

'Truth for Believers' Volume 2.

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The Knowledge of the Father.

"I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father." 1 John 2: 13.

A few words are necessary as to the construction of this part of the Epistle of John, for it is obscured in our A.V. translation, through not observing a distinction between "children," by which endearing term the aged Apostle addressed the whole family of God, as in 1 John 2: 1, 12, 28 and afterwards; and "little children," for which another word is used in verses 13 and 18, when he is inspired to divide the family according to various stages of growth. For in God's, as in our natural families, there are fathers, young men, and little children. He sums up what he has to say to each of these in verse 13, and then develops his thoughts to each from verse 14 on.

The fathers, the most advanced stage of Christian growth, have known Him that is from the beginning — that is Christ (see 1 John 1: 1) — and to this he can add no more. There is nothing beyond the knowledge of Christ, for all true growth consists in "that I may know him" (Phil. 3: 10). In the middle of verse 14 the young men are addressed as being strong, their strength being manifested in having overcome the wicked one, but it is important to note that this strength is attributed to the word of God abiding in them. The world is their danger and of this they are warned. From verse 18 he addresses the "little children" fully, warning them against the many anti-christs already manifested and the seductions of false teaching, and bringing out where their resources lay, to the end of verse 27: and then at verse 28 he resumes his address to the whole family.

It is not now my object to go into what is said to each, but only to gather from the whole instruction what belongs by infinite grace to the little child, and if to the youngest, to all in the family of God. Three things come out prominently: that, in common with all addressed, their sins are forgiven them for His name's sake, which involves all the value of His person and work (ver. 12); further that, as ever intimately connected with this forgiveness, and consequent upon it, they have received the Holy Spirit to dwell within them. The effect of this indwelling is twofold: (1) that they know all things (ver. 20) — not of course in the developed knowledge of all the subjects of revelation, but as having divine capacity to enter into divine things (for the natural man receiveth them not); and (2) He is within them as the divine Teacher (ver. 27) to teach them of all things, thus making them independent of the pretensions, wisdom, or folly of man. Then what the Apostle makes the distinguishing characteristic of the little children, they know the Father (ver. 13). These three things, then, characterise the full Christian position:-

1. The forgiveness of sins through Christ;
2. The possession of the Holy Spirit; and
3. The relationship of children with a known Father.

The Apostle is not taking account of natural years in speaking of fathers, young men and children, nor is it any question of attainment. The little children are such, whatever their natural years, as having been only lately introduced into the full Christian place by receiving the glad tidings of their salvation. The young men and fathers are such by spiritual growth in that place.

And now we are face to face with what led me to take up the subject. What is this knowledge of the Father to which the youngest child in Christ has his inalienable title? And if he has this title, is it yours and mine actually to enjoy it in all its inestimable privilege? It is clearly something more than knowing that we are children of God; though our hearts may well be deeply touched as we behold the manner of the love bestowed upon us, that we should bear this name and be able to take up the

children's place before the Father, as born of Him, and possessing the Spirit of His Son. (1 John 3: 1)

The relationship is one thing; the knowledge of the Father whose child I am is another. Suppose the case of natural relationship, and the difference will at once be perceived: the relationship remains the same whatever the character of the parent, but for the children how much depends on it — he may be loving and considerate, or very much the reverse: the difference to them is incalculable. Is it enough, then, for us to know that by infinite grace we are the children of God, or shall we not seek to know our Father? Ought we not to earnestly desire to become familiar with the thoughts and feelings of His heart, the love of His nature, His character (if I may use the word in the deepest reverence), when He makes this knowledge of Himself the privilege of the youngest child of His? But it may be asked, how am I to know Him? It can only be as He reveals Himself. Let us then humbly seek the way Scripture presents this blessed revelation to us.

Matthew 11 will naturally come before us as the first intimation of such revelation in the ministry of the Lord Jesus. All the circumstances make it the more affecting for our hearts. It was a time of deep trial and testing for Him. Hard-hearted unbelief met Him in the cities wherein most of His mighty works were done, and these works attested who He was in whose presence they were so unmoved. But it only served to bring out in the perfection of the blessed Lord, what the knowledge of the Father was to Him. He knew whence to receive all that pressed so heavily upon Him, for we read, "At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes."

In His rejection by these cities He owned nothing but His Father's ways of perfect wisdom and love. If in divine wisdom these things were hid from the wise and prudent, there were babes to whom they would be revealed by infinite grace. He knew the love of the Father, and in this He found His perfect resting-place, and submitted Himself absolutely to His will; this is clearly expressed in the words "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." These two things come before us, then, in the experience of the blessed Lord: the source of His rest in the knowledge of the Father, and His perfect submission to the Father's will: into both He would introduce us; for this is the connection of the words that follow, too often missed. In verse 27 all the deeper glories of His Person, of the place given to Him, and His work in the deepest character of it come before Him. Not only the Messianic Kingdom, but "all things" in universal supremacy are delivered unto Him by the Father: the unfathomable glory of His Person is made known in the words "no man knoweth the Son but the Father"; and then as the most precious object of the incarnation — "Neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." He had come to reveal the Father, and this goes far beyond and above the glory in which He had been presented to Israel up to the point heretofore reached in this Gospel. But let us carefully observe that it is when the divine and inscrutable glory of His Person as the Son is brought out that He intimates, as so closely connected with and depending upon this glory, His purpose to reveal the Father.

If it now becomes an anxious question, to whom will He reveal the Father whom only the Son had seen and known, the answer comes at once in the precious words, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." How many there are that have been through the world, and with all their toil and weariness have found it void of anything to satisfy. He had been through it and found it to be such, but He had a secret source of perfect rest. He calls us to Him that He might reveal it to us. This source of rest is the Father, and His heart of infinite love. The Son would give us rest by revealing Him, and then we have only to learn of Him, the meek and lowly One, how to submit ourselves absolutely to His will to find this perfect rest realised practically under all circumstances. Both have been seen in practical operation in the blessed place the Lord took as

expressed in "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight"; and it is when faith finds its sure title to trace all that comes upon us to the Father's heart, that the yoke of submission is easy, and His burden light. How blessed, then, the confirmation that to know the Father is not some advanced experience that only belongs to those who have been long in the Christian way, when we find that it is the first thing before the Lord as needed to give rest, and to establish the heart that trusted Him, in view of the consequences of His rejection and the changes of dispensation involved by it, as the remainder of this Gospel opens them out. But for the full development of all that flows from the divine glory of His Person, that has just been touched here and then dropped, as not within the scope of Matthew, we must turn to the Gospel of John, where from the outset it shines out everywhere, though veiled in the lowly form of Manhood.

The Word, who was in nature God, became flesh and tabernacled amongst us, so that the opened eye of faith beholds His glory, the glory as of an only-begotten with a Father — the one cherished object of the Father's delight. (John 1: 14) This it is that gives His blessed competency to make the Father known; even as we read in verse 18, "No man hath seen God at any time the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared Him." Who so fitted to make Him known as the Son who dwells in His bosom? For His nearness and intimacy of relationship with the Father ever characterised Him while speaking and acting as Man amongst men. Let us then seek to follow out how the revelation of the Father comes to us in the person of the Son. It is in His words and works as grouped together by the Spirit in the Gospel of John we shall find it. Here alone, in all Scripture, the Father is fully revealed, one reason, doubtless, why the little flock turns to it instinctively as their richest pasture.

Mark the way He is presented to us in John 5: 17-20. It becomes a revelation to us of the place the Son had taken, and which He ever kept in His pathway here. In refusing the possibility of a Sabbath for the heart of God in a world of sin and sorrow, Jesus says, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." If the time for the rest of God was not yet, the full time of His work had come, that men might be fitted to have their place in that rest. The Jews were right in taking the words of the Lord as involving His equality with the Father, but for that reason it could not be true that He *made Himself* God. The truth was that, being in the form of God, He thought it not a matter of usurpation of that which did not belong to Him to be equal with God, but *emptied* Himself (for that is the wonderful word) and took upon Him the form of a servant and became in the likeness of men; and even then being found in fashion as a man He *humbled* Himself. (Phil. 2: 6-8) Emptying Himself as God, He humbled Himself as man, instead of making Himself anything.

He was not here, then, to act as God, independently, for He said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, the Son can do nothing from himself, but what he seeth the Father do." He had come only to act in absolute dependence upon the Father; yet none but he who was equal with the Father could have said, "What things soever he doeth these also doeth the Son likewise." But it was as acting from His conscious place in the Father's love and in perfect communion with Him, "for the Father loveth the Son, and showeth him all things that himself doeth." All His works were thus the Father's works, the expression of the Father's nature and will as flowing from this divine communion. In His works the Father was revealed. Hence His solemn words in John 10: 37, 38, "If I do not the works of my Father believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him."

Nor was it otherwise with His words, as John 12: 49, 50 wonderfully shows: "I have not spoken from myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak . . . whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me so I speak." What new

and precious interest His whole path is invested with, when we learn that in words and works alike He is expressing the Father, that we might be brought to know Him as thus perfectly revealed. From this, too, flows the revelation of the Father's house, never before spoken of in Scripture.

THE FATHER'S HOUSE AND THE WAY.

John 14, where all comes out fully, commands our deepest attention. For there we find that when the Lord Jesus could no longer take His place with His own in a world that rejected Him, He would give them a place with Himself in the Father's house where He was going: "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also. And whither I go, ye know, and the way ye know." Two things then He expects them to have conscious knowledge of — the Father's house, as the place where He was going, and the way. But how could this be so when the Scriptures had been silent on such themes?

Thomas asks as to the way and learns that Jesus spoke of the way to the Father, for the revelation of the Father was the revelation of the Father's house, the way to the Father was the way to the Father's house. Jesus was Himself "the way," for "no man cometh unto the Father but by me." He was also "the truth," for God being revealed they had the truth as to everything, which consists in its relation to Him: and then further He was "the life," the blessed capacity to enjoy the revelation. And he adds, "If ye had known me, ye should have known [conscious knowledge, Rev. text] my Father also: from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him."

Philip would know more of the place, for he seemed to seize the thought that the Person makes the place, that the Father constitutes all the joy and blessedness of the Father's house, hence his prayer, "show us the Father and it *sufficeth* us." How blessed by grace to have the consciousness that nothing else is needed to fill and satisfy the whole being. How far do we enter into anything of this sense of things, now that all is fully out? But the answer lies in what has been before us; and in words of gentle reproof Jesus says, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father, and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father? "And He appeals to His words and works, "Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not from myself, but the Father that dwelleth in me he doeth the works." And if the words were not sufficient — "believe me for the very work's sake" (ver. 11).

But Philip had not then the Spirit, as we have, to enable him to enter into the testimony of the words he heard, and of the works he saw. What of ourselves, beloved brethren, how far — to ourselves again let us put it — how far have we profited by the revelation? — now that the Spirit has brought it to constant remembrance by the apostolic record, and, as dwelling in us, would give effect to the testimony in our souls, and be the power of our enjoyment of it to the full.

WE HAVE NOT BEEN LEFT ORPHANS.

We all know how to feel for an orphaned child, with the capacity for the enjoyment of relationship, and yet without that which alone could draw out and fill and satisfy the affections and give the sense of home — a father and the love of a father's heart known and possessed: for the father's house is ever the home of the children. But we are not orphans, for we know the Father, and again it must be pressed that the knowledge of the Father implies more than merely the consciousness of relationship. There is love of the Father, and the Lord would lead us into the blessed reality of it. See John 16: 26, 27: "At that day ye shall pray in my name: and I say not unto you, that I will ask the

Father for you [for the words 'pray' and 'ask' ought to be thus reversed]: for the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God." What wealth and fulness of divine affection are here! The Father loves the Son, and if we love Him there is a bond between our hearts and His in a common object of love; and thus we are given the sense of being the objects directly of the Father's love.

ETERNAL LIFE.

But there is what even goes beyond this, for in John 17 there is presented another character of the blessing that is connected with the revelation of the Father, namely, what eternal life is, the life we possess in the Son of God. It is, in its deepest character "that they may know thee [that is, the Father whom He was addressing] the only true God [not now to be known apart from the revelation of the Father] and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent" — the way and One in whom He has been revealed. Eternal life had been in the Son with the Father from eternity (1 John 1: 2) ever characterised by that relationship; it was manifested for the first time on earth by the incarnation, the Son revealing the Father in all His ways; now, based upon the work of redemption, which in this chapter is looked at as already accomplished by His death and resurrection, He introduces us into all the position and relationship of that life as set forth in the risen Christ. The position in which He here associates us with Himself in relationship with the Father, in absolute separation from the world, leading on to our yet future enjoyment of it in the proper sphere of that life, His heavenly glory and the Father's House, is the most complete setting forth of eternal life we have.

Then how beyond all the thoughts of men is the purpose of eternal love which finds expression in the words of this wonderful prayer. For Jesus speaks not only of the perfection of the given-glory of Christ in which He will manifest us to the world (ver. 22, 23) "that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and *hast loved them as thou hast loved me*;" but in the last verse He speaks of the way He has provided for our *present* enjoyment of such a place in the Father's love: "I have made known [a richer word than 'declare'] unto them thy name, and will make it known." The revelation of the Father's name in the Son by His words and works is perfect, as we have seen in this Gospel, and nothing can ever be added to it, But the blessed Lord assures us that He will *make it known*, so as to bring the power of the revelation into our hearts and lives now as an ever-increasing reality. And this in order "that *the love wherewith thou hast loved me* may be in them, and I in them." He Himself — oh, if we could only enter a little more into the marvellous thought! — to conduct the Father's love, as He knew it, and was the object of it, into our hearts — He Himself in us as life, to be our strength and capacity for knowing and enjoying it. If chapter 17 had not so revealed it we never could have conceived that the Father's love to us was of such a character, and that the place the Son had in it was the only measure of our place in it. We cannot grasp it, but we can believe and enjoy it and adore Him, and know something increasingly of living in the consciousness of being loved by the Father as He loved the Son.

