

A Question to the Professors of Christianity

by Isaac Penington

Isaac Penington's sermon challenges Christians to reflect on whether they possess a true, saving knowledge of Christ beyond mere intellectual understanding.

Scripture: John 6:63, John 17:21, Romans 5:19, Hebrews 10:9

Topics: "Knowing Christ", "Spiritual Formation"

Description

Isaac Penington challenges the professors of Christianity to deeply reflect on whether they truly know and acknowledge Christ in spirit and truth, beyond mere knowledge of Scriptures. He emphasizes the importance of understanding Christ's appearances, the significance of His taking on our flesh, and the spiritual nature of His flesh and blood that believers are formed from and feed on. Penington urges believers to seek the true knowledge of Christ in the Spirit, to remove veils of deception, and to experience the life, power, and salvation found in Christ's nature.

Transcript

A

QUESTION

TO THE

PROFESSORS OF CHRISTIANITY

WHETHER

THEY HAVE THE TRUE, LIVING, POWERFUL, SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST, OR NO

WITH

SOME QUERIES CONCERNING CHRIST, AND HIS APPEARANCES; HIS TAKING UPON HIM OUR FLESH; AS ALSO CONCERNING HIS FLESH AND BLOOD, AND OUR BEING FORMED THEREOF, AND FEEDING THEREON

AND

AN INCITATION TO PROFESSORS SERIOUSLY TO CONSIDER, WHETHER THEY OR WE FAIL IN
THE TRUE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND OWNING OF THE CHRIST WHICH DIED AT JERUSALEM

Likewise

some propositions and considerations concerning the nature of church-worships and ordinances since the death of the apostles, for the sake of the simplicity, which hath been long held captive therein

With the sounding of bowels towards thee, O England!

Also a faithful guidance to the principle and path of Truth

With some sensible, experimental Questions and Answers from the Tenth Chapter of John

BY ISAAC PENINGTON

Prisoner in Aylesbury, who, by the counsel of the Lord, hath chosen rather to suffer affliction with the despised people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season

[1667]

PREFACE

"THIS is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." Whom did the Father send? Did he not send the Son of his love? From whence did he send him? Did he not send him out of his own bosom? Whither did he send him? Did he not send him into the world, to take upon him a body, and glorify the name of the Father, doing his will therein? He laid down his glory, stripping himself of the form of God, and appearing in habit as a man, in their raiment, with their garment upon him; in which, as a servant, the seed (the heir of all) served the Father. And now his work being as good as done, he looks back at the glory which he had laid down for the Father's sake, looking up to the Father for the restoring of it to him again. "I have glorified thee on the earth," saith he, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." John 17:4-5.

Now having sought and travelled (from my childhood) after the true knowledge of God, and of his Christ; and having been satisfied with nothing else that ever I could meet with, and having at length (through the tender mercy of the Lord, and guidance of his Spirit) met with this, and been satisfied therewith, finding it to be the eternal life, the true food, the living power, the pure rest, the joy and salvation of my soul, I cannot but testify it to those that lay out their money for that which is not bread, and their labor for that which satisfieth not.

We (some of us at least) laid out as much of our money as others, who now despise us, have done; and as much of our labor; and (I may speak it in the fear of the Lord, and in true sense, without boasting) some of us had as much of that which they feed on, and call bread, as they have now. Yet when the Lord brought us to the true balance, we found it not to be bread, nor able to give the soul true satisfaction. The bread was not that which we then called bread, but that which we overlooked, and wist not what it was. But the eternal life which was hid with the Father, and is manifested in the Son, and made known to the soul (as the Son is manifested to it, and revealed in it), -- that is bread indeed, that is meat which perisheth

not, but will endure when all literal and outward knowledge of God and Christ fails, and will fall short of satisfying that hunger of the soul, which is after the substance itself.

Now to draw men's minds to a sense of truth, to a sense of that which is the thing, that they might know the bread indeed, that they might know the living waters, come to them, and drink thereof, and find Christ in them a well of water springing up to eternal life; therefore was it in my heart to give forth this question, and the ensuing queries; which he that rightly answers, must know the thing; and he that doth not rightly know the thing, by his inability to answer, may find that he doth not, and so may wait upon God that he may receive the knowledge of it, and come to it for the eternal life which it freely giveth.

The Jews were puzzled with a literal knowledge of the law and prophets, and about the Messiah to come, according to their understanding of the prophecies concerning him, and so were kept from the true knowledge thereby. Most sorts of those that now profess Christ, are puzzled about a knowledge concerning the outward body, flesh, and blood of Christ, according as they apprehend the Scriptures to speak; and so the veil is over their hearts likewise, and they cannot see the eternal life and substance, no more than the Jews, but by an outward and literal knowledge are kept back from the thing, as the Jews were. Now the breathing of my heart to the Lord is: To take away the veil off all hearts that sincerely desire after truth, and to open the true eye in them, that they may see the desire and beloved of their souls, and may be led by him into the true travel, out of self, towards the kingdom; yea, into the very land of the living, where the food of life is fed upon, where the living springs flow, where are vineyards which we planted not, and dwelling-places which we built not, where the fruit of the vine of God's planting (the wine of the kingdom) is drunk of, even new in the kingdom, with the Father and Son in the Spirit, who are One and All there.

The Lord give a sense and understanding, that the ear of the needy, the afflicted in spirit, the mourners, the captives, the bowed-down may hear, and may be drawn to touch that which hath the virtue in it, and which effectually redeemeth those that wait upon it, from all that boweth down and oppresseth.

A QUESTION

TO THE

PROFESSORS OF CHRISTIANITY

THE question is not, whether they know what is said of Christ in the Scriptures; but whether they know it savingly, truly, livingly, powerfully. Yea, they may know what is said of him, and yet not know him of whom those things are said. As it was with the Scribes and Pharisees; they knew what was said of Christ in the law and prophets; but they knew not himself, when he appeared in that body of flesh. So men may now know what the apostles and the evangelists have said concerning his appearance in a body of flesh (concerning his birth, circumcision, baptism, preaching, doctrine, miracles, death, resurrection, ascension, intercession, &c.), and yet not know him of whom these things are said. Yea, they may know what is said concerning the Word which was from the beginning, and yet not know the Word, the power, the life itself.

Since the prevailing of the apostles' testimony, the way of the enemy hath not been directly to deny Christ, but to bring men into such a knowledge of Christ, as saves not. And as the enemy did own Christ, when he appeared in that body of flesh, saying: "I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God;" so he hath found it for his advantage, almost ever since, to own that appearance of his. So that this he doth not oppose, nor men's knowledge and understanding of scriptures, so as to confirm them in this. But the saving

knowledge, the true knowledge, the living knowledge, the powerful knowledge of truth, -- that he always opposeth; for that alone overturns and destroys his kingdom in man, and brings man from out of his reach.

