any implied conflict or antagonism between the divine Holiness and Love--these two attributes of the Supreme Being must ever act in strictest harmony. But regarding Him as infinitely just and righteous, as well as beneficent and merciful, it would be to impeach His moral character, and to subvert the immutable principles on which His government rests, were He to grant indemnity to the guilty without any expression of His hatred at sin, or of His obligation to visit it with just, proper, and suitable punishment. As "God absolute," indeed, it may be affirmed, and with truth, that He can do anything. As God absolute, He has the sovereign power to confer on His rebellious subjects a free, unlimited pardon--a universal amnesty. At His omnipotent mandate, every rebel-chain could be broken, and this revolted race again placed within the sphere of His regards. But what He could do as the Almighty Sovereign (with reverence we say it), He could not do as the Righteous Lawgiver. As such, He is under a moral necessity, arising out of His own holy nature, to dispense His laws with equity. "It became Him, of whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." The whole teaching of Scripture represents Christ the Son of God, as identified in law with those He came to redeem. As Adam (to use the theological term of our old divines) stood the representative or federal head of the first covenant; so Jesus, the second Adam, the Lord from Heaven, stands as the vicar of His Church, in the room and stead of each of its members. Having voluntarily taken upon Him their responsibilities, He must endure in His person the penalty annexed to their transgressions.

We have already seen, in the former chapter (in speaking of His assumed humanity), that He was Himself "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." He had no personal complicity in our guilt--and we must therefore beware of the unwarrantable phraseology of those who speak of Him in connection with His vicarious work, as "becoming a sinner." We only, however, use the words of Scripture when we say "He became Sin." He was reckoned and dealt with, in the eye of the divine law, as guilty; as if the condensed transgressions of the millions He came to save ("His unknown agonies," as it is significantly expressed in the Greek Liturgy), were poured into His mysterious cup. All the bitter experiences of His passion, the mocking, the scourging, the jeers and taunts, the thorn-crowning, the God-desertion--were His due, not personally, but by imputation. "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us."

Different indeed, in kind, was the penalty endured by this Almighty Substitute, from what sinners themselves would have suffered, had they been left to undergo the full measure of punishment due to their transgressions. It belonged, however, to the Great Creditor to accept some satisfactory method, by which the infinite debt might admit of being discharged, without infringing

the rights of justice, or lowering and violating the sanctity of His law. And, owing to the dignity of the Sufferer's Person, this Atonement rendered by Christ was of surpassing value. It was THE SUBSTITUTION OF INCARNATE DEITY. The altar of His Divine nature sanctified the gift, and imparted a priceless worth to the divine oblation. As "God manifest in the flesh," He was free from the law, and the obligations of creatureship. Had He been less than divine, He could not possibly have obeyed for another. As a creature, He could not have transferred to another the merit of His obedience. Moreover, on the supposition, for a moment, of the admissibility of substitution in the case of an angelic being; one creature-substitute could only at the utmost discharge a single debt. It would be creature for creature, life for life. But owing to Christ's peerless dignity as the eternal Son of God, not only was He above the obligation of all natural law--"a law unto Himself," having "power over His own life;" but the sacrifice of the Divine Victim was of that infinite value, that the One offering was deemed sufficient to effect the ransom of "a multitude which no man can number." On this account, His whole work has received in theological language the appellation of a "satisfaction." It was, in the eye of God's righteous law, a glorious and all-sufficient equivalent. It met all the requirements of Sovereign Justice, Righteousness and Truth. Remitting the myriad liabilities of an insolvent world, the Great Creditor signs a full discharge. The holiness of His name and nature, and the righteous principles of His moral government, remain intact and inviolate. But let us proceed to examine the assertions of Scripture, and observe how this great truth of Christ's substitution runs throughout the Revealed Word like a golden thread. It would require a volume to do justice to the subject--little more can be overtaken here, than to glance at a few of the more prominent Typical, Prophetical, and Apostolic testimonies.

I. The TYPICAL testimonies of Christ's vicarious atonement. The idea of substitution is interlaced and interwoven with the whole Mosaic ritual. The voice of "the blood of sprinkling" spoke in wordless eloquence on the altars of Israel, as they ran daily with the blood of slain victims. Not a few of these were fellowship, or thank offerings--but the vast bulk of them were penal and expiatory. Not only so, but what we wish especially to note at present is, the remarkable testimony they afford to the principle of vicarious suffering--that the blood of the animal was shed in the place or stead of another. Every offering was a ransom for the sin, or for the life, of the human offender. It was life for life, blood for blood. The victims were subjected to the penalty incurred by the transgressor--there was a symbolic imputation of his guilt to them; and thus, typically, these sacrifices "were ordained to take away sin."

We see this vicarious, or substitutionary element, in Israel's INDIVIDUAL sacrifices, offerings made to expiate the sin of individual offenders. The offerer brought his victim, laid his hand upon its head, and made confession of his crime. "He shall offer it of his own voluntary will at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the Lord. And he shall put his hand upon the head of the burnt-offering, and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him."

Again, as regards the guilt of THE WHOLE CONGREGATION, the command was given, "They shall offer a young bullock for the sin, and bring him before the tabernacle of the congregation. And the elders of the congregation shall lay their hands upon the head of the bullock before the Lord, and the bullock shall be killed before the Lord. And the priest shall make an ATONEMENT for them, and it shall be forgiven them."

Or, once more, as perhaps the most expressive of all types of the Great Substitution; on the solemn anniversary of THE DAY OF ATONEMENT, the High Priest, clad in his linen garments, appeared as the Representative of Israel. Two goats (constituting one offering) were brought to the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. The people stood round in speechless solemnity. The one was immolated (that is--sacrificed); its blood was carried within the veil, and sprinkled on the mercy-seat. Laying his hands on the head of the other living animal, he made confession over it of all the sins of the people; and then, with this load of imputed guilt, it was led away into the depths of the wilderness never more to be seen. Hear the significant appointment of God Himself--"When Aaron has finished making atonement for the Most Holy Place, the Tabernacle, and the altar, he must bring the living goat forward. He is to lay both of his hands on the goat's head and confess over it all the sins and rebellion of the Israelites. In this way, he will lay the people's sins on the head of the goat; then he will send it out into the wilderness, led by a man chosen for this task. After the man sets it free in the wilderness, the goat will carry all the people's sins upon itself into a desolate land." Leviticus 16:20-22

What type could possibly be more significant than this?--the imposition of hands, accompanied with confession of sin--the sins of "all Israel"--typically transferred to the innocent substitute. The countless iniquities of Christ's people are surely seen meeting on the head of the great Antitypical Scapegoat--the atoning Sacrifice of Calvary, who has borne them forever away into a land of oblivion. If all this substitutionary ceremonial ritual had no reference to the Divine Antitype--then we ask, What was its design?

Standing by itself, without this New Testament 'anti-type', it is not only a meaningless appointment, but (again, with all reverence we say it), it would have been an appointment unworthy of God. There is no natural connection whatever (there is rather an inherent unfitness and incongruity), between the slaying of a mere animal, or the laying the hands on its head, and the expiation of human guilt. "It was impossible that the blood of bulls and of goats" (even heaps on heaps of slain irrational beasts, which are so far beneath in dignity the nature of the transgressor) "could take away sin." There was an utter inefficacy and inadequacy in such to expiate moral guilt. The very conscience of the offerer repudiated such a thought. They were powerless to pacify the soul under a sense of its sin, and to remove the Divine displeasure--"For the gifts and sacrifices that the priests offer are not able to cleanse the consciences of the people who bring them." But the whole of this strange, bloody ritual receives at once a wondrous significance, when we connect it with more precious blood, and a more precious Life--with the imputation of our guilt to the Lamb of God--"Christ our Passover sacrificed FOR US."

II. Let us pass from the typical, to the PROPHETICAL testimonies of the vicarious sufferings of the Redeemer. Two among several other passages may suffice. The first, is Isaiah 53:1-12; that wonderful Old Testament picture of the Savior's humiliation. Again and again is the truth we are now unfolding there brought prominently before us--that the Lord Jesus took our sins actually upon Him--that He suffered in our room and stead.

Isaiah 53:4, "Surely He has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows."

Isaiah 53:5, "But 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."

Isaiah 53:6, "The Lord has laid upon Him the iniquity of us all."

Isaiah 53:8, "For the transgression of My people was He stricken." "By His knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many, for He shall bear their iniquities."

Isaiah 53:12, "And He was numbered with the transgressors, and He bore the sin of many."

What could be more explicit than these varied statements?--that He who rose up before the Prophet's vision as "the Man of Sorrows," was really the Substitute of the guilty; enduring the stripes that were due to us--carrying the load of sin we should have borne. Though sinless Himself, yet, as the Vicar of His people--enrolled--"numbered, among transgressors." The other prophetic passage we may cite in confirmation of the doctrine, is from the Book of Daniel. That Prophet, speaking in the most explicit and indubitable language of "Messiah the Prince," who was "to finish (the) transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in an everlasting righteousness," adds, "And after threescore and two weeks (of years) shall Messiah be cut off" (by death), "but not for Himself." He was to suffer, but it was for no sin of His own, for no personal demerit. He was to finish the transgression of His people, to discharge their debt, by the offering of Himself--and the Prophet immediately adds, that having thus completed His atoning work, "In the midst of the week, He shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease." The substance having been revealed, the shadows melt away. The Divine Antitype having come--the great Antitypical Sacrifice being offered, the ceremonial ritual is abrogated; all other sacrifices and oblations are abolished.

III. We proceed now to advert to the APOSTOLIC testimonies in support of this same cardinal truth--Christ's substitutionary atonement. In doing so, we shall attempt little more than simply quote a few appropriate verses, in themselves so clear and explicit as to require no comment. Observe, however, the force of the preposition "for," as denoting substitution, which occurs in most of them. "When we were without strength, in due time Christ died FOR the ungodly." "He was made sin FOR us, who knew no sin." "Made a curse FOR US." "He who spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up FOR us all." "He was delivered FOR our offences." "Christ was once offered to bear the sin of many." "Who gave Himself FOR us." "He gave Himself FOR us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savor." "Christ has also once suffered for sins, the just FOR the unjust, that He might bring us to God." "Who loved us, and gave Himself FOR us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity." "Now once in the end of the world has He appeared, to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." "Who His own self bore our sins in His own body on the tree. By His stripes we are healed." And if we ascend from the testimony of the Church on earth, to that of the Church glorified in Heaven, it is the same. "You have redeemed us to God by Your blood." "To Him who loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood."

If language has any meaning, these and other passages are surely conclusive. We repeat, the preposition "for," so often employed in these verses, undoubtedly supposes and implies substitution--one put in the place or room of another. "Christ died FOR us"--not as the Socinians say, that He died for our good, for our advantage; not that He became incarnate merely to be the Revealer of the Father's love, a spotless Example, the Ideal of perfect humanity (though this, as we shall subsequently show, was included as a subordinate object in the divine mission); neither that His sufferings are merely to be regarded in the light of "afflictions" or "calamities," similar to what His people are often called upon to undergo in this life; but, He came as the law-fulfiller--the

sin-bearer. Sin and guilt were not only in a figurative, but in a literal sense laid upon Him.

Take away this feature in the doing and dying of Jesus, and the Incarnation is shorn of its glory; and the whole 'typical economy' becomes an enigma. It resolves itself into a mysterious, incomprehensible, wasteful expenditure of blood and animal suffering; and the Apostolic writings become a mass of distorted reasoning. But, accept the view of Christ as a vicarious Sacrifice, a real Substitute for human guilt, dying in the stead of transgressors, then the whole mystery is solved. Then there is a tongue put in every bleeding wound of every expiring victim--a halo encircles the fire and smoke ascending from every altar. These proclaim in dreadful, but significant symbolism, what He to whom they pointed expressed in His own simple utterance, "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many."

We may conclude, by refuting one false and erroneous deduction with which some have ventured to charge this doctrine, that is, that it is derogatory to the benevolence and beneficence of God; that it represents Him in the unamiable and unloving light of a rigorous Exactor, who requires His wrath to be appeased by the blood of an innocent Sufferer--no, further, that as the natural consequence of entertaining such a dogma, our affections are necessarily transferred from the exacting inexorable Lawgiver, to Him who, by His voluntary anguish and death, has effected the reconciliation. Such repulsive views of the Divine Being, however, are false and empty assumptions, containing an utter perversion of Catholic teaching and Scripture language.

What is the true Bible representation? God is there brought before us, as we have already seen, infinitely Holy--immaculately Righteous--inviolably Faithful and Just--His law uncompromising in its demands, rigidly exacting in its penalties. This Almighty Being is represented, moreover, as requiring an adequate sacrifice and satisfaction--no, in a bold figure, as summoning the sword of Justice to "awake against the Man who is His fellow." But, if we draw aside the veil, and look still farther into the secrets of the Divine counsels, we shall see that the motive-principle of all was the Father's divine compassion and mercy. It was not the substitution of the Great Sacrifice that was the cause of God's love to our world. That love not only existed antecedently in the Divine mind, but it was that infinite Love which prompted and devised the amazing plan of redemption. "God so loved the world"--"GOD commends His love." GOD "spared not His own Son." It was His originating love which provided the Lamb for the burnt-offering. The true method, therefore, of viewing the Atonement of Calvary is to regard it, from first to last, as a stupendous plan of Divine Sovereign Grace and Mercy exercised in consistence with Justice and Truth--a rainbow, indeed, seen with a dark background of suffering and wrath, but in whose blended tints and colors "mercy rejoices over judgment."

Reader, are you able fully to accept--no, to rejoice in this stupendous doctrine, and by faith to appropriate its sublime verities? to view it, not as a beautiful figure, a typical fiction, but as a sober reality, denoting and asserting a veritable transference of your guilt to the Lamb of God--a glorious crevice in the Rock of Ages, in which you may fold your wings and sink to rest as you sing, "He loved me, and gave Himself FOR me?"

Rejoice, also, that that transference has taken place; the negotiation is completed, the Substitute has been provided, the ransom has been paid. It is not a matter which now remains in suspense and unaccomplished. Many on earth have noble and lofty intentions which have never been fulfilled. Many a high enterprise has been devised; but the enthusiasm wears past, the opportunity

is lost, or the resolve is strangled at the birth. Not so with this great salvation. What Christ undertook He has performed. He does not utter the unavailing soliloquy and lament in His heavenly palace, over an apostate world, which David did on the occasion of the death of his ruined child, "Would God I had died for you." He has died; He has fulfilled His covenant-pledge as our Surety. Our lost inheritance has been recovered. The prophetic words have become now the utterance of an historic fact--He HAS seen of the travail of His soul, and is satisfied!

Well do we know that the doctrine we have now been considering, is in these modern times disliked by many; by not a few rejected. We do not hear it enunciated in our systems of theology, nor proclaimed in our pulpits, as its importance demands. Many prefer coming with Cain's bloodless offerings of thanksgiving (the deist sacrifice) rather than, like Abel, bringing the bleating victim from his fold. They are willing to behold Christ the Son, but not Christ "the Lamb of God." They build the temple, but they disown the altar. Believer, be it yours ever to look to the lintels and door-posts sprinkled with blood. Clasp this glorious truth to your heart of hearts--Christ your Substitute. All He did, reckon as having been done by you. When He was prostrated on the cold earth in His soul-struggle in Gethsemane, or when He trod the blood-stained path along the dolorous way, or when He uttered the Eloi-cry on the cross--think, it was your sins that were draining these drops of anguish, and extracting these strong cryings, and pleadings, and tears.

Blood is death; and if by faith you be sprinkled with the sacred token, you are reckoned to have died in the Surety. When He gave His precious, peerless life, it was equivalent to your giving yours. Be assured that this is the only view of the death of Jesus that will stand the test and scrutiny of Scripture; or that, as a strong and all-sufficient rock-cleft, will be able to ensure solid and satisfying peace in believing. It is not the philosophic divinity which consists in the deification of mere virtue--it is not eliminating these peculiar doctrines of the cross, and substituting cold negations, that will pacify conscience.

"Jesus, Your blood and righteousness,

My beauty are, my glorious dress;

'Mid flaming worlds in these arrayed,

With joy I shall lift up my head.

"When from the dust of death I rise,

To take my mansion in the skies,

This all my hope, this all my plea,

That Jesus lived and died for me."

Let what will form your alone stable and satisfying trust then, be the ground of your hope and confidence now. Accept Him, unhesitatingly, as your Surety- Savior, "the end of the law for righteousness." See how He has "blotted out the handwriting that was against you, and has taken it out of the way, nailing it to His cross." See how God, the injured Creditor, has cancelled your obligations. Never again, in point of law, can your legion-sins appear; they are obliterated forever. Let the mightiest angel in heaven be delegated to go in quest of these sins! Let him roam creation!

Let him search every corner of the earth, and every cavern of old ocean. He will come back from the mission with the tidings--"The iniquity of Israel is sought for, and there is none; and the sins of Judah, and they are not found." "As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us."

06.04. CHRIST THE PROPITIATION

CHRIST THE PROPITIATION "Whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood."-- Romans 3:25

"Happy is he alone, to whom the Lord does not impute transgression--to have Him propitious to me against whom alone I have sinned. When my soul is troubled with the view of my sinfulness, I look at Your mercy, and am refreshed." --Bernard, 1123.

"The Everlasting God be praised! We have a remedy and a sure helper. Christ the Son of the living God has fulfilled the law for us, to deliver us from sin." --Latimer, 1546.

"Under this shadow, O my soul, refresh yourself. If your sins fear the hand of justice, behold your sanctuary; if your offences tremble before the Judge, behold your Advocate ; if your creditor threatens a prison, behold your bail. Behold the Lamb of God, that has taken your sins from you." --Francis Quarles, 1592.

"Sprinkled with His atoning blood,

Safely before our God we stand;

As in the Rock the Prophet stood,

Beneath His shadowing hand." --Keble. A similar cleft in the same Great Rock--a kindred subject to that which it was our endeavor to unfold in the preceding chapter, invites our thoughts in the present. It would be easy, indeed, to limit ourselves to a cursory examination of these views of sacrifice and oblation in the outer court of the Earthly, before we pass within the veil of the Heavenly Temple, with its redeemed worshipers and ministering seraphim. But we deem it needful, in the first instance, to have our confidence well assured on the procuring cause of all that wealth of present privilege and future bliss--to see and acknowledge the Divine necessity there was, in bringing many sons unto glory, that the Captain of their salvation be made perfect through suffering. Unless the Rock had been "stricken," "smitten of God," there could have been no 'clefts' in it. Take away the sacrificial element from the Incarnation of the Redeemer, and you sweep from beneath the feet every stable and reliable ground of confidence and safety. Let others speak slightly and disparagingly of "dead dogma," and affect the possession of breadth and liberality of sentiment in rejecting with a sneer what they presume to call "special theories of atonement." Be it ours rather, with humble reliance on the teaching of that Spirit promised to "guide into all truth," to have our faith on such great foundation verities "grounded and settled;" and conscious of having attained a sure footing on what cannot be shaken, to be able to say, in the simple couplet of the well-known hymn--

"On Christ the solid Rock I stand,

All other ground is shifting sand."

Once more, then, under another form, let our thoughts revert to the central, kernel doctrine of our most holy faith--CHRIST THE PROPITIATION, "Whom God has set forth to be" (not merely the Ideal of human perfection, the Manifestation of a life of stainless virtue and sublime self-sacrifice, but) "a Propitiation through faith in His blood." That word "Propitiation" occurs only three times in the New Testament--in the present passage of Paul's Roman Epistle, and twice in the Epistles of John. The original word, as is well known, refers to the lid of the Ark of the Covenant in the Tabernacle or Temple. It is the same expression which is found in the ninth chapter of Hebrews, and there rendered "mercy-seat"--"The Cherubims of glory shadowing the mercy-seat;" or as it is more faithfully, perhaps, translated in most of the old versions of the English Bible by the word propitiatory. This covering of the ark was made of fragrant acacia-wood. Its lining and corner-pieces were of pure beaten gold. It was protected by the overshadowing wings of the Cherubim; while the Shekinah, or symbol of the Divine Presence, in its dreadful cloudy splendor, rested between. Once every year (on the Great Day of Atonement) the Jewish High Priest entered the Holiest of all. The warm blood of the slain victim, sprinkled on the "Propitiatory," flowed down on the pavement, where he stood as the officiating representative of the nation. The root word (the verb) from which the term Propitiation in the original is derived, signifies "to appease wrath," "to turn away anger."

It speaks of an offence, and an offender; and the typical "Propitiatory sacrifice" comes as a shield, or guard, between the offender on the one hand, and the Being offended on the other. It is scarcely needful to pause, in order to explain the expressive symbol; and how the Israelitish type is fulfilled and illustrated in the person and official work of the Divine Antitype. As we found in the previous chapter, God's law has been dishonored, its sacredness violated, its penalties incurred. Let us not be misunderstood. We must fastidiously guard, as most derogatory to His glory, against the use of language that would, by remotest implication, impute to the Great Supreme anything analogous to those vindictive passions resident in the human bosom. He is "offended," because of the infinite holiness and rectitude of His nature. He must, as a moral Governor, uphold intact and without compromise, every jot and tittle of His law, and maintain the honor and majesty of His Throne. His justice and righteousness dare not be impeached in the eyes of the other sections of His vast empire.

Darius the King, we read, made a decree, and set his royal seal to it. It led to the inevitable destruction of an innocent man. That night, sleep was banished from the royal pillow--no sound of harp or flute or dulcimer was heard, during those gloomy watches, within the palace walls. He had "labored until the going down of the sun to deliver Daniel;" but all in vain. Why in vain? Why might not that Eastern despot, whose will was law, have in a moment ordered the release of the captive Jew? No, "Know, O King, that the law of the Medes and Persians is, that no decree nor statute which the King establishes, may be changed." In a far higher, loftier, more solemn sense is this true of Him by whom kings reign. The statutes of the Eternal are unchangeable. "A man's heart devises his (own) way," but "the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand." The pillars of His Throne have immutability to rest upon; and "though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished." But the blood of the Great Surety has been shed; the Lamb for the burnt-offering has been immolated (sacrificed); the Veil is rent in twain; the prophetic hymn of the angels at Messiah's birth has had its exalted strains fulfilled--while glory has been secured to God in the highest, peace has been proclaimed on earth, and goodwill to men. And now, as the sinner

stands, like the High Priest of old, in front of the Mercy-seat, we see, significantly symbolized, at once the offence, the offender, and the Great Propitiation. Inside the ark were deposited, among other sacred things, the two tables of stone, on which are inscribed the words of the Eternal decalogue. That law demands satisfaction. Had it not been for the lid of which we have just spoken, these imprisoned commandments would leap like fiery swords from their scabbards, and mingle the worshiper's blood with his sacrifices. Like a shield, however, the Propitiatory intervenes!

Even in its material adornments it was typical; the acacia-wood was emblematic of the real humanity of the Divine Propitiator; moreover, the fragrant acacia-wood pointed significantly to His purity and sinlessness; while the golden border and golden clasps at the corners, with equal impressiveness symbolized His Deity--the Deity and Humanity conjoined, but not blended or intermixed. Behold, then, we repeat, the sinner within that dreadful sanctuary--the law unabrogated, unrepealed, uttering its denunciation--"The soul that sins, it must die!" The Cherubim bending over the mercy-seat, appear, as they point to its symbolic covering, to proclaim the words which head this chapter--"Whom God has set forth to be a propitiation!" While the worshiper, through his representative, drawing near with the blood in his hand--sprinkling it above the mercy-seat, and before the mercy-seat, until the purple stream falls on the floor, offers the plea as he points to the Propitiatory--"Behold our shield, look on the face of Your anointed."

Or, again, in still more impressive words--"God be merciful to me a sinner." We say, in more impressive words; for it is remarkable and well worthy of note, that in this prayer of the Tax-collector, the verb translated "be merciful" corresponds with the Greek for "propitiation." "Be propitious," he cries; but it is mercy by sacrifice; it is mercy through the atoning blood of the Great Surety. Blessed meeting-place between offending man and an offended God!

If we can venture for a moment to personify the attribute of JUSTICE, we see her clad in vestments of stainless purity, with the sword in one hand and the balances of equity in the other. As we follow her within the Veil, we behold her standing by the Propitiatory with sheathed weapon, side by side with Mercy. We can hear her, within the very shadow of the decalogue, uttering the glorious words--"The Just God, yet the Savior;" "the just, yet the Justifier"--yes, singing in concert the special song of the sister attribute, "O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good, because His MERCY endures forever!"

Before we close, let us note the special declaration made by the apostle regarding this divine Propitiation, "Whom God has set forth" a word which in the original means "set publicly apart," "manifested publicly for some great end or object." There are many ways which will suggest themselves, in which the Eternal Father, the Originator of the scheme of Redeeming Grace, has "set forth" the Son of His love, as Mediator and Surety for the fallen.

He was set forth from all Eternity in the divine counsels. In the archives of Heaven His name and purpose were recorded--"In the volume of the book it is written of Me--I come to do Your will, O God." He was set forth in the very hour of the Fall, in the first promise of Redemption; as well as in the "coats of skin" of the first sacrifices, with which the guilty pair covered their nakedness. He was set forth in Noah's altar-fires on Ararat; in the glorious tints of His rainbow, and in the Covenant of which it was the symbol.

He was set forth in the Patriarchal Church, in Abraham's offering on Mount Moriah, and in Jacob's ladder at Bethel. In the Mosaic Church, He was set forth in the sprinkling of the lintels and doorposts; in the smitten rock and bronze serpent. He was set forth, more fully still, in that vast and complicated ceremonial, upon every part of which is significantly inscribed "Not without blood,"--"the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."

He was set forth in the Prophetic Church, from Jacob's earliest prophecy of the Shiloh, and Balaam's of the Star, to Malachi's last glowing figure of the Sun of righteousness. And then, when the fullness of time came, He was more peculiarly 'manifested.' The morning stars, and the sons of God, that had sung responsive their jubilant anthem at creation's birth, again meet to celebrate in joyous strains the birth hour of an Incarnate Deity! The Shepherds of Bethlehem, and the Wise Men of Arabia (the representative Jew and Gentile, the representative rich and poor), gather around His cradle, not in a palace, but at a manger, to sing 'Glory to the newborn King.'

Again and again, and with ever-growing publicity, was He manifested in the eyes of His Church. At His baptism, He received (as viceregent, or substitute,) a sinner's rite at a sinner's hands, accompanied with the proclamation from the excellent glory, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." In His transfiguration, He was set forth, indeed, in the first instance, in the majesty of His Godhead, robed in the Shekinah cloud--the "white and glistening" clothing--delegates from heaven and earth met to do Him homage. But even in that scene of transcendent brightness, it is as the Propitiation He appears; for it is a memorable feature in the transaction, that these lofty messengers from the Church triumphant, in their converse with the members of the Church militant, talk, not of His supreme dignity, nor of the coming and resultant glory of His Messiahship, but "they spoke of the death which He was to accomplish at Jerusalem." As the closing scenes of His public ministry thicken upon us, how pre-eminently (almost exclusively) is it as the Propitiation He is revealed. Gethsemane, the Judgment-Hall, the house of Caiaphas, the dolorous way, the dreadful culminating scene, when, raised above the ground, He hung on the cross an ignominious spectacle; when Jew and Gentile exhausted their weapons of ruffianly taunt and mockery, with scourge, and nail, spear, and thorn; and when, after man had done his worst, over and above all, the cry was heard from the Lord of Hosts, "Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd!"

It is in the same light (as the Great Sacrifice and Oblation--the Satisfaction for His people's sins), He has been set forth for the last eighteen centuries in His own appointed ordinances--specially in the proclamation of His glorious Gospel, and in His great memorial rite, with its simple yet significant commemorative symbols. He is set forth in the varied experiences of His people, in their every season of exigency and trial. These are too numerous to admit of being specified. At no time are His presence and grace more signally exhibited and realized than at the hour of death. It is then, looking to the golden 'shield' of their covenant-Ark, that His spiritual Israel, like the old band of wilderness warriors, pass dry shod and brave-hearted through the border river, to the shores of the heavenly Canaan. The cheering assurance uttered 3000 years ago, has lost none of its comfort, "Behold the Ark of the covenant of the Lord of the whole earth passes over before you into Jordan!" In one of his Patmos visions, the beloved disciple beheld "the Temple of God," and "the Ark of his testament." What was this, but the symbolical disclosure of the Great Propitiation; as He was witnessed by the dying martyr Stephen, and by triumphing multitudes in subsequent ages at a similar hour? "I see Heaven opened, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God." A

grander and sublimer revealing of His Person and dignity (afterwards to be considered), will take place on the day of the "manifestation of the sons of God,"--emphatically designated "the day of His appearing;" when still, as the Son of Man, seated on His Throne of Glory, "every eye shall see Him." He will be set forth finally, as we shall come also more particularly to note, through all Eternity, in the midst of His Church triumphant; still as the Propitiation; wearing the mysterious memorials of suffering in the blessed world where suffering is unknown--while this is to form the eternal hymn and ascription of His ransomed--"Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing, for You have redeemed us to God by Your blood!" On a review of these imperfect reflections, are any prompted to ask the urgent question--"How am I to obtain the shelter of such a Rock-cleft as this? How can I procure access and welcome to the true Mercy-seat?" There are no barriers of exclusion. The veil is rent; the approach is free; the Propitiation is made yours, "through faith in His blood."

How many among the votaries of a false and spurious Christianity, are looking to Christ through material relics--pieces of the so-called true cross, fragments of the spear or thorn-crown, or the seamless robe! We are called to look "through faith." How many more are groping their way to Him through propitiations of their own--penances, and prayers, and fastings, and flagellations. The propitiation is completed--"Whom God has set forth." If the Jewish High-priest, as he stood at the mercy-seat, instead of sprinkling the blood, had stripped the jewels from breastplate and mitre, and flung them on the sacred chest, what would all have availed? Nothing. There was but one offering efficacious there--an offering composed not of 'pearls from the ocean, or gold from the mine;'--"When I see THE BLOOD I will pass over you." Significant testimony to the alone method by which pardon and peace are procured, through the atoning work of the Great Antitype, "the one true, perfect, and all-sufficient oblation!"

Oh, believer, who is in this cleft of the Rock, exult in your inviolable security! Sheltered therein, the curses of the law are made impotent. As the angel came down by night to the camp of the Assyrians, and strewed the Judean plain with their corpses, rendering every weapon powerless which the dead warriors grasped in their hands; so has the great Angel of the Covenant--the true "Prince who stands for the children of His people"--descended in the deep night of the world's darkness, and made the arm of the law, with all its denunciations, incapable of inflicting so much as one wound. The efficacy of the blood of Christ is INEXHAUSTIBLE. The book of Revelation unfolds 144,000, with lustrous robes, washed and made white in it; and still the Propitiation is "set forth;" still the way into the Holiest and to acceptance is open. Come, approach it, with this one only passport to pardon and forgiveness in your hand. See the old, but ever-binding and obligatory Tables of Sinai's law, screened out of sight by the intervening barrier--hidden, as a covenant of works, by the better work of Jesus. God has set Him forth as a Propitiatory. He (the true 'shield, and lifter-up of your head'), "stands between the living and the dead, and the plague is stayed!"

06.05. CHRIST THE MANIFESTATION OF THE FATHER

CHRIST THE MANIFESTATION OF THE FATHER "Who is the image of the invisible God."-- Colossians 1:15 "God is not called the Father of Vengeance, but the Father of Mercies." --Bernard, 1123.

"Let us accustom ourselves more and more profoundly to sink into the blessed mystery of our most holy faith; so that we may correct all transcendental, vague thoughts about God, by setting Christ at once before our eyes. He is the Visibility of the Invisible, as far as, and in such way, as that may be seen. Even in the heavenly 'beholding' throughout Eternity, there will be no showing of the Father out of and apart from Christ." --Stier. A new and most blessed Rock-cleft is now to engage our thoughts. In the two preceding chapters, we have endeavored to extract grounds of confidence and trust from the contemplation of Christ as the Surety-Substitute, and as the Propitiation for the sins of the world. In doing so, it behooved us to dwell on the character of the Supreme Being as a Moral Governor--the Holy, the Righteous, the Just, the True, the inflexible Guardian and Dispenser of Laws based upon principles of everlasting rectitude, demanding the payment of penalties annexed to transgression. But having laid this broad and needful foundation; beholding every attribute of the Divine nature magnified and made honorable in the Cross of the Divine Sufferer--bringing a revenue of glory to God, and of blessing to the human race; we shall now proceed, in the light of that Cross, to consider a new revelation of the Almighty. We have pondered Jehovah's character as Lawgiver and Judge. We are now to regard Him manifested in Christ, in His beneficent, paternal character as a FATHER.

It is worthy of remembrance, as appropriate alike to the present theme, and to the title of this volume, that when God, in long ages preceding the Incarnation, made a revelation of Himself to Moses, it was in reply to the request of the 'lawgiver' (a request which embodies the urgent query of humanity), "I beseech you show me Your glory" and, as if to shadow forth the great mystery of a coming dispensation, the Divine Being "set him IN THE CLEFTS OF A ROCK, and made all His glory to pass before him." As the mystic, undefined Presence of the Great I AM, swept by the face of that mountain watch-tower--nature's shrine; the proclamation of the Sacred Name was sounded in the listener's ears. But what was the Revelation? Not, God, dreadful and terrible, enshrined in the blackness and darkness, the lightnings and tempests, which so lately played on the mountain-top frowning over His servant's head; but words composed of letters as if written in bright sunbeam--"The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious." It is this typical vision of Moses, fulfilled and realized in the Person of the adorable Antitype, which is to occupy our contemplation in the present chapter. We are invited to enter "the Clefts of the Rock" to behold the glory of Jehovah. But, as in the case of the Jewish Lawgiver, it is to have our fears calmed and our trust established, by an apocalypse (an unveiling, or revealing), not of majesty or terror, but of ineffable paternal love.

What is God? The foundation truth of all theology, and indeed of all thought, has been the perplexing problem of every age. Who is He? What is His character? What are my personal

relationships to Him, and His to me? Nature contributes her own quota to the solution of the question. This invisible One is visibly imaged and understood in "the things He has made." Wondrous and diversified are the illustrated pages of that Great book in showing forth His praise. These are formed of woods and mountain, lake and river; of vernal sky and summer verdure; of virgin morning, noontide brightness, dewy eve; night with her sable mantle woven with gems, the silent pageantry of moon and stars; the song of birds in the groves, the music of streams, the hues of flowers spread in profusion over hill and dale, the solemn chant of winds, the many voices of the ceaseless sea. And not only so; but as we gaze on this beautiful world-temple, full of beneficent agencies and gracious provisions, what are all such combined, but endless affirmations of the wisdom and power, the graciousness and love, of the Omnipotent Framer and Sustainer. In this Temple does every one and every thing speak of the glory of His natural perfections. And yet, the witness so eloquent in proclaiming and authenticating His Being, pronounces at best only a partial deliverance on His other moral attributes. Farther, the choir of nature's vast shrine is not always in harmony. Its notes are at times grating and dissonant. These bright skies have, ever and anon, their dark clouds and deep-voiced thunders. These winds at times revel with their wild music over devastated fields or shipwrecked crews. That air which wafts the perfume of flowers, and transmits the sweet note of birds, is at times the highway of the noisome pestilence and the destruction that wastes at noonday. The pang of suffering, the wail of death, the corruption of the sepulcher, refuse to countersign the testimony otherwise borne to a God who is all love. No, rather, in a thousand ways, do they indicate or assert the existence of estrangement between the Creator and the creature. With these anomalies--these mysterious phenomena, alike in the material and the moral world, which of us, trusting alone to the light of nature, but would be forced to cry out in bewilderment, "Verily You are a God that hides Yourself?" When we turn from nature to other solutions, the darkness and perplexity only seem to thicken and deepen around us. We go in vain to heathen philosophers and their systems; and that, also, at the most refined era of the world, when the human intellect was under the most favorable conditions to grope its way to the highest spiritual verities. The brain which contrived in poetry the most fascinating creations of human imagination, or which compiled massive laws of wisdom which have guided and molded modern intellect and politics, manifested only failure here. The chisel which could embody its thoughts in breathing marble, and bequeath its wondrous conceptions as heirlooms to admiring ages alike in sculpture and architecture, could, in its conceptions of the Invisible Spirit, only carve the confession of its powerlessness on an Athenian pedestal, "To the unknown God!" When we go to the temples of heathen worship--with rare exceptions, they have a still gloomier and more perplexing response, in their bloody slaughterhouses, and reeking altars, and groaning victims. Whether it be the Moloch of Moab, or the Baal and Ashtaroth of Phoenicia; or Jove enthroned as King in Greek and Roman Pantheon, grasping Olympian thunderbolts; or Kali and Vishnu of Hindooism, or Thor and Odin of Scandinavia; we have, substantially, the same expression of their conceptions of the mysterious Invisible Abstraction worshiped as God--a Great Being, or Beings, with a reserve of power, absolute in their decrees, vindictive and implacable, the object of dread and dismay; few weapons in their infinite armory but what are whetted for retributive vengeance. Those heathen votaries, groping after the knowledge of a Supreme Ruler, had "neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His shape;" and their crude guesses at the dreadful reality, molded in imagination a living embodiment of terror, to whom judgment was no strange work. Or even if we turn (where we might have expected a more reliable and authoritative interpretation of the Oracle)

to the Jewish "El Shaddai," "Jehovah," or "Elohim,"--was not this Infinite One invested, even by them, with similar awe? Is He not addressed by prophets, and sung of by psalmists, as "dreadful in His holy places," "The Great and dreadful One," "The Jealous One;" with "wrath kindled," "The fiery stream going forth before Him;" "Bowing the heavens, and coming down, with darkness under His feet;" sending avenging angels to the earth, to smite with sword and pestilence--this the invocation of His worshipers, "The Lord reigns, let the people TREMBLE."

We listen to one revelation of Himself, that He dwells "in the thick darkness." A prior one, on that thick darkness being for the moment unrolled, was in "the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words, which voice those who heard entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more." They beheld Him and feared Him, as "the Lord of hosts." At the march of this great God of armies, "the earth shook, the heavens dropped." "A fire goes before Him and burns up His enemies round about--His lightnings enlightened the world--the earth saw and trembled. The hills melted like wax at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth." "Say unto God, how dreadful are You in Your works! through the greatness of Your power shall Your enemies submit themselves unto You."

Even when we turn to the aid given to their conceptions of the Divine Personality, a mystic cloud covered the mercy-seat of their Temple, shrouding it from every eye but one, and that one could dare approach it only with blood. Well might Paul call this economy of the Theocratic nation, by the name of "the ministration of condemnation." A favored few of the favored people had indeed penetrated that darkness. After the wind and earthquake and fire, they had heard "a still, small voice," and had been taught to sing, "How precious also are Your thoughts unto me, O God," "My soul shall make her boast in the Lord," "O taste and see that the Lord is good, blessed is the man that trusts in Him," "O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good, for His mercy endures forever."

Through the discourses of their Prophets, and the hymns of their Psalmists, many had groped their way to some dim apprehensions of the Divine Fatherhood. Still, to the mass of the Jewish nation He was the Great Incomprehensible; answering them, as He did Job, "out of the whirlwind;" leading them to endorse the utterance of one of the friends of the same Patriarch, "Can you by searching find out God?" With many, moreover, who live under a better and brighter dispensation, are there not similar distorted views entertained of the nature of Jehovah? They think of Him as a mighty Architect, who has piled infinite space with His handiwork--omnipotent, omniscient--dreadful in His holiness, inexorable in His justice, implacable in His vengeance. They have fully apprehended the partial revelation of Him as the punisher of sin, but they have failed to enter the "cleft" of the true Rock, and to gaze on the glorious complement of His character, as the Gracious and Merciful, the Father and the Friend. We repeat, that it is when within these clefts of the Rock of Ages, that latter and more gracious revelation, as in the case of Moses, is given. The paternal relation of Jehovah to His people is manifested in the Person of Him who came to our world the Incarnation of the Divine Spirituality, the Image and Representative of this Invisible God--the unveiler of the essential perfections of Deity. "In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." He is Himself the articulate answer to the query of His impatient disciple, "Lord, show us the Father, and it suffices us"--"He that has seen me," was the reply, "has seen the Father." As there had been a patriarchal, a legal, and a prophetic dispensation--so now Christ comes as the founder and exponent of a filial one. To take the significant opening words of the Apostle in his Epistle to the Hebrews (not as they are rendered in our version, but as they have

been rendered in the full force of the original), "God who at sundry times, and in diverse manners, spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken unto us by a Son." "In creation," says a writer, "He is a God above us; in the law He is a God against us; but in the Gospel He is Immanuel, a God with us, a God like us, a God for us."

Most delightful surely and comforting is this theme of contemplation--Christ the Revealer of the Father. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." Well may He be designated by this appropriate term. For just as 'words' are the outward audible expression of silent invisible thought, so Christ is the expression of the Invisible God--the utterance and embodiment in human shape, of Him who revealed Himself in the dimness of an earlier dispensation as "secret," "wonderful," "incomprehensible." As the natural eye is dazzled by looking on the material sun in his noon-day splendor, and requires some medium through which to gaze on his brightness; so, no man can see the face, or comprehend the character of God, but through the Divine medium who came to our earth--the reflected "brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of His person." "No man has seen God at any time, the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him." The glorious train of the Divine attributes descended and filled the Temple of His body, and over the portico of that Temple stands inscribed in unmistakable characters, "God is love." The false conceptions of Him, as a Being dwelling in thick darkness, ought to be forever dispelled. What says the Apostle, as he points to Him who is "light, and with whom is no darkness at all"? "God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." But this brings us more specifically to inquire, What is the character of this Great God, as manifested and reflected in the Son of His love?

We have only to track the divine footsteps of the Redeemer on earth, and (to use the Apostle's simile), there to behold "as in a mirror the glory of the Lord." What do we see? A Being, indeed, of infinite holiness--unsparing and uncompromising in His rebuke of iniquity, sternly denouncing sin in all its forms, driving with a scourge the sacrilegious traffickers from His Father's house, proclaiming the impending and certain doom awaiting incorrigible sinners, the workers of iniquity; even predicting by discourse and parable the dreadful verities of a judgment-day, and pronouncing everlasting doom on the impenitent and unbelieving; on all traitors to their trust, on all neglectors and squanderers of committed talents; thus repeating, in words not to be misunderstood, the very truth which fell on the ears of Moses in his Rock-cleft, as the sublime voice and vision were dying away--"And that will by no means clear the guilty." But yet, in combination with this, we are called to contemplate ONE of infinite purity, beneficence, tenderness; whose delight was to feed the hungry, to heal the diseased, to help the helpless, to comfort the bereaved; feeling for them; weeping for them--in His parables, giving a welcome to the Prodigal; in His daily communion, never scorning a suppliant's request, or a penitent's tears; listening, even in His expiring agonies, to a cry for mercy from a felon at His side; accepting the widow's mite; making generous allowance for the lack of watchfulness at His own greatest crisis-hour on the part of trusted disciples; pardoning, with the tenderest of rebukes, the aggravated sin of a faithless follower; the prayer, trembling on His dying lips, of forgiveness for His murderers.

Reader! take in, at a glance, this wide comprehensive view of the Savior's life and ministry, and in it you have a picture and impersonation of the character of God. "Behold, the tabernacle of God is

with men." "From henceforth," says Christ, pointing to Himself, "You know the Father, and have seen Him." "I and My Father are one." Yes, there is God! Isaiah's names and titles seem to receive new appropriateness and significancy--"the everlasting FATHER," "Immanuel, God with us." You have obtained, in the person and utterances of that pure, spotless, and beneficent Being, a reply to the words of the Great Prophet--"To whom then will you liken God, or what likeness will you compare unto Him?" In the beautiful Sermon on the Mount, the Divine Teacher, in His spoken words, exhibits before the mental eye of His hearers His Father's hand, in painting the lily, feeding the raven, and watching the sparrow's fall. But it has been well said--"When He would reveal the Father's heart, it is not by His words and discourses, but by His deeds and actions." That life of beneficence and goodness sets His own utterance in golden lettering, "GOD SO loved the world!" The very title of "Father," well near unknown under a former dispensation--how He dwells upon it!--how He delights to interweave it with parable and miracle, and intercessory prayer, and last agony, and first Resurrection-words! Well He knew the tender associations the name and image would call forth among the millions who pondered the story of His incarnation. He would have the sacred earthly relation transfused into the Heavenly. As He puts His people into the clefts of the Rock, and makes all the glory of His goodness to pass by; the proclamation is made, "My Father, and your Father, My God, and your God." He would have them to know and to feel, even in the house of their earthly tabernacle, that they are pacing a Father's halls--a dwelling frescoed and decorated with a Father's love!

Although He himself, their Lord and Savior, is no longer visibly present to the eye of sense yet, having been thus embodied once in human form as the reflection of the Father's character, faith can follow the glorious Image within the veil; and with all the memories of that holy life in view from Bethlehem to Olivet, the key-note to the 'divinely taught' prayer can be struck with filial gladness and joy--"Our Father who is in Heaven, Hallowed be Your name!" It has been beautifully said, "In all our endeavors to raise our thoughts to God, the 'idea of Jesus' comes to our aid like the mystic ladder of the patriarch's dream, and they ascend and descend upon the Son of Man." Yes! thanks to the mystery of His holy incarnation for this full and perfect unfolding of the character of Jehovah. In the Old Testament dispensation, the revelation of God in His Temple evokes from the lips of the worshiper the tremulous exclamation, "Woe is me, for I am undone, for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts." In the New, the experience of the beholder is this--"We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." In the Old Testament dispensation, the first miracle of the Viceregent of God was turning water into blood. In the New, the first miracle of the Divine Viceregent, the Image and Representative of the Father, is turning water into wine. In the Old Testament dispensation, in answer to the question, "Who is this King of glory," the reply is heard, "The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle." In the New Testament dispensation, in answer to the same question, "Who is this King of glory?" there comes, in varied language, like an echo from the Rock of Ages, the response--thus embodied in the uninspired utterance of universal Christendom--"You are the King of glory, O Christ, You are the everlasting Son of the Father!"

Believer, exult more and more in this sublime revelation of God. We have already listened in the prologue of John's Gospel, to the Beloved disciple's testimony alike to the Deity and humanity of Messiah--"the Word was God" "the Word was made flesh." In the equally sublime prologue to his Epistles, when he speaks of "Him who was from the beginning," and of his own amazing privilege

of gazing upon "the manifested Life," he proceeds to deliver a special message confided by this Great Revealer of the Father--"This then is the message which we have heard of Him, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all." Strange that this message should be so often misinterpreted, that the beauties of holiness should be disfigured with the presentation of repulsive and distorted views of the character of Deity. The Romanism of the Middle Ages, which, in Church, and Cathedral, and wayside shrine, depicted the Divine Being (either in person or by the ministry of avenging angels), inflicting every device of material torture, seems, as we have already remarked, to be perpetuated in the minds and creed of many Protestants. Who can wonder that under such gloomy systems of misnamed 'orthodoxy,' the thought of God is a thought of servile terror, which dogs the footsteps like a hideous spectre, and makes the fondest longing of the aggrieved heart to have Him dethroned from His world.

How different the entire scope of the Savior's teaching. His whole object was, "to allure us to God; to win the world to an appreciation of the Father's excellence"--to unsay and repudiate this inversion of His own Word, an inversion which in the case of many might thus be rendered, "God is darkness, and in Him is no light at all." If that Savior's life was a life of love, full of all that was gentle and tender and good, 'Every feature,' He seems to say to us, 'that is attractive in Me, is to be found in the character of Him whom I represent. I am an Image of the Divine mind, reduced to dimensions capable of human comprehension; to know Me is to know the Father, "from henceforth you know Him, and have seen Him." By all I have done, by word or deed, it is He who is commending His love to you.'

What a new force and beauty does there not seem to be, in the challenge of the great Apostle, when read in the light of God's paternal character to us and our filial relation to Him--"He who spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things" (Romans 8:32). 'After giving you,' he seems to say, 'such a pledge of His parental love, can you for a moment suppose that He will exact from you one unnecessary sacrifice, or refuse one really needed blessing within the compass of Omnipotence to bestow?' Every dark letter of mourning and lamentation and woe in the roll of Providence, thus becomes radiant with love. In seeing Jesus, you see the Father. In asking Jesus, you ask the Father. The names are interchangeable. "Whatever you shall ask the Father in My name, He will give it to you." Oh how near does all this bring the great God Almighty! How it represents Him, as regarding with discriminating love each member of His redeemed family; caring for their needs, sympathizing with their sorrows, bearing with their infirmities; loving them--we had almost said doating on them as a Father. How different from the heathen conception of their deities, living in the isolation of a voluptuous calm; far removed from the concerns of earth, devoid of all personal interest in those from whom nevertheless they demanded cruel offerings, and over whom they were often represented as reveling in bloodthirsty malignity.

"God in Christ," "God with us"--"with us," as truly as Jesus was with the anxious Nicodemus, or with the sisters of Bethany, or the widow at Nain, or the disciples tossed on their midnight sea, or the downcast mourners at Emmaus. "God with us"--brought down from the regions of infinite abstraction--challenging our perfect confidence and trustful love--lifting the veil of the Holy of Holies, not to disclose altars drenched with blood, piled with instruments of torture, and resounding with groans of victims, but "to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His Temple."

Children of God, and heirs of Glory! go, breathe your loved and time-worn litany, with the consciousness of a new and glorious meaning and trust--"O God, the Father of heaven! have mercy upon us, miserable sinners." O my gracious Father! I will measure You no longer by any low human standard. Let the kindness and gentleness and beneficence of Him who walked this earth as Your image, teach me evermore to repose unhesitatingly in the everlasting love of Your infinite heart. I will cling to this glorious shelter--in this Rock-cleft "I will lay me down in peace and sleep;" for God is my Father; and GOD IS LOVE!

06.06. THE IMMUTABILITY OF CHRIST

THE IMMUTABILITY OF CHRIST "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and forever."

– Hebrews 13:8

"Build not your nest on any tree of earth, seeing God has sold the forest to Death. But rather soar upwards to the sure and immutable refuge in the Clefs of the Rock." –Samuel Rutherford.

"What a blessing that the Anchor of our love is firmly fixed beneath the cross of Christ; for such a friendship is sure and lasting, not merely held fast by the 'silver cord of life,' which may be snapped in a moment, but embedded in the cleft of the Rock forever." –Hedley

It is the tritest of sayings that everything here is given to change. If the calm blue sky above us were a mirror, what a scene of vicissitude would it reflect! The natural fabric of the world is a monument of mutability. Its aqueous and igneous rocks--strata piled on strata--are so many chapters written on stone tablets, registering successive revolutions. Hill and valley contain in many cases the repositories of extinct races and forms, animal and vegetable--a shelved museum of sepulchered generations. Where the hum of cities now ascends, yes, where mountains raise their heads, the murmur of old ocean once was heard. In marine deposits she has left the unmistakable trace of her footsteps. While on the other hand forests once grew, and living creatures roamed, where now we see a waste of waters, and listen only to the boom of the sounding billows.

Passing from the world's material to its historical annals. These are one long record of change. Nation has succeeded nation, dynasty has succeeded dynasty, as wave follows wave! Excavators in the old kingdoms, alike of East and West, have dragged buried capitals from the tomb of ages. The axe and shovel have disclosed streets grooved with the wheels of chariots, and adorned on either side with the winged symbols of now vanished power. The owl screeches and the jackal howls amid the tenantless wastes of Babylon. The fisherman spreads his net where the green waves laved the Palaces of Tyre. Earth's history and that of its peoples is a humiliating alternation of rise and fall. There has been a constant weaving and unweaving of the web of nations. The magnificent kingdom of Alexander is no sooner made, than it is dismembered and partitioned. The Roman eagle for centuries wings its magnificent flight over a prostrate world; but at last it falls with wings collapsed, and other birds of evil omen from the forests and swamps of northern Europe build their nests in the eaves of the capital. In our own time, who can predict for one brief year what the destinies of contemporary nations may be? what thrones may rock, what scepters may tremble or fall from the feeble hands that grasp them!

If we turn from nations past and present to the record of individual history, how sadly do we see the same vicissitude written, from the smiles at the birth to the tears at the death. Who that has lived for half the threescore and ten but can bear witness? Who that has measured out the fourscore, but can bear more emphatic testimony still? We go back to revisit the haunts consecrated by the remembrances of youth--How changed and metamorphosed often are its most

treasured memorials! In vain we search for the ancestral trees under whose shadow we sat, or the pendent willows that used to kiss the passing rivulet. Strange faces appear at the windows; other hands till the soil; other worshipers crowd the pews of the village church, and another voice speaks from its pulpit. The group that was used to gather under the paternal roof--how the inevitable wave of change has swept over and dispersed it! Many may vividly recall the day--the hour, when that full circle that was used to gather round the hearth was first broken; that day when you stood by the shore and waved the last farewell to a departing brother, who in sailing to a distant land left the first empty chair behind him. Alas! the first instalment of other inroads, other changes yet to follow. Some can speak of more sacred breaches--these hearths pillaged of beloved tenants called to set sail to further shores. And if not of their own circles, cannot all tell, how the friends of their youth, the companions of their boyhood, the associates of their manhood, shipload after shipload have sailed from the shores of time, bound for "the silent land"--that land from whose destination no voyager, no traveler returns. Death is ever busy at work reaping the green corn, as well as gathering in the yellow sheaves. Sepulchers seem to lie along our path. Year by year well-known faces are missed, in the market, the street, the sanctuary. And even if these friends of bygone times are spared, how changed from what many remember them! The once buoyant youth now with silvered hair and furrowed brow; the once athletic frame now stooping with the load of years; the once clear and vigorous intellect now clouded and impaired--memory sharing in the wreck of the crumbling outer tabernacle--nature lapsing into her second childhood!