THE GREAT OBSTRUCTION.

One more thought for which we must turn back to the Epistle. What is it that has so obstructed the realisation of what has come out as the first and simplest yet deepest privilege of the youngest in God's family circle? I think it is not far to seek. We are brought to it when the next stage of growth is reached, and the "young men," who have met Satan coming openly against them, and by the word of God abiding in them, have overcome him, have to be warned against *the world*. The subtle enemy of our souls knows how to work by that which is his sphere, and present some object in the world to allure

the heart. For it is not what lies in our hands that is the chief danger, but that which he can incite us to desire. "Love not the world;" and it is added — to guard us against the treachery of the heart that would make "the world" be just that which lies outside the boundary of its own hopes and prospects and ambitions — "neither the *things that are in the world*." And there we learn that "if any man love the world the love of the *Father* is not in him." He does not speak of the love of God, which is shed abroad in the heart as surely as the Holy Spirit has been given, which is assumed of all those to whom John writes. It is the love of *the Father* — the enjoyment of that special relationship, with all that flows from the knowledge of Him with whom we are in relationship — which is specifically hindered, if the heart goes out after any poor worldly object. Yet all that is in it morally — how well to know it from God — is "lust," the desire to possess what we have not, or "pride" — the contemptible pride of what we have; and absolutely nothing else. What a cheat it is! Yet how many Christian lives, which once opened full of the brightest promise, have soon become clouded over and closed in comparative darkness as having become ensnared by it. "The world passeth away" — thank God we may well say, — "and the lust thereof but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." The Lord make that blessed will the one thing before our hearts, for the few remaining moments of testing, so that there may be true expansion and growth in the divine nature which we possess, by the power of the heavenly relationships we enjoy, and the knowledge of divine Persons with whom we are in relationship by infinite grace.

The Prayers of the Ephesian Epistle.

Ephesians 1: 15-23; Ephesians 3: 13-21.

We may well believe that the prayers to which the Apostle is led, in the unfolding of the wonderful truths of this epistle, are of very great moment for our souls. I am sure that many of us have responded to the thought that has often been presented to us, that it is only on our knees these great truths can be learned. This is exactly what seemed to impress the Apostle, the Spirit of God leading him to prayer that the truths he was inspired to communicate should take a deep hold of the hearts and consciences of the saints.

Now I think it is a help to us to see that there is a certain order in the thoughts of the prayer in this first chapter, depending upon and flowing from the truths that have been filling the Apostle's heart, and coming out to us in his testimony of them.

The first prayer is addressed to the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, "that he may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the full knowledge of him; the eyes of your heart being enlightened, that ye may *KNOW*." Now that is of first importance. There must be the intelligence of the mind of God as to the wonderful position the believer and the church has before God and the Father, before there can be any intelligent appreciation of a walk according to it here below. This, then, is what he seeks for the saints, that there may be the full knowledge of Him who is the object of all God's thoughts and counsels — but heart knowledge; not merely the eyes of the understanding, but "the eyes of your *HEART* [as it really is] being enlightened, that ye may know;" and then follow the three great subjects of the prayer: first, the hope of His calling; secondly, the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints; and lastly, what is the exceeding greatness of the power that has wrought, to put us into the calling, and to make us heirs of the inheritance.

Now first as to the calling. We are the called ones indeed, but the calling is characterised as of God "His calling" — as of His own blessed nature, and all the counsels of His love unfolded in it. The

calling comes out in verses 4-6. But before he proceeds to the orderly communication to us of the great truths that are filling his heart, he worships the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, in that double name in which is contained all the blessing we have been brought into in Christianity. The Father of the Lord Jesus is our Father, His God, our God. The heart of the Apostle was too full to contain itself, and flows over in blessings to Him "who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ." This is just what worship is, and indeed it is in such a spirit only that we can truly enter into the character of the blessing presented to us. How blessed to be able to take our place in the faith of such blessing at the very outset; "all spiritual blessings" — of the highest order, in the heavenlies — the most exalted place, ours "in Christ." What else could we do but worship?

But now we are brought back to the standpoint of this wonderful blessing, and we must seek to put ourselves there to have any true thought of it. It is that of God's eternal counsels, as He saw us in Christ.

No thought of the first man enters here. The ages of his probation have closed in the cross, in the judgment pronounced indeed upon the flesh from the very first, but now that has been endured for us by Christ. What infinite grace has brought us to learn that history in our own souls; and to bow to the necessary end of all we are after the flesh, in the judgment of God; not merely that our *sins* have been borne away by Christ in that judgment, but that in His being made *sin* for us, we ourselves are gone. The humbling history of man in the flesh has closed for ever in the cross of Christ for God and for faith. But this is not the truth of Ephesians, however necessary for our souls to enter into, that we may know anything of the calling of God.

Here we are carried back before the foundation of the world, countless ages, perhaps, before it was fitted for man's habitation, therefore before man's history opened — not to say closed in the cross of Christ. "According as he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love." Thus He is pleased to reveal to us the thoughts that were in His heart about us in a long back eternity. There is no activity of the divine counsel yet. It is simply what He chose for Himself. You choose what suits yourself, and so it is with the blessed God: He chose what suited His own nature, and revealed Himself in the choice He made. And what was that wonderful choice? He hath chosen us in Christ, holy, without blame before Him in love. And the most blessed word in that verse is "before Him," as though he would set us out before His own gaze, the objects of His love. Oh, how blessed to be allowed to know it. As it is in Christ that we have been thus chosen, we have had the perfect expression of the character and object of His choice, when Christ was manifested here, as in Matthew 3: 16,17. It is a wonderful help to our realisation of what is so beyond all our thoughts, to have had the manifestation of all that was perfectly suited to the heart of God in Christ down here. Four things are thus presented to us in Him — the heavens opened to Him, the Spirit of God descending upon Him, the Father's voice declaring Him to be His beloved Son, in whom He was well pleased, and all because of what He was personally in Himself.

Thus, then, it is that we have been chosen in Him before earth's foundations. The opened heavens? There is where we have been blessed in Him. Holy and without blame? That's what He was. "Before Him," with what complacency of delight His eye rested upon Him; "in love," the perfect object of His love. How sweet to think of it. God would have us ever near Him, and so He chose us in Christ, to be all that Christ is before Him, so that there might not be a cloud between our hearts and Him, that we might enjoy His presence, and that He might have His delight in us.

Next in this wondrous calling of God, we find the relationship He has been pleased to set us in; only let us remember that it is no question yet of our being brought *into* these great things, but the

revelation of what was in the heart of God as to us from eternity. "Having predestinated us unto sonship by Jesus Christ to himself according to the good pleasure of his will." Note, "to himself" — the most precious word in this verse. It was not merely something to make us happy and blessed, to fill and satisfy our hearts in the sense of relationship with Him; but it was what He counselled for Himself, and what alone could satisfy His own heart for us in the relationship of sons before the Father. If we had been predestinated to the position of angels, how wonderful it would have been, for rebel sinners such as we; but angelic relationship would never have satisfied the counsels of eternal love. Myriads of them there are that ever do His pleasure, but they are but servants. Not one of them could ever call Him Father; and He wants to surround Himself in His own home with the cry of "Abba Father." It was according to the good pleasure of His will that we should be His sons. Nor is this all; there is that which God counted upon to be to the glory of His grace; in which all His grace would be so expressed that it would be to the praise of the glory of it for ever. What was it? That in that grace "He has [according to the full force of the word] taken us into favour in the beloved." The Spirit of God changes the expression which is really the keynote of the epistle. "In *Christ*" will not suffice here; it is "in the *Beloved*." It recalls the voice from the opened heavens, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." In nothing less than all the favour that rests upon the beloved Son of the Father, we are before Him. The next verse brings in redemption through His blood, the basis of the whole position in righteousness, and which alone made it possible for us as sinners; but that was *according to the riches of His grace*. Our place in divine favour was to be "to the *praise of the glory of His grace*."

Such then in its whole extent is this wondrous calling of God.

But the Apostle prays that we may know the hope of it. (Ver. 18) What then is "the hope of his calling"? It is not the Lord's coming in Ephesians; and this because of the height of the position in which we are set, as made to sit in the heavenlies in Christ. (Eph. 2: 6) His coming would, as it were, disturb the seated ones. The hope of it is the full realisation in the eternal glory of all that God has called us into in Christ, as the fruit of His counsels of a past eternity. Would that we were more deeply impressed with the wholly heavenly and eternal character of such a calling; counselled for us in Christ before the world's foundation, possessed in Him in the heavenlies, and to be realised in full conformity to Him in the glory of God for ever. No link with time or the course of this world: the Christian belongs to eternity.

Now we come to the second object of His desire for us, that we may know "what the riches of the glory of his inheritance." In His calling, we look up above; the inheritance, as it were, stretches out beneath our feet. Verses 10 and 11 give it to us, in a marvellous way, in connection with the revelation of the mystery of His will; that is of what God had purposed in Himself from eternity for the glory of Christ, but which had never been disclosed before. "That in the dispensation of the fulness of times" (when the dispensations had run their course, succeeding one another until the end for which they had been started had been reached), the end would be that all things in heaven and upon earth would be found to be headed up (for such is the force of the expression) in Christ. We know that according to Psalm 8, quoted in verse 22 of this chapter, all things shall be put under His feet. He must reign till all enemies are put under His feet (see 1 Cor. 15: 25). It is characteristic of the kingdom. But that is not the mystery here revealed, which brings us to the magnificent result of all God's ways in government in the dispensations of time, including the kingdom; that the whole universe — "all things which are in the heavens, and which are upon the earth" — should be headed up in blessing in Christ. That is the glory of His inheritance. It is His first, and only in Him that we shall enter into it, as made heirs of that whole inheritance of glory. What a prospect opens out before the eyes of faith! "In whom we also have obtained inheritance [or been made heirs] being predestinated according to the purpose of him who

worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will."

Attention has to be called specially to the force of the passage (ver. 11), as through misunderstanding the bearing of the truth the Revised Version has made us the inheritance. No, we are the heirs, heirs of God, co-heirs with Christ; and there is no possibility of confounding the heirs and the inheritance. And there is nothing that would more confirm this, and at the same time bring out the wonderful character of the inheritance, than what comes out in verses 13, 14. That in Christ — having heard the word of truth, the gospel of our salvation, and believed in Him — we "were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession." The moment we believed in Christ according to the glad tidings of His accomplished work, we received the Holy Ghost to dwell within us — the seal of God that we were His, and the earnest for us of all that is before us in the glory of the inheritance. The earnest is not for the inheritance, but for the heirs, as anyone can see. We have received nothing of the inheritance yet. Christ has not received it. Though He has purchased it with His blood, redemption has yet to be applied in power to the purchased possession. It is in Him we pass into the inheritance. But until and in view of that moment, nothing short of the Spirit of God dwelling in us is the earnest of it. What must be the glory of the inheritance of which the Holy Ghost is the earnest! The same blessed Spirit that descended and abode upon Christ, as we have seen in Matthew 3, and by whom He was sealed as the perfect object of the Father's delight, is now the seal of God upon us in Him, completing the whole wonderful position in which Christ was manifested there, only that then He was absolutely alone in that position in His personal perfection. But now, as the result of the precious corn of wheat having fallen into the ground and died, all is made ours in resurrection in Him; to be known and enjoyed by the power of the Holy Ghost.

But why, it may be asked, does it say "the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints"? Because it is in the saints He takes possession of the inheritance. We have seen it set out before us in all its boundless extent — all things in heaven and in earth. (Ver. 10) It is the inheritance of Christ. But, as Jehovah took possession of Canaan, as His inheritance, by putting Israel into possession; so when Christ takes possession of all things as Head of the universe, He does so by putting the heavenly saints into possession, and it becomes the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.

So far we have seen then how the prayer depends upon (as it refers to) the two great parts of the preceding instruction. Now He seeks that we may know the power that has been operative to put us into the calling, and make us heirs of the inheritance, as has been said.

What is that power? It is nothing short of the power that wrought in raising Christ from the dead, that is now to usward who believe. What a conception is afforded us of the exceeding greatness of it, "according to the working of his mighty power which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead." That was a scene of universal death, in which God began to work, to carry out the counsels of eternity and reveal Himself as never before — all men dead in trespasses and sins, and the Lord of life and glory Himself in the sepulchre, made as sure as man could make it that he should never have anything more to do with the Son of God. In that world of death the power of God "wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenlies, above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in that which is to come." If only we could enter into the character of the scene as presented to the eye of God, now come out fully as the result of the long trial of the ages — not a leaf of moral life stirring in the whole creation, men alive and active enough in the pursuit of anything Satan as the prince of it had to present to them, but perfectly dead in sins before God, and to God, and the blessed Lord Himself in death as the full expression of that condition under the judgment of God — we should

be able the better to estimate the display of the power of God as presented in raising that one Man from the dead to the highest point of heavenly glory. It is the first action of God in the epistle, in so raising Christ. We have not here God giving Him to go down to death, to charge Himself with our sins and be made sin for us, thus to end the whole history of the race, in the judgment He endured. We have seen that that history is not within the scope of the epistle. It is simply God acting by His power in a world of death, to make good the thoughts and counsels of eternal love that He had as to Christ, and us in Him in what is a wholly new creation, of which Christ, raised from the dead is Head — given to be "the Head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." Before the day when He takes His headship over all things (ver. 10), the church recognises Him in that headship in her own relationship to Him as His body; He filling all things not only by His Godhead glory, but by the glory of His redemption work, and the church His fulness in that day of glory.

