

# The Scattered Sheep Sought After

by Isaac Penington

*The sermon emphasizes the importance of living on God's life and coming to the living God to recover from the loss of His presence.*

**Scripture:** Deuteronomy 6:7, 1 Samuel 3:13, Proverbs 22:6, Ephesians 6:4, Colossians 3:21

**Topics:** "Parenting Styles", "Child Discipline"

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## Description

The preacher delves into the concept of provoking children to anger, emphasizing the detrimental effects of nurturing bitterness, resentment, and grudges through harshness, favoritism, unrealistic standards, and neglect. The sermon highlights the importance of parenting with love, gentleness, and spiritual authority, rather than through authoritarianism or excessive discipline. Drawing from biblical examples like Eli's failure with his sons, the preacher stresses the significance of nurturing children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord, teaching them diligently and setting a positive, constructive environment for growth.

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## Transcript

THE

SCATTERED SHEEP

SOUGHT AFTER

FIRST: In a LAMENTATION over the General Loss of the powerful PRESENCE OF GOD in his People since the Days of the APOSTLES; with a particular Bewailing of the Withering and Death of those precious Biddings-forth of Life, which appeared in many at the Beginning of the late Troubles in these Nations; with the proper Way of Recovery for such.

SECONDLY: In some PROPOSITIONS concerning the ONLY WAY OF SALVATION; where is an ANSWER given to that great OBJECTION, that the Light which convinceth of Sin, is the Light of a natural Conscience; and a brief Account rendered of the Ground of Men's understanding Scriptures.

THIRDLY: In exposing to view the FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLE of the GOSPEL, upon which the REDEEMED SPIRIT is built.

AND FOURTHLY: In some QUESTIONS and ANSWERS (by way of CATECHISM, for the sake of the Simple-hearted) directing to that Principle, and fixing in it.

BY ISAAC PENINGTON, THE YOUNGER

[1659]

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When Ephraim spake trembling, he exalted himself in Israel; but when he offended in Baal, he died. And now they sin more and more, &c., therefore they shall be as the morning cloud, as the early dew, &c. Hos. 13:1,2,3.

Yea, his spring shall become dry, and his fountain shall be dried up. Ver. 15.

We have all been as sheep going astray; but blessed be the everlasting arm which hath gathered any of us to the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls.

Oh come to the fold; O scattered sheep, come to the fold. Wander no longer from mountain to hill; but remember your resting-place, the old resting-place of Israel, even the mountain of the Lord's house, where Israel may lie down and feed in peace, and no ravenous beast can disturb.

O house of Jacob, let whoredom, wine, and new wine no longer steal away your hearts; but come, let us walk in the light of the Lord.

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PREFACE

"My people have committed two great evils; they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." This was ever and anon the complaint of the Lord concerning Israel, from the beginning to the end. The Lord did delight to beget, nourish, and bring up that people for himself; but they were almost continually revolting from him, and rebelling against him. He did mighty things for them; but they still forgot him. He redeemed them by his outstretched arm; he fed them, he defended them; but they knew him not, Isaiah 1:3. but decked themselves with the ornaments which they had from him, and then lift up the heel against him. Ezek. 16:7. and Deut. 32:15. In plain terms, they got what knowledge they could from him into their own vessels, and then they would set up for themselves, live of themselves, without fresh bubbleings-up of life from the spring, from whence their knowledge came. The priests said not, Where is the Lord? but could handle the law, and teach the knowledge of it without him; and the prophets could prophesy by another spirit. Jer. 2:8. And thus the Lord God of life lived not in them; but they lived upon such things as once came from the life; but, being separated from the spring, were dead, and nourished but the dead part in them, the estranged from God. And thus, though their professions were great, and they multiplied prayers, sacrifices, and fasts, and drew nigh to God with their lips, yet their hearts were far from him. They had forsaken the fountain; they drank not of the waters of the spring, of the rock that followed them; but they drank of the waters of their own cisterns. They set up that knowledge of the law for their light which they had hewed out with the tools of their own understanding, without the spirit that wrote it. This was Israel's error of old: they drank very zealously of the waters of the law; but they drank it not from the spring, but out of the cisterns which themselves had hewed.

And as it was thus with Israel of old, so hath it been with Israel since. The Christian Israel hath been always backsliding, always forgetting the Lord! still getting what they could from him to live of themselves,

but refusing to live on him: getting what knowledge they could from the scriptures without him; getting what they could from their exercises and experiences; but neglecting the spring of their life. And so this Israel also dies; this Israel likewise withers, and becomes a scorn to the heathen. For though they speak great words of their God; yet they themselves are but as the heathen; uncircumcised like them; unacquainted with the virtue and power of life like them; always striving against sin in that which cannot conquer; and so they also are slaves under their lusts and corruptions, like the heathen, and know not the truth, which makes free indeed.

Exceeding great hath been the apostasy of this age! mighty was the appearance of God inwardly in his people's spirits! mighty was the appearance of God outwardly in the nation! many ways and great hopes there were of a thorough reformation. But how suddenly was the pure spirit of the Lord forgotten, and departed from, and his work overturned both within and without; inwardly in his people's spirits, and outwardly in the nation, whose revolting was but a type of the inward! and how hath the spirit of the Lord mourned after his people, often reproving them for their backslidings! but they have been (as Israel of old) like a deaf adder, justifying themselves, and complaining against the witnesses of God (as Israel did against his prophets) who from the Lord testify against them. And it cannot be otherwise; for the dead waters in Israel's hewn cisterns will never agree with the waters of the living fountain, but will withstand their testimony.

How shall the charmer charm wisely enough to make apostate Israel hearken to his voice! I have not backslidden, saith one in one form; I have not backslidden, saith another in another form; I have not backslidden, saith one in one notion; I am not backslidden, saith another in another notion: I am believing, hoping, and waiting in what the Lord hath already revealed, and following on to know him. This hath been thy manner from thy youth, that thou obeyedst not my word; but still hast been justifying thyself as if thou hadst obeyed. And yet your backslidings are written upon your foreheads, as with the point of a diamond. For who among you retains his freshness? An evident demonstration that ye are departed from the spring, and hold your knowledge, experiences, and hopes in the dead part; and your choicest prop of comfort is the remembrance of what ye once had. Ah poor, barren, dead souls, is this your best support! return, return; enter into the house of mourning, and let the living lay it to heart.

#### THE SCATTERED SHEEP SOUGHT AFTER

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A LAMENTATION; WITH A CALL TO MOURNING AND LAMENTATION, &C.