Some may have to recount changes sadder and more sorrowful still than bereavement--breaches in affection; the friendships of early life cooled and alienated; an unmeant word or unmeant deed undoing and obliterating years of communion; the door rudely closed where the heart has lavished its best stores of kindness. What shall we say of human hopes that have been blighted, human joys that have evaporated like a snow-wreath! golden harvests which the flood has swept away just at the reaping--rock-pillars that have turned out to be sand-pillars; flowers that have drooped, and paled, and died, before summer began--what promised to be a brilliant sunset, only a few fitful pulsations of quivering light, and then, a dull watery setting! And not to pursue these reflections, we need go no farther than examine our own individual minds, our tastes, feelings, opinions, course of life, daily associations and occupations. How constantly changing! The man of fifty is no more like the child or youth, than the oak of half a century is like the sapling or acorn from which it sprang. Molded by ten thousand influences either for good or for evil, through a succession of years, we may almost fail to recognize our former selves! Our spiritual history too, how vacillating!--strong one hour, weaklings the next. On our Carmel heights today; under our juniper trees tomorrow--today we fancy ourselves Asahels, swift of foot; tomorrow "unstable as water!"

Yes! Human life, outwardly, inwardly, is a "shifting spectacle;" so says the apostle of it. He compares it to the moving scenes or characters in the old Grecian theaters--"the fashion" (or the drama) "of this world, passes away." Over the "yesterday" of the past, and the "today" of the present, the clouds of heaven are chasing one another. The waves of its seething, restless sea, are tossing and tumbling in fretful disquietude. And whether these changes have been from prosperity to adversity--or adversity to prosperity; converting life, with some, into a golden viaduct, with others, into "a bridge of sighs," they conduct alike to the one final goal. The path of sorrow as well as the path of glory "leads but to the grave."

Oh! amid this heaving ocean of vicissitude--amid severed friendships and buried loves--amid these crude heart-tearings of human caprice and surging passion, is there no spot whereon we can plant our foot--no rock-cleft where the wandering, tempest-tossed dove can fold its weary wing and sink in repose? This brings us from the mutable to consider the Immutable. The words which head this chapter, proclaim the unchanging love of Christ--an Immutability--arising (as has already been fully considered in previous chapters), out of the Infinite perfection of His own Infinite Being, as "God over all, blessed forever," and yet as "Immanuel, God with us." What He was in the Yesterday of the eternal past when dwelling in the bosom of the Father, He continued at the time of His incarnation, when still, as God, in very deed He dwelt with men on the earth and He shall continue to be forever! We are reminded of some gigantic Alpine peak unsealed and unscalable by human footstep--covered summer and winter with virgin snow. It seems to look down with kingly demeanor on the angry elements beneath. While these are holding wild riot, it has not a jewel in its icy crown displaced--not a ruffle made in its glistening mantle--not a wrinkle on its everlasting brow. Emblem of the Rock of Ages. Though in His human nature--as the Man of Sorrows--the Surety and Representative of the fallen, furrowed with flood and tempest--"His Visage more marred than any man's, and His form more than the sons of men,"--in the calm glory of His adorable Godhead He is "without variableness or shadow of turning." Amid the alterations in earth's material framework, the convulsions of nations, the fluctuations of human thought and feeling, He remains immutably the same. The march of events works no change in Him--"The Lord sits upon (yes above) the water-floods--yes, the Lord sits King forever!" Blessed truth! the unchangeableness of Jehovah-Jesus--"O come, let us sing unto the Lord--let us make a joyful noise unto the Rock of our salvation."

Specially comforting is it for us to connect the Savior of the present, with the Savior who lived and loved of old, in the days of His humiliation--to go the round of His deeds of mercy; to cull from gospel story all His words of encouragement, His sayings as well as His doings, and transfer their perpetual unchanging solace to ourselves! Did He invite the weary? Did He give the assurance that as the Good Shepherd He came to seek the lost--that as the Son of Man He had power on earth to forgive sins? Did He dry the tears of disconsolate mourners by proclaiming Himself as the Resurrection and the Life? In sealing up the vision and prophecy, did He give, as His last utterance to the Church, the precious invitation, "Whoever will, let him take of the water of life freely?" Each of these sayings, and many more, come to us this day with the same reality and freshness as when they first welled forth from these lips of love and tenderness.

Other declarations of earth's wisest and greatest may have lost their power and meaning--but Christ's sayings are forever true and relevant. Other highways may be broken up by the lapse of ages--but this highway of golden words and promises and deeds remains unaltered. Other fitful gleams of light have been cast on the Christian's dungeon-wall for a few moments and then vanished--but these, like Vestal fires, are to burn on forever.

Believer, amid the fitfulness and uncertainty of earth and earthly things, come and enter into this Rock-cleft of a Savior's unchanging faithfulness. "Trust not in man, nor in the son of man, in whom is no help."

It may be that some who read these pages may have had, or may be even now having, painful personal proof of that mutability, uncertainty, evanescence and transitoriness, of which we have

spoken. You may have felt by experience, how often those joys, which like the bright berries in the summer woods are beautiful to the eye, prove bitter to the taste; how often the loveliest cloud in the life-sky condenses at last into a shower and then falls; how the loveliest rainbow-hue dissolves; how riches take to themselves wings and flee away; capricious fortune forsaking, often just when the golden dream seems most surely realized! But "HE has said, I will never leave you nor forsake you." Have you never observed, that while in the course of a long succession of years the scenery on a river's bank may be changed, the river itself remains the same? Formerly it was used, it may be, to flow through secluded woods--its waters, murmuring by forest glades, where the wild deer stole down on the silent eve undisturbed by human step. Now hives of industry are lining its course; ponderous wheels are revolving, and the clang of hammers are resounding, where the woodman's axe alone was formerly heard. But the river itself, unchanged and unchangeable, carries its unfailing tributary-torrent to the main. So it is with Him who is as "the River of God." The earthly valley through which that river flows is a scene of change. But onward it rolls its own glorious volume of everlasting love. "There is a river the streams whereof make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High. God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved!" "Behold," says the same Immutable One, in another metaphor, "I have engraved you on the palms of My hands." Not on the mountains, colossal as they are, for they shall depart; on no leaf of nature's vast volume, for the last fires shall scorch them; not on blazing sun, for he shall grow dim with age; or on glorious heavens, for they shall be folded together as a scroll. But on the hand which made the worlds, the hand which was transfixed on Calvary, the hand of might and love--I have engraved you there. No corroding power can efface the writing, obliterate the name--you are Mine now, and Mine forever!

AGED Christian, old inhabitant of the forest, the frosts of winter silvering your branches--you who feel yourself left alone; too advanced in life to make new friendships, and none, even if you formed them, that could fill the blank of old ones--blessed, we say for you, with your own years failing, your own strength impaired, your loved ones taken from your side, to lift your tearful eye on the Great Unchanging, and to say, amid these slanting shadows, and stripped boughs, and wintry skies--"But YOU--oh, YOU, are the same, and Your years shall not fail!"

DESPONDING Christian (it may be erring and backsliding one), you who feel clouds and darkness dimming the brightness of former days, cast down because of your coldness and deadness. Past or recent sin may have covered you with shame and sorrow. You may, like the disciples, have slept glorious opportunities away. You may be wondering if Christ can still cast on you, as once He did, a pitying eye. Your mournful soliloquy and pensive musing is this--"Surely my way is hidden from the Lord!" Be comforted. "If we believe not, He abides faithful. He cannot deny Himself." You may have changed towards Him--but He is unchanged towards you. The clouds may intervene, but the unchanging Sun shines the same as ever in the skies. Looking away from your own fluctuating self, you may revert with chastened confidence to the day of your spiritual espousals, when you knew and felt that He loved you; and then take courage in the conviction that His love is unchanged, that it can admit of no diminishing nor decay.

BEREAVED Christian, you who have been called more specially to experience the sorrows of life, how consolatory to know that there is one prop that cannot give way, one Friend beyond the reach of vicissitude, who is working out your soul's everlasting well-being in His own calm world, far above and beyond the heavings and convulsions of ours. One who is the same amid storm and

sunshine, births and deaths, marriage peals and funeral knells--of whom you can say, amid the wreck of all human confidences, "The Lord lives, and blessed be MY ROCK!" No more. When, we ask, is the thought of the immutability of Christ most precious to you? Is it not just when your own heart and your own flesh are fainting and failing--when lover and friend are put far from you, and your acquaintance into darkness? Like trees which the winds of autumn have stripped of their leaves, you are led, in the very wrestling with these storms, to moor your roots firmer and faster and deeper in the Rock of Ages! You can tell alike as your experience and your confidence--

"Our lives are like the shadows

On sunny hills that lie,

Or flowers which deck the meadows

That blossom but to die. A sleep, a dream, a story,

By strangers quickly told;

An evanescent glory

Of things that soon grow old. But You--THE ROCK OF AGES

For evermore have been;

What time the tempest rages

Our dwelling-place serene."

Yes, sheltered in these clefts, you can feel the glad assurance, that no desolating wave which has swept away your earthly moorings, can ever separate you from the love of Christ. You can see the rainbow of the covenant resting majestically on the stormy billows, and read on its luminous scroll of ruby and emerald and gold the glorious superscription--"I am the Lord, I do not change."

06.07. THE SYMPATHY OF JESUS

THE SYMPATHY OF JESUS

"For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are--yet was without sin." – Hebrews 4:15

"This happiness Christ gives to all His--that as a Savior He once suffered for them, and that as a Friend He always suffers with them." –South, 1633.

O Sirs! there is in Jesus something proportionable to all the straits, necessities, and desires of His poor people." –Thomas Brooks, 1635.

"Jesus is the great sympathetic nerve of the Church, over which all the oppressions and sufferings of His people distinctly pass. Surveying this scene of overtoiled labor, and sleepless anxiety, and wasting solicitude, in which mortals are embroiled, the voice of Jesus--the Friend of man--the tender Sympathizer with human woe, is heard rising in tones of the kindest compassion." –Harris. The Rock Christ--the Rock of Deity--the Rock high above the lower valley--mantled in clouds, as if veiled with cherub's wings; inaccessible to human footstep--its glorious summits the privileged home of angels. What affinity can there be between this Mighty God and puny man--between Omnipotence and weakness--Deity and dust?

Affinity, yes more than affinity there is! That Rock, whose top, like the Patriarch's ladder, reaches to heaven, has its base on the earth. The Great Redeemer, as we have already seen, combines the attributes of Godhead with the attributes and characteristics of a true and veritable humanity. To one of the most beautiful features of that humanity--the divine Sympathy of Jesus--this new Rock-cleft introduces us.

Among the heart's most sacred and hallowed emotions, none is surely more hallowed than Sympathy. In these dependent natures of ours, who, in the season of need has not longed for it--and when it comes, has not welcomed it like the presence of a ministering angel? Others working with us, feeling for us--sharing our toils, helping us to carry our burdens; entering into our hopes, our joys, our sorrows; to see the responsive tear glistening in the eye--all this is a mighty strengthener and sustainer amid the vicissitudes of chequered life. The lonely fisherman on the stormy sea has his midnight of weariness, and it may be of peril; is charmed, as he glances towards the light gleaming in the hut on the shore, and thinks of the wakeful vigils of the loving hearts within. The soldier in his camp under the starry heavens, thousands of miles intervening between him and his native soil, is cheered by the very tread of the sentinel, or the breathing of the slumbering forms around him--or he remembers the far-off home and those whose sympathetic spirits are with him--and the thought is like cold water to a thirsty soul. The martyr at the stake has been often nerved for endurance by the whisper of "Courage, brother!" from the fellow-victim at his side. How the Great Apostle in his Roman dungeon--when he was "such an one as Paul the aged" was cheered by the visits of congenial friends, such as Timothy and Onesiphorus! How touchingly does the illustrious captive invoke God's richest blessings on the latter and on his household,

for "often refreshing him and not being ashamed of his chain."

If human sympathy be thus gladdening and grateful, what must be the pure--exalted--sinless--unselfish Sympathy emanating from the heart of the Great Brother-Man? It is of this, we shall now speak; and taking the words which head this chapter to lead our thoughts, let us consider these two points embraced in them--The sympathy of Jesus, the Great High Priest of His Church; and the one exceptional characteristic here mentioned, that, "Though in all points tempted as we are"--it was "Yet without sin."

Genuine Sympathy requires that there be an identity, or at all events a similarity of nature, between him who sympathizes and the object of sympathy. The holy Angel, when he sees the children of fallen humanity in sorrow, may pity; but he cannot sympathize with them. Why? Because he never himself shed a tear; his nature never felt pang of trial, or assault of temptation. We see the worm writhing on the ground--we know it is in agony--suffering pain. We pity it--but we cannot sympathize with it. Why? because it is in a different scale of being.

Even in the case of the human family, in their condolence with one another--the finer elements of sympathy are lacking, unless they have passed through the same school of experience. Look at the BEGGAR on the street--the man or woman in ragged tatters, with half-naked children in their arms, singing for a livelihood from door to door. Who, in the majority of instances, are found most ready to respond to the appeal for support? Observation will prove, that it is not the rich, not even the middle class; most frequently it is the poor themselves. We have often marked such charity willingly doled out by the laborer, returning from his place of toil at meal-hour, in workman's attire--one who perhaps himself had known the bitter blast of adversity--what it is to have closed factory doors and silent shuttles, and at whose blackened fires grim poverty once sat--his sympathy arises out of identity of experience with the sufferers. The BEREAVED tell the story of their swept and desolated home to a friend--a friend too, it may be, full to overflowing with natural feeling. He may listen with heartfelt emotion to all they have to say--but he has never laid a loved one in the grave--death has never invaded his dwelling--the overwhelming wave of bereavement has never left traces of desolation on his soul. Another comes in. He may not have the same natural strong emotions or sensibilities. But he has consigned treasure after treasure to "the narrow house"--he has himself waded through the deep waters--the woes of others have been traced and chiseled in his own heart of hearts; and consequently the very deeps of his being are stirred. More than one endorsed letter has been sent, in recent years, by our beloved Queen, to those in high places who have been called to exchange crowns and coronets for weeds of mourning. These, under any circumstances, would have been a grateful and prized expression of royal condolence. But how much more touchingly and tenderly such utterances came home to those bleeding hearts, when the writing, within its deep border, was known to be blotted with the tears of kindred widowhood! The same remark may be made with reference to PREACHING. How often do we hear trial dwelt upon in our pulpits by the lips of youth--young (and nevertheless faithful) servants of their heavenly Master, who expatiate on the deathbed, the grave, the broken heart, the wilderness-world, earth "vanity and vexation of spirit." But yet (say as they will), they have only adopted the phraseology of others--they speak from no experience--they believe it all to be true, but they have never felt it to be true. Their words therefore come home with little power; they may even grate upon the ear, as being, in the lips of the declaimers, unnatural and inappropriate. But bring some aged, venerable man--some old veteran in the school of trial, whose

memory and soul are ploughed and furrowed with deep scars; whose friends in the unseen world number as many as in this--Listen to him, as he pours oil and wine into the mourner's bosom! How pulse beats responsive to pulse, and heart to heart. He has been "touched with a fellow-feeling," for he has been in all respects tried even as they. He has been in the furnace himself; the arrow of comfort and sympathy comes feathered from his own bosom; and when sorrow and trial are the theme of his preaching, he speaks feelingly, because he feels deeply.

All this has its loftiest exemplification in the sublime sympathy of the Son of God. He is "touched with the feeling of our infirmities" Why? Because "He has been tempted in every way, just as we are." His is a deep, yearning, real sympathy arising out of His true and real humanity. His was not an angel-life. He was not, as many falsely picture Him, half Angel, half God--looking down on a fallen world from the far distant heights of His heavenly throne. But He descended, and walked in the midst of it, pitching His tent (as we have seen) among its families--"He did not take on Himself the nature of Angels, but He took on Him the seed of Abraham." The Great Physician lived in the world's hospital. He did not write out His cures in His remote dwelling in the skies, refusing to come into personal contact with the patients. He walked its every ward. With His own hand He felt the fevered pulses; His own eyes gazed on the sufferer's tears. He stood not by the fiery furnace as a spectator, but there was one in it "like the Son of God." To leave us the less doubt as to His capacity for entering into the feelings and sorrows of His people; note His own longing after sympathy. In the Garden of Gethsemane He could not pray the prayer of His agony without it--"Sit here, while I go and pray yonder." How cherished to Him was the family home of Bethany, just because He could there pour out the tale of His own sorrows in the ears of congenial human friends. Even at the last scene of all, how sustained He was by human presence! "Now there stood by the cross of Jesus, His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary, the wife of Cleopas, and Mary Magdalene." Oh blessed thought! He knows our frame; for He had that frame Himself. "Behold the Man!" Every heart-throb you feel evokes a kindred pulsation in the bosom of the Prince of Sufferers; for "He that sanctifies, and those who are sanctified, are all of one (nature)." But let us advert to one or two special characteristics.

(1.) It is a PRESENT sympathy. He IS touched with a feeling of our infirmities. "I know their sorrows"--not, 'I have known them once, but have now forgotten them in My state of glorification; I once bore this frame of yours, but the human nature is merged in the divine.' No. "I AM He who lives."

"Though now ascended up on high,

He bends on earth a brother's eye;

Partaker of the human name,

He knows the frailty of our frame.

"Our fellow-sufferer yet retains

A fellow-feeling of our pains;

And still remembers in the skies

His tears, His agonies, and cries."

(2.) Another characteristic is that of INTENSITY. Relationship is one of the elements which generates and intensifies sympathy. A man feels for the sufferings of a fellow-man--but if that sufferer be a relative, connected by ties of blood or affection, how much deeper the emotion. A stranger standing on the pier, seeing a child or youth struggling in the waves, would feel an uncontrollable impulse to rush to its rescue. If a swimmer, he would plunge into the sea, and cleaving his way through the surge, would make every effort to snatch the child from a watery grave. But what would be his feelings in comparison with those of her, who, from the same spot, beheld in that drowning one the child of her bosom? The pity of the former would be coldness itself in comparison with her combined emotions of anguish and tenderness. The dwellers in the wild valley of Dauphiny, who saw the eagle bearing the infant in its talons to the lofty rock, were moved with horror at the scene, and made several brave efforts to effect a rescue. But it was the mother alone, whose love bore her with fleet foot from crag to crag, until reaching the perilous crag, she was in time to clasp the living captive to her bosom, and say--"This my child was dead and is alive again, it was lost and is found." Such is the intensity and tenderness of the love and sympathy of Jesus, the "living Kinsman"--He who is Parent, Friend, Brother, all in one. "Lord, behold he whom You love is sick"--"Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities those who fear Him"--"As one whom his mother comforts, so will I comfort you."

(3.) The sympathy of Christ is a COMPREHENSIVE and PARTICULAR sympathy--embracing not only all His Church but every individual member of it. It takes in the whole range of human infirmities; outward troubles, inward perplexities, unspoken griefs with which a stranger dare not meddle. No trial, no pang, no tear, escapes His eye. With a microscopic power "He knows our frame, He remembers that we are dust," as if we stood alone in the world, and individually engrossed all His solitudes. A grain of sand, almost imperceptible, affects the tender organ of sight. This is the Bible emblem of the divine-human sympathy--"He that touches you, touches the pupil of His eye."

How varied were the methods by which Jesus, when on earth, expressed His sympathetic love and thoughtful compassion! Not to rehearse familiar instances already given, see how, in order to dispel their misgivings, He joins the two disconsolate followers on the way to Emmaus, how He appoints a special meeting to clear up the doubts of Thomas. His last earthly thought on the cross is providing a home for a mother and a disciple--"Woman, behold your Son!--Son, behold your Mother!"

(4.) The sympathy of the Divine Redeemer was ACTIVE--not a mere emotion evaporating in sentimental feeling; the casket without the jewel. There are those who can be touched by reading the pages of a romance, who shed tears over the columns of a newspaper; yet who, though thus able to indulge in fictitious griefs, stretch out no hand of substantial support to the needy; who, like Priest and Levite in the parable, can see a wounded fellow-being, and leave him half dead. Not so Christ--He is the world's good Samaritan, binding up the wounds of aching humanity. He was sent to "heal the brokenhearted;" and nobly did He fulfill His commission--"Our friend Lazarus sleeps, but I GO that I may awake him out of sleep." The Divine Consoler never mocked the children of sorrow with a stone when they asked for bread--saying, in the cold heartlessness of the mere sentimentalist, "Depart in peace, be warmed and filled." He "went about doing good."

(5.) His was, moreover, an ABIDING sympathy. The world's sympathy is often short-lived. It cannot penetrate the depths and recesses of the smitten heart. It cannot make allowances for intense grief. It offers its tribute of condolence at the moment; but if the heart-wounds remain unhealed, it has its own harsh verdict on inordinate sorrow. The ripples in the water where some treasured bark has gone down, have closed again; the world's vessels cross and recross the spot, but no vestige, no legend of the catastrophe is left on the unstable element. Sorrowful anniversaries come back, but they are all unnoted, save by the bereft one, who has learned to lock up these sacred griefs and to weep alone. There is ONE, abiding, unchanging Sympathizer--the Immutable Savior! The moss may gather over the tombstone, and almost obliterate the lettering--but no corroding hand of time or of years--

"Can e'er efface us from His heart,

Or make His love decay." The sympathy of the dearest earthly friend may be evanescent; brother may be estranged from brother, sister from sister--friend from friend. But "there is a Friend that sticks closer than a brother."

We can do little more than notice, in closing, the 'exceptional clause' in the Apostle's statement, that this Great High Priest, touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and tempted in all points even as we are, was "yet without sin." Does not this one sentence, however, neutralize, or at least render much inappropriate and inapplicable, of what we have already said? If perfectly sinless, how could He be tempted? and if not tempted, how could He feel? If perfectly sinless, how could He enter into the most poignant part of our woes, the assaults of corruption, the wiles of the Great Adversary?

We must be careful to guard with jealousy this precious jewel in the Savior's humanity, His "IMPECCABILITY." He was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners." He could utter the unanswerable challenge, "Who of you convinces Me of sin?" There was no affinity in His nature with sin or temptation. Apply the lighted torch to the loaded cannon, it will at once give out its voice of thunder because loaded with the explosive element. But, apply the fuse to that same piece of artillery in which the fulminating ingredients are not; it will remain mute and harmless as the rocks and stones around--and the timid bird can nestle safely in its barrel. So it was with the sinless nature of Christ. Temptation, in His case, was the lighted torch applied to the uncharged, unloaded cannon. Ignition was impossible; for affinity there was none between the Tempted and the Tempter. But though incapable of sin, and incapable of temptation in the sense of being overcome by it, He was not incapable of suffering by it. "He SUFFERED, being tempted." The very holiness of His nature--the very recoil of His spotless soul from evil--made the presence of sin, and of temptation, the cause of unutterable anguish. And these same refined sensibilities impart to Him now, a livelier and acuter sympathy for those who are tempted; just as the purer the glass, or the brighter the metal, the more visibly are they sullied if breathed upon.

Though the Prince of this world came and found nothing in Him--though no device could drag Him from His steadfastness--though the sinless One rolled back wave on wave of temptation, and sent the Adversary away, thwarted among his legions of darkness; did He not feel, with a shrinking and sensitiveness all His own, that Tempter's presence and power? Hear the testimony and exclamation of His own lips--"Now is My soul troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save Me from this hour, but for this cause I came unto this hour." When He was standing in meek, silent majesty

in Pilate's Judgment-Hall--the Lamb speechless before His shearers--Incarnate Truth in the midst of error, impiety, and blasphemy--or on the cross, while listening to the cruel taunt and ribald jest of the passers-by--did He feel nothing? Though breathed in silence, here is His prophetic experience--

"My enemies surround Me like a herd of bulls;
fierce bulls of Bashan have hemmed Me in!
Like roaring lions attacking their prey,
they come at Me with open mouths.
My life is poured out like water,
and all My bones are out of joint.
My heart is like wax,
melting within Me.
My strength has dried up like sunbaked clay.
My tongue sticks to the roof of My mouth.
You have laid Me in the dust and left me for dead.
My enemies surround me like a pack of dogs;
an evil gang closes in on Me.
They have pierced My hands and feet.
I can count every bone in My body.
My enemies stare at Me and gloat.
They divide My clothes among themselves
and throw dice for My garments.
O Lord, do not stay away!
You are my strength; come quickly to My aid!
Rescue Me from a violent death;
spare My precious life from these dogs.
Snatch Me from the lions' jaws,
and from the horns of these wild oxen."

Psalms 22:12-21

Believe it--it is not a sinful nature, or sinful practice, that makes us feel a deeper sympathy with our fellow-sinners. As it has been well observed, when David was living in scandalous and unrepented of sin--when his conscience was blunted, and prayer restrained before God; then he had no sympathy--no mercy for the cruel author of a hypothetical case of violence and wrong. When Nathan told him the story-parable about the ewe-lamb--"The man that has done this," said David, "shall surely die." Sin hardens the heart; blunts the sensibilities. It is the highest and purest specimens of humanity who are the kindest, best, most tender. What, then, must it be with the Great Ideal of all excellence; the sinless God-man Mediator?

Yes! if I wish a true, perfect sympathizer, I look to Him, who, while He had (and He has at this moment) a real humanity, is, at the same time, "the Holy One of God"--"tempted," "yet without sin;" and exult in the Prophet's words of comfort--all the more because of His infinite purity--"A 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."

Reader, do you know what it is to take refuge in this glorious Rock-cleft, the Sympathy of Jesus? There are crisis-hours in our lives when more especially we need strong support--when, like Jacob at Bethel, we are all alone in a desolate place--the sun of our earthly happiness set, and our summer friends gone. Or like John, as he wandered in Patmos, the sole survivor of the Apostolic band, old fellow-disciples and companions removed--like a tree left solitary in the forest. These are the times when the Savior delights to come, showing us the ladder which connects the pillow of stones and the weary sleeper with the heights of heaven--or, as in the case of the lonely exile of the Aegean Sea, raising us from our prostrate condition, and whispering in our ears His own gentle accents of reassuring peace! It is when the tempest is fiercest, we know the preciousness of such a Refuge--"When my heart is overwhelmed, lead me to THE ROCK THAT IS HIGHER THAN I!"

06.08. THE TENDERNESS OF JESUS

THE TENDERNESS OF JESUS "A bruised reed He will not break, and a smoldering wick He will not snuff out." Isaiah 42:3

"He will feed His flock like a shepherd. He will carry the lambs in His arms, holding them close to His heart. He will gently lead the mother sheep with their young." Isaiah 40:11 "He has never yet put out a dim candle that was lighted at the Sun of Righteousness." –Charnock, 1628.

"Upon Palm Sunday, when Jesus rode triumphantly into Jerusalem, and was adorned with the acclamations of a King and a God, He wet the Palms with His tears, sweeter than the drops of manna, or the little pearls of heaven that descended upon Mount Hermon; weeping, in the midst of His triumph, over obstinate, perishing, and malicious Jerusalem." –Jeremy Taylor, 1613.

"When our heart does but relent, His melts; when our eye merely pities, His affections yearn. How many vices and defects of ours does He smother, how many indignities does He pass by; and how many affronts does He put up with at our hands, because His love is invincible." –South, 1633.

"Shall not the Redeemer's tears move you? They signify the sincerity of His love and pity--the truth and tenderness of His compassion. His tears were the natural genuine expressions of genuine beneficence and pity." –John Howe, 1630. The TENDERNESS OF JESUS is a Rock-cleft, which, though nearly allied to that spoken of in our last, seems to suggest and to claim a special consideration. A writer has remarked, that the only occasion during our Lord's public ministry, on which He laid claim to any human excellency, was when He uttered the words recorded in Matthew's Gospel--"I am meek and lowly in heart." This is not the character which the world values. These are rather some of its self-laudations, its loudest trumpet-blasts--'I am great, I am rich, I am courageous, I am cultured, I am learned.' It does obeisance to "The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power." As we had occasion to note in a previous chapter, the old Pagan qualities eulogized and canonized were bravery, manliness, heroism, and the like. Humility, meekness and gentleness were unknown in their calendar of virtues. It was reserved for the Prince of Peace to claim as His special characteristic that He cast away no bruised reeds--that He trampled out no smoking flax!

What a contrast here, also, with other religious teachers, in the weapons employed for the propagation of their tenets. Fire, and sword, and scimitar, have in most instances paved the way for spiritual conquest. Indeed, unlike their Master, even the best of His own Apostolic band had no milder method to suggest in dealing with schismatics. In imitation of the Fiery Prophet, they would have called down lightning-bolts from Heaven on the churlish Samaritans. Peter's unsheathed sword would have dealt deathly vengeance on the High Priest's Servant. But in both cases there was an instantaneous rebuke from the tender lips of their Lord--"The Son of Man came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them." "Put up again your sword into his place, for all those who take the sword shall perish with the sword."

"He had no curses," says an eloquent divine, "for His foes--no blows for His enemies. Such was His gentleness, that when He might have shaken the earth and rocked the thrones of tyrants, and made every idol-god totter from its blood-stained throne, He put forth no such physical power, but still stood with melting heart and tearful eyes, inviting sinners to come to Him; using no lash but His love--no battle-axe and weapon of war but His grace." In dwelling for a little on the Gentleness and Tenderness of Jesus, let us begin by referring to one or two Old Testament prophetic intimations regarding this special feature in the character of the predicted Messiah. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me," said Isaiah, "because He has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the meek. He has sent Me to bind up the broken-hearted." "You have been a refuge for the poor, a refuge for the needy in his distress, a shelter from the storm and a shade from the heat."

Oriental kings and potentates of old delighted in OSTENTATION and DISPLAY. Solomon rode in his cedar chariot, with his body-guard running in glittering attire by his side, their hair covered with dust of gold. But see how prophecy describes this Greater than Solomon, as He goes forth in triumphal state--"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem--behold, your King comes unto you--He is just, and having salvation; LOWLY, and riding upon an donkey, and upon a colt the foal of an donkey." TENDERNESS was the sweet fragrance that was to exude from every leaf and blossom of the Stem of Jesse--"He shall grow up before him as a tender plant." The watchmen in the Canticles, when they met the dejected spouse, wounded her and tore off her veil. When she met her Lord, she receives no angry word--no look of upbraiding. "He shall deliver the needy when he cries--the poor also, and him that has no helper." "You are fairer than the children of men; grace (graciousness, tenderness) is poured into Your lips."

Passing from prophecy to its fulfillment; the whole ministry of Jesus on earth was the picture of which these are the framework. The opening act of that ministry is the proclamation of His tenderness. The earliest public utterances of a king or statesman are generally taken as indicative of the policy and principles which are to regulate his future career. How beautifully was the initial text He Himself selected in the synagogue at Nazareth, illustrated by a life and example of gentleness and love. Not, like the manifesto of many public men, misrepresented through fickleness and caprice, or the delirium of success--their promised acts and deeds of generosity and benignity lapsing into coldness, and selfishness, and austerity. As we watch the crowds of helpless and diseased, sick and fevered, orphaned, friendless, and dying, who thronged the way wherever He went, we see how the tenderness of His words was endorsed and countersigned by His equally tender deeds.

Let us go and stand by that PORCH OF MERCY and witness the throng, as severally, they approach with their tale of anxiety and perplexity--sorrow and sin.

Here is one! He comes by night. When the evening shadows have closed around Jerusalem, and no unkindly human eye is able to track his footsteps, he sneaks to those gates of compassion. His soul is fevered and restless. He is sick at heart with the worn-out conventional forms of Judaism, and longing to hear of the principles of the new Kingdom. How tenderly does the Great Teacher listen to the questions of this anxious inquirer, in the anguish of his first convictions, and unfold to him the wondrous story of God's everlasting love!

Here is another! An avaricious tax-gatherer; one who, in all probability, in common with the class to which he belonged, had preyed upon widows and orphans in extorting his unscrupulous gains;

one, moreover, who, on account of his extortionate calling, we may well believe had seldom or ever listened to a kind or generous word from his brother townsmen of Jericho; rather, who had been subjected on all sides, and not undeservedly, to suspicion and distrust. Strange and novel must have been the gleam of tenderness in that eye which scanned him among the thick branches of the sycamore; remarkable the kindness conveyed in the intimation which fell on his ears, "Zaccheus, today I will abide at your house." The word of the infinitely pure One, awoke sensibilities that were dormant, or rather, which had been crushed and stifled by an unsympathizing world, and "he received Him joyfully."

Here is another! He is the most bruised and broken of all--one who had imagined himself strong in faith, giving glory to God; but who had ignominiously bent before the blast of temptation and had denied his divine Master with oaths and curses. Can there be anything of tenderness manifested towards the renegade Apostle? Surely he has placed himself, by his heinous guilt and craven cowardice, beyond the pale of forgiveness. No! when we might have thought the heart he had grievously wounded was alienated from him forever, there was first a "look" of infinite love--a melting glance, which sent him forth to weep bitter tears over foul ingratitude; and subsequently a message, entrusted to the Angel-guardian of the sepulcher and conveyed by him to the three women, "Go your way, tell His disciples and Peter." 'Go, tell the most faithless of My followers, that even for him there is still a place in My tender regard. Go, tell this wandering bird with drooping wing and soiled plumage, that even for him there is a place of shelter still open in the clefts of the Rock.' No more--when Jesus met him subsequently on the shores of Gennesaret, instead of dragging afresh to light painful memories of abused kindness and broken vows, all now too deeply felt to need being recalled; no severer utterance for unworthy apostasy was pronounced, than the gentle rebuke conveyed in the thrice-repeated challenge, "Do you love Me?"

Or, if we may revert to a yet earlier scene in His ministry, it is the occasion on which 'degraded guilt' was brought face to face with 'perfect Purity and Innocence'. He does not palliate the enormity of transgression. By no means! But He who read the heart, makes it an opportunity of proclaiming what His mission is, as a mission of forgiveness. He utters, in the case of the sinner who then confronted Him (as in that of the other weeping Magdalene who bedewed His feet with her tears), the gracious absolution, "Neither do I condemn you; go, and sin no more." He again refuses to break the bruised reed and to quench the smoking flax; to send a wreck of misery out, unsuccoured, amid the black night and the howling pitiless winds. "Go and learn," He seems to say, "what this means, I will have mercy and not sacrifice." "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

Indeed, when pronouncing some of His most impressive woes and threatenings, He appears, at times, as if He dreaded lest any broken-hearted one might misinterpret His sayings, and construe His wrath against sin and hypocrisy, as indicating a lack of consideration to the penitent. Take as an example the occasion when He had been proclaiming stern words regarding the contemporary "sinful generation;" more especially rebuking them for their blind unbelief in the midst of light and privilege; declaring that for those cities which had scorned His message (Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum), it would be more tolerable in the day of judgment for Sodom and Gomorrah than for them. He seems suddenly to pause. The storm has exhausted itself. Possibly amid the crowd who had just listened to these utterances of wrath, His Omniscient eye discerned some trembling outcast--some brittle reed or sapling bending beneath the hurricane. He will not allow it to be

broken. He will not permit the wind and earthquake and fire to pass, without being followed by a 'still small voice'--and then it is, that the words (unparalleled in their tenderness and beauty among all He ever spoke) come like a gleam after the tempest, or like a rainbow encircling with its lovely hues the angry spray--"Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." In His last prayer preceding the Passion, how touching are His pleadings in behalf alike of His disciples and His Church! More like a mother's tenderness over her defenseless children, when, leaving the parental care, they are sent forth lonely and unbefriended to face and fight the battles of life in an ungenial world. In the climax of His own humiliation, when nailed to the cross of Calvary, how tenderly does He commit His dearest earthly relative to the keeping of His dearest human friend! How tenderly in the extremity of anguish and soul-desertion, does He speak words of heart-cheer to the dying thief at His side! How tenderly does He plead for those who had entwined the thorn-crown around His bleeding brows, and driven the rough iron into those hands which had never been employed save to cure--never uplifted except to bless! On the Mount of Ascension, when the gates of heaven were ajar, and its distant hallelujahs of welcome to "the King of glory" were already wafted to His ear--how tenderly He breathes a farewell on the orphaned band; as if all His thoughts and all His love were still centered on those He was about to leave behind Him--the last vision imprinted on their memories being that of His arms uplifted in benediction! When He meets the beloved disciple in Patmos, and the awestruck beholder, dazzled with the luster of His glorified humanity, falls at His feet as one dead--how tenderly is he reminded that he is in the presence of the same unchanged and unchanging ONE, on whose bosom of love he had often pillowed his head on earth. At midnight, years before, on the dark, stormy surface of Gennesaret, the Spirit-form he and his fellow-disciples so much dreaded, spoke the reassuring word, "It is I; do not be afraid!" 'That same Jesus' comes down now from the still waters of the river of life--the nightless city of the crystal sea, with the same well-remembered soothing lullaby--"He laid His right hand upon me, saying, 'do not be afraid!'" It was, yet again, "as one whom his mother comforts." Oh, when the aged Evangelist and honored Prophet retired to Ephesus, in the evening of his life, to put in writing personal experience of the Divine dealings, well might he say (regarding these and other remembrances, indelibly impressed on him, of his living, loving Lord), "We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth!"

Let it, however, be very carefully noted, that there was nothing indiscriminate in the tenderness of Christ. It was tenderness towards the weak, the poor, the helpless, the penitent, the erring. There was, as we have already had occasion to remark, no tenderness towards sin. On the contrary, there was uncompromising severity towards all wrong-doing and hypocrisy, oppression and untruthfulness. How unsparingly He lashed the vices of the age! With what withering words He confronted and combated Pharisee and Sadducee! When the tears were scarcely dry which He wept over Jerusalem, the scourge was in His hand driving the sacrilegious traffickers from the Temple-courts, who had converted the most sacred ground on earth, into place and opportunity for ministering to their own avarice! "Get these out of here! How dare you turn my Father's house into a market!" was His voice of stern rebuke, as the guilty crowd fled affrighted from His presence.

Side by side with the Parable of the Vineyard laborers, wherein, even at the eleventh hour, a welcome was offered and wages given to every unhired idler in the market-place--we have the Parable of the Blighted Fig-tree on the heights of Olivet (with its pretentious foliage--"nothing but leaves")--stretching out its skeleton arms to heaven, a monument of vengeance--this the

malediction uttered against it by these same lips of compassion--"From now on, let no fruit grow upon you forever!"

Reader, do you know the preciousness of the Rock-cleft on which we have been dwelling? amid the rough blasts of life, to take shelter in the Tenderness of Him whose love is better, truer, more enduring, than that of the kindest and most loving of earthly friends? Have you learned to sing amid the moanings of the storm--

"Jesus, Refuge of my soul,

Let me to Your bosom fly;

When the waters o'er me roll,

While the tempest still is high?" Do you know what it is, as one of the sheep of His pasture, when weary and footsore, panting, and burdened--to run to this Infinitely gracious Shepherd, who, in the beautiful metaphor of Isaiah already quoted, delights to carry the Lambs in His arms and gently to lead His burdened ones?

WHAT ARE THESE BURDENS? They are many and diversified. With one, it may be that of CONVICTION OF SIN. You may have reached the momentous time in your spiritual history, when conscience has awoke from the 'low dream of earth' with quickened sensibility--when forgotten sins are brought before you in vivid memorial; the obligations of a misspent life flashing upon you the reality of a hopeless bankruptcy; and you feel how utterly vain is the plea with which you have long sought to delude yourself--"Have patience with me, and I will pay You all." You may feel, to change the figure, that in yourself you are the most worthless and abandoned of prodigals; that you have righteously forfeited a place within the paternal halls! But, He is waiting your return. He sees you, haggard, hunger-stricken--sick at heart. He watches the first indications of penitential sorrow. While yet "a great way off," He is ready with the fond embrace and the kindly welcome. Wondrous tenderness, surely, do these His own words describe, in that surpassingly touching parable--"His Father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck and kissed him." What! the riotous living--the spendthrift life--the debasing companionship, all forgotten? Yes, by that one kiss of forgiveness, all is buried in everlasting oblivion! With another--it may be the burden of declension and backsliding--the guilt of apostasy from a first love--the decay of the inner life. Permitted sin and permitted worldliness have superinduced languor and lethargy. You are not what once you were--you have lost tenderness of conviction--you have blunted the fine edge of conscience--the old ardor in the divine race is gone; you have allowed the tooth of earthly cares to corrode--petty vexations and annoyances to eat out the kernel of religion--"the little foxes" have entered unchallenged the soul's vineyard and spoiled the grapes. None more bruised and broken than you. The flax, once burning clear, gives forth now nothing but noxious smoke--polluting and poisoning the atmosphere of your spiritual being! Despond not. The forgiving love and tenderness of Christ can meet your case. Burdened one, He your Shepherd is willing gently to lead you also. He will rekindle these smouldering ashes of a dying love--He will "strengthen the things which remain that are ready to die."

What says He, by the lips of the Prophet, to His backsliding people? (and He says the same to you)--"you keep right on doing all the evil you can"--(as much as to say--'You could not have done worse'). "Yet," He adds, "O Israel, My faithless people, come home to Me again, for I am merciful. I

will not be angry with you forever. Only acknowledge your guilt. Admit that you rebelled against the Lord your God and committed adultery against Him by worshiping idols under every green tree. Confess that you refused to follow Me. I, the Lord, have spoken!" Jeremiah 3:12-13 With another, the burden may be of a different kind. It maybe the burden of SORROW AND TRIAL. He may have touched you to the quick. It may be the woundings of friends--hardships in leading a religious life--the jeers and mockings of ungodly companions, or those of your own household. It may be the loss of worldly substance, or the blighting of fond affection, or the yawning chasm made by death and bereavement--these and similar causes may have made you weary and heavy-laden--or left you a broken bruised reed on the world's highway. You may be unable to trace the mystery of the Divine dealings--you may be even tempted to indulge in unworthy surmises regarding the Divine faithfulness!

What a blessed Rock-cleft for you also, in the tenderness of Him, who, being a disciple Himself in this school of affliction, is able to enter with exquisite sensitiveness into all your sorrows. That apparently 'rough voice' of the true Joseph to His brethren, is 'tenderness in disguise'. He will not speak too roughly. He knows what you can bear. He will temper the wind to the shorn lamb--He will make this sorrow, whatever it is, fruitful in blessing--"For thus says the Lord--as the new wine is found in the cluster, and one says, Destroy it not, for a blessing is in it--so will I do for My servant's sake." So tender is He, that He feels what is done to His people as if it were done to Himself--"Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?" The faintest sound of woe still, as of old, arrests His ear. As in nature, He alike guides the planets in their orbits, and watches the fall of the sparrow; as He alike tends the kingly sun and the lowly dewdrop--so in the moral and spiritual world. While He receives the archangel's homage, He listens to the cry of the infant on its knees--or notes the tear and the wail of the widow in her agony. Like His own shepherd in the parable, He rejoices to go after the lost one--the worst truant of the fold--"until He find it."

O You, into whose lips grace is poured!--You Mighty One!--Yet infinitely tender!--ride forth in Your glory and in Your Majesty, "because of truth and meekness and righteousness!" Forbid that it should be, in the case of any perusing these pages, as with Jerusalem of old--that tears of compassion should be accompanied and followed by words of reproach and doom. "How often would I have gathered you!" How often would I have rescued the broken reed, and fanned the smoking flax--carried the feeble lamb, led the burdened, and given rest to the weary--"but you would not--therefore now is your house left unto you desolate!"

Blessed be God, that voice of kindness still sounds in our ears--that waiting Savior--though His "head be wet with dew and His locks with the drops of the night"--still stands knocking, with tones of tenderness on His lips, and the hoarded love of Eternity in His heart! The Great Apostle had many incentives to use, many golden chains with which to moor the tempest-tossed to the Rock of Ages. Among these is the very theme of our present chapter--"Now I Paul beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ." It was indeed no new or original argument. It was that taught and enforced by his great Lord Himself--when He said, in the memorable words already quoted, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me--for I am gentle and humble in heart." The traveler who refused to part with his cloak at the bidding of the furious chilling wind, surrendered it to the warming influence of the sun. What the tempests of the law--"the terrors of the Lord"--fail to effect--may be accomplished, and often is accomplished, by the gracious beams radiating from the true 'Sun of

Righteousness'. Let us own their potency. Let us fall down, vanquished by His gentleness.

Blessed Savior, let the tenderness of Your deeds on earth--the tenderness of Your invitations to the weary and the burdened--the tenderness of Your tears wept over Jerusalem--the tenderness of Your words spoken in Your death-agony, salvation to the felon and forgiveness to the murderers--let these and other memories of gospel story--like a peal of heavenly bells, summon me to enter the opened gates of mercy. Let me listen to them, as the many-toned voices of the Beloved inviting to flee to the 'Clefts of the Rock.' There, safe--secure--at rest forever, and with the blessed consciousness of all the elevating, ennobling privileges to which Your bleeding love has exalted me--may it be mine to say in the triumphant words of the Psalmist, "You have also given me the shield of Your salvation; and Your right hand has held me up, and YOUR GENTLENESS HAS MADE ME GREAT."

06.09. CHRIST THE PEACE GIVER

CHRIST THE PEACE GIVER

"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid." – John 14:27 And just as they were telling about it, Jesus himself was suddenly standing there among them. He said, "Peace be with you." – Luke 24:36

"I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world." – John 16:33

"Therefore, since we have been made right in God's sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us." – Romans 5:1 "The heart never rests until it finds rest in God." –Augustine, 410.

"Jesus came to me in the third watch of the night, walking upon the waters. He stilled the tempest in my soul--and lo! there was a great calm!" –Halyburton, 1670.

"Oh, that I might effectually recommend to you the full possession of that precious legacy of our blessed Savior--peace." –Hall, 1574. No shadow of the "Great Rock in the weary land," is more precious to the children of humanity than this. The circumstances in which the Savior uttered these words were interesting and peculiar, and give a deep pathos to His declaration. It was at a time, one would have thought, of the deepest unrest and anxiety to His own soul; a time when the saying, "My peace I give unto you," would have seemed a strange and questionable blessing--for the shadows of the cross were gathering around Him; the Prince of darkness was prowling on His path; and the dreadful scenes of Gethsemane and Calvary were close at hand. And yet it was then (yes, at the very moment when the Rock of Ages was wrapped in portentous gloom), that Jesus speaks of the calm and the rest awaiting those who find shelter in its clefts. He was delivering His final charge to His disciples; imparting to them directions, comforts, and promises--His farewell benediction. Some consolation, higher than earth could afford, was needed, when the Shepherd was about to be smitten and the sheep to be scattered. In the clouds of that dark, troubled horizon He sets the rainbow of covenant Peace. His utterance was more than a promise--it is couched in the formula of a last Will--a Testamentary deed. It is the dying legacy which the Prince of Peace bequeaths to His Church and people in every age.

Taking these words of Jesus more specially to guide our thoughts, let us advert to three, out of many characteristics of this priceless legacy.

I. It is A WELL-FOUNDED PEACE--and in this respect it is "not as the world gives." By reason of the great original apostasy, the soul of man has lost its peace; and fallen nature, not unaware of the loss, yet all ignorant where the forfeited blessing is to be recovered, is engaged in a perpetual effort to effect the restoration. In ten thousand ways does the world "minister to a mind diseased," singing its siren lullaby--"Peace, Peace;" while, from the unsatisfied aching voids of the heart, the

echo is returned, "No peace." The object desired being too often sought either at forbidden or at polluted fountains, multitudes fail to secure the coveted prize. The Peace enjoyed by the believer in Jesus, is full, complete, satisfying. It rests on the broad foundation of His atoning work and sacrifice, ratified by the Father and sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. It is the death of the Divine Testator which enables us, by law, to enter on this bequeathed heritage--"Where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the Testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead--otherwise it is of no strength at all while the Testator lives." Never was a Will so "proved" and "attested" as this. The adorable Redeemer surrendered His precious life, in order that (in the words just quoted from the Epistle to the Hebrews) it might be rendered "of force." Moreover, unlike all mere human and earthly Testators, He rose from the grave and ascended to His Father's right hand, to see its provisions and bequests implemented. He who executed this testamentary disposition is still our Advocate in the Court of Heaven--and, as such, He will take care that all His heirs are granted the purchased blessings.

It is a peace founded on the principles of everlasting truth and everlasting righteousness. As its primary condition, it secures alike the vindication of the divine law and the manifestation of the divine glory; for the Angels who came to announce the restoration of the lost heritage, sang--"Glory to God in the highest," before they proclaimed "Peace on earth." Let us think of it, then, as a peace purchased by Jesus--"Peace through the blood of His cross." In no other way could it have been procured. By no other could it be bestowed. No voice, but the voice which exclaimed in dying accents, "It is finished," can say to the troubled tempest-tossed soul--"Peace, be still." In the familiar Bible narrative, we see the heathen sailors rowing hard to bring the vessel to land, in whose hold was the fugitive Prophet. It was in vain. "The sea raged, and was tempestuous"--wave after wave baffled strength of oar and muscle. What then was their recourse? The sacrifice of the one life was demanded and surrendered for the sake of the others. So it was with the true Jonah. When He was taken and cast into the deep--that deep was hushed into a calm--its fury stilled--every tumultuous billow rocked to rest--"The sea ceased from her raging." "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." As it was sin that was the cause of disharmony, so the Redeemer, by His propitiatory, meritorious sacrifice, has taken that cause away. He has effected the atonement, ("at-one-ment.") "He is our peace, who has made both one." We are "made near by the blood of Christ." In a striking passage in Isaiah, God and man, by a bold figure of speech, are represented as at war with one another--God "going through the wicked" as "briers and thorns" and "burning them up together." But a gracious alternative is also provided and offered--"OR, let him take hold of My strength that he may make peace with Me, and he shall make peace with Me." "He SHALL." Peace is uncertain and precarious in other things. It is often a hollow truce, which hushes for a time the clang of arms, only to have the strife resumed. But it is certain here--for the "one offering" of the Great Peacemaker, who is God's "Strength,"--"the Arm of the Lord"--"the Man of His right hand"--has given Him the prerogative to utter the words, "You shall find rest unto your souls."

Let all those who are going about seeking peace and finding none, shelter themselves under the eagle-wings of this glorious truth. That peace is no simulation--no counterfeit. There is no flaw in these title-deeds. It is a perfect peace--peace with God above, and peace with conscience within--peace secured by the Sufferer on the Cross, and ratified by the Kingly Intercessor on the Throne. Like the weary bird, after tracking its way across long leagues of waste ocean, the

believer can sink into the crevice of the Great Rock, and sing the song of an older heir of covenant blessings, "Return unto your Rest (your Peace), O my soul."

II. Another characteristic of the peace of Christ is, that it is a PRESENT peace; and as such, "not as the world gives." The world's visions of peace are most generally prospective; the world's notes are promissory. Many of its best blessings are mere hopes and wishes for the future. Its hope 'deferred' too often makes the heart sick. Its future is full of air-castles in due time to be raised; but when the longed-for season of realization comes, how often they turn out to be airy nothings, "baseless fabrics of a vision."

Many a man has a lifetime to wait, before the hopes of youth are fulfilled; and when the wealth or the leisure he has aspired after, or the broad acres he has hoped to inherit come to him, frequently he cannot enjoy them. The zest of life is over; the tinted soap-bubble he has for long years been inflating collapses, and new worries and troubles take the place of the old ones! Not so the peace of Jesus. It is a peace, indeed, largely of future enjoyment in a better world; but it is a peace, if not in degree, at least in kind, possessed in the present also. The moment the offers of grace are closed with and accepted, the charter of peace is put into the believer's hands. He receives the first instalment of the gracious benefaction, "We who have believed DO enter into rest." "All who believe are justified." "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God." "I AM pacified," says God, "towards you." "Beloved NOW are we the sons of God." The Prodigal, in returning to his Father's house, had not first to undergo years of probation before he received the kiss of peace and reconciliation and love; he had not to wait until the flush of health had filled his sunken cheeks, or until clad in proper attire he could venture into his Father's presence. No--just as he was--in all the rags of the 'far country'--with haggard face, and trembling limb, and sunken eye--he receives the paternal welcome, and gets the best ring, and robe, and shoes, put upon him.