And now we see what was faintly shadowed forth in Eden realised in all this wonderful work of power and love and glory. When God set Adam at the head of all subordinate creation, He gave him Eve to share his position. So now when Christ is raised from the dead to take His place as the last Adam, Head of everything in heaven and on earth, He has given Him the church, His heavenly Eve, to share with Him the whole inheritance of glory. What a wonderful place! How blessed the power that has wrought to set us there, reaching down to us where we were in all our death and sins; even the same mighty power that wrought to raise Christ from the dead, now put forth that we might be quickened together with Him, raised up together and made to sit together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus. I do not attempt to go into the detail of that work of divine power as it applies to us. But it is blessed to know that one result of it is "that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us in Christ Jesus." That God should have wrought out of such material to form the church as the body of Christ makes us the expression, in the ages to come, of how far His grace could go, of how great the extent of it; while another and present object in that work is seen in verse 10. "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them:" the epistle from Ephesians 4 opening out to us this fore-ordained path and the works that flow from our new creation in Christ, according to His eternal counsels.

But now I want that we should see the connection of the truth that leads the Apostle again to prayer for us in Ephesians 3. The first part of Ephesians 1 has been the revelation of our individual place in Christ before God and the Father in eternity; the latter part bringing in also our corporate relationship to Christ as His body, in connection with the work of God in time to accomplish what He counselled in eternity; with the result that in Eph. 1: 11-22 we have the formed existing assembly upon earth, and this in its relationship also to God, who has taken up His dwelling-place in it by the Spirit, as the habitation of God.

In Ephesians 3 the Apostle brings out his own part in the work in connection with the mystery. There was his double ministry; first of the gospel, verses 7, 8, "To preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." This is the wonderful scope of the gospel, the riches of Christ, beyond all that can be traced out. What an inexhaustible theme for the evangelist!

Then, besides, there was his ministry of the mystery, verses 9-12, "To make all men see what is the administration" — it is a fuller word than "fellowship," though fellowship is a very sweet part of that administration. But the larger word takes in all that pertains to the practical carrying out of the truth of the church as the body of Christ on earth.

The truths of this twofold ministry of the gospel and the mystery are not merely for heaven. No ministry of them will be needed there. They are to form the whole practical life of the Christian here.

This was what lay before the Apostle now from Ephesians 4 to the end. Think of the interests of God and of Christ in such a result — the immensity of it all. "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in the heavenlies might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God."

These exalted intelligences of the heavens had never seen anything like the church before. They were familiar with the display of Godhead power in creation; they had seen His judgments, His providence, His works of grace, and — beyond all — God manifest in the flesh, the object of their worship thus taking form for them for the first time.

But here was an entirely new part of the ways of God; "That the Gentiles should be co-heirs and of a co-body, and co-partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel." That out of such heterogeneous elements, racial animosities, and opposed nationalities — Jew and Gentile — should be formed one body of all who are Christ's, united to Him their Head in glory, and walking as the members of His body on the earth. The like of this had never been seen on earth before. It was as though God, who created all things, had now put forth all the resources of His power in the formation of this body upon earth, that to the principalities and the powers of the heavenlies might therein be known, as in a masterpiece, His manifold wisdom "according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." And I do not doubt that it is so still, in spite of the most humbling failure of the assembly from almost the first, to answer to what it is before God; these powers in the heavenlies would be able to distinguish between the wonderful work of God, and the miserable mess we have made of it.

How necessary then it would seem that the Apostle should once more betake himself to prayer for us, before entering into the detail of the practical walk of the assembly and the saints that compose it, and how we need to seek to enter into what becomes in reality the inspired desires of the heart of God for us. His prayer is now to the Father. "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom every family in heaven and earth is named;" whether it be angelic, or those of Jew and Gentile, or the church of God, all come, each in its distinct place, under the Name of the Father of our Lord Jesus in the divine scheme of blessing. "That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith."

The prayer is not now "that we may know," as in chapter 1 — not for the intelligence of our place in Christ; of primary importance as is the intelligent entrance into the counsels of God that have given us that place, there is a yet deeper need if the truth is to be held in freshness and formative power, namely the dwelling in our hearts in communion, of the Christ in whom our place is. And what resources are available for this! There are "the riches of His glory," that is, of all the wonderful revelation of the Father in the Son — the only measure of the power by which we may be strengthened "by his [the Father's] Spirit in the inner man." I know not if the blessed Spirit is anywhere else so presented; but how perfectly in keeping here, when it is by the Father's Spirit that He who dwells in the Father's heart may now dwell in our hearts by faith.

The prayer in Ephesians 1 was connected with our being in Christ; here it is with His being in us, and not merely as life, but now as the centre and object of that life. He is the centre of all the Father's thoughts and counsels of eternity. He would bring that centre into our hearts by the power of His Spirit: "That ye being rooted and grounded in love" — in all the love that has been revealed to us in these counsels — "may be able to apprehend with all saints" — for the love of Christ would not leave out one — "what is the breadth and length and depth and height" — of what? Nay, it cannot be defined. If Christ is the centre there is no circumference to that boundless sphere of glory — "all things that the Father hath," that are Christ's according to the Father's will, and the work that has given effect to it, in

which all the glory of God the Father has been revealed and made good.

"And to know the love of Christ." This might seem to bring our hearts back from what has been so infinitely beyond us to what is more within our reach. But it is at once to let us know that it passeth all that we can know. His love is as boundless as the vast infinity of God's counsels and revelation of Himself in them. Yet how sweet it is to know that His love surpasses (we have had the word already in Ephesians 1: 19, and Ephesians 2: 7) knowledge in its greatness. Truly it needed that the inner man be strengthened with might by His Spirit, that we might enter with ever increasing measure into what has no limit or end, "that ye might be filled into all the fulness of God." For thus has He revealed Himself. And dwelling in love we dwell in God and God in us. Every thought of the prayer is so wonderful. But let us not forget the divine resources that are presented to us that there may be a little progress in the appreciation of the thoughts that are revealed, and, in our entrance into them, which alone can fit us for a walk worthy of such a calling.

Thus — we have come to the Apostle's closing words, "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us." This brings out the force of the prayer; it is not for the objective knowledge of the great truths of God's calling, but for our subjective realisation and entrance into them. It is not now simply the exceeding greatness of the power that wrought to give effect to the will of God in that calling by the resurrection of Christ from the dead, now *to usward* who believe. That was the prayer of Ephesians 1. It is a power that works in us, which is such that if God is able to do superlatively above all not only that we ask but even think of asking, it is according to that power. How often that last clause of the verse is left out.

It need hardly be said that no ruin can touch these things, that have all the stability of the eternal counsels of God. They are revealed and remain today for all the saints of God to give form and character to their path. And how immeasurable are the resources that God presents to us, as available for our entrance in communion with Him into His thoughts and counsels for the glory of Christ in the church, that the precious truths of it may be wrought out in us, to His glory in it for ever. The last verse assures us of the full final accomplishment of this. "Now unto him be glory in the church in Christ Jesus unto all generations of the age of ages [the fullest expression in the original of eternity in Scripture], Amen."

"In Christ."

In seeking the light of Scripture as to what the expression, "in Christ," conveys, it is important to bear in mind that the starting-point of Christianity was Christ as man taking a new place on high consequent on the work of redemption having been accomplished. "In Christ" sets forth this place as that of everyone who believes God as to the value of the work on the ground of which Christ has taken His place on high. By that work He has won the title in righteousness to set every believer in His place, in life, righteousness, and perfect acceptance before God. In Christ is found the new character of the Christian's life as possessed in Him. It is life such as it never existed before, in a risen Man, past every question of sin, death, the judgment of God, and the power of Satan. Then again it expresses the righteousness in which the believer stands: "He who knew no sin became sin for us, that we might become God's righteousness *in him*." (2 Cor. 5: 21) Nor is it otherwise with our acceptance; for "to the praise of the glory of his grace he hath made us accepted *in the beloved*." (Eph. 1: 6) And in one all-inclusive statement (Col. 2: 9) we are *in Him* — "complete in him" — who also as the exalted Man on high is above all principality and power. Further, we learn from the Lord, in John 14: 20, that it was to

be the characteristic portion of the believer, when the Spirit was come, to know that Christ was in the Father, and we in Him, and He in us. But there are two ways in which this new and wonderful position of the Christian is presented to us in the Bible.

First, as we have been looking at it, objectively; that is, as revealed to the opened eye of faith in all the perfection of it in Christ risen and glorified. Then in the ways of God with us in order that we may enter into the position subjectively; that is, so as to be consciously in our own souls in all the blessedness of the position of Christ before God. For the deeply interesting study of these ways of God with us we naturally turn to the epistle to the Romans, where are found the great foundation truths of how God, in grace that reigns through righteousness, can take up a poor sinner into relationships with Himself. Our place in Christ comes first fully into view in Romans 8: 1: "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ." Much had gone before in the epistle to lead up to such a statement — much that is needed for our souls in order to enter into it intelligently. "No condemnation" does not merely express that I am justified, but that being in Christ I am in all the impossibility of condemnation for Him. No wave of judgment could reach Noah shut in by the Lord in the ark. Condemnation must first reach Christ where He is in glory before it can reach those that are in Him. Let us turn back then to try and trace a little what brings the believer into such a position, free to look up upon Christ, and to know that Christ's place is the only measure of ours. The whole of the first part of the epistle has been taken up with our sins, and how God has met our case in relation to them. It is by the double aspect of the work of Christ, as the propitiation through faith in His blood, laying the ground for God to be righteous in justifying any ungodly sinner that believes in Jesus (Rom. 3: 25), and as *substitute* for all who have believed; for "He was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification." (Rom. 4: 25) So that the moment we rest upon God's testimony as to these accomplished facts of the work of Christ, we have peace with God through Him (Rom. 5: 1), and receive the Holy Ghost who is the power of our entrance into, and enjoyment of, the whole Christian position. But before it can be ours to enter into and enjoy, there is a deeper question than that of our *sins* that has to be gone into in the soul with God, namely that of *sin*. This is taken up from Romans 5: 12, and is the subject of Romans 6 - 7. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Adam only became the head of a race when he had sinned, thus involving his race in his ruin. From him we inherited a corrupt, fallen flesh, incapable of any good; this is the root that produced all the evil of our life. The solemn truth of this our common state has to be brought home to us individually in the ways of God with us, in order that we may know in all its reality deliverance out of that state, just as we had to be convicted of our *sins* to know pardon and peace. The process is a painful and humbling one, as is opened out to us in Romans 7; but it is needed to break the will of the flesh, as we learn how incorrigible the evil of it, and our utter helplessness against it. Sooner or later, whether *before* forgiveness is known or *after*, we have all to go through this experimental learning of what the flesh is in us, in order to enter into our place in Christ, and the liberty that flows from it. The fact of a struggle within proves the existence of a nature we have received from God by new birth. Only thus could it be said of any, "I delight in the law of God after the inward man." This was the beginning of a divine work in our souls. The conviction of sins was the sure mark of it. And when the new-born ones rested on God's testimony as to the finished work of Christ, they were justified from all things, and received the Spirit to dwell within them.

The epistle to the Ephesians brings out the full light of the position in Christ from the standpoint of God's eternal counsels.

But there is another aspect of the place and state we were found in, and of how it has been met, that is needed in order that we may apprehend what it is to be in Christ, according to that wonderful

point of view. I refer to our connection with the fallen race of the first man, and the need of transference to that of a wholly new order of man in Christ.

We learned in the epistle to the Romans, not only that our sins had been met by the cross of Christ, but also that the root that produced them, the flesh in us derived from fallen Adam, has been condemned in the death of the Son of God. But the truth goes further still, and in the epistle to the Colossians we are brought to the end of the man to whom alone these principles of the flesh could apply. Thus in all this, while there are points of contact with the truth in Romans, there is an advance upon that epistle, which if it be spiritually discerned, greatly clears the way for what is before us as to the full positive revelation of "in Christ" in Ephesians.

But how are we to approach the wonderful revelation of what was in the heart of God for us from eternity? If the ground is simpler because it is wholly a question of God acting from Himself to make good what He has counselled for His own glory in Christ, it is so much the more beyond all thought in the immensity of the blessing that lies out before us. Worship is the true attitude of the soul as we receive such communications; even as the Apostle seeks relief in it, as it were, in the greatness of the revelation filling his thoughts. (Ver. 3) We have but to take up the place we are given in simple faith, like the once prodigal at the Father's feast, with hearts bowed before the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, to bless Him "who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ." Not a blessing withheld, of the richest character, in the highest place, and all made ours in Christ. No wonder the Apostle's heart is full as he proceeds to the inspired communication of the blessings in their order.

And now nothing can be more important for our apprehension of them, than to seek to get hold of the point of view at which they are presented to us. Verse 4, "According as he has chosen us in him before the foundation of the world." Observe that we are carried back before the history of man opened; before even the foundation of the world that God had yet to fit for his habitation, was laid; before time itself began; to learn what the choice of God was in eternity. There is no activity of counsel yet, but simply what He chose, as suited to His own nature. How astonishing to learn by the next words that it was "us, in him" as seen in the perfection of Christ "holy and without blame before him in love." Time is not taken into account. But if it was in Christ God had us thus before Him in eternity, it is when Christ was here that it became manifested what God's choice was. And so it was in Matthew 3: 16, 17, when the heavens were opened to Him and the Father's voice proclaimed "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." As we behold Him there, was He not holy, and without blame, and in love, the cherished object of the Father's delight, out before His own gaze? That is what we were chosen in Him to be.