O ISRAEL, the royal seed, the plant of renown, the living offspring of eternity! O daughter of Sion, who didst once shine with the beauty and glory of life, what is become of thee! How art thou held captive, and chained up in Babylon! How dost thou lie sullied among the pots! How are the wings of thy dove clipped! How art thou covered and polluted with the filth of the whole earth!

Oh take up a lamentation, weep, O Israel! mourn, O daughter of Jerusalem! bewail thy widowhood, thy desolation, thy loss of husband, thy sad captivity, thy banishment out of thine own land, and thy thralldom in the land of thine enemy!

What is become of thy God, the mighty God of Jacob, whose out-stretched arm hath been able to save and redeem his seed out of bondage? What enemy hath been able to stand before him? What wild boar out of the wood, or wild beast out of the forest, was able to break into his vineyard, while he kept the

fence? Where is that arm that smote Rahab, and slew the dragon? Where is that hook that he was wont to put into the nostrils of the leviathan? Pharoah is alive, the wise Egyptians have power, Egypt holds the seed in bondage; Gebal, Ammon, and Amalek, the Philistines, with the inhabitants of Tyre, are all able to smite Israel, and to stop up the well-springs of life. Awake, O arm of the Lord! and awaken Israel, that thou again mayest become his saviour in the sight of all the nations; and let all the house of Israel, being awakened, mourn in the spirit of the Lord after the Lord.

What is become of thy Messiah, the Lord's anointed, the captain of the Lord's host, the angel of the covenant of life; who was wont to go in and out before thee in fighting the Lord's battles; who was thy prince and saviour in the land of peace and rest; who walked in the midst of the candlesticks; who was thy king, thy shepherd, thy temple wherein thou worshippedst, and the eternal light of thy life in the land of the living?

What is become of that holy spirit which quickened thee to God, and which lived in thee being quickened; which kept thee alive in him that liveth, and made thee taste of the sweetness of life continually? Where is the anointing which supplied thee all over with the oil of gladness and salvation? Where is the comforter that refreshed thy spirit continually, and led thee into all truth, teaching thee all the things of God according to thy measure of growth in the life? Where is the spirit of thy father, which spirited thee with thy father's nature, which begat and brought forth the life, power, glory, majesty, eternity of thy father in thee? What is become of Sion, the holy mount, whereon thou wast built? Sion, the fortress of holiness, where is it? What is become of Jerusalem, the holy city, thy mother, whereof thou wast born? What is become of that covenant of life, in whose womb thou wast begotten and brought forth, and by whose milk and breath thou wast afterwards nourished and brought up.

Where are all the fruits of the holy land; the pleasant grapes, the sweet figs, the precious olives that yielded wine and oil to make the heart glad, and to refresh the countenance of the Lord of life? Where is the joy in the Lord, the obedience to the Lord, the praying, the praising, the living, the walking in his spirit, the entering into and bringing forth fruit in his pure understanding, and in his holy and unspotted will, and moving in the purified heart?

Alas, alas! Babylon has prevailed; her king hath reigned; Sion hath been held in bonds; and that which hath sprung up under her name, hath been the filthy offspring of Babylon, the seed of the mother of harlots; and these have brought forth sour fruit, loathsome fruit, finely painted to the view of that eye which cannot search into it, but loathsome in its nature. This has been the state of the apostasy since the days of the apostles, wherein that which hath not been of God hath reigned, and that which hath been of God hath suffered, and been reproached as if it had not been of God, and hath panted and mourned after the springing up of the spring of its life, and its gathering into it.

The deep sense of this hath afflicted my soul from my tender years; the eternal witness awakening in me, and the eternal light manifesting the darkness all along unto me; though I knew not that it was the light, but went about to measure its appearances in me by words which itself had formerly spoken to others, and so set up my own understanding and comprehension as the measure, although I did not then perceive or think that I did so. Thus continually, through ignorance, I slew the life, and sold myself for a thing of nothing, even for such an appearance of life as my understanding part could judge most agreeable to scriptures.

This the Lord blew upon, though its comeliness was unutterable (the life still feeding my spirit underneath, from whence sprang an inward beauty and freshness). Then such a day, or rather night, of darkness and distress overtook me, as would make the hardest heart melt to hear the relation of; yet the Lord was in that darkness, and he preserved me, and was forming of me to himself; and the taste I had then of him was far beyond whatever I had known in the purest strain of my religion formerly.

And the Lord powerfully shut up my understanding, and preserved my life from the betrayer; but yet that was not perfectly destroyed in me upon which the tempter might work: and the Lord suffered him to lay a snare, and my feet were entangled unawares, insomuch as the simplicity was betrayed, and the fleshly part grew wise, by those exercises wherewith the Lord had tried me. This poisoned me; this hurt me; this struck at the root of my life, and death insensibly grew upon me.

The devil, the envious seedsman, cozened me with the image of that, which before I had had in the truth, opening my understanding part (by the subtlety of temptation and deceit) which the Lord had been destroying; and letting that in, which the Lord had shut out: and then the Lord took away and shut up from that part, that which before he had opened to the seed, whereby the way of life became stopped, and the way of death opened in a mystery. And then I could talk of universal love, of spiritual liberty, &c., and wait for the glorious appearance of life, having lost that which formerly gave me the sense of its nature; yea, at length I could seek to the creatures for what they could yield, and strive to rub out the time of my misery without the immediate presence of the life of the Creator.

And as for this despicable people, whom I now own in the Lord, I could measure them, I could fathom them, I could own their standing; and yet see their shortness; and could, with satisfaction to my spirit, write death upon them, as the end of that dispensation of life into which I saw them enter, and in part entered. Here was my standing when the Lord drew his sword upon me, and smote me in the very inmost of my soul; by which stroke (lying still a while under it) my eyes came to be opened; and then I saw the blindness of that eye which was able to see so far, and the narrowness of that heart and spirit which was so large and vast in comprehending: and my soul bowed down to the Lord to slay this, to starve this, to make a fool of this; yea, my desire was, to present sense, as great after the death of this, as after the enjoyment of life in the Lord.

And now this hath opened a fresh spring of sorrow in me, a mourning over the just One, which hath been slain by me. Oh how cruelly, how often have I murdered that which came to give me life! How often have I sought to have my own understanding, my own comprehension, my own will and affections in religion, live, and the righteous, pure, immortal principle die! though I did not then call it my own, as other men do not now; but took it to be of God, and to be the thing that was to live. For I also was deceived, and thought the bastard (which was a false conception) was to inherit; not knowing him to be the bastard, but taking him for the right heir. And my soul is exceedingly enlarged in me towards those who at this day lie under the power of the same deceit; who have slain the Lord of life as well as I, and in whom the contrary nature lives under a covering; who cannot possibly see that this, which now lives in them, is not the heir, until the same eye be opened in them.