Reader, think of this! If you have been brought, self-renouncing and sin-renouncing, to the foot of the cross, the peace of God and of His Christ is already yours. If that peace had been in any way your own procuring, then might its attainment be effected only after years of laborious effort. But being purchased, you have only to come and accept it as a free gift, a blessed gratuity; being bequeathed to you, you have only to claim joyfully the inheritance, and enter on its possession--"giving thanks unto the Father, who HAS made us fitt to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." It was a common salutation among the Jews in entering a dwelling of old, "Peace be upon this house." So Jesus, standing by the threshold of every believing penitent soul, says, as He said to His gathered disciples on the evening of His resurrection day, "Peace be unto you." "My peace I GIVE unto you" (not "I shall give"). "O, my dove, who is in the clefts of the Rock."

III. A third characteristic of the peace of Jesus is, that it is a PERMANENT peace--and as such, it is "not as the world gives." Many of the world's best blessings, those which are considered to minister most effectually to outward happiness and inward tranquillity, may be ours today--but be gone tomorrow. We have no pledge or guarantee for their continuance. They are fed from the low marshy grounds of earth, dependent on fitful seasons and capricious showers. But the peace of Christ being from Heaven, is a perennial stream; it is fed from surer supply than glacier Alps, and it rolls on in undiminished fullness and volume, in summer's drought and in winter's cold.

It is the greatest of mistakes to suppose that mere outward things--fame, wealth, property, honors, give peace. It is often the reverse. They give care and anxiety. They give birth to envyings and jealousies, to discontent and ingratitude. They are as often a man's curse as a blessing. But the peace of Jesus is irrespective and independent of all outward accidents. It bears up and sustains amid the annoyances of business, the crushings of poverty, the weariness of sickness, the pangs of bereavement, the shadows of death.

Yes! if you would wish to understand the true meaning of that phrase, "the peace of God which passes all understanding," go to the believer's dying couch; see (what may be witnessed again and again) when earth is dimming from the view--when the footsteps are standing on the threshold of the mysterious spirit-world, and all that is held dear is to be parted from forever. Listen to the words so often whispered, "All is peace--perfect peace." And as the color fades from the cheek, and the smile of heaven suffuses the now hushed and silent lips, oh, how is the promise--(realized indeed, all through life--but never more so than in life's closing hour)--how is that promise then fulfilled--"You will KEEP him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You."

Among the glorious army of MARTYRS, who have then witnessed and exemplified the sustaining peace of God, those at all events familiar with Scottish annals, may recall one whose calm heroism is made more memorable in a familiar picture. There God's noble-minded servant is represented reclining on a crude couch. He has the horrors of execution before him on the morrow; yet he lies in tranquil slumber, like a babe on its mother's breast. When the waves of death are dashing at his feet, he calmly reposes in this Rock-cleft of peace! Well may the gifted author of the "Pilgrim's Progress" give the name of "PEACE" to the chamber "in which Christian lay," and whose "window opened towards the sun-rising."

We may conclude with a word of EXPLANATION, and a word of exhortation.

It must not be imagined, from what has been said, that the believer's history is one of unclouded calm--a sky in which there brood no storms--a path in which there lurk no briars. That strange paradox of the apostle will be true to the last in the Christian's experience, "sorrowful yet always rejoicing." Paul, even when he speaks of peace, exhorts to have "the feet SHOD;" for, notwithstanding its possession, the road is often a rough and a thorny one. The same voice which proclaims, "My peace I give unto you," adds, "In the world you shall have tribulation." The way to peace is often through the channel of unrest and trial; just as the water that sleeps quietly in the pool has found its way there over jagged rock and foaming cataract. The disciples' way to land, and that too at their Master's bidding, was through a stormy sea, "toiling in rowing." The Israelites' road to the rest of Canaan was through the barren wilderness. Jacob's way to spiritual victory, and a peace to which he was a stranger before, was through a night of wrestling and soul-struggle. The afflictions of life--temptation without and corruption within--are ever and always ruffling the calm repose of the soul, and reminding that true peace and abiding rest are above. "Beloved," says Peter, "think it not strange concerning the fiery trial that is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you." This is the history of every harpist on the glassy sea, "These are they who came out of great tribulation."

Amid all trials, however, it is the believer's consolation, that, despite of outer disquietudes, the true peace of Christ itself cannot be disturbed. The former are only like the surface-heavings of the

ocean. That surface alone is fretted and ruffled. Go down into its unexplored depths, among its luscious wildernesses of sub-marine seaweed--its coral rocks and wondrous mosaic of pebble and sand, and all is peaceful and still. No rolling billow is heard there--no roaring breaker--no scream of storm-birds. So with the soul! In its lowest, truest depths, all is peace. The ship may be tossed, but its moorings are secure. In the same sentence in which the pressure of present corruption impels Paul to cry out, "O wretched man that I am;" he adds, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." He bemoans the tossings of the frail bark in one breath--he remembers the strength and security of the anchor in the next. The believer's subjective peace, the calm assurance or consciousness of his interest in Christ, may be often assailed. But the peace itself cannot be. The clouds, engendered by sin and weakness and unbelief, may at times obscure from his vision the rays of the Sun. But the Sun, notwithstanding, shines brightly as ever. Once that peace is his, he knows it never can be finally forfeited. The flowing of the spiritual river may be impeded; there may be opposing rocks which here and there disturb the even course of its current--but it will surmount them all, and mingle its waters at last in the ocean of eternal peace and love in heaven.

Meanwhile, beware of creating such obstructions as will tend to mar your peace--indulged sin, or neglected duty. You may be personally responsible for diverting the river from its channel, and leaving your soul "a dry and thirsty land where no water is." "Great peace," says the Psalmist, "have they who love your law, and nothing can make them stumble." Keep out of the way of temptation; avoid the brink of the precipice if you would avert a fall. Keep beyond reach of the fire lest you be burnt. "Oh," exclaims the great Giver of peace, speaking to His backsliding Israel, "Oh that you had hearkened to My commandments, then had your peace been as a river." What is the apostle's recipe for the preservation of peace? "Be anxious for nothing," says he, "but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving . . . and the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts." Walk," he again enjoins, "in the Spirit;" and what is the result? "The fruit," he adds, "of the Spirit is love, joy, PEACE."

Let us add yet a word of EXHORTATION. Some may fancy themselves in the happy position of not requiring this gospel blessing of which we have been speaking. They are undisturbed by any fears of guilt. They know no accusations of conscience. They contrive to banish the thought of death and what is after death. Aye, even when they come to that solemn crisis hour, the Psalmist's description may be true of them--they have "no bands in their death; their strength is firm." Is this, however, peace? Yes. But it is the peace of the cemetery. The dead "know not anything." No voice reaches the ears in that silent land. The voice of affection, the sobs of the disconsolate, may break over the grassy turf; but they hear them not. The "loud stunning tide of human care" may go surging past the narrow homes--the speechless tenants listen to no footsteps; the clang of battle may be heard raging close by, profaning the sanctity of 'God's acre;'--the sound of no trumpet or clarion, no clash of arms nor roll of drum, wakes one echo in that 'empire of oblivion'; silence sways her unchallenged scepter. It is the dread stillness and peace of death! Beware of such a peace of the soul as this. It is possible to continue, even to the last, self-deluded and self-deceived, and to die with a lie in your right hand. But be assured, from such a peace there will be a terrible awaking. It is only the portentous silence which, in the outer world, holds nature silent before the bursting of the thunderstorm. "There is no peace"--there can be no peace, "says God, to the wicked." Be it yours to ascertain, before it be too late, on what foundation your peace rests. Give up the vain dream of procuring peace in anything short of Jesus. No wealth can give it; no

wealth of money, no wealth of intellect, no wealth of affection. Live near the cross, and peace is yours. "How beautiful upon the mountains" are the feet of the divine messenger who "publishes peace!"

You may now be racked with care, fevered with disappointment, and, worse than all, bound and fettered with sin. Like the maniac of old dwelling among the tombs, you may be roaming the moral wastes, crying and cutting yourself with stones. One voice alone can tame you, and change the storm of the soul into a calm--that one is JESUS. There (at His cross and His feet) you will have possession of peace--peace from the condemning sentence of the law--peace from the accusations of a guilty conscience--peace amid the trials of life--peace in the prospect of approaching dissolution. You will have peace in the gladdening, sustaining conviction that all events are under your Redeemer's control--that He orders all that concerns your temporal and eternal well-being. You can sleep securely in the tempest, for the helm is in the hands of Him whom these winds and waves obey. "The work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance forever."

Speed, then, your flight, O weary wanderer, to the true Ark. The true Noah, the "Rest," the Peace-giver, invites you within. Seize the olive-branch, and wing your way across the stormy waters. The bough on which your earthly nest was built, may have been felled by the axe or broken by the storm; but "He is our peace." And as driven by the windy tempest your cry is, "O Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world, grant me Your peace!"--O Rock of Ages, cleft and smitten for me, grant me Your shelter! May it be yours to listen to the glad response, "My peace I give unto you"--"Though you have lived among the pots, yet shall you be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold."

06.10. CHRIST A SAVIOR TO THE UTTERMOST

CHRIST A SAVIOR TO THE UTTERMOST "He is able also to save unto the uttermost, those who come unto God by Him." – Hebrews 7:25

"Who is a God like You? None can pardon as You do. None can pardon so freely; none so fully; none so eternally; none so effectually, as You do. It is all one to You, whatever the sins are; and all one to You, whose the sins are; so long as they come ask pardon of You. –Caryl, 1670. The pressing, urgent question with a thousand thousand anxious souls--overwhelmed with the weight of aggravated transgression--is this--"Can this God-Man-Redeemer--this Surety-Substitute--be a Savior for all indiscriminately? A shelter and refuge for others, can these Rock-clefts be open for the guiltiest?" It is the old controversy that Satan has with many--whom he first goads on to presumption, and then, when entangled in his meshes, he seeks to drive to despair. Many such has that merciless warder shut up in the deepest dungeons of "Doubting Castle"--gloomy cells, where the sunlight is forbidden to enter--and rung over them the knell of 'extinguished hope'. The crushing thought of personal unworthiness--the memories of guilty bygone years, rise up before them like avenging angels.

What! this Savior and salvation for ME--it cannot be! I have plunged madly into sin--not, like others, because I have never been warned--never counseled--never known the tenderness of a mother's prayers, nor the sanctity of a father's entreaties, nor the privileges of a hallowed home. I have been oblivious of all these. Even now, I seem to listen (though in years long gone by), to voices which I have lived basely to scorn--to counsels I have trampled on--the retrospect all the sadder by the reflection that the lips which spoke them are hushed in the grave--and the arms that of old cuddled me, as on Sabbath night I knelt by the loved knee, are mouldering in the tomb.

What! Christ receive ME, with all that diary of a misspent, godless, defiant life unveiled to His omniscient eye!--deeds of foul depravity--outbursts of fiery passion--malignant purposes of revenge--dishonest deals in business--undermining my neighbor and my friend's name and character to advance my own--secret crimes which have involved the ruin of the innocent--my own ship fatally sunk--but worse far than this, miserable wrecks for which I am guiltily responsible, strewing the shores. Mine is not, as it is with many, a mere upper layer of iniquity; but it is deposit on deposit--strata piled on strata--the mournful consolidation of a life of sin; ten thousand echoes ring along the dreary corridors of the past, "lost! lost! lost!" "Surely my way is hidden from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God." No not so! Aggravated as your case is, it is never hopeless; you cannot hear your spiritual death-knell tolled, so long as you can read the golden letters which head this meditation--"Able to save unto the uttermost." You may have been to the uttermost a sinner--you may have gone the sickening round of all life's follies--run riot of its whole enchanted circle--no prodigal may have ever wallowed deeper in the mire and morass than you. O Israel, you may have destroyed yourself--there may be not one redeeming feature in your case--not one gleaning left for the grape-gatherer--you may be a stripped, defenseless, degenerate Vine--fit only for the axe and the cumberer's doom. But hearken to the words of

God--"In Me is your help." "I know the thoughts which I think towards you--thoughts of peace and not of evil!" "I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions, and as a cloud your sins." "I--even I"--the very Being you have most deeply injured--whose Spirit you have grieved--whose mercies you have scorned--I, the Almighty Creditor, am ready to grant and sign a full pardon--"Him that comes unto Me I will in nowise cast out." The Stronger than the strong man armed, sounds the silver trumpet of jubilee, "He has sent Me to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound." And blessed have been the millions who have heard that joyful sound!

There is indeed one sin mentioned in Scripture, but only one, which debars any soul from the Savior--the sin which is left purposely wrapped in its own undefined dreadful mystery--"the sin against the Holy Spirit!" But if there be, in the case of the most apparently hopeless, one breathing of penitence--one prayerful aspiration after a nobler being, then we believe we are warranted in saying, that which is called "the unpardonable sin" you have not committed. If you had, your heart would have been utterly impervious to conviction--all the avenues of conscience would have been closed. Like the fool spoken of by the Psalmist who has reached the climax of his hardihood, you would have remained callous and indifferent to every pleading voice, alike in Providence and grace--despising the credulous weakness of those around you who are listening to 'the idle tales,' and saying in your inmost heart--"No God for me!"

However far therefore you may have fallen, if the feeblest sigh of contrition be still heaved, it demonstrates that you are still a 'prisoner of hope,' and gives you encouragement to "turn to the stronghold." One warming beam of the Sun of Righteousness finding its way amid the frigid icebergs of your moral being, is evidence sufficient that you are not left icebound in the winter of eternal desertion; in one word, that yours is not the sin that is beyond the reach of forgiveness; but that we are abundantly warranted to address you now in the glorious words, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him, and unto our God, and He will abundantly pardon." "Why sit still?" says Bunyan, in his "Jerusalem Sinner Saved"--"arise. Why stand still? 'Begin at Jerusalem' is your call and authority to come. Therefore, up! and shoulder it, man! Say, Stand away, Devil, Christ calls me--stand away, unbelief, Christ calls me--stand away, all you my desponding apprehensions, for my Savior calls me to receive of His mercy."

Let us not, however, in these encouraging thoughts, be misunderstood. Let none say--If such be the gracious, unrestricted offer of the Gospel--if Christ can save the vilest and the basest--if He can save at the very verge and extremity of life, may I not live now as I please, and trust to His mercy at my deathbed? No! That Gospel of pardon and forgiveness is not for the future, it is for the present moment. The words are not--"He SHALL be able to save to the uttermost," but "He IS able"--not "he who SHALL believe," but "he who believes shall be saved." You can put no presumptuous reliance on a deferred repentance. Moreover, be assured, the farther you advance in willful unbelief and impenitence, the harder will it be to put an arrest on your downward course. The stone, as it descends from the mountain top, increases in momentum and velocity. Each new bound it takes, is alike greater and swifter, until with a final leap it disappears. Every hour you live unsaved, you are bounding, like that stone, with accelerated speed, down the dark precipices. The child's hand can stop in its course a ball of snow as it is loosened at the hill summit, but who could arrest its rush, when grown into an avalanche, it thunders onward from crag to crag towards the

Valley. Add to this--by guilty presumptuous delay, you miss the present joy and happiness of forgiveness--the joy, while walking through this world, while mingling in its cares and duties and trials, of rising above them all, under the elevating consciousness "I am forgiven;" and of joining in the sweet melody--"O Lord, I will praise You, for though You were angry with me, Your anger is turned away, and You comforted me!"

One other closing thought suggests itself, by laying emphasis on the first word of our motto--"HE is able to save." Christ is not only a Savior to the uttermost, but He is the only Savior. Reject Him, and "there is no more offering for sin." "Neither is there salvation in any other." "Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, who is Jesus Christ." How many are reluctant to accept of this truth in all its unqualified freeness. They would sincerely raise up some personal work in the matter of their justification. They refuse to entrust to the great Physician their entire cure. They would gather some of the balm of Gilead with their own hands--they would weave some of the web of merit on their own loom. Others would vaunt their good deeds, and make these excuse and palliate their bad deeds; striking a balance between merit and demerit; presuming that by a law of moral compensation, the average will fully entitle them to God's favor. Others hope to meet the undischarged debt of the past and condone shortcomings by a better future, giving the promissory-note to the great Creditor, "Have patience with me, and I will pay You all." But what says Jehovah? "I, even I, am the Lord, and beside me there is NO Savior." Nothing dare come in the place of the one work of Immanuel. The giant deed of His doing and dying must stand alone in its integrity, admitting neither substitute nor supplement. "Salvation," says the Psalmist (from first to last), "salvation belongs unto God." Those attempting to thrust in something of meritorious SELF, only put stumbling-blocks in the king's highway. They only load the wings of the dove with needless encumbrances--hamper and retard its flight to the clefts of the one Rock of safety. They are trusting their anchors, not to a chain of iron but to a cord of thread. They are doing what will all be undone. They are ploughing the sand only that it may collapse in its own furrow. They are laboring in the fire only to have the result of their toil consumed. They are building on the bough of the tree whose roots the winter flood is fast sapping, instead of having "their nest in a rock."

"He only," says the Minstrel King, "is my Rock and my Salvation." "Lord, save me, else I perish," said Peter, as, with sinking step, he turned his eye from the unstable billow to the Divine Being at his side. Perhaps it was with this Gennesaret memory recalled, that he could, long afterwards, proclaim to skeptic Jews and mocking heathen the noble confession of his faith--"There is no other name given under heaven among men whereby we must be saved."

Ah, when shall the self-deceived and self-satisfied learn, not to come, like Naaman, to the door of the true Elisha, with ornamented horses and magnificent chariot filled with gifts, expecting to be told to do some "great thing?"--but ready, at the bidding of the Gracious Physician, to go with their incurable leprosy straight to the waters of the living stream, and there "wash and be clean." "Ho, every one that thirsts, come to the waters, and he that has no money--come! buy and eat; yes, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price."

You, then, who are wandering "in the wilderness in a solitary way," your soul fainting within you, mocked again and again with the mirage of life, the hollow nothingness of this painted world; or you, perhaps, whose wilderness experience is different; the hot blinding wind of trial unexpectedly

overtaking you, strewing your caravan on the desert sands, and leaving priceless treasures hidden from your sight--oh turn from the perishable to the imperishable; turn from torn tents and shattered canvas to the only secure shelter, saying, "The Lord lives, and blessed be my Rock, and let the God of my salvation be exalted." Thousands on thousands, with drooping wing and wailing cry, have flown for refuge beyond the storm-clouds of earth to these glorious Rock-clefts, and yet there is room; pardon for all, peace for all, heaven for all. Hear the sainted multitude, as, in garments whiter than snow, they cast their crowns before the throne and pour forth their eternal anthem to the one Savior--"You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood!"

06.11. CHRIST RISEN

CHRIST RISEN "The Lord is risen indeed!" – Luke 24:34

Among the many Rock-clefts of the believer's trust, pre-eminent in importance and value is the Resurrection of Jesus, forming as it does the crowning proof of the Redeemer's divine mission. In the hour indeed of deepest humiliation, when pouring out His life's blood on the cross, there were not lacking signs and miracles which evidenced and proclaimed His Godhead glory. There were wondrous symbols in the heavens, and strange convulsions on earth. The shrouded dead rose from their graves. The High Priest was disturbed in his devotions by the mysterious rending of the temple-veil. The sun was draped in darkness as if his race were prematurely run. But, along with these, there were also startling contrasts. His marred visage is motionless, in death. He who saved others seems powerless to save Himself; He has perished with a felon's excruciating torture. The funeral rites are over. He who raised others from the tomb, is Himself laid lifeless in the sepulcher. The stone is rolled to the mouth of the cave, and the fond hopes of the disconsolate disciples seem crushed forever--"We hoped it had been He that would have redeemed Israel." But on the third day the Divine Conqueror rose triumphant. The glad tidings are circulated from lip to lip, "The Lord is risen indeed;" and from that memorable moment He was declared in apostolic teaching, to be "the Son of God with power, by the resurrection from the dead." As this was the most important fact of all the incidents of the incarnation to have established on clear and decisive evidence (Christianity as a system must stand or fall with it), so did God provide that it should be accredited and authenticated by "many infallible PROOFS." Let us in a few words enumerate these. The Jewish authorities made sure His sepulcher. It was a sepulcher hewn out of a rock--leaving being thus impossible, except by the one entrance. A band of Roman soldiers were stationed around it, to whom sleeping on watch would have been dishonor and death. A clear passover moon, also, defied the abstracting of the body by stealth in the dark. And with regard to the testimony of the disciples, it is incredible, when all the circumstances are weighed, that they could be either deceivers or self-deceived. What motive could a handful of illiterate, unsophisticated men have had, in secretly possessing themselves of a dead body, and upholding an imposture? What possibly could induce them to circulate and uphold a cunningly devised fable, when persecution and imprisonment was their only recompense for doing so? Peter had more than once shown a craven spirit. What could have made this Feeble-heart become "bold as a lion," if we resolve that boldness into a mission through the world to defend a lie, and at last to be crucified, as tradition asserts, in a more cruel form and with more intense physical suffering than his Master? And the same is equally true with regard to all the others. There was nothing conceivable for these unlettered, simple-hearted fishermen to gain, by propagating an enormous falsehood. It could bring them neither riches, nor worldly influence, nor renown. It would infallibly draw down upon them scorn and contempt, if not bonds and suffering and death--martyrdom, as in the case of James, with the sword--long exile and lonely banishment as in the case of John.

Paul, also, like "one born out of due time," had surrendered all his hopes of earthly distinction to uphold the fact of a risen Savior. Wonderfully does he unfold and vindicate this cardinal article of

his creed, in that noble treatise on the Resurrection, contained in the 15th chapter of 1st Corinthians. His pleadings are not like the pleadings of a deceiving advocate--a man who was propping up a desperate and untenable cause--it is the grand exposition of one who would stake his all, yes, life itself, on his fervid heartfelt utterances.

While they had thus no conceivable object in deceiving others, it is equally impossible and improbable that the apostles could themselves have been deceived. It is true they were plain men, but they were no fanatics. They were just such a jury as in this country would enlist our confidence, in submitting a case for decision, which required no more than the testimony of their senses and average powers of discrimination. Though unskilled in the world's wisdom and philosophy and science, they possessed honest minds, capable of taking broad and commonsense views of things. And if some would aver, that, as the disciples of Christ who had accompanied with Him, they were likely to be biased in their opinions, and more disposed than others to be credulous--we know from their own conduct, on the day of alleged resurrection, that it was not so--rather the reverse. They were slow to believe--their faith had been shattered by the crucifixion-scene. When the Risen Lord appeared, not a few doubted; others denounced the wondrous tidings of a vacant sepulcher as "idle tales;" one would not give his assent until he could have tangible evidence of the fact. Not until he had touched the gash of the spear and the holes in the hands and feet, would he renounce his incredulity, and give in his adherence, as he did, by the emphatic utterance, "My Lord and my God."

Add to this, for the space of forty days after the resurrection, they had been familiar with their Lord's presence--so familiar, as to make sure of His personal identity. Their eyes had seen--their ears had heard--their hands had handled the Word of Life; enabling them to give the united testimony (James, Peter, the twelve, the "five hundred brethren at once"), "This Jesus, God has raised up, whereof we ALL are witnesses." In truth, few historical facts are so well authenticated; and those who refuse to admit its evidence as sufficient, must be incredulous and skeptical about other remarkable events in the world, based and established on ordinary data. Reject the truth of the Resurrection because the evidence is inadequate, and the annals of the past must become a blank; skeptical on this, we must be skeptical on the most important incidents of profane history. Xenophon and Herodotus, Tacitus and Livy, Gibbon and Macaulay, need not have written. Their facts are myths--and the last four thousand years of the world are a chaos. From what we have said, then, we may cease to marvel at the pre-eminent importance assigned by the inspired writers to this great sheet-anchor of the Church's faith. From the frequency with which they allude to it, even the peerless truth, Christ crucified, seems to give way in their estimate to Christ risen. And for this reason, as we shall subsequently show, that the one would be valueless without the other. The glorious light, illuminating the tomb of Jesus, throws its radiations on almost every other doctrine of the Christian system. The believer's justification, regeneration, sanctification, resurrection, glorification--each has its halo of glory borrowed from that vacant sepulcher. "The Resurrection" seems, with the sacred penmen, to be the article of a standing or a falling faith. "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain." "And with great power gave the apostles witness of the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus."

Paul, to his cultured auditory on Mars' Hill, preached "Jesus and the Resurrection." "It is Christ," says he, "who died, YES RATHER who is risen again." Once more, in the concluding benediction of the great Epistle to the Hebrews, it is the Redeemer's Resurrection which is specially singled

out as the mightiest of God's mighty acts--"Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen."

We shall cease to wonder at the relative importance assigned by the apostles to this soul-stirring doctrine, when we briefly glance at three, out of the many glorious truths, which cluster around it.

I. It was the public token of the Father's acceptance of the work of Christ. God, by thus raising Him from the place of the dead, and not allowing Him to see corruption, expressed His full and unqualified satisfaction with the great atoning Sacrifice. At the commencement of His Son's ministry, He had given public attestation to His divine mission by the heavenly voice and the descent of the dove. He would now at its close, give visible demonstration that the crowning oblation was accepted, and that the expiring cry, "It is finished," uttered on earth, had been heard and ratified in Heaven. "Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father." The demands and penalties of the law having been discharged and fulfilled by His obedience unto death, it was now consistent with the honor of the Father's name, that "His Beloved should be delivered," that "He should save with His right hand and hear Him." The Surety-Substitute descended into the lonesome prison-house of the grave. The new tomb enclosed Him within its rocky cavern. If one single sin had remained unatoned for, the stone would to this hour have remained sealed, and the hopes of untold millions been buried along with the Captive. Death stormed the citadel. For a moment its walls trembled under the assaulting foe, and the Divine Vanquisher seemed the vanquished. But it was only His heel the serpent touched--no more! He had completed the work which the Father had given Him to do. He could not be held captive by death. The superincumbent stone (befitting symbol of a violated law) has been rolled away, and two white-robed angels are seated in the deserted tomb, to tell the glad news, "The Lord is risen!" The believer can now triumphantly exclaim, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to His abundant mercy, has begotten us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." Satan, death, and hell, are chained as trophies to the wheels of His conquering Chariot. He leads these "captive multitudes captive;" taking from them all the armor wherein they trusted, and dividing the spoils. As we behold Him, on that early morning of a new dispensation, carrying in his hand the iron crown of the King of Terrors--a voice proceeding from the excellent glory seems to repeat the old assurance, "This is my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

"Lord of Life and Glory," says Bishop Hall, "is there any weak soul that makes doubt of Your complete atonement for his sin; of the perfect accomplishment of the great work of man's Redemption? You raised Yourself from the dead leaving that prison of the grave whence You could not have come, until You had paid all." Or as Bishop Reynolds similarly expresses it, "Therefore the Lord sent an angel to remove the stone from the mouth of the Sepulcher; not to supply any lack of power in Him, who could Himself have rolled away the stone with one of His fingers; but as a judge, when the law is satisfied, sends an officer to open the prison doors to him who has made that satisfaction, so the Father, to testify that His justice was fully satisfied with the price which the Son had paid, sent an officer from heaven to open the doors of the grave, while his Lord came forth from His bed-chamber."

II. Almost identical with this view, and arising out of it, the Resurrection of Jesus was a pledge of the believer's complete justification. In manifold passages of the New Testament a 'oneness' is represented as existing between Christ and His Church. Every notable official act in the Incarnation was performed by Him in His federal character, as our covenant Head and Representative. When He died, it was reckoned as if His people had died with Him. "I am crucified," says the apostle, "with Christ." "Reckon also yourselves to be dead unto sin." And when the buried Savior rises victorious from the grave, the Church, His mystical body, is represented as rising with Him. "Buried with Him in baptism, wherein also you are risen with Him, through the faith of the operation of God, who has raised Him from the dead." And again, to the same effect, believers are spoken of, as being "quicken together with Christ." As our adorable Redeemer left behind Him in His tomb the mementoes of victory, so the believer, by virtue of this union with his Lord, becomes a partaker in the same great Resurrection triumph. With every fetter of condemnation struck off his limbs, every brand of condemnation effaced from his soul, he walks forth "alive from the dead" claiming as the glorious security of his new resurrection-life, that because Christ lives he shall live also. Thus God the Father, by raising the Living Head, sets His seal to the pardon and justification of all the members. "He was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification."

Yes, coming to the empty grave of Jesus, we can see in these scattered trophies the pledge and guarantee of our own spiritual emancipation. Written on that tomb are the words--"It is God who justifies, who is he that condemns?" However much we may delight to stand under the shadow of Calvary's Cross, and listen to the Conqueror's dying words, declaring the work finished and the victory won--with not less holy but rather augmented interest do we approach the mouth of the sepulcher, there to be the privileged auditors of tidings fraught with everlasting consolation--"He is not here, He is risen, as He said; come, see the place where the Lord lay."

Reader, remember too, in the light of that sepulcher, that yours is a completed justification. By virtue of your living union with your living Savior, your acceptance with God is not a question that remains indeterminate and unsettled. It has been settled--the accounts have been closed--the debt liquidated. "Now," says the apostle, "if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him. Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead, dies no more. Death has no more dominion over Him. For in that He died, He died unto sin once--but in that He lives, He lives unto God. Likewise reckon you also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin--but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." Standing with your feet on that displaced grave-stone, and your eye heavenwards, you can join with Paul in challenging the heights above, and the depths beneath, ever again to separate you from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus your Lord.

III. The Resurrection of Jesus was a pledge and pledge of the Resurrection of His people. "If a man dies, will he live again?" is a problem insoluble by natural religion. What is called the argument from analogy, when we come rigidly to sift it, is really at best not an argument. It is an illustration, a corroboration, no more. To take two well-known and familiar instances. The farmer casts his seed into the furrow--these handfuls of seed, laid in winter in an earthy sepulcher, rise in spring exultant from their tomb. No, more, they become, in harvest, fields of yellow corn a hundredfold multiplied. Can analogy fairly point to this, as a triumphant demonstration and prophecy of the body's resurrection? It is a type of it--but no proof of it. And why? Because that buried seed, or rather each individual grain, is not dead. Inert, lifeless though it seems to be, it has

within it the germinating principle--the latent element of vitality. The earth of the field into which it is cast is not its grave. It is the nurturing home of a still living thing, which the clods of the valley only serve to foster and develop. Or look at the example of the torpid chrysalis, which in summer starts into resurrection beauty in the form of the butterfly. That chrysalis, also, inanimate as it seems, is not lifeless. Vitality is within the repulsive shell. It is in a dormant state. No more. It only waits the return of summer suns and summer skies, to awake from its sleep of darkness and begin its winged existence. But it is altogether different with the body of man laid in the grave. The analogy is imperfect--rather, it completely fails. There is here no dormant state--no mere condition of torpor. It is utter death--decay--dissolution--brotherhood and sisterhood with the worm and corruption. It is dust resolved into dust--ashes resolved into ashes--earth resolved into earth! Thus, however suggestive these be as illustrations (and we are abundantly warranted to take them as such), they form no proof whatever of the certainty of the body's future and final resuscitation. They are beautiful guesses of a great truth culled from the Volume of Nature--but that is all. And when the solemn question is propounded over the grave--"Son of Man, can these bones live?"--Reason can give no more--natural theology can give no more--than the modest answer of the prophet--"O Lord God, You know." But coming to the grave of Jesus, there we have the problem solved. The Great Abolisher of death has brought life and immortality to light. We hear Him proclaiming, "I am the resurrection and the life," and the gladdening truth is caught up and echoed by one after another of the "glorious company of the apostles." "He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies." "Christ being raised from the dead dies no more, death has no more dominion over Him." "Begotten again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." "Who by Him do believe in God, who raised Him up from the dead."

"But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of those who slept." The First fruits--either as a sheaf, or the earliest gatherings of the harvest--were of old taken with pomp and rejoicing to the Jewish temple, and "waived" there "as an offering before the Lord"--the pledge alike of corn-crop and vintage before long to follow. So has the Divine 'Sheaf' (if we can venture, with reverence, to apply the symbol) been waived in the Heavenly Temple, the pledge of a coming harvest of immortal redeemed spirits, the fruit of His soul-travail. Nor is it unworthy of note, that there was a remarkable correspondence between the olden Israelitish type and the antitype. The offering of the first fruits of barley harvest among the Jews, took place on "the morrow after the Sabbath" that is, on the third day after the passover. Jesus was crucified on the passover-day. He was laid in His grave on the Jewish passover Sabbath. But on the third morn He rose--the very day in which these first fruits of the land were offered in the temple. As the type was being presented in the earthly courts, angels were bearing to the Heavenly the tidings of a risen Antitype. They carried the First sheaf, the glorious pledge of a mighty harvest--gathering in the morning of the general Resurrection, when 'the Church throughout all the world,'--the vast family of the ransomed from earliest to latest eras--would be assembled before the supreme tribunal, to listen to the words of the enthroned Judge, "Behold I and the children which God has given Me!"

It was that Resurrection hour for which Jesus Himself is represented as longing from all eternity, when pillowed on the Father's bosom. Then He joyed "according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil." He seems to bound over intervening ages; and with His eye first on His own vacant tomb, and then on the myriads His Resurrection foreshadowed, He is

represented as exclaiming--"I will ransom them from the power of the grave, I will redeem them from death. O death, I will be your plagues! O grave, I will be your destruction!" No wonder that the Resurrection of Christ has been for the last 1800 years a joyful day--that our Sabbaths are its solemn commemorations. It was the truth of all truths among the primitive believers. It was not the day of His death they made their Sabbath, but the First day of the week--the day when the sadness of the weeping women at the sepulcher was turned into gladness--and their watchword at meeting (the word of congratulation and welcome) was not "the Lord has died," but "the Lord has risen." It was with them a day of praise, more than for confession; for psalms of thanksgiving, more than for penitential tears. Conscious that a new and nobler Genesis had dawned on a benighted world, they sung in responsive melody, "This is the day which the Lord has made, we will rejoice and be glad in it." The pledges of the outer material creation are welcome and joyful. If we hail with grateful spirit the first budding of early spring in grove and field, because in these we see the pledge that soon nature will be arrayed in her full robes of resurrection beauty--with what feelings ought we to stand by the sepulcher of our Lord, and see the buried Conqueror rising triumphant over the last enemy! Do we not behold in Him, the harbinger of an immortal spring-time, or rather a glorious harvest, when the mounds of the earth, and the caves of the ocean, shall surrender what they have held for ages in sacred custody, "Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision" when "this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal immortality," and the summons shall go forth, "Awake and sing you that dwell in dust." "Christ the first fruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming!" Not satisfied with His own Resurrection as a pledge of His people's, Jesus gave, in the course of His ministry on earth, four striking confirmatory attestations to the same gospel truth; and as has been noted, there is an impressive and significant sequence in these four successive instances of victory over death. The first was in the case of Jairus' daughter. She was "now dead;" the last enemy had only just gained his triumph. The second was the case of the son of the widow of Nain--"He was carried out"--death had for two days put his icy brand on the pale brow. The third is the case of Lazarus, a farther step in the progression--"he has been dead four days"--corruption begun. The final case was on the occasion of the commencing Easter of the Church, when from the graves which had previously been opened by the quaking earth and rending rocks, "many bodies of the saints which slept arose." If the proof had rested with these four illustrative instances of resurrection, we might still have been staggered. They were only temporary resuscitations--no more. They effected only a transitory respite from the iron grasp of the King of Terrors.

Lazarus and his restored compeers had the gloomy portals a second time to enter--these withered flowers were revived only to decay--their dust is probably at this moment reposing in one of the Valleys around Jerusalem. But the great Conqueror dies no more, death has no more dominion over Him. He carried away with Him forever the gates of Hades. "You will not leave My soul in the place of the dead, neither will You allow Your holy One to see corruption."

Come then, believer, enter into this cleft of the Rock. How it disarms death of all its terrors, to hear the unconquered Lord of Life proclaiming through the bars of the grave, "I am He who lives. I was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death." In Adam, the first federal head, we are hereditary bondsmen--"in Adam all die." But in our second Head, the Lord from heaven, "shall all be made alive." The grave is converted into a bed of repose, where the sleeping but redeemed dust "rests in hope."

You who have priceless treasures in the tomb, think of this! "So He gives His beloved sleep"--"them also who sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him." True, that "house of our earthly tabernacle" at death, is a "darksome ruin." That dust is resolved into its kindred dust. The constituent elements of the dismantled framework are incorporated with new forms of matter. Sad and terrible truly is dissolution in all its accompaniments. We do not wish to strew that dismal path with flowers. Death, from the earthly view of it, is not irradiated by one gleam of sunshine. The slow and gradual wasting and decay, the fading of the bloom from the cheek, the languor of the eye, the wearisome days, the long night-vigils, the mind participating in slow degrees with the wreck of the body, memory often a total blank, even the fondest look and the fondest name eliciting no response! Then the close of all--the silent chamber, where "echo slumbers;" the noiseless footfall, the mute crowd of mourners, the grave, the return to the silent dwelling, and the vacant seat--O Death, truly here is your sting; O Grave, truly here is your victory! But the day is coming when all these memories of woe shall vanish, like the darkness before the morning sun. When the spoil of plundering ages shall in a mysterious way be all restored--when, as in the Prophet's Valley of Vision, bone shall come to bone, and sinew to sinew; the old loving smiles of earth will be seen again in the newly glorified body, purged from all the dross and alloy of its old materialism--the drooping withered flower reviving, beauteous and fragrant with the bloom of immortality! But for the Death and Resurrection of Christ and the blessed hope of a glorious resurrection to eternal life in Him, how cheerless, how repulsive would be every thought of the grave. How we might well shrink from all its associations, and make the very mention of the name of loved ones a proscribed and forbidden theme--saying, Consign them, as soon as may be, into cheerless oblivion--let them sleep on in their clay couch, unremembered; draw close the grassy curtains around them--whisper not that word into my ear, it only brings memories of darkness and annihilation!

No, no!--talk not of the living as among the dead. "Weep not;" he or she "is not dead but sleeps!" "Why do you weep?" was the question of the risen Conqueror, as He gazed on a tear-dimmed eye on His Resurrection morn. The Christian's grave need be watered by no tears; for Jesus has converted it into the vestibule of heaven, the robing-room for immortality. Oh! to live as "the children of the resurrection;" as those who are waiting for their Heavenly Father's final adoption--"the redemption of our bodies." We know not the constituents of the higher natures of the invisible world--what are those angel-forms which move in ceaseless errands and ministries of holy love, doing God's pleasure. But no elevation of their immortal being can be higher than that of those, who, from dust, are destined to spring into union (we had almost said assimilation) with deity, "fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body." No more shall there be the elements of decay; no more "the sentence of death in themselves;" no furrow ploughed on the cheek, no wrinkle of age on the brow; but when stars shall fall from their orbits, and worlds succumb to the present laws of decadence, they shall still be in the immortal youth of undying life!

06.12. CHRIST ASCENDED

CHRIST ASCENDED

"He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things."-- Ephesians 4:10

We have listened in our last, to the glorious tidings, another echo from the Rock of Ages--"The Lord has risen!" We have stood in thought by the entrance to the vacant sepulcher; seen the stone rolled away, and angel-warders telling of Him "Whom God has raised up; having loosed the pains of death; because it was not possible that He should be captive by it." When the now reassured disciples were fully certified of the amazing fact, may we not well imagine that the thought which would suggest itself to their minds, dominating all others, would be this--"Is He now to remain with us?" Is the adorable presence of this Conqueror of death to be given as a permanent inheritance and boon to His Church? No, further, "Is the time now arrived for the often-predicted Messianic reign, when we, as His privileged assessors, are to be seated on twelve thrones--the tribal heads in a new and more blessed theocracy?"

No! Strange and startling, surely, the first message must have been which the Risen One sends them. He bids the weeping disconsolate Mary dry her own tears and theirs, but not with the gladdening assurance that He is now to continue forever in their midst, as a Friend and Guide, to cheer them with His fellowship, and animate them with the tones of His living voice. He sends rather the unexpected announcement--that He must speedily leave them--"Go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father, and to My God, and your God." Accordingly, as is minutely described in the sacred narrative, after remaining with His infant Church for forty days subsequent to His resurrection--thus affording His followers ample time and opportunity to have their convictions established, on irrefutable evidence, regarding the reality of that great event--and after giving all requisite instructions relative to the proclamation of His Gospel and the extension of His Church and kingdom, the Divine Master led His more privileged disciples out "as far as to Bethany, and lifted up His hands and blessed them--and it came to pass that while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into Heaven."

Let us enter this new "Cleft of the rock;" and under its shelter, meditate on the grounds of confidence and joy which the believer has in the contemplation of his Lord's Ascension. In doing so, let us state and endeavor to illustrate, two leading and prominent reasons among others, why it was thus necessary and expedient that He should "go away"--why it behooved, not only that Christ should have "suffered these things," but also to have "entered into His glory."

I. The Ascension of Christ formed the divine attestation to the full completion of His mediatorial work. We have already seen, among other great truths which cluster around the Resurrection, that it may be regarded as a public declaration on the part of the Father, that the wages of sin were all paid--that the penalty of the law had been borne in the person of the Surety-Substitute, who was "delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification." But legal release from the

condemning sentence of the law, was not the whole which the Redeemer undertook in the salvation of His Church. It was indeed a vast part of it--to have the chains struck off, the prison-doors opened, and the glorious words pronounced, "There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus." The work undertaken by the Great Surety from all eternity had, however, far more stupendous issues. It contemplated nothing short of recovering to man ALL that he had lost and forfeited by the fall. Not only was the flaming sword of the cherubim to be turned away, or quenched in the blood of His cross, but the closed gates of a better than earthly Paradise were to be re-opened. Not only was the divine law to be vindicated and magnified; but the divine love--that love which bathed in sunlight-beams the groves of the first Eden--was to be restored, and the happiness of that endearing communion revived, when "the voice of the Lord God was heard walking in the garden in the cool of the day." In one word, Paradise lost was to be Paradise regained. Having overcome the sharpness of death, the great Forerunner was to open the Kingdom of Heaven to all believers.

How was this glorious achievement--this wondrous consummation to be certified? As the Resurrection of Christ from the dead constituted the public evidence and testimony of the remission of their sins--so His entrance into heaven was to form the pledge and guarantee of His people's final glorification. We have already seen, that in all the more prominent and important events of His previous ministry on earth, the adorable Redeemer stood as the Representative of His people; that they were identified with Him--reckoned as participants in His mediatorial work. When He DIED, it was legally counted as if they had died along with Him--when He ROSE, as if they had risen along with Him. So now when He ASCENDED, it was also in His federal or representative character as the Vicar of His Church.

Believers--the members of His mystical body, though still left in earth's "Valley of Vision" amid scenes of corruption and death, to grapple with sin and temptation--are yet, again and again, spoken of in Scripture, as if they had already received (by anticipation in the Person of their Head) the great covenanted reward--already been "made partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." Let the following passages in proof suffice--"Who HAS raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ." "For our citizenship IS in Heaven." "You have come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God--to the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels." "Who HAS made us kings and priests unto God and His Father."

We rejoice, indeed, to contemplate in the ascension of the Redeemer, the fit reward of His own sufferings and humiliation--the fulfillment of His own last prayer, "Now, O Father, glorify You Me with Yourself with the glory which I had with You before the world was." "When He had by Himself purged our sins, He sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." "Sat down"--a significant figure--the emblem of rest. The mighty work is done--the Victor is reposing at the close of the campaign--"His rest shall be glorious." But it is more than this. We see in Him the Precursor of a mighty multitude which no man can number, who, in His ascension and glorification, have the pledge and prelude of their own. To take a feeble earthly simile. A brave leader, in capturing a city, takes possession of it, not for himself, but in the name of the Sovereign and of his or her people. So does the Divine ascending Conqueror, in entering the Heavenly Jerusalem, take possession of it in the name of His Church on earth--"the Queen" who is yet to "stand at His right hand in gold of Ophir." The words of the Prophet, in which he speaks of the members, we may apply for a moment, in part, to their great Head--"He shall enter," says Isaiah, "into peace; they shall rest in

their beds, each one walking in His uprightness." He, their Representative, enters into His own purchased peace--the enjoyment of His stipulated reward. And "they" (they His people) "shall rest!" Their work too is done; for He has done it for them--and if they have not yet entered, like their Precursor, into the realms of heavenly peace--if the night of earth must intervene before the morning break--they may "rest in their beds" and dream of a glorious day-dawn--even of "walking in the uprightness" of their crowned and exalted Redeemer--waiting for the joyous hour when His voice will be heard--"Awake and sing, you that dwell in dust." One in mystical union now, they can anticipate the hour, when they shall be one in full vision and fruition, and so be "ever with the Lord."

And, moreover, as it is God the Father who is represented as the efficient Agent in all the previous parts and stages of the Redeemer's mediatorial work--"God so loved the world"--"Whom God has set forth to be a propitiation"--"It pleased the Lord to bruise Him"--"Whereof He has given assurance unto all men in that He has raised Him from the dead"--so this same adorable First person in the Ever-Blessed Trinity, is described as setting His seal to the great public act of ascension and enthronement--welcoming, in the Person of the Representative Head, all the believing members. "HE has set Him at His own right hand in heavenly places" "Wherefore God also has highly exalted Him, and given Him a name that is above every name." When we hearken, therefore, to the Father saying to His Divine Son--"Sit on My right hand"--we listen, in that coronation welcome, to more than a personal address. We hear in it the authority addressed to His Church for the glorification of all its members; that they are served heirs in Him to their regal honors--that will they be in possession of the stipulated reward. "With gladness and rejoicing they shall be brought--they shall enter into the King's palace." It is the Father welcoming the Elder and the Prodigal Son in one, within the patrimonial halls. As He looks to the once ragged and tattered outcast, now wearing the best robe and jeweled ring and glittering sandals, and then from Him to a truer "Elder Brother" than that depicted in the parable, even the Divine Being who had brought back the wanderer from spiritual poverty and death to blessedness and life--He exclaims, "Son, You are ever with Me, and all that I have is Your. It was fit that we should make merry and be glad--for this Your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found."

II. Another special reason for Christ's Ascension, was in order that the gift of the Holy Spirit might be conferred upon the Church. When that first intimation to His disciples of His approaching departure fell from the Savior's lips, we may picture to ourselves the agonizing feelings of the attached and loving band. 'What!' would doubtless have been their exclamation, had their individual and united thoughts found utterance in words. 'What! Go away! Can it be that these brief years of sacred and devout communion are to vanish like a dream? Can it be that we are to be severed from Him who has been to us better than the best of masters and the fondest of parents?--that we are to be left as sheep without a shepherd, orphaned, forlorn, in a desolate world? This is death indeed.'

Stranger still, perhaps, would be the first impression made by the words in which the sudden announcement was conveyed. "It is necessary." How can it possibly be so? How can it possibly be better, for us, timid and inexperienced mariners, to be left without our Pilot to buffet these stormy seas? How can it be better for us, a helpless and trembling flock, to be deprived of the Great Pastor's presence; abandoned to grapple, as best we can, with the briars and thorns of the wilderness? How often has He sought that among us which was lost, and brought again that which

was driven away, and bound up that which was broken, and strengthened that which was sick! When the storm was gathering overhead, and the wolf was prowling on our path, we had this sure cleft--the shadow of this "Great Rock" ever to repair to, for safety and repose. But now, we shall be left unsheltered and unsuccored in the dark and cloudy day! Oh, need we wonder that as the Divine Redeemer, on the occasion referred to, looked around on the sad faces and, perhaps, tear-dimmed eyes which at that moment met His own, He added, "And because I have said these things unto you, sorrow has filled your hearts." But having stated the startling fact, He proceeds to assign one very special reason for this departure and its expediency-- that is, that there was a divine Agent, a heavenly Comforter, to come in His stead--whose presence in the Church would compensate, and more than compensate, for His own absence. "It is necessary for you that I go away, for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you, but if I depart, I will send Him unto you." In His valedictory discourse, again and again does He revert to the same cheering truth. As there is often some one prominent thought which fills the mind of a dying parent when he gathers his children around his couch, some one special charge which he endeavors by reiteration vividly to impress on their memories--so does this coming of "the Comforter" seem to be the leading thought or theme of consolation on which the Redeemer fondly dwells, as His own dying hour approaches. The advent of the glorious Third person in the adorable Trinity is elsewhere, in more passages than one, said to be contingent or dependent on the Savior's departure. "The Holy Spirit was not yet given because that Jesus was not yet glorified." No sooner did the ascension take place, than the bereft men of Galilee returned from Mount Olivet to Jerusalem, to wait, according to the last injunction of their ascending Lord, "for the promise of the Father." Day after day they continued in profound expectancy of its fulfillment. In the little room--the upper chamber--where the infant Church was gathered--ofttimes, we may well believe, would the cry ascend, 'Lord, fulfill Your gracious assurance! Did You not say, "If you, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven, give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him." Remember this word unto Your servants, upon which You have caused them to hope!' And there were more reasons than one for their anxiety. The advent of the Paraclete would confer new spiritual powers on themselves--communicating superhuman strength for their gigantic labors, out of weakness making them strong, giving efficacy to their teaching, opening hard hearts and prejudiced intellects and seared consciences to the mighty truths of the Gospel--in one word, inspiring them with the certainty of success in an otherwise hopeless enterprise. But more than this--It was of the last importance to have some outward and even miraculous attestation to the fact of the Savior's ascension. These disciples had been the witnesses of His humiliation, some of them had been present at His baptism in the Jordan, others at His agony in the Garden, and His death on Calvary; they had climbed (some by slow incredulous steps) to a firm assurance of His Resurrection. All these momentous facts had, moreover, been authenticated and accredited by heavenly signs and witnesses--the descent of the dove and the voice at His baptism--the angels strengthening Him in His agony--the rocks rending, the graves opening, and the heavens darkening at His crucifixion--the angels in white sitting within His vacant grave. But now He had vanished from their view!--a cloud had received Him out of their sight. He had told them He was about to ascend to His Father and their Father. They had accompanied Him to Bethany; they had seen His glorified shape borne upwards on the wings of a cloud--higher and yet higher that Divine form rose, until, reducing into a speck, it was lost in the hazy distance. Was all this an airy dream--a strange delusion? It could not be; their senses could not be mistaken, their eyes could

not have been deceived in the loved and well-known Person--their ears could not have been deceived in the tones of the loving voice and its last tender benediction. But how is their belief to be verified? It is not, in the case of the Ascension, as it was in the case of the Resurrection! They could visit personally and scrutinize the Tomb. They had it in their power orally to sift and compare the testimony of witnesses. But they have no longer access to the ascended and glorified body, to ascertain by touch its personal identity with that of their own beloved Master who was crucified. They cannot follow that chariot-cloud in its mysterious flight; they can send no messenger; they can delegate no Mary up to these untraveled heavenly heights with the question--They have taken away my Lord, tell me where they have laid Him!

It was all important therefore, that, as in the case of the other momentous incidents in the Incarnation, some visible miraculous sign should be given to the Church, to attest and certify the reality of the Savior's reign at the Father's right hand. Such a distinct proof He Himself promised before He departed, in the descent of the Holy Spirit. With what intense and longing eagerness, then, must His disciples have looked for this crowning evidence of their Lord's mission and divinity. It would be with them the testing, or rather the confirmatory, article in their creed. Let there be failure in this last promise, and they would be driven back again on their own faithless exclamation, "We TRUSTED it had been He who would have redeemed Israel." As day after day elapsed, how trying would be the postponement! Often would the question pass from lip to lip, 'Is there no sign yet of His appearing? Why tarry the wheels of His chariot?' No weary watcher on a stormy sea, no lonely castaway on a night of tempest, would more wistfully long for the dawn, than these anxious twelve! But come it does at last. "The Lord is good to those who wait for Him, unto the soul that seeks Him!" On the day of Pentecost--assembled in loving communion ("they are all with one accord in one place")--suddenly, a rustling is heard. It is the "sound of a rushing wind;" and forked radiant flames, like tongues of fire, crown the heads of the praying disciples. The Lord descended of old, first in the tempest, then in the fire, and then revealed Himself in "the still small voice." But on this occasion it is not the soft whisper, it is the voice of power--"the Power of the Holy Spirit." That rushing wind symbolized the bestowment of a new energy in proclaiming the glorious truths of the Gospel. Though numerically feeble, a mere handful of untutored and unlettered men, their Lord has given the word, and great is the company of those that publish it. Hear with what remarkable boldness and confidence Peter (the inspired minister of that hour) speaks, regarding the wondrous attestation of the Savior's ascension, which had just been given. How fully we feel them to be the words of a man whose whole soul had now, by that miraculous confirmatory sign, been finally and forever surrendered to the service of his exalted Master--"This Jesus has God raised up, whereof all are witnesses--therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has shed forth this, which you now see and hear. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God has made that same Jesus whom you have crucified both Lord and Christ."

Yes! glorious proof and assurance that "that same Jesus" who had vanished from their sight a few days before, from one of the slopes of Olivet, had really entered heaven and taken His seat on His kingly throne! By that baptism of fire, the Ascension is left no longer a matter of faith, or conjecture, or probability. It is proclaimed a great fact in the development of the scheme of Redemption. The feeble infant Church on earth may unite with the ingathered ransomed of the heavenly Jerusalem--"You have ascended on high, You have led captivity captive." "The Lord has gone up

with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet. Sing praises to God, sing praises. Sing praises to our King, sing praises." The true Joseph's exaltation being completed, He can send the message of comfort--the grain-sacks of spiritual blessings to His brethren. Our Heavenly Ambassador having entered the celestial courts, and signed as Mediator of the Church the great treaty of peace, can send now back a glorious Divine delegate, loaded with gifts, which He can dispense "even to the rebellious"!