But besides this place in Christ before God, there comes the thought of what relationship would suit the heart of God for those so chosen to be in Him. For it will be observed how in this whole passage it is not that God plans for our blessing merely, but for what would satisfy Himself in the character of the blessing. This only enhances it infinitely. And now we find the counsels of God in activity. "Having predestinated us unto sonship by Jesus Christ to himself." ("Adoption of sons" is really one word, "sonship.") If God had been pleased to put us into the position of angels, how marvellous it would have seemed to us. But that would not meet His thoughts. The elect angels, though they excel in strength and ever do His will, are but ministering spirits (servants, that is), and never could be anything else. But it was the will of God that His house should be filled with the cry of "Abba, Father." Hence sonship was to be our blessed relationship "to himself" - mark, the most precious part of the verse — "according to the good pleasure of his will." This relationship was also manifested in Christ in all the blessedness of Son with the Father, as we have heard the word "This is my beloved

Son."

Yet there is more, for which we are in measure prepared, when we hear of something that is to be "to the praise of the glory of his grace" (ver. 6), that is, of the full revelation of His grace.

It is that He "hath taken us into favour [for the word expresses nothing less than this] *in the Beloved.*" The oft-repeated "in Christ" of the epistle is here changed with divine design to bring out that all the favour in which the Beloved Son is in His presence, is our place in it. We are beloved in the Beloved One.

These verses that we have been looking at, set forth how God saw us in Christ in eternity in the counsels of His own love. Nevertheless it is very blessed that it can be brought out that we have redemption also in Him (ver. 7), because it provides the righteous basis for the accomplishment of the counsels. It forms the link between God's counsels and us where we were in our sins, involving the forgiveness of them. Only that now it is not the same revelation of the *glory* of His grace, as in our acceptance, but we are met by the *riches* of His grace, in the poverty of our need.

Even now all is not yet told of what was in the purpose of God for us. There was to be an inheritance suited to the dignity of such a calling — "His calling." (Ver. 18) What it is comes out in His making known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself; namely, that when the dispensations of time have had their course, He would, as the object of His ways in them, head up all things in heaven and upon earth in Christ. For now we find that in Him we have been made heirs of that whole inheritance of glory, having been predestinated to it "according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will."

What thoughts are these of divine and infinite love, communicated to us that we may enter into them by simple faith. For if verses 4-6 give us His calling, in all that is so infinitely above us, verses 9-11, add our inheritance in all that vast scene of glory that will be below us, all made ours in Christ.

There is but one thing more needed to complete the glorious position of the Christian, as it also gives us the present power of the realisation of it: it is the sealing of the Holy Ghost. (Vers. 13, 14) *In whom* also having believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise which is the earnest of our inheritance." Again we can look back to see the manifestation of it with Christ when He was here, and the Spirit of God descended like a dove and abode upon Him. It is only in Him, and according to the salvation He has wrought for us that the moment, we believed the glad tidings we received the Holy Ghost, and have thus been sealed for God, while He is the earnest for us of all that is before us in the glory of the inheritance, when redemption will have been put forth in power to it.

May this brief study, however partial and defective, of what is conveyed to us by the expression "in Christ" be used to encourage our hearts to seek to enter into the fulness of the blessing made ours to enjoy by faith, and the power of the Holy Ghost.

"Show Me Thy Glory."

Rom. 3: 22, 23; Rom. 5: 2; Ex. 33: 18, 20; 2 Cor. 3: 18, N.Tr.

It is an immense thing for the soul when it is seen from the first that His own glory is the standard to which God will conform all those whom He is pleased to take into relationship with Himself. Nothing short of this will do for Him, nothing but what perfectly answers to that standard can ever

enter into the glory of God. Now the gospel is the full revelation of that glory.

Only in the consciousness of being fit for His presence could any creature be at home with God; and such is His love that He will have us there in no other way. Nor is this true of the future only. God has wrought in blessed grace to bring us to Himself now, that we may be before Him without fear, every barrier broken down, no unsettled question between our souls and Him. *The ground* of such a place is found in that "Christ hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." *The effect* is known in the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost given us. The Holy Ghost is also within us as the Spirit of sonship whereby we cry Abba, Father, in the childlike confidence and holy intimacy of such nearness to God, while God Himself has become our exceeding joy. Not a step is taken in the Christian path here before we can "give thanks to the Father who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." (Col. 1: 12)

Who can bridge the distance between the first two verses that head our paper? It is "the gospel of the glory of Christ" alone that enables us to put them together; the whole revelation that God has given us of Himself in that gospel lies between these two points. But who could have conceived that the glory of God, the light of which convicts us as sinners in Romans 3, should become the hope of the believer in Romans 5: 2? Well may it be said of us, even more than of Jacob and Israel of old, "What hath God wrought?" (Num. 23: 23)

To "come short" in no sense refers to the innumerable shortcomings of conduct with which all who know themselves must charge themselves before God. But, that as in the public service there is a standard of height for the army and the like, and no one who does not come up to it can be taken into the ranks, so God has a standard for those He receives. It is His glory, long hidden behind the veil, but now brought to light in the gospel. Every creature must submit himself to it. Nor is it any question of the degrees in which we are short of it. "There is no difference:" we all fall short of the only standard of the sanctuary.

How fatal is the fallacy of measuring ourselves by any other; and we have all done this. "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men: extortioners, unjust, adulterers, nor even as this publican," expresses not only the utter blindness of the religious Pharisee in the parable, but is the fruitful cause of blindness everywhere. Who does not know somebody to compare himself with advantageously or the reverse? It is all false ground to take, and the surest way to be deceived by the enemy of God and of our souls.

Romans 3: 9-19 presents the glass into which we must look if we would know the truth of our condition. "All are under sin:" there is no exception. By every avenue by which what is in man could come out — the throat, the tongue, the lips, the mouth, the feet, the ways, the eyes — in awful sevenfold completeness nothing but sin is expressed: and this not the state of the heathen merely. It is the testimony of the law as to those who are under it, "that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world be under judgment to God." (Ver. 19, N.T.) All nice distinctions between sinner and sinner, that men think to make in their own favour, utterly disappear before God. Measured by His standard, "there is no difference; for all have sinned, and fall short [R.V.] of the glory of God."

Yet if God had left us to apply the standard to ourselves, who would not have preferred his own estimate of himself? But it is just here that the goodness of God intervenes to lead the sinner to repentance. (Rom. 2: 4) He it is who in sovereign grace takes His own way to bring home the light of the revelation to our souls. Nothing is calculated to affect the heart more than these ways of His grace, pursuing the soul individually, that would have never sought Him, to bring sins upon the conscience, without which there is no reality in the soul with God.

Isaiah gives us a beautiful case in point of this work of God. The prophet tells us of his conversion. He saw "the Lord sitting upon a throne high and lifted up:" every circumstance of majesty was there. The Seraphim cried, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory." John 12: 41 clearly states that it was the glory of the Lord Jesus that Isaiah saw. What was the immediate effect of His glory upon him? "Then said I, Woe is me!" It was a wonderful interlude of grace to the prophet: he had been pronouncing woe upon every phase of iniquity in Israel (Isa. 5: 8, 11, 18, 20-22), and had yet to complete the solemn sevenfold denunciation of it in Isa. 10: 1 (Isa. 6 to Isa. 9: 7 coming in as a parenthesis of God's purposes centred in the Virgin's Son, Immanuel). Now he has to pronounce it upon himself: "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips . . . for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." Unclean lips would not do for the glory of the Lord.

But what made his lips unclean "Not that which goeth into the mouth" — as the Lord says in Matthew 15: 11, 18 — "defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man. . . . Those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart, and they defile the man." Here we are all in the same case, whatever the apparent differences as to outward life. "Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart is only evil continually" is found to be not only an antediluvian state of things, but the truth of the heart of man everywhere and at all times: it is the defiled spring of everything that defiles. The moment Isaiah was brought to his true bearings before God, the answer of grace in the removal of his guilt, in as far as it could be known then, was not delayed a moment.

But the truth as to man's condition under the light of the glory of God goes deeper still. Let us turn to Exodus 33. Here the whole circumstances are such as to profoundly impress the soul. Moses had been admitted to an unprecedented privilege of intercourse with God. "The Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend." (Ver. 11) Emboldened by the favour shown him he proffers his request and is answered graciously. But there was a reserve of which he was conscious, and at last it takes shape: "He said, I beseech thee, show me thy glory." (Ver. 18) We may not all have been led to such a defined sense of need as to be able to express it in this way. Yet it may be confidently affirmed that no soul is at settled rest in the presence of God that has not found the answer to what Moses thus sought but that could not be granted to him.

"And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. And he said, Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live." (Vers. 19, 20) There were sovereign resources of goodness and grace and mercy in the Name thus proclaimed, upon which faith could count for the new relations of the Lord with the people, for whom otherwise all was lost in their total failure in the responsibility they had assumed. But the whole ground upon which men under law stood, and that was Moses' personal position (his typical place as representative of Christ as Mediator is not in question), was untenable, in the light of the glory of God.

For the law came to man, already a sinner, to demand that he should not be one; nor does it open to him any way of deliverance from that condition: it neither gave life, nor strength, nor object and in result can only bring him under the curse. For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them," (See Gal. 3: 10 and 21) When this was the revealed ground upon which Moses stood it was no wonder that there could be no manifestation of the glory of the Lord. It would have been his destruction.

We are brought to this, then, that it is not only that a guilty conscience cannot stand before Him who is "of purer eyes than to behold evil," nor that the state of the heart unfits for His presence, but that

man at his best will not do for God. Yet because nothing is so strange or contrary to the thoughts of men God had to allow the truth to come out in the long patient trial of the ages up to the cross of Christ. The history of the chosen nation which forms so large a part of the Old Testament, was just that of man proved under the most favourable circumstances.

The parable of the Lord in Mark 12 leads us to the result. God had sent servant after servant to His vineyard to receive the fruits of His culture, but they had been shamefully handled, sent away empty, or killed: "Having yet therefore one Son, his well-beloved, he sent him also last unto them, saying, They will reverence my Son." But when they recognised Him, "they took him, and killed him, and cast him out of the vineyard." It was the last answer of man's heart to the last test God had to apply to it — "Away with him, crucify him."

Stephen, at the close of his remarkable address in Acts 7, sums up the whole history. The promises were despised (for they turned back in heart into Egypt), the law transgressed, the prophets persecuted and slain, the Just One betrayed and murdered, and the Holy Ghost always resisted. What a history of man under probation! What a disclosure of the state of his whole race! Not a sound spot to be found in it: not a man that answered to the standard of God. How far has the solemn lesson been learned in our souls to this day, that having given up all hope of ourselves, we might submit ourselves without reserve to the absolute necessity of God's way of dealing with the race, as announced in His early sentence, "The end of all flesh is come before me"? (Gen. 6: 13)

But if it should appear as if we were no nearer the discovery of how any of us could ever rejoice in hope of the glory of God, when the only effect hitherto of any rays of the light of it has been to reveal men, and all men alike, to be fit for nothing but the judgment of God; the truth is — and it is very blessed to be brought to know it — that all God's dealings with the race have had for their object to shut up the soul to the second Man, whom God has found for Himself, and of whom the first was but a figure. (Rom. 5: 14; 1 Cor. 15: 45-49)

As the second Man the Lord Jesus Christ is contrasted with the first, for the question was of bringing in another man, instead of any further dealings with the first, to modify or improve his condition. He is the last Adam, as foreclosing the history of the first, the One and the only One in whom there was any hope for men from the beginning. To Him the eye of faith turns to find the perfection in which God delights. He it is who is made of God to the believer all that fits us for the unclouded light of His glory (1 Cor. 1: 31), and to whose image we shall yet be conformed according to the eternal counsel of His love. (Rom. 8: 29)

For there was another aspect of Christ's presence in the world than that of bringing out by His rejection the state of all hearts before God. An intimation of it is found at the moment of His entrance into it, in the outburst of heavenly praise over the new-born Babe in Bethlehem, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good pleasure in men." (Luke 2: 14, N.T.) For that was the order of heaven's mind, if little thought of on earth. There must be glory to God before there could be peace on earth, or God's good pleasure in men. Can we in any little measure seek to follow out by the Spirit's teaching how that glory was accomplished? It must be as our eyes, closed upon all that is of the man under condemnation, are open upon the One in whom God finds His perfect delight. In Him we trace the path of man's perfection before God as had never been found on earth before. Man governed only by the will of Him who had sent Him. By every form of testing He was proved to be perfect in dependence, in obedience, in the devotedness of love to the Father, and the absolute refusal of the world's glory. His path was one solitary track of light across the darkness of man's world.

The Father's estimate of that tested and perfect path, even if there was no other to enter into it,

was declared on the Mount of Transfiguration, as we learn from the chosen witnesses of His majesty. "He received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (2 Peter 1: 16, 17) At last there was a Man upon earth that the excellent glory could claim as perfectly suited to it, and in the moral contrast between Him and all other men there is the final demonstration that they are short of the only standard God can recognise.