The life that was stirring at the beginning of the trouble of these nations was very precious. It did unite to God; it did unite to one another; it kindled an universal sense of the captivity, of the bondage, of the great oppression of Israel, and a joint cry went up to God for deliverance. And God heard the cry, and arose to deliver, and did begin to break the yoke, both outwardly in the nation, and inwardly in people's spirits.

But the tempter did also set himself on work again to entangle Israel. For this end he brings forth likenesses of that which Israel desired, and was seeking after. He brings forth several forms of worship, to allure some with; several sorts of notions, to allure others with; several fresh appearances of life, of love, of liberty, to tempt the people of God aside from following that spirit which rose up to deliver. Thus comes he forth and prevails; he divides in Jacob, and scatters in Israel; drawing one part to this form; another part toward that form; one to this notion, and another to that notion; one to this inward image, another to that spiritual idol; and all from the life, all from the power, all from the Saviour, all from the deliverer, and so the work stops. It stops in the nation, and it stops in people's spirits; and men generally wheel about and enter again, and apply themselves to make images like the images they had destroyed: and so the captivity returns; Israel is turned back into his bonds, and the spirit which oppressed him before, crusheth him again, and rules over him. And so great hath the breach been upon Israel, that the spirit of the world is become hardened, and thinks there is an end of this work of God; and now they may venture again to settle both church and state upon the old principles of that wisdom which the Lord was shaking.

And now where is the people whom the Lord was redeeming? Where is the praying people, the panting people, the mourning people, the people that could have travelled from sea to sea to have had the will of God revealed? Are they not run into the earth? Is not the spirit of the earth come over them? Are they not dividing the spoils? The inward Jew, the renewed nature is sunk, lost, made a prey of; the Gentile, the heathenish spirit hath risen up, and seated itself in a form of worship, or in some high notions of knowledge, on which that spirit, which knows not the tree of life, loves to feed. Some are stark dead, no sense at all in them, but life quite swallowed up of death: others perhaps are still pressing toward the kingdom; but in the wrong nature, in that which shall never obtain: and they may there meet with some enjoyments; but not enjoyments from or of the true thing, but the likeness which the enemy hath painted to deceive them with. And they may also wait and hope that the kingdom will come, and yet be out of that which knows its coming, and can alone prepare the heart for its appearance. Yea, some are got so high, that they are even in the throne. They have the love, the life, the liberty, the joy, the peace of the kingdom, as they imagine. They can reign as kings without us, without that nature and principle wherein our life lies. But these mighty ones, these princes, the Lord will pull from their seat, and raise up the humble, the meek, the low in heart, the beggar from the dunghill, and give to him the throne of his glory.

Now this my life in love saith to you all, as the proper and only way of your recovery and redemption, Come to that which can judge you. "Sion is to be redeemed with judgment and her converts with righteousness." If Sion be redeemed, if the seed be again raised, that spirit which hath got up above it, and keepeth it down, must be judged, and brought under by judgment. How was Israel of old to be recovered from her idolatries and whoredoms, but by owning and coming to that light in the prophets which manifested and judged them?

Ye also have worshipped idols; ye also have run a whoring from the Lord, and have been inflamed with idols under every green tree. Every new idol, every fresh appearance, every lively likeness, hath tempted you aside from the living God. When one way of worship hath been dry and barren, ye have left that: when some notions of things have appeared empty and shallow, ye have been weary of them; but the next new idol, under the next green tree, hath drawn you aside into the bed of whoredom, where ye have lost true fellowship with the true God of life, and have been betrayed of the seed of life, which he began to quicken and raise from the dead.

Now come to that which judgeth the idol, the idol-maker, the whorish spirit, which tempteth aside from the true husband, and that spirit which is liable to be tempted; and let these be cut down by the judgment, and

then the true seed of life will spring and flourish again. There is no other way; be not deceived: that must be awakened in you which can judge you, and must bring forth its judgment in you unto victory, if life in you ever rise and get the dominion over death. And that spirit which now rules in you, and keeps the life down, knows this very well, and therefore endeavors all it can to keep you from owning judgment.

He would fain keep the light in others from judging you. "Do not judge," saith he; "all judgment is committed to the Son." True; but shall not the light of the Son judge? Shall not the light of that candle, which the Lord hath lighted in one heart, discover and judge the darkness in another heart? Light doth make manifest, and its manifestation is its judgment. The uttering of the words is but the declaration of what the light in the heart hath done before, and cannot but do; for as long as it is light, wherever it comes, it will and cannot but discover and judge the darkness it meets with; though the darkness cannot own either its discovery or its judgment, but must needs except against it.

Now if he cannot do this (which is utterly impossible for the dark spirit to do) then, in the next place, he fortifies and hardens the heart as much as he can from receiving the judgment, by persuading him to look upon it as the judgment of another spirit like his own, and not as the judgment of the light. And so what Paul said concerning man's judgment (that it was a small matter to him to be judged by man's judgment), the same will he say concerning this judgment. And yet, as the greatest judgment of man, in the highest strain of the comprehending part, shall fall; so the lowest judgment of the light, in the weakest child, shall stand: and all the exalted ones of the earth shall in due time fall before it; though now, in the present elevation of their minds, they may rise above it, and trample it down.

Therefore be not afraid to judge deceit, O ye weak ones! but be sure that the light alone in you judge; and lie very low in the light, that that part which the light in you judgeth in others get not up in you, while the light is making use of you to judge it in others.

And now, ye poor lost souls, who find the need of judgment, and any willingness within you to embrace it, wait first for the rising of the Judge of Israel in your hearts, and in the next place wait for the joining of your hearts to him; both which are to be done by his eternal light, which manifests and gives his life. In the lowest shining of this light there is the judgment, and there is the king himself, who is not severed from the least degree or measure of his own light. Bow down to him, kiss his feet, know the nature of the thing, and be subject to it: worship him here in his humiliation, receive him in his strokes, in his smitings, and observe and turn from that in yourselves which smites him, and ye shall one day see him in his majesty, in the power of his love, in his everlasting healings and embraces. And know assuredly, that that which will not worship him here, will not be fit to worship him there, nor shall not; but shall only tremble at the dread of his majesty, and be confounded at the sweetness of his love, but not be able to bow down to it in the true life. For that spirit, which is out of the life, is shut out in its highest desires, hopes, attainments, enjoyments, seemingly spiritual rest, universal love, liberty, and peace, as well as in its darkest and grossest paths of pollution. Therefore wait to know the nature of things, that ye may not be deceived with the highest, choicest, and most powerful appearances of death in the exactest image of life, nor stumble at the true life in its lowest and weakest appearance. And this ye can only attain to by a birth of, and growth up in, the true wisdom, which slays that spirit which lives on the same things in the comprehension, and gathers a stock of knowledge and experiences in its own understanding part. These are words of tender love, and they will also be words of true life, where the Father's earth opens to drink them in; to whose good pleasure and blessing my soul commends them.