Who, indeed, can read the wondrous story of these days, as it is simply recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, but must be conscious that a new era had dawned on the Church and on the world! It is remarkable, that in the days of the Savior's personal ministry, the number of conversions was small. Even His Divine words and wondrous works seemed to make comparatively little way in breaking down Jewish prejudice and Gentile unbelief. After three years of preaching and miracle--what was His success? See the muster-roll of the Church immediately before Pentecost--"The number of the names together were about an hundred and twenty." He seemed purposely to restrain His own power, in order to magnify the grace and work of the Holy Spirit in the new dispensation which this Divine agent was to inaugurate. No sooner, however, are the windows of heaven opened, no sooner does the Promised Comforter descend, than unprecedented results follow. Hard hearts are broken, blinded eyes are opened, dry eyes are unsealed, and scoffing souls propound the question, "What must we do to be saved?" The Lord is once more in His holy place, as in Mount Sinai--rending the mountains and breaking in pieces the rocks. "You, O God, did send a plentiful rain, whereby You did confirm Your inheritance when it was weary."

Oh when the wondering disciples are witnesses of these moral miracles--thousands on thousands flying as doves to their windows, and nations, through their representatives then gathered at Jerusalem, "born in a day"--whatever may have been the sorrow with which they once heard of their divine Master's severance from them; however deeply, since the hour they parted from Him on Olivet, they might have missed His personal companionship and love--they would cease at all events now to marvel at His saying or to dispute the expediency of His announced purpose--"It is necessary for you that I go away, for if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you, but if I depart, I will send Him unto you."

Lord, come! hide us in this new cleft of the one Glorious Rock--and as the Beloved Disciple tells us he was "in the Spirit," when his eyes were opened to the transcendent visions and his ears to the wondrous words of his ascended Lord, so may He open our ears to receive the soul-stirring message which gave heart-cheer to the lonely exile of Patmos, "Fear not; I am He who lives and was dead, and behold! I am alive for evermore!"

"Grant, we beseech you, Almighty God, that like as we do believe Your only begotten Son the Lord Jesus Christ, to have ascended into the heavens--so we may also in heart and mind there ascend, and with Him continually dwell, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, world without end."

06.13. CHRIST THE INTERCESSOR

CHRIST THE INTERCESSOR "Who also makes intercession for us." – Romans 8:34

"He who might have been placing a vial of wrath in the hand of every angel around His throne, with a commission to pour it out on this rebellious world until it was utterly consumed, is standing at the moment, at the altar of incense, presenting our prayers for mercy, and officiating there as our great High Priest." –Harris With the contemplation of every new Rock-cleft, the "treasures hidden in Christ" seem to grow upon us, not only in number and variety, but in value and preciousness. This is specially the case in meditating on the Redeemer as the INTERCESSOR of His Church and people. In that beautiful grouping of the great apostle's "Confidences" in his divine Lord, to which we have more than once adverted, the crowning one is that which heads this chapter--"It is Christ who died; yes, rather, who is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God; who also makes intercession for us!" It is when climbing, step by step, he reaches this height of his high argument, that he turns round with the challenge, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" The intercession of the Savior is based on His atonement. It has been well defined as "the efficacious virtue of the atonement perpetuated by a divine official act." Some theological writers have ingeniously drawn an analogy between creation and providence, atonement and intercession; that just as Providence is the sustaining of the creative work--so that if Christ's continual upholding arm were withdrawn, the outer material world would soon lapse into disorganization--so, the intercession of Jesus is the carrying out, and carrying on, of His propitiatory and mediatorial work--the complement of the great salvation consummated on Calvary. The Atonement, indeed, is in itself complete; just as this natural creation, (to revert to the analogy), was complete, when it came in all its glorious mechanism from the hands of God, and was pronounced "very good." But in order to perpetuate the benefits of Redemption, and make them available for His people, it is needful for Him, as the High Priest, to continue His priestly office "at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens--a minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man." The temple-service of old was the shadow of these sublime heavenly things. The Jewish High Priest, having offered on the great day of Atonement the sacrificial oblation on the altar of burnt-offering, attired himself in a dress of pure white linen--linen robes, and linen belt, and linen mitre, white from head to foot. Thus arrayed, he carried the blood in one hand, and the censer of live coals in the other, into the Most Holy place. Beating some fragrant incense small, he mixes it with the burning coals. A grateful cloud arises--the whole Temple Court is redolent with the perfume, and enveloped in smoke.

Significant type, surely, of Him who has entered through the rent veil of His own crucified body into the Holiest of all; carrying with Him the memorials of His own precious blood-shedding and the fragrant incense of His adorable merits. As the Jewish High Priest sprinkled the blood on the pavement before the mercy-seat, as well as on the mercy-seat; so, our, Divine High Priest sprinkled His blood first on the floor of earth where He shed it, and now He sprinkles it on the throne of heaven. There, with the true incense and fire He pleads. Attired in the white linen vesture of His perfect obedience and righteousness, He confesses His people's sins--He stands between

the congregation in the outer court of earth and the Divine Shekinah-glory. The mercy-seat is sprinkled; He waves the fragrant censer--and the whole heavenly house is filled with the odor of the incense.

We dare not, indeed, presume to speculate or dogmatize on the MANNER of this intercession. It is a silent inarticulate speech and pleading. The voice of Abel's blood is represented, by a bold figure, as crying from the ground. That blood, it need not be remarked, was in reality mute. So doubtless is it with our Divine Intercessor. There may be no articulate accents, no audible utterances. He sprinkles no material blood. But this we know, that He has carried with Him to His intercessory throne a glorified body, still bearing the visible marks of earthly humiliation and suffering--the perpetual memorials of His atoning sacrifice--so that that blood may still be said to have a voice before the throne--"The blood of sprinkling which speaks better things than that of Abel." When on earth He poured out His soul "in strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, He was heard in that He feared." In heaven, He pleads in silence; His wounds are His argument; He is heard in that He suffered! But in this, we are anticipating. We shall proceed, as the most befitting method of illustrating the great truth, to enumerate one or two characteristics of the Savior's intercession.

I. It is a RIGHTEOUS Intercession. This is the attribute which specially suggests itself to the apostle John in his First Epistle, where, under a new figure, he thus speaks of his Lord's intercessory work--"We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous." "The Righteous"--a word which refers not so much to the righteousness of the Savior's person, as to the righteousness of His claim in behalf of His people. It is the Divine Advocate appealing to the equity of the Judge--resting His plea on the majesty of justice. An earthly counsel is only the hired and often a dishonest pleader. The righteousness or unrighteousness of the cause he has espoused is no matter to him. His sole object is to gain his client's case; although even in the successful conducting of it before an earthly tribunal, he may have the unuttered conviction of guilt and criminality, and that justice is evaded or perverted. Varied, also, are his appeals to the pity of the jury or the mercy of the judge. Many a cause is determined, not on its merits, but by skillful and adroit pleadings, by dexterous sophistry, or by the wizardry of eloquence! Not so is it with the Great Intercessor. He pleads not, indeed, the personal innocence of His clients. On the ground of their own merits, they stand, in the sight of heaven, convicted and condemned--destitute of all argument to support their cause. But they are made righteous through the righteousness of Him, their federal Head and Surety-Redeemer. The merits of His obedience and death constitute His plea on their behalf. It is because "He bore the sin of many," that He makes "intercession for the transgressors." In thus, therefore, advocating the cause of His people, it is not the plea of the suppliant imploring mercy--the appeal of an servile petitioner. It is a plea of right. It is the triumphant Conqueror claiming His stipulated reward. It is the Covenant-Surety claiming the fulfillment of the Father's promise.

Addressing His Father in His last intercessory prayer, He appeals to Him in His character of Righteous. "O holy Father," "O righteous Father." All the blessings of the atonement which are to us the free gifts of free grace, are to Him of debt. They are the purchase of His dying love. They come to Him, and through Him to us, as an old writer expresses it, "with the mark of the cross and the print of nails." This Righteous Advocate, standing before the throne, has only to utter His omnipotent formula, "Father, I will!" And all that is within the compass of omnipotence to bestow is

His--"Son, You are ever with Me, and all that I have is Yours!"

II. This leads naturally to a second characteristic resulting from the one just mentioned— that is, that it is a PREVAILING Intercession. Jesus is emphatically "the Prince" who has power with God and "prevails." All power has been committed to Him. Him "the Father hears always." They are His own remarkable words in the 16th chapter of John--"In that day you will no longer ask me anything. I tell you the truth, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete. In that day you will ask in my name. I am not saying that I will ask the Father on your behalf."

What does He mean by this? Is it not that the very mention of His all-prevailing name in the Father's ears, will be sufficient to ensure the request of His people being heard and their claims regarded. "Ask in My name." As if He had said, 'It will dispense with the need of My formally pleading on your behalf. It will itself be a passport to the Father's kind regard. So intensely does He love Me for My work's sake and righteousness' sake, that you have only to give utterance to "the name that is above every name," and its music will unlock to you the heart of God.'

How prevailing that name and that plea moreover must be, when we look to the host of petitioners who are warranted to use it. It is a beautiful part of the vision of the pleading covenant-angel in Revelation, with "the censer full of much incense" in his hand, that they are "the prayers of ALL the saints," which, perfumed with His adorable merits, ascend before God's throne and are accepted! It is not merely the pleadings of patriarchs and prophets, apostles and martyrs, men strong in faith giving glory to God. Neither is it the prayers enshrined and intoned in imposing ritual, rising from the great congregation amid ornate temples, and borne on the wings of enchanting music--but the groan, the glance, the tear, the tremulous aspiration of smitten penitents, the veriest lisping of infant tongues; the unlettered petitions morning and evening of the cottage home, where the earthen floor is knelt upon, where the only altar is the altar of the lowly heart, and the sacrifice that of a broken and contrite spirit. It may be affirmed of the Father regarding one and all of these pleadings of the Divine Intercessor, in the prophetic words of the Psalmist, "You have given Him His heart's desire, and have not withheld the request of His lips."

Nor, having Him thus as our prevailing Intercessor, do we stand in need of any other auxiliary, any other advocacy. On the great day of atonement in the Jewish Temple-service of old, no Levite, no subordinate Temple officer was permitted to assist the High Priest, either in the sacrificial offering, or in the subsequent carrying of the blood and incense. No voice within the veil was allowed to be heard, but his. The congregation stood in the outer court. No other footstep dared venture within the holy precincts. There were crowds--thousands on thousands close by. But this solitary priest is unaided, unaccompanied, at that solemn hour. Alone he pled; alone he sprinkled the blood; alone he waved the censer. In like manner, Christ has entered alone into the holy place, having Himself obtained eternal redemption for us. The solitary Surety on earth, He is the solitary Intercessor above. No other voice pleads with the Father; no other priest or minister, saint or angel, can be of any avail in coming between the sinner and God. As on earth He made the prophetic announcement, "I have trodden the wine-press alone, and of the people there are none with Me" so, standing by the golden Altar above, and stretching down the golden scepter, He, and He only, has the right and prerogative to say, "Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete."

III. It is a PERSONAL Intercession. It is not a mere general advocacy for His Church in its collective capacity--like Aaron rushing between the crowded masses of living and dead when the plague was stopped--but pleading for individual members of that Church with an individual, personal interest, as if each separate case enlisted His sympathy and engrossed His regards. As the High Priest of old wore on his breastplate, gleaming with Urim and Thummin--not the one word Israel--but the separate distinctive names of all its tribes--so also with the Great Antitype. It is not His Church in the aggregate, but the name of each separate believer He has imperishably engraved on His heart. He, the Great SHEPHERD, seated on the heavenly hill and looking down on the earthly pastures, "calls His own sheep by name, and leads them out." He, the great CAPTAIN of Salvation, gazing down on His fighting warriors in the earthly battlefield, is represented as exclaiming, "Him that overcomes, the same shall be clothed in white clothing, and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before My Father and His holy angels." He, the mighty INTERCESSOR, watching the assaults of the great Accuser of the brethren, is comforting every faint-heart with the old words addressed to a tempted disciple, "Simon, Simon, Satan has desired to have you, that he might sift you as wheat, but I have prayed for YOU that your faith fail not."

How does John (in speaking of Jesus the Intercessor under the title of Advocate), introduce the Divine Pleader's name? Is it, "If His Church, if His people, if His members sin," they may rush in a crowd to the Intercessor on high, and cast their conjoint petitions at His feet or into His censer? No! there is a beautiful individuality--unit by unit in the mighty family of the ransomed have the comfort of it, "If ANY MAN sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous." Blessed truth! As in His own impressive parable of the Good Shepherd, He follows the ONE erring wanderer until He finds it--the one stray sheep engrossing all His sympathies, as if He had no thought, no room in His heart but for the ONE. So also, in His intercessory work. He has a loving regard for each separate child of His redeemed family; He carries the case of each before God. The 144,000 harpists on the sea of glass--the representatives of the Church of the glorified--do not exclude His tender concern in those who are still suppliants in the outer courts. His Infinite wisdom, power, and love, are the Divine guarantees that none can be overlooked; none left unsuccoured. An invisible golden chain links every tempest-tossed vessel to the eternal throne. Zechariah's description of Joshua, the High Priest, is a faithful portraiture of each saint of God to this hour. Satan at his right hand ("the public prosecutor") resisting him; pleading against him; advocating his overthrow. But at his other side stands a Defender mightier than the mightiest--the Divine Angel-Intercessor, saying, "The Lord rebuke you--Is not this (this ONE) a brand plucked out of the fire?" And that personal intercession will never cease, from the hour when the believer is first brought a lowly suppliant to the foot of the cross, until the final petition (unheard by weeping relatives in the death-chamber on earth) ascends from the lips of the Great Intercessor in heaven, "Father, I will, that they also whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory."

IV. It is a MERCIFUL and COMPASSIONATE Intercession. On earth the successful mediator for the oppressed and suffering--the successful philanthropist--is, generally speaking, not the man of stern nerve and iron will; but rather, the possessor of keen and tender sensibilities, who can himself enter into the tale of sorrow; who, it may be, from dear-bought experience, can make the cause of the wretched his own. The most potent advocate of the captive, is he who has himself

been familiar with the wrongs he denounces. He who would most successfully plead--indeed, who has most successfully pleaded the cause of the slave, is the man who is the liberated slave himself; who has had personal experience of the cruelty and indignity of the tyrant's scourge.

Jesus is a compassionate Intercessor--"a merciful"--as we have seen Him to be a "faithful High Priest;" for He can enter with liveliest sensibility into all the diversities of His people's experience. Their every pang and sorrow He has Himself endured. "In all their afflictions He was afflicted." What a confidence this merciful character of the Great High Priest gives in approaching His intercessory throne, and soliciting His direction and guidance! Even on earth, what a joy and comfort it is in seasons of difficulty, to resort to a tried and loving friend, in whose tenderness and affection you can place unhesitating reliance! What an ease to unbosom in that brother's ear the difficulty that is harassing you, and solicit his wise and faithful counsel! Jesus is this Blessed resort in all time of your tribulation!

What a privilege, when Providence is dark and duty is perplexing, to repair immediately to this "Wonderful Counselor;" to take your case, as Hezekiah did Rabshakeh's letter, spreading it out before Him in prayer, and saying in simple faith, "I am oppressed, undertake for me." An earthly advocate may ably conduct the cause confided to him, and vindicate or assert disputed rights. But it is not, we repeat, necessarily any more than the work of a hired pleader. He may never have seen his client's face, or claimed his acquaintance, far less his friendship. Not so the Heavenly Advocate. "We have not an High Priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities." "He is not ashamed to call us brethren." "I have called you friends." In the Epistle of James, God--"the Lord Almighty"--is said to hear the cry of the defrauded reaper--the common laborer--when he utters the appeal of oppressed and downtrodden poverty. How much more will the cries of His spiritual children enter with acceptance into the ears of their Intercessor! How tenderly will He compassionate, protect, defend, those whom He has redeemed with His own precious blood!

V. Finally. It is an UNCHANGING Intercession. Under the Levitical economy, the intercessor for the nation was removed by death. It was a temporary, hereditary, transmissible priesthood. Ever and always the nation was clothed in sackcloth, as they mourned their departed ecclesiastical head. Not so Jesus! "This man because He continues ever, has an UNCHANGEABLE PRIESTHOOD." He is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life. Many a good and righteous cause on earth has been lost by the death of its advocate. But our Advocate, as He is without beginning of days, is without end of years. As the tinkling bells of the High Priest's vestments were heard by the crowd in the outer court, while he himself was ministering within the veil--the sound conveying to them the assurance that he was still engaged in the solemn act of intercession--so the ear of faith can still catch up the music of these sacred chimes--these silver bells in heaven--"Blessed are the people who know the joyful sound!" The Jewish Hierarch acted as the nation's Intercessor for one day only--once every year--and for only a part of that one day. But, day without night is our Intercessor pleading. He never intermits; His love never cools; His ardor never decays! The true Moses on the Heavenly Rephidim, His hands never grow heavy; for of Him it is sublimely said, "He faints not, neither is weary." Nor, we believe (and as we shall in a subsequent chapter more fully unfold), will He ever entirely abdicate His office as the Divine medium of communion and communion between God and His people. Even in the Church triumphant, "the Son," we read, is "consecrated for evermore." "He ever lives to make

intercession for us."

Thus, then, have we endeavored briefly to illustrate some of the characteristics of the Redeemer's Intercession; as a Righteous Intercession; a Prevalent Intercession; a Merciful Intercession; an Unchanging Intercession. In conclusion, let us seek to receive this great truth, not as a figure of speech, but as a glorious and sublime verity. Not a few are at times tempted to say, 'If Christ were still among us; if He still trod our streets as once He did those of Nazareth and Jerusalem; if He ministered on our shores as once He did on those of Jordan and Gennesaret; if PENITENCE could still creep, as it did of old, unbidden to His feet, to pour out in silent tears its tale of sorrow; if trembling CONVICTION could sneak (Nicodemus like) under the curtain of night to listen to the Heavenly Teacher's loving tones; if SORROW could rush, as once it did, with throbbing emotion, and cry out, "Lord, if You had been here, our brother would not have died;" if I could take my darling child, as once the Jewish mother did, and hurry through the crowd to receive the omnipotent touch and the healing word, all would be different. But alas! He is invisible. I am told to pray; but in vain I look for that countenance of compassion. In vain I listen at my threshold for that footfall of love! My sick chamber is like John's place of exile, a lonely Patmos--but, unlike him, I behold no one in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. I see no symbol, I hear no voice! I pray, but it is to a Savior-Intercessor I do not see!'

"Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed--blessed are those who have not seen, and yet have believed." "Whom having not seen, you love; in whom, though now you see Him not, yet believing, you rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." Yes! prayer can still carry you into that glorious and glorified Presence, and the hand of faith can still touch as though He was on earth, the hem of His garment! Jesus of Nazareth still passes by. The spiritually blind and impotent can still breathe the prayer for mercy--for He ever "lives!"

Think for a moment what it would be were that intercession suspended? Or, recurring once more to the analogy with which we started, think what this fair creation of ours would be, were the Divine Providential hand to be withdrawn! All would immediately collapse! Chaos and night would again rise to the ascendant, and the world rock to ruin. And what would be the result to the spiritual world--the Church--were the intercession of its Head intermitted? How would every Asahel become a Ready-to-halt; every warrior's hand drop paralyzed on the battle-field. It is sad to be deprived of the loving sympathy and counsel of the earthly friend we most valued--when distance separates, or coldness estranges; or (saddest of all) when death puts his irrevocable seal on the sweet counsels of the past.

What must it be were we deprived of the prayers and counsels and sympathies of Jesus! See that you forfeit not these by sin. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." Oh, saddest of all responses from the Heavenly Oracle is that of this Righteous Intercessor, when He looks down on His faithless people "hastening after another god," and says, "Their drink-offerings of blood will I not offer, nor take up their names into My lips."

God grant that we may know, from personal experience, the blessedness of resorting to to such a Rock-cleft as this--"He shall hide me in His pavilion, in the secret of His tabernacle shall He hide me, He shall set me up upon a Rock." The Divine Intercessor, the Mighty Pleader before the throne issues the gracious invitation--"Come, My people, enter into your chambers, and shut your doors behind you--hide yourself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast."

Let it be ours to respond with the ardent aspiration, the votive prayer—"Be to me a protecting rock of safety, where I am always welcome. Give the order to save me, for you are my rock and my fortress." Psalms 71:3

06.14. CHRIST THE KING

CHRIST THE KING "On his robe and thigh was written this title— King of kings and Lord of lords!" Revelation 19:16 In speaking of the Ascension of the Divine Redeemer in a preceding chapter, we have already so far anticipated consideration of the Rock-cleft which is now to engage our attention--the Kingship of Christ--"Set as King upon His holy hill of Zion"--made "Head over all things to His Church." But the theme is one which volumes cannot exhaust. Well might the inspired Psalmist thus speak of it. "My heart overflows with a beautiful thought! I will recite a lovely poem to the king, for my tongue is like the pen of a skillful poet."

How sweet should be the music of these words to every believing heart--"He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death--even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name--that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." When He disappeared from the sight of the eleven disciples on Mount Olivet, His extended hands poured a priestly benediction on these representatives of the Church of the future. But it is as a King He is next pictured to us in the page of inspiration. In the lofty poetry of the Psalmist, it is as a King He enters heaven. The summons of His attending retinue outside the celestial portals is--"Lift up your heads, O you gates; and be lifted up, you everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in." The response is made, "Who is this King of glory?" And the reply is returned, "The Lord, strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. The Lord Almighty, He is the King of glory." His Regal office, indeed, did not date its commencement with His reign at the right hand of God. In human language, that was only the date of His public investiture with royal honors--when, in phrase borrowed from earthly coronations, He was said to be "anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows,"--after being "made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, He was crowned with glory and honor." But His Kingship had a more ancient pedigree. He was designated King of His Church from the ages of eternity. "I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, before ever the earth was." Among other types, His royal dignity was foreshown in the person of MELCHISEDEK, who was "King of Salem as well as Priest of the Most High God." Also in the people of King DAVID and Solomon--the former, with more special reference to the years preceding His resurrection, when He was "the Man of sorrows"--reproach often breaking His heart--a King in the midst of enemies--while SOLOMON, in the splendor of his reign, was typical of the risen and glorified Head of His people; riding forth in the chariot of salvation, surrounded with the valiant of His spiritual Israel; inaugurating, as the ascended monarch of the Church, the services of the Heavenly Temple. His REGAL POWER was predicted by the lips of patriarchs and prophets, from the Shiloh of Jacob to the Messiah-King of Zechariah. And when His advent in the flesh did take place; though His only apparent palace was a stable at Bethlehem, and His throne a manger; yet, even at His birth, representative potentates were present to do Him homage, bearing their KINGLY GIFTS of "gold, and frankincense, and myrrh." Throughout the period of His Incarnation--though wearing a garment of humiliation and a crown of thorns--He was clothed too

with an invisible robe of glory and honor. Like some of our own ancient monarchs, He was King in disguise; a sovereign in beggar's garb. Ever and always the golden tassel of royalty revealed itself under the assumed ragged attire--while, on one memorable occasion, branches of royal palm strewn the highway across Mount Olivet--and the air rang with the acclamation--"Hosanna to the Son of David--Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord!" In the very moment of His deepest abasement, in answer to the interrogation of a heathen judge, "Are You a King, then?" Jesus answered, "Yes, it is as you say."

It is important, moreover, to regard the Kingly office of Christ as the complement of His Priestly functions. Or, rather, it is the combination of the two which imparts to the believer surpassing comfort and confidence. As the great covenant angel, He has both the censer and the scepter; while standing robed by the altar, He has "a crown of pure gold put upon His head." All earthly rule is but the shadow of this great prototype of Sovereignty. The correct view, indeed, to take of Christ's Kingship, is not that of a mere figure or emblem derived from the rule of earthly monarchs; but rather are earthly crowns and scepters derivations and emanations from His great central everlasting throne. They have their archetype or primal pattern in the kingdom of heaven--in the Person and dignity of Him who is "forever sat down at the right hand of the throne of the majesty in the heavens." The earthly sovereignty with which we are familiar, may serve to suggest a few simple thoughts regarding the mediatorial Kingship of Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ, our exalted King, has a THRONE. It is a throne of Righteousness. Righteousness is at the foundation of all rule. History and experience are ever reading and rereading, that the earthly throne not established in righteousness--based on tyranny and wrong--bolstered up by oppression and treachery--will, sooner or later, totter to its fall. The Intercessory and Kingly offices of Christ, are alike founded on the great work of righteousness wrought out and completed by Him on earth. "Righteousness will be His belt and faithfulness the sash around His waist." "This is the name whereby He is called--The Lord our Righteousness." It forms the theme of adoration alike of His Church below and of the Church of the first-born in Heaven, as they "speak of the might of His awesome acts and the glorious majesty of His Kingdom." "You love righteousness and hate wickedness; therefore God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness above Your fellows. All Your garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces whereby they have made You glad." The Lord Jesus, our exalted King, has a SCEPTER. It is called "the rod of His power" "The Lord shall send the rod of Your strength out of Zion." By it He is said to rule in the midst of His enemies. As His throne is a throne of righteousness, so this "scepter of His kingdom is a righteous scepter." In the proclamation of the Gospel, His design is to vindicate the righteousness of His law in the salvation of sinners, and to foster and advance the cause of righteousness among His people. That Gospel is "the little Book" which the angel in the apocalyptic vision held in his hand, when he was seen flying with it open in the midst of heaven. In the eye of the world's wisdom, a "little Book," a little Scepter, a feeble rod. But "the wisdom of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men." "Is not My word like as a fire?" says the Lord; and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?" "The Spirit of the Lord," was the opening sentence of the Messiah's ministry, "is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach glad tidings to the meek." And when that ministry was terminating, and He was about to delegate the rod of His power to others, this was still the parting apostolic commission, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature."

Nobly did His followers fulfill His royal decree. Hear the boldest and bravest of these ambassadors--the great apostle of the Gentiles. Whether he stood amid the soldiers and senators of imperial Rome, or among the merchant princes of Corinth, or the sailors on the Adriatic Sea, or the cultured philosophers on the Athenian Areopagus--hear him proclaiming, as he holds out the same golden scepter delegated to him by his heavenly King--"I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ--for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one who believes; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." This suggests, that Jesus Christ our Divine King has, like earthly sovereigns, subordinate officers to carry on the administration of His vast empire. We cannot withdraw the veil which screens the upper sanctuary. Could we do so, doubtless we should find "the spirits of the just made perfect" engaged in ceaseless embassies and ministries of love in behalf of their exalted and glorified Head--employed in bringing to Him royal revenues of glory from distant worlds. In one of the beautiful figurations of the Apocalypse, the armies of heaven (angelic natures as well as the redeemed) are represented as "following Him upon white horses." But we know with certainty that He has appointed such officers in His Church and kingdom on earth, to gather in "ransomed spoil" against the day of His final appearing and enthronement as Lord of all. He has selected, moreover, these subordinate ministers of His court, not from among angels, not from among the unerring inhabitants of heaven; but from those whom He has purchased with His own blood--dust and ashes--earthen vessels--with no badge of distinction or human greatness--often purposely the weakest instrumentality, that the excellency and the power may appear to be of Him alone. "As My Father sent Me," said He, as He invested His disciples with divine authority, "even so send I you." These specially gifted and endowed office-bearers of the Gospel age, clothed with miraculous powers needful for laying and consolidating the Church's foundations, are indeed now withdrawn. But while the extraordinary ministrations have ceased, the ordinary remain. The "prophets and apostles" have been followed by "pastors and teachers"--and though claiming no 'apostolic succession' in the conventional sense of the word--no gift of tongues or of prophesying--yet we assert and maintain the Divine institution of the pastoral office. The King has still heralds, as of old, to prepare His way before Him; and these in their turn are charged by Him to commit their work to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.

Ministerial power is derived, not from priestly ordination or hereditary virtue, but directly from the King Himself. "To every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ." "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God." As the earthly King has his viceroy and ambassador at foreign courts, empowered to speak in his sovereign's name, and to vindicate his sovereign's rights, so He has committed unto His servants "the ministry of reconciliation," and empowered them thus to deliver their high command--"Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we beg you in Christ's stead, be reconciled to God." As an earthly King has SUBJECTS, so has our heavenly King. His mediatorial sway is indeed, in one sense, UNIVERSAL--"His kingdom rules over all;" "All things were created," not only by Him, but "for Him." His true subjects, however, are composed of the Church, which He has redeemed with His blood--chosen by Him "before the foundation of the world." "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited and redeemed HIS PEOPLE, and has raised up an horn" (horn, the type of kingly rule) "of salvation for us in the house of His servant David." These, His people, are said to become "willing in the day of His power." What day is that? Doubtless it is the momentous era in their lives, when, by the efficacious grace of His Spirit, they are brought to surrender their weapons of rebellion; to renounce the service of

Satan, and enroll themselves under the banner of their Savior-King. To effect this result, at times the terrors of the law are employed--those arrows which "are sharp in the hearts of the King's enemies, whereby the people fall under Him." At other times, "the still small voice" proves, as in the case of the prophet, more efficacious than tempest, and earthquake, and fire. The heart is conquered and won by love. A TWO-FOLD CHANGE is at that great crisis-hour undergone.

There is, first, a change of state. The new-born subjects of the King are enrolled among the pardoned. Enemies once, with the sentence of death recorded against them--they receive a full forgiveness--a royal amnesty is extended to them--they are "accepted in the Beloved;" From being by nature and practice (to use the simile in the Song of Solomon), like "pillars of smoke," they become redolent "with myrrh and frankincense, with all powders of the merchant." Captives once--the chains are struck off; prodigals once--the home of their Father is thrown open. God in His judicial character justifies them--in His paternal character He adopts them. They are received into the number and invested with all the privileges of Sonship.

But, in addition to the change of state, that "day of power" brings along with it a change of character. It not only captures the citadel of the heart, which had long held out against the heavenly King, but all its storehouses and resources are now willingly laid in tribute at His feet. The understanding is enlightened, the affections purified, the will renewed. The body, which was formerly the slave of unrighteousness unto sin, is now consecrated to His service. Inspired with love and loyalty, His people reverence His laws. It is their supreme delight to serve and honor Him. Their interests are identified with His. Their obedience is not the coerced duty of the slave, but the delight of a voluntary heart-surrender. The moral and spiritual transformation is likened to the working of that mighty power which God wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead.

More than this--just as in the case of friends with whom we are in the habit of daily and familiar communion, we insensibly catch up their tone and manner and conversation, and imbibe their tastes and likings--so it is with believers and Him, who, though a King, delights to call them "friends." They gradually become assimilated to the Divine character. They imbibe His spirit; they reflect His image. "The King's daughter," like her Lord, becomes "all glorious within; her clothing, is of wrought gold" (the inwrought graces of the Spirit). So that it may be said of Christ's true people as of the brethren of Gideon, "each one resembled the children of a king."

Thus then the subjects of this Divine Mediator receive the double blessing of having their natures changed as well as their sins pardoned--or as this is briefly but beautifully stated by Peter in his address before the Jewish council, "Him has God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins." Does the personal question here occur, 'HOW are we to become the subjects of this exalted Sovereign? What is the passport of admission into His royal favor and within His palace-gates? Have we to fight our way to it, like desperate men, through blood and death? Have we in our own strength to scale inaccessible ramparts before reaching the city of the great King?' Listen to the words of the beloved disciple, "As many as received Him to them gave He power (or the right) to become the sons of God, even to those who believe on His name." We have no merit in the attainment of these royal privileges and prerogatives. They are all derived from grace and bestowed through faith. The hand which "delivers from the power of darkness" translates also into "the kingdom of His dear Son." The charter of our rights is delivered to us in the same way as the cure was dispensed to the cripple at

the Beautiful Gate of the Temple--"In the name of Jesus of Nazareth rise up and walk." Or, to employ an older Bible simile, He, the true Ahasuerus, extends the regal scepter, and of His sovereign good pleasure confers the rich blessings of His spiritual kingdom.

While, however, it is by grace we are redeemed, we must never forget that HOLINESS is the distinguishing badge of all true subjects of the Savior's rule. This is the characteristic of "the nations of those who are saved"--a holy people. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." "Christ also loved the Church and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it through the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, without having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that it should be holy and without blemish." If we are partakers of this heavenly citizenship, inhabitants of this glorious spiritual empire, let us listen to the word of power, divinely recorded as the test of our loyalty and allegiance, "As He who has called you is holy, so be holy in all manner of conversation."

One other observation is suggested by the analogy between an earthly and heavenly sovereign. As a truly great earthly king has ever in view THE GOOD OF HIS SUBJECTS, so it is with our gracious Redeemer. In His beneficent administration, He has constantly and invariably at heart the welfare of each individual member of His spiritual realm. The children of Zion may well be "joyful in their King." They may trust His combined power, and wisdom, and faithfulness; for all things, by immutable covenant, are working together for their good. Jesus is depicted in one of Zechariah's visions, as a royal warrior, riding in the midst of His Church on a "red horse," while "red horses, speckled and white," are in the same vision represented as forming His retinue--varied colored providences--some "white" (clearly understood), others "red and speckled" (or mottled). But all providences are under His control. Even when He afflicts, He afflicts not willingly. Chastisement is one of His love-tokens. This royal Shepherd often seeks out His flock in "the dark and cloudy day." He will not allow trial to go too far. He will not allow His people to be tempted above what they are able to bear. "The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations." We may well, in all that concerns us and ours, TRUST HIM IN THE DARK; remembering that He is infinite in His wisdom and boundless in His resources. Let "the shout of a King" be in the midst of His spiritual Israel. He has but one object in view in all His dealings with them--the "bringing many sons unto glory." And He will not leave His work undone until their salvation is complete. They may well take up the words of the prophet, and say with triumphant assurance, "The Lord is our judge, the Lord is our Lawgiver, the Lord is our King; He will save us!"

We have thus briefly contemplated some of the characteristics of the rule of Christ over His Church and people. But there is one special phase of His sovereignty constantly unfolded in Scripture, to which we may make a brief reference in closing. It is the exercise of that SOVEREIGNTY OVER HIS ENEMIES. While we are told of "the rod of His strength out of Zion" by which He rules His people, we are told of a rod of iron by which He "breaks" His foes; "dashing them in pieces like a potter's vessel." As the warrior of Edom, He is represented, with blood-stained clothing, coming up from the overthrow of His adversaries--first of all, indeed, "speaking in righteousness--mighty to save;" but to those who reject that righteousness, mighty to destroy and to condemn.--"The Lord," we read in Psalm 110, "said unto my Lord, Sit at My right hand, until I make Your enemies Your footstool." "And I saw," says John, "heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and He who sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness does He judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on His head

were many crowns." The power of His enemies is only temporary--the triumph of His own cause is certain. "The rod of the wicked" will not always "rest upon the lot of the righteous." Despotism, Tyranny, Atheism, Popery, Infidelity, and the other foes of His Church and forces of evil, may do their worst. But every anti-Christian confederacy will at last be broken like a cobweb. "He must reign until He has put all enemies under His feet."

It is a comforting and elevating contemplation, and especially in these days, to think of Christ as King of nations, as well as King of His Church--King of Providence as well as King of Grace--and making all events work out His own ends for the advancement of the cause of righteousness. He who manifested Himself in olden time, by His visible interpositions, as God of nature--who made the material world, alike earth and skies, subservient to His purposes--putting a drag on the burning axles of the sun--causing the stars in their courses to fight against Sisera--drying up the tongue of the Red Sea--making the hail of heaven--the white arrows of His quiver--to accomplish the conquest of Israel's foes--("When the Almighty scattered kings, it was white as snow in Salmon")--this sovereign Mediator superintends and controls the revolution of the still more complex and often apparently capricious wheels of Providence. He "holds the stars (emblems of political rulers) in His right hand," as well as "walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks."

See how in the bold figure used by the Prophet, He put a bit in the mouth of haughty Sennacherib! That heathen king was the instrument, employed by a Mightier, for the needed chastisement of apostate Judah--"But this is not what he intends, this is not what he has in mind." Never, doubtless, did that tyrant dream, that his whirlwind march through the passes of the Lebanon, so graphically described by the inspired narrator, was at the dictate and to fulfill the sovereign purposes of the great God of armies. He would have spurned the thought of being the rod of Jehovah's anger and the "staff of His indignation." As such, nevertheless, he was employed--the minister of divine retribution; and then, when he had done his work, his legions were scattered like chaff before the whirlwind!

"I am Jehovah of hosts," says the Divine Messiah, "and besides Me there is no God." And all the plottings and counter-plottings of tyrants and despots, civil and ecclesiastical, will be similarly overruled for the spread of His cause, and the defeat and final overthrow of His enemies--when they shall be "consumed with the breath of His mouth; and destroyed with the brightness of His coming."

'Prince of peace, take to Yourself Your great power, and reign!' "Gird Your sword upon Your thigh, O most mighty, with Your glory and with Your majesty, and in Your majesty, ride prosperously!" We know the day is coming when You shall be "King over all the earth, and Your name one"--when You shall become, as prophecy has described You, "the Desire of all nations"--when to You as the true Shiloh, shall "the gathering of the people be." "Violence shall no more be heard in Your land, wasting nor destruction within Your borders." The nations of those who are saved shall walk in the light of Your millennial glory. The shout of jubilant loyalty recorded in the Canticles will have its true fulfillment in that great coronation-day--"Go forth, O daughters of Zion, and behold King Solomon, with the crown with which his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart." What a mighty multitude will bow down before that chariot of victory, in which are yoked the white horses of salvation--a multitude with palms in their hands, out of every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people--the Bride of the King--seated alongside

her Lord, wearing on her person the costly jewels (her royal dowry) of "glory, honor, immortality, eternal life!"

Let us, in conclusion, hear this Warrior-king, standing, as He did of old before Joshua with a sword drawn in His hand, and asking each of us individually, "Are you with Me or against Me?" Reader! have you ever pondered all that is comprehended in the reality--"AGAINST Him?" Let Balaam's description be true of you now--one whose "dwelling is in the clefts of the Rock;" so that the same soothsayer's other dreadful words may never be verified in your experience--"I shall see Him (I shall see these clefts), but not near; I shall behold Him, but not near." "Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him."

06.15. CHRIST THE JUDGE

CHRIST THE JUDGE

"For He has set a day when He will judge the world with justice by the Man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising Him from the dead." – Acts 17:31

"Because of His alliance with man's nature; because of His sense of man's infirmities; because of all He did and suffered for man's sake as the Son of man, the Son is that Person of the Trinity who is the most fit as well as most worthy to be man's Judge." –Burgon.

"He will take His seat upon a throne infinitely exceeding that of earthly or even of celestial princes, clothed with His Father's glory and His own--surrounded with a numberless host of shining attendants. In the meantime, O my Divine Master, may my loins be girded about, and my lamp burning, and my ears be watchful for the blessed signal of Your arrival." –Doddridge, 1702.

It is the well-known climax of the most sublime of Litanies, "In the Day of Judgment, good Lord deliver us!" Happy are they who have obeyed the summons of the great Prophet--"Men will flee to caves in the Rocks and to holes in the ground from dread of the Lord and the splendor of his majesty, when he rises to shake the earth"--and who can thus appropriate the strong confidence embodied in the dying testimony of the chief of apostles--"I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him against that day." "Where are you?" was the shuddering question which rang amid the blighted bowers of Eden, when "the voice of the Lord God was heard walking in the garden in the cool of the day." In a far different sense will that question yet come to be uttered. Alas! in the case of thousands on thousands, the only reply will take the shape of an invocation to rocks and mountains to become barricades in the futile attempt to evade Omniscience. But on the other hand, the response of earth's first apostate will have a new and glorious meaning in the lips of each member of the ingathered Church, who, washed in the blood and clothed in the righteousness of Jesus, has fled to Him for safety--"I heard Your voice and I was afraid because I was naked, and I hid myself!" Hid myself in Christ; hid myself in the Rock of Ages! Even now may we be enabled, with some good measure of triumphant assurance, to take up the often-repeated words, and sing them in anticipation of that Great Day with its glorious shelter and hiding-place--

"When I soar to worlds unknown,

See You on Your judgment throne--

Rock of Ages! cleft for me,

Let me hide myself in Thee!"

It will be observed that the verse selected to head this chapter, and which we may take to guide our thoughts in considering the lofty theme, connects the present Rock-cleft with one already dwelt upon. There is a connection stated between the Resurrection of Christ, and His appearance as

judge of all mankind. After announcing that the world is to be judged in righteousness by the Man of God's ordaining, Paul in his address to his Athenian auditory, is represented as adding, "Whereof He has given assurance unto all men in that He has raised Him from the dead." Jesus, in the course of His public ministry, had announced two great truths to His hearers, both wearing the stamp of strangeness and improbability. The one, that He Himself was to die, and by His own inherent power to rise again; that after being laid in the grave, He was to come forth on the third day alive from the sepulcher. And in order to fix this astounding fact in their memories, He associated it with the remarkable analogy or prefiguration in the history of one of their own prophets--"As Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." Or yet again, investing their honored Temple with a typical significance, "Destroy this body, and in three days I will raise it up." This was the one well-near incredible fact. The other was still more marvelous-- that is, that at some indefinite period of the future, in the exercise of the same power by which He was to quicken His own body, all the millions that ever trod this world were to be awakened from the sleep of death, and cited at His righteous judgement. Everlasting awards were to be apportioned. Those who had done good were to come forth to "the resurrection of life," and those who had done evil to "the resurrection of damnation."

Now the first of these two marvels had been accomplished. The Resurrection of the Redeemer we found to be a historical fact, certified and accredited by "many infallible proofs." And by the fulfillment of the one prodigy, God has set His seal to the indubitable certainty of the other. As surely as the crucified and buried Jesus of Nazareth came forth triumphant from His tomb on the appointed third day, so surely will the slumbering myriads of mankind--the dust of ages and centuries--awake at His summons to judgment. "The dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear shall live."

We may make one other preliminary remark suggested by these words of the apostle. They vividly impress upon us the CERTAINTY of that day and that tremendous scene. Other events and transactions in the world are uncertain; their occurrence is contingent on circumstances. In that unwritten roll of our varied futures, there is no one event of which we can feel infallibly sure, except our death. But this Day of judgment is as great an historical verity of the future, as the Resurrection of Christ is of the past. Even the period is not left unfixed and indeterminate. Utterly beyond the presumptuous guesses of human soothsayers, (for "of that day and that hour knows no man,") yet it is known to God. "He has appointed a day." The day is written in the Book of His decrees; and every hour is bringing you and I nearer its solemnities. "Surely," says the now reigning King, as He makes the last inspired communication to His Church, "Surely I come quickly."

What will be the EVENTS of that day?

Let us note, first, THE BELIEVER'S CONFIDENCE AND SECURITY as he contemplates the Person of the enthroned Judge. God is to judge the world in righteousness "by that MAN whom He has ordained." It is "the Son of Man" who is then to come in His glory. He is to come, indeed, in unutterable majesty as the Supreme Jehovah--the co-equal and co-eternal of the Father. But He is to come also in His own glory, as the Mediator of His Church--the effulgence of His Godhead is to be tempered with the tenderness of His humanity. As my Kinsman, my Avenger, the Brother in my

nature, the Lord who died for me, who is now pleading for me, He is to stand on that latter day on the earth; to vindicate my cause, to wipe off every aspersion on my character, to ratify my pardon and acceptance before an assembled world, and joyfully to proclaim, in the presence of His Father, as He points to the trophies of redeeming grace and love around Him, "Behold I and the children which You have given Me!"

Observe next, THE SPHERE OR EXTENT OF HIS JUDICIAL PROCEDURE. On that appointed day He is to "judge the WORLD." All that have ever lived are to be gathered within the area of that supreme, tribunal; "Before Him shall be gathered all nations." "All that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God." Not one shall be missing! From earth's teeming mounds--from ocean's hidden caverns. The pauper from his shroud of dust--the king from his gilded monument. Consecrated and unconsecrated ground alike will yield what they have long held in custody. "Every eye shall see Him;" every knee shall bow before Him; either in the reverence of adoring love and joy, or in the unutterable anguish of despair. How solemnly does the Apostle bring home to each of us, alike the universality and personality of that vast assize--"So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God."

Next, let us note THE ONE ATTRIBUTE WHICH WILL THEN BE CONSPICUOUSLY DISPLAYED. He is to "judge the world in righteousness." It is to be a throne of uncompromising equity. It is said of the Divine Conqueror of the Apocalypse, who, on His white horse, now heads the armies of heaven, that in "Righteousness He does judge and make war." We never can speak too much or too often of the Reign, or of the Throne of Grace. We never can proclaim too urgently the glad welcome which awaits every stricken penitent. We delight to picture that Throne with its rainbow canopy, and the inscription which surmounts it, "Faithful and just to forgive sins." But the day will come, when the rainbow-tints shall melt and merge into the color of pure white (the type of pure untainted justice)--"I saw," says John, "a great white throne." Righteousness, we have again and again seen, has been the foundation on which the whole work of the Atonement was raised, and Righteousness will form its closing act, the top-stone of the completed Temple. Nor are we left in ignorance as to the PRINCIPLE which will regulate that righteous judgement. "He will judge every man according as his work shall be." "And the dead were judged every man according to their works." The silence of the hushed assembly will be broken by this statement, coming from lips from which there is no appeal--"Let him who does wrong continue to do wrong; let him who is vile continue to be vile; let him who does right continue to do right; and let him who is holy continue to be holy."

Let it not be supposed that these sentences and awards in any degree encroach on the grand central Gospel truth of salvation by grace--salvation without the deeds or works of the law. Every glorified and happy saint that day will be justified by faith, and by faith alone. If he be accepted, it is "accepted in the Beloved;" if righteous, it is because he stands clothed in the surety-righteousness of his Redeemer; if saved and sheltered, it is because he is sheltered in the "Clefts of the Rock." But good works, as the RESULT and FRUIT of faith, will, in the case of all Christ's people, be required, not as the grounds of acquittal, but as the EVIDENCES of the reality of their union with Him. In the case of the impenitent, their recompense will be in accordance with life antecedents; so that their future condition will only be the continuance and perpetuation of present character. In their case, evil deeds will form the ground of condemnation, "Whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap." "The fearful and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers,

and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone." Our Lord's saying will have, in the case of all such, a dreadful but truthful fulfillment, "Wherever the carcass is, there shall the vultures" (of retribution, the vultures of their own sins) "be gathered together." The master lusts, tyrant passions of the present, will form their future tormentors.

Let none forget or overlook the moral aspect of that majestic assize, as the great SIFTING-DAY OF CHARACTER--the Day when the Books of Conscience, and Memory, and Privilege, are to be opened; when life--all life--every page, and chapter, and line in the biography--will be resuscitated and enlivened; when hypocrisy, with its subterfuges, will be exposed; the thousand masks and disguises torn from the faces they have successfully screened, as they confront Him "whose eyes are as a flame of fire, and His feet like unto fine brass as if they burned in a furnace." In the present economy, unerring judging is impossible. The righteous and the wicked are found together promiscuously. The good and the bad fishes are in one net. The tares and the wheat are in the same field. The sheep and goats browse on the same pasture. Vessels, some to honor and some to dishonor, are found in the same family, the same community, the same church. But not so in that Day. He, who judges "in righteousness," will separate the one from the other. When the angels with sickle in hand, of whom we have spoken, receive the mandate, "Thrust you in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe," the myriads mown down by these celestial Reapers are to be bound in distinct and separate bundles; some for the heavenly garner; others to be "cast out." The great gulf of separation is fixed forever. "Watch, therefore, and pray always, that you may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man."

Reader, are you prepared for this hour of solemn judgement? Are you able to look forward to it with joyful hope and expectancy as the day of your complete and final glorification; when the Lord, the Righteous judge, will confess your name "before His Father and before His holy angels," and welcome you "to inherit the kingdom?" It is "the day of the REVEALING of the sons of God." It will then be found that God's people were in this world often hidden--unknown; often their goodness and graces and virtues unacknowledged, misrepresented, or scorned; their failures or inconsistencies unduly magnified and exaggerated; their light hidden under a bushel, or prematurely quenched by persecution and death. But "THEN shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father!" That second coming was to the early Christians their cherished harbor of refuge in the midst of envioning storms--"And to wait for His Son from heaven." "The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and the patient waiting for Christ." "Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord draws near."

Moreover, it is well worth noting, that in the inspired epistles, it is not the day of death which is spoken of or LOOKED FORWARD TO BY THE CHURCH WITH JUBILANT EXPECTATION, but THE DAY OF CHRIST'S APPEARING. It is that day which gives the sacred writers their strongest motives and incentives, not only for the urging of watchfulness, but for the cherishing of hope, faith, and joy. Need we wonder at this? Death is no pleasing theme--though the Christian's last enemy, it is an enemy still--'the King of Terrors.' But the second Advent of the divine Savior--is identified with final triumph over death; when "this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal immortality; and the saying shall be brought to pass as it is written, 'Death is swallowed up in victory.'" Not only so, but that "vile body" (itself a part of the redemption-purchase) will come forth from the dishonors of the grave, fashioned like the glorious body of its glorified Redeemer. In

the experience also of God's people this "blessed hope" has calmed, and cheered, and elevated many a pilgrim in his passage through the dark valley. It is said of a distinguished judge of the English bench that, on sending for Archbishop Usher as he felt death approaching, he declared to that pastor, that amid all the collected stores of human learning and erudition he had in his rare library, there was but one sentence on which he could rest with comfort, and that sentence was from holy Scripture--"The grace of God, which brings salvation, has appeared unto all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, and righteously, and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ."

How many anguished, BEREAVED mourners, also, have had their grief calmed and their tears dried, by this same sublime antidote of the great Apostle, as he points them on to the second coming of their Lord, and associates that coming with the restoration of their beloved dead! "I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who are asleep, that you sorrow not, even as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, them also who sleep in Jesus, will God bring with Him." At that blessed season when "the tabernacle of God shall be with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people; and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God"--amid these revived friendships and indissoluble reunions, "God"--the God on the throne--the Brother-man--"shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." Nor is the anticipated joy of that Day altogether a personal and selfish one. No small element of it is the believer's joy at the GLORY which will then encircle the brow of his adorable Lord. It will be the PUBLIC ENTHRONEMENT OF JESUS of Nazareth. He will come "to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired of those who believe." All the humiliations of His first coming--the manger--the carpenter's home--the unsheltered head--the nights of wakeful anguish--the scorn, and taunt, and jeer--the piercing thorns--the bitter cross--the ignominious sepulcher--all, all now exchanged for the shout of welcome--"Lo! this is our God, we have waited for Him."

How often, among His own people on earth, is He dishonored--wounded in the house of His friends--the unsullied glory of the Master tarnished with the blemishes and inconsistencies of the disciples. But not so on that Day. Even these marred, blotted, imperfect images and reflections, shall then, at least, become perfect copies and transcripts of their glorious divine Original--"We know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." "I saw," says John, "the Holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband."

Let us only remark, in closing, that the best preparation for His second coming to judge, is to rest, with firm believing trust and confidence, in His first coming to save. "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and to those who look for Him shall He appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation." Seek to be now forming the character you would wish to have completed and perfected, when the Advent shall take place--"Let every man that has this hope in him purify himself ever as He is pure."

Whatever your earthly duties be, do them nobly, purely, faithfully--keeping, amid the rough wear and tear of a work-day world, a conscience void of offence. Not like some of the enthusiasts of the Pauline age, who, in the erroneous anticipation and interpretation of that Advent, deserted their

posts of duty, and surrendered themselves to an existence of dreamy contemplation--but rather, in the midst of your laborious callings, glorify in these the Lord who redeemed you--prosecuting your prescribed path, whatever it be. Only remembering thus to pursue, with the loins girded and the lamps burning, and being like those who are waiting for the coming of the Lord. With such a glorious inheritance reserved for God's children, what are earth's pomps and vanities? How do its riches, and honors, and ambitions pale into utter nothingness before the approaching blaze of that advent throne! "Blessed is he who watches and keeps his garments." Blessed is he, who, in whatever calling he is called, therein abides with God. Thus remaining expectant in this glorious Rock-cleft, we can mark the rainbow-arch which spans the sky of the future, connecting the cross with the crown; and say, in lowly believing confidence, with one of the Church's noblest watchers, "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me AT THAT DAY!"