Now there is a vast difference between knowing the relations concerning a thing, and knowing the thing related of. And there is also a great deal of difference between believing the relations concerning a thing, and believing in the thing which is related of.

Spiritual things cannot be savingly known, but in union with them, in the receiving of them. A man can never really know the Spirit of God, by all that can be said concerning it, but he must first feel somewhat of it, whereby he may truly know it. So the peace, the joy, the life, the power, -- they pass the understanding; and a man can never rightly know them by reading, or comprehending ever so much concerning them; but by coming out of himself, and travelling thither where they are given and made manifest, he may come into acquaintance with them. And if the peace which Christ gives, the joy, the life, the power, cannot be thus known by literal descriptions; how can he, who is the fulness of all, the fountain of them all, the treasury of all perfection, in whom are hid all the riches and treasures of wisdom and knowledge, -- how can he be known by outward and literal descriptions?

Now we have travelled through these things. We knew formerly what ye know now; and we also know now, what God hath given us further; and what our former knowledge was, and what our present knowledge is. And this is it which gives us satisfaction.

Our knowledge is in a principle, wherein we receive our capacity of knowing, and wherein the Father (from whom the principle came) teacheth us. And this is his way of teaching us; by making us one with the thing he teacheth. Thus we learn Christ, by being born of him, by putting him on. Thus we know his righteousness, his life, his wisdom, his power, by receiving a proportion of them, which giveth an ability to discern and acknowledge the fulness. And in this we receive the understanding of the Scriptures, and know the seed of the woman (which bruise the serpent's head), by receiving the seed, by feeling its growth in us, and its power over the enemy. Then we know the thing; likewise we know the woman that brings forth this seed after the Spirit, which is the Jerusalem above; and we know also, and singly acknowledge, the bringing forth of it outwardly after the flesh. This seed we know to be the seed of Abraham, the seed of David after the flesh, and the seed of God after the power of the endless life; and we are taught of God to give the due honor to each; to the seed of God in the first place, to the seed of David in the second place. There was the seed that wrought the thing, which seed was the life; and the seed in which he wrought it, which was formed into a vessel like ours, but without sin, in which the pure Lamb appeared in the pure power of life, which kept the vessel pure; and so he (who was to be the first fruits) had the honor above all his brethren, being anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows.

But we also are born of the same seed. He is formed in us; we are formed of him; we are as well of his flesh and blood, as he was of ours. And by being thus formed, and feeling him grow up in us, and receiving an understanding from him, and in him, thus we come to know him, and to understand the words of scripture concerning him. By feeling and knowing the Lamb in our vessels, we know also what was the Lamb in his vessel.

Thus we know things in the certainty and demonstration of God's Spirit, even in the light which shines from him, and in the life which he begets; and we speak of things as they are, and as we feel them to be in the true life, which the Spirit of Christ hath begotten in us. And we can truly say concerning the Scriptures: that now we believe, not so much because of the relation of things concerning Christ, which we have found in

them; but because we have seen and received the thing which the Scriptures speak of, and find it to be the very thing indeed, the very Christ of God, the spotless one, the living garment of righteousness and salvation, wherein God findeth no fault, and in which the soul appears without blame before him. And concerning this, can we speak words of its nature, words of its virtue, words of its life, power, and righteousness; which that which is of the flesh cannot hear, but that which is born of God naturally owneth and understandeth. Why so? Because it knoweth the nature of the thing, and receiveth them in the savour thereof. Can life deny life? Can the birth of life deny that which springs out of the same womb? No, no. The children which are born of wisdom, do justify wisdom in its several sproutings-forth and appearances; but that which denies it is a birth after the letter, a birth after the literal and outward knowledge of things, a birth of the comprehending wisdom; that indeed reproacheth and blasphemeth the incomprehensible wisdom, in its incomprehensible ways, and would restrain life to what they apprehend, or can comprehend by the letter concerning it.

And this may be a great evidence to professors, that they know not indeed Christ in his nature, Spirit, life, and power; because they speak not of him as persons who feel the thing, and speak from the present sense of it, and acquaintance with it, but only as persons that bring forth a notion they have received into their understandings. And yet they fail therein also; for they speak not of Christ according as the Scriptures hold him forth, compared one with another, but as they have grossly apprehended concerning him from some scriptures, as the Jews outward did. For the Scriptures speak not only of a body, but also of him that appeared in the body; nor only of bodily flesh, blood, and bones, but also of such flesh and bones, whereof Christ and his church consist. He is Christ (say the scriptures) who is one with the Father, who came from the Father, in whom the Father was, and who was in the Father; so said Jesus of himself (lifting up his eyes to heaven, and praying to the Father for his disciples, and the children whom the Father had given him) more than once in that seventeenth chapter of John. Yea, he is Christ, whom a man cannot see, but he must see the Father also; and whom, whosoever seeth the Father, seeth; who was before Abraham was; whom no man could know whence he was, even as no man can know whence the Father is. Christ granted the Jews that they knew him, and whence he was as to his body; and yet for all that, he was the Christ who was to come, whom no man knew from whence he was. What was that, Christ called me speaking to Philip? "Hast thou not known me, Philip? Has thou not seen me?" What! dost thou know me after the flesh, after the body? Dost thou take that for me? Have I been so long with you, and do you know me no better than so? The body is from below, the body is like one of yours (only sanctified by the Father, and preserved without sin); but I am the same Spirit, life, and being with the Father. We are one substance, one pure power of life, and we cannot be divided; but he that sees one, must needs see both; and he that knows one, must needs know both. This is the Lamb of God which John bare witness of, which he said was before him, John 1:15. which the body was not.

Now friends, if you have this living spiritual knowledge, if ye hold it in him that is true; then own and acknowledge it (as it is expressed in the Scriptures, and as God hath now brought it forth in his people), that ye may manifest yourselves to that which is of God, that ye are of him. There is an understanding and wisdom of man, and there is a witness of God, which witness gives true judgment. Man (at best) judgeth but according as things appear to him from the Scriptures; but the witness judgeth of the things of God in the demonstration of the Spirit, according as they are felt and known to be in him.