But did the heavens then receive Him from the holy mount whose title none could dispute to enter into them, and did He leave the world to the judgment of God? No; blessed be God! He came down from that mountain to begin His last journey to Jerusalem to die. From His own words we learn the meaning of the descent. When Judas was gone out into the night to consummate his treachery, and prove what the heart of man was capable of, "Jesus said, Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him." Let us pause to note how in His perfection He counts it His glory to be able to glorify God, though it had to be in all the shame and humiliation of the cross. But He continues: "If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him." (John 13: 31, 32) God had indeed been glorified in His walk before Him in man's perfection. He had been glorified, too, in the perfect revelation of all divine goodness in man before men, as it never had come out before. But the full outflow of that goodness was still hindered, and Jesus had to say, "I have a baptism to be baptised with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished." (Luke 12: 50)

The whole question of sin — for man's state was proved to be nothing but sin — had to be gone into, and God glorified as to sin. The blessed Lord was on His way to the cross to meet, in the baptism of divine judgment due to sin, the worst work of the enemy and turn it into the occasion of bringing the brightest glory to God, in the revelation of all that He is. The mighty works of creation had displayed His eternal power and Godhead, but told nothing of His nature, save as the general impression of beneficence might be gathered from the character of His works. But in the work of the cross every moral attribute of His Being has been revealed and glorified, and that when nothing but sin was in question. There what God is *against sin* has come out as fully as all that He is *for the sinner*. Divine holiness was manifested when Jesus was left in the anguish of His soul to cry, "My God, My God! why hast thou forsaken me?" Divine righteousness against sin, was there declared in sin's righteous judgment infinitely endured — not one drop of the dreaded cup remitted to Him who could alone exhaust it. The majesty of the throne was vindicated. The truth of God was maintained, light and love, what God is in Himself, were in full manifestation. GOD had been revealed and glorified.

And now the claim of the Lord Jesus was that if it were so indeed, that God was glorified in His accomplished work, He would glorify Him in Himself, and not wait for the kingdom to do it, but "straightway" glorify Him. Again, in John 17: 1, He can say "The hour is come" (He takes His place as having gone through it), and claims glory by His divine title as the Son; while in verses 4, 5 He claims to take His place as man in the glory He had with the Father before the world was, on the ground that "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." Could the answer to such a claim be withheld? Impossible, in very righteousness, to say nothing of what we can conceive so little of, the satisfaction of the Father's heart in it. Before the devoted women that loved Him could be at the sepulchre that resurrection morning, the glory of the Father had been there: He "was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father." (Rom. 6: 4) "God raised him up from the dead and gave him glory." (1 Peter 1: 21) The Spirit witnesses of the full positive revelation of the righteousness of God in the place He has set Him in. (John 16: 10)

"All the depths of Thy heart's sorrow

Told in answering glory now."

Well may we rejoice in the place He has taken. It is the seal of God put upon the perfection of the work of the cross that has so infinitely glorified Him, when the Son of God had given Himself to bear our sins and be made sin for us. Well may we rest where God rests. We are saved by nothing short of the work that is the everlasting glory of God.

We have already seen that God has been infinitely glorified by the work of the cross; and that we rest for salvation where God rests; so that the work by which we are saved will be the everlasting glory of God.

The full force of the expression in 2 Corinthians 4: 4 (which must be rendered) "the gospel of the glory of Christ" will now be seen. It is not the "glorious gospel" of the A.V., expressing merely what is fine, and that even as connected with glory to the fullest degree, but it defines the glory, in which He is, as *the point of the testimony*. It is the glad tidings that God has found such glory in the work accomplished by the Lord Jesus as to our sins, that He has exalted Him to the highest point of heavenly glory.

The consequent position of the believer is now presented to us in wonderful contrast to that of Moses in the last passage referred to. (2 Corinthians 3) The law had attached the promise of life to the condition of doing: "This do and thou shalt live," but we needed life to be able to do anything. "The Spirit giveth life" to begin with, in contrast to the letter that killeth. That is, the glory of Christ, though hidden beneath the letter, had been the mind of God according to spiritual intelligence of it in the Old Testament. The Spirit now reveals Him as the object of faith, and so gives life where alone it is to be found, in Christ. The law demanded righteousness from those under it: "It shall be our righteousness if we observe to do all these commandments" (Deut. 6: 25); and of course it would have been but man's righteousness. But as righteousness never came by the law, and there was "none righteous," it became but a ministration of death and condemnation to man. (Vers. 7, 9)

But now the gospel as Paul preached it is a "ministration of righteousness." (Ver. 9) From the glory where Christ is, righteousness is ministered to us. "Bring forth the best robe and put it on him." (Luke 15) And instead of man's righteousness (if there had been any), that never carried anything with it but long life and good days on earth — no ray of heavenly glory — it is the righteousness of God, so perfectly suited to the glory of God that it has already carried Christ into that glory as Man, from the very depths of the judgment where divine love had led Him for us. Him who knew no sin, "God has made sin for us, that we might become God's righteousness in him." (2 Cor. 5: 21) Finally, as completing the whole individual Christian position, there is a "ministration of the Spirit." (Ver. 8) To those who have received Christ as their life and righteousness, the Spirit is given to be the power of an enjoyment of the whole wonderful revelation.

Now looking at the position of Moses again, which was that of man under the law: there was, indeed, a place by Jehovah, a rock, "And it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a cleft of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by: and I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts: but my face shall not be seen." No hiding-place is needed now, that the manifestation of the glory of the Lord might be only a partial one for us. There is no hiding in a cleft as the glory passes before us in John 17. Every ray of it is concentrated on that face once more marred than that of any man; and we can look upon the glory in His face; for it is that of Him who gave Himself for us.

But Moses could not be in presence of even the back parts of Jehovah's glory without bearing away a reflection of it; and so when he came down from the Mount the skin of his face shone. "And

when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses . . . they were afraid to come nigh him." They could not bear even the feeble reflection of the partial manifestation of it. The reason is not far to seek: what was that in his hands? The two tables of stone, rewritten by the finger of God — the "ministration of condemnation." The nearer the light of the glory came while it was still connected with the righteous claim of God upon them, the more intolerable it was. So "till Moses had done speaking with them he put a veil on his face." (Ex. 34: 29-35)

No claim is connected with the glory on the face of the Lord Jesus. It was never revealed there till every claim of broken law and outraged holiness had been gone into and settled for ever. It is the witness to us of God's infinite satisfaction with the settlement made in the propitiatory work of the cross. Moses had indeed, proposed to make such a settlement, "Ye have sinned a great sin; and now I will go up unto the Lord; peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin." (Ex. 32: 30-32) But no creature effort was of any avail. "None can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him." (Ps. 49: 7) The Lord Jesus did not go up to God till He had come down and given His life a ransom for many. Hence He could go up with no "peradventure" on His lips, but in the full consciousness of the indisputable claim He had established by His finished work to take His place as Man in the glory — a place He had won for us in divine righteousness.

The last verses of 2 Corinthians 3 bring us to the focus of the contrast of the Christian's position with that of Moses and Israel. Only we must read verse 18 a little more true to the original. It is not our face that is unveiled: it is the glory of the Lord. "We all beholding [or looking upon] the glory of the Lord with unveiled face are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Lord the Spirit." Moses had to put a veil upon his face for Israel: the Lord Jesus has not to do so for us; though the difference is great between the reflection of partial glory in Moses' face, and the whole glory of God shining in the face of the Lord Jesus. What would have been Moses' destruction is the holy liberty of the Christian in the power of the Holy Ghost: for "where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty." The light of that glory tells of peace made by the blood of His cross, and of the perfection of the work on the ground of which we are identified with Him in life and righteousness. Every motive of divine and unutterable love engages our hearts to be occupied with that glory as it shines for us in His face. Look round the circle of the nearest and dearest to us; is there any face we have the same title to look into as His who gave Himself for us, all radiant as it is with the glory of God?

The prayer of Moses is fulfilled, for the simplest believer, in a way beyond all that he could have conceived. So that it only remains for us through the Spirit to wait for the hope of righteousness by faith, as Paul expresses it in Galatians 5: 5, which is defined to be the glory of God (Rom. 5: 2), the hope of which has become so real as to be the present power of exulting joy in our lives.

One thing more of the deepest practical importance to our souls flows out of the contrast the Apostle so fully develops between the glory of the system under which Moses stood, "which was to be done away," and the glory which excelleth and remaineth brought in by Christianity. It is that which lies between the powerlessness of the law to effect anything, as the stones were cold and unimpressionable upon which it was graven, and the full positive effect of the gospel of the glory of Christ in forming the assembly as a letter commendatory of Christ in the world. This was produced by a ministry through the Apostle by which the Spirit of the living God wrote Christ on fleshy tables; that is, the affections of the heart. The realisation by the assembly of this, its wonderfully privileged and responsible place, depends upon the response of heart, in the individuals that compose it, to such a ministry. Verse 18 brings out the formative power of it; first by the Object presented to our hearts, and secondly by the indwelling Spirit — "the Lord the Spirit," referring to verses 6 and 17. "Looking upon the glory of the Lord . . . we are transformed . . . into the same image even as by the Lord the Spirit."

The Spirit dwelling in us is the power both of the objective presentation and the subjective effect produced. As the light of the unveiled glory in His face streams upon us from the opened heavens by the ministry of the Spirit, and the eyes of our faith are fixed upon an Object so worthy to absorb, by the power of the same Spirit, the affections take the impress of their Object, and the glory of Christ is reflected in the life and ways suited to Him of those who are His own.

Moses even bore the reflection of the partial glory he had seen. Could it be possible that we should look upon that unveiled glory that shines for ever on the face of Jesus, and not bring some of the reflection of it amongst those we come in contact with? This will be known in the moral traits of His glory, that lowly life of confidence, and dependence, purity, singleness of purpose, obedience, and devotedness, and all that was true in Him who is now become our life, being reproduced in us. As long as we are here it will only be in degree, and just that in which the growth of our souls consists "from glory to glory." There is no perfection of condition known to Scripture short of reaching Him then we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is meanwhile, having this hope in Him, we purify ourselves even as He is pure. (1 John 3: 2, 3) The Lord Jesus has set Himself apart in heavenly glory that we may be set apart by the truth of all that He is there. Growth, then, in the Christian, in the blessed likeness of the Lord depends on His being before our souls continually. No effort of ours enters into it, or could produce any trait of His life in us. Nor can the eye be turned in upon self, nor diverted to any object in the world, without obstructing the transforming process. Not that it is meant that the soul should be ever conscious of the transformation. A shining face never sees itself. Moses wist not that his face shone, though Aaron and Israel were well aware of it.

May our hearts then be simply set upon a life of increasing, adoring occupation with Christ. The result is assured. We shall then answer a little more to what we are by His grace and calling, the epistles of Christ known and read of all men, to His praise and glory. May the name of our Lord Jesus Christ be glorified in us before we go to be glorified in Him for ever, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Thess. 1: 12)

"He That Overcometh."

Revelation 21: 1-7.

It is to the last of these verses that I desire to call attention. They are the fullest setting forth in Scripture of the blessedness of the new heaven and new earth, wherein all things are made new. It is the eternal state, where God rests in the blessing of His redeemed people according to the perfection of His *nature*. The scene of His ways in government in time has closed. The earth and the heaven that now are have fled away from before Him who sat on the throne, "and there was found no place for them." (Rev. 20: 11) The first eight verses of this chapter lift the veil from eternity. But there is one link taken up with the things that are passed away, of such wonderful grace: "He that overcometh shall inherit *these things*" (margin, see N.Tr.) — i.e. the things that have been brought out in the preceding verses "and I will be his God and he shall be my son." In the eternal state there will be no more overcoming; there will be nothing to overcome. Such a note of triumph carries us back to the battle-field of the past, and the part that His own have taken individually in those battles upon which God thus put His seal. Who but He could have so recalled them? Far different would have been their account of themselves, and their experience in the conflict, even on the part of the most faithful of His servants. We might have thought the record would have been of nothing but failure and defeat. But in sovereign grace this is the

character He gives them: all else is remembered no more. Could anything affect our hearts more deeply, or be more calculated to nerve us up for the conflict that remains, and in which ever increasingly we find ourselves in these last days? If rightly apprehended, shall not the precious grace of such a God, beyond all our thoughts, be the strongest incentive to seek to answer to the character He gives, and to be overcomers indeed?

If it be asked what are the circumstances to which the overcoming refers, let it be observed how general it is. No particular conflict is specified, as if the whole Christian life had to partake of this character. But in turning to Scripture to seek light as to it, a precious clue is found in another passage in this book. "To him that overcometh will I give to sit with me in my throne, *even as I also overcame* and am set down with my Father in his throne." (Rev. 3: 21) Nor can this refer to the special character of the conflict or overcoming in the Epistles to the seven assemblies of Asia. At each phase in the history of the responsible vessel of Christ's testimony in the world, as given us prophetically in such a remarkable way in these addresses, all who were really Christ's were so characterised and encouraged by promises suitable to the state of things in which they had to overcome. But nothing of this entered into the conflicts through which the blessed Lord passed when here: for the assembly was not then formed until He was glorified and the Holy Spirit was given at Pentecost. Yet that little clause may well arrest the attention: it has a peculiar sweetness, "*Even as I also overcame.*" For it recalls to us the Lord Jesus in His pathway here, and occupies us with the perfection in which He passed through conflict, and how He overcame; and as the pattern for us, to our great strengthening of faith in following Him. Can we, then, learn from the Gospels anything of the opposing forces, and the character of the conflict and the manner in which He overcame?

But before we turn directly to them there is a little word in the epistle to the Romans which, though it is not exactly applied to Him, can only be understood as we see in Him the perfect expression of it: "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." (Rom. 12: 21) Could anything be more characteristic of the path of the blessed Lord? In a world of evil He who was the revelation of the perfect goodness of God, in the power of that good rose above all the evil — was never overcome by it. We have to go through the same world, and are tested in our experience every day. Shall I be overcome of evil, or has the revelation of the infinite good I know in Christ so taken possession of my heart that in the power of it I can overcome? And that instead of the thought of avenging myself I fulfil the word, "If thine enemy hunger feed him, if he thirst give him drink," and so on. What can be more humbling in our relations with one another than the ease with which we are affected by some fancied slight or insult? Taken off our guard in an instant we flare up, bitter feelings are engendered, telling the sad tale of how we have been overcome, when by greater dependence and nearness to the Lord there might have been but the triumph of His grace.