06.16. CHRIST REIGNING OVER HIS CHURCH FOREVER

CHRIST REIGNING OVER HIS CHURCH FOREVER "He shall reign forever and ever."-- Revelation 11:15 The contemplation of the sublime themes which, in the preceding pages, have occupied our thoughts, would be incomplete, without adverting, however briefly, to the grandest and most glorious Rock-cleft of all--the confidence which the believer enjoys in the anticipation of the reign of the glorified redeemer in the midst of his triumphant church, throughout the ages of eternity. In the preceding views of Christ's character and work, and of the official relation in which He stands to His people, He has been brought before us as "the shadow of a Great Rock in a weary land." During their wilderness travel, when the fierceness of the desert heat, the sirocco-breath of fiery temptation and trial, is beating on their unsheltered heads, they know the blessedness of journeying to these secure refuges, and of hiding themselves there "until the indignation be past." But when "the dry and thirsty land" is ended, and Canaan entered--when the twin foes, Sin and Death, have been finally conquered, and the ransomed multitudes are ushered amid the glories of a sinless, sorrowless, deathless immortality--is "the Great Rock," then, to become only a memory of the past--recalled only as a sheltering covert while sojourning among the mists and glooms of the Valley of Tears?

No; if we can with reverence use the simile; like that strange mass of rock, the Rock of the Sakrah, which the traveler to Jerusalem who has seen it, can never forget--rising in mysterious impressiveness in the very midst of the old Temple area--so shall the Rock of Ages remain conspicuous, through everlasting years, in the center of the glorified Temple of the true City of God--Yes, a Rock, with its sacred clefts and fissures standing in the midst of "the house not made with hands"--whose walls are salvation and its gates praise! Stripping it of metaphor, Jesus is to reign forever in the midst of His saints. His humanity will, in the future, be co-eternal with His divinity. Of His mediatorial kingdom and government there is to be no end.

We seem, indeed, to gather from various passages of sacred Scripture, that the regal sway which at present He exercises over His enemies, human and Satanic, is, at "the end of all things"--the winding up of the present dispensation--to cease. Now (adopting, the application of the words of the 8th Psalm made by an inspired writer), God has "put all things under His feet." To the Prophet of Patmos, we have seen Him represented in vision, not only walking in the midst of His Churches (symbolized by seven golden candlesticks), but holding the seven stars in His hands. Now, He is exalted not only to be Head of His Church, but Head over all things FOR the Church. As the adorable Guardian of her blood-bought rights and prerogatives, He sways the scepter of universal empire in her behalf. "Say among the heathen that the Lord reigns--the world also shall be established that it shall not be moved--he shall judge the people righteously." But this portion of His mediatorial sway, "the KINGDOM OF CHRIST over this world," is to be surrendered, so soon as the last member of His triumphant host has entered within the walls of the heavenly city--placed forever beyond the hostility alike of wicked men and of blaspheming devils. The limits of His reign are defined alike in Old and New Testament Scripture. Listen to the language of ancient prophecy--"The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit at My right hand, UNTIL I make Your enemies Your

footstool." Or hear the apostolic testimony claiming in Him the fulfillment of these same words--"He must reign UNTIL He has put all enemies under His feet." "THEN comes the end, when He shall have delivered up (this part of) the kingdom to God even the Father that is, when He shall have put down all (wicked, and impious, and oppressive) rule, and all authority and power." Not only so, but when the triumph over His own and His people's enemies is complete, He gives over this subsidiary administration into the hands of the Father. The affairs of the universe are henceforth to be conducted as they were previous to the incarnation. Like a mighty river which has finished its course, and which mingles its waters in the everlasting volume and the rest of the ocean which gave it birth, that part of the mediatorial sovereignty, which extends beyond the pale of the ingathered and glorified Church, will be merged and absorbed in the sway of God absolute. "And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him who put all things under Him, that God" (in the only true Pantheistic sense, rescuing the word from its modern perverted meaning) "may be all in all." On the other hand, (and this aspect of the subject which now concerns us), as the Mediator of His glorified Church in heaven, there are to be no limits set to the tenure and exercise of his Kingly and Priestly offices. As it is expressed in the prophetic Psalm, to which we have just alluded, with reference to His royal Priesthood--"You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek;" or in the emphatic comments on the same, given in the Epistle to the Hebrews--"Having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abides a priest continually. Made not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life. This Man, because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood. He ever lives to make intercession--He is consecrated for evermore." In the most impressive of His own parables, the Redeemer seems to speak as if "the end of the age" were thus to form the true commencement of His limitless reign. For then it is He calls Himself, for the first time, by the title of "the King,"--as He invites His blood-bought subjects to inherit the kingdom He had won.

Similarly, in the parable of 'the Pounds,' when, under the figure of the nobleman "returning from the far country," He is spoken of as "having received the kingdom;" so far from abdicating His mediatorial scepter, "His appearing and His kingdom" are spoken of as identical, dating from the hour when He shall judge both the quick and the dead. It is His coronation-day, "the day of His espousals, the day of the gladness of His heart." "Let us be glad and rejoice, for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife has made herself ready." The title given to Him by the great Apostle, and upon which we have dwelt, as one of the most blessed of the believer's Rock-clefts, will have an eternal meaning and signification--"Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and FOREVER." In that sublime figure in the Apocalypse, referred to also in a previous chapter, we behold the glorified Mediator under the emblem of a SLAIN LAMB, with the scars of earthly suffering still visible--(the impressive memorials of His anguish and bloody sweat--His cross and passion)--adored by a multitude which no man can number--even by "ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands." Their ascription indicates the duration of His sway--"Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto Him who sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever."

Similarly, in the still sublime passage and vision of the white-robed and palm-bearing multitude, that same Jesus, in His offices of immutable love--the same adorable Redeemer, under His suffering title, and designation of the "Lamb"--is represented, in the midst of the throne, as

"feeding them," and "leading them to the living fountains of waters;" and with the identical hand that was nailed to the cross "wiping away all tears from their eyes;" as if Eternity's comment on the precious words of the old prophet, now so familiar to us, "A MAN shall be as...the shadow of a great Rock!" At the sounding of the seventh angel, the voices in heaven which proclaimed His final conquest of the world-kingdoms, are heard proclaiming, "He shall reign forever and ever." And, not to dwell on other delineations of the future, given in the same inspired record, the sublime closing vision of "the Holy City, New Jerusalem "with its river, and trees of perennial fruit--attests alike the termination of the reign of evil--"the curse,"--and the perpetuity of the reign of Christ--the Author and Dispenser of all "blessing"--"There shall be no more curse but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and His servants shall serve Him." From these then, and other similar passages in holy Scripture, we gather the exalted truth, that, though the "subsidiary sway of the divine Redeemer over His foes, human and angelic," is to be terminated, He is to "reign over the house of Jacob forever"--that through the endless years of eternity, the Rock of Ages, with its glorious clefts and unscalable heights, is to remain bathed in the sunlight of heaven. His redeemed are still to love Him as Mediator, while they adore Him as God. "You set a crown of pure gold on His head. He asked life of You, and You gave it to Him, even length of days forever and ever." "His name shall endure forever. His name shall be continued as long as (yes, longer than) the sun." "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever." "If I go to prepare a place for you," was His own gracious declaration, "I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am there you may be also." The perpetuity of that mediatorial office and reign over the Church of the First-born, we may regard in a twofold light. (1.) As the stipulated REWARD OF THE REDEEMER'S SUFFERINGS on the part of the Father--the fulfillment of glowing words spoken centuries before the Incarnation--"When You shall make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand. He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied."

(2.) The continuance of His official character and administration, is represented by Christ Himself as THE PLEDGE AND GUARANTEE FOR THE PERMANENCE OF HIS PEOPLE'S BLISS. "Because I live, you shall live also." Their lives are "hidden with Christ in God." They "shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ." They "sit with Him upon His throne." His presence as Mediator constitutes the divine tenure, by which, as kings and priests they hold their crowns and censers. So that, if we dare use so strong a simile, that Rock of Ages must first crumble in pieces, before they can be divested of their inviolable bliss--their blood-bought privileges. The song of earth will thus be echoed and perpetuated by the Redeemed around the throne--made the never-ceasing anthem of heaven, "O come, let us sing unto the Lord--let us make a joyful noise to THE ROCK OF OUR SALVATION!"

Most blessed and elevating thought!--the whole redeemed Church--under the Psalmist's beautiful emblem of a dove--with its once soiled and ruffled plumage, now "covered with silver and its feathers with yellow gold," flashing back the glorious sunlight--delighting still, as on earth, to perch in these eternal Rock-clefts--no longer "hastening its escape from the windy storm and tempest," but folding its wings in the perfected bliss of everlasting rest and everlasting love!

Here on earth, the Church is represented as only seeing her Beloved "through the lattice,"--obtaining brief and passing glimpses of Him. Here the Rock of Ages is beheld often through looming mists, or at all events, gleams of sunshine alternate with obscuring clouds. Not so

in that bright world! Nothing is there to dim, or darken, or blur the vision. "We shall see Him as He is." In a nobler sense than that of present security, "we shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." The closing petition of His own priestly prayer will be everlastingly fulfilled--"Father, I will that those also whom You have given me be WITH ME where I am, that they may behold My glory." Who can tell but that in the revelation of that glory, it may be with the Church in heaven as with the Church on earth, that the Divine Being can only be discerned mediately; that no one (no, not even a glorified saint) can gaze on the unveiled lusters of Deity. The words may hold as true in a world of blessedness as in a valley of tears--"No man can see My face and live." How then shall the great Jehovah be most appropriately revealed to the eyes of adoring worshipers? Shall it not be through the same divine medium by which He was unfolded to His Church on earth--when as the Christ incarnate they beheld His glory--the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth; "the Image of the Invisible God?" Thus revealed as "the slain Lamb" with scars and blood-marks--thus revealed as "the smitten Rock" with its clefts and gashes--these will be, to the Church triumphant, EVERLASTING REMEMBRANCES ALIKE OF THE VILENESS OF SIN, AND OF THE VASTNESS OF JEHOVAH'S LOVE! In closing these transcendent themes, let the solemn--all-important personal question press itself with ever-renewed and augmented earnestness; can we (each of us) with some good measure of humble yet triumphant confidence, appropriate Christ as OUR God and Savior? Are we able in any feeble degree to make the noble avowal of the great Apostle our own--"To me to live is Christ?" Are we cherishing, in any humble measure, as our life-long aspiration, that we "may win Christ, and be FOUND in Him." Found in the Rock-clefts now, are we able to make the challenge of an assured present acceptance and peace--"It is God who justifies, who is he that condemns?"

Found in the Rock-clefts in all the times of our present TRIBULATIONS, are we able, amid the fragile blessings and fleeting pleasures of earth--to claim a better and more enduring portion, and to say, "My flesh and my heart fails, but God is the Rock of my heart and my portion forever?"

Found in the Rock-clefts in all time of our present BLESSINGS; are we able to disown perishable refuges; and exulting in divine and more enduring confidences, to tell as the secret of true happiness--"In the Lord put I my trust, why do you say to my soul, flee as a bird to your mountain?"

Found in the Rock-clefts in the hour of DEATH; while the silver cord is fast loosing, and the golden bowl is in the act of being broken; as life, and those whose presence and smile have made life joyous, are fast dimming from sight, shall we be able thus to triumph in Him who alone is "without change"--"The Lord lives, and blessed be my Rock; and let the God of my salvation be exalted?"

Found in the Rock-clefts on the Day of JUDGMENT--shall we be able then, as we look unawed on passing heavens, a dissolving earth, and burning worlds, to exclaim--"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?"

Found in the Rock-clefts through all ETERNITY; under the consciousness of their unassailable security, shall we be able to enter into the Apostle's words, when (conjuring up in his enumeration every possible form of antagonism and evil), among others, he defies "things to come"--the cycles of eternity--ever to separate from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?

"And now, all glory to God, who is able to keep you from stumbling, and who will bring you into his glorious presence innocent of sin and with great joy. All glory to him, who alone is God our Savior,

through Jesus Christ our Lord. Yes, glory, majesty, power, and authority belong to him, in the beginning, now, and forevermore. Amen." Jude 1:24-25

O ROCK OF AGES! swathed in clouds of light,
Whose heights unclimbed, never foot of angel trod—
Ancient of days--Almighty--Infinite!
Older than Nature's eldest-born--Great God—
We praise, we bless, we magnify Your name!
And as before the birth of Time were Thou,
So, through unending ages still the same,
Past, present, future, one eternal Now!
You did descend from everlasting bliss,
In manger born, to raise us up on high;
A woe-worn Pilgrim in earth's wilderness,
Wedding our finite dust with Deity.
Around Your path no blazoned banners wave;
No jeweled diadem Your brows adorned;
Your cradle borrowed, and a borrowed grave;
Servant of servants, poor, despised, and scorned!
The spotless Lamb is to the slaughter led,
The Son of man and Lord of Glory dies;
For us! for us! He bowed His thorn-wreathed head:
O mystery transcending mysteries!
The mighty triumph is at last complete,
Hell's myriad hosts are vanquished and uncrowned,
Death lays his scepter at the Victor's feet,
And captive millions rise with chains unbound.
Nor this alone--He left His Throne of light!
The secret hid from ages past to tell;
The Revelation of the Infinite,

The Image of the Great Invisible.
A Father's love disclosing unto all;
The poor, the lost, the burdened, the oppressed
Not one excluded from the gracious call—
"Come unto Me, you weary, and have rest!"
Peace for the guilty, stung with conscious sin;
Peace for bereaved ones wailing for their dead;
Peace amid waves without and storms within,
The troubled soothed, the mourner comforted.
O Savior God, ascended up on high,
You true High Priest within the Temple-veil,
To all that call upon You ever nigh,
"Prince who has power with God, and must prevail;"
You who do reign Your Church's Lord and Head,
With many crowns upon Your regal brow,
You who shall come to judge both quick and dead,
Great Rock of Ages! hide Your servant now—
That when archangel's trumpet is pealing loud,
"When every mountain shall a Sinai be"
When sun and moon shall wear their sackcloth shroud,
Creation in her final agony—
"Found" in Your clefts, and shielded by Your might,
From Your blest love and presence nothing may sever;
Earth's shadows merged in Heaven's unclouded light,
Securely sheltered in THE ROCK, FOREVER!

07.00. COMMUNION MEMORIES

COMMUNION MEMORIES by John MacDuff, 1886 The record of some Communion Sundays, with Meditations, Addresses, and Prayers suited for the Lord's Table

Part 1—SERMONS The Grain of Wheat Falling into the Ground and Dying The Great Resolve The Psalm of the Pilgrims Spiritual Progress The Exaltation of the Humanity A Flight of Doves Christ and His Disciples at the Last Supper The Great Festal Gathering and Song of Heaven The Obligation of Christians to Observe the Lord's Supper Beautiful with Sandals The Passover in Egypt and its Typical Significance Concluding Address Part 2—Meditations and Addresses, with Other Aids and Thoughts for the Lord's Table Private Meditations Preceding Communion #1 Private Meditations Preceding Communion #2 Private Meditations Preceding Communion #3 Private Meditations Preceding Communion #4 Private Meditations Preceding Communion #5 Prayer Before Communion Address to Aged Communicants Address to Mourning Communicants #1 Address to Mourning Communicants #2 Address to Mourning Communicants #3 Private Meditations after Communion #1 Private Meditations after Communion #2 Private Meditations after Communion #3 Private Meditations after Communion #4 Private Meditations after Communion #5 Private Meditations after Communion #6 Prayer after Communion

07.01. The Grain of Wheat Falling into the Ground and Dying

The Grain of Wheat Falling into the Ground and Dying.

"I tell you the truth, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds." John 12:24 To understand the scope and meaning of these words, we must connect them with the verses in the immediately preceding context.

Some Greeks, not Grecian Jews, but Gentiles—what were called Proselytes of the Gate—had gone to Jerusalem to worship with other pilgrims at the Feast of the Passover. They came to Philip of Bethsaida, probably attracted by his Greek name, with the request, "Sir, we would see Jesus." The disciples could not fail to observe the profound emotion which the desire thus expressed produced on their divine Lord. When Philip told Andrew, and Andrew and Philip together told Jesus, it brought from His lips an utterance of strange triumph—"The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified!" Occurring as it did in that solemn season of Passion week, there was something in the petition and the petitioners alike remarkable. These Greeks were Representative men. In the eye of Christ, it was "a prayer," to use the words of Stier, "in the name of their nation and of all nations," to see the world's Savior. It was the heathen (the "other sheep not of the Jewish fold") soliciting to be gathered in; yes, too, and the Jew introducing the Gentile. Need we wonder, that the Redeemer beholds in this, the first-fruits of a mighty ingathering—a pledge that the time was at hand when the covenant and uncovenanted nations would be blended and reconciled; the middle wall of partition broken down, and all the ends of the earth see the salvation of God? 'What!' He seems to say, 'Gentiles coming to My light! aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenant of promise! Men from Pagan shores, and that, too, from no vague curiosity, but with the intense earnestness and wistful longing of "watchers for the morning," uttering the cry of weary humanity, "Sir, we would see Jesus!" Then, the hour is come that the heathen are given for My inheritance; when men shall be blessed in Me, and all nations shall call Me blessed.'

But, His exclamation of triumph comes to an abrupt conclusion. All at once, by a singularly rapid transition, He changes the theme. That momentary glimpse of glory seems dimmed and clouded by the intervention of some troubled thought—"a prelude to Gethsemane." It is as if some bolt had suddenly darted athwart the azure sky; and He had called to mind that the way to glorification is by suffering and death. The Cross must be borne before the Crown can be gained. While in one breath, with an unusual gleam of joy on His countenance, He proclaims, "The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified," the "decease" He must first "accomplish" casts its dreadful shadow on His path; and He adds the similitude of our text—"Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone." You will observe, in the announcement and enforcement of a great truth, He goes, not to the Volume of Prophecy (this He might have done, and probably would have done, had He been discoursing to Jews alone). But in the presence of these Greeks, He turns to pages better understood by them; and allows Nature, through her simplest processes, to speak, and unfold the impending mystery. He brings before

them the familiar parable of the seed-grain dropped into the earth—showing how life comes out of death—a new and more exuberant growth springing from the destruction of the inserted grain.

Dear brethren, the subject surely is specially appropriate in the prospect we have of commemorating the death and sufferings of our divine Savior. Come, then, let us gather around the lowly emblem, and contemplate "Christ, THE GRAIN OF WHEAT." In doing so, let me direct your meditations to these three points— The Grain of Wheat abiding alone. The Grain of Wheat falling into the ground and dying. The Grain of Wheat bringing forth much fruit.

I. The Grain of Wheat ABIDING ALONE.

It is Christ's humiliation which we are mainly called in these words, as well as in our commemorative feast of today, to ponder. But in order, by contrast, to bring out the wonders of that humiliation, let us, as here suggested, go back to a past Eternity, and contemplate that Grain of Wheat abiding alone.

Immensity a void. The mysterious Trinity in unity, pervading and filling all space. No need of worlds or angels to glorify them. Stupendous thought! To wing our way up the ascending steep, with no planet for a resting-place—No created spots where we can breathe, and pause, and breathe again—Nothing above, below, around, but GOD!! No trill of an angel's song, to break the trance of everlasting ages—There was the Grain of Wheat abiding alone—The Eternal Son with the Eternal Father, in the glory which He had with Him before the world was!

Sublime indeed is it to contemplate Christ at this moment, as the Sovereign Ruler of His vast universe marshaling its hosts of stars; kindling up the Altar-fires of Heaven, "binding the sweet influences of Pleiades; loosing the bands of Orion; guiding Arcturus with his sons." But equally grand and magnificent is it to revert to the period before the existence of this wealth and munificence of power—when no forests were waving, no waters rolling, no planets circling in their spheres. To think of the great Center of all, then reposing in the solitudes of His own Infinite Being—no tongue of angel, redeemed or unredeemed, to hymn His praise—yet ineffably glorious in His own blessed Nature!

Behold "the Grain of Wheat"—behold the Second Person in the Ever-blessed Trinity "abiding alone!"

II. The Grain of Wheat FALLING INTO THE GROUND, AND DYING.

Impelled by nothing but His own free, sovereign, unmerited grace, Christ resolves not to abide alone. He has to come down to a ruined world in order to effect its ransom and salvation. Compassionating the wandering star which had broken loose from its orbit, plunging ever deeper and deeper into darkness—He resolves to replace it within the sphere of the divine regards.

But, how replace it? How, in other words, is this Redemption from sin and death to be effected? Is it by becoming incarnate in order to live a pattern-life, the embodiment and manifestation of all virtue and moral excellence; and thus exhibit in the sight of apostate men a model of unsullied purity, sublime unselfishness, peerless self-sacrifice, divine love?

He doubtless did so. He, the Infinite One, descended in the likeness of sinful flesh; and as He walked through a guilt-stricken woe-worn world, wherever He went He scattered the riches of His

beneficence. Compassion beamed in His look; grace flowed from His lips; disease crouched at His feet; sickness at His touch took wings, and fled away. God the Father complacently beholding that sinless, Holy Being, proclaimed from the excellent glory—"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." But all this was subordinate to higher requirements—more dreadful responsibilities. "Christ also has once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God" (1 Peter 3:18). Regarding Him as merely the Ideal of Humanity, the manifested perfection of divine "Manhood," He could not, in that capacity, save us. Death (in this most majestic and solemn of all illustrations) must be the condition of life. The grain of wheat—to revert to the symbol in outer material Nature—may be perfect, a perfect specimen of its kind. No more, it has in it the germ of vitality—the seminal principle of life. But if left by itself in the granary, it cannot fructify. It remains an inert unproductive thing—"it abides alone." It must first be sown, or, we may figuratively express it, be buried in the earth. But thus falling into the ground and dying, it comes up a verdant stalk, ultimately bearing fruit, the parent and progenitor of a thousand harvests. So it was with Jesus, the Lord and Giver of life. How wondrously does Nature's lowliest page thus preach to us the great central truth of the Gospel—"Him who died for us, and rose again." As I go to the field where the husbandman is scattering his grain, I see in one of those tiny seeds a type and interpreter of that Mystery which angels desire to look into. It tells me that the way to the seed's multiplication and to Christ's glorification is the same—by the law of death. I see the grain of wheat, which abode alone in the barn, taken and cast into the ground; harrowed over; left during winter or in early spring to slumber under the insensate clod. Anon the field is flushed with living green—the one yellow seed has started up, multiplied thirty-fold. Out of apparent decay and dissolution there emerges prolific life and loveliness—"it brings forth much fruit." "I came," says the Great Antitype, and Interpreter of these nature-teachings, "that you might have life, and that you might have it more abundantly."

There are two words in our text, on which we may for a moment instructively pause. The one suggesting the necessity, the other the voluntariness of the death of Jesus.

(1) "EXCEPT a grain of wheat fall into the ground." "Unless."—There was no other possible way by which the world could be redeemed. Without the dying of the grain-seed—no life. Without the shedding of blood in the person of the Divine Sin-bearer—no remission. This is not the place to enter on the consideration or explanation of theological difficulties and perplexities. The whole principle of Surety substitution is a mystery to us; though, too, abundantly exemplified and manifested, alike in the analogy of Nature and in human experience. But we may well believe, that had there been any other possible method, by which the vindication of God's law could have been effected and the sinner saved—the Grain of Wheat would to this day have remained (if we can with reverence employ such a figure) where it had been from all Eternity, in its place in the Heavenly Garner. Christ would have "abode alone,"—God, the Being of infinite compassion as well as of righteousness, would never and could never have permitted unnecessary and superfluous suffering in the Son of His love. It was the one only means of restitution and safety. "It became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their Salvation perfect through suffering" (Hebrews 2:10.) There was a necessity for all that He endured, arising out of the very Nature of God. The law, in the outer world, of the seed-growing, became a law to the Moral Lawgiver Himself.

(2.) We have the voluntariness of Christ's death here set forth. "If it dies!" "If." This same monosyllable He Himself repeats with similar emphasis a few verses further on—"And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me."

It is a conditional particle of intense and momentous significance. It sets before us the perfect freeness and spontaneity of the Sacrifice—uttered at the moment it was, with the shadow of the Cross projected on His path—His hour of untold Suffering close at hand. May we not take it as revealing to us the human, in the divine Person of the God-man—for the instant shrinking at the anticipation of coming anguish? "If it dies!" As if He were casting up and pondering in His own infinite Mind, the possibility of evading the terrible necessity. "If it dies." For a moment, if I may so express it, appalled at the dreadful yet indispensable conditions Suretyship involved!

How full indeed is all this passage of His strong human emotions. A few verses succeeding He exclaims—"Now is the judgment," or, as some have rendered it, though we may challenge the accuracy of the rendering—"Now is the CRISIS of this world." But in reality it was so—the crisis-moment—the great turning-point in the world's salvation. Am I to save Myself—or save it? Am I (the Grain of Wheat) to fall into the ground and die, or am I to return, unsundered to death, to the heaven whence I came? Are the longings and hopes and aspirations of 4000 years to be rolled back again into the abyss of chaos and night? Or, is the debt to be paid, and earth's millions to be saved? "Now is the Crisis of this world."—The Church of the past and the Church of the future are, as it were, hushed into silence, listening with arrested ear for the announcement of the resolve, which rests with the Divine Speaker. Is He to pause or go on? Is the cup to pass from Him, or is He to drink it? Is He to drop into the ground and become life for others; or, to "abide alone?" He Himself, at this same crisis-hour, prolongs the soliloquy—"Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say?" "What shall I say?"—Shall it be, Father, save Me! Accept My past life of loving filial obedience! Father, let Me leave untasted this dire chalice of death. Let Me revoke My word of promised Surrender and Sacrifice, "I will ransom them from the power of the grave, I will redeem them from death!" Father, let the world perish. Forego the world's harvest—take me to Yourself to abide alone, and forever?

We read in another place, regarding the great Harvest-home of the world, that "the Reapers are the Angels." A writer on this passage of a bygone age, has graphically pictured angel whispering in breathless interest to angel, as they look forward to this reaping time—"What will be the solution of this stupendous problem?" "What will He say?" Shall we have the joy of reaping our golden harvest—or, will the Grain of Wheat refuse to fall into the earth, and abide alone? What DID He say? "Father, save Me from this hour! nevertheless for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify Your Name!" It is enough. In these last words He has given the sure "prelude of victory." He will save others, Himself He will not save! The angels are not to be bereft of their glorious reaping. This Man of Sorrows (His soul in trouble)—this God-man Mediator, going forth weeping, bearing in Himself precious Seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing His sheaves with Him.

We all recall the old Roman story, when, in obedience to the oracular response, a human life, by an act of heroic self-surrender, paid the demanded penalty, and the earthquake-rent was closed.

Christ, in a nobler sense, was that Victim. By the supremest of all deeds of self-sacrifice, because superhuman and divine, the yawning gulf between earth and Heaven has been filled up. The Prince of Life, the sinless Son of God, has given Himself for a ransom.

Like another Aaron, "He stood between the living and the dead, and the plague was stayed." In the lowly emblem of our text, the Grain of Wheat dies, and becomes the life of a perishing world. This leads us—

III. To the Grain of Wheat BRINGING FORTH MUCH FRUIT.

It was prophesied regarding the Redeemer, that He would "see His seed" (Isaiah 53:10). "This," says He, "is the Father's will who has sent Me, that of all whom He has given Me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day" (John 6:39). In that group of Hellenists—men from the shores of the most intellectual of the European nations—who now stood in His presence and had given the key-note to all this discourse, the Savior beheld the first "handful of grain on the top of the mountains, whose fruit would yet shake like Lebanon." The wise men had come from the East to worship at His birth—these Greeks had come from the West to worship before His death. The simple desire, "We would see Jesus," was, to Him who heard it, better than all gold and frankincense and myrrh. It was as precious ointment against the day of His burial. With the omniscient glance of Deity, He that moment foreknew that He was about to die. He (the Tree of Life) was to be felled to the ground; the axe was already laid to the root. But as many a noble inhabitant of the forest, coming with a crash on the sward, scatters its seed all around, and in a few years there starts up a vast plantation—So Christ, by dying, scattered far and wide the grain of spiritual and immortal life. The seed and the leaves of this Tree are for the healing of the nations. The divine Grain-Seed drops into the ground; a golden harvest waves, and Heaven is garnered with ransomed souls.

Brethren, it is surely delightful for us, on this Day of Communion, to connect the cross with the triumphal crown. We are about to contemplate the one solitary fact, the Grain of Wheat falling into the ground and dying. But the eye of faith is carried forward to that final harvest of the world, when the mighty Conqueror will be recognized and welcomed, as the Balm of all hearts, the Redressor of all wrongs. Seeing of the fruit of the travail of His Soul, He shall be satisfied—and surrounded with His spiritual Seed exclaim, "Behold I, and the children whom You have given Me." The cry subsequently heard from these same Greeks and their shores, "Come over and help us," will become the shout of nations. "Unto Him shall the gathering of the people be."

Oh wondrous multitude which no man can number! A multitude growing ever since Abel bent, a solitary worshiper, in the heavenly Sanctuary, with his solitary song—the first solitary sheaf in these Heavenly granaries. Yes! the song is deepening; the sheaves are multiplying. The patriarchal Church swelled the store; the Mosaic Church added to its bundles of first-fruits, and its members prolonged the festal anthem. The strain was taken up by shepherds and fishermen of Galilee. It was echoed by Magi of Persia, and heathens of Greece. It spread along the shores of the Mediterranean; it rang in the halls of Caesar. It was taken up by the waves of the Western seas. It reached the shores of Britain, and from her sent its echoes round the world. India uttered it from her Pagodas. Iceland proclaimed it amid her eternal winters. Ethiopia stretched out her hands unto God; and this was the burden of the universal prayer, "Sir, we would see Jesus." The song of the Church on earth is nothing to the song of the Church above. It has expanded into "the sound of much people, the sound of a great multitude, the noise of many waters, the voice of mighty thunderings." And what is its theme? It is the death of the Grain-Seed, and the resultant "much fruit." "You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every kingdom and

tongue and people and nation."

Brethren, we come this day to present ourselves as an offering—living sacrifices on God's altar; as it were a portion of the fruits of the Savior's atonement—acknowledging, that if we have any life in us—it is as springing from that Grain of Wheat we have now seen (and are about through the more vivid emblem of His own instituted Ordinance to see) falling into the ground and dying. We come, joyfully owning and confessing, that all we have we derive from Him, as the life of our souls. May not this appropriately form the closing practical thought—If He died for us, what have we done, what are we willing to do for Him? The lowly disciple of Bethany brought the best offering she had, with which to embalm her Lord on the eve of His decease. Are we preparing our tributes of affection?—our alabaster box filled with the choicest graces of humility, faith, repentance, new obedience—loving Him who has given us, as the mightiest proof and measure of His love, that instead of "abiding alone" through the everlasting ages with the Father, He was willing to fall into the ground and die?

Spirit of God! consecrate our Communion Sabbath! Open the doors of the banqueting house! Unseal the Sacred mysteries! Let Your people leave the din of the world behind them, that they may come and "see Jesus!" With their hearts full of the lowly similitude of our text; with their footsteps turned to Gethsemane and Calvary—the cross and the grave—let them obey the summons, 'Come, see the Grain of Wheat laid in the furrow of darkness and death! Come, see the place where the Lord suffered; Come, see the place where the Lord lay—for He has swallowed up death in Victory!' May Angels, looking down upon us as we are assembled at the Holy Table, be able to say, "They joy before You, according to the joy in harvest; and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil!"

07.02. THE GREAT RESOLVE

THE GREAT RESOLVE "We will walk in the name of the Lord our God forever and ever."— Micah 4:5 The Sacrament of the Supper is a votive as well as a commemorative ordinance. And these words may be appropriately taken as embodying a holy resolution, or rather a series of holy resolutions, on the part of those who have recently recorded their vows.

"The Name of the Lord," it is said, "is a strong tower—the righteous runs into it, and is safe" (Proverbs 18:10). You who, as good soldiers, have anew attested your allegiance to your heavenly Leader, are represented as garrisoning this divine Stronghold—"Those who trust in the Lord shall be like Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abides forever." It has its "places of defense"—fortified battlements. And we are now to invite you to "go about Zion, mark the towers thereof, mark well her bulwarks and consider her palaces." The various Towers of this Great spiritual Fortress are nothing else than the titles and attributes with which, in His own Inspired Volume, God has seen meet to make Himself known. Of such there are six, more conspicuously presented to us, in Old Testament Scripture alone—

JEHOVAH-TSIDKENU. The Tower of Righteousness.

JEHOVAH-SHALOM. The Tower of Peace.

JEHOVAH- SHAMMAH. The Tower of the Divine Presence.

JEHOVAH-NISSI. The Tower of Defense.

JEHOVAH-JIREH. The Tower of Trust.

JEHOVAH-ROPHI. The Tower of Healing.

After a Sacramental Season, it is my privilege, as we survey these glorious munitions, to say to all believing communicants, in the words of the Prophet Zechariah—"I will strengthen them in the Lord; and they shall walk up and down in His name."

I. The First Tower we mention is JEHOVAH-TSIDKENU. "The Lord our Righteousness."

We were surely today specially invited to behold this Tower built on "the Rock of Ages." What was the main purpose of our gathering at the Holy Table, but to commemorate the Prince of Life working out for us, by His obedience and death, a righteousness not our own? Any shelter we can rear is a tower of sand—a citadel of bulrushes—that will leave us naked and defenseless in that solemn hour which is to try every man's work, and every man's righteousness of what sort it is. But, says Jehovah, "I bring near My righteousness" (Isaiah 46:13). The salvation wrought out by His Eternal Son He has "appointed for walls and for bulwarks." And the believer's prayer who has fled to this Refuge city is—"Let Your hand be upon the Man of Your right hand, on the Son of Man whom You have made strong for Yourself" (Psalms 80:17). He has finished transgression and made an end of sin, and made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in Everlasting Righteousness (Daniel 9:24). Perish all else that would interfere with it. Let the giant deed—the triumph of divine

sorrow and love which we have had before us in significant symbol—stand forth in its solitary grandeur. To attempt anything of our own by way of supplement or addition to the merits of the Divine Surety, would be seeking to gild refined gold; holding up the candle to help the sunlight; or listening to those who counseled the youthful conqueror of Goliath to cumber himself with useless armor, a helmet of steel, and boots of brass, and an untempered shield. Like him, let us cast them all aside, saying, as we stand panoplied in the great imputed righteousness—"Behold! O God, our Shield, and look on the face of Your Anointed."

Brethren and fellow-Communicants, think as you pace that Tower, with its memories of suffering and victory, how it has been crowded by the Saints in the past. You are walking where Abraham walked, when "he believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." You are treading what was consecrated by the footsteps of Isaac and Jacob—Moses, and David, and Isaiah—the blessed Apostles, the holy Martyrs, the members of the true Church throughout all the world and in every age. You are taking up, in the text, the strain chanted and sung by each of them in turn—"We will walk in the name of the Lord our God," and "this is His name whereby He shall be called, the Lord our Righteousness" (Jeremiah 23:6).

II. A Second Tower is JEHOVAH-SHALOM. "The Lord my Peace," or "The Lord send Peace." This Spiritual Tower of Peace stands side by side with the Tower of Righteousness. "The work of righteousness shall be peace" (Isaiah 32:17). "Being justified by faith"—faith in the finished work and righteousness of Christ—"we have peace with God" (Romans 5:1). "Let him take hold of My Strength, that he may make peace with Me, and he shall make peace with Me" (Isaiah 27:5). It is through Him, who is emphatically THE STRONG ONE, that we can have peace. "Having made peace, through the blood of His cross" (Colossians 1:20). The gifted author of the "Pilgrim's Progress" speaks of the window of the chamber called Peace, in which Christian lay, as opening towards the risen sun. The window faces the Sun of Righteousness. It gets its very name from the "Brightness of His rising." Isaiah, in one of the beautiful emblems of his later prophecy, likens the believer's peace to the "flowing of a river" (Isaiah 48:18). How as of a river? Whence these tranquil streams—these still, deep-flowing waters? They cannot be fed from the low marshy ground of his own goodness—his virtues, or moralities; his fitful frames and feelings—but from the Everlasting Hills—from that Righteousness, which the Psalmist describes to be as "the great mountains" (Psalms 36:6). Like the glacier Alps, from which streams, melted by the sun, are flowing all summer long in the midst of drought, when every other channel is dry.

Walk up and down, as Christian sentinels, in this Name of the Lord—singing your watch-song, "You will keep him, O God, in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You!"

What a repose this Gospel peace gives amid all the petty troubles of life! The Apostle speaks of it as "the Peace of God, which passes all understanding," and which "keeps the heart" (according to the meaning of the word in the original), as in a citadel or garrison. What a calm elevation is imparted to the present; while the future can be contemplated undismayed! The chariot of peace in which the believer is seated rolls on; and life's troubles are but as the thin clouds of dust on the gusty highway. Yes, you who climbed so lately "the Hill of blessing," as you enter this Tower of Zion, and gaze from its loopholed window, see how, when God gives His beloved the gracious boon of peace, He makes all things look peaceful. All that belongs to the Christian; his duties; his engagements; his very cares and difficulties, are softened and mellowed with this calm tranquility;

just as in nature the setting sun transforms and metamorphoses the whole landscape into gold. While from your Peace-Tower you thus look along life's valley, you can observe also, beyond the border river, the fields of the true Canaan "dressed in living green," and which this purchased peace has made all your own. With the present rest of grace in possession, and the rest of glory in reversion, we may well say of the Lord, "He is my Rock, and my Fortress, and my Deliverer; my God, my Strength, in whom I will trust; my Shield, and the horn of my salvation, and my high Tower."

Let us joyfully renew and ratify our vows; and with earnest heart and voice utter the resolution, "We will walk in THIS name of the Lord our God forever and ever."

III. A Third Tower is JEHOVAH-SHAMMAH. "The Lord is there,"—The Tower of the Divine Presence.

It is a blessed thing for the believer to bear constantly about with him the realized sense of the Divine nearness, and it is his peculiar privilege and prerogative to do so. God, indeed, is everywhere. The world, the universe has written on its every portal JEHOVAH-SHAMMAH—"The Lord is there." It is gleaming in starry letters on the nightly skies. It is carved in deep hieroglyphics on earth's lowest strata. It is inscribed on the brow of its loftiest mountains. It is written in mosaic on the floor of the sounding sea. Among the forest glades—the cathedral aisles of tangled wood—where neither hammer nor axe nor tool of iron has built a Temple, God is there. Amid the waste of desert sands; on the mossy bank; on the lonely shore, God is there. In the summer calm; the raging storm; the smiling harvest, God is there. Like one of those giant mountains whose base is furrowed with lakes and valleys, and its top pierces the clouds; so is the Ever near—the Omnipresent One. Heaven is His throne, and the earth is His footstool. From among its lowliest insect tribes, up to the myriad ranks of Angel and Archangel—JEHOVAH-SHAMMAH—the Lord is there.

He is the living God also in Providence—alike in great things and in small. When we hear of kingdoms convulsed; nations reeling and trembling, The Lord is there. "Shall there be evil," says the prophet, "in a city, and the Lord has not done it?" (Amos 3:6). When we hear of death darkening the humblest dwelling; when we see the tiniest bud of earth's affection falling, as we think, prematurely to the ground, "The Lord is there," "Who knows not in all these things that the hand of the Lord has wrought this?" (Job 12:9). Yes, it is delightful and comforting surely, with the eye of faith, to see Jehovah thus riding in the chariot of Providence, reining in (if I may so express it) at His sovereign Will its fiery coursers—the mighty wheels, like those in Ezekiel's vision—rather their complex movements, wheel within wheel—revolving and evolving nothing but good—He guiding and supervising all; appointing every sorrow that is endured, and every tear that is shed!

There is yet a nobler and pre-eminent sense in which His covenant people can flee into this Strong Tower; and walking in the name of their God can say—"The Lord Almighty is with us—the God of Jacob is our Refuge,"—"Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3). Oh! how it would hallow all life's duties, and take the sting from many of its sorrows, and fortify against its temptations, if we could ever regard ourselves as God's fortresses—our souls bearing the superscription on their living gates—"The Lord is there." Where the term we now speak of is used, Micah is gazing with prophetic inspiration on the future city of Jerusalem, and the Sanctuary which was yet to crown the heights of Zion. He tells us that although there will be the

absence of the glory of the First Temple—no visible Shekinah—no visible cloud—yet that the presence of the invisible God will be diffused like an odor of sacred incense around; and the name of it shall be JEHOVAH-SHAMMAH.

Dear friends, today's watch-word, circulating from guest to guest at the Holy Table, was "Surely the Lord is in this place! This is none other than the House of God, and this is the gate of Heaven." Let us seek to perpetuate the blessings of a Communion-Sabbath by the holy resolve—"If Your Presence go not with us, carry us not hence." "You, O Lord, are in the midst of us, and we are called by Your name." "We will walk in this name of the Lord our God forever and ever."

IV. A Fourth Tower is JEHOVAH-NISSI. "The Lord my Banner,"—The Tower of Defense. This reminds all of us who have given public testimony of our faith in Christ, that we are still in an enemy's country. You remember how Bunyan (to quote the great Dreamer again) represents Christiana and her children knocking at the Gate; while in a castle, near by, there were those who were assailing them. If any leave a Communion-table to return to the world in their own strength, they shall assuredly fall. But we go not a warfare on our own charges. "Some trust in chariots, and some in horses, but we will remember the name of the Lord our God," and He who is for us, is greater than all that can be against us.

Let our moral attitude be like the workmen on the walls of Zion in Nehemiah's time, building with the sword girded by our side; ever ready, when the missiles are flying thick and fast around, to flee to Him who is a "High Tower against the enemy," and who thus invites all weak and helpless ones—"Come, my people, enter into your chambers, and shut your doors about you; hide yourself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast" (Isaiah 26:20). This is the true Tower of King David, built for an armory, whereon there hang a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men (Song of Solomon 4:4). "Blessed is the people who know the joyful sound—they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of Your countenance. In Your name shall they rejoice all the day and in Your righteousness shall they be exalted. For You are the glory of their strength—and in Your favor our horn shall be exalted. For the Lord is our DEFENSE—and the Holy One of Israel is our king" (Psalms 89:15-18).—"We will walk in this name of the Lord our God forever and ever."

V. Our Fifth Tower is JEHOVAH-JIREH. "The Lord will provide,"—The Tower of Trust.

It is always desirable for a conquering army either to be near its supplies, or to keep up its line of communication. That broken, all is lost. The Christian has his promise of assured help—"My God shall supply all your needs, according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Php 4:19). "The Lord will provide." Ah, that future! that unknown, sometimes dark and chequered future, how many a thought it costs! Who can forecast the varying scenes of changeful life? It is like walking up some sequestered dell; every turn in the path presents something new. A cluster of flowers here, a rotten branch or decaying tree there—now a flowing stream, now a quiet pool, now a sprawling cascade; now a gleam of sunlight, now the driving rain or muttering thunder. But each apparently capricious turn in life's way, all its accidents and incidents, are the appointments of Infinite Wisdom and "those who know Your Name shall put their trust in You."

Trust—trust in the goodness, and mercy, and faithfulness of God, is surely one at least of the great lessons which a Communion Season inculcates. Looking to these symbols and pledges of unutterable love, you can confidently make the challenge—"He who spared not His own Son, but

delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" (Romans 8:32). A child in the midst of the storm can muffle its head in its father's arms and fall asleep. God is your Father! Walk up and down in the strength of that Gospel Name. Every earthly father does in a small scale to his family what the Great Parent does on a large scale to all His people. From that glorious Tower on the Hill of Ordinances you can look through the embrasures behind, as well as before. Survey the landmarks of the bygone pilgrimage! Count up your Ebenezers—the providential interpositions of the past, and then say—taking these as pledges and guarantees for the time to come, "You have been my help—leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation." The future, as we have already said, with all its vicissitudes, is in His keeping and ordering. You may work the loom—the shuttle may be in your hands but the pattern is all His—the intermingling threads of varied hue, even what are dark and somber. Talk not of a tangled web, when it is that of the Great Craftsman. Confide in that heart of Infinite Love. Shall we dream of being wiser than God? Shall we dream of correcting His Book of Sovereign decrees? of altering the building-plans of the Divine Architect? No! trust His loving heart, where sense cannot trace His hand. Trust is a staff not for level plains and smooth highways. It is the alpenstock, the pilgrim prop for the mountaineer, for the rugged ascent, the slippery path, the glacier crevasse. As the El-Shaddai—the All-sufficient, God has said, "I will never leave you, I will (in the redundant emphasis and energy of the original) "never, never, never forsake you." He is a Rich Provider, a Sure Provider, a Willing Provider, a Wise Provider. JEHOVAH-JIREH! "We will walk in this name of the Lord our God forever and ever."

VI. Yet one other Tower remains to be noted. JEHOVAH-ROPHI. The Tower of Healing—"I am the Lord who heals you."

Among those who partook of the Holy Sacrament, doubtless there were not a few members of the ever wide family of affliction. Some, experiencing soul-sorrows—hidden, unspoken griefs, too deep for utterance or for tears. In the case of others, trials, the nature of which is only too patent to fellow-worshippers and fellow-communicants, from the sable attire and symbols of mourning. It is blessed for you to think of Him whose love you commemorated, as Himself the King of sorrows—the Prince of sufferers—who, just because He was thus "acquainted with grief," is pre-eminently able to heal the broken in heart, and to bind up their wounds. He proclaims as His Name (and He suffered, and wept, and bled, and died, that He might have a right to say it) JEHOVAH-ROPHI, "I am the Lord that heals you." He is the true "Healing-tree," which, cast into your bitterest Marah-pool, will make its waters sweet.

Brethren, if other earthly portions have perished, cleave to Him who is unailing and imperishable—whose Name survives, when prized earthly names have either faded in oblivion, or are whispered through tears. When, let me ask, is the name of God most comforting? "I have remembered," says the Psalmist, "Your name, O Lord, in the night" (Psalms 119:55). It was at Jacob's fierce struggle-hour, as at many of our own, he was led to prompt the earnest question to Him who was wrestling with him, "What is your name?" And, as with the Patriarch, He blesses us there. That Name of God is like a lighthouse, with its six-sided revolving lamps, it shines brightest in the gloom of trial. If some of the loopholes of your Tower be darkened—if the sun has set; and the midnight sky be over and around you; be it yours to sing—"You will light my candle, the Lord my God will enlighten my darkness," "God our Maker gives songs in the night." My closing communion wish and prayer is, that that Name, which is above every name, may be to all of you

as "Ointment poured forth." "The name of the Lord!" it is spoken of as the badge at a more enduring Feast in the Church of the glorified. "His name," we read, "shall be upon their foreheads." No more; that Name is to form the theme of the saints' everlasting song. For what is the ascription of the Church triumphant—the ransomed conquerors beheld by John in vision, standing on the sea of glass, having the harps of God? "Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify YOUR NAME?"

O Father, Son, and Holy Spirit! Three in One in covenant for our salvation—Send us help from the Sanctuary, and strengthen us out of Zion! that the resolve following a transient season of Communion on earth, may form at once the vow and the joy of Eternity—

"We will walk in the name of the Lord our God forever and ever."

07.03. PSALM OF THE PILGRIMS

PSALM OF THE PILGRIMS

"How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord Almighty. I long, yes, I faint with longing to enter the courts of the Lord. With my whole being, body and soul, I will shout joyfully to the living God. Even the sparrow finds a home there, and the swallow builds her nest and raises her young—at a place near your altar, O Lord Almighty, my King and my God! How happy are those who can live in your house, always singing your praises. Happy are those who are strong in the Lord, who set their minds on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. When they walk through the Valley of Weeping, it will become a place of refreshing springs, where pools of blessing collect after the rains! They will continue to grow stronger, and each of them will appear before God in Jerusalem."— Psalms 84:1-7 This is emphatically a Communicant's Psalm; and occurs appropriately today in our ordinary course of exposition.

Conjectures have been numerous and varied on its authorship and historical bearings. This would not be the time or place to enter at length on the vindication of any favorite theory. Enough to remark, that, while by very general consent it is regarded as a Psalm of the Jewish Pilgrims on their way to one of the annual Feasts, there is, to say the least—following not a few eminent authorities—a strong probability that it is not of David's but of Hezekiah's times; and refers to the gathering of festal worshipers during his occupancy of the throne. That pious monarch inaugurated his reign by a season of national humiliation, and by a subsequent purification of the Temple; ridding the latter of idolatrous objects which had clustered around it during the life of his apostate predecessor—cleansing its courts, regilding and restoring cedar-gates and porticoes—altar, and table, and candlestick—also reviving the ceremonial of music, in accordance with the Divine model appointed by David and Asaph.

Hezekiah, however, did not rest satisfied with this outer reformation and revival, noble as it was. On the completion of the task, he calls together all his subjects to make a consecration of a nobler temple still—that of their own souls. Moreover, the same deep-seated religious zeal prompts him to decree a great sacramental season. A Passover is to be celebrated; and not for Judah only—but, with his patriotic heart sighing over the disruption and alienation of the ten tribes, he would once more endeavor to re-unite the dual kingdom in sacred fellowship and service—that, too, even though the period of the year was unusual, and the dark cloud of the Assyrian invasion was gathering in the north-eastern sky. He would have them forget for a time their differences, and meet together under the old roof-tree of Jerusalem's Sanctuary—around her hallowed altars; and under her anointed Priest and King, be one again. It was a beautiful conception; and one, surely, in all respects worthy and desirable; for indeed the Passover had not been duly kept since the age of Joshua. Oh! would not this be the answered prayer of another magnificent Psalm, most probably also of his—the sigh of the true-hearted over the crumbling of church and state—"Return; we beseech You, O God Almighty; look down from Heaven, and behold, and visit this vine!"

He allows no time to elapse in carrying the project into effect. No sooner is the Temple purged and re-decorated, and the old ceremonial revived, than messengers are despatched through the land "from Dan to Beersheba," and especially to the Kingdom of Israel, to proclaim the approaching Paschal solemnity. They speed from town to town, from village to village; blowing up the trumpet in the new moon; announcing the time appointed—the solemn feast-day. As was quite to be expected (what alas! is found too often the accompaniment or result of ecclesiastical divisions)—the royal couriers in many instances met only with insult. The sacred enthusiasm of the king was traduced and misunderstood. Not a few forfeited the intended blessing—the dew that was to descend on the mountains of Zion; when "the good and pleasant thing" might have been revived, of "brethren" (brethren once, and who should have been brethren still) "dwelling together again in unity."

Nevertheless, rejected by some, a considerable number from the more northern tribes responded to the call. The blare of the silver trumpets awoke the dormant religious patriotism; and before many days had elapsed, the great pilgrim road—the Jewish "Via Sacra," untraversed with the same intent for ages—was again studded with travelers singing, though with what has been well called "pathetic joy," the Songs of Zion.

We know not what these other songs may have been—but we have at all events presumptive reason to surmise, that the present Psalm was written, or in the case of too strong assertion—may have been written by the Korhites, for this resuscitated Passover of the King of Judah, to give embodiment and expression to the inward aspirations of the worshiping throngs. As such, let us now ponder it—as such, let us keep before our mental eye these scattered travelers; as from the distant Naphtali—the border-land of Lebanon—they emerge on their pilgrimage, until they stand within the gates of the elect metropolis. May the sentiments of the Psalm be echoed by many lowly festive worshipers here. May we, too, as children of Zion, be joyful in our King.

Let us confine ourselves at present, to this one aspect of the Psalm, as containing a description of the Pilgrim's (or in our case the Communicant's) journey to the Feast. This is contained in the opening portion selected—what may be more correctly called the first and second strophes. As the wayfarer commences his journey, or starts in company with a few fellow-Israelites, his heart kindles into emotion at the thought of once more worshiping the God of his fathers in the oldest of their sacred rites, and that too within the ancestral Shrine—"How amiable (how lovable, how beautiful) are Your tabernacles, O Lord Almighty! My soul longs, yes, even faints for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh cries out for the living God!" In our authorised version, these worshipers are represented as envying the sparrow or swallow who have built their nests in the eaves of the Temple, or under its altars. The figure, however, is very simple and expressive in its application, without having recourse to a somewhat strange and unnatural rendering. The writer would seem rather to take the image of these two birds sinking into their woodland nest for repose, merely as an emblem of the blessed rest and peaceful enjoyment anticipated in entering within the Gates of the Sanctuary. "Yes, as the sparrow finds out a house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young; so," (with a significant ellipsis) "so—Your altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God." The traveler pursues his way until we may suppose him to have reached a resting-place. As he pauses, leaning on his staff under some shady oak or terebinth, still they are anticipations of the festal day—the hallowed courts—which occupy his mental vision; and he breaks forth into the soliloquy, "Blessed are those who dwell in Your house, they will be still

praising You!" But onwards he proceeds; or, it may be, we have already suggested, as one of a caravan. They have now come to a gloomier part of the road. The scenery around them wears a more desolate aspect, and tinges for the moment their own thoughts with sadness. They have reached "the Valley of Baca"—"the Valley of weeping" or "the Valley of the weeping trees"—a valley still pointed out on the way to Jerusalem—supposed by some to have been full of a peculiar moisture-distilling tree—"nature's tear-drops" falling from its pendent branches. At all events it was, to use a modern oriental word, a dry and somber desert—the sun above poured on their heads his burning arrows, and their lips were parched with thirst. But even here, their spirits rise and their songs ascend. The God of the pilgrims has made "the wilderness pools of water, and the dry land springs of water." He has changed that scorched "Valley of the weeping tree" into a Well. The clouds which had gathered gloomily on the hill-tops around—screening the sunshine—burst in blessing—and down the slopes the streams with their glad music descend. The welcome boon has already filled its waterless troughs and ridges. In the place they least expected, weeping has been changed into joy. Baca has become as Elim. God has sent a plentiful rain, whereby He has refreshed His heritage when they were weary. They can sing with joyful lips—"Happy are those who are strong in the Lord, who set their minds on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. When they walk through the Valley of Weeping, it will become a place of refreshing springs, where pools of blessing collect after the rains!" Psalms 84:5-6 The Valley is at last traversed; and in due time there are indications that the journey is drawing to a close. The groups are increasing (v. 7). "They go from strength to strength," possibly, as that may be rendered, 'from company to company;' or 'from halting-place to halting-place.' Group is added to group; larger and yet larger grows the caravan; louder and yet louder swells the song. And now, Temple and tower and Holy Mount rise conspicuous to view. Their glowing anticipations are on the point of fulfillment. The City of Solemnities is reached—its Gates open to the weary travelers—"Every one of them in Zion appears before God" (Psalms 84:7) And, beautiful for situation (then as now), on the sides of the north, is "the City of the Great King!" My friends, is there here, in any feeble measure, a picture of ourselves this day? As the Israel of God, can we enter into the ecstatic language of these pilgrims of old as they came up to Hezekiah's restored courts? Specially observe the keynote of their song—what it was that formed the burden of their intensest aspirations. It was to meet Jehovah—to "see God in His Sanctuary." Many a heart among these thousands doubtless beat high at the prospect of gazing for the first time on the Holy City, so full of lofty and sacred associations. But while there was much in the external glory of its Temple-Courts to thrill and solemnize; while they might well gaze with profound and reverential devotion on "the altar of God," it was "God, their exceeding joy," who formed the burning center of their desires and yearnings. The recorded promise uppermost in their thoughts was this—"There I will meet with you, and will commune with you from off the mercy seat."