But if ye have not this knowledge, but have long laid out your money and labor for that which is not bread, nor can yield the true satisfaction; oh, come to the waters, and receive that which is given freely, without money and without price! Oh, sell all for the pearl, for the knowledge which is of life, for the knowledge

which is life! "I am the way, the truth, and the life," saith Christ; this is life eternal to know. And wait to feel the rock laid as a foundation in you, even the seed of God, the life of Christ, the Spirit of Christ revealed in you, and your souls born of it, and built upon it. Oh that ye could come out of your own understandings, that ye might feel and receive the love of my heart, and know the travail of my bowels for you; that ye might be born of the truth, and know and receive it as it is in Jesus, and as it is felt in the Spirit, and its own pure power!

Now a little further, to remove the scruples and prejudices out of the minds of such as sometimes have been touched with the power of truth, and have had the witness of God reached to in their hearts; but afterwards the enemy hath raised mists, and cast blocks in their way, stirring up in them hard thoughts against us, as if we denied what the Scriptures affirm in this thing, and indeed (in effect) that Christ which died at Jerusalem, and set up a natural principle within, instead thereof:

To remove this out of the minds of the honest-hearted (who in the guidance of God might light on this paper), I shall open my heart nakedly herein.

1. We do own that the Word of God (the only begotten of the Father) did take up a body of the flesh of the virgin Mary, who was of the seed of David, according to the Scriptures, and did the will of the Father therein, in holy obedience unto him, both in life and death.

2. That he did offer up the flesh and blood of that body (though not only so; for he poured out his soul, he poured out his life) a sacrifice or offering for sin (do not, oh! do not stumble at it; but rather wait on the Lord to understand it: for we speak in this matter what we know), a sacrifice unto the Father, and in it tasted death for every man; and that it is upon consideration (and through God's acceptance of this sacrifice for sin) that the sins of believers are pardoned, that God might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus, or who is of the faith of Jesus.

3. What is attributed to that body, we acknowledge and give to that body in its place, according as the Scripture attributeth it, which is through and because of that which dwelt and acted in it. But that which sanctified and kept the body pure (and made all acceptable in him) was the life, holiness, and righteousness of the Spirit. And the same thing that kept his vessel pure, it is the same thing that cleanseth us. The value which the natural flesh and blood had, was from that; in its coming from that, in its acting in that, in its suffering through that: yea, indeed, that hath the virtue; that is it which is of an unchangeable nature, which abideth for ever; which is pure, and maketh pure for ever; and it is impossible for a man to touch it, but he must feel cleansing by it. Now this living virtue and power man was shut out from by the fall; but through the true knowledge of the death of Christ, the way is made open for it again, and man brought to it to be baptized, washed, cleansed, sanctified, fitted for, and filled with life. So that this it is that doth the thing; this is it from whence Christ had his own flesh and blood (for we are taught, both by the Spirit, and by the Scriptures, to distinguish between Christ's own flesh, and that of ours which he took up and made his); which flesh and blood we feed of in the Spirit; which they cannot feed on which serve at the outward tabernacle; nor they neither which know only the outward body; but they only that feed in the Spirit.

Now of this thing we might speak yet more clearly and plainly, could men hear our words. But if we have spoken to you earthly things (in parables and figures), suitable to your understanding, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if we speak to you heavenly things; if we should tell you plainly of the Father, in whom is all the life of the Son, and all the virtue and salvation that ever the Son had from him? The Jews

were to learn in types, figures, and shadows, till Christ came.

And after Christ came, he also taught them in resemblances and similitudes of things: and the apostles wrote and spake much to persons, as just coming out of that state, in a language suited to that state. But he that comes into the thing itself, and is taught there by the Spirit, after he is grown up and made capable, he is taught plainly the nature of the heavenly things, and the words of the apostles (concerning the deep things of God), which are mysterious to others, are manifest and plain to him.

Yea, the Lord so teacheth him things, as words cannot utter; that is, he so knoweth the peace of God, the joy of his Spirit, the life and power of the Lord Jesus Christ, his wisdom, righteousness, and pure, precious ways of sanctifying the heart, the tender mercy, faithfulness, and rich love of the Father, &c. as he cannot utter to any man; nay, so as he never learned (nor could learn) from words about the things; but by the sense and experience of the thing itself, the Lord (in whom are the depths of life, and who giveth the sense and understanding of the deep things of the Spirit) opening them in him, and manifesting them to him.

And indeed this is the right and excellent way of knowledge, to come into the union, to come into the thing itself; to learn in the union, to see and know in the thing. This is the way that the Lord teacheth all his children in the new covenant, by the inward life, by the pure light within, by the inward demonstration of his Spirit, by the power and virtue of the truth itself, which it hath in him that is true. And he that is in the Son, hath some measure of this life; and he that hath not some measure of this life, is not in the Son; but in a talk and wise knowledge of things after the flesh, which will perish, and he with it, who abideth there.

For no man can be saved, but by coming into the knowledge which is of a pure, eternal, living, saving nature. Can an opinion which a man takes up concerning Christ from the Scriptures (and casting himself thereupon) save him? For it is no more than an opinion or judgment unto a man, unless he be in the life and power of the thing itself. Then indeed it is truth to him, knowledge in him, right knowledge; otherwise it is but knowledge falsely so called; knowledge which will not subdue his heart to truth, nor hath its seat there; but in his head, making him wise and able there to oppose truth, and so bringing him into a state of condemnation, wrath, and misery, beyond the heathen, and making him harder to be wrought upon by the light and power of the truth, than the very heathen.

Therefore consider your ways, O professors of Christianity! and do not despise the hand which is stretched forth to you in the love of God, and in the motion and guidance of his Spirit, who condescends to you exceedingly, that he might reach to his own in you, and scatter your apprehensions, imaginations and conceivings about the meanings of scriptures (which are as so many chains of death and darkness upon you), that ye might come to him in whom is life, and who gives life freely to all who come to him.

Oh, observe what bars were in the way of the Scribes and Pharisees! They would not come to him that they might have life; nay, indeed, they could not, as they stood. There are greater bars in your way; yea, it is harder for many of you to come to him, than it was for them. My upright desire to the Lord for you is, that he would remove the stumbling-blocks out of your way, that he would batter and knock down the flesh in you, that he would strip you of all your knowledge of scriptures according to the flesh, that ye might be made by him capable of knowing and receiving things according to the Spirit, and then ye will know how to understand, honor, and make use of the letter also; but till then ye cannot but make use of it both against your own souls, and against Christ and his truth.

And then for setting up a natural principle, we are further from that than ye are aware. For we were as shy of this, and jealous that it was a natural principle, as ye can be; and started from it, divers of us, till the Lord, by his eternal power, and demonstration of his Spirit, reached our hearts, and showed us that it was the seed of the kingdom (even the root of all the spiritual life, that either we ourselves formerly, or ever any else received at any time), and gave us the sight of the things of the kingdom in it, and at length wrought that in us, and for us, by it, which never was wrought in us before, and which can be wrought by nothing else but the power of the Spirit.