SOME PROPOSITIONS CONCERNING THE ONLY WAY OF SALVATION

1. That there is no way of being saved from sin, and wrath eternal, but by that Christ alone which died at Jerusalem. There is no name, virtue, life, or power under heaven given, by which lost man may be saved, but his alone.

2. That there is no way of being saved by him, but through receiving him into the heart by a living faith, and having him formed in the heart. Christ saves not as he stands without at the door knocking, but as he is let in; and being let in, he brings in with him that life, power, and mercy, which break down the wall of partition, unite to God, and save. The Jews could not be saved formerly by the belief of a Messiah to come, with the observation of all the laws and ordinances of Moses; nor can any now be saved by the belief of a Christ already come, with observation of all that the apostles commanded or practised; but alone by the receiving of him into the heart, who there works out the salvation.

3. That there is no way of receiving Christ into the heart, and of having him formed there, but by receiving the light of his spirit, in which light he is and dwells. Keep out the light of his spirit, keep out Christ: let in the light of his spirit, let in Christ: for the Father and the Son are light, and are alone known and received in the light; but never out of it.

4. That the way of receiving the light of the Spirit into the heart (and thereby uniting with the Father, and the Son) is by hearkening to, and receiving its convictions of sin there. The first operation of the Spirit towards man lying in the sin, is to convince him of the sin; and he that receives not the convincing light of the Spirit, the work is stopped in him at the very first; and Christ can never come to be formed in him, because that light whereby he should be formed is kept out. And then he may talk of Christ, and practise duties (pray, read, and meditate much), and gather comforts from promises, and run into ordinances, and be exceeding zealous and affectionate in all these, and yet perish in the end. Yea, the devil will let him alone (if not help him) in all this, knowing that he hath him the surer thereby, he being (by the strict observation of these) kept out of the fear of the danger of his condition, which otherwise perhaps he might be made sensible of.

Object. But I may be deceived in hearkening to a light within; for while I think that I therein hearken to the light of the Spirit, it may prove but the light of a natural conscience.

Ans. 1. If it should be but the light of a natural conscience, and it draw thee from sin, which separates from God, and so prepare thee for the understanding, believing, and receiving what the Scripture saith of Christ; this is no very bad deceit: but if, in the result, it should prove to have been the light of the spirit, and, thou all thy life-time, hast taken it for the light of a natural conscience (and so hast despised, or at least neglected, if not reproached it), thou wilt then find that this was a very bad deceit.

2. I can show thee by express scripture, that it is the work of the spirit to convince of sin. John 16:8. And again, that the law, which is spiritual, manifesteth that which is corrupt and carnal. Rom. 7:14. But where canst thou show me from scripture, that a natural conscience can convince of sin?

3. Let any man give heed to the light in his heart, he shall find it to discover his most inward, his most secret, his most spiritual evils; which a natural light cannot do: for that which is natural cannot discover that which is spiritual.

4. The apostle saith, that it is the grace which hath appeared to all men, which teacheth not only godliness, but also sobriety and righteousness. Tit. 2:11-12. The light of the fallen nature is darkness, can teach nothing of God. What any man learns now of the true knowledge of God, he learns by grace, which



shines in the darkness of man's nature, to leaven it with the true knowledge; though man, being darkness, can by no means comprehend it, and so cannot give it its true name.

Therefore take heed, lest (through ignorance) ye blaspheme the holy light of the pure spirit; calling that natural (looking on it with the carnal eye) which, with the spiritual eye, is seen to be spiritual. For thou that dost this wilt be also erring on the other hand, calling thy carnal meanings and conceivings, about the mind of the spirit of God in scripture, spiritual. And he that thus puts darkness for light, must needs put light for darkness; and then call evil good, and good evil: and so err from the spirit of God in the whole course of his religion, even in the most inward exercises of it.

Man, by nature, is dead in trespasses and sins; quite dead, and his conscience wholly dark. That which giveth him the sense of his death, and of his darkness, must be another thing than his nature, even the light of the spirit of Christ, shining in his dark heart and conscience. It is the seed of the woman which not only destroys, but also discovers, all the deeds of the serpent. Now this seed, this light is one in all, though there have been several dispensations of it. One to the heathen; in whom it springs up after an hidden manner, even as it were naturally; from whence it had the name of the light of nature (though it be the mystery of life and salvation hid in them, Col. 1:27. this mystery IN the Gentiles; it is ill translated, among). Another to the Jews, in whom it was more rigorously stirred by a law given; who by types and shadows, and righteous exercises according to the law, were to be awakened to the living principle. Micah 6:8. Another to the Christians, in whom it was livelily brought forth to light and life, by an especial dispensation of grace; insomuch as that which was the mystery in the Gentiles, and veiled from the Jews, being opened in them, was found to be Christ the hope. Col. 1:27. But under all these dispensations, the generality of men have fallen short of the glory of God, and missed of the substance. Therefore the Lord God is now bringing forth the substance itself, but under such a veil as hides it from the eye of man's wisdom, under what dispensation soever he be, and how high soever in that dispensation. To some it seems natural; to others legal; to some it seems from the power of Satan (or at least they pretend so); to others it seems the ministry of John Baptist. Thus men guess at it in the wisdom of their comprehensions, wanting the true line and plummet to measure it by.

Now to you who have not waited to learn in the wisdom of God the names of things (which there are given according to their nature); but, in the forwardness of your spirits, from your gathered knowledge, without the living power, have ventured to call that natural, which in the eternal wisdom is seen to be spiritual, and which hath been able to effect that, which all that knowledge which ye call spiritual could never do, let me propose the consideration of one scripture to your consciences, in the sight of God.