See, how in our Psalm, the same longing is expressed and repeated!—"How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord Almighty. I long, yes, I faint with longing to enter the courts of the Lord. With my whole being, body and soul, I will shout joyfully to the living God." "Blessed are those who dwell in Your house—they will be still praising You." "Their strength is in You." They appear in Zion, but it is "before God!" Is this the chief and most ardent aspiration in the heart of each worshiper and each communicant now before me? It is not attractive service, nor gorgeous ceremonial, nor external symbolism; no, nor formulated doctrine and dogma, the soul desires; but a living Being.

"I know," says Paul in words often misquoted, and in the misquotation their sense and beauty mutilated, "I know" (not in whom), but "I know Whom I have believed." It was not sects, nor creeds, nor churches, nor ecclesiastical organizations that this dying hero clung to in the hour of departure as he had done in life; but the glorious Person of the divine Emmanuel; the living Presence of the ever-living Savior—the Brother, the Friend on the Throne, whom he had learned to love more dearly than all the world beside. Is it so with us? Is our prayer and longing, today, that of him who first celebrated the Hebrew passover, "I beseech You, show me Your glory"? Do the glowing words of another Psalm form the exponent of our feelings and desires—"O God, You are my God, early will I seek You; my soul thirsts for You; my flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land where no water is; to see Your power and Your glory, so as I have seen You in the Sanctuary"? A second reflection occurs. Diverse and manifold, we may feel sure, were the feelings of individual worshipers among the Hebrew throngs of old, as they pursued their journey along the Palestine highways. These only too truly and faithfully reflect our own varied and chequered experiences. Some there are among us on the hill-tops of gladness, the "Delectable mountains," Nature's spring-time clothing every valley, and making its pastures sing for joy. The early or latter rain coming down on flower and tree and meadow, and causing them to sparkle like gems in the radiant sunlight. With others, it is some Valley of Baca. Clouds have gathered. The moral landscape is not spring blossoms, but autumn leaves; bared stems; branches scattered with hail and storm. Some have to tell of blighted affections, narrowed family circles, the pride and prop of the homestead fallen—fellow travelers of bygone Paschal seasons no longer at their side—voices missed in the caravan. They could almost sit down under the gloom of these weeping trees, and hang their harps on the cypress branches. But whatever be your experience, even though the sad and weeping one may predominate, you will have rich consolation in this appointed means of grace. May you have "the early rain" in coming to the Table, and "the latter rain" in returning from it—communion with Christ, who is Himself, in the manifold phases and revelation of His grace and mercy, as "Rivers of water in a dry place." O Happy pilgrims and Christian communicants, spoken of in this Pilgrim-psalm—how all-sufficient is your "strength!" Every pilgrim needs a staff, yours is a Savior-God. Your strength is in Him. As the sparrow and the swallow here spoken of, flee from the windy storm and tempest, and sink in peace in their nests; so may you find increasing repose—it is ratified to you today, in the completed work of your glorious and glorified Redeemer—the true "Cleft" for God's hidden-ones. A communion-table is one of His own appointed resting places for His spiritual Israel, where He recruits their souls and opens to them wells of refreshment.

It was the custom of the Jewish paschal worshipers, in going to the City of Solemnities, to be arrayed in new attire—new garments adorned their bodies, new sandals bound their feet. Be it yours to have on, not for the transient sacramental season only, but as your habitual attire, the garment of holiness and love and new obedience—to have your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; having a more single undivided trust in Jesus; a greater willingness to bear His cross—greater joy at the prospect of sharing His crown.

"The swallow a nest." The swallow—Is not that a bird of passage—here today, away tomorrow to sunnier climates? Be this your constantly realized feeling, that you are swallow-like; migratory; the present a state of transition. Soon you will be away from earth's wintry skies to your Heavenly home, to build your nest in the golden eaves of the Eternal Sanctuary!

Brother Pilgrims and Fellow-Communicants, how happy your prospects, alike present and future—for time and for eternity! Present—You have here the assurance and guarantee, in every stage of your appointed journey, that the Lord God will prove "a sun and shield"—a sun to gladden, a shield to protect; withholding from you nothing that is truly "good" (Psalms 84:11). Thus with His own blessing resting upon you; and under the guidance of the double name, "God Almighty, and God of Jacob" (Psalms 84:8)—whether "Bacas" of sorrow or "Elims" of delight be yours; whether you have to pass through valleys of weeping trees, or ways clustering with amaranthine flowers; you will, you must be blessed. The Future!—Oh, if a day—one day—thus spent in God's courts is better than a thousand, what will be the Eternal day? No Valley or Valleys of tears; no vacant seats, no absent guests; a long forever! To take up the sweet refrain of this psalm which has trembled on our lips during the services of an earthly Sabbath, and to sing it everlastingly—"O Lord Almighty, blessed is the man who trusts in You!"

07.04. SPIRITUAL PROGRESS

SPIRITUAL PROGRESS "Grow in grace."— 2 Peter 3:18

Progress is a great law in the universe of God. Nothing either in the world of mind, or matter, is stationary—with One exception. In the midst of His vast material creation, and of the myriads of His spiritual intelligences, God alone never knew and never can know what progress is. He being infinitely perfect, is incapable alike of decrease or increase in bliss, knowledge, power, glory. It is well known that the familiar river of Egypt possesses this peculiarity amid its compeers, that during a course of more than a thousand miles to its delta, it is indebted to not a single rill or tributary. While the other rivers of the world, issuing as tiny streamlets from their mountain-bed or glacier-cradle, are swollen with innumerable such, before they reach the ocean; this father of earthly rivers, as he sweeps by the tombs of Memphis and the minarets of Cairo, has received no accession to his volume during all that vast distance he has majestically traversed. So (with reverence we say it) is it with the Supreme Being, the great Father of all. While others, constituting His offspring, are susceptible of progress—of receiving fresh rills, fresh accessions of intelligence and happiness, He remains from everlasting to everlasting unchangeably the same. The angels who excel in strength, we believe are still more and more excelling—reaching higher and yet higher stages of advancement—nearer and still nearer to God; and yet, the nearer they come, feeling more the infinite and untraveled distance separating between Creator and created. The saints—the redeemed from the earth—will, we doubt not, through all eternity be progressing in the divine life and likeness, growing in grace, climbing from height to height and altitude to altitude. But though approaching always nearer the infinite Brightness—that brightness still being "light inaccessible and full of glory,"—the confession ever made, as each new eminence is attained—"Between us and You, O God, there is a great gulf fixed!"

This, however, is growth in Glory. Let us descend for a little from the heavenward to the earthward contemplation to which the Apostle summons us; when, (speaking of progress in the Church below) he urges on his readers to "grow in grace."

We are met at once by similar analogies in nature. We cannot fail to note the constant manifestations in the outer world of this law of progress or advancement—that the Creator and Ruler does nothing suddenly; rather that His vast processes move on silently—slowly—imperceptibly. Let the heavens declare this "glory of God" in the grandeur of its progressive operations. We need no other illustration than the breaking of the morning light and its brightening into perfect day. If we sought more recondite testimony and illustration, we might find it in what astronomers tell us of the process in the great planetary system, by which, as was the case with our own earth, vast globes like Jupiter and Saturn, from "liquid seething masses of fiery heat," as they at present appear to be, are, in all probability, being gradually consolidated, until an outer crust is formed to fit them for becoming living habitations. Is it the vegetable world? On a minuter but not less real scale, how gradual the development! First the blade, then the ear, then the full kernel in the ear. The inserted grain does not rush up all at once, and become immediately

ready for the sickle—it is matured by the husbandman's laborious culture. After a long appliance of means—moistening rains, gentle dews, fructifying heat—that tender seed struggles upwards through the overlying clods of earth, to the gladsome light. Then comes a fresh conflict with atmospheric influences—But on it progresses. Spring nurses the embryo blade; Summer smiles on the bursting ear; Autumn opens her lap to receive from the sickle the full kernel in the ear. It is Nature's great parable on the law of advancement in the material world. May I quote the child-words—

"'Little by little,' an a kernel said,
As it slowly sank in its mossy bed,
'Little by little' each day it grew,
'Little by little' it sipped the dew;
Day after day and year after year
'Little by little' the leaves appear;
Until its branches are spreading far and wide,
And the mighty oak is the forest's pride."

What grows suddenly, dies suddenly. The ever welcomed snow-drop rushes up from its bulb in a few weeks, but its life-time is as brief. In animal life, we see the same law in operation. To take at once the highest type in sentient being. The Infant does not attain, in a moment, the full growth and dignity of manhood; like the ancient Greek's ideal of human perfection in the case of their patron goddess, said to have sprung at once, fully armored, from the head of Jupiter. It is a progressive development. The bones and muscles and sinews grow with the child's growth and strengthen with its strength; until the helpless arm that can scarce grasp the toy in its cradle, is, in the course of years, able to sustain the ponderous weight—it may be to ply the hammer, or guide the plough, and give, or ward off, the warrior's blow.

Turn to the world of mind—there is similar progressive development there. The lisping stammerings, the playful prattle of infancy, are succeeded by the buoyancy of childhood. This again merges into the thoughtfulness and high aspirations of hopeful youth. Then comes manhood, with its maturer judgment and experience and power—and every different and successive stage in that mental history is one of progress. Mark, yet once more, it is not by one vast bound that the mountain can be ascended and the summit reached; but by the same slow day-by-day, step-by-step process. By no fitful efforts, but by many an hour of toilsome application, have the great masterminds, who guide the destinies of empires and of mankind, been disciplined and matured. The statesman, the philosopher, the historian, the man of science, can traverse in memory those years of student life, when in the secluded chamber the midnight lamp met the hues of morning. When others were slumbering, or pursuing the 'phantom of pleasure', there they were, storing the mental citadel with treasures which at some future day would make the earth they live in wiser and better.

Now in all these, and manifold other illustrations which might be given, is there no analogy in the spiritual and divine life? Yes. This law of advance and progress—exemplified in the outer world, and in the constitution and growth of our own bodily and mental frames—illustrates God's dealing in the higher economy. We speak of "the life of faith"—"life in the Soul." Here also is there an infancy, youth, teenage, manhood, maturity. Peter in his First Epistle speaks of "babes in Christ"—those who are to be fed on milk. They could not bear stronger nutriment. They are in the earliest, the incipient stage of the spiritual existence. A brother Apostle speaks of "little children," "I write unto you, little children, because you have known the Father" (1 John 2:13); of "young men," "I have written unto you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you" (1 John 2:14); of "fathers"—saints grown grey in the service of their Heavenly Master—"I have written unto you, fathers, because you have known Him who is from the beginning" (1 John 2:14).

We find our blessed Lord Himself recognizing these same stages of advancement in the case of His own disciples—"Have I been so long time with you, and yet have you not known Me?" (John 14:9). And to the same effect, "I have many things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now" (John 16:12).—As if He had said, "There is a time coming—an ulterior stage in your spiritual existence, when you will be able to understand and appreciate these mysteries of the kingdom—but not yet!"

Perhaps in the case of none of the Apostolic band was this spiritual progress more perceptible and better illustrated, than in the case of Peter, who penned the words of our text. See him at first the "little child." As a child, petulant, fretful. See him in full manhood; attained to much, yet having much to learn; full of rash impulses—sensitive, impetuous. Venturing on the water, yet sinking; faithful, yet fearful; loving, yet doubting—and at last, frailest moment of all, when that devoted Master most needed his loyal adhesion and sympathy, becoming unfaithful and renegade. But mark him in the mellowed sunset of his career. That sun had waded, during life's long day, through mist and cloud and tempest, alternately brightened and obscured; how tranquil now is his "going down" behind the mountains of Israel! Calm as an infant that has been rocked asleep on its mother's lap, or as some well-known flowers fold their leaves when the night-shadows begin to fall! As we read of him in the gospels, we meet there with a bold, fiery, passionate soul—the grace and prayer of Christ alone between him and ruin—"Simon, Simon, behold Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat—but I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not" (Luke 22:31-32). Thirty years after this, he wrote his Epistles. How changed the man! we scarcely recognize his personal identity. How grace has molded him, softened, subdued, chastened him! His every breathing in these letters is gentleness and love. He had himself felt the benefit of the purifying, refining furnace; and therefore thus he writes—"That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perishes, though it be tried with fire, may be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:7).

See, as has been noted by more than one writer, how his humility appears in undesigned coincidences. We know that he had much to do in the writing of Mark's Gospel. What does he say of himself there? Everything is suppressed that would savor of self; everything brought in that would humble him and exalt his Lord. His walking on the water—suppressed; the special blessing Jesus gave to him as "Simon Bar-jonas," recorded in Matthew, suppressed; the word "bitterly," inserted by the first evangelist when he records the intensity of Peter's repentant sorrow when "he went out and wept," suppressed; and more than all, that dark sorrowful story of his denial is more

fully recorded in this second Gospel than in any of the others.

Then see when he comes to die—What is the testimony of the man who was once afraid of death?—he who shook with terror in the water as he felt himself sinking—he who cowered with more than womanish fears when his Lord was buffeted, lest he might be dragged to share His cross and sufferings! Hear the old man speak! Hear the softened, calmed, heavenly-minded apostle, with his grey-hairs and furrowed brow—how he writes about death—that event so terrible to all. It has lost its dread. "I must put off," says he, "this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ has showed me" (2 Peter 1:14). Christ showed him how he was to die. He had foretold the painful and ignominious manner of his decease—that he was to follow Him in crucifixion; meet the King of Terrors in his most revolting form. But how does the aged champion contemplate this?—He speaks of it as the laying aside of an old cloak (so the word may mean)—a useless outer garment! To speak so of death, and such a death, showed surely that this "righteous man"—once called by his Lord "fearful" and of "little faith,"—once a poor reed shivering in the wind, had now, by the power and growth of divine grace, become bold as a lion! This spiritual progress, so singularly illustrated in the case of him who exhorts us in our text, is (must be) the distinguishing characteristic, more or less, of all God's true people. And as there were seasons in the life of the Apostle, so also are there in ours, when a gracious and salutary impulse is given to spiritual advancement. The Lord's Supper is intended to be a strengthening as well as a commemorating Ordinance. The nutritive and sustaining qualities in the natural elements of bread and wine are doubtless intended to be symbolic of a higher truth—that of feeding and stimulating the graces of the Christian character—promoting sanctification and holiness. Our Church will never be arraigned for any unwarrantable leanings towards what is known as "Sacramentarian efficacy." But a Standard whose authority we all own and reverence, leaves us no doubt what its compilers considered the relation which the Divine rite bears to our text today, as being one special means of fostering and promoting the life of God in the Soul. We are "by faith made partakers of His body and blood, with all their benefits to our spiritual nourishment and growth in grace."

Yet, while, we trust, this divine growth may form the ardent aspiration, the grand practical result of our hallowed season, let no humble Christian, let no believing communicant, leave these sacred courts under a misapprehension. Let none go away cast down or discouraged, under some humbling conviction that with them there has been no such thing as advancement in grace—that relapse rather than progress—from weakness to weakness rather than "from strength to strength" is and has been their mournful and saddening experience. Who among us, brethren, is free from the haunting suspicion, that if tried and tested by this spiritual growth, we would have good cause, humbled and conscience-stricken, to evade the scrutiny? But are there not many of God's true people who are apt, in this respect also needlessly, to write bitter things against themselves? We believe, indeed, that often the Christian may seem to himself to be retrograding, when all the while it is the reverse—no apparent continuity of progression, yet ultimately and really periods of advance. You may at times have stood on the sea-shore, and watched the incoming tide—wave after wave laving the beach; only to retreat into the bosom of the former wave. It seemed receding; murmuring for a moment at your feet—and then back again to nestle in its watery bed. As, however, the briny tears came sweeping over the sand or rock, you saw that the ripple-marks were gradually diminishing; that, despite of these refluent waves, the tide was making, and the boat

moored dry on the shore would be soon buoyant on the water. So it is with the ebbings and the flowings in the spiritual life. You may be ever and anon in doubt and despondency. Temptation after temptation, like wave upon wave, may tell of nothing but apparent relapse. The tide of the divine life may appear to recede; while, in truth and reality watched by the unerring discriminating Eye above—it is rising—the old marks of sin are being submerged under the advancing waves. "The righteous shall hold on his way." "Though he falls, he shall not be utterly cast down, for the Lord upholds him with His hand." "He gives more grace." "He who has begun a good work in you, will perform it unto the day of the Lord Jesus."

"Why is that plant"—ask this question of the experienced gardener—"making no advance? Though healthy in appearance, its growth seems arrested." "No—not so," would be his reply. "Externally, and to the outward eye, it makes no progress. But it does better—it is mooring its unseen roots all the firmer and deeper in the soil." And now, what remains, in closing, but to exhort and encourage you, as God's votive and covenanting people, to aspire after increasing attainments. By startling providences, as well as by revolving seasons, we are solemnly reminded that our present fleeting opportunities will soon be gone, and gone forever. "The night is far spent, the day is at hand." Time is rushing on, swift-winged to Judgment. He puts no arrest on his revolving wheels. He stops no grain in the diminishing sand-heap. Day follows day; Sabbath treads on the heels of Sabbath; Communion season on Communion season; and the sun, like a vast pendulum, as he swings from East to West, seems to proclaim—"Nearer Eternity!" "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." "Be not weary in well-doing; for in due season you shall reap if you faint not!"

Members of the Sacramental host of the Great Captain of Salvation! be yours especially the noble resolution of the man, who exhibited on the vastest and grandest scale the practical power of the resolution of our text—"I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do—forgetting the things that are behind, and reaching forth unto those that are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus!"

"By the grace of God we are what we are." May we leave His courts today, feeling that by that same grace we may grow into something higher, nobler, holier, diviner still.

"Your vows renewed; go seek His mercy only,

To arm the trembling spirit for the strife;

You shall not fight the world's great battle lonely,

Soldiers of Christ, you bear a charmed life!

"Go with sweet thoughts of Jesus, and in meekness

Take up the cross and follow in His way;

His strength shall be made perfect in your weakness,

His GRACE shall be your comfort and your stay."

07.05. THE EXALTATION OF THE HUMANITY

THE EXALTATION OF THE HUMANITY

"What is man, that You are mindful of him? and the son of man, that You visit him? For You have made him a little lower than the angels, and have crowned him with glory and honor."— Psalms 8:4-5 This Psalm, like many others, has a twofold application. No simple reader can have failed to be struck in perusing it, with a mingling up, throughout, of reference to "Man," and to some one Infinitely Greater. In the first verse of our text, the sacred writer turns from the consideration of God's wonders in the starry heavens, to the favored being on earth upon whom He has lavished such distinguishing tokens of His love. And yet, immediately after, he appears by prophetic inspiration to blend his contemplation of humanity in the creature, with the contemplation of humanity in the future Incarnate WORD. It would be superfluous to occupy time in showing that the passage is inapplicable to man alone; and how the expressions, "You have crowned him with glory and honor," "made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands," "put all things under his feet," have a higher and diviner signification. Any such proof is unnecessary, as we have inspired comment and authority, in the second chapter of Hebrews, in applying it to Christ. In discoursing, therefore, with God's blessing, on the words, I would have you to bear in mind, as their most interesting feature, this somewhat remarkable dual reference; the identifying, so to speak, of the two humanities. Come, and let us with devout reverence meditate on the theme thus opened up; for it is that which we are to have set before us today, in visible sacramental memorial—"the great mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh."

Let our thoughts be directed to these successive views of the exaltation of the Humanity—

I. In the Divine purpose.

II. In the Incarnation of the Son of God.

III. In the Ascension of Christ.

IV. At the Day of Judgment.

V. Through all Eternity.

I. The exaltation of the Humanity in the DIVINE PURPOSE.

It formed the great Divine idea, so to speak, before the earth was made, and when God dwelt alone in the solitudes of infinite space.

Amid the countless worlds which were in future to throng His universe, there was one selected to become the scene of an unparalleled manifestation of love—the Almighty Creator Himself, condescending to assume the Human nature in union with the Divine, in order to exalt that nature, fallen and degraded, to glory and to honor. We have dim and obscure intimations of this sublime conception given us in Scripture. There are passages of light which burst upon us here and there, from the recesses of eternity, unfolding the grandeur of the human destiny, as contemplated

before the birth of time.

Although on no account vindicating such an interpretation by any strong assertion, it has at all events been regarded by expositors as possible, that in a well-known Bible chapter, under the personification of Wisdom, Christ Himself may be regarded as announcing that "from everlasting, before the earth was, His delights were with the sons of men," as if coming down, while yet our globe was without form and void, to visit the great theater of His soul's travail and of man's salvation (Proverbs 8:23-31). In a still earlier Scripture, the Blessed Trinity, in their ineffable counsels, seem to intimate the development of some magnificent plan in connection with the world's creation—"Let us make man after our own image," words which have a primary reference to the formation of the former in a state of purity and innocence, and thereby a reflection of the divine Original, the uncreated God—but which can alone, in their full complementary significance, apply to Jesus the Great Ideal of Humanity, the Perfect Man—He who by distinctive pre-eminence is "THE Image of the Invisible." If we have reason to believe that the new-born Earth arrested the interested contemplation of other Orders of Intelligence—little at all events would they dream of so surpassing an honor in store for it—how the first speck of new-born light which appeared, penetrating chaos, fell on the realm an Incarnate God was to redeem—in which He was to assume the nature of a finite creature and therein enshrine the Infinite. As it gradually became more luminous, the brooding darkness dispelling, the sun shining on its fresh verdure—well might the Morning Stars, in joyous jubilee-strains, sing together, and all the Sons of God shout for joy!

Let us contemplate—

II. The exaltation of the Humanity in the INCARNATION of the Son of God.

"Manifest in the flesh!" How magnificent does fallen nature appear, even in its ruins, in thus becoming the very sanctuary and residence of Deity. The traveler visits with emotion places consecrated as haunts of the mighty dead. He reverently lingers amid the broken columns and capitals of antiquity, associating their very desolation with illustrious sages and heroes—names traced imperishably on the tablets of history. How sublime, we may almost say awe-inspiring, the thought, that every man has within himself a Temple with associations, no, with realities, incomparably grander—that the Human spirit, wrecked by sin, is the very habitation in which Deity dwelt for three and thirty years of humiliation on earth! "Destroy this Temple," said Christ, "and in three days I will raise it up. He spoke of the Temple of His body." His body! It was a fleshly tabernacle like yours and mine, with this exceptional characteristic, that it was "yet without sin." By Him Humanity was ennobled, hallowed, consecrated, in its every phase and condition. He consecrated infancy, by Himself becoming the Babe of Bethlehem. He consecrated poverty, by Himself being emphatically "the houseless One," "having nowhere to lay His head." He consecrated bereavement, by the tears shed at Bethany's grave, and the words of comfort spoken in Bethany's darkened household. He consecrated suffering and pain and trial, by the wave on wave that swept over His own guiltless head, until His mangled body was left, like a wreck on the desert shore. He consecrated death itself, when the walls of the Temple collapsed, wherein dwelt the ever-blessed God. Yes, He consecrated Humanity's last resting-place—the very grave cannot be dissevered from the earthly tabernacle which the great Lord of heaven condescended to occupy. Unspeakable honor to put on the nature of a fallen being!

Glorious indeed might have been the exaltation of Humanity if Adam had remained staunch in his allegiance; and the nature he received pure and spotless from his Maker been transmitted uncontaminated to his posterity. There would have been the beautiful spectacle of a world tenanted by sinless creatures; every bosom filled to the brim with love to its Creator, and no room for one shadow to dim or darken. But, more glorious and wondrous far, that exaltation, when "very God of very God" deigned to convert a ruined haunt into His own presence-chamber, and transform it into what is divine! If condescension be a relative term, and increase in proportion to the distance and disparity between its objects—where is there condescension equal to this?

We have read of kings on earth visiting the beggar's hovel—there is condescension here. But what is such after all? One finite being visiting another finite being, one mortal visiting another mortal. But we have presented to us in our present contemplation, the God seated on the throne of the universe, coming down to the outcast and the perishing! Brethren, we cannot estimate the wonders of such condescension, because there is no scale by which it can be measured. There are certain existing relations between everything else in creation. There is a certain relation and proportion between the giant mountain and the grain of sand. There is a certain relation and proportion between the drop of water and the boundless ocean. There is a certain relation and proportion between the sun and the tiny candle which glimmers into nothingness in his beams. There is even an imaginable relation and proportion between the seraph before the throne and the insect whose lifetime is a brief hour, for they are both creatures, though at the opposite extremities of being. But there can be no measurable—no possible relation or proportion between the Great God and the vile sinner, between Deity and dust! When I think that in a bodily framework like my own, only untainted by evil, there dwelt the Adorable Jehovah, "the high and lofty One who inhabits Eternity,"—that "He took not on Him the nature of angels," that He selected, not the angelic form or condition to ennoble and exalt, but "the seed of Abraham," well may I exclaim with the Psalmist in devoutest amazement—"What is man, that You are mindful of him? and the son of man, that You visit him? You have made him a little lower than the angels, You have crowned him with glory and honor!"

III. The exaltation of the Humanity in the ASCENSION of Christ. Our human nature occupies the Central throne of Heaven—If great be the mystery of godliness, "God manifest in the flesh," we may with reverence add as a counterpart, "Great is the mystery of godliness"—Man manifest on the throne of God! If it be an amazing truth, Jesus bore our suffering nature on earth—it is a verity, surely no less marvelous, Jesus bears our glorified nature in the upper sanctuary. When "the gates lifted up their heads," and the King of Glory traveled through the burning ranks, it was before Humanity in union with Deity, they bowed as He passed. It is in that glorified Human nature He there still lives and loves.

Take one among several kindred visions of the Apostle of Patmos—that of the white-robed and palm-bearing multitude. The central figure in that inspired picture of pictures is THE LAMB in the midst of the throne, leading them, and feeding them—conducting them from pasture to pasture and from fountain to fountain. What is this, but the blessed assurance, alike to His Church triumphant and militant, of the Redeemer's undying Manhood; that though reigning as King of kings—God over all, blessed forever—He still retains the Brother's eye, and the Brother's love, and the Brother's heart? No more, as Head and Representative of His people, His glorified Humanity forms the pledge of their own ultimate exaltation. He, the first sheaf in the harvest

presented in the Heavenly Temple, is the pledge of myriad sheaves that are to follow. Where He is, His people also are to be. "Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body." "His glorious body!" or as it is rather rendered, "the body of His glory." It is the mighty mold into which our fallen nature is to be recast. It is the divine model after which the defaced and mutilated block is to be shaped into eternal symmetry and beauty. It is the glorious Archetype, in conformity with which the mirror, shattered in a thousand pieces in Eden, is to be completely reconstructed—each broken fragment, each ransomed sinner—the lowliest, the humblest—like a piece of polished glass, to reflect a perfect image of the Lord! My friends, what an exaltation is this, to the nature of Humanity —alike present and future? Present. "Christ the first fruits,"—His divine human form, once pierced with thorns and racked in torture, now, in language of lofty metaphor, wearing many crowns! In prospect—the multitude which no man can number, ransomed with His own precious blood; now, it may be, despised, dishonored, disesteemed; but who shall then be raised from obscurity and scorn, "set among princes; and made to inherit crowns and thrones of glory." Oh! with what a grandeur is the lowest and poorest child of Adam thus invested; if within his clay-walls, as a child of God, he is a partaker of the Divine Nature—that nature elevating the human to a pitch of greatness which leaves all earthly distinction immeasurably behind!

IV. The exaltation of the Humanity at the DAY OF JUDGMENT.

"The Father has given Him authority to execute all judgment, because He is the Son of Man." "He has appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that Man whom He has ordained." Here, again, it is Humanity exalted, on the throne of final reckoning—The Man Christ Jesus. Who can unfold the glory which will then accrue to our nature, when "every eye shall see Him?"—the irreversible sentence going forth from the lips of glorified Humanity. My hearers, be it yours to exult in the anticipation, that there will be seated on that majestic tribunal, not a Being of dreadful, inapproachable majesty—whose presence would blind and dazzle and confound—but, once more, a Brother in your own nature! The cry of Jewish mockery and Gentile scorn which resounded of old around His cross, will then form your note of triumph—the secret of your joy when gazing on His throne—"Behold the Man!"

Behold the representative Man! Behold the once-suffering Man! Behold the righteous Man! Behold the sympathizing Man! Behold now the exalted and the crowned Man! "We know," says the beloved disciple, in a transport of holy joy, "that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." From the same lips which in trembling accents on Calvary once called him "Son," he will hear the benediction and welcome, "Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." On that great and alarming day, when the wrath of God shall sweep away all refuges of lies, the designation given Him by the prophet, so cheering to the tempest-tossed soul on earth, will lose none of its comfort then—"A Man" (A MAN!) "shall be as a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest!"

V. Contemplate the exaltation of the Humanity THROUGHOUT ALL ETERNITY.

Christ's mediatorial reign, with regard to His enemies, will end at a Day of judgment; for we read, "He must reign until He has put all enemies under His feet," and "then shall He deliver up" (that part of His kingdom) "to God, even the Father." His sovereignty with regard to them, shall be merged into that of God absolute. But of the increase of His mediatorial government "there shall

be no end." The Humanity He wore on earth will continue evermore on the throne! The divine Father, by immutable covenant, invested Him, as Mediator, with "length of days forever and ever." Unto principalities and powers in heavenly places will be made known by the Church (under her Great Representative Head), "the manifold wisdom of God."

Let me ask you, dear friends, are you prepared, after these imperfect meditations, to echo the exclamation of the Psalmist? Will it be that which will circulate from heart to heart while you surround as guests today the Table of communion, "What is man, that You are mindful of him? and the son of man, that You visit him?" Rise to a sense of your distinguished, your peerless privileges in Christ! Oh, if such be the dignity bestowed on human nature in the Person of the Adorable Head, need we wonder at the pre-eminent and surpassing honors set forth in Scripture as in store for the members? Angels are sons of God by creation; but ransomed man becomes a son of God by filiation, adoption—union with his glorified Lord. From being at the base of the pyramid, lying among the debris and ruins, see where redeeming love has placed him! "To him who overcomes, will I grant to sit with Me on My throne; even as I also overcame, and have sat down with My Father on His throne."

Having this hope in Him, (the hope of seeing Him as He is) are we purifying ourselves even as He is pure? "Wherefore, brethren," says the Apostle, "partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus." "Consider!" It is an emphatic word. Literally "gaze" on the Lord Jesus. It is the artist copying, line by line, and feature by feature; not expecting the transcript to be perfect here (for that it cannot be), but seeking to approximate if he can do no more; looking forward to that blessed time when, without one speck of sin and sorrow to mar or blemish, "we shall be transformed into the same image from glory to glory."

Let us go, meanwhile, to His holy Ordinance, with the earnest determination and the recorded vow—"This God shall be our God forever and ever!"

07.06. A FLIGHT OF DOVES

A FLIGHT OF DOVES "Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?"—Isaiah 60:8 The whole of this chapter of the great evangelical Prophet is replete with sublime imagery. It forms in itself a unique Poem, a gallery of successive pictures delineating the golden age of the Messiah. His Church, resplendent with the glories of her King, is represented as growing and expanding, age by age, until a whole world is seen hastening to lay tribute offerings at His feet, and to welcome Him to the throne of universal empire!

Several of its verses, taken by themselves, might form befitting themes to sum up the sacred services of a Communion Sunday. We need indeed go no further than the opening exhortation, "Arise, shine," sounding as it does like a clarion-note, a herald trumpet in entering again the battle of life with refurbished armor, and the renewed vow of allegiance on the lip. "Let your light so shine before men, that others, seeing your good works, may glorify your Father who is in Heaven." But we have been led, in preference, to select a different but equally expressive metaphor—the sight which revealed itself to Isaiah, as he gazed down the vista of ages on the Church of the future. It is that of a flock, or rather flocks of doves, on the wing to their cotes. Jesus may well be regarded as the true House of safety—while Communicants, His covenant people, like these silver and golden plumaged doves, flee to Him for shelter, trust Him for shelter, abide in Him for shelter. May God help us to some appropriate meditations, in harmony with the simplicity of the emblem.

(1.) The first thought which the verse suggests, in connection with our Communion services, is that of blissful association. Can we fail to think of the Prophet's figure as symbolizing what has occurred among us in this vast city today?—varied churches and varied denominations engaged in celebrating the same sacred rite. We have, in and through its significant symbols, been looking and fleeing to the one only Savior. As the dovecot may have its different openings; so, each church retains its own denominational entrance. But the Glorious meeting-place, the spiritual Shelter, is the same. The windows are diverse, but there is a blessed identity in the hallowed haunt itself. The summoning bells have rung their varied tones—but there is a sweet harmony and concord in the responsive chime of consecrated hearts—"Unto Him who loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood!"

Clothed, we trust, in the one glorious plumage, and with wings bearing in the same direction, may we not imagine angels exclaiming, as they look down on the multitudes in this and in other places throughout our land, hastening to the figurative sacramental Ark—"Who are these that fly as a cloud and as the doves to their windows?"

(2.) In connection with our sacred rite, the emblem of our text suggests a public profession. The Prophet is arrested; or possibly, in the poetical imagery here employed, a chorus of spectators—in which he veils his own personality—are arrested by the spectacle. The doves are not spoken of as flying under screen of night or darkness; neither were they beheld winging a solitary or circuitous flight, as if dreading and evading observation. But the mid-day sun looked down on a whole cloud of them, their golden iridescent plumage flashing in his beams.

Dear brethren, it is no unimportant or insignificant feature in your divinely-appointed Ordinance, this open dove-like flight to the Covenant Ark. In these times, when there is so much unworthy shame in espousing Christ's cause, ranging ourselves under His banner, and unfurling it before the world—it is a noble thing, or rather a joyful privilege, to come boldly forward and avouch the Lord to be our God—making the public unhesitating avowal, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ," like the man at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple, who, before all the multitude, went forth "walking and leaping and praising God" (Acts 3:8). "Those who honor Me, I will honor" (1 Samuel 2:30). Doubtless Jesus will regard with a special delight, those who have, with willing, loving obedience, responded to His own dying command, and in the words of another verse of this chapter, "glorified Him in the House of His glory."

Yes, as He looked down and saw this day, those who are the fruit of the travail of His soul—as He beheld His people winging their flight to His Sacramental Table; may we not, with reverence, suppose Him joining in the angelic interrogation, and saying in the gladness of His own infinite heart—"Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?"

(3.) The cloud of doves, as here represented, betokens the character of Christians and of Christian communicants. They are, or ought to be, dove-like. The Dove has these among other characteristics—

First. It is the complex symbol, in sacred poetry and art, of peace and love, of meekness and gentleness, purity and harmlessness (Song of Solomon 1:15, Song of Solomon 6:9, Matthew 10:16). I may add, in the crude early Christian symbolism of the Roman catacombs, the Dove, as the bird of hope, is generally represented in connection, variously treated, with the olive branch. What a lesson for us all as believers in Jesus, and specially in rising from His Holy Supper, to carry away the resolution of imitating more than we have yet done, "the meekness and gentleness of Christ," His kind, loving, unselfish, peaceful spirit! If, in the retrospect of past months, it may be of past years, we have to mourn the cherishing or the exhibition of unholy tempers and resentful feelings—unworthy passions that have held guilty sway over us—let us form the determination, in God's strength, that henceforth we are to be more Dove-like—more like Him who was "meek and lowly in heart,"—"who when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not, but committed Himself to Him that judges righteously."

Moreover, recalling the Dove as the bird of hope; either perched on the branch of peace or bearing it in its mouth, what more befitting benediction to carry with you as you leave this sacred ground—"Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Spirit" (Romans 15:13)? A Second characteristic of the Dove is, that it is swift of wing. The Prophet saw them, not sailing like a cloud, or drifting like a cloud, but flying; borne along with whirlwind speed. The carrier dove is well known for the swiftness—the length and steadiness, of its arrowy course, surpassing the proverbial flight of the eagle. An Oriental writer mentions regarding it, that it never pauses; that when its wings are weary, it poises itself on one, while the other droops for a little by its side, and when rested, the unremitting flight is resumed. This, coupled with Isaiah's figure, surely suggests the activities of the Christian life. The believer is swift of wing to do God's service. The religion you profess, and to which many have set their seal today, is not only a being good, but a doing good. Be always, like the dove, soaring. In a spiritual sense it is a safeguard and preservation against sin, not to remain with wings folded, but

to mount on ministries of active service. It matters not what these services may be; for there are also, in this respect, many windows in the Ark—many outlets of usefulness—diversities of gifts and consecration. Only "whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might." To be on the wing is to be safe. To have the wings folded, sunning in the glaring light, is often to be in peril. It is a striking and beautiful verse in Proverbs, "Surely in vain the net (of temptation) is spread in the sight of any bird," or, as it is rendered in the margin of your Bibles—"in the sight of that which moves on the wing." Moving; resting not; making no perch of the world; but in the pure cloudless ethereal regions of faith and love and holiness, soaring ever higher to the home in the hills of God. "Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?"

(4.) The figure of the Dove fleeing to its window reminds and suggests, that it is a bird which requires a safe shelter. It does not, like some others, hide in hedgerows or furrows. The wild pigeon may build its nest on the forest tree; but the tame one seeks its secure dovecot. The eastern dove, which had no artificial home, had its equally secure dwelling in the rock-clefts—"O my dove, which is in the clefts of the rock" (Song of Solomon 2:14.) A little way from the northwest shores of the Lake of Gennesaret there is a recess in the hills called the "Wady Hyman," or "Valley of Doves," the sides of which are perforated with their retreats.

You who are Communicants have been fleeing anew today for refuge to the "Rock of Ages." You have come for a little season into this Ark of Ordinances, from work and duty, from roaming the needful fields of every-day occupation—shall we say to bathe afresh your ruffled, soiled plumage, in the Fountain of Salvation? Rather, you have desired, in one of His own appointed Sacraments, to hold nearer, dearer, and more confidential fellowship with Christ—realizing more devoutly that in Him you have your best, securest, and happiest Home. Away from earth's troubles and anxieties, its sins and sorrows—in this glorious Rock-cleft you have been folding your weary wings. An earthly communion is the foretaste and foreshadow of a safer and more enduring shelter; the pledge of a happier and more blissful Sabbath, when you will sink into the crevices of the true Rock forever!

It is a special characteristic of the Dove, that, however far it goes—though at a distance of hundreds of miles—it will fly back with unerring aim, sureness, and safety to its abode. So with "the dove of Christ." Every true believer, born of God—born from above, and for above, through every cloud and tempest, will reach at last the true Home on high. "The spirit shall return unto the God who gave it."

(5.) The cloud of Doves on wing to their windows, reminds one of young communicants. In the Septuagint, the words of this verse are remarkable, "Who are these that fly like doves with their young?" The doves fly to their dovecot, but not alone, they have their offspring with them. Not the least beautiful thing about a Communion-Sunday is the spectacle of young doves; those who have just risen from their early perches, the perches of the morning of life, and are winging their way, bright and unsoiled, to the Rock! If old communicants may be likened to the doves, whose wings the Psalmist speaks of as covered with "yellow gold" (golden with age); may we not compare young communicants to those wings, described in the same verse, as covered with silver; silvered over with the white shining of early piety and youthful consecration.

"Who are these that fly like doves with their young?" If a father or mother ever in their lives experience a sacred and hallowed joy, it surely is at the hour when their young ones are found by

their side at the sacramental table. Fleeing together; wing touching wing; nearing together the same Ark—together in the clefts of the same Eternal Rock. Yes, for parents to feel, when in the course of nature they are constrained, with aged and disabled pinion, to drop out of the flight; or rather, when they come to enter finally the windows of that Dovecot from which there is no return—that they will leave behind them those who will pursue their way, year after year, to "the Ark of the testimony."

Oh! my dear young friends, you who are the young doves today, in this glorious flight, be true and faithful to your God. Keep your plumage untainted. Let no feather be soiled with sin. Many wings among us would have been swifter, more buoyant, more soaring, if they had not been broken or blemished by some former falls. The cloud of doves spoken of in this verse, were ever getting nearer their windows. May this be so with you in a nobler spiritual sense; and may the familiar words be alike your prayer and your experience—

"Still all my song shall be

Nearer, my God, to Thee,

Nearer to Thee!"

(6.) One other thought is suggested, by the remembrance of a large class of those who are always to be found at the Sacrament of communion—I mean the afflicted. This image of doves flying to their windows reminds of storm. They were seen flying; drifting along like a tempestuous cloud. The dove flies to its dovecot, or to the rock-clefts, when the storm is brewing; perhaps were it not for the tempest it might linger in the open field, and get entangled in the snare or trap of which we found the Wise man speaking. But the black cloud is in the heavens! the thunder is heard—the tempest moans—the rain torrents descend. On the wings of the tempest the timid creature directs its flight to the sheltering covert.

Sorrowing, afflicted ones! and especially any who, as communicants, partook of the sacred emblems in heaviness of spirit, bewailing the loss and absence of "those who are not," may not this be your sanctified experience of the Divine dealings? Has not that desolating storm, which tore down your cherished earthly dovecots and shelters, only led you to speed more swiftly, steadily, persistently, to the only Refuge that never can be assailed by the hurricanes of dire misfortune, or the darker, gloomier tempests of bereavement and death? Yes, mourning dove! this day too faithfully noting blanks amid the flock of living wings around you—whether the silver-plumaged dove of youth missing the golden one of age, or the golden plumaged ones of age missing their young—rejoice if that "windy storm and tempest" has brought you closer to Jesus, driven you from the perishable to the Imperishable, and attuned lip and heart more for the song of a sainted Minstrel—

"I flutter, I struggle, I pant to be free,

I feel me a captive while banished from Thee:

A pilgrim and stranger the desert I roam,

And look on to Heaven and long to be home!

Ah, there the wild tempest forever shall cease,
No billow shall ruffle that haven of peace—
Temptation and trouble alike shall depart,
All tears from the eyes and all sin from the heart."

It is by affliction God has always prepared His doves for flight and for heaven. Without affliction, they might be grovelers forever. It is by the thorn in the nest He drives them to the wing. They might otherwise have been content with a poorer portion. It is one of the finest of the old Assyrian myths or legends, that when their great Queen Semiramis, the founder of their empire, died, she was changed into a dove. How often does death—the death of beloved friends—work a similar transformation on bereaved souls! imparting to them the dove-like spirit, and the upward soaring!

God grant that many among us, young and old, may have had the longing prayer answered today—"Oh that I had wings like a dove, then would I fly away and be at rest!" (Psalms 55:6). From our present theme of meditation, with its pictures and suggestions of shelter and repose; from the emblems and tokens of redeeming love at the Sacramental Table; from all that our eyes have there seen of the Word of Life; from Him who has tuned our hearts, inspired our thoughts, and given significance to our vows; from His dying lips on the Cross, from His glorified lips on the throne—we hear His own blessed, dove-like balm-word, stealing on the breath of eventide as a chime from the upper Sanctuary—"Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you REST!"

07.07. CHRIST AND HIS DISCIPLES AT THE LAST SUPPER

CHRIST AND HIS DISCIPLES AT THE LAST SUPPER When evening came, Jesus was reclining at the table with the Twelve. And while they were eating, he said, "I tell you the truth, one of you will betray Me." They were very sad and began to say to him one after the other, "Lord, is it I?"—Matthew 26:20-22.

"Sanctify yourselves, for there is to be a feast of the Lord!"

Such was the customary summons to the Jews of old on the occasion of their solemn festivals. The silver trumpets sounded, "Prepare to meet your God, O Israel," and blessed were the people who knew the joyful sound. With the prospect we have before us, today, of keeping the New Testament Sacramental memorial, I have selected these words as an appropriate theme for meditation. Let us gather with sacred interest around this scene in the upper chamber of Jerusalem, and may God the Holy Spirit direct, inspire, and sanctify our thoughts.

Let me speak of these four points— The rite celebrated. The company assembled. The announcement made. The manner in which the announcement was received.

I. THE RITE. It was the Passover Supper. It would be altogether out of place here to examine a question which has given rise to conflicting opinions, whether the meeting of our Blessed Lord and His disciples described, was the actual commemorative Jewish feast; or whether, as from a comparison of dates there seems some grounds for surmising, it partook rather of the nature of a private observance in anticipation of another on the 14th day of the month Nizan; that date being held, with greater chronological accuracy, to have fallen on the following evening, corresponding with our Friday. The preponderating arguments, supported by most reliable authorities, seem to incline to the long accepted view that it was the actual Passover feast, the same that was being celebrated universally that night in Jerusalem. If so, it was the close of what must have been in all respects a remarkable day in the City of Solemnities. Within the walls, supplemented by tents or booths in the Valley of the Kedron and on the slopes and in the green hollows of Olivet, it is computed that two million people were assembled to keep the annual festival. Each family had to provide itself with a lamb, and take it to the Temple for sacrifice. Relays of priests were there standing in a row, with gold and silver basins, into which the blood of the animal was poured, while its carcass was returned to the owners, and by them prepared for the evening meal. At eventide came a hush of silence after the busy day—a day noisy with the tramp of the multitudinous pilgrims, the bleating of the sacrifices, the festal songs of Levites and worshipers, and the blare of the silver trumpets. Now, each house-door was shut, each tent-curtain drawn; and, save for the strains of the Hallel, a sacred silence pervaded the scene, while the immemorial feast was kept. It was the grandest and most impressive of all the types of the ancient dispensation. Though unrecognized by few in that vast assemblage, the Great Antitype Himself was there; the true Paschal Lamb about to take away the sin of the world.

"The evening had come," the last evening He was to spend in peaceful communion with His disciples. In the mysterious appropriate twilight, when the full moon was rising over Jerusalem, He had crossed from the hamlet of Bethany, and gathered the chosen apostles in a small room on Mount Zion; possibly the same apartment that had been hallowed to Him on many previous similar occasions, when He accompanied His Mother and "the multitude that kept holiday" from Nazareth—a room moreover, that more likely was soon to have a new consecrated association, as the scene of the joyful benedictions of Easter Evening. The Jewish memorial was now to be merged in the Christian. Not that the national commemoration was to be altered for something diverse in kind and significancy. The two rites were each sacramentally expressive of the same peerless gospel truth. The testimony of Jesus, the one prospective the other retrospective, was the spirit of both ordinances. The older is to be interwoven with higher, diviner mysteries. If change there was, the change has been likened to that in a tree when the blossom drops off to make way for fruit. And though "the Lord's Supper" is never to be superseded by any other rite on earth, it may itself be regarded as a transition Ordinance, which will attain its full consummation and perfection in the sublime Heavenly Festival; where, with no traitor and no betrayal to interrupt its celebration, we shall, as glorified guests, "sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of God."

II. THE COMPANY ASSEMBLED. The MASTER and His disciples—the Shepherd, and the flock that are so soon to be scattered. The Passover Supper was essentially a gladsome family gathering. Relations and friends living in distant and diverse parts of Palestine, were enabled once a year—in this the loveliest season, when the land was in its full wealth of floral beauty, and its skies undimmed with a cloud—to meet at the sacred festival and renew suspended communion. Jesus, who habitually and scrupulously accorded with all innocent traditional usages and customs, was not likely to make any exception in the present case. We might naturally have expected Him, therefore, to regard it as a fitting opportunity of gathering (shall we say, not in the limited apartment of a house, but within some commodious tent of Galilean pilgrims on the Mount) all that were nearest and dearest of His family and friends, "His cousins and brethren." Would not the Marys of the Lakeside be there; and the Bethany sisters, with their restored brother; besides many other intimate friends and recipients of His grace and mercy? Above all, would not the dear earthly Mother, whose love and presence must have been vividly associated, as we have just remarked, with many such previous anniversaries, have had her special summons? No! Every one of these we have named are conspicuous by their absence. They receive no invitation. It is to be a sacredly private and confidential meal with His own chosen disciples. The specific words of the invitation are in every way remarkable. "With desire have I desired" (with great desire) "to eat this Passover with YOU, before I suffer." And when Peter and John, at their Lord's bidding, track the footsteps of the water-carrier to his house, they deliver this as their message—"The Master says, My time is at hand; where is the guest-chamber, where I shall eat the Passover with My disciples?"

Solemn convocation! Monarchs of the earth were that night sitting on thrones of state or dreaming of conquest. But what was all the glory encircling them, compared with the undying interests which center in that little band?

Imagine the scene. The Divine Lord had just performed, in their presence, an act of unparalleled humility. "Jesus, knowing that the Father had committed all things into His hands, and that He came from God and was going to God." "Came from God!"—At that moment, with the full

consciousness of His underived glory—in His hand the garnered treasures of the universe. "Was going to God!"—With all the prospect of His approaching triumph over death and the grave, and His ascension to His Mediatorial Throne—yet then, He undid His loose upper garment, took a towel and girded Himself, and washed the disciples' feet. Going from couch to couch on which they were reclining, carrying in His own hand the bronze laver, and stooping to this menial office "as one who serves!"

Having resumed his white festal robe, He invites them to partake of the provided Feast. But in doing so, He renews the significant intimation of what was before them and Him. It was a feast preliminary to His own "suffering." We need not have wondered if this theme of suffering, like a somber keynote of plaintive minor, had run through all His discourse; if the shadow of the morrow's cross projected on His path had occupied and engrossed His mind to the exclusion of all else. But see His unselfishness! With the anticipated agony—the surcharged clouds gathering more ominously and ever nearer around Him—the gleam of the torches and the flash of the swords at hand, the buffeting and the ignominy—sadder than all, the consciousness of the desertion of His own tried and trusted disciples—still He seemed to have no thought for Himself or about the brimming of His own cup. His tenderest sympathies and longings and anxieties are for them. He has assembled them in this quiet guest-chamber, to breathe farewell words of comfort and peace—"These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." Further, in order that they might retain these valedictory utterances in visible and permanent memorial, He proceeds to institute the sacred Ordinance—a keepsake and legacy of love, which would be treasured by them when He Himself would be visible no more. Yes, "having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them unto the end!" In all the other homes and within all the other tents of the City of solemnities that night (it was a very distinctive feature in the ceremonial observance), there was delivered, by the presiding head of the family, a narrative or rehearsal of the flight from Egypt and the subsequent wilderness journey to Canaan. In His opening valedictory discourse in the 14th chapter of John, Jesus, as it has been well said, "elevates and transfigures past historical events by transferring them to Himself and speaking of His own 'Exodus.'" (Dr. Maclear)

We may even expand the thought, and note how, as if under a series of new gospel metaphors, He rehearses the wilderness wanderings of His people to the end of time; comforting in the first instance the Pilgrim Band around Him, as He points them to "the Way, the Truth, and the Life," unfolding Himself before them as the wondrous Tree which will sweeten their bitterest Marah-pools—the true desert Rock, from whose smitten sides the waters of everlasting consolation flow in a perennial stream—the true Elim, with its stately palms of refreshment and wells of consolation—the true Joshua, conducting them at last in peace and triumph through the dry channel of Jordan, until landed in the Heavenly Canaan—the Father's House with its many mansions, which He was going before to prepare for them!