Now having certainly felt and known the thing in our own hearts, and having also seen the snares and nets which the enemy lays for you, whereby he keeps you from the true bread, and from the water and wine of the kingdom (even as he kept us formerly), how can we hold our peace, but witness to you (in the love and drawings of the Spirit of the Lord) of the truth, life, and power which we have felt in Jesus, though ye become our enemies therefore? Nor do we this to bring you to another opinion, or outward way (that is not our end); but that ye might feel the thing itself, and know assuredly what is the truth, in that which never was deceived itself, nor ever deceived any; nor will suffer any to be deceived who are joined to it, and abide in it.

Oh! why should ye wander in the dark opinions and uncertainties of the night? why should ye not rather come to that wherein the light of the day springs, and out of which it shines? And can the natural man (who hath his eyes) be deceived about the light of the natural day? Doth he not know the light of the day, both from the lights, and also from the darkness of the night? Ten thousand times more certain and inwardly satisfied is he, who is born of the spiritual day, brought forth in the light thereof, and who spiritually sees, lives, and walks therein.

So that there is no doubt in him who is grown up into the thing; but he hath the assurance of faith (which is far above the assurance of outward sense or reason), and the assurance of understanding. Oh! blessed is he who hath an eye to see, an ear to hear, a heart to understand, the things which God hath revealed by his Spirit in this our day, the living way which he hath now made manifest, the principle of life that he hath raised out of the grave of death. But he that reproacheth and speaketh evil of this (that will neither enter in himself, nor suffer others), he is far from receiving the blessing or blessedness of this seed; but groweth up in the wrong nature and spirit, the end whereof is to be burned, with all that is in union with it, and groweth up from it.

Therefore come out from that spirit; come out of that dark mind and nature, which never saw, nor can see the truth, but setteth up opinions and appearances of things instead of it; and receive the anointing which is given with and in the seed, which is raised in some, and visited in many, in this day of the Lord's love and tender mercy; to whom the living, the sensible, the redeemed sing praises, and on whom they wait, for the further manifesting of his power and glory in them daily more and more.

Now, friends, if ye will know aright, or believe aright, ye must know and believe in him, who was with the Father before the world was; who was the Saviour, the Jesus, the Christ, from everlasting. For what makes him so? Is it not the power of salvation in him? His taking up a body made no alteration in him, added nothing to him; only it was necessary that he should take it up, to fulfill the will in it, and to offer it up a sacrifice in his own life and Spirit to the Father. This we firmly believe; and this also we cannot but say further, that the virtue, the value, the worth, the excellency of what was done by him in the body, was not of the body, but it was in him before time, in time, and will be after time, and for ever: yea, it is he to whom the name Jesus and Christ did of right belong before he took up the body: and he only put forth in the body

the saving virtue which he had before, which belonged to the nature, to the anointing in him, whether ever he had saved any with it or no. And this virtue, this life, this Spirit, this nature of his, is the food, the righteousness, the garment of life and salvation, which he (through the death of the body) made and prepared a living way for the soul to come to, to feed on, and be clothed with. I can hardly stop speaking of these things for your sakes, that through my words (or the words of whom the Lord shall please) ye might come to feel that which is able to give you the holy understanding, and might come to the true sense and experience of the truth itself, and might see who hath blinded you, and how he hath blinded you, and fed you with husks and dry food, instead of that which hath the true living sap in it. But while ye see and judge in that which is wrong, ye must needs judge amiss both of yourselves and others, and also of the truth itself, and of the words spoken, either formerly or now, concerning it, whereby ye expose and bring yourselves under the righteous judgment of the truth itself, even of the Son, and the light of his day, which hath power from the Father to judge all false appearances, deceits, and deceivers.

POSTSCRIPT

IT hath pleased the Lord, as he manifested his Christ gloriously before the apostasy, so to manifest him so again. For he was not only born (in the flesh) of the virgin Mary; but he was also born in the Spirit of the woman clothed with the Sun, which had the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. She also brought forth the man-child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. Rev. 12.

Now of this appearance and return of the Lord Jesus Christ, and his fresh bringing forth of his life and power in his body, the church, there are many witnesses, who have seen, felt, and tasted thereof, with the eyes and senses which are of God, and of the new birth. And of this, in the love and good-will of God, and from the drawings and requirings of his Spirit, they bear witness to others, that they also might come to see the glory and brightness of his day, and rejoice therein. For indeed it is a glorious day inwardly in Spirit, to those that are quickened and gathered to the living Shepherd and Bishop of the soul, by the eternal arm of his power. And happy is the eye that sees the things that they see, and the ear that hears what they hear, and the heart which understands the things which God hath revealed in and unto them by his Spirit.

Glorious was the appearance of Christ in the flesh; but there were blocks in the way of the Jews, that they could not know, own, believe, and receive him. And glorious is the administration of his life in Spirit, in this day of his power; but there are also blocks lying in the way of them to whom it is sent, which cause them to stumble at it, and keep them both from letting it into them, and also from giving up to it. But blessed was he who was not offended in Christ then, and blessed is he who is not offended at him now. For he that is offended at him, who is life, and gives life, stumbling at the present way of dispensation which God hath chosen to give it out by, how shall he live? This is the cause that so many poor hearts lie mourning and grovelling on the earth, groaning because of their sins, fearing because of the strength of the enemy, and the corruptions of their own hearts, which are continually ready to betray them into his hands; because they know not him who hath stretched out his arm, and is come in his power to deliver; but are prejudiced against the way wherein he hath and doth deliver. Yea, they know not his voice who calls, come unto me; I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth in me, shall receive my strength; and though he were ever so weak, shall become as David: and though ever so unclean, shall find the waters that spring from my well to cleanse him, and nourish him to life everlasting.

How tenderly did Christ visit the Jews in the days of his flesh! How powerfully, and in the true authority of God, did he preach among them! What mighty works did he show! And yet they could not believe. Why

so? The enemy had entered them with his temptations, had got somewhat into their minds of a contrary nature, to keep out thereby the sense, knowledge, and acknowledgment of him. So that when their hearts were even overcome with his power, and sweet, precious doctrine, and ready to yield that this was he, this was the Christ indeed, then the enemy raised up some argument or other to prejudice them against him, that he might thereby beat them off, and drive them back again from owning or receiving him.