The scripture is that in Job 28:12. to the end. "Where shall wisdom be found? and where is the place of understanding? Man knoweth not the price thereof; neither is it found in the land of the living. The depth saith, It is not in me; and the sea saith, It is not with me. It cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof, &c. Whence then cometh wisdom, and where is the place of understanding? seeing it is hid from the eyes of all living, and kept close from the fowls of heaven. Destruction and death say, We have heard of the fame thereof with our ears: God understandeth the way thereof, and he knoweth the place thereof, &c. And he said unto man, Behold the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil, is understanding." Now consider well:

First, Is this natural wisdom, or spiritual wisdom, that is thus precious? What is this, that destruction and death have heard the fame of? Is it the wisdom of nature? Or is it Christ, the wisdom of God?

Secondly, Where is the place of this? Where doth God point man to find this wisdom? He points him to the fear. Unto man he said, "(he hath showed thee, O man! what is good) Behold the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil, is understanding." Go to the fear; there it is taught; that is the wisdom: learn by the fear to depart from evil; that is understanding. This is it which is so precious, which nothing can equalize or value; here is the place of it, thus it is to be learned: sin overspreads all the land of darkness; there is no fear of God before men's eyes there; there is no learning of the fear there; all the wisdom that man can come by, cannot teach it: he that learneth to fear God, to depart from evil, must learn of Christ, the wisdom of God, and must deny all the varieties of the wisdom of man; which undertakes to reach it but cannot.

Thirdly, What is that in man, which teacheth the fear? which teacheth to depart from evil? Every man hath in him an eye that sees the evil; what is that eye, which the god of this world doth so strive to blind, and doth generally blind? Every man hath in him an enemy to evil; one that never consented to it, but still reproveth it, and fights against it, even in secret. What is this? This is no less than a ray from Christ, the wisdom of God, out of the seat of the fear in every heart, to lead into the fear, where the law of departing from iniquity is learned: and so this ray, being hearkened unto, and followed in the fear, brings up into the love, into the life, into the light, into the wisdom, into the power. Do not shut your eyes now, O ye wise ones! but open your hearts, and let in that which knocks there, which can and will save you, being let in, and which alone can save you. For it is not a notion of Christ without (with multitudes of practices of self-denial and mortification thereupon) which can save; but Christ heard knocking, and let into the heart. This will open the scriptures aright; yea, this is the true key, which will truly open words, things, and spirits: but he that opens without this key, is a thief and a robber, and shall restore, in the day of God's judgment, all that he had stolen: and woe to him, who, when he was stripped of what he hath stolen, is found naked.

The scriptures were generally given forth to the people of God; part to the Jews, part to the Christians. He that is born of the life, hath a right unto them, and can read and understand them in the spirit which dwells in the life. But he that is not born of the spirit is but an intruder, and doth but steal other men's light, and other men's conditions and experiences into his carnal understanding; for which they were never intended, but only to be read and seen in that light which wrote them. And all these carnal apprehensions of his (with all the faith, hope, love, knowledge, exercises, &c., which he hath gained into his spirit hereby; with all his prayers, tears, and fasts, and other imitations), will become loss to him (for he must be stripped of them all, and become so much the more naked), when God recovers his scriptures from man's dark spirit (which hath torn them, and exceedingly profaned them with his conceivings, guessings, and imaginings), and restores them again to his people. The prophets and apostles, who wrote the scriptures, first had the life in them: and he who understands their words, must first have the life in him. He that understands the words of life, must first have life in himself. And the life, from which the words came, is the measurer of the words, and not the words of the life. And when the scripture is interpreted by the life and spirit which penned it, there is then no more jangling and contending about it: for all this is out of the life; from and in that spirit, nature, and mind, where the lust, the enmity, the contention are; and not the unity, the love, the peace. But this is it which undoeth all; the dead spirit of man reads scripture, and from that wisdom, which is in the death (not knowing the mind of the spirit), gives meanings: and from believing and practising the things there spoken of (which death may do, as well as speak of the same), gathers a hope that all shall be well at last for Christ's sake; though it feel not the purification, the cleansing, the circumcision, which cuts off the body of sin and death here (for it is not to be cut off hereafter), and so gives an entrance into the everlasting kingdom, where the King of Righteousness is seen, known, and worshipped in spirit.

## THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLE OF THE GOSPEL

"This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." 1 John 1:5

THIS was the message which Christ gave his apostles, to make way into men's hearts by: this is the first thing that is proper for the mind to receive, which lies in the darkness; namely, that there is no darkness in God, nothing but light. Darkness is excluded from him, and the mind that lies in darkness cannot have union or fellowship with him. Therefore he that will be one with God, and partake of his life, must come out of the darkness, which hath no place with God, into the light where God is, and in which he dwells.

The work of the Son is to reveal the Father, and to draw to the Father. He reveals him as light, as the spring of light, as the fountain of light, and he draws to him as light. When he gave to his apostles the standing message, whereby they were to make him known to the world, and whereby men were to come into fellowship and acquaintance with him; this is it, "that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all."

Christ Jesus, the Son of God, he is the image of his substance, the exact image of this light, the light of the world, who is to light the world into this substance. So that as God the Father is to be known as light, so Christ the Son also is to be known as light. He is the only begotten of the Father of lights, the only image wherein the eternal substance is revealed and made known. And he that receives this image, receives the substance; and he that receives not this image, receives not the substance.

Now there is a breath or spirit from this substance, in this image, which draws to the image; thus the Father draws to the Son; and the image again draws to the substance; thus the Son draws to the Father. And so hearkening to this breath, the mind and soul is led out of the darkness, into the image of light (which is the Son), and by the image into the substance: and here is the fellowship which the gospel invites to. Joining to this breath, being transformed by this breath, living in this breath, walking in this holy inspiration, there is a unity with the Father and the Son, who themselves dwell in this breath, from whom this breath comes, in whom this breath is, and in whom all are, who are one with this breath.

This breath purgeth out the dark breath, the dark air, the dark power, the mystery of death and darkness; and fills with the breath of light, with the breath of life, with the living power, with the holy, pure mystery.

Now, as the Father is light, and the Son light; so this breath, this spirit which proceeds from them both, is light also. And as the Father, who is light, can alone be revealed by the Son, who is light; so the Son, who is light, can alone be revealed by the spirit, who is light.

He then who hears this message, that God is light; and feeleth himself darkness, and in darkness, and is willing to be drawn out of the darkness into fellowship with God, who is light; this is requisite for him to know; namely, how he may be drawn out, who is it that draws, and which are the drawings; that he may not resist or neglect them (waiting for another thing) and so miss of the true and only passage unto life. Wherefore, observe this heedfully.

None can draw to the Father, but the Son; none can draw to the Son, but the Father: and both these alone draw by the spirit. The Father, by his spirit, draws to the Son; the Son, by the same spirit, draws to the Father: and they both draw by the spirit as he is light, as he is their light lighted to that end. For as the Father is light, and the son is light; so that spirit which draws them must be light also. He is, indeed, the breath of light, eternally lighted, to draw to the eternal image of light, and then to the eternal substance,

which eternally dwells in that eternal image.