Let us pass for a moment, in this rapid reference, from the Master to the GUESTS. It is interesting, in the prospect of our own Communion, to note the variety of character surrounding that supper-table. Each member of the company has his own individuality, different mental and moral, as doubtless they had varying physical features—yet all, with one exception, are loving and beloved. In several—it may be diverse ways—they manifest their attachment and devotion. Outspoken, impulsive Peter, full of words, yet genuine, ardent, sincere. Silent, meditative John,

wrapped in contemplation, in restful affectionate confidence leaning on his Lord's bosom. Calm, intellectual Thomas, and others of similar temperament; not saying much, or professing much—rather battling with doubt—cast down because unable to show the same vehemence of love which some of their more enthusiastic fellow-apostles exhibited. In this respect they were types of the variety of guests that would in all future ages assemble round the same sacramental Table. They were representative communicants; representatives of that diversity of character which must ever distinguish God's true people, on similar solemn occasions.

Some, of ecstatic frame and feeling, souls burning with ardor—others, fearful, distrustful, rejoicing with trembling; yet, though in a different way, equally conscious of love to their Lord—equally owned and recognized by Him, "who accepts according to what a man has, and not according to what he has not." Some, who I may venture to call, without for a moment implying or intending disparagement, demonstrative Christians, who can at once show what they are—unfurl their banner and display it—others, like the Mother of our Lord, who "kept all these things in her heart." God will not reject because the one is devoid of the complementary gifts and graces of the other. "There are diversities of gifts, but the same spirit."

III. THE ANNOUNCEMENT MADE. The Paschal meal and its attendant ceremonies were over. The cup of blessing and thanksgiving, we may suppose (according to olden custom), had four times gone round. The great Hallel—the closing psalm of praise, had been at least partly sung. The new rite is about to be instituted. But before it is so, there is something of sorrowful import burdening the mind of the loving Master. He has, until now, kept it from the guests; He can do so no longer. He reluctantly adds new drops to their cup; but the sad story must be told. All in a moment, with startling abruptness, their hour of hallowed communion is broken by the communication, "Truly, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray Me." How every word—syllable by syllable—must have gone like fiery arrows to their hearts! "Verily I"—I, your Lord and Master—I, the gracious One who called you from your homes in Gennesaret, and honored you to be my confidential friends. I, who during three years of hallowed converse have given you proof of nothing but pure, unselfish love! "Truly, I say." Too well do I know the sad truth. It is no perhaps, no surmise or contingency—something regarding which I may have been mistaken or misinformed. As the omniscient Lord, I can certify the painful reality. It is my own betrayal! I am to be ignominiously delivered up for crucifixion and death. By an act of secret treachery, my life has been compassed, and the assassins are already prowling on my path.

Worst of all, it is "one of you" that is to be the guilty agent in consummating the foul deed. It is not an enemy, then I could have borne it—but he that dips with Me in the dish, eats with Me at table, the man I have received—welcomed—honored as a brother and friend, "has lifted up his heel against Me." A wicked bribe is to conquer and cancel the memories of much recent kindness. Need we wonder that another Evangelist should tell us, in a parallel passage, that "as Jesus testified these things, He was troubled in spirit." It was not the nail and spear of Jew or Roman which now entered His soul. It was the thought of injured goodness and unrequited love on the part of a faithless disciple. It was Sinless Purity incarnate, wounded in the house of His friends. He wept over a whole city; now His mighty soul is bowed in sorrow by the base conduct of one Apostate, and the keen anguish seems too deep for tears!

Oh! let that single unhappy traitor tell us, what one sin, trifled with—tampered with—can do! His name, "Judas," means "praise of God." We have every reason to believe that he was once as earnest and faithful as his brother Apostles—as unselfish in his motives as they, in joining Christ and the Disciple-band—God's candle shining on his head. But covetousness—the base and degrading love of money—assailed his better nature. In an evil hour he dangled its forbidden gold and silver chains, and they became fetters to bind him. The master-passion by degrees took full possession of his soul—dominated his will and affections—crushed every lofty aspiration—all that once was fair and lovely and of good report, and left him, at last, a blighted blackened ruin, demon-haunted and defiled! The most dreadful sin that ever stained the catalogue of creature guilt, came to brand his name and memory with infamy. As we see him leaving abruptly the supper-table, and from the lighted room plunging into the dark streets with a deeper darkness in his soul; from no one figure in all sacred story comes there so terrible a lesson—a lesson that may well be enforced by the inspired monitory words—"You, therefore, beloved, beware lest you also, being led away by the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness." "Who can understand his errors? cleanse me from secret faults."

4. THE WAY IN WHICH THE ANNOUNCEMENT WAS RECEIVED.

"They were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto Him, Lord, is it I?" What, rather, might we have expected? Surely that the disciples, after a first moment struck speechless with shame and amazement, would have united in an instantaneous disavowal—spurned and repudiated the incredible imputation, saying—"Lord, it cannot be that villainy so base can possibly be ours. We could not be such disloyal renegades towards One so kind and indulgent as You!" Or, if not this, that each would look with a suspicious eye on his neighbor, or cast an uneasy glance on Judas. But, they were too busy with their own untrustworthy spirits to have time, or thought, or room to fasten accusation on others.

Instead of the query passing from lip to lip, "Is it you? every eye was turned to their injured Master as they inquired, through anguished tears, "Lord, is it I?" As much as to say—'Fearful beyond words is such an impeachment—yet we cannot, we dare not say it is impossible. We know too much of the wickedness and waywardness of these hearts of ours. We have proved weak and cowardly in the past—broken reeds. We know too well, if left to ourselves, Satan would desire to have us, that he may sift us as wheat—"Lord, is it I?" Was that apprehension—that unconscious self-distrust and misgiving—unwarranted? Never were these disciples, we believe, more touched with the love of their Lord, or more conscious of the sincerity and loyalty of their own, than now. Yet, they all, a few hours later, forsook Him and fled!

Brethren, it is well for us, in our seasons of devoutest consecration, to cherish a sense of our own frailty the fickleness and fitfulness of our best frames, the instability of our best purposes. Even on the holy ground we tread today, be it ours to avow, in profound humility and godly fear, "Lord, it is Your grace alone which keeps me from being another Judas. I cannot trust this traitor-heart. I shall go to Your table, uttering and deeply feeling the confession, by the grace of God I am what I am!"

Yet, let me add, on the other hand; as God's appointed ordinance—if partaken of in a spirit of lowly, earnest faith, it cannot fail to prove a quickener in the divine life, stimulating to new and more devoted obedience. Though in many ways our hearts may condemn us, He who is "greater than our hearts" will accept our offerings, and give us strength equal to our day. The very

approach to Him, through His special means of grace, will secure its own pledged and covenanted blessing—"You meet him who rejoices and works righteousness; those that remember You in Your ways" (Isaiah 64:5). "I will make them and the places round about my hill a blessing—and I will cause the shower to come down in his season there shall be showers of blessing" (Ezekiel 34:26).

Doubtless, on many a future dark and perplexing day, when their Master was gone, and they had to fight single-handed the battles of the faith, would the Apostles revert to this hallowed hour of a first Communion. May He, whose presence and blessing now, as then, gives to the solemn Ordinance all its preciousness, make Himself known to us in the breaking of bread—revealing the mystery of His suffering love, the completeness and glory of His final victory; and fulfill in our experience His assured promise—"In all places where I record My name, I will come unto you and bless you."

07.08. THE GREAT FESTAL GATHERING AND SONG OF HEAVEN

THE GREAT FESTAL GATHERING AND SONG OF HEAVEN

Then I looked again, and I heard the singing of thousands and millions of angels around the throne and the living beings and the elders. And they sang in a mighty chorus—

"The Lamb is worthy—the Lamb who was killed. He is worthy to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing!" Revelation 5:11-12 What an anthem is this!

We have, today, been assembled at Christ's Sacramental Table, contemplating the memorials of His dying ever-living love. The sublime passage just read contains also a superb description of a Communion. But the place of convocation is not a Temple on earth, but Heaven—the fellow-guests, not a few perishable mortals, but a glorified multitude which no man can number. It may form no unbecoming theme, surely, for this evening's service, to connect our sacrament below with the Supper of the Lamb above—The eternal festal Sabbath; no mock kiss of pretended friendship to mar—no anticipated hour and power of darkness to ruffle the deep rapture of its joy. How profoundly interesting the thought that we have here depicted what is now transacting in the Upper Sanctuary. How delightful to reflect, that in ourselves ascending the Mount of Ordinances, we have been identified with the redeemed around the Throne; that the Church militant and the Church triumphant are associated in the same grand commemorative rite. Lo! as faith catches up the echoes of the Heavenly minstrelsy, it tells that our theme and our song are one—"The Lamb is worthy—the Lamb who was killed. He is worthy to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing!" In their connection with the previous and succeeding context, let me advert to a few consolatory truths with which the passage is replete. We may learn—

(1.) The delight with which Christ looks back on His own Atoning work and sufferings. It was predicted, "He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied," and it would appear from the text, as if this were to be a perpetual sight and ever new satisfaction. If, even on earth, when the appalling prospect was before Him of treading the winepress of the wrath of God; when, at hand, was the gleam of the midnight torch, the assassin-band, Gethsemane's hour and power of darkness, and other deepening shadows beyond—if, even then, anticipating the results of Redemption, He could say, as if longing for the final triumph—"I have a Baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened until it be accomplished!"—now, when His work is completed, the vision informs us with what holier satisfaction He regards the retrospect of His agony and endurance. Rejoicing still to talk with His redeemed, as He did of old on the Mount of Transfiguration, of "the decease accomplished at Jerusalem," beholding on every side the evidences of His conquest—living trophies in their robes of light and with palms of triumph—contemplating the influence His death has exercised, not on the family of earth only, but on the varied orders of intelligence throughout the universe; what an attestation to God's immaculate holiness, His unimpeachable rectitude, His burning purity, His boundless mercy! Shall

the record be allowed to perish, or be henceforth an unknown and unpondered theme in Heaven? No—exceptional as it is, there shall still be one everlasting memorial there of anguish and suffering, in a place where pain never enters and suffering is unknown. Accordingly, when the Redeemer puts the coronation anthem into the lips of His worshipers, He reveals Himself, not in the glories of Godhead, but as a slain Lamb, wearing the marks of humiliation. He tells them to make Calvary still their meditation, and His Cross and Passion the great Sacrament of eternity. The print of the nails in His hands, and the spear-mark in His side, are not the mementoes of shame but of victory—remembrancers of a love whose depths the ages cannot fathom. The vision of the text thus becomes the mightiest of preachers, replete to the hosts above with the Story of grace. There is a tongue in every wound of the glorified Sufferer, silently but expressively proclaiming, "Great is the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh!"

(2.) The Vision of the slain Lamb would seem symbolically to point to the perpetual efficacy of the Savior's sacrifice. "Christ was once offered to bear the sin of many." "By one offering He has perfected forever those who are sanctified." By that one oblation He has made the bestowment of love and mercy compatible with every demand of justice and every requirement of righteous law. Nearly nineteen centuries have rolled by, since those wounds were opened and that blood shed. But the power and sufficiency of the Atonement are undiminished—still is He "able to save to the uttermost." And what is His plea when, as the ever-living Intercessor, He bears the names of His covenant people on His heart in every approach to the Throne? It is the plea of His own precious blood-shedding. He appears as "the slain Lamb." He points to the mute but expressive traces and symbols in His own adorable Body, as the grounds of His Advocacy. The live coals in the censer of the true Aaron (the fire of suffering) give the odor-breathing incense of His merits all its fragranciness. By His death He wrought out atonement; by intercession He perpetuates it and renders it forever efficacious; so that in the noblest of senses it may be said of Him, "He being dead, yet speaks." When on earth He poured out His soul in strong crying and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, "He was heard in that He feared." In heaven He pleads in silence. He is heard in that He suffered.

(3.) The Vision informs us of the continued identity of Christ's Person as God-man Mediator. It assures His people that He is the same Savior now that He was on earth. "Behold the Lamb of God!" said John, when pointing out the Man of sorrows in this valley of tears. "Behold the Lamb of God!" exclaim myriads in the Heavenly Sanctuary, when gazing on the exalted Savior. It is indeed a glorified humanity He now wears; but it is humanity still—His risen Body a human Temple enshrining the Shekinah of Godhead. As the slain Lamb He proclaims that the same heart which throbbed in anguish on the Cross still beats on the Throne—that He is still the elder Brother, "the living Kinsman," the Almighty Friend; still feelingly alive, exquisitely sensitive to every pang which rends the human soul. What were the comforting words which the angels, on the Mount of Ascension, addressed to the disciples as they saw the bright cloud hearing their Lord to Heaven? "This same Jesus." Precious assurance! Jesus unchanged and unchangeable—"this same Jesus"—of Bethlehem and Nazareth, of Jerusalem and Galilee—"this same Jesus," who mingled His tears with the widow at the gate of Nain; who wept over the memory of a cherished friendship, and was melted in a flood of tenderest compassion over a fated city and an apostate land—"this same Jesus," who breathed balm-words of comfort on the very eve of His own agony, and in the midst of it welcomed a dying felon to Paradise—is now, with a heart of unaltered love and

sympathy, wielding the scepter of universal empire! And He will continue "this same Jesus" until these clouds be once more parted, and the celestial gates once more opened, that He may "come again and receive us unto Himself." This is, and ever shall be, His name and memorial, "I am He who lives and was dead." "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever."

(4.) We may yet further infer from the Vision, that Redemption is the grand theme of adoration for unredeemed angels, as well as for the redeemed family of God. It is a mighty throng of worshipers the text discloses. It is not one company alone. We have angels, "living ones," and elders—redeemed and unredeemed. No harp is unstrung, no voice silent. One strain thrills on every tongue—"Worthy is the Lamb, the Lamb who was slain!" It is only one of the many ranks who may be said to be personally interested in the subject-matter of the anthem; and yet the whole celestial hierarchy would seem to dwell with devout and delighted amazement on the marvel of marvels. We may picture them exclaiming in turns, as they gaze on the significant symbol of sufferings, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty!" How spotless His righteousness! How inexorable His justice! How unsearchable His wisdom! How infinite His love! How He hated sin, yet loved the sinner! How He magnified the law by showing He could by no means clear, and yet how He has 'cleared, the guilty!'

Dear Friends, it is surely an elevating thought, that you have been this day associated in your Sacramental feast, not with the Church triumphant alone, ransomed sinners who have exchanged the pilgrim warfare for the pilgrim rest, but with the whole Family of God, from the archangel nearest the throne to the least in the kingdom. Though requiring not, as we do, the personal application of the blood of sprinkling, they love to assemble as spectators at the Great commemorative rite, and make it the theme of devoutest contemplation; for, we read, "unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places is made known, by the Church, the manifold wisdom of God." When they search for the richest displays of the Divine character, where is it, we are told, they direct their gaze—with what do they task their immortal energies? With folded wings they bend over Gethsemane and Calvary, and exclaim, "The whole EARTH is full of His glory!"

(5.) The Vision of the text informs us, of the preeminent dignity and bliss of the ransomed saints. The Evangelist heard the voice of many Angels round about the throne, and round about the living ones, and round about the elders. What does this unfold, but a succession (so to speak) of concentric circles encompassing the all-glorious and glorified CENTER; and that the innermost circle—those standing nearest the slain Lamb, permitted the nearest glimpse of His Presence—are "Elders," that is, the Redeemed from the earth. It was the white-robed multitude, with crowns and palms, who in a subsequent vision were beheld "before the Throne," God sitting on the Throne and dwelling among them. They would seem (to use the language of the old divines,) as if reckoned the blood-royal of Heaven—"Kings and priests unto God," "sitting with Christ on His throne." Wondrous spectacle! the ranks of cherubim and seraphim, angel and archangel, making way, that redeemed sinners may take the station nearest "the excellent Glory," and pour in their own special chorus, in which no unredeemed tongue can join—"He was slain for us!"

(6.) We learn further from the Vision, the unity which pervades the heavenly ranks. "Angels," "Living ones," and "Elders." No discordant voice to disturb the symphony. Not only so, but among the elders themselves (the ransomed from earth) there is blessed harmony. We read of the whole

aggregate Church triumphant, "the four-and-twenty," symbolizing the varied churches of Christ gathered from "every kindred and tongue and people and nation," singing in sweet concert the new song, and falling down in blissful accord at the feet of Him who lives forever and ever. However different on earth, there, at least, variance ceases. No jarring sound—no party or separating shibboleth. The trumpet of discord mute. All seeing eye to eye and heart to heart. Then (alas! for the first time) that which is often spoken of as so beautiful in theory in the Church militant, will be realized in the Church glorified, "Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." The only ambition amid the mighty convocation will be, what harp will yield the richest melody, what tongue the loftiest tribute of grateful and adoring homage to "the Lamb—the Lamb that was slain!"

(7.) Finally, let us draw one other concluding lesson. The vision seems intended to prepare the Church on earth for her own sufferings, and reconcile her to her approaching tribulation. The scene is placed near the beginning of the Apocalypse; a preliminary to the pouring out of a succession of vials on the nations. But, before the thunders awake, the Church receives a wondrous vision of consolation. What is that? It is the sight of an Almighty Fellow-Sufferer! What can better reconcile her to have her own vestments dipped in blood, than looking up to the crimsoned vesture of her Adorable Head? How can she repine, when she looks to heaven and beholds the once Crucified Savior—reminding her that in her struggles she can fare no worse than her Master and Lord—that if persecutions be appointed, what are they, when she sees on the Throne the visible memorials of suffering, in comparison with which all her experiences of scenes and ages of agony would be but as dust in the balance?

We know nothing more consolatory for the child of God, in the midst of sorrows too deep for utterance and tears, than to take the vision of the text and dwell on its profound teachings. Afflicted believer! trial upon trial, like wave after wave, may have been rolling over you—deep calling unto deep. But is there not a voice from that Slain Lamb proclaiming—"I am a Fellow-Sufferer," and may you not well be mute under the unanswerable challenge—"Was there ever sorrow like unto My sorrow?" Precious vision! it tells me, when my heart is overwhelmed and in perplexity, that there is One at the right hand of God who can say, from identity of experience, "I know your sorrows," for as the Slain Lamb, the Man of sorrows, He has felt them all Himself. Ah! it is a Lamb too, the token and emblem of innocence. Can I, a guilty sinner, repine at my afflictions, when this spotless, sinless, innocent Lamb of God was mute before His shearers? Is there not a voice stealing from that glorious and glorified One, addressing every child of tribulation, 'O bleeding heart, look at My wounds, and then say, can you murmur?'

Men and brethren, we have celebrated another high festival on earth; and as we descend the Mount, let us do so with the anthems of glory we have now been considering sounding in our ears. Lo! the immortal ranks (to repeat our opening sentence)—are busied with the same festive rite as ourselves. They echo back the motto and watchword as their own, which has ascended from not a few spirits among us today—"God forbid that we should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." O Lamb of God, who did so freely shed Your blood; we entreat that that blood may plead mightily for us!—that when we bid farewell to Communion here, and rise to the everlasting festal Sabbath in Heaven, it may be to prolong and perpetuate words which have been now uppermost in our hearts; which form our rejoicing while pilgrims on earth; which will compose our death-song and smooth our death-pillow; which will be our passport at Judgment and our triumphant anthem

through Eternity—"Worthy, worthy, worthy is the Lamb, the Lamb who was slain!"

07.10. THE OBLIGATION OF CHRISTIANS TO OBSERVE THE LORD'S SUPPER

THE OBLIGATION OF CHRISTIANS TO OBSERVE THE LORD'S SUPPER "Therefore let us keep the feast."— 1 Corinthians 5:8

These words (which are selected more as a motto than a text), I desire, with the utmost simplicity of thought and language, to take as the theme of appropriate meditation on this Sacramental Sunday morning. Our subject is—the solemn and imperative obligation resting on Christians to keep the sacred Feast of Communion.

There are not a few, regularly and devoutly worshipping God in His Sanctuary—"not forsaking the assembling of themselves together, as the manner of some is," who yet leave their places vacant on the recurrence of the Holy Ordinance of the Supper. As the professing servants and followers of a great and good Master, I would desire to bring home to all here present who have arrived at a mature age, the privilege and duty of making this avowal of their faith in Christ and of consecration to His service. Let me proceed to state one or two reasons, why the Communion Service ought to be devoutly observed, by every one who bears the Savior's name.

I. The Lord's Supper is to be observed, because its obligation rests on the Redeemer's dying command. An injunction is always rendered more binding and imperative if it has these two, among other considerations, to enforce it—

(1.) When it comes from the lips of One we love, and who has shown a deep interest in our welfare. We naturally pay a respectful deference to the request of a neighbor or acquaintance; but what is this, in comparison with the command of a parent? How supremely obligatory to every right-thinking child is the wish emanating from a father or mother, and with what joyful alacrity is it obeyed! The son going to a distant land has a Bible put into his hands, as the last gift of doating love, with the sacred promise exacted and given, that night by night in the adopted home he will never fail to use it. The request might be sacred for other reasons; but doubly so would it be, when he regards it as that of his dearest earthly friend.

When, in the desert wasteland, or in solitude, memory travels back to the parental hearth, and remembers the devotion which so often and so willingly submitted to self-sacrifice—the hands which smoothed the pillow of sickness, and the voice which solaced in the hour of sorrow—if he ever proved traitor to his trust—if that hallowed souvenir should be ever left to gather dust on the neglected leaves, we know whose image would be the first to give the upbraiding look of injured love, and lead him with remorseful tears to unclasp it once more. The observance of the Lord's Supper is the solemn injunction of One, who has proved Himself to be infinitely more than the best and fondest on earth. Even a mother's love—noblest type and ideal of supreme human affection—pales before His. All our tenderest and most endearing relationships, individually and combined, form but a feeble image and emblem of the devotion of this Parent of parents—this Brother of brothers—this Friend of friends—"He that does the will of my Father in Heaven, the

same is my mother and sister and brother." It is from the lips of such peerless LOVE the command is addressed, to "keep the Feast!"

(2.) Another consideration which makes such a request specially obligatory, is, if it is conveyed at some exceptionally solemn or momentous season. Surely if there be a time in the history of any human being more sacred or impressive than another, it is at the hour of death. How sacred must have been the dying adjuration of the last of the Patriarchs, when he "made mention of the departure of the children of Israel, and gave commandment concerning his bones!" How filially and loyally was this injunction obeyed—all the more so, just because it was a dying one. The bones of Joseph were not allowed to repose in Egyptian sarcophagus or under Egyptian pyramid. They were religiously guarded and kept unburied by his children's children, until, borne in the longest funeral procession the world ever saw, they were laid, in obedience to his last injunction, in the mausoleum at Sychar.

Take a New Testament illustration. Timothy would feel at all times imperative the wishes of his great spiritual father. But when the latter was "such an one as Paul the aged," "ready to be offered," sinking under the weight of years and suffering in his dungeon home, how devoutly would the younger disciple respond to his injunction, even to the request about his winter cloak and parchment writings left in Troas! And, when the noble champion of the faith was gathered to the Church triumphant, how specially would every dying word listened to in that Mamertine prison, remain engraved indelibly on the survivor's heart.

What shall we say of the circumstances in which the parting command—the great farewell injunction—was given, of a Greater than the greatest of Apostles, that of the Divine Savior of the world? "Do this in remembrance of Me" has, as we well know, the special significance and impressiveness attached to it, of being uttered the night before death. It was, as much as the "Peace I leave with you," His dying legacy. He left on it the impress of His dying lips; yes, too, when His agony and bloody sweat, His Cross and Passion, and all their fearful accompaniments, were vividly portrayed to His omniscient eye. If John felt that the hallowed bequest of his Lord had a double obligation, because uttered by the faint lips of the Crucified in the supreme moment of suffering love—"Son, behold your mother—Mother, behold your son,"—if, just because it was spoken with dimming eye and paling countenance, that disciple regarded the direction and trust all the more sacred, from that hour to take the bereft mourner to his own home—with what profound reverence ought not we to accept and ratify the valedictory command of Jesus, to show forth His death in His own appointed Ordinance?

Yes! If I love the Savior; and so loving Him, if there be preeminently sacred music in His dying words; then surely no evasion of what is alike a duty and a privilege can be pleaded regarding our solemn Feast day. "If you love Me," says He, "keep my commandments." You are my friends if you do whatever I command you." Blessed Redeemer! to Whom we look for every hope for time and for eternity—in the great crisis-hour of Your work and sacrifice, You did not only institute this precious Memorial, but did lay upon Your Church the solemn injunction to perpetuate it for all ages—"Therefore, let us keep the Feast."

II. I would observe, under our second general head, that an obligation rests upon us to celebrate the New Testament Ordinance, because it is a befitting public declaration of our Christian profession.

Beautiful must have been the spectacle of that ancient mountain gathering, when the tribes of Israel assembled to give public testimony of their allegiance to their fathers' God, on the slopes of Ebal and Gerizim. More solemn and interesting still, what we have on other occasions referred to in connection with our Sacramental seasons—when, year by year, the valleys and highways of Palestine were vocal with the songs of Pilgrims, as they went in company to celebrate the appointed feasts. Jehovah required them thus, year by year, to make mention of His name in the City of Solemnities. It was not enough for Jewish parents, by oral instruction, to impart His will and unfold His testimonies to their children, "talking to them when sitting in the house and when walking in the way—when lying down or rising up"—thus faithfully inculcating in the homestead the observance of private and domestic religion. "The Lord loves the Gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob." Jerusalem was the place where He recorded His Name, and where He promised especially to meet His chosen people. Hence every true and warm-hearted Israelite, when he came of age, considered it alike a duty and delight to take part in the holy convocation, and "subscribe himself by the name of Jacob." "Jerusalem is built as a city that is compact together, where the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the Lord."

Brethren, "let us keep the Feast"—our New Testament Passover—as a blessed opportunity of testifying, in presence of our fellow-Christians and before the world, our obligations to the Savior, and that we are not ashamed of Him and His gospel. Observe, the Psalmist (himself a devout worshiper) puts special emphasis in paying his vows "in the presence of all God's people." "In the courts of the Lord's House, in the midst of you, O Jerusalem" (Psalms 116:14, Psalms 116:19). Let none of us be guilty of false shame, shrinking from an open declaration of the infinite debt of gratitude we owe to Redeeming Love. Even the soldiers of pagan Rome were not ashamed to pay their religious vows along with their comrades. They gloried in ascending the steps of the Capitol to the Temple of Victory, with their votive offerings, swearing by the gods of Olympus allegiance to their Imperial Master. And shall we, Christians, be found cowards to the true Jehovah and His Christ, when the heathen did public fealty to mute idols?

If such unworthy feeling be deterring any from approaching that Holy Table, let them remember the righteous upbraiding which will meet them at the Great Day, "Whoever is ashamed of Me and my words, of Him shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when He comes in the glory of His Father and of the holy angels." No, no; may this rather be the avowal that rises spontaneously to our lips, "We will rejoice in Your salvation, and in the Name of our God we will set up our banners." God helping us, we shall not, like the recreant children of Ephraim, "carrying bows, turn back in the day of battle." The servant may desert his master—the beggar may refuse to recognize his benefactor—the restored may pass unacknowledged the physician that cured him—the soldier may absent himself from the ranks, or basely disown his brave and trusted leader—but God forbid that we should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. "You have given a banner unto those who fear You, that it may be displayed because of Your truth." "Therefore, let us keep the Feast!"

III. We are under an obligation to keep this feast, because by not keeping it, we incur spiritual loss. We never can be careful enough in discarding the false and unscriptural idea, that there is any peculiar grace or virtue in the Sacrament—any mystic charm to pacify conscience—or that the mere act of communicating earns some claim or title to God's favor—in some mysterious way

condones transgression, and cancels bygone guilt. We can entertain no such modification of the Roman Catholic dogma. As little could the mere act of communicating have power to take away sin, under the new dispensation, as had the blood of bulls and of goats under the old. All grace and mercy, pardon and acceptance, flow, not from the sacrament, but from Christ. This Ordinance is no more than one of "the golden pipes" spoken of by Zechariah in his beautiful and instructive vision, as conveying the golden oil from the Heavenly reservoir (Zechariah 4:12). But neither, on the other hand, must we undervalue the Ordinance, as a mean of grace. It is doubtless one of the Divine channels for the conveyance of spiritual good—one of the aforesaid golden pipes which transmit needed and promised grace to the soul. God could have fed His Temple-lamps miraculously, without aid or intervention. He could have nourished them by some mysterious supernatural process. But in this, as in other things, He works by instrumentalities; and if we neglect those of His own express appointment, we cannot expect otherwise than to suffer spiritually. Would the Pilgrim host of Israel have sustained no deprivation if they had omitted to quench their thirst and fill their leathern bottles at the wells of Elim? Would Elijah have suffered no loss if he had rejected the offered food, in whose strength he braved the barren desert for forty days and nights? And how can we expect otherwise than to incur loss and detriment if we pass by this Well of Living Water dug for us in the Valley, without partaking of its refreshment?

We would confidently appeal to many who, in obedience to their Lord's command, have come again and again (using the expressive word of an old writer), to this gracious "Trysting-place" and surrounded His Table. Have you not found it a precious means of advancing the work of grace, and of fostering spiritual growth in your hearts? Can you not, as you look back to these "Delectable mountains," with their hallowed memories, exclaim, "It was good for me to be there"—"I will remember You from the land of Jordan and of the Hermonites, from the Hill Mizar"? How many have there received some unexpected tokens of blessing—gracious revelations of the Savior's character and work—new unfoldings of the Savior's love—some more intense and quickened longings after divine fellowship—some more realizing and energizing views of the unseen and eternal?

Ask such, if they regard this Day of Solemnity as an empty form—a mere periodical accordance with a conventional religious custom, from which they expect no fresh and stimulating impulse to faith, and love, and holiness? They will tell you far otherwise. "I have food to eat which the world knows not of." "His Flesh is food indeed, and His Blood is drink indeed." "You have put gladness in my heart more than in the time that their harvests and their wine increased." We take no undue or exaggerated estimate of His ordinance when we say, that it is the choicest and most strengthening meal provided by the Master for His spiritual Israel, in the House of their pilgrimage—"Lord, evermore give us this Bread!"

These remarks may appropriately be closed by a simple reference, and no more, to a DIFFICULTY. This difficulty is occasionally felt and expressed as twofold, on the part of those who remain away from the Lord's Table, and forfeit a personal share in the blessing of which we have spoken.

(1.) 'We are not warranted to approach the Table of Communion, because we are not prepared for it.' My answer is—The same reason which makes you unfit for the Communion, is equally valid, equally pertinent, in rendering you unfit and unready for Death. Unfit for the Communion Table in

the Church below, can you be fit to sit down at the Supper-table of the Church above? Unworthy! Oh, is it not because we are sinners, and unworthy, that we are invited to come to the Feast, and there to celebrate the infinite worthiness of "the Lamb that was slain?"

(2.) It is further and not infrequently urged—"We cannot go to the Sacrament of Communion because we know that some venture who have no right to be there." 'Hypocrites,' say they, 'frequent this hallowed ground—those living in known sin and spending disreputable lives. We shall not, we cannot go, where the cup of fellowship is mixed with the cup of devils—to talk of it as a "Communion" would be a brand and stigma on the name.' I reply—Your duty of obedience to your Lord's command is independent of any such intruders. You are not responsible for the sin and presumption of others. If hypocrites there be, to the Lord they thus mock, and defy, and crucify afresh—not to you—are they answerable. It is a disputed question, whether the betrayer himself dared to partake of the consecrated elements on the night of Institution. If he did, John and Peter and James were assuredly not responsible for the sacrilege—the defiant crime of the Apostate putting his lips to that sacred cup. And of every Judas who ventures with unhallowed footstep among disciples still, we can only say—"To his own Master he stands or falls."

Jesus bids all His lowly followers welcome. "Blessed are those who do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Why stand excluded from the gracious privilege by the intervention of any needless barriers and impediments unrecognized by the Master? If in any degree conscious of love to Him who first loved, and so loved you, and cherishing a humble yet earnest desire for its increase—do not delay this public manifesto of your allegiance. Rather, in response to His invitation, "Come, for all things are ready,"—be it yours to say, even while deeply feeling your unworthiness and infirmity—

'Just as I am! Your love unknown

Has broken every barrier down;

Now to be Your, yes, Your alone—

O Lamb of God! I come!"

We cannot more appropriately close, than by simply repeating our text, and the words of the immediate context—"Christ, our Passover, is sacrificed for us. Therefore, let us keep the feast!"

07.11. BEAUTIFUL WITH SANDALS

BEAUTIFUL WITH SANDALS "How beautiful are your sandaled feet, O prince's daughter!" — Song of Solomon 7:1

I am well aware of the purely secular treatment of the Song of Solomon has received at the hands of not a few scholars in these modern days.

I shall not, however, be deterred by any schools or tenets of theology, from utilizing a precious Book of the sacred Canon for the highest spiritual instruction. This, too, on no "accommodation theory,"—deflecting it from a poor earthly meaning, in order to engraft pious thoughts and lessons it was never designed to furnish or suggest. Grant that it has a historical basis; grant that its primary and original purpose was to serve as a 'Marriage Song', or that its literary structure assumes the form of a romantic epic—still, these are but the setting of a more precious Jewel. It has a truer intrinsic value than that of being merely a choice product and specimen of Hebrew pastoral poetry. Its chapters have been, to tens of thousands of God's holiest and best, from Origen, and Jerome, and Theodoret among the Fathers, down to our own Samuel Rutherford, like "Apples of Gold in pictures of Silver," It has been called by one of them "The Holy of Holies of the Bible sanctuary." At no time do the themes of the Great Allegory seem more befitting and appropriate, than when forming part of the service of a Communion Sabbath. In a remarkable passage immediately preceding our text, Christ is figuratively regarded as coming down to "the Garden of nuts" (the Church on earth) to hold communion with His members—they transporting their chariots of faith and love up to the Gates of Heaven to quicken His approach—"before I ever knew it—my soul bore me (margin) on the chariots of a willing people" (Song of Solomon 6:12). The Great Redeemer, the Heavenly Bridegroom, is now represented under the leading emblem of the Book, as surveying the beauties and excellences of His betrothed bride. "Return, return, O Shulamite; return, return, that we may look upon you." Amazed at His condescension she replies—"What will you see in the Shulamite?" "What, O my Savior, will You see in me?" by nature lost, by daily transgression incurring Your displeasure; my love so weak, my resolutions so feeble—"What will you see?" Nothing but a divided heart; "the company of two armies." Grace on the one hand, corruption on the other; faith on the one hand, sight and sense on the other; the remains of the carnal mind still enmity against God, the flesh lusting against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh. And did You not "cover my head in the day of battle"—fight for me the good fight of faith; restrain my foes and curb my wavering affections; I would long ago have been able only to tell of one army; that I was leagued on the side of Satan against You; the helpless victim of my own legion-sins, my present tyrants, my future tormentors. Even now, with all Your wondrous mercy and gracious forbearance, I feel too often and too mournfully the tendency of the evil heart of unbelief. Self-abased, and self-condemned, alas! I need no other lips than my own to attest the humbling reality—You see nothing but "as it were the company of two armies" (Song of Solomon 2:13). Her Lord replies in the verse of the text. The whole chapter is an apostrophe to her. She is in herself full of conscious unworthiness—blemishes and shortcomings which seem to mar her best services and highest consecration. But He sees her clothed in the bridal attire of His own

righteousness, having "neither spot nor wrinkle, nor any such thing," and instead of upbraiding her for avowed imperfections, He begins with the words—"How beautiful are your sandaled feet, O Prince's daughter!"

Let me this evening speak, with God's blessing, on these two points.

I. The Church's or the Believer's NAME—"Daughter" and "Prince's daughter."

(1.) She is called "DAUGHTER." This points to the tender relation subsisting between Christ and His people. When Jehovah in the Old Testament speaks most endearingly of His ancient Church, He calls it "The Daughter of Zion." He employs, indeed, manifold figures, all indicative of strong and ardent attachment. "As one whom his mother comforts." "Can a woman forget her nursing child?" "Like as a father pities his children." "I will be a Father unto you."

How graciously, too, does He adapt Himself to their special circumstances and diverse experiences! He came down to Abraham (the pilgrim and sojourner) in a tent. He came to Moses (when Israel was in the furnace of sore trial) in a burning bush—burning, yet not consumed. Joshua was fighting—a man of war; his Lord came to him with a sword drawn in His hand. Zechariah was in a deep midnight of national trouble—the horrors of internal feud and bloodshed impending; his Almighty Defender appeared to him by night, as "a man riding on a red horse," with the ensigns of battle and pledges of deliverance. In the text the believer needed gentle dealing. The Shulamite, represented in the lowly garden or valley of nuts—the valley of humiliation, is compared to a budding pomegranate (Song of Solomon 6:11); graces feeble; requiring the gracious influences of sunshine, or the balmy zephyrs of the south wind previously invoked (Song of Solomon 4:16). It was necessary to express the tenderness of God's pardoning mercy and purposes. He will not treat as a son—requiring bolder, harsher correction, the severer tokens of parental discipline. But He will manifest and bestow all forbearance and love. He calls that honored believer "Daughter!"

(2.) But again, she is a "PRINCE'S daughter." He reminds her of her pedigree. It is no ordinary birth. She is one of the adopted children of the "King of kings,"—those who, by virtue of their spiritual relationship to the Prince of the kings of the earth, their Elder Brother, are themselves "made Kings and Priests unto God." Their glory is His glory. Their lives are, through this mystical indissoluble union, "hidden with Christ." He feels what is done to them as sensitively as if it were done to Himself. Oh wondrous thought! God not only recognizes them as His children, but includes them in the same paternal affection which He bears to His own dear Son. And Christ, the Brother in their nature, regards them with a like measure and intensity of love—"As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you." The concluding words of His memorable Valedictory prayer are among the most marvelous in the Bible—"That the love with which You have loved Me may be in them, and I in them!" Well may we echo the challenge—"Who is a God like unto our God, who pardons iniquity and passes by the transgressions of the remnant of His heritage?" "He raises up the poor out of the dust, and lifts up the beggar from the ash-heap, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory!" Would that we could realize the full grandeur of these royal privileges which have been ratified to us today at the Sacramental Table. I repeat, let us not regard the language of the verse we are now considering as a mere figure of speech of oriental poetry, but rather as a glorious divine reality—and those into whose hearts God has sent forth His Spirit, enabling them to cry "Abba, Father," know it to be so. Heavenly blessings in Christ in

possession—and, in reversion, the prospect of being ushered into the presence-chamber of the King; according to the description in Psalms 45:1-17—the King's daughter "all glorious within," her clothing of "wrought gold" (the golden texture of a spotless righteousness not her own), arrayed in "clothing of needlework" (the graces of a divine life and character inwrought and inweaved by the Holy Spirit in the soul); "the virgins her companions following after," rank on rank of attendant angels—ministering ones to the heirs of salvation—ushering her with gladness and rejoicing into the Heavenly Palace; there, as princes, and prince's daughters, to reign forever and ever!

How all earthly greatness dwindles into nothingness before the honors and blessings of God's purchased people! What is the mightiest king or prince of the earth?—a robe of ermine or a crown of gold conceals, underneath, a body corruptible as others. A breath may overturn the most towering fabric of earthly happiness. The vile worm refuted Herod's divinity. In an unexpected moment the revelries of Belshazzar were stilled in death, and his diadem plucked from his brow. One mandate from the throne of Heaven converted Sennacherib's tented field into a sepulcher, and scattered the pride of Assyria like chaff before the whirlwind. What is the history of earthly empires and kingdoms? "Ichabod! Ichabod!—the glory has departed!" an alternation of rise and fall—a proud capital one day, the next century a pile of ruins. The laurels of victory and empire one day fresh; another, withering and fading with the brow that wears them. But, believers, yours are imperishable crowns—palms ever green, robes ever white. The leaves of your coronation diadem are leaves plucked from the Tree of Life; yours an inheritance "incorruptible, undefiled, and that fades not away!" "Therefore since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear."

Let us proceed now—

II. Her Lord's SUBJECT OF COMMENDATION—"How beautiful are your sandaled feet."

I would observe (1.) The sandal, in ancient times, and in oriental countries, was the badge of FREEDOM and HONOR. The crouching slave never wore a sandal. The lack of shoes—the unsandaled feet—was the badge and mark of slavery, if not of degradation. When the Lord, therefore, in the text speaks of His betrothed Bride's feet being "beautiful with sandals," what is this but to proclaim that she—type of every believer—is translated from the bondage of corruption into "the glorious liberty of the children of God?" Free from the condemnation of a broken law; free from the accusation of a guilty conscience; free from the terrors alike of temporal and of eternal death. "Thus shall you eat it," was the address to pilgrim Israelites of old—sembled, as you have been today, at their Paschal feast—"with your loins girded, with the shoes on your feet" (Exodus 12:11).

It was the anniversary of their emancipation—the celebration of their national birthday, which brought them forth from their land of bondage and terminated their thralldom. You come forth from a Communion Table, wearing the sandals of freedom. God has anew, in that blessed sacrament, sealed to you your divine liberty. Its significant symbols of love and suffering recall that you "are not redeemed with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." Computing in some feeble measure the amazing ransom-price paid for your redemption, you can say with the Roman officer, as he addressed Paul in the castle of Jerusalem—"With a great sum obtained I this freedom." The Son has made me free, and I am free indeed! In that beautiful festal Psalm where the worshiper is heard declaring, "I

will take the cup of salvation, and call on the name of the Lord," he is represented as adding—"O Lord, truly I am Your servant; I am Your servant and the son of Your handmaid, You have loosed my bonds" (Psalms 116:16).

I remark (2.) Sandals were emblems of JOY—while the lack of these was equally recognized and regarded as a symbol of grief and sorrow.

David, you will remember, when compelled to leave his throne and capital, and take flight to a land of exile, went up Mount Olivet barefoot. On the other hand, upon the occurrence of glad seasons—whether great national ovations, or social feasts and entertainments, where mourning was turned into dancing—the guests were supplied with sandals. Such, in the Parable of parables, was the case with the hunger-stricken prodigal, on his return from the far country to his forfeited filial privileges—within paternal halls and walls; the rejoicing father proclaiming it to be an occasion for making merry and being glad. And is not the Christian called to be joyful? Yes, God's children are indeed, really, and in truth, alone of all, in this sin-stricken world, entitled to the epithet of "happy." Never say that gloom and despondency are the conditions and accompaniments of the believer's creed and the believer's life—that sadness of countenance is the badge and penalty of godliness. Who can forget that the God of nature is the God of Christianity? Never tell me, that He who gave the lily its beauty and the sky its delicate blue, and the sun golden wheels to his chariot and golden arrows of light for his quiver, could ever intend the soul to be draped in sackcloth. So long as we continue to be strangers to the covenant of promise, living in neglect of the great salvation—then our figurative description is that of men barefoot; our appropriate emblems those of melancholy and sorrow; for happiness, in its highest and noblest phase, must be unknown in the bosom where God is a stranger. But the moment a man is united by faith to the Lord Jesus as his ever-living Redeemer—the moment he obtains the assurance of sin forgiven—the blessed sense of adoption into the Divine family, he is "girded with gladness," the shoes, not only of liberty but of holy joy, are put on his feet. Like the Ethiopian of old, in the desert of Gaza, having found what he had so long sought in vain, he goes on his way rejoicing.

"The daughters of Jerusalem," the band or chorus of singers in this allegory, may appropriately name the Bride of the text "SHULAMITE," that is, "peaceful." She is filled with "the peace of God which passes all understanding." The sacramental rite of today, when partaken of by those who can, with humble confidence, justify their claim to the title, "children of the King,"—may well be called "Eucharist," or "Feast of Joy."

(3.) Once more. The sandals on the feet speak of activity and duty, and preparedness for Christ's service. They point to the nature of the journey the believer is pursuing. Though a pleasant road, and a safe road, and a road with a glorious termination, it is at times rough; a path of temptation and trial. Unshod feet would be cut and lacerated with the stones and thorns and briars which beset it. The figure, moreover, suggests, that there can be no loitering or lingering on the way. Impressive must have been the scene that night, to which we have already referred, at the first Paschal Feast in Egypt. It was not the solemn calm which so distinguishes our Communion celebration—the elements handed slowly and reverently from guest to guest in a hush of hallowed silence. As we see the old Hebrew family, or cluster of families, gathered together, every movement betokens celerity. They stand girded—"harnessed." They eat the appointed Supper, not only with shoes on the feet, but, it was an added injunction—"in haste," as it were, by

snatches, like men who have not a moment to put off—delay may be fatal. When we hear the voice of our "Beloved" saying, "How beautiful are your sandaled feet!" we are reminded that these shoes are given not for ornament, but to be worn—they are given that His true Israel may walk, yes, "run in the way of the divine commandments," ready to follow the Great Captain of salvation wherever He sees meet to guide them; seeking, with the true pilgrim ardor, to be ever advancing in the heavenward, homeward way; listening to the old monition, "Speak to the children of Israel that they go forward." The path of the just is compared to the sun in the skies, traveling in the greatness of his strength; glowing with intenser brightness until he reaches his meridian—or, like the eagle in his soaring—his nest on the earthly rock, but his home the skies. "They shall mount up with wings as eagles."

We may all take to ourselves here the apostolic injunction—"See that you walk circumspectly." In the quaint but expressive phrase of an old divine on this passage, "Many are content to walk slipshod." They go with a halting pace; with meager faith, and satisfied with a low standard of grace and holiness. They have shoes on their feet, but they are the sandals of a flimsy profession that cannot stand the rough parts of the road; and when affliction or tribulation arises, immediately they are offended. Beware, and specially those who have recently renewed their vows at the Holy Table—beware of the first symptoms of spiritual declension—that drowsy, sleepy, lukewarm condition so forcibly described in a preceding chapter of this same Song—where the believer, stretched on the downy pillow of self-security, listens—but it is only with languid indifference—to the knockings of the Savior at the door of the heart.

How tenderly, how gently, how urgently He importunes—"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!" (Song of Solomon 5:2). What is the cold reply of the slumberer? Mark how she invents excuses. She has cast off the sandals of a close and holy and habitual walk with God, and replies—"I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them?" Ah, if the feet had been shod as they ought to have been; if she had been on the alert, ready for duty and obedience, her Pilgrim-Lord would not have been repelled from the door, or left unwelcomed amid the falling, drenching dews. If she had been careful then to have been ready for His presence, she would not have been driven, as we find she was, out amid the dark streets and crude watchmen of Jerusalem, seeking Him with plaintive wail, and bleeding feet, and anguished tears. This subject suggests to us a lesson of a different kind. Another befitting fragment may be gathered from it at the close of our Sacred Feast. The shoes (the beautiful shoes) seem to indicate, not only the believer's personal activities in the matter of his own high calling, they point to him also as a messenger to others. The Church in each of her members must be, or ought to be, shod as "a ministering one." It is noticed by an excellent commentator, that the translation of our text in the oldest Bible is, "How pleasant are your treadings with shoes, O Prince's daughter!" Hers should be treadings in the world's thousand pathways and byways of duty and kindness and mercy. It is a law in all God's moral government that "the elder should serve the younger,"—the higher minister to the lowlier natures. He who is at the summit of all Being ministers to the needs of angel and archangel. Christ, the Incarnate God, came "not to be ministered to, but to minister." The angels are "ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for those who shall be heirs of salvation." And, as God ministers to angels, and angels to man; so, surely, man, in a higher social station, ought, in accordance with this great law, to minister to those of his fellow-beings occupying a lowlier one.

"We who are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak." The family, surrounded and dowered with many domestic blessings, should be the willing almoners of God's bounty to others—aiding and succouring the orphan and fatherless, the poor also, and him that has no helper. Blessed is that church which sends its messengers "shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace," and whose advent is thus hailed by the perishing in the world's darksome valleys—"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that brings good tidings!" In Isaiah's temple-vision of the six-winged seraphim, while the 'pose' of a double pair of these wings was indicative of reverence—the contemplative and devotional element in the Christian character and life—with the remaining pair "he did fly," the symbol of joyful activity, ever ready to speed on behests of unselfish love and mercy. Nor is this the duty and the privilege only of the influential few. All in their varied ways—(with many it may be a very humble and lowly way) may become such ministering angels of kindness. You may receive, for that little, but a small recompense of praise from man. But the Great Recompenser, who does not forget even the cup of cold water, may be heard addressing you—"How beautiful are your feet,"—how pleasant are your treadings "with sandals, O Prince's daughter!"

Let all who have put on afresh their festal sandals today, seek in this, as in other ways, to follow Christ—to "walk, even as He walked." May it be said of you, "These are those who follow the Lamb wherever He goes." He may at times take us by a rough road, narrow and difficult; full of crosses and hardships and losses; but He will not conduct us over a path harder than our shoes can bear. He will lead us by the right way to a city of habitation. When we think of the lessons more especially taught us at His Memorial Ordinance; how His feet were transpierced, that the sandals of salvation might be put upon ours; when we think that there is not the path of sorrow which the treadings of the Man of Sorrow knew not; nor the pang of woe which His bleeding heart felt not; shall we refuse to follow Him in any way He may choose to appoint? The ruggedness of this and every other tortuous and thorny road will be all forgotten, when our feet shall stand within your gates, O Jerusalem!

Dare I close without one other urgent thought, which seems yet to claim a concluding sentence? Should there be any here, to whom the symbols of the Holy Table have been all unmeaning, who are still strangers to Christ and His Salvation—walking unshod—slaves, for they have no real freedom; joyless, for they have no true joy—leading a selfish, aimless, profitless existence; living in unconcern and sin—their own souls in unrest, and others around them uncared for and unblest—Let any such arise, and go to their Father. He welcomes every prodigal's return. There are shoes—jeweled sandals—awaiting in the long-lost home. Oh! how many has that Lord of love and tenderness watched in the hazy distance! How many a drooping penitent, with ragged dress and tear-dimmed eye, has He met at the threshold; and stripping off the tattered clothing, given orders to the attendant servants—"Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and SHOES ON HIS FEET."

07.12. THE PASSOVER IN EGYPT AND ITS TYPICAL SIGNIFICANCE.

THE PASSOVER IN EGYPT AND ITS TYPICAL SIGNIFICANCE.

"Wear your traveling clothes as you eat this meal, as though prepared for a long journey. Wear your sandals, and carry your walking sticks in your hands. Eat the food quickly, for this is the Lord's Passover. On that night I will pass through the land of Egypt and kill all the firstborn sons and firstborn male animals in the land of Egypt. I will execute judgment against all the gods of Egypt, for I am the Lord! The blood you have smeared on your doorposts will serve as a sign. When I see the blood, I will pass over you. This plague of death will not touch you when I strike the land of Egypt. You must remember this day forever. Each year you will celebrate it as a special festival to the Lord." Exodus 12:11-14 The Passover, in its earliest celebration, is perhaps the best known of all Old Testament types. But it is with it, as with most familiar things—if they are interesting and impressive, they can well bear restatement and repetition. With the observance before us today of our own Gospel Feast, we may appropriately and with profit take the Jewish rite as our theme of meditation.

We are transported in thought to that memorable night when, under the guidance of their trusted leader, or rather under the strong Hand and outstretched Arm of the God of the Pillar-cloud, the oppressed race are to leave their home of exile forever. Let us endeavor, by individualizing a domestic group, to form a mental picture of the scene. On the 14th day of the month Nisan, an Israelite family are gathered for the last time in their Egyptian dwelling. The door is shut; the father's face is lighted up with joy as he addresses his assembled household with words of encouragement; for he knows that they are about, in some mysterious way, but with very real certainty, to bid farewell to their bondage. 'Fear not,' we may imagine him saying, 'before the morrow dawns, Jehovah is to do mighty wonders! yet another hour, midnight will be here, and then a great cry will be heard amid the darkness; for the Destroying Angel is to speed through every dwelling in the land, and leave its firstborn dead—son of king and son of slave. Yes, even the firstborn of beasts too. Egypt's animal-gods, which our oppressors in their base superstition have worshiped, will share the doom, and the Lord God of Israel, our God, shall be glorified.' If the father observes, meanwhile, any of those present betokening alarm—possibly hearing them exclaim, 'Alas! shall not we also be involved in this terrible destruction?' 'No!—dismiss your fears,' would be his reply. 'Did you not see, a few hours ago, how I besprinkled our lintels and doorposts with the blood of a lamb? That mark, wherever it is made, will ensure to every Hebrew house and household immunity from the Destroyer. Only keep, as we are now, within the walls. To venture outside would be exposure to certain peril. Here we are safe!' At that moment, may we give further license to imagination, and suppose, by a bold metaphor, that there is heard outside a sound as of rustling wings! It is the dreadful Messenger of vengeance. But that Angel's eye falling in the present case on the appointed blood stain, he passes by the dwelling unscathed. Not so with the habitations of others. Plaintive wail follows plaintive wail, as the discovery is made in every Egyptian home that there is a dead eldest-born! The frantic cries increase. Mothers, beating their breasts, rush from their houses in the delirium of despair. They seek Priest and Temple. They cry

wildly to Osiris and Mnevis to be up and save them! But these oracles and deities are dumb. "They have ears, but they hear not." And now the hour of longed-for emancipation has arrived. 'Up! let us be going'—Hebrew calls to Hebrew. 'Let our tears and chains be henceforth nothing but a doleful memory.'

It is done. Amid the darkness of night—relieved only by the light of the moon, and the silence broken only by the cry of the bereft Egyptians, the country scarred with the marks of the recent plagues, the palm-trees struck down and blasted with the hail of God—the march begins. "Not a hoof is left behind," Israel is free! The mighty army of liberated slaves have begun and effected their Exodus.