"This man is not of God," say some; "for he keepeth not the sabbath." He cannot be a prophet, say others, because "he is of Galilee, out of which no prophet ariseth," He "cannot" be Christ, saith a third sort, because "we know whence he is; but when Christ cometh, no man knoweth whence he is." He is not holy, strict, and zealous according to the law, say others; but a loose person, "a man gluttonous, and a wine-bibber; a friend of publicans and sinners;" one who teacheth not his disciples to fast and pray, as the Pharisees did theirs, and John, who was generally looked upon as a prophet, did his, but justifieth them in plucking the ears of corn on the sabbath-day, and so thereby rather encouraging them to break it, than strictly to observe and keep it according to God's law.

He is a "blasphemer," say some (speaks most horrid blasphemy), "making himself equal with God." He reproacheth the most strict and zealous men that we have, even our teachers, and interpreters of the law and prophets, calling them "hypocrites, painted sepulchres, blind guides," &c., and pronounceth woe upon woe against them. And those that are the children of Abraham he calls the children of the devil; and saith: "He that committeth sin, is the servant of sin; but if the Son (meaning himself) make you free, ye shall be free indeed."

And if we will have life in us, we must believe in him, and eat his flesh, and drink his blood. (Did ever Moses, or any of the prophets teach such doctrine?) Again he saith: "If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death;" whereas Abraham and the prophets, who believed God, and kept his sayings, are all dead. This made them even conclude, he had a devil. John 8:52. So how could they understand him when he said, he was "the good Shepherd, and the door," &c., and "that all that ever came before him were thieves and robbers;" would they not look upon this as witnessing of himself, and endeavoring to set up himself?

And when he said: "Verily, verily, before Abraham was, I am;" were they not ready to stone him, for speaking a false and impossible thing, as it seemed to them; he manifestly being not yet fifty years old? But suppose it to be true, that he was before Abraham, how then could he be the Messiah, who was to come of Abraham, and out of the loins of David, according to the Scriptures? And then for his miracles, having beforehand concluded that he was a bad man, a sinner, a breaker of the sabbath, a blasphemer, a deceiver of the people, &c., how easy was it for them to harden themselves against them, and to infer that he wrought not these things by the power of God, but by the aid and assistance of the devil, to overthrow the laws and ordinances of Moses, and to set up himself and his new doctrine by?

Indeed many (and some seemingly strong and unanswerable) were the exceptions which the wisdom and understanding in them (which was out of the life and power of truth) formed against Christ, whereby they justified themselves in their refusal of him, who was sealed and sent of the Father, and so excluded themselves the kingdom, and the righteousness thereof.

This is past, and they can condemn them now, who themselves are acting over again the same thing in spirit. It pleaseth the Lord thus to suffer things to be, still so to give forth the dispensations of his life, as they alone that are in some measure of his life can discern them. And the same spirit, under a new guise,

still opposeth truth in its present appearance and dispensation, and stirreth men up to slight and blaspheme that holy name and power, which they that believe in are saved and sanctified by. Well, what shall I say to you? Oh that ye could discern spirits! Oh that ye could see what spirit ye are of, and whom ye serve, in opposing the present dispensation of life! Oh that ye could see how ye read scriptures out of that which wrote them, and bend them against that which wrote them, making yourselves wise and strong in a wrong wisdom and knowledge against the Lord, and against his Christ, whom he hath set upon his holy hill of Zion, and who appeareth there, though you see it not. For Zion is not now literal, or after the flesh (the day is come, the shadows are gone); but Zion is the holy hill of God in Spirit, upon which the heavenly Jerusalem was built, which is revealed, come down, and coming down from heaven, and many of the heavenly citizens dwell there already, and more are coming thither to dwell; for even from the east, west, north, and south, shall the gathering be, to sit with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom which cannot be shaken; which kingdom was received by the Christians formerly before the apostasy, and is now received again, blessed be his name who lives and reigns in power over all the spirits of darkness and deceit, maintaining his pure life and truth in the hearts of his children, in despite of them all.

But why should you thus err in heart from the pure truth? Why should you not open to him that knocks in his holy power, and in the demonstrations of his Spirit to your conscience? Why should a subtle device of the deceiver be let in and hugged by you, to cause you to thrust him back from your hearts who is the Word of eternal life, and with whom are the words of eternal life? The Lord God discover the deep deceits of the enemy to you, where he captivateth your hearts and understandings, that it may not be always said of you, as it was of the Jews: "He came unto his own, and his own received him not"! But to as many as received him, he gave power in the day of his flesh; and he giveth much more power to them that receive him in spirit (in the day of his Spirit) to become the sons of God. And because they are sons, he poureth out abundantly of his Spirit upon them; and he that hath the Spirit hath the Son; and he that hath the Son hath life: but he that hath not the Son (but blasphemeth the appearance and light of his Spirit) hath not life, but is yet in that wisdom and knowledge which is death, and which keeps him dead.

Now the Lord of his tender mercy make you sensible of, and pardon your opposing and resisting his truth; and also cause the light of life to shine in your hearts, quickening and guiding you thereby out of the land of death and darkness, into the holy land of life; that all that sincerely breathe after truth may (through the faithful travel) come to sit down, dwell, and feed together in it, in the one power, in the one life, in the one Holy Spirit, where is pure rest and peace, perfect joy and satisfaction for evermore. Amen.

SOME QUERIES

CONCERNING

CHRIST, AND HIS APPEARANCES; HIS TAKING UPON HIM OUR FLESH: AS ALSO CONCERNING HIS FLESH AND BLOOD, AND OUR BEING FORMED THEREOF, AND FEEDING THEREON

Query 1. WHETHER there was not a necessity of Christ's taking upon him our flesh, for the redemption of those that had sinned, and the satisfaction of the justice offended?

Query 2. Whether the Father did not accordingly prepare a body for him, to do his will in all things in; and particularly to offer up to him the acceptable sacrifice for the sins of the whole world?

Query 3. Whether it was not necessary, in this respect also, that Christ should take upon him our flesh, that he might have experience of our temptations and infirmities, and become a merciful and faithful

high-priest and intercessor for us.

Query 4. Wherein lay the value and worth of his sacrifice, and of all he did? Did it lie chiefly in the thing done, or in the life wherein he did it, in that he did it in the pure faith and obedience to the Father? He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; and he, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God.

Query 5. What was he, for whom the Father prepared a body, and who took it up to do the will, and did the will in it? Was he not the arm of God, the power of God, the Saviour and salvation of God, the Jesus and Christ of God?

Query 6. To whom do the names and titles Jesus and Christ chiefly and in the first place belong? Do they belong to the body which was taken by him, or to him who took the body? The body hath its nature and properties, and the eternal Word, or Son of God (the pure, spotless Lamb, the fountain of innocency), its nature and properties. Now the query is, which was the appointed Saviour of the Father? Which was the anointed of the Father, chiefly, and in the first place? Whether the body prepared, or he for whom the body was prepared, to do the will, and offer up the acceptable sacrifice in?