Quest. But how may I know the spirit, and its operations; that I may follow him, and be led by them, both to the Son and to the Father; and so come into the everlasting fellowship?

Ans. The spirit is to be known by those motions and operations which are proper to him; which flow alone from him, and from nothing else.

Quest. What are they?

Ans. Convincing of sin, and reproof for sin; which nothing can truly discover and reprove, but the light of the spirit. Darkness cannot make manifest darkness, but whatsoever maketh manifest is light. All the discoveries of darkness, in the hidden world of the heart, are from Christ the sun of righteousness, by his spirit, what name soever men may give it; who know not this sun, nor its light, nor the true names of things in the light; but have named even the things of God in the dark, and according to the dark apprehensions and conceptions of their own imaginary mind. But this I say to such, who are so ready to beat their brains and dispute, leave contending about names; come to the thing, come to that which reproofs thee in secret, follow the light that thus checks and draws; be diligent, be faithful, be obedient; thou shalt find this lead thee to that, which all thy knowledge out of this (even all that which thou callest spiritual light) will never be able to lead thee to.

And when thou art joined to this light, it will show thee him whom thou hast pierced (even so as never yet thou sawest him), and open a fresh vein of blood and grief in thee, to bleed and mourn over him; and work that repentance in thee, which thou never wast acquainted with before; and teach thee that faith to which yet thou art a stranger; and teach thee that self-denial, which will reach to the very root of that nature which yet lives; even under that, and by means of that, which thou callest spiritual light; and will lay such a yoke on thy neck, as the unrighteous one is not able to bear: yea, such an one as the hypocrite (which is able to hide it under confessions of sin, and forms of zeal, knowledge, devotion, and worship) shall be daily tormented and wasted with. And then thou shalt know what it is to wait upon God in the way of his judgments, and find the powers of life and death striving for thy soul, and daily floods and storms encompassing and attending thee, under which thou wilt assuredly fall and perish, unless the everlasting arm of God's power be stretched out for thee, and be continually redeeming thee. And then thou wilt feel and see how sin is pardoned, and how it is bound; how death broke in upon Adam, and how it daily breaks in upon mankind; and what that standard is, which the spirit of the Lord lifteth up against the powers of darkness. And then thou wilt come clearly to perceive, how that which thou hast called religion formerly (which flowed not from this principle) hath been but the invention of thine own imaginary mind (though thou fatheredst it upon the Scriptures, as most men do most of their inventions about doctrine and worship), wherein thou hast been in a dream of being changed, and yet remainest still the same in nature: and hast had a name that thou hast lived, but art still dead; a name of being sanctified, but still unclean; a name of being justified, but still condemned by the light in thine own conscience; which is one with him who is thy judge, and who will judge according to it: and so, as that which is real taketh place in thee, so that which hath been but imaginary will pass away.

A SHORT

CATECHISM

For the Sake of the Simple-Hearted

QUESTION. What is the estate and condition of all men by nature, as they are begotten of the seed of the evil-doer, and come out of the loins of the first Adam?

Answer. A state of sin and darkness; a state of death and misery; a state of enmity against God; a state accursed from God; exposed to his wrath and most righteous judgments, both here and hereafter.

Q. What brought Adam to this estate? and what keeps the sons of Adam in it?

A. Feeding on the tree of knowledge, from which man is not excluded to this day, though he is from the tree of life.

Q. How came Adam at first, and how come men still, to feed on the tree of knowledge?

A. From a lustful appetite and desire after the forbidden wisdom, sown in their hearts by the envious enemy of their souls; who is continually twining about this tree, and tempting men and women to eat of it, persuading them that the fruit thereof is good for food: and indeed it is very desirable to their eye, and promiseth fair to make them everlastingly wise, but still faileth.

Q. What is the forbidden fruit?

A. It is knowledge without life; knowledge in the earthly part; knowledge acquired from below, not given from above. This promiseth to make men as God, and to give them the ability of discerning and distinguishing between good and evil, which is God's peculiar property. Eating of this fruit undid Adam, undid the Gentiles, undid the Jews, undid the Christians; they all feeding on the tree of knowledge, and departing from the life in their several dispensations.

Q. How doth this fruit undo man?

A. The wisdom and knowledge, which they thus gather and feed upon, perverts them; makes them wise in the wrong part; exalts them against the life; dulls the true appetite, and increases the wrong appetite; insomuch as there is not so much as a desire in them after God in truth; but only to get knowledge and wisdom from what they can comprehend. By this means, whatsoever was afterwards ordained to life, became death to man. Thus the Gentiles liked not to retain God in their knowledge, but fell by their dispensation; provoking God to cast them off, and give them up to the vanity of their imaginations. And thus the Jews, whom God then chose, fell likewise by their dispensation; God for this cause giving them up to their own hearts' lust, and rejecting them from being a people. And the Gentiles, whom God ingrafted into the true olive, in the Jews' stead, they also, after the same manner, fell by their dispensation. Thus each of these fell by gathering wisdom from the letter, but missing of the life in every of these dispensations.

Q. What is the food which man should feed on?

A. The tree of life; the word which liveth and abideth for ever, which is in the midst of the garden of God; which word was made flesh for man's weakness' sake, on which flesh the living soul feeds, and whose blood the living spirit drinks, and so is nourished up to eternal life.

Q. But had Adam this food to feed on? and was this to be the food of the Gentiles, Jews, and Christians, in their several dispensations?

A. God breathed into man the breath of life, and man became a living soul: and nothing less than life itself could satisfy his soul at first, nor can to this day. Every word of God that cometh fresh out of his mouth, is man's food and life. And God speaketh often to man, showing him what is good: but he cannot relish nor feed on this, but desireth somewhat else, through the error and alienation of his mind. And what God speaketh now to man (if that be man's life) Adam had much more of it before his fall. And for the Jews, Moses tells them the word was nigh them, in their heart, and in their mouth: and Paul also tells the Christians so. So that the word is not far from any man, but men's ears are generally stopped against it, by the subtlety of the serpent which at first deceived them.

Q. But did not the Jews seek for eternal life, in reading and studying the Scriptures under their dispensation? and do not the Christians now seek for life, and to feed on life?

A. Yea they did, and do in their own way, but they refuse it in God's way. Thus Adam, after he had eaten of the tree of knowledge, would have fed on the tree of life also; but he was shut out then, and so are Christians now. And if ever they will feed on the tree of life, they must lose their knowledge, they must be made blind, and be led to it by a way that they know not.