Brethren, let us gather around these significant emblematic teachings. If no passage in this ancient story of God's acts is more familiar, none is fuller or more suggestive to us of the Great Redeemer. With the utmost simplicity of thought and treatment, for the subject will admit of no other, let us view "Christ, our passover, sacrificed for us,"—"The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." In doing so, we shall briefly recall—or, if I may use the expression—'outline'—and that in the order of the inspired narrative, the leading points in the olden type.

(1.) The first feature which strikes us is concerning the PASSOVER, is that the Rite was of DIVINE APPOINTMENT. This significant Hebrew ceremony would never have been thought of by an Israelite himself. It would have been the last thing that would have suggested itself, on the concluding night of bondage, to kill one of the members of their flock and sprinkle doorpost and lintel with its blood. The method of the Great divine Expiation for the sins of the world was pre-eminently God's devising. What human mind would ever have formulated such an idea, as that the Eternal One would send to this apostate earth of ours, the Prince of Life and Lord of Glory, in order to effect, through a death of self-surrender and suffering, the emancipation and final salvation of His people? Surely if, in any respect more than another, God's ways are not our ways, nor God's thoughts our thoughts, it is that He should have "so loved the world, as to give His only Begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him might not perish, but might have everlasting life."

(2.) Let us note next, the name and nature of the appointed victim—a LAMB. The animal of all others that seems to suggest the idea of innocence and meekness. In the lion's whelp, with all its playfulness, there is early discerned the incipient fierceness of untamable years. But a lamb, as it browses on the mountain side or by meadow and stream, is the recognized picture of gentleness and patience. Expressive emblem, surely, of "the Lamb of God!" It seems to us a poor reason which some have given for the selection of the Paschal offering, that it was what could most readily be furnished by the shepherds of Goshen from their herds. Let us see, rather, in this first simple element in the typical significance, what the writer of an after age calls, "the meekness and gentleness of Christ." "HE was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth."

(3.) As a further expansion of this thought, the selected Paschal lamb was to be WITHOUT BLEMISH.

Plague-mark or disease or infirmity dare not attach to it. No animal would be accepted with torn fleece, or broken limb. A maimed member of the flock would be an insult to Jehovah, and would have vitiated the offering. The besprinkled blood of such would have failed to arrest the footsteps

of the Avenging Angel.

Christ was "a Lamb without blemish and without spot." He "offered Himself without spot to God." As one flaw or vein in the marble fatally damages the sculptor's work—as one speck in the lens of microscope or telescope destroys its use and demands a recasting—as one leak would inevitably submerge the noblest vessel that ever rode the waters—so, one leak in the Mighty Ark of Mercy—one flaw, one stain in the nature of the Divine Surety—the Image of the Invisible God—would have been fatal to His qualifications as a ransom for the guilty. Blessed be His name, the Lamb "slain for us," was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." What a host of witnesses conspired on earth to testify to His immaculate purity! His very foes were compelled to own and recognize His blameless, stainless life. The traitor who sold Him had to avow—"I have betrayed innocent blood," the judge who condemned Him had to wash his hands, and declare, "I find no fault in Him at all." His own beloved Disciple, in after years, beheld Him in vision "girded with a golden belt," "glorious in His holiness."

(4.) The Paschal Lamb was not only without blemish, but "a male of the first year," that is to say, had attained its full growth. It was the choicest of the fold. It was, in its lowly way, the type of absolute perfection.

Behold again, a yet additional attestation to the All-perfect Sacrifice! It may appear to some a very accidental and subordinate feature; but we think it cannot be overlooked, that the expiation for sin was consummated by the Great Antitype at the very age when manhood reached its prime. Vain is the attempt, save from unauthorized traditional sources, to form any definite conception of the outward appearance—the human form and likeness—of the Divine Son of God. We may each have our separate imaginings and surmises regarding what has been unrevealed. Chief perhaps among these, that just as with the best and noblest on earth, we generally find worth, purity, integrity, sympathy, and kindness, unmistakably reflected in face and feature—so it may have been with Him "whose countenance was as the sun which shines in his strength." May it not reasonably be conjectured, that whatever was most attractive and beautiful in man, was unfolded in the outer aspect of "the Altogether Lovely one"? It surely adds to the touching thought of His death, that it was just when the adorable Savior had attained all that was complete as the Ideal of humanity, that "He was taken out of the land of the living." The Heavenly Flower was cut down, not when in early incipient bud, but in amplest blossom. The pure white Lily bowed its head, not when the latent beauty was undeveloped, but when it had fully revealed its "calyx of gold." The Divine Tree of Life succumbed to the axe, not in the early spring when its branches were unclothed and the fruit unformed; neither in late autumn, with the leaves seared—but in the full summer of its glory; when every bough was laden with verdure and hanging with richest clusters. The magnificent Temple fell, not when half upreared, nor yet when toil and suffering had left their lines and furrows on the gleaming marble; but rather, just when the top stone had been brought forth with shouting, and the cry arose, 'Grace, grace unto it!' If we venture to use human language, it was when this "Fairer than the children of men" was 'at His noblest and best,' that in divinest sacrifice He poured out His life-blood for us. From this conjunct emblematic view of Christ as "a Lamb," "a Lamb without blemish," "a male of the first year," let us take comfort. It required perfection—the perfection of Deity and humanity, to make Him all that we need as a Savior. An Angel has a perfection of his own, but an Angel cannot redeem. His perfection is at best only the perfection of a creature—the borrowed derived glory and luster of the satellite. They "veil their

faces with their wings" in token of conscious unworthiness. The perfection of Christ is underived—His the alone perfection that can be accepted as substitute for imperfection, and by reason of which He can thus address His Church—"I who speak in righteousness, am mighty to save!"

(5.) The Paschal lamb was SEPARATED from the flock and kept alive four days. This formed a further Divine injunction, as you will find by reference to the detailed instructions in the opening of the chapter from which our text is taken. (Exodus 12:3, Exodus 12:6.)

Christ, as we have already seen, was designated for His atoning work and sacrifice in the counsels of the Father from the foundation of the world. Before the true Paschal Antitype was slain, the world was left 4000 years (four millennial days, as an old writer expresses it) to work out the problem of its own self-restoration. God seemed to say, I will set apart the Great appointed Sacrifice for these specified eras, to let the nations test their ability to save themselves—to solve, if they can, by their own intellect and reason; by their laws of progress, their astute philosophies, their "moral consciousness," the all-momentous question, "How can man be just with God?" The solution of that problem, after the long period of waiting and probation was—"The world by wisdom" (its own boasted wisdom and civilization; its moral codes, its political expedients and scientific theories) "knew not God!" Then, the fullness of the time came, and God sent forth His only begotten Son.

(6.) The Paschal Lamb, after being presented "on the fourteenth day of the first month, at full moon, between the evenings,"—was slain. At the celebration of the rite in Egypt, with which we are now especially concerned, the head of every household officiated as sacrificing priest. But when they reached Canaan, and in subsequent times, each offerer seems to have brought his separate lamb to the Tabernacle or Temple, where it was killed by Levites. The blood was poured, at all events in the Temple service, into gold and silver basins. These were handed along a row of officiating priests, until they reached the altar upon which the blood was finally cast. In either case the Paschal Lamb was a sacrificial offering—a propitiation.

Brethren, here is the foundation truth of the gospel; "the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." Yes, the "sprinkling," for observe, that under the varying forms of observance in earlier and later Jewish times, this expressive action was rigidly preserved. Not enough for you or for me is the slaying of the Lamb—in other words, the mere historical fact that the Divine-human Victim died. There must be the saving application of that blood to the conscience—a personal individual interest applied for and found in the great salvation—"He loved me and gave Himself for me."

Vain for us will it be to sit down at our great New Testament Feast unless conscious that the lintels and doorposts of our hearts, as a great spiritual reality, have been marked with the covenant token, and that we are resting in Christ as our only Savior. We have seen that nothing but the sprinkling of the blood could have saved from the Avenging Angel. The Israelite might have piled buttress on buttress, pyramid on pyramid, to effect exclusion. He might have strengthened his dwelling with bars of brass and pillars of iron, lintels and doorposts of cunning workmanship. The Destroyer's weapon would have cleft them in sunder.

"Neither is there salvation in any other." The work of Jesus must stand alone in all its solitary grandeur and sufficiency. "When I see the blood"—"the blood," says God—"I will pass over you."

Omitting several additional interesting typical lessons on which time forbids to speak, I shall conclude with one other reference—the final injunction to the Hebrews regarding their offering; that is, that after the carcass of the victim was "roasted with fire," it was to be eaten—the whole of it was to be eaten, nothing was to be left. In the modern Samaritan celebration of the rite, no part would appear to be more strangely interesting, than the guests, under the light of the full paschal moon, gathering around and consuming the carcasses of the slaughtered lambs. There is, moreover, the same rigid adherence to the old command, that nothing was to be unconsumed; so that if any morsels remain, they are carefully gathered up and placed on mats and burned. Fires and candles are lighted, and the ground searched in all directions, in case of any fragment being overlooked. "You shall let nothing remain until the morning, and that which remains until the morning you shall burn with fire."

What, among others, is one great spiritual lesson here inculcated? That it is not enough to rest satisfied with the initial act of pardon and forgiveness through the blood of the cross. Christ must not only be looked to by simple faith, but in His own expressive but much misunderstood and misinterpreted words and simile, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except" (in a lofty, spiritual sense) "you eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of God; you have no life in you." In a very especial manner, dear friends, is that typical feature brought before us today. You recall the words of Institution uttered by the Great Master of the New Testament Feast. These are not "Take, look," (this would have been sufficient had it been a commemorative occasion and no more); but He significantly says, "Take, eat." It is a covenanting, strengthening, grace-imparting, nourishing Ordinance. By partaking of the Sacramental bread, and drinking the Sacramental wine, there is expressed, in the outer act, the necessity of what the old divines call "appropriating the Redeemer and all the benefits of His purchase." The ordinance, received by faith, not only "does signify, but seal, our ingrafting into Christ, our partaking of the benefits of the Covenant of Grace, and our engagement to be the Lord's."

Brethren, "Let us keep the Feast!" and as we "go to the altar of God, unto God Himself our exceeding joy," let us do so with the cherished, familiar litany on lip and in heart—"O Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us!" "O Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, grant us your peace!"

07.13. SUNDAY AFTERNOON—CONCLUDING ADDRESS

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"There shall be a song as in the night when a holy solemnity is kept; and gladness of heart, as when one goes with a flute to come to the mountain of the Lord, to the mighty One of Israel."—Isaiah 30:29

"But the people of God will sing a song of joy, like the songs at the holy festivals. You will be filled with joy, as when a flutist leads a group of pilgrims to Jerusalem—the mountain of the Lord—to the Rock of Israel." Isaiah 30:29 In the previous solemn services of today, our minds were directed to the typical significance of the first Passover in Egypt; which we endeavored to connect, by many remarkable particulars, with our own New Testament celebration.

I have thought I could not more appropriately wind up and close our sacramental meditations, than in the words just read from the great evangelical Prophet. They have reference to an interesting custom in the keeping of the Paschal Feast during subsequent ages of Hebrew history; when, year after year, every Israelite went up to Jerusalem. The multitudes which thronged there from all parts of Palestine were in the habit of traveling by night as well as by day—proceeding in bands or companies; cheering one another with the voice of psalms and sacred songs, or with the simple music of flute or tabret.

What a rush of thought must have filled the bosoms of these Pilgrims, as, under a clear passover moon, and making the valleys resound with their melodies, they drew near the City of Solemnities, to commemorate the mightiest epoch in their national history! Many and varied, we may suppose, would be the voices composing these night-strains, from the tremulous accents of the aged patriarch, who had traversed often before with hardier step the same journey, to those of the youth, who was now, at last, to have the ardent longings of boyhood realized, personally to be spectator of the glorious things spoken of the City of God.

We may imagine, as the secluded villages and hamlets, from the slopes of Lebanon to the borders of Idumea, poured out their groups, how many and pleasing themes of converse there would be by the way. Some, who, it may be, from varied causes had left their homes in sadness, disconsolate and desponding, would be cheered and invigorated by the sympathy of congenial minds. It would be a season of holy fellowship meetings between Israelite and Israelite. The voice of united prayer would mingle with that of praise—while the one object of their journey, the one keynote of their song, would cause every heart to thrill with gladness, "Our feet shall stand within your gates, O Jerusalem!" But in due time, the solemnities are ended. The highways of Palestine are again thronged with the returning worshipers; these highways, lighted up with the waning passover moon, and its troop of attendant stars. The dead of night, once more, resounded with the Songs of Zion.

How many fresh thoughts must have crowded the minds of these wayfarers! How varied the feelings with which they would muse on the now ended festival! How brief (would not one of their

reflections be)—how brief has been the joyous season. It seems but yesterday we were entering with bounding hearts within the Temple of our Fathers, and here we are again bidding it farewell. We looked forward for a long year to this festive meeting. It has come and gone. The vow has been made—the votive offering rendered. The sacred Gates are closed; and we are retraversing the road to our distant mountain and village homes!

Brief, is our experience also, are earth's best and most hallowed seasons of festal joy. We eat our paschal supper, as if, like the old Hebrews, with girded loins and sandaled feet and pilgrim staff—all indicative of pilgrim haste. The everlasting, uninterrupted, unending Festival is above; where the guests are assembled and associated, not for a fleeting hour, but for eternity! The thought most appropriate to us, at this part of our service, is, that these Jewish wayfarers returned to their several homes to resume their usual occupations—the customary routine of everyday common life. They had been for days—perhaps weeks, unfamiliar with scenes of worldly toil. The laborer's busy task had been suspended. The vinedresser had laid aside his pruning-hook, the husbandman his plough—the fisherman's nets were spread on the shores of Galilee, and his boat slept on its shadow as it was moored to the rocks of Capernaum. A deep, unworldly solemnity had reigned within Jerusalem, as the nation, at the bidding of its God, kept its high holiday. But the hallowed Portals are shut—The Feast is over—the old heritage of work must be undertaken—the festive and holiday garments must be exchanged for the ordinary attire and as the groups hasten back to their homes along the highways, and by the plains and valleys, they see the tiller of land again in his field—the shepherd again with his crook in the midst of his flock—the Hebrew sailor has started afresh with his Tyrian cargo, and the fishermen on Gennesaret are again preparing for a night of toil. So it is, brethren, with us. After the most sacred festal and sacramental seasons, the world's business and cares necessarily reassert their claims. Its din and bustle must again be heard and entered—and labor, God's own appointment—yes, gracious appointment—resumed.

BUT—think we, would these old Jewish worshipers (those who were worshipers indeed) in casting off their holiday attire, cast off also their holiday and festive spirit? In the midst of the coarse contacts of daily existence, would the recollections of the Jerusalem Festival no longer linger in their memories? No, rather, would not these Songs of Zion still haunt their ears and hang upon their lips?—would not the shepherd be heard chanting them in the midst of his fleecy charge by green pastures and still waters? would not the fisherman warble them in his nightwatch on the Lake? and the sailor as he bounded over the Great Sea, and the dim mountains of his Fatherland were receding from view? would not the cottager, as he reached his home among the hills of Kedesh or on the spurs of Hermon, evening after evening, in returning from his toil, gather his little ones by his knee, and rehearse to them the joyful remembrances of the holy season? Be it ours, dear friends, while we leave the New Testament Feast, and engage—as engage we must—in our daily avocations, to carry the hallowed memories of it along with us. These Communion seasons, though only brief pausing places in life's pilgrimage, are intended too as Arbors for spiritual refreshment and revival in the ascent of the "Hill Difficulty"—to brace and strengthen for the everyday road which is again to be traversed, the steep and rugged mountain again to be climbed. While anew wearing the world's dress, and grappling once more with cares and duties, forbid that we should know, with regard to spiritual things and holy resolutions, the world's oblivion power—that we should suffer its engrossments to sweep our solemn impressions away—as the ripple marks on the sand are effaced and obliterated by the first rising tide!

Rather, in resuming our varied tasks and employments, let it be, with our hearts overflowing in gratitude to Him who summoned us to the place of solemnities, to ratify His covenant and give us festive pledges of His love. As we leave the banqueting-house, be it ours to take up in spirit the very strains which hung on the lips of returning Hebrews—and with heartfelt devotion, mingled with resolutions of new obedience, to say, "What shall I render unto God for all His benefits?" "The Lord has been mindful of us—He will bless us—He will bless the house of Israel—He will bless the house of Aaron—He will bless those who fear the Lord, both small and great."

"Those who fear the Lord, both small and great."—Among the multitudes of Jewish wayfarers resuming the familiar road to their native homes, none does imagination follow with deeper and kindlier interest than the young worshipers—those who had gone up to Jerusalem to gaze for the first time on the City of the Great King—to render their first offering, and pay their first vow. Many mothers in distant localities of the land would doubtless, during his absence, follow with prayerful emotion her son's earliest journey, and wait with trembling solicitude to hear the impressions of a never-to-be-forgotten pilgrimage. Are we wrong in thinking, that the character of not a few youthful Israelites would be permanently molded and influenced by that momentous era in opening life—that, with regard to not a few of them, the words of their great Psalmist were happily fulfilled—"Of Zion it shall be said, the Lord shall count, when He writes up the people, that this one was born here"? And surely, if there be, among those who have come up today to our Gospel Passover, any whose circumstances are more interesting than others, it is those of young communicants.

How solemn and important this step in your spiritual history! One cannot but feel, with regard to most of you who have encompassed for the first time your Lord's table, that your characters too are just forming; that it depends much on the resolutions which you have now taken, and the manner you carry them out, what your future is to be. You have put your hand to the plough—see that you turn not back. Oh, endeavor to act out, and pray out, and live out, the firm resolve, that "whatever others do, as for you, you will serve the Lord." Be life's vista long or short, may you never cease to cherish a lively remembrance of your earliest Passover vow—that it may be with you as with the young Hebrews who, in leaving Jerusalem after their first festival, cast a lingering tearful glance on the Gates that were closing behind them—"If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its skill upon the harp. May my tongue stick to the roof of my mouth if I fail to remember you, if I don't make Jerusalem my highest joy." Psalms 137:5-6 To all here present, young and old, would I repeat the benediction which has more than once been breathed upon you—that in "peace you may go from the Table of the Lord, and that the God of love and of peace may go with you!"

Among many other reflections which occurred to the Hebrew Pilgrim when the feast was over, and he found himself returning again to his home, would not this assuredly be one—'Shall I be spared to be there again?'—shall I ever again tread these hallowed courts? It may be, this is my last Passover. Before another such season comes round, I may be laid in the sepulcher of my fathers. My next Passover!—It may be in the New Jerusalem. I may be called to sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven! My brethren, many of our former Communion feasts, as well as today's, have reminded us of the precarious tenure which binds us to earth's best blessings; and can we suppose it will be different in those that are to come? Or rather, will not new, solemn, warning bells be tolling in our ears? Oh, let this be the home question with each and

all of us, as the Sanctuary doors are about to be closed—If today I have registered my last communion vow, prayed my last communion prayer, sung my last communion song—if the summons, before another Sacramental Sabbath comes round, were heard by me, which once fell on a patriarch's ear, "Get up and die,"—would I be able to respond "I am ready!" and looking, by faith, within the portals, on the great Communion Feast and Sabbath of Eternity, to say, "Open to me the Gates of Righteousness, I will go in to them, and I will praise the Lord"?

Meanwhile, let us return to our several homes, with new and more devoted purposes of obedience, with a higher ideal of what Life—may I even add, what Religion—should be? that it dare not, cannot be restricted to Sunday hours or Communion Seasons—that it is not a thing of the lip—of talk, or theory, or dogma, or barren speculation—neither is it expressed by moping countenance, or sullen and moodish divorce from the world's duties and business, its smiles and joys—but a great abiding, permanent principle of action. It is full of deeds. It shows on the character. It proclaims its presence and power by gentleness, and meekness, and patience, and unselfishness; by benignity and kindness; willing if need be to make sacrifices for Jesus, with the ever-present remembrance of the sacrifice and the cross which He so meekly accepted and endured for us. As on this winding up of a Communion Service many years of solemn responsibility lie behind us, uttering their thousand conflicting echoes of hope and joy, of fear and sorrow—let the recording Angel stay his flight, until, once more, the one supreme message finds its fit parting utterance, and we are permitted yet again to urge upon one and all of you, old and young, rich and poor, to close with the free, full, glorious offers of a Great salvation. In that divine Master's name, around whose Table we have gathered this day—I adjure you, by all the bliss of heaven; by all the solemnities of judgment; by all the realities of eternity; by all the love that we have been commemorating; by Calvary's Cross and Calvary's Savior; by His agony and bloody sweat—by His Cross and Passion—by the spear that pierced His wounded side and the thorns that wreathed His bleeding brows—flee, oh flee to that most gracious Redeemer—flee, oh flee "from the wrath to come!"

Though it should be the last sentence I ever utter, the last proclamation I ever make—let that blessed Name be in it. Let it be enshrined in all its unspeakable and unutterable preciousness—Jesus only—Jesus wholly—Jesus first, last, all in all! Hark! does not the ear of faith even now listen to a song stealing down from the Church triumphant? It is from the guests within the veil!—the white-robed multitude at the great Communion Feast and Sabbath of glory. We have been identified and associated with them this day throughout every portion of our holy service. The same song has been thrilling on our lips, the same Name has been weaved like a golden tissue in our mutual anthem, "Unto Him who has loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood—and has made us kings and priests unto God and His Father—to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen!"

"From these blessed hours we borrow

Music that shall linger long,

And the labors of tomorrow

Shall be cheered by holy song—

Followed still by chanting voices,

We may tread life's rugged way,
Ever in our hearts repeating
Anthems that we sing today."

07.14. Private Meditations Preceding Communion #1

Private Meditations Preceding Communion #1 "The Master has come, and is calling for you." (John 11:28).

These familiar and memorable words were spoken at Bethany on a very different occasion from that of a Communion Season. But they may be warrantably and appropriately adapted as a summons and invitation to the Great Feast of love.

Jesus at all times is invisibly near to His own people. As doubtless, though unseen, He marked every tear of sorrow in that Bethany home during the mysterious "tarrying days" beyond Jordan—so on His throne in Heaven is He still ever imparting and manifesting, by His grace and Spirit, the comforting sense of His presence. But there are times and seasons when He draws especially near; and at no time nearer, or more graciously, than at this His own blessed Sacrament of Communion. In these memorials of His bleeding love, He is evidently and impressively "set forth crucified and slain." In the preaching of this blessed Gospel I hear of Him. In the Holy Ordinance of the Supper I am privileged emblematically to behold Him. There, as in the case of Mary and Martha, He summons me to His feet, to listen, on that hallowed ground, to utterances of love and promises of glory. He takes me, as He did them, to a Grave—but it is that of no human friend. It is the Sepulcher into which He Himself entered as my Surety and Substitute. It is to see the Grave-stone rolled away forever; and over these symbols of suffering to hear Him proclaiming, as He did to the Bethany sisters, that He is Himself the Resurrection and the Life, and that because He lives, His people shall live also.

How does the summons sound in my ears? "The Master has come." Do I—can I—respond to the Name? Am I able, experimentally, to rejoice in Him as 'Rabboni, my Master,'—an all-sufficient Savior—whose blood has purchased a full, free, everlasting remission of my sins; and whose intercession is so prevalent at the right hand of God, that I am warranted, as I meet Him at this Bethany-gate of love, to say in the words of Martha's first utterance—"I know that even now whatever You will ask of God, God will give it to You"? Yes! that mourner of Bethany presents me with a divine watchword, a golden key for the Table of Communion. The riches and promises of grace are to be there, in visible emblem, spread out before me—the garnered blessings of Salvation "hidden in Christ," and whatever be my trial, or weakness, or infirmity, I am encouraged to behold the Scepter of the Heavenly King stretched forth, with the challenge and invitation—"What is your petition, and what is your request?"

"I will hear what God the Lord will speak—He will speak peace unto His people." I will go to His appointed Ordinance, and there unburden and unbosom to Him all my needs and necessities. He will not send me empty away. "Jesus wept."—He wept tears of sorrow as He stood before Martha and Mary in the Bethany graveyard; but this day He is to manifest Himself, in significant symbol, as shedding, not His tears, but His blood. He gives me the blessed pledge and assurance that He will, after the greatest of all boons and blessings—the gift of Himself, freely dower me with every lesser mercy. The Table is about to be spread; the Feast is prepared; the oxen and fatlings are

killed, and all things are ready. As, in the name of the rich Provider, I listen in thought to the summons, as if from some herald-angel—"The Master has come, and calls for you," be it mine to respond—"I will go into Your House with burnt offerings, I will pay You my vows." Lord, to whom can I go but unto You, You have the words of eternal life! Bring me to Your Banqueting-house, and let Your banner over me be love! Hide me in this Cleft of the Rock, and let all Your glory pass before me!

07.15. Private Meditations Preceding Communion #2

Private Meditations Preceding Communion #2

"Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols? I have heard him and observed him. I am like a green fir tree. From me is your fruit found" (Hosea 14:8). The whole of this precious chapter—a jewel among the Minor prophets—consists of a dialogue between a penitent and his God; and seems peculiarly suitable as a theme for thought and reflection, in the prospect of this day's solemn Ordinance. May I seek devoutly to commune now, alike with my own heart and with the great Heart-Searcher. Be it mine, with the docility of a little child, to say, "Speak, Lord, for Your servant hears!"

God Himself begins the conversation—He is the first to address overtures of mercy to backsliding Ephraim. We might have expected words of threatening, and upbraiding, and retribution. But there is no terror in His voice. They are rather the tender breathings of a fond father over his erring and wayward children. The marvelous entreaty and admonition break upon our ears—(Hosea 14:1-2) "O Israel, return unto the Lord your God; for you have fallen by your iniquity. Take with you words, and return to the Lord—say unto Him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously; so will we render the calves of our lips." The invitation is obeyed. Humbled and sin-stricken, yet overpowered by a sense of the divine forbearance, they pour out a full confession of their guilt. Hitherto, they had been trusting to an arm of flesh; but they now recognize where their true strength lies—(Hosea 14:3) "Assyria will not save us—we will not ride upon horses, neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, You are our gods; for in You the fatherless finds mercy." The Lord hearkens. He gives ear to the penitents' breaking of heart, and replies—(Hosea 14:4) "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely, for My anger is turned away from him. I will be as the dew unto Israel—he shall grow as the lily and cast forth his roots as Lebanon." Even Ephraim, the apostate and obdurate—we might have deemed irreclaimable—listens to the gracious pleadings. As the scales are falling from his eyes and the chains from his soul, he feels the desire rising within him to give himself to this God in whom compassions flow. As he awakes from his sleep of death, the past, with all its record of sins, passes before him. He gets a glimpse into the chambers of his spirit. He sees they are thronged with idols—usurpers of Jehovah's rights. Amazed that so long, in guilty unconcern, he should have surrendered himself to these, he exclaims, in words of unqualified renunciation—"What have I to do any more with idols?"

Taking this one verse for my present meditation, let me note, as an intending communicant, these three points—The Penitent's resolution. The Divine recognition. The added Promise.

(1.) Is this my vow and resolve, in the prospect of meeting God at His Holy Table—"What have I to do any more with idols?" In my case, as in that of Ephraim, it may well be a resolution evoked by the contemplation of God's wondrous, unmerited love. Guilt and unworthiness have been met with patience kindness. How often have I fainted and grown weary of Him; yet He has never fainted nor grown weary of me! What determination can be more fitting, when about to stand, so to speak, under the shadow of Calvary's Cross—contemplating alike the mightiest manifestation of God's

mercy and the mightiest testimony against sin? With such affecting memorials and symbols before me of my own transgressions, and of the dreadful price demanded for their remission, may I be enabled firmly to resolve, that all which dishonors and displeases Him shall be dethroned, saying, 'O Lord my God, other lords beside You have had dominion over me. But this God shall be my God forever and ever.'—"What have I to do any more with idols?"

(2.) But the conference—the dialogue—does not end here. The verse admits us further into the secrets of the audience-chamber. We have, next, the Divine recognition—"I have heard him and observed him."

What can be more touching? No earthly auditor may have listened to Ephraim's breathings of self-reproach. The penitential sighings of his broken spirit may have fallen on no human ears except his own. But One eye, though not of earth, marked these tears. One ear listened to the groanings of the travailing soul. The Almighty Spectator and Hearer now discloses Himself—"I have heard him and observed him!" Beautiful picture, surely, of the interest God takes in His children! His concern for their peace and happiness; the delight, above all, with which He hears the still small voice of penitence—the wail of conscious yet sorrowing estrangement—longing through tears for restoration—"Oh that I knew where I might find Him!" He is watching these feeble pulsations. The tear wept in secret He has registered in His Book. The cry heaved in solitude has been borne to His Throne, and entered with acceptance into the ear of God Almighty. "I am poor and needy," said the Psalmist, when he was himself buffeting the waves in a midnight of gloom—but he adds the experience of Ephraim—"Yet the Lord thinks upon me" (Psalms 40:17).

(3.) This, however, is not enough. With my foot about to stand on holy ground, I cannot help forecasting, with trembling anxiety, the future. So it was with penitent Ephraim. He remembers how frail he is. Even with the consciousness of new love and fresh consecration, he recalls past backsliding and declension. He is filled with desponding fears for the days that are to come. Memory cannot obliterate the just upbraiding and reproach for former treachery and unfaithfulness—"O Ephraim, your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goes away" (Hosea 6:4). No strength in himself, the tender sapling dreads the hurricane. Help he needs; where is this help to be found?

God meets his case and mine, with a twofold promise of Protection and Grace. "I am like a green fir (or cypress) tree. From Me is your fruit found." The cypress-tree—alike so beautiful and so common in Eastern lands, with its long, tapering, graceful form and its dark clothing—was one of the precious woods employed in the Temple of old; and forests of them are still to be found in the less frequented parts of Lebanon. From its undying verdure, owing to a perpetual supply of sap, winter and summer—so dense, moreover, and strong in foliage, as to afford shelter and nesting-place even for the stork (Psalms 104:17)—it forms surely an appropriate type, in inanimate nature, of the sheltering protection, safety, and security, the believer has in God!

If I am now self-distrustful—troubled with misgivings for the days to come—let me be cheered with the assurance of Him who has promised to be a shelter from the storm and a covert from the tempest. He reveals Himself here to me as an Almighty Friend; who will fortify against all temptations; unravel all perplexities; and overrule all providences for my well-being. He will impart strength in the hour of weakness, and courage in the hour of despondency, and peace in the hour of trouble, and victory in the hour of death.—"I," says a protecting God, "am like a green fir-tree."

"As your days, so shall your strength be." May I not further think of that green fir-tree, as pre-eminently the emblem of my gracious Redeemer—the God-man Mediator—"the Tree of Life in the midst of the garden"—its roots struck in the soil of humanity; its top reaching to heaven—the "Brother-born," yet "mighty to save"? He makes known, elsewhere, the secret of continued support—"Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat—but I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not" (Luke 22:31-32). "I have prayed for you." A sinking disciple, a praying Master—Satan tempting, Christ upholding—"From Me is your fruit found!"

Let me, take, as the motto and watchword for an unknown future—"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me,"—"By the grace of God I am what I am." By the aid of that promised grace, may I be enabled specially to keep close underneath this Heavenly Fir-tree—to live near to Jesus. The tribe of Ephraim, whose soliloquy I have been pondering, was selected and honored to follow immediately behind the Ark in its way through the wilderness. Let this be ever my coveted position—not on high Communion Seasons only, but all through the pilgrim-journey—to be close to Him whom that Ark symbolized, as my Protector and strength and salvation. Let the song of the many thousands of Israel be mine today; let it be mine from week to week and from year to year, until Grace is merged in Glory—"Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh, stir up Your strength, and come and save us!" (Psalms 80:2).

07.16. Private Meditations Preceding Communion #3

Private Meditations Preceding Communion #3

"Blow the trumpet in the new moon, in the time appointed, on our solemn feast-day. For this was a statute for Israel, and a law of the God of Jacob." (Psalms 81:1-16). Psalms 81:1-16 may be called "The New Moon Psalm," or "The Psalm of the Silver Trumpets." While these trumpets were blown every morning, at daybreak, in preparation for the morning sacrifice, they were specially sounded at each New Moon. There was one occasion, specially designated "The Feast of Trumpets," which took place on the 1st of the seventh month, the holy month of the Jewish year—when, instead of the one matin blare, their sound was heard all day long, accompanying the eucharistic and expiatory sacrifices. A longer preliminary blast summoned the worshipers to prepare for solemn service. They are reminded in this Psalm of the divine Institution and authority of the Feast—"For this was a statute for Israel, and a law of the God of Jacob." One among other designs of this Jewish Festival, was to prepare the hearts of the people for the celebration of the Great Day of Atonement. The silvery tones of the Gospel trumpet are sounding in my ears its herald notes for today's Gospel Feast. How solemnly and vividly is the Jewish great Day and Feast of Atonement recalled, with its wondrous typical significance; when the High Priest of the nation sprinkled the blood on the Mercy Seat! He disrobed himself of his gorgeous dress, his tiara of gold, his ephod and sparkling jewels—and was arrayed in a simple garment of spotless white. Fit emblem and prefiguration surely of Him, who divested Himself of His eternal glories, and came into our world attired in the pure white vestments of a holy humanity, to suffer and die—Antitype alike of priest and victim. Alone He went into the most Holy Place, the divine presence chamber; alone He carried the censer; alone He sprinkled the blood—"I have trodden the wine press alone!"

I am to see all this, today, in impressive symbol—the blood sprinkled on the Mercy-seat and before the Mercy-seat. In the blood cast, or sprinkled on the pavement "before the Mercy-seat," I behold a type of the blood of Jesus speaking peace to His people on earth—"above the Mercy-seat," speaking peace from before the Throne, where He now pleads as Intercessor. "For Christ has not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us."

I would seek to hear the preparation-trumpet calling me to devout thought and meditation in the prospect of the great Gospel Festival—"Blow the trumpet in the new moon, in the time appointed; on our solemn feast day." It was a universal belief of the Jews of old, that on this their Feast of Trumpets, Jehovah seated Himself on a Throne, and that His people "passed before Him as a flock of sheep before their shepherd." In the presence of a heart-searching God, let me listen to the New Testament exhortation of the Great Apostle, as he too, in a spiritual sense, sounds the herald note—"Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup." Let my feet be shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace, as now the summons is heard—"Prepare to meet your God, O Israel!"

Yes, "your God." This is His own message to me, and to each intending communicant. Let me hear it addressed in this Psalm (Psalms 81:10), "I am the Lord YOUR God—open your mouth wide and I will fill it." He will there—at His own appointed ordinance—reveal Himself as my God in Covenant; and, if I 'open my mouth wide,' that is, if I go with longing desires after Him and longing earnestness for His help and blessing—He will not mock my approach by sending me away unblest. "He satisfies the longing soul with goodness." True to the closing promise of this new-moon Psalm, He will feed me with the finest of the wheat, and with honey out of the rock—with spiritual treasures hid in Christ, the true Rock of Ages—will He satisfy me (Psalms 81:16).

07.17. Private Meditations Preceding Communion #4

Private Meditations Preceding Communion #4

"Come, you yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest awhile" (Mark 6:31). The hour of noontide rest was a special one of old in Palestine—when the laborer suspended his toil; when the oxen were unharnessed from the yoke, and the ploughshare reposed on the upturned furrow; when the Caravan of Pilgrims, as they may be seen to this day, gathered under the shade at some well, eating bread and fruit, with their burdened camels moored around. In a diviner spiritual sense that noontide rest is about to be mine. "Come," is the Savior's gracious invitation, addressed to His disciples of old—"Come, you yourselves apart, and rest awhile." "This is the rest with which He causes the weary to rest, and this is the refreshing." Let the world be for a little time shut out—its cares hushed, its duties and business suspended; as with my fellow-communicants I repair to the Well of Living water, the Fount of Gospel mercies "springing up unto everlasting life," and there "rehearse together the righteous acts of the Lord" (Judges 5:11).

Let me note, as its chief and divinest feature; it is rest in the fellowship of the Great Master. It would have afforded little joy or refreshment to His disciples if they had been sent away to that desert place alone. This brief season of suspension from work would have been divested of all its blissful peace and holy gladness, had they been unaccompanied by their Beloved Lord. The consciousness of that Presence and Love and Sympathy was all in all to them. They did not heed the passing away of the splendid vision of the Transfiguration Mount, when in their descent in the grey mists of early morning, "they found no man, save Jesus only" (Matthew 17:8). The summons from the Table of sweet communion on Zion, to the mysterious gloom of the Kedron and the Olive Garden, had sufficient music and heart-cheer to them, from one word embraced in it—"Arise, let us go hence." "And when they had sung a hymn, they went out (together) to the Mount of Olives." A subsequent night of unrecompensed toil on the Sea of Galilee was all forgotten in the morning's joyful recognition—"It is the Lord!" So is it with Master and disciple still. That Feast of love has its holiest, sweetest, most consecrating thought in this, that it is "the Lord's Supper." It is the presence of the King which makes it, in the truest sense, a Communion. "There," is His own promise, "I will meet with you and commune with you from off the Mercy Seat." If Your presence, O Savior God, goes not with me, carry me not hence! May I be able to say, both in the prospect and retrospect, "He brought me to His banqueting house, and His banner over me was love." "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ."

We have need of such "quiet resting places" in the Pilgrim journey; breathing-times amid the din and turmoil and harassing cares of the world. Let me now leave its soiled garments, its coarse wearing drudgery, behind me in the outer court; and unembarrassed and unencumbered, enter with sacred footstep to be 'alone with Jesus.' Many are the circumstances and seasons when the choicest of all His sayings is applicable—none more so than regarding this "Feast in the desert,"—"Come unto Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest!"

07.18. Private Meditations Preceding Communion #5

Private Meditations Preceding Communion #5

"Awake, O north wind; and come, you south wind; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my Beloved come into His garden, and eat His pleasant fruits" (Song of Solomon 4:16). Come! Blessed Spirit, in all the plenitude of Your gifts and graces—and as I am about, this day, to go to the sacred Feast, breathe upon me and my fellow-communicants, and say, "Receive you the Holy Spirit!" Come, as the North wind bringing with it conviction of sin—my own sin—seen in the light of my Savior's Cross and sufferings. Come, as the South wind—with all soothing, comforting, sanctifying influences—bearing on its wings the Beloved's own balm-words of mercy—revealing the wonders of His love—the tenderness of His sympathy—the riches of His grace. Let the spices—the fragrance of a grateful heart filled with all joy and peace in believing—flow out.

One of the most sublime prayers on record, is that of the Apostle, for the special bestowment of the Holy Spirit preceding the dwelling of Christ in the soul—a beautiful and befitting prelude-utterance to a Communion season and service—"For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man." "He shall glorify Me," says the Redeemer Himself, "for He shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you."

Awake, then, O North wind! come, you South wind, blow upon my garden! Make this sacramental season—one in which heaven and earth seem to touch one another—an occasion of hallowed and blissful intercommunion between my soul and Jesus. Yes, 'intercommunion.' The joy of this permitted fellowship, delightful to His people, would almost seem, with reverence be it spoken, as if shared by His own Infinite heart. The Beloved comes into His garden "to eat His pleasant fruits."—"I am glorified," says He elsewhere, "in them." Who can ever fail to be struck in the Gospel narrative, with the intense—the vehement earnestness of the Savior's longing to meet His own disciples at the first institution of the Supper, immediately before His death? His own soul was—I was about to say—strangely engrossed with the preparation and arrangement for it. "With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer" (Luke 22:15). The disciples, knowing and noting how singularly that Festive hour seemed to fill their Lord's thoughts, came to Him and said—"Master, where will we go to prepare for You to eat the Passover?" When they met the man bearing the pitcher of water, they address him thus—"The Master says, my time is at hand, I will keep the Passover at your house with my disciples." Moreover, when the Feast itself was being partaken, the season of hallowed and confidential fellowship proved evidently to Him a sweet "song in the night"—a gleam of joy amid the gathering, thickening darkness—"These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." It is the same now as it was then. While to all disciple-guests it is primarily a blessed occasion and opportunity of unburdening their inmost thoughts to their divine Lord; of having faith

strengthened—love deepened—misgivings lulled—troubles healed—they may exult in the assurance that it is distinctively also a season of complacent joy to the Redeemer Himself. The blessedness, felt and realized by His covenanting people, is most deeply shared by the true Solomon—It is "the day of His espousals, the day of the gladness of His heart" (Song of Solomon 3:11). As the Great Master of assemblies, He there sees of the fruit of the travail of His soul and is satisfied. "Satisfied!" wondrous thought! as if His own intensest joy were in the happiness of His redeemed people. "Father," He said, on that same betrayal night, when fresh from the Institution of the New Testament Passover, and when the shadows of His own Cross were projected on His path—"Father, I will,"—(what is this mighty boon which Omnipotence is about to invoke at the close of His intercessory Prayer? It forms the climax of His pleadings; as if He had reserved the crowning solicitation to the last)—"Father, I will,"—(with what does He fill up the formula?—He knows that He can write under it what He pleases—what then is the great yearning, filial wish—the richest reward and recompense of His soul-travail?)"—"Father, I will, that those whom You have give me, may be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory!" May that glory—the glory as of the only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth—may the distant rays of it, at least, be revealed to me, today, on the holy ground of Communion. May the meeting in the earthly Garden prove a blessed pledge and foretaste of that diviner communion and fellowship in the better Garden above—that Garden in which there is no sepulcher, no funeral spices, no "why are you weeping?" whose precincts can be invaded and saddened by no sin—no sorrow—no broken vow or forgotten resolution—no Lebanon storms to dread; no "lions' dens or mountains of leopards" (Song of Solomon 4:8), but where disciple and Master, and that forever and ever, shall rejoice together with joy unspeakable and full of glory!

07.19. Prayer Before Communion

Prayer Before Communion

O Lord, I beseech You to draw near to me this day in Your great mercy. I have the near prospect of approaching You at Your gracious Sacramental Ordinance. As You are preparing for me a table in the wilderness, do prepare me for the table. O send forth Your light and Your truth, let them lead me—let them bring me unto Your holy hill and unto Your tabernacles. Then will I go unto the Altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy. May it be my experience within the gates of the Sanctuary, and while partaking of the Sacred Feast—"This is none other than the House of God, this is the Gate of heaven,"—"I have seen the King, the Lord Almighty."

Fill me with a humbling sense of my own demerits and shortcomings. I am not worthy to eat of the crumbs which fall from the Master's Table; how much less to be seated at the banqueting Table itself, and to enjoy the blessedness of near and endearing fellowship with You. Come, Lord, and search me—Come and try me—Come and see if there be any wicked way in me; and lead me in the way everlasting. Impart, above all, an inspiring and elevating sense of Your great and infinite love to me in Christ Jesus. At this, His own commemorative Ordinance, may I have a realizing apprehension of all that mystery of agony and suffering He so willingly endured for me. May the near sight of Gethsemane and Calvary give me deeper and intenser views of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, as that which filled His cup of anguish. May I be enabled, as I go afresh to this covenanting ground—not only to confess my sins, but to have the hearty desire and resolution to forsake them; and to live, in the time to come, not unto myself—but unto Him who loved me and gave Himself for me, that He might redeem me from all iniquity, and purify me unto Himself, as one of His own peculiar people, zealous of good works. My earnest prayer is, to be brought more constantly and habitually under the constraining influence of redeeming love—that the life You have preserved by Your mercy, and which You have ransomed at such a price, may be henceforth consecrated to Your praise. May the blessed Feast prove a hallowed means of strengthening within me every Christian grace, and of confirming every good resolution. May this be my earnest aspiration, 'Lord, evermore give me this Bread.' Like Your servant of old, in the strength of that food, may I go on, from day to day, until I reach the true mount of God above.

Bestow Your blessing on all my fellow-communicants. There is bread enough in our Father's house and to spare. May those who through sickness and other restraints of Your providence, are unable to go to the Courts of Your Sanctuary, know that You are not confined to temples or to tables made with hands—that wherever there is a true worshiper, there, there is a prayer-hearing—a prayer-answering—a covenant-keeping God. May those who tarry at home divide the spoil.

Bless Your ministering servants who are to be this day the dispensers of the Holy rite. As they deal the Bread of Life to others, may their own souls be abundantly satisfied. Let Your priests be clothed with righteousness, and let Your saints shout for joy. The Lord bless the House of Israel—the Lord bless the House of Aaron—both small and great that fear the Lord, do You surely

bless them. So may this appointed Ordinance prove, to each and all of us, a season of reviving and refreshing from Your own immediate presence. And all I ask, or hope for, is in the name and for the sake of Jesus Christ, my only Lord and Savior. Amen.

07.20. Address to Aged Communicants

Address to Aged Communicants

Each returning Sacramental Sabbath emphasizes the thought to us all, that we are nearer eternity. These sacred seasons are shadows moving across the dial-plate—or as if another hour were tolled on the great clock of Time. With special solemnity and impressiveness does this reflection come home to aged communicants. Some of you can look back, through a long vista of years, to the hour when you approached for the first time the Holy Table. How many who then gathered with you are left? The pastor who dispensed to you the mystic symbols—gone! The father and mother who looked with proud and tender interest upon you; following you with prayers and tears to the hallowed ground—gone! Those who shared with you in receiving the Bread of life, and talked over the sacred service on the Sabbath eve—many of them—most of them—gone! It is a tale that is told. Yes, to some, there are many more remembered faces of that old throng amid the congregation of the dead, than among the worshiping living! And the time will come—(must come) sooner or later—who need dread it if they are living prepared for the supreme moment and the irrevocable summons?—when others will pronounce our names, and say of us, 'They are no more!' Who can tell, but that the Master may this very day have, all unknown, been whispering in the ears of this one and that one, grown grey in His service—"You shall henceforth no more drink of this fruit of the vine, until I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom!"

Aged friend, you have been permitted to wait once more, on God, in His own Ordinance. Spiritually, may He renew your strength. He has 'latter rain' as well as 'early rain' to bestow—a blessing on those girding for the fight—a blessing for those unbuckling their armor. The Temple-lamps in the Jewish Sanctuary were lighted 'at evening.' If the night-shadows of your life be falling, and with you the day be far spent, may you be able to say, "YOU will light my candle, the Lord my God will enlighten my darkness." Beautiful is the promise—"Ask of the Lord rain in the time of THE LATTER RAIN—so the Lord shall make bright clouds, and give them showers of rain" (Zechariah 10:1). May you be privileged to go on—in what still remains of your pilgrim way, rejoicing—leaning, as a staff for very age, on the faithful promises of a covenant-keeping Jehovah—preserving the torch of faith and love and holiness undimmed to the last.—So that you may be able, like the weary exhausted runners in the Grecian games of old—to hand it, undiminished in brightness, to younger athletes, who are waiting to bear it—as witnesses for God and His truth, when you are gathered to your fathers.

Go in peace, from His table; and may the God of peace and of love go with you. Amid dimming memories and diminishing friends, "He has said, I will never leave you nor forsake you." May your holy approach to the holiest Ordinance of earth, be to you the foretaste and foretaste of the eternal Feast and rest which remains for His believing people. "Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you disturbed within me? Hope you in God, for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God!"

07.21. Address to Mourning Communicants #1

Address to Mourning Communicants #1

"Again the next day, John was standing with two of his disciples. When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, "Look! The Lamb of God!" The two disciples heard him say this and followed Jesus. When Jesus turned and noticed them following Him, He asked them, "What are you looking for?" They said to Him, "Rabbi" (which means "Teacher"), "where are You staying?" "Come and you'll see," He replied. So they went and saw where He was staying, and they stayed with Him that day. It was about the tenth hour." (John 1:35-39).

We had our meditations directed, today, to this beautiful incident in the early Gospel narrative—the two fishermen friends and companions from Bethsaida of Galilee—having pointed out to them, by the Baptist, a Greater far than he—"Behold the Lamb of God!" They are at once attracted, in some mysterious way, by HIM who had just returned to the banks of the Jordan from the temptation of the wilderness, where, for forty days, He had been without home or shelter. They hesitate to intrude—not venturing to address Him or to disturb His meditations—still they follow His footsteps, in the direction of His temporary dwelling—a dwelling probably, like that of the other pilgrims who had gathered around the Desert Preacher—some leafy tent close to the river side or under the shadow of a rock, made of interlacing boughs from the adjoining woods. "Rabbi, where are You staying?" was their simple request, full of humble yet confident faith and trust. His response was immediate, a word of kind welcome—"Come and see." His voice, His look, His demeanor reassure them. It was the truth of a future saying anticipated and illustrated, "Everyone the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will never cast out." That long afternoon and evening were spent in loving fellowship with that Gracious Master, whose devoted consecrated servants they were ever after to be—enjoying an immediate three years of blissful personal communion, and when that was terminated and His visible presence withdrawn, believing, they still rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

What the themes of meditation were, during these thrice hallowed hours, we cannot tell. May not their thoughts naturally have grouped themselves around the Baptist's suggestive exclamation—"Behold the Lamb of God!" John was undoubtedly one of these two disciples. And we know that these words lingered in his ears like a strain of heavenly music, and filled his most seraphic visions fifty years afterwards, when he wrote the Apocalypse. How the divine emblem seemed almost to absorb his recollections! Thirty times is Jesus there spoken of as a LAMB. Retaining that first never-to-be-forgotten glimpse of his divine Redeemer, the writer seems to have lived, and suffered, and died, beholding "the Lamb of God!" How long, moreover, this interview in the valley at Bethabara lasted, we are not informed. Probably it was far on towards midnight before they departed. The bright stars and paschal moon may have been shining on the white cliffs and foaming waters when the two disciples came forth, at the close of the most momentous day of their lives. Who can doubt, that they would return to the distant Bethsaida—home with their souls filled with the one wondrous theme and thought—"We have seen the Lord!" Our experience

today has been identical with that of these favored disciples. We have received a gracious invitation to partake of nearer and more confidential communion with our divine Redeemer. "Master, where are You staying?" You Son of the Eternal God, yet the Divine Brother-man—alike the Taker-away of sin and the Remover of burdens from laden-hearts—where are You staying? that we may come and unburden our heavy secrets—and, like these two disciples of old, away from the din of the multitude, sit at Your feet and behold You as the Lamb of God?

"Come and see!"—has been the gracious response. We have obeyed the summons. We have beheld, in impressive emblem and memorial, the Great Propitiation, "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." The leafy tent or covert of the Jordan has still its glorious spiritual counterpart and reality. "There shall be a tabernacle (a tent) for a shadow in the day-time from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain." "A MAN shall be as an hiding-place from the wind, and as a covert from the tempest,...as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land!" Afflicted communicant!—Pilgrim of sorrow—you have resorted to your Lord's Bethabara-dwelling, at His own gracious summons, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." But while your season of fellowship has doubtless been hallowed and comforting; when you come forth from it now, it is, like these same two disciples, to face the dark night again—the dewy tear-drops on the dank grass—the cold moonshine—the glimmering stars and the roll of Jordan. Yes, 'the roll of Jordan,' with the saddened memories it may be of those who, in the familiar and accepted figure, have recently crossed it; and whose companionship is gone for the forever of time. You walk along, pensive and sad, to mingle, once more, in the noise of the wilderness tents—back again tomorrow to Bethsaida, to your smitten home—to gaze on the vacant seat—to miss the old voice and the sympathetic ear, into which you could have told how your heart burned within you, while He talked to you by the way, and you sat under His shadow with great delight! Ah, perhaps it was the very smiting of that earthly home which drove you, today, to ask, with more intense fervor and more impassioned prayer, as you missed the earthly friend, "Master, where are You staying?" 'My best earthly prop is gone. Oh, Messiah Jesus, I come to You! I come now to Your own appointed dwelling-place, that I may unfold all my grief, and get these heart-storms lulled with Your Omnipotent "Peace, be still"!' As you now pursue your saddened way, let not the darkness blind your eye to this day's sight and vision. Let not that roll of Jordan dull your ears to this day's exclamation, "Behold the Lamb of God!" Suffering one! fix your gaze on that Sufferer of sufferers—that wounded, bleeding Lamb of God. Think of that wilderness of temptation from which He had just come! See Him, there, assaulted with hunger, thirst, cold, weariness; tempted in body, assailed in spirit; and this by the arch enemy of all. Yet He meekly endures! He is the Lamb "silent before His shearers!" Say, can you murmur where He murmured not? Seek, rather, to honor Him more and more by a closer following of His divine footsteps. Go forth, even in the dark, with the fretted waters at your side, and star after star of earthly hope expunged from your skies, meditating on His faithfulness and love, even "in the night-watches!" Rest assured, if, as you journey on, you try to utter through your tears, "though He slays me, yet will I trust in Him,"—He will, as with the Bethsaida disciples, give you glorious surprises—meeting you, now on the distant lake—now in the busy city—now in "the high mountain apart," until, from these chequered earthly experiences, He takes you across the true Bethabara ("the house of passage") to be with Himself in the tearless land forever!

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