Query 7. Which is Christ's flesh and blood which we are to partake of, whereof we are to be formed, which we are to eat and drink, and which is meat and drink indeed, nourishing to life everlasting? Is it the flesh and blood of the body, which was prepared for, and taken by him, wherein he tabernacled and appeared? Or is it the flesh and blood of him who took, tabernacled, and appeared in the body? For that which he took upon him was our garment, even the flesh and blood of our nature, which is of an earthly, perishing nature; but he is of an eternal nature, and his flesh and blood and bones are of his nature. Now as the life and nature which is begotten in his is spiritual, so that which feeds, and is the nourishment of it, must needs be of a spiritual and eternal nature.

Query 8. What is the bread which came down from heaven? Is not the bread and the flesh all one? Outwardly-visible flesh and blood was not in heaven, nor came down from heaven; but the bread of life did come down from heaven, which the heavenly birth feeds on and lives by. For that which redeems, that which is Jesus (the Saviour), came down from heaven, and took upon him a body of flesh here on earth, in which he manifested himself as King, Priest, and Prophet, and did the work appointed him by the Father. John 17:1, &c.

Query 9. What was that which saved people outwardly from their outward infirmities and diseases, while Christ was on earth in that body? Was it the body, or the life, power, and Spirit of the Father within the body, and manifest through the body? And can any thing less save inwardly? Now that which saves, that which hath the virtue and power of salvation in it, -- that the eye of faith is to fix upon, and not to stick or stop in that through which the life works it.

Query 10. Who was he that humbled himself, that made himself of no reputation, that took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men, and found in fashion, or habit, as a man? Was it the body of flesh, or was it he that was glorified of the Father before the world was? And who is to have the honor and exaltation? At whose name is every knee to bow? Is not the reward to him who laid down his glory to take upon him the body of flesh, and appear in it, that he might honor, glorify, and fulfil the will of his Father?

Query 11. Are not the children and he of one? Are not he and they of the same stock? ("Both he that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of one." Heb. 2:11). Is it not from thence that he is not ashamed to call them brethren, even because he finds the nature, Spirit, and life of his Father in them? What makes a child to God? Is it not the being begotten of the Father, and born of the Spirit? And that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit. Now mark: have we the denomination and relation with Christ from that which is spiritual, and hath Christ himself the name from or because of the body of flesh? Nay, nay; the name Christ was from the anointing which was in the body, which ran into and filled the vessel. It is true, the body, in and by the union, partakes with him of his name; but the name belongs chiefly and most properly to the treasure in the vessel.

Query 12. What is it to put on Christ, or what is the putting on of Christ? Is it the putting on of that body of flesh? Or the putting on a belief concerning him, according to what is said of him in scripture? Or is it not rather a putting on of his nature, his seed, his Spirit, his life, wherewith the souls of those that are born from above are clothed, as the body is with a garment?

Query 13. Who was it that said, I am the resurrection and the life? Was it not Christ? And what did he say it concerning? Did he say it concerning the body, or did he say it concerning the power and virtue of the Father which was in the body? Did he not say it concerning that which had the power of life in it before it took up the body, and had also the power of life while it was in the body? yea, and could raise up not only other bodies, but that also after it had laid it down? For after it was laid in the grave, he could raise it up, and take it on again, as well as he did at first, when it was first prepared. John 10:17-18.

Query 14. If I, or any one else, have felt the saving arm of the Lord revealed in us; if we have felt a measure of the same life, power, and anointing revealed in our vessels as was revealed in his, is it not of the same nature? Is it not the same thing? Is not Christ the seed? And is not this seed sown in the heart? Now if this seed spring and grow up in me into a spiritual shape and form (though it be but of a babe), is not Christ then formed in me? If I be ingrafted into, and grow up in it, am I not ingrafted into Christ (the true olive-tree, the true vine), and do I not grow up in him? And is not this the same Christ that took upon him the body of flesh, and offered it without the gates of Jerusalem? Is there any more than one, or is there any other than he? Is Christ divided? Is there one Christ within, and another without? He that knoweth the least measure of the thing, doth he not know the thing in some measure? And he that is in the least measure of the thing, is he not in the thing? He that knoweth the Son, doth he not know the Father? And he that knoweth the Spirit, doth he not also know the Son? And he that is in the Spirit, is he not in the Son? For they are one nature and being. A man may have notions of the one, and not of the other; but their nature, their being, their life, their virtue, is inseparable. And as Christ said concerning the Father, -- that he was in the Father, and the Father in him; and that he that saw him saw the Father; so may it not be as truly affirmed (in the true sense and understanding of life) concerning Christ, that he is in the Spirit, and the Spirit in him; and that he that seeth the Spirit seeth him; and he that seeth him seeth the Spirit? For he is the Spirit, according to that scripture, 2 Cor. 3:17. "Now the Lord is that Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." What to do? Why, to see and read within the veil, and to behold the glory of the Lord, which is revealed there; which they whom the veil was over formerly, or whom the veil is over now, have not liberty to do. Here is confusion and impossibility to man's wisdom; that Christ should be all one with the Spirit; that Christ should send the Spirit in his name, and also himself be the Spirit whom he sends. (This is a hard saying, who can bear it?) And yet this confusion to man is God's wisdom, and precious in their eye who are taught of him.

For it is one and the same Christ that was signified in types and shadows under the law, revealed in the fulness of time in that prepared body, and afterwards in Spirit. Now after he was ascended, he received the Spirit so as he had not received him before; and so having received the promise of the Father, he so dispenseth the Spirit to his brethren and disciples, as it had not been dispensed before. Indeed he comforted and refreshed his people under the law by his Holy Spirit, which was their instructor then, Neh. 9:20. and taught them the things of God under types, shadows, and resemblances. When he came in the body, he chose out disciples, whom he taught the things of the kingdom, and was a refresher and comforter of them therein. And was not this another comforter than those had under the law? Had the Jews before ever any such comforter, as Christ was to his disciples in his bodily presence? Now when he ascends, he receives the Spirit from the Father, as the Father had promised him; and having so received him, he sends him to them for their comforter. And may not this justly be termed another comforter than Christ was in his bodily presence? And yet is it not also the same Spirit of life, that had been with them in that body? So that it is another in the way of administration, but the same in substance; even the Word which was from the beginning, the Spirit which was from everlasting; and to everlasting there is no other.