Q. This is too mysterious for me; give me the plain, literal knowledge of the Scriptures.

A. Is not the substance a mystery? Is not the life there? The letter of any dispensation killeth: it is the spirit alone that giveth life. A man may read the letter of the Scriptures diligently, and gather a large knowledge therefrom, and feed greedily thereon; but it is only the dead spirit which so feeds, but the soul underneath is lean, barren, hungry, and unsatisfied, which, when it awakes, it will feel.

Q. But may not the dead spirit as well imagine mysteries in every thing, and feed thereon?

A. Yea it may; and the error here is greater than the former: but in waiting in the humility and fear, to have the true eye opened, and the true mystery revealed to the humble and honest heart, and in receiving of that in the demonstration of the spirit, out of the wisdom of the flesh, here is no error; but the true knowledge, which springs from life, and brings life.

Q. How may I come at this mystery?

A. There is but one key can open it; but one hand can turn that key; and but one vessel, but one heart, but one spirit, which can receive the knowledge.

Q. How may I come by that heart?

A. As thou, being touched with the enemy, didst let him in, and didst not thrust him by, with the power of that life which was stronger than he, and nearer to thee; even so now, when thou art touched and drawn by thy friend (who is nigh), and thereby findest the beginning of virtue entering into thee, give up in and by that life and virtue, and wait for more; and still as thou feelest that following, calling, and growing upon thee, follow on in it, and it will lead thee in a wonderful way out of the land of death and darkness, where thy soul hath been a captive, into the land of life and perfect liberty.

Q. But can I do any thing toward my own salvation?

A. Of thyself thou canst not: but in the power of him that worketh both to will and to do, thou mayst do a little at first: and as that power grows in thee, thou wilt be able to will more, and to do more, even until

nothing become too hard for thee. And when thou hast conquered all, suffered all, performed all; thou shalt see, and be able understandingly to say, thou hast done nothing; but the eternal virtue, life, and power, hath wrought all in thee.

Q. I perceive, by what is said, that there is a Saviour; one which hath virtue, life, and power in him to save; but how may I meet with him?

A. Yea, he that made man pitieth him, and is not willing that he should perish in the pit into which he fell, but hath appointed one to draw him out, and save him.

Q. Who is this Saviour?

A. He is the tree of life I have spoken of all this while, whose leaves have virtue in them to heal the nations. He is the plant of righteousness, the plant of God's right hand. Hast thou ever known such a plant in thee, planted there by the right hand of God? He is the resurrection and the life, which raiseth the dead soul, and causeth it to live. He is the spiritual manna, whereupon the quickened soul feeds. Yea, his flesh is meat indeed, and his blood is drink indeed, which he that is raised up in the life feeds on, and findeth the living virtue in them, which satisfieth and nourisheth up his immortal soul.

Q. But hath not this Saviour a name? What is his name?

A. It were better for thee to learn his name by feeling his virtue and power in thy heart, than by rote. Yet, if thou canst receive it, this is his name, the Light; the Light of the World; a light to enlighten the Gentiles, that he may convert and make them God's Israel, and become their glory. And according to his office, he hath enlightened every man that cometh into the world; though men neither know the light that cometh from him, nor him from whom the light comes; and so, notwithstanding the light is so near them, remain strangers to it, and unsaved by it.

Q. Why dost thou call him the light? Are there not other names every whit as proper, whereby he may as well be known?

A. Do not thus set up the wise and stumbling part in thee; but mind the thing which first puts forth its virtue as light, and so is thus first to be known, owned, and received. Yet more particularly, if thou hast wherewith, consider this reason: we call him light, because the Father of lights hath peculiarly chosen this name for him, to make him known to his people in this age by, and hath thus made him manifest to us. And by thus receiving him under this name, we come to know his other names. He is the life, the righteousness, the power, the wisdom, the peace, &c., but he is all these in the light, and in the light we learn and receive them all; and they are none of them to be known in spirit, but in and by the light.

Q. How are the other names of Christ known in and by the light?

A. Letting in the light (which convinceth of, and warreth against, sin) the life stirs and is felt; and the life leads to the Word which was in the beginning, and giveth the feeling of that also. And in the Word, the righteousness, the peace, the wisdom, the power, the love are felt; and he is made all these to those who are led into and kept in the light. And when the powers of darkness appear with mighty dread, and there is no strength to withstand them, this lifts up a standard against them, and calms all the tempests, and cures all the wounds and diseases of the soul, anointing it with the everlasting oil; so that now I can sensibly, and with clear understanding, call it my Saviour, the Captain of my salvation, my Christ, or Anointed, my Husband, my King, my Lord, my God.

Q. Where doth this light shine?

A. In the darkness at first; but when it hath vanquished, expelled, and dispersed the darkness, it shines out of it.

Q. What is that darkness wherein the light shines?

A. Man: man's heart, man's conscience, man's spirit. This is the world, which Christ, the Sun of righteousness, is the light of, in every part whereof he causeth the rays or beams of his light to shine at his pleasure; though in no part the darkness can comprehend the least shining of his light.

Q. How then can it ever be converted thereby?

A. The darkness is not to be converted. Every man in this state is reprobated, and the wrath abideth on him. So that the darkness is rejected, and man in the darkness; but man touched by the light, made sensible of it, and following it in the life and power which it begets, is drawn out of the horrible pit, and saved.

Q. How may I do to find the light in the midst of the darkness of my heart, which is so great, and this seed so small?

A. By its discovering and warring against the darkness. There is somewhat which discovereth both the open and secret iniquity of the corrupt heart, following it under all its coverings of zeal, holiness, and all manner of voluntary humility and self-righteousness, with which the true light never had unity; and sometimes may cause secret misgivings that all is not well, but there may be a flaw found in this covering, and in the end it may prove too narrow for the soul. This which thus warreth against the darkness, to bring people off from all false foundations to the true and living foundation, this is the light; and thus thou mayst find it, at some time or other, at work in thy heart, if thou mind it.

Q. Having found the light, how may I come to feel the saving virtue and power of it?

A. By believing in it. For the virtue and power springs up in the heart that believes in it.

Q. How can I believe in it? Am not I dead?

A. There is a creating, a quickening power in the light, which begets a little life, and that can answer the voice of the living power.

Q. Yea, if I could find any such thing begotten in me, then I might be drawn to assent that that (though never so small) might believe; but surely my dead heart never can.