Twice in the Gospels the Lord speaks to us of His overcoming, first in the gospel of Luke 11: 21, 22. "When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace: but when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour. wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils." How well we know the truly awful peace in which we, once the strong man's goods, were firmly held, until the advent of the stronger than he who overcame him; and we are spoils of that victory, now at the disposal of the Victor.

But we are taken back to the arena of the conflict of which no other eye but God's was witness, and learn who He was that proved Himself to be the stronger, and how He overcame. He was "led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil." *We* have to be led of the Spirit to be with God: *He*, who was ever with God as His normal state, had to be led ("driven," Mark says) of the Spirit to be with Satan. "And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights he was afterward an hungered" — in

what utter contrast to the circumstances of the first man who, surrounded by every token of God's providential care, so easily succumbed to the serpent! The tempter came to Him and said, "If thou be the Son of God command that these stones be made bread." What subtlety! for had He not divine power and title as the Son of God to exercise it? But He had become man, and man's place was to obey. He answered and said, "It is written: Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." He might have said: "I am God," and then no rebel creature would have stood up against Him, *but* there would have been no example for us. He overcame by keeping the place He had taken as man, and that was to obey. Blessed, perfect obedience! He would not help Himself to bread when in view of it without the word out of God's mouth, by which man was to live, and not by bread alone. So it was *written*: that was enough for Him. And Satan had to change his ground.

"Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, and saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God cast thyself down, for it is written, he shall give his angels charge concerning thee . . . lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone." He could quote Scripture too, and even apply a Messianic psalm to the Messiah Himself, if only to falsify its truth, but he omitted the cardinal condition of such care, "In all thy ways." (Ps. 91: 11) To cast Himself down from a pinnacle of the temple was no part of God's ways, for Him, or for any man. *In those ways* He knew God too well to need to test Him to see if He would be as good as His word. And so His simple answer was, "It is written, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." Thus too we learn what tempting God means. Men say that we tempt Him if we do not the best we can for ourselves, but this is the absolute opposite of the truth: *we tempt God when we do not trust Him entirely in everything*. The dependence of the Lord was as perfect as His obedience; He confided in God, and would not depart from the appointed path of His will: and in all this He is the perfect example for us.

Thus if John (1 John 2: 13, 14) writes to the young men because they have overcome the wicked one, we learn the source of their strength: it was that the word of God abode in them — again the "It is written" — "even as I also overcame." How we need to seek to be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, that we may ever have the word ready in suited application to meet the varied wiles of the enemy.

But there was another weapon in the armoury of the strong man and wherein he trusted, still to be tried against the Lord. "The devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them; and saith unto him, All these things will I give thee" (and in Luke he adds, "for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it") "if thou wilt fall down and worship me." Nor was this an altogether vain pretension of the devil. There is a measure of truth in the power he assumes, which makes it so serious for us. It is not that he can put any one in the satisfied possession of anything. All he wants is gained when he has set our hearts on the pursuit of any object in the world of which he is prince and god. "If thou therefore wilt worship me all shall be thine." Here he fully declared himself, and was met by the ever-faithful Lord with, "Get thee hence, Satan; for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve." The Lord God filled His heart for worship and service, and there was no attraction in anything of the world's glory, or room within His heart for what Satan would present to Him. Do we know anything of a heart so preoccupied and absorbed with God Himself as its object as to be proof against everything that would attract or distract us from Him, so that Satan can gain no foothold? *"Even as I also overcame."* Note, too, the perfection of the blessed Lord in taking His stand, in His conflict with Satan, on the book of Deuteronomy. It was the revelation of God's mind for an Israelite in the land. The Lord had come into that place in grace, and when everything as to God's glory and the accomplishment of His purposes of blessing depended on the issue of that conflict, He staked all on the "It is written" of Deuteronomy.

Now nothing can be of more solemn significance for us than that the order of the enemy's tactics with the Lord is the same that the young men have to be warned against in 1 John 2. They have overcome the wicked one, coming openly against them as such, by the word of God abiding in them. The world is the danger now: "love not the world," and, because of the treachery of our hearts that would construe "the world" as something which is outside the horizon of our own hopes and ambitions, it is added, "neither the things that are in the world." For it is not possession that is in question, though we know from the Lord the danger of anything a man possesses here as tending to link him up with the world under God's judgment — "with what difficulty shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God:" but here it is what a man hopes to possess, what the heart is set upon: "Love not." All God's objects for us are centred in Christ, and found where He is. He can present nothing to the heart that is of, or in, a world that has cast out His Son. If there is anything here that has attracted us so as to become the object of our pursuit, it is the wily tempter, who, turned away from the front door, has, as it were, come round by the back door, and gained an entrance by what we have desired for ourselves or our families. As another has said: A bit of ribbon in a shop window may do his work; but it is well to know that if it will not he can enlarge the bait up to all the kingdoms of this world and the glory of them — not, however, one thing outside the world. *Yet what a vast cheat of the enemy we see the world to be when we learn that, in God's estimate, there is nothing in it morally but lust and pride — the miserable lust of what we have not, or the contemptible pride of what we have.*

We belong to another world — the world of the Father — and there is nothing in common between it and Satan's world. There is no possible point of contact between these spheres. "All that is in the world is not of the Father but is of the world: and the world passeth away and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

But how are we to overcome the devil's snare of the world? Chapter 5 of the epistle brings us to the resources to enable us to do so. And first (1 John 5: 4), "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world": by the very life and nature we have received from God we have a principle of victory over the world. "And this is the victory that overcometh the world, our faith:" that is, by the object presented to faith. "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" If it be a question of who is my brother that I am to love (1 John 4: 21), the answer is, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God" (1 John 5: 1) — the Spirit goes down to the feeblest apprehension of His glory, even as a few might believe on Him as the Messiah. This suffices to mark one begotten of God. But more was needed for victory over the world. Nothing short of the full glory of His person as the Son of God sufficed for that: we need the full shining before the opened eyes of our faith of His infinite glory as Son of God to give us victory over the poor unreal tinsel of this world and its shams. Then shall we know something of a heart so filled with Him for worship and service that, as with the Lord when He was here, there shall be no room for any object of Satan's world.

And now once more the Lord Himself as an overcomer is brought before us in His closing words with His disciples in John 16: 33: "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." We can easily see that this is another side of the world. It is not the seductive aspect of it by which Satan hoped to overthrow the Lord, and which is the danger of the young men, but the persecuting aspect of it — a world where much tribulation was to be encountered on the way to the glory. It is our appointed portion here, and the danger is of yielding before the pressure of it and becoming unfaithful — If Satan cannot seduce the Christian by the world, he will persecute by it, as in Smyrna. "Behold, the devil shall cast some of you. into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days:" (there is no limit to his power) "be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." (Rev. 2: 10)

This aspect of the world may not be so insidious, but it is very real; and our only safety is in keeping the eye upon Him who tells us of it with words of cheer as a world in which He has been tried, and been ever faithful: "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." And thus, again, "even as I also overcame" has its full bearing upon our path. It was given to the Philippians "in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake; having the same conflict" which they saw in Paul and now heard to be in him. (Phil. 1: 29-30) It was not God's will that they or we should be discouraged — "in nothing terrified by your adversaries, which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God."

But if we have to meet the power of Satan in the world it is in a very different way from that in which the Lord met him, flushed as he was with the success of forty centuries. Never had he met a man able to stand against him, always and absolutely, before. But now he is completely discomfited. "When the devil had ended all the temptation he departed from him for a season," and Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit, the same power in which He had gone to meet him, into Galilee. (Luke 4: 13, 14) And if that season was spent by Satan in gathering up all his resources for the last onslaught on the Lord Jesus, it was only to meet with his final overthrow. For through death He has brought to nought him that had the power of death, to deliver them who through fear of death had, as in Old Testament times, been all their lifetime subject to bondage (Heb. 2: 14, 15); so that he is a vanquished foe, to faith; and it can be said, "Resist the devil and he will flee from you." (James 4: 10) He cannot stand before the weakest saint that will but lift the little finger of resistance to him. And shortly the God of peace shall bruise Satan under our feet. The world, too, shall have passed away and the lust thereof; and in a new heaven and a new earth we shall hear of war no more. He that overcometh will have eternity to enjoy in peace the inheritance of these things. "I will be his God, and he shall be my son," the sum of all the blessedness. Yet that little word, become characteristic of those thus blessed, tells of how God had not forgotten the conflicts of the past, though only recalled by the grace that made them overcomers, and, as it is said in another place, "more than conquerors" (for the word is the same, though with a strengthened force) "through Him that loved us."

The Lord, by the wonderful grace of the example He has set us, stir up all our hearts to more earnest and devoted faithfulness in the conflict that yet remains. "*Even as I also overcame.*"

The Church: the Body and the Bride.

1 Corinthians 12, and Ephesians 5.

The Body is a *present* relationship of all who are Christ's to Christ, but goes on into eternity. We never cease to be His fulness, blessed be God. But now from this flows another precious aspect of our corporate place. (Eph. 5) I say "from this" because we see a man's wife as identified with himself in verse 28. How does the relationship of man and wife set forth that of Christ and the Church? Because being members of His body (1 Cor. 12: 12) we are Himself; "no man ever yet hated his own flesh." (Verse 29) So, according to the original institution of marriage, "they two shall be one flesh;" and he speaks "concerning Christ and the Church."

Thus, you see, the thought of the wife or bride of Christ is not another relationship, but only another aspect of the one we are in by being members of His body.

You may say, why is this other aspect added to all the wealth of divine relationship expressed in

chapters 1 and 2? Because the thought of being His body did not in itself sufficiently express Christ's affections *He* wanted more to express what the Church was to His *heart*; hence the moment husband and wife are referred to as the beginning of natural relationship, the Spirit seizes the opportunity of unfolding thus to us what the Church is to Christ.

As to the place of Revelation 22: 16, 20, it is mere inattention to Scripture and the structure of the book to say it has anything to do with prophecy. The book, as a whole, has; but in the close of it, as at the opening of it, there is an address to the Churches into whose hands the book is placed. It is the Church, then, turning from the dark prophetic outlook of judgment, which characterises the book, to the blessed Hope that flows from its *own proper relationship to Christ*.

It is not the Kingdom the Bride wants, but Himself, the absent Bridegroom of her heart. It is not to get out of trouble she wants, or relief of any kind, but to see His face.

Aspects of Resurrection.

2 Corinthians 5: 5.

This verse is tantamount to the Apostle saying, "Always provided I am speaking of true Christians." In the first two verses he has been expressing the normal confidences of faith in view of the dissolution of the body.

The glorified condition that awaits us is looked at as a *building* in contrast to a *tent*, a building of *God* in contrast to a material house. The moral effect of a body of glory in prospect is that we groan in this body, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven. The terms used are significant; verse 4 explains "clothed upon" to be in contrast with being "unclothed." The fact is that the hope of the Lord's coming having been revealed, and put in its full place in Paul's earliest epistle, 1 Thessalonians, he ever after looks at it as ingrained into the whole Christian life. Hence he turns from the thought of the body being laid down in death, to that which will be the effect of the Lord's coming for us who are alive and remain unto it, i.e. that we shall be changed, without death at all, into the image of our Lord; all that is mortal being swallowed up in the power of that life we already possess in Him.

But there was much in the profession at Corinth that suggested that all was not real there. Hence the solemn warning clause of the parenthetical third verse. There would be those who would be clothed in bodies of resurrection who would be found awfully naked before God, as never having received the "best robe" (Luke 15: 22), never having become God's righteousness in Christ, as the last verse of the chapter expresses it. The clothed state of the spirit, when, in the hour that is coming, "all that are in the graves, shall hear his voice" (John 5: 28) is here referred to in contrast to the spirit being unclothed in death. The "naked" will be those who come forth (clothed indeed, as far as their bodily condition is concerned) to nothing, but "the resurrection of judgment."

Philippians 3: 11. There is no such thing as a special or select resurrection of a certain company of believers. Scripture speaks of but two resurrections; first, that of the just when the Lord comes; then when time itself is over, the resurrection of the unjust to judgment. Christ is the firstfruits of them that sleep; afterward they that are Christ's at His coming. (1 Cor. 15: 20, 23) It is for them as for Him a resurrection from among the dead, which is simply what Paul refers to in Philippians 3: 11. It belongs to all who are His, and depends altogether upon Christ (2 Cor. 4: 14; 1 Thess. 4: 14), and in no way

upon the condition of the believer. What then does the passage mean? It is the expression in the experience of the Lord's beloved servant (which he is inspired to give us all through the epistle as the only true, proper experience of the Christian) of the power of having before his own soul the object before God for him. What had He laid hold of us for, when the first ray of light from God pierced the darkness of our souls, but to be conformed to the image of Christ in glory? (Romans 8: 29; 2 Cor. 5: 4, 5) Then, says Paul, that is what I follow after, or press toward (the word is the same). And his eye is so completely on the end of the way, that he does not care what the character of it may be. It may be rough or smooth, long or short; nay, a martyr's death may be imminent in it. He does not care; his whole mind is concentrated on the glorious end. "If by any means I may arrive at" (it is not the word for attainment) "resurrection from among the dead." Offer him the finest situation possible for a man in this world: how can it be compared with what his heart is set on? It is an object outside the whole sphere of the enemy's power through which he has to pass, an object that infinitely eclipses all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, that is ever before his mind.