Now as the Father sent the Son, and yet was with and in the Son, so the Son sending the Spirit, he also is with and in the Spirit. And as it is the Father's will, that the same honor be given to the Son as is given to him; so it is the Son's pleasure, that the same honor be given to his Spirit as is given to him. Yea, as he that will worship the Father, must worship the Son, must come to him in the Son, must appear before him in the Son, must reverence and kiss the Son; so he that will come to Christ, will worship him, must come to him in the Spirit, must bow to him in the Spirit. Yea, he that will know and worship Christ in his fulness (in the majesty of the glory, dominion, and power), must learn to bow at the lowest appearance of his light and Spirit, even at the very feet of Jesus; for that is the lowest part of the body.

Query 15. Did not the bridegroom go away, as to his appearance in flesh, that he might come again in Spirit? Did not the apostles, who knew his appearance in flesh, and his tabernacling among them, know also afterwards his appearance in Spirit, and his tabernacling in them? And were not their hearts filled with joy unspeakable, and full of glory, because of the presence of the bridegroom? Did they not know the man-child born and brought forth in Spirit, as really as ever he was born and brought forth in flesh? Yea, did they not travail and help to bring him forth? Were there not many in that day, who could say concerning the spiritual and inward appearance of the bridegroom: We know that the Son of God, the eternal life, the pure power and wisdom of the Father is come? Did they not receive from him the understanding which he gives in and by his coming? Yea, were they not in him that is true, even in Jesus Christ the Son, who is the true God, and life eternal? 1 John 5:20. Had they not received the kingdom which could not be shaken? And did they never see and converse with the King in the Kingdom? Nay, did not he walk in them, and they in him, and he sup with them, and they with him, in the kingdom? Oh that ye could read in Spirit! Oh that ye did receive that measure of life from Christ, which the Father hath allotted you, that ye might read therein! but the letter, read out of the Spirit, darkeneth and killeth.

Query 16. What is the laver of regeneration, or the water wherewith the soul is washed, and whereof a man is born again? Is it outward or inward? Is it the water which ran out of the side of the natural body, when it was pierced with a spear? Or the water which springs from the fountain of life, the water which floweth from the Spirit? What are the waters which corrupt, mud, and defile the mind? Are they outward waters? And what are the waters which purify and cleanse it? Can they be of a lower nature than spiritual? What are the waters which answer the thirst of the soul after life, after purity, after salvation; that refresh and glad the heart of him that drinketh thereof? Are they not from the pure river, clear as crystal, which

runs from the throne? And if the water which cleanseth and nourisheth the soul be spiritual; can the flesh and blood (which falleth not short of the water in its virtues, properties, and operations) be inferior to it in nature and kind?

Query 17. Can outward blood cleanse the conscience? Ye that are spiritual consider. Can outward water wash the soul clean? Ye that have ever felt the blood of sprinkling from the Lord upon your consciences, and your consciences cleansed thereby; did ye ever feel it to be outward? It is one thing what a man apprehends (in the way of notion) from the letter concerning the things of God, and another thing what a man feels in Spirit.

Query 18. Seeing the apostle speaks of purifying the heavenly things themselves, Heb. 9:23. it would seriously be inquired into, and the Lord waited on, to know what nature these sacrifices must be of, which cleanse the heavenly things? Whether they must not of necessity be heavenly? If so, then whether was it the flesh and blood of the veil, or the flesh and blood within the veil? Whether was it the flesh and blood of the outward, earthly nature, or the flesh and blood of the inward, spiritual nature? Whether was it the flesh and blood which Christ took of the first Adam's nature, or the flesh and blood of the second Adam's nature?

Query 19. What is that, wherein they that are in the Spirit, behold as in a glass, with open face, the glory of the Lord? Is it not Christ? And how is Christ so? Is it not as he is made manifest in Spirit? Doth he know Christ aright, or believe in him aright, that knoweth him according to his bodily appearance (that can relate, and firmly believe, what he did therein), or he that knoweth and believeth in his Spirit and power? Henceforth know we no man after the flesh; no, not Christ, saith the apostle, though we have known him so. What meaneth that? The same thing may be known several ways: outwardly, inwardly; according to the flesh, according to the Spirit. Now, if ye are of the Spirit, live in the Spirit; if ye live in the Spirit, know in the Spirit the things of God after the Spirit, as the Spirit reveals, as that which is born of God receives; and not as the wisdom, understanding, reason, and flesh of man can receive; and then ye will come into fellowship with Christ, both in his death and resurrection, and know indeed the resurrection both of the life and of the body: which to know, and be able to acknowledge in Jesus, is very precious.

Query 20. Hath not Christ made us kings and priests to God, even his Father? What is it that is the king and priest in us? And if we be priests, must we not have somewhat to offer? What have we to offer? And what makes our sacrifices savory and acceptable? Is it not that of his Spirit, that of his life, which is in them? Is it not the faith, the love, the obedience, which are all of him, wherein they are offered? If we should give our bodies to be burned (in the way of testifying to truth), without this would they be accepted? If we give but a cup of cold water in this, is it not accepted?

Now, is the life, the faith, the obedience of the Son, the thing which is of value in us? And was it not the same which was of value in him? What did the Father require of the Son, for satisfaction for Adam's disobedience? Was it not the obedience of the second Adam, which weighed down the transgression and disobedience of the first? Doth not this make all righteous (who are of him, and found in his nature), as the transgression of the first made all unrighteous? Rom. 5:19. Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not. Lo, I come to do thy will, O God! (He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second.) By the which will we are sanctified, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. Heb. 10:9-10. What can be plainer to that which hath truth's ear? So by truth manifested in the heart, there is nothing denied of what is said concerning Christ in scripture, but every thing owned, believed, and received in its proper place.

Query 21. Who is the Captain of our salvation? Who is it that girdeth himself with might, riding on conquering and to conquer all the enemies of the soul? Is it not the Lamb? Is it not Christ? Is it not he whose name is called the Word of God? And yet how can it be he? Is not he to sit at God's right hand, until his enemies be made his footstool?

Query 22. What is the water and Spirit, whereof a man must be born again, or he cannot see the kingdom of God? Is it Christ's flesh and blood, or no? His flesh saw no corruption; and incorruptible flesh and blood may enter the kingdom, though corruptible cannot.

Query 23. What did all the types, veils, and shadows under the law signify? Did they signify another veil? Did they signify or shadow out that which was outward? Or did they shadow out and signify that inward life, virtue, and saving power, which was the substance of all?