A. Hast thou never found a true, honest breathing towards God? Hast thou never found sin not an imaginary, but a real burden? This was from life: there was somewhat begotten of God in thee, which felt this. It was not the flesh and blood in thee; but somewhat from above. And if this had known the spring of its life, and not been deceived from it by the subtlety, it would have fed upon, and have grown up in, the virtue and power of the spring from whence its life came.

Q. Why then, by this, all men have power to believe.



A. In the light which shines in all, and visits all, there is the power; and this power strives with the creature to work itself into the creature; and where there hath been the least breathing after life, there hath been a taste of the power: for this came from it. But the great deceiver of souls lifts up men's minds in the imagination to look for some great appearance of power, and so they slight and overlook the day of small things, and neglect receiving the beginning of that, which in the issue would be the thing they look for. Waiting in that which is low and little in the heart, the power enters, the seed grows, the kingdom is felt and daily more and more revealed in the power. And this is the true door and way to the thing: take heed of climbing over it.

Q. What is it to believe in the light?

A. To receive its testimony either concerning good or evil, and so either to turn towards or from, in the will and power which the light begets in the heart.

Q. How will this save me?

A. By this means; that in thee which destroys thee, and separates thee from the living God, is daily wrought out, and the heart daily changed into the image of him who is light, and brought into unity and fellowship with the light, possessing of it, and being possessed by it; and this is salvation.

Q. We thought salvation had been a thing to be bestowed hereafter, after the death of the body; but if it be thus, then salvation is wrought out here.

A. So it is, even in all that are saved; for there is no working of it out hereafter, but here it is wrought out with fear and trembling; and the believer, who is truly in unity with the life, daily changed from glory to glory, as by the spirit of the Lord.

Q. But show more particularly how faith, or believing in the light, worketh out the salvation.

A. First, it causeth a fear and trembling to seize upon the sinner. The Lord God Almighty, by the rising of his light in the heart, causeth the powers of darkness to shake, the earth to tremble, the hills and mountains to melt, and the goodly fruit-trees to cast their fruit; and then the plant of the Lord springs up out of the dry and barren ground, which by the dews and showers from above, thrives, grows, and spreads till it fills God's earth.

2. In this fear and trembling the work of true repentance and conversion is begun and carried on. There is a turning of the soul from the darkness to the light; from the dark power to the light power; from the spirit of deceit to the spirit of truth; from all false appearance and imaginations about holiness, to that which the eternal light manifesteth to be truly so. And now is a time of mourning, of deep mourning, while the separation is working; while the enemy's strength is not broken and subdued, and while the heart is now and then feeling itself still hankering after its old lovers.

3. In the belief of the light, and in the fear placed in the heart, there springs up a hope, a living hope, in the living principle, which hath manifested itself, and begun to work. For the soul truly turning to the light, the everlasting arm, the living power is felt; and the anchor being felt, it stays the soul in all the troubles, storms, and tempests it meets with afterwards; which are many, yea, very many.

4. Faith, through the hope, works righteousness, and teaches the true wisdom; and now the benefit of all the former trouble, anguish, and misery begins to be felt, and the work goes on sweetly. All the

unrighteousness is in the darkness, in the unbelief, in the false hope. Faith in the light works out the unrighteousness, and works in the righteousness of God, in Christ. And it makes truly wise, wise in the living power; even wise against the evil, and to the good, which no man can learn elsewhere.

5. In the righteousness, and in the true wisdom which is received in the light, there springs up a love, and a unity, and fellowship with God, the Father of lights, and with all who are children of the light. Being begotten by Christ, the light, into the nature of the light, and brought forth in the image, there is a unity soon felt with God, the Father, and with those who are born of the same womb, and partake of the same nature. And here are a willingness and power felt in this love, to lay down the life, even for the least truth of Christ's or for the brethren.

6. Belief in the light works patience, meekness, gentleness, tenderness, and long-suffering. It will bear any thing for God, any thing for men's souls' sake. It will wait quietly and stillly for the carrying on of the work of God in its own soul, and for the manifestation of God's love and mercy to others. It will bear the contradiction and reproach of sinners, seeking their good, even while they are plotting, contriving, and hatching mischief; laying many subtle snares, and longing thereby to entrap the innocent.

7. It brings peace, joy, and glory. Faith in the light breaks down the wall of darkness, the wall of partition, that which separates from the peace, that which causeth the anguish and trouble upon the soul, and so brings into peace. Christ is the skilful Physician; he cures the disease, by removing the cause. The unskilful physicians, they heal deceitfully; crying, Peace, peace, when there is no peace, while that which breaks the peace is standing: but Christ doth not so, but slays the enmity in the heart by the blood of his cross, so making peace. And this is true peace, and certain peace.

Now finding the clods of earth removed, the enemy, the disturber, the peace-breaker trodden down, the sin taken away, the life and power present, the soul brought into the peace; here is joy, unspeakable joy! joy which the world cannot see or touch, nor the powers of darkness come near to interrupt. Here is now no more crying out, O wretched man! and who shall deliver! &c., but a rejoicing in him who hath given victory, and made the soul a conqueror; yea, more than a conqueror. Wait to feel that, thou who art now groaning, and oppressed by the merciless powers of darkness.

And this joy is full of glory; which glory increaseth daily more and more, by the daily sight and feeling of the living virtue and power in Christ the light; whereby the soul is continually transformed, and changed more and more, out of the corruptible into the incorruptible; out of the uncircumcision, the shame, the reproach, into the circumcision, the life, the glory.

Q. Doth the light do all this?

A. Yea, in them that turn towards it, give up to it, and abide in it. In them it cleanseth out the thickness and darkness, and daily transformeth them into the image, purity, and perfection of the light. And this nothing can do but the light alone.

Q. What makes men generally so averse from the light?

A. Their unity with the darkness, which the light is an enemy to, discovering and disturbing it.

Q. But wise men, knowing men, men who are looked upon as having most light, they also are enemies to this light, and speak hardly of it.

A. Was it not always so? Did any of the rulers, or wise scribes and teachers of the law, believe in him formerly? And is it any wonder if such believe not in him now?

Q. What may be the reason why the wise men formerly have not, and now cannot, believe in the light?

A. There are two great reasons for it.

1. Because they cannot comprehend it. They can comprehend the knowledge which they can gather out of the book of nature, or out of the books of the law and prophets, or out of the books of the evangelists and apostles: but they cannot comprehend the light which all these testify of. So that such a kind of knowledge they can receive; but the light they cannot; for it is not to be comprehended; but gathereth into itself, and comprehendeth.

2. Because it is an utter enemy to them. It will not wink at the closest of

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