But it is of the deepest interest that the chapter does not close without bringing in the effect of the Lord's coming by which the glorious goal may be reached at any moment without death at all. The one is the soul's pursuit, pressing on through everything here to reach Christ and full conformity to Him in glory; the other, the hope in which the affections of the heart rest. May both be more real to us every moment till we see His face.

The Lord's Person.

That there was distinct individual personality in the "man Christ Jesus" seems to me so clear that I cannot understand any thoughtful person questioning it. But if it is meant that there was a "human personality" in the Lord Jesus here (and now?) as distinct and separate from His divine personality as the Son, then I should ask for an explanation of what is meant by it. Two distinct personalities in one person? If I look at Scripture I find He could say "I" as God "Before Abraham was I am." And He could say "I" as man — "I will put my trust in him." But these were not two "I"s, the person was one — "the Son." Individual personality was there beyond a question, a true "ego" — but who was the person?

Depend upon it we shall gain greatly in our souls, and in our knowledge of the truth, if we adhere to Scripture. I read there of a Person — the Word, existing in eternity, Himself the Creator. I read of that same Person become flesh, a man on earth amongst men, a true, real, individual man, but the same blessed Person — God manifest in flesh, the Son whom God sent in likeness of flesh of sin, God's Son, come of a woman. There is no thought of a change in the Person, the real "I." He is always the same, though His "form" is changed, and the condition in which He has life.

When "He" took part in flesh and blood, who was "He"? Personal identity does not change, though form and condition may. It lies behind all that we commonly think of in a person. If "I" depart to be with Christ, all the affections and interests I have as a man belonging to this condition of life are left behind with the condition to which they belonged; but the "I" remains, and it is the same "I" when in a spiritual body, "I" shall be "for ever with the Lord," though the conditions of life are totally different.

In our case personality began to exist when we were born, but in the case of the Lord "he came down from heaven." His existence was eternal. He was the "I AM," but there was a moment when He "became flesh." In doing so He entered into the feelings and affections which belong to the nature of a

man.

It seems to me most beautifully simple if we allow the plain words of Scripture to have their place in our hearts. There we find a Man — a perfect, blessed Man" full of grace and truth." He was "wearied" at the well; He "loved" Martha, etc.; "he groaned in spirit and was troubled"; He "wept" — all beautiful expressions of human feelings in perfection; but who was "He"? The eternal Word, the Son of God, one with the Father. If you bring in another personality the truth of incarnation is gone.

The fact is, in my opinion, that we are scarcely conscious how material our ideas of Scriptural things are, and even of God Himself; and how largely they are formed by the creeds, and theology, instead of by Scripture.

As regards Matthew 11: 27, it does not seem to me to refer *exclusively* to the Son *come as man* into the world, but to the character of the Son, who never "began to be" — who was eternally such.

It is a very solemn feature of the times that the question of the humanity of the Lord Jesus should be rife everywhere. And this does not to me indicate a leading of the Spirit, and is rather a warning against our being occupied with it. I cannot think that sufficient cause has been shown to take exception to the expression "unity" as applied to the Lord's Person. It is certain that the word itself does not *necessarily* involve any such meaning as two beings joined together; nor do we so understand it in ordinary theological use. As, for instance, unity when applied to the Persons of the Godhead; we do not understand that the three Persons are joined together.

Take Loche, "Whatever we can consider as one thing, suggests to the understanding the idea of unity." Or the very ordinary definition, "the state of being one." It is applied to what is absolutely indivisible.

The Bread of God.

John 6: 38, 51, 62, 63.

John 6: 43-69. — There are three positions in which the blessed Lord is presented in the doctrinal portion of this chapter: first, as come down out of heaven to fulfil the will of the Father that sent Him; then, as giving His flesh for the life of the world; and lastly, as ascending up where He was before. In the first He is the bread of God. Not merely the bread He gives, but that which He feeds upon Himself. Now, for the first time, man's path was found opening out in Christ in all its perfection before the Father, whose eye and heart only could enter into it. What perfect dependence, obedience, devoted love to the Father were there! A life governed only by His Father's will in every detail of word and action, with the absolute refusal of every other object but His Father's glory. No wonder the heavens opened to Him and the Father's voice declared His perfect delight in Him. Thus He was the bread, or food, of God's own joy. But how wonderful to know that it was not to be for Himself alone: "My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven." In His infinite grace the Father would have others enter into His estimation of the Son whom He loved. He was the bread of life; and he that cometh to Him by faith should never hunger or thirst.

This leads us to the second position that the Lord took: that He who was the bread of God might be the bread of life to us.

The more perfection shone out in Him amongst men, the more the state of every other man came

out in His presence. The light shone in darkness: we saw no beauty in Him that we should desire Him. "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know?" was the answer of the Jews (ver. 42) to the gracious revelation that it was the will of Him who sent Him that He should lose nothing of those given Him, and that every one who sees the Son and believes on Him should have eternal life, and be raised up into the proper sphere of that life when the end of the present age had come. This moral incompetency to enter into all that made Him the sealed One (ver. 27) of the Father's delight was the last and conclusive proof that there was nothing in us for God, and the absolute necessity of the early sentence of God upon man, "The end of all flesh is come before me." So that in order that any should eat of the bread come down out of heaven, and not die, but live for ever, we read, "The bread that I will give is my flesh which I will give for the life of the world" (ver. 51); and the essential condition of our having life in Him is that we eat His flesh and drink His blood. (Ver. 53)

Up to this in the Gospel there had been the objective presentation of the life in Him, but now it is the question of our subjective entering into it. This depends upon our having been brought to bow to the judgment of God, not only of our sins, but of all that we are according to the flesh, in His death. It is surely by faith, but having eaten His flesh and drunk His blood [the verbs in verse 53 are of one definitive act] expresses more than this. It is that we have solemnly identified ourselves with Him in the death He endured for us, and which ended before God and for faith all we were as children of Adam. We have, as in the type of the sin-offering, laid our hands upon the victim's head, and owned His death to be ours. It is a definite point to which we have to be brought in the soul's history, never to be gone back from: deliverance from the dominion of sin is found in it. But the eating of His flesh and drinking of His blood is not simply a thing of the past — that we have done with; for now begins the necessity of the habitual feeding upon the death of the Son of Man that we may possess eternal life in all its reality as a life of communion with the Father and the Son. As His death is thus before our souls, we are extricated and practically delivered from all that is of the flesh in us, and of man and his world, that the Lord Jesus had to carry down to death under the judgment of God. How could we, in the presence of the infinite sufferings of Gethsemane and the cross, tolerate anything in ourselves of what involved those sufferings for Him who, in such unfathomable love, gave Himself for us? With His death thus applied to our souls continually there will be nothing to hinder our enjoyment of that life of divine and heavenly relationship which is "eternal." (Ver. 54) So also is it with abiding in Him, so essential as we know it is to us every moment, from John 15. By the Holy Ghost indwelling we know that we are in Him, as He said we should be. (John 14: 20) But dwelling or abiding in Him, as the continuous realisation of our being in Him, depends also upon our eating His flesh and drinking His blood, which is true meat and drink. And now verse 57 brings us into what verse 33 had presented to us: "he that eateth me." It is no longer simply His death, but He Himself personally known as the food and joy of our souls who is the Bread of God. We could only have part in that wonderful Bread by identification with Him in His *death*, but it is He Himself upon whom now we can feed. "As the living Father hath sent me and I live by, or on account of, the Father: so he that eateth ME shall live on account of ME." He *lived* for nothing else but the Father: the Father was the whole reason of His existence here, the absorbing object of His life. And so, as He rises before our souls in all His perfection, more and more entered into as we feed upon Him, He will become the absorbing object of our life: we shall live but for Him.

At the close the Lord intimates that He would ascend up where He was before. Of what immense moment for us! For it is thus that all the precious truth has become available for us. The light of the glory in which He is has been shed back on all He was in the lowly, perfect path of His humiliation, and upon the cross in which God has been infinitely glorified and man's history closed in judgment, so that nothing but Christ should remain before our souls in this blessed communion of divine joy and

satisfaction.

May we each know increasingly what it is to eat His flesh and drink His blood, and feed upon Him personally who is the Bread of God.

Romans 6: 11.

Romans 6: 11. — IT is asked what does reckoning ourselves to be dead to sin mean? There can be no truth of greater importance for the believer to enter into. For it is thus that our deliverance from sin that once held us as its miserable captives is realised practically in the daily life. At the opening of the chapter the Apostle meets by anticipation the opposition of the flesh to the doctrine to which we have been brought at the close of Romans 5, that where sin abounded grace did much more exceedingly abound. So that by the obedience of Christ, brought to its last test and consummated in His death, we that were of the fallen race of Adam have been constituted righteous. This involved that before God and for faith we have died with Him. Hence the idea that we should continue in sin that grace may abound is abhorrent. We have died to sin instead of living in it is the answer of the Christian; and this was explicitly set forth in the place we took in baptism at the very entrance of our path. We were baptised to His death, buried with Him by baptism unto death, henceforth to be dead to all we once were as having lived in sin.

But the truth of death to sin has to be learned experimentally. That is the significance of the conflict of the soul presented to us at the end of Romans 7. It is the process by which God brings us to the conviction of the hopeless, irremediable evil of the flesh in us. In principle all must go through it who would ever know deliverance from sin's power. I have to learn that there is a total absence of good in me, but light seems to be breaking through the darkness when I realise that there would be no conflict if I had not another nature from God as born again that desires good and hates evil; and I take my place with that nature, and judge that it is not I but sin that dwelleth in me, but only to find myself perfectly helpless against the evil. In vain I struggle against it, for it struggles against me and overcomes me, till at last, in the bitterness of my soul, I am brought to the necessity of one outside myself to deliver me from myself. The deliverer is near in such a case: I have only to lift my eyes from self to Him and thank God through Jesus Christ.

The principle of the deliverance is then found in Romans 8: 3, that God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and, as a sacrifice for sin, has condemned sin in the flesh. Such was the flesh morally that God had to carry out His early sentence upon it, "the end of all flesh is come before me." It was the only way God could deal with it. No wonder that with all my weary efforts I could make nothing of it. But oh! what rest when the soul is brought to the point of giving up itself as only fit for the judgment of God, and then to look back and see that judgment executed in the cross of Christ. It was the death of Him who had become my life, and so I am entitled to count it as mine before God; and death to sin becomes a reality to the soul. We now know that our old man — that is, all we were as characterised by the flesh and sin and law which was its strength — has been crucified with Christ, that the body of sin — that is, its whole system and force, as we say the body of a river — might be brought to nought, and we be its abject slaves no more. That we shall live with Him follows as a blessed inference from our having died with Him, knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over Him: for in that He died He died unto sin once for all, but in that He liveth He liveth unto God. As come into this world He had to do with sin on every hand, and went at last to the cross to be made sin for us. But such the perfection of His work when He suffered

there for us, that He has no more to do with it for ever, and has only God to be before Him and live to. "Likewise" — that is the wonderful word for us — in like manner as Christ — "reckon ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin." Faith reckons with God that we have died to it in His death, and so have no more to do with it, but are alive to God in Christ, free now to live in blessed occupation of heart with Him to God alone.

Not that the flesh has ceased to exist in us, or that there is any change in its essential evil: that which is born of the flesh is so characterised to the end; but we reckon by faith that we have died with Christ to it. And how real and blessed the deliverance thus, from ceaseless occupation with the evil in us leading to no result but of being constantly subjected to its power, to that of being free to be occupied with Christ, in whose death we reckon that we have received our sentence, in whose life that we are alive to God, to breathe the atmosphere of His presence and bring forth fruit unto Him.

Thus it has pleased God to present the great fact of deliverance from the dominion of sin in our death with Christ, that faith may lay hold of it in that which is the sole basis and cause of it; while in Romans 8 we have the full positive resulting liberty, and the Holy Ghost indwelling as the power of our realisation of it.

Romans 7: 24, 25.

An explanation is sought of Romans 7: 24, 25. Is there in the Gospel what answers to the cry of misery, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of death"? Can there be in reality such a deliverance from the bondage and power of sin? Is it the knowledge of it that leads to the totally changed note of "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." And if so, how is it to be found and realised? What questions could be of deeper importance to the soul? Let us look, then, at the setting of the passage — what precedes and follows after, if only the main elements of the truth can be pointed out within a brief compass.

In the first eight chapters the whole question of our sins has been gone into, and the ground of a righteous justification on the part of God has been opened out to us, by two aspects of the redemption work of Christ. The one — propitiation through faith in His blood that met all the need of God's glory (Rom. 3); and the other — substitution; namely, Christ" delivered for our offences and raised up again for our justification." So that "being justified by faith we have peace with God" through Him. (End of Rom. 4 and first verse of Rom. 5) But all this leaves untouched what brought in sins: namely, our state by nature — the root sin — that produced all the guilty fruit of sins. This is taken up by the Apostle from Romans 5: 12. And another aspect of Christ's death is brought before us, in which we are identified with Him, as having died with Him in the faith of our souls. (Rom. 6)

But just as we needed the conviction of sins, in the goodness of God that leads to repentance, so as even to have been shut up to the reality of Christ's death and resurrection for us, and have pardon and peace: so we needed to have our state of sin brought home to us by a work of conviction wrought in the conscience, that we might enter into the blessed reality of having died with Christ to it.

This is just where the experience of the end of Romans 7 comes in, and it is not the exact experience of the Apostle or of anyone, perhaps, but it presents to us in principle what every soul has to be brought into, in order to pass by death with Christ become known to me, out of bondage into liberty as in Romans 8, of which the Holy Spirit indwelling is the power. It is the process by which God has to bring us to the learning in ourselves of the utterly hopeless irremediable corruption of the flesh in us,

with which we were born, as of Adam's race; so that we may be brought thankfully to bow to the necessary end of all that we are in the judgment of the cross; and that instead of being occupied with ourselves any longer, we may be free to be adoringly occupied with Him who has delivered us.