Query 24. Is not the substance, the life, the anointing, called Christ, wherever it is found? Doth not the name belong to the whole body (and every member in the body) as well as to the head? Are they not all of one; yea, all one in the anointing? Was not this the great desire of his heart to the Father, that they all might be one, even as the Father and Christ were one. John 17:21,23. And so being one in the same Spirit (one in the same life, one in the same divine nature, 2 Pet. 1:4. even partakers of God's holiness. Heb. 12:10), Christ is not ashamed to call them brethren, Heb. 2:11. nor is the apostle ashamed to give them the name Christ together with him. 1 Cor. 12:12. The body is the same with the head; one and the same in nature; and doth not the name belong to the nature in the whole? So that the name is not given to the vessel, but to the nature, to the heavenly treasure, to that which is of him in the vessel, to that which the Lord from heaven begets in his own image and likeness, of his own substance, of his own seed, of his own Spirit and pure life.

Query 25. What was that live coal from the altar, whereby the prophet Isaiah's iniquity was taken away, and his sin purged? Isa. 6:6-7. Can any thing purge away sin, but the blood of Christ?

Query 26. What are the leaves of the tree of life, which are for the healing of the nations? Is not Christ the tree of life? Is there any other tree of life besides him? Is there any other healer? And what do these leaves of the tree of life heal the nations of? Do they not heal them of their sins, and of the sicknesses and distempers of their souls because of their sins? And have these leaves any of the blood of Christ in them, or no?

Query 27. Is not Christ the true vine, the true olive-tree; the living vine, the living olive-tree; the spiritual vine, the spiritual olive-tree; into which all the spiritually-living are ingrafted? As the Father is the husbandman; so is not the Son the vine? And hath not this spiritual, this eternal vine in it juice and sap of an eternal nature? And is not this sap its blood?

Query 28. Is there not a choice vine, to which the foal and ass's colt of the seed of Judah is tied? And are not the garments and clothes of the true Jews washed in the wine, and in the blood of the grapes of this vine? Gen. 49:11.

Query 29. What is that which the earthly nature slays? And what is the blood which the earthly nature shall disclose, and the slain which it shall no more cover?

Query 30. What are the robes which are washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb? And how are they washed and made white therein? And what is the blood (of what nature, earthly or spiritual?) wherein

they are washed and made white?

Query 31. What is it to have, or how come we to have, fellowship with Christ in his death, and to suffer and be crucified with him? Is it by having our natural bodies crucified on the same cross of wood (or some such like one) as his body was crucified on, or by having the fleshly nature crucified, subdued, and worn out of our souls, minds, spirits, &c., by the power of the Spirit? Rom. 8:13. Now if the flesh we are to put off be of such a nature and kind; to wit, inwardly and spiritually corrupt; must not the flesh of Christ, which we are to put on instead thereof, be of as deep, inward, and spiritual a nature? What is the flesh whereof we are to be unclothed, before we can be clothed with Christ? is it outward or bodily? And what is Christ's flesh we are to put on? is that any more outward or bodily than that which we are to put off?

Query 32. Is not the flesh and blood, which they that have eternal life feed on, and which nourisheth them up to life eternal (they continuing to feed thereon, and not feeding afterwards on strange flesh, and strange blood), -- I say, is not this flesh and blood Spirit and life? For that is it which profiteth. John 6:63. Is it not the flesh and blood of the Word? Was not the Word made flesh? And did not the Word, who was made flesh, dwell and appear in a tabernacle of flesh, and cause the glory of his own divine flesh to shine through that earthly flesh? Oh! read and consider, that ye who have stumbled and murmured against the truth may stumble or murmur no more, but now at length receive the pure and precious doctrine thereof (and so come to witness the fulfilling of that promise, Isa. 29:18-24) and praise him who giveth understanding.

Query 33. Is not the true church flesh of Christ's flesh, and bone of his bone? Is not the false, or antichristian church, flesh of antichrist's flesh, and bone of antichrist's bone? What is the flesh of the spiritual whore, which is to be stripped naked and burnt with fire? Shall ever the church which is of Christ's flesh be stripped naked and burnt with fire? Nay, doth not his flesh make able to abide the devouring fire, and to dwell with the everlasting burnings?

Query 34. What is the pure milk of the word, which is milked out to the babes from the pure breast? And what is the breast from which it is milked out? Is it of the flesh of Christ, or no?

Query 35. Are not the wicked of the seed and flesh of the serpent? Is not that the body of flesh, of sin, of death, which is to be put off? And are not they who are renewed in spirit, of the seed and flesh of Christ? Is not that the body or garment of holiness, of righteousness, of life, which is to be put on?

Query 36. Is it not as necessary that the eternal word be made flesh inwardly, that so the children may feed on him, as it was for him to take on him an outward body of flesh, to suffer and die for them, and to fulfil all righteousness, both of the law of the letter, and of the law of the Spirit in?

Query 37. Is there not that which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt? And do not they which dwell there, instead of eating Christ's flesh, and drinking his blood, put his flesh to pain, crucifying it in and to themselves, trampling under foot the Son of God, and counting the blood of the covenant an unholy thing? Read the figure. Did not outward Israel suffer in outward Egypt? Did not just Lot suffer in Sodom? Doth not the spiritual seed suffer in and by spiritual Egypt? Doth not the flesh of the holy and just One suffer in and by spiritual Sodom?

Query 38. What is that which the Gentile-Christians, who are not Jews inward, circumcised in heart and spirit, who know not the inward temple (the place of the true Jews' worship, where they worship the Father in Spirit and truth), but only worship in the outward court, which God hath cast off, and left out of his

measure, Rev. 11:2 -- I say, what is that holy city which these Gentiles tread under foot forty-two months? Is it the church which is of the flesh and bones of Christ, or no?

He that knoweth the substance, the seed of the kingdom, the birth of the Spirit, knoweth the flesh and blood which is of the seed. And this flesh is flesh indeed, this blood is blood indeed, even the flesh and blood of the seed's nature; but the other was but the flesh and blood of our nature, which he honored in taking upon him, in which he did the will, in which he offered up the acceptable sacrifice; but yet did not give the honor from his own flesh and blood to it. For the flesh and blood of our nature was not his own naturally, but only as he pleased to take it upon him and make it his. But that whereof he formeth us, and which he giveth us to eat and drink, is the flesh and blood of his own nature; and this was it wherein was the virtue, and wherein is the virtue, life, and power for ever. Happy, oh happy is he who is of it, who is taken out of and formed of him (as Eve was of Adam), and so becomes flesh of his flesh, and bone of his bone! Then will he know the mystery of life, feed on the thing itself, and not stumble about appearances and expressions, as those that are out of and from the thing itself do, through the darkness of their mind, and because of their ignorance of the thing spoken of in the Scriptures.

AN INCITATION TO PROFESSORS SERIOUSLY TO CONSIDER, WHETHER THEY OR WE FAIL IN THE TRUE ACKNOWLEDGMENT AND OWNING OF THE CHRIST WHICH DIED

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