But let us trace the steps of the process described by one who is free. A man floundering in a bog at every step cannot stop to describe his experience. But when he is out on firm ground, he can tell what he has been through. It is thus with the state so graphically presented to us in verses 14-23. The great leading fact is that there are three conflicting principles within, of which the soul is painfully become conscious. How came it about that there should be in us such war and strife? It was not always so. Once we drifted along peacefully enough, borne on the swift current with plenty of others, to a lost eternity. But the arrest came: God had spoken, and His word applied by His Spirit became life in the soul, and the new life had a nature answering to it. As that which is born of the flesh is flesh, as characterised by its source, so that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. (John 3: 6) But nature is not power; and so I find myself with the desires of the new nature, but powerless to perform them: "That which I do I allow not, for what I would that do I not, but what I hate that do I." And so as the effect of being born again, conflict begins. And as it goes on, the first lesson is learned.

"I know that in me" (that is my flesh) "dwelleth no good thing." (Ver. 18) Have we each come even thus far? to know, as having proved it in myself, that there is no good in the flesh, no use therefore in looking for anything but evil in it, no disappointment at the discovery of any depth of it. But there is more. Even where there is the will, there is no power to perform what is good. The good I would I do not; the evil which I would not, that I do. A gleam of light seems to illumine the darkness; the very presence of opposing forces within me proves the existence of the two natures. It takes two to make a fight any day. And I learn to take my place with the nature I have received from God, and judge that it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. Yet this only leads to a deeper, darker discovery still. (Ver. 23). "I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members." The flesh in me is after all too strong for me. The more I struggle with it for the mastery, it struggles with me and overpowers me. I am like a man in the wrestling-match: my opponent has me down, and wriggle and struggle as I will I cannot rise up. Ah! the secret is out: you have been looking for victory over yourself — to overcome this lust, and that passion — and how proud you would be if you had gained it. But must I not strive, you say! Strive on: strive on! You have not come to the end of yourself yet. God has to let the weary struggle go on till that end is reached, and you lie back in all your proved helplessness over the evil within you, and look for a Deliverer outside yourself to deliver you from yourself. For note well, it is not now, How shall I gain the victory over myself? but "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of death?"

It is an humbling, but very real, process by which God breaks the proud will of the flesh and reduces me down to His estimate of what I am — hopeless as helpless under the dominion of sin — that I may be shut up absolutely to the Deliverer of His providing. For blessed be God, He was there before ever my need had arisen. The eye lifts to behold Him, and in broken utterance I can exclaim, "I thank God through Jesus Christ." Not that even deliverance had made any change in the character of the flesh: hence ver. 25, the close of the verse. Free now, "with the mind I myself serve God's law"; but if I get on to the ground of the flesh it will only be to prove "with the flesh the law of sin."

The principle of the deliverance is found in Romans 8: 3 that "God having sent his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin [that is, as a sacrifice for sin] has condemned sin in the flesh." Having been brought by God's ways with me to bow to the necessity of that early sentence passed upon it, "the end of all flesh is come before me" (Gen. 6), how blessed to find that in the death of Christ the

end has come for God, and now for the faith of my soul, the death of all that I am as well as of all I have done under God's judgment — that otherwise I should have had to meet in the lake of fire. But He who went down into the judgment, where the sentence was carried out, has risen from the depths of it to be my life; and I now know that I am entitled to count all that happened to Him as having happened to me. And thus the truth of Romans 6 has become real to me. "Knowing this," mark, it is presented as a known experience of the soul, "that our old man" (namely, all we were as characterised by the flesh and sin) "has been crucified with him, that the body of sin [put for the whole system and totality of it, as we say "the body of a river"] might be brought to nought, that henceforth we should not be slaves to sin." (Ver. 6). "We have died with Christ" (ver. 8), and can reckon ourselves to be dead to sin, but alive unto God in Jesus Christ our Lord."

What a deliverance it is — how blessedly real. Only observe, it is no question of a state attained by us, but of what has become true to faith, and is only realised moment by moment by faith's reckoning.

Into this wonderful deliverance the Holy Ghost enters, as (in Rom. 8) become the power of it, and of the liberty we enjoy, opened out in wonderful detail. If the truth has been apprehended in faith and the power of the Spirit and the soul is free, a few words as to Romans 12: 1 may suffice. The exhortation follows on all that has been unfolded of the mercies of God in Romans 1 - 8. For the intervening chapters are in the nature of a parenthesis, in which God deigns to prove that the main doctrine of the epistle (that all are under sin, and no difference in this between Jew and Gentile (Rom. 10: 12) is consistent with the special promises made to Israel. So that when we connect the exhortation directly with the doctrine of chapters 1 - 8, how irresistible the claim of God becomes upon us. How could we not respond to such rich mercy in presenting our bodies, once the instruments of the flesh's will, now to be a living sacrifice (in contrast to the dead ones of Judaism doubtless), holy acceptable unto God, which is our intelligent service. The Lord grant that this may be the effect for every one that knows the liberty of grace, which is the only proper, normal experience of the Christian.

Romans 8: 1-14.

There are two expressions in verse 2 that I wish particularly to draw your attention to. Life in Christ Jesus, and the Spirit in me, the power of that life. Life was the beginning of God's blessed ways with our souls; till then we were dead, alive to any worldly object but dead to God. Now in His sovereign grace the Spirit has laid hold of our hearts and consciences by some word of God or by the truth revealed in it, and there has been the communication of divine life. As we were born into natural life, so are we born absolutely anew. Except a man be born anew he cannot enter the kingdom of God. Nothing can be more important than this. The very beginning of all God's ways of grace with us has been the communication of divine life, with the nature which is inseparable from it. (John 1: 4) "In him was life; and the life was the light of men." Precious truth; we see these two things, life and light, inseparably bound up together; as surely as there is life there is light in a soul.

But now comes the evidence of our natural state: "The darkness comprehended it not." Such was our condition in sin; if the light had simply shone into the world we should never have known its presence (vers. 10, 11) but love has come in with it and been active to bring in the rays of the light into our souls. "As many as received him to them gave he power to become the sons of God, who were born . . . of God." Thus only has He been received. It is only as by His sovereign grace we are born of God, that any of us would ever have received Jesus. Apart from life there is no real conviction of sin in

the soul, but now life is not peace, it is the beginning of trouble, and that is where the first part of the epistle to the Romans comes in. It lays the foundation in righteousness of all His ways of grace with the sinner in setting forth His Son to be the propitiation, that every question of what troubled us might be gone into and settled for His glory. There is God's acceptance of His finished work in raising Him from the dead (Rom. 4: 24, 25), the glorious proof given to the believer that our sins that He bore on the cross are gone for ever. "When he had by himself purged our sins he sat down on the right hand of God." He never sat down there till He had purged our sins away.

Then, as we have seen in Romans 5: 12 on to Romans 8, we find the deeper question raised not of sins but of the root that produced them. Just as we needed the conviction of our sins to know forgiveness, so we needed the conviction of self in its utter evil and absence of strength that we might be brought at last to give up the vain struggle to make anything of it, and to bow to the judgment of all we are, as well as of what we have done, and to see that judgment executed when God condemned sin in the flesh in the death of His Son. (Romans 8: 3). The moment I am brought to this point to see my judgment executed in the death of Him who became my life, identifying myself by faith with His death, I know that my old man was crucified with Him. I am entitled to reckon that all that happened to Him who became my life has happened to me, and thus the ground is clear; not merely my sins are gone but this flesh, this self that I could make nothing of, is gone too from before God's sight, and now the eye lifts from self and rests on my Deliverer, and chapter 8 brings out the position and condition of the delivered man, the normal one of Christians.

We began by receiving His life, but then we needed to know His work for forgiveness and liberty that we might enter into and realise our immense privileges. Here we find the wonderful elements that go to make up our position in Christ. "There is therefore now no condemnation," etc. Condemnation must first reach Him before it can reach us. We have not merely come to an end of self in the judgment of the cross, but there is what He has brought in in the place of what He had to condemn. I am in Christ risen from the dead, passed every question of sins and sin, the judgment of God and the power of Satan. If I have lost my place as man in the flesh in the judgment of God, I have my new place in Him who has come out of that judgment, in all that Christ is as man before God and in the Spirit as the power of that new place. That is the position of every delivered child of God. What a range of truth opens out to us in it; for it is not all — that I am in Christ, but inseparably connected with it as the power of this position, God the Holy Ghost dwells in me.

The two parts of His work come before us in the testimony borne to His glory in John 1: 29, "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world"; and then verse 32, "John bare record saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove," etc. Now in the room of that which had to be taken away in judgment He was to send the Holy Ghost to bring us in power into the whole of His position as the risen Man. Now go to John 7: 39, "The Holy Ghost was not yet given because Jesus was not yet glorified." This shows us how entirely distinct a thing the gift of the Spirit is now in Christianity. He was not given while Jesus was here, or ever before. Jesus is glorified now, and the Holy Ghost is given as He never was before, so you cannot look back to the Old Testament for it. (John 14: 16) "He shall give you another Comforter that he may abide with you *for ever*." Come from that glory where Jesus is, the Holy Spirit can never be taken from the believer now. This is entirely distinct from being born of the Spirit; the unbeliever has to be born of the Spirit, but it is only in the believer that He can dwell. (John 16: 7) "It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you." So great and inestimable is the blessing that it is better for us that He is gone — that He is glorified, for He has sent His Spirit to dwell in us always and never to leave us. And then see what He does. (Verse 13) "He will guide you into all truth. He shall take of mine and

show it unto you." In Acts the great fact is that God the Holy Ghost has come: ever since, His dwelling-place has been here upon earth and in the believer.

Now you may ask, When does the believer receive the Holy Ghost? Turn to Acts 10: where Peter was sent to Cornelius. The man had been born of God and had been producing many precious fruits of the divine life, and Peter was now to tell him "words whereby he should be saved." Now read verse 43: "Whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins. While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them that heard the word." So we see that the Holy Ghost taking His place in us is connected with the remission of sins; the moment you received the remission of your sins that moment God the Holy Ghost took up His dwelling-place in you. (Ephesians 1: 13). "In whom also after that ye believed" (that is "the gospel of your salvation") "ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise." The ray that convicted me of my sins revealed to me the Person of my Saviour and became life in my soul; when the testimony to His finished work is believed the Holy Ghost dwells in me, come from the glory to be the power of Christ's life in me. Thus we have the first great part of our deliverance: "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free." (Verse 2)

We carry the flesh in us still, it has undergone no change; the two natures remain within me, each having their own character; as the last verse of Romans 7 coming after the deliverance is reached, states; but now I am entitled to reckon myself dead to the old, and am no longer in the flesh but in Christ and in the Spirit given to dwell in me and to be the power of the believer's walk. Through it I am enabled to keep the evil nature within me in the place of death. Secondly, we are free by the new range of objects presented to us. (Ver. 5) The flesh finds its objects in the world that God has judged — just what is suited to it; but, blessed be God, there is a sphere of things suited to the new nature, "the things of the Spirit," or else we should be like fish out of water. The Holy Ghost takes of the things of Christ and shows them to us. He is not merely the power of the life we have received in Christ Jesus, but communicates to us the things of that life — of its home and hopes, new relationships, new joys, new objects where Christ is. We look at unseen things: we have our mind on things above, our citizenship there. Therein we find the immense practical power of our deliverance; I am as a delivered person free to enjoy the things that the Spirit thus ministers to me. It is the immense formative power of an object when it is adequate and absorbing. We see the power of it in poor earthly things; he who seeks money is avaricious, fame ambitious, and so on; how much more so when the object is divine.

Using the ark again as an illustration of these things — there were two principles within, illustrated in the raven and the dove: the raven that the moment it was given its liberty found its food in the masses of corruption floating on the waters of judgment; the dove that found no rest for its foot in such a scene and returned again unto Noah into the ark. The raven is the flesh, but we have learnt its character. If you have a robber in the house whose character you know, you will keep him under lock and key. By faith our death with Christ, and the Holy Ghost, are the power now to refuse the flesh its liberty, having proved its character, and to keep it in the place of death. The dove, the new life in the power of the Holy Ghost, finds no rest here. When Christ was here the Spirit descended on Him in the form of a dove, and now that same blessed Spirit directs our hearts to where He is, to the One that will fill them for all eternity. Is He not an adequate object? Can He not satisfy now? He delights to do it if you will only let Him. Are you allowing the Spirit to take of the things of Christ and form your hearts by the Son of God as your object — like Noah with his one window up above, or are you trying to break a hole in the side to be interested in and find your object in a judged world? He will never depart from us, but we may grieve Him and then all communion, and joy in it, and power is obstructed, and I believe there is no heart more miserable than one who has tasted of what Christ is as an object, and turns away to be occupied with the things of the world.

One thing more belongs to this wonderful position. (Ver. 11) We now wait for the moment when the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven, we know not the moment, but the Lord is at hand. Then we shall have resurrection bodies, changed in the twinkling of an eye or raised. The two first parts of the deliverance, by the Spirit as the power of life, and by the Object of that new life — we wait for the deliverance of the body and then all will be complete. What a deliverance, and what a Deliverer is ours

Romans 8.

It is clear to me that the three first verses resume respectively the argument of Rom. 5, 6, 7, only in each case (as always when the Spirit resumes) adding fresh light. No condemnation is not the sequence of thought of Rom. 6 and Rom. 7, but is the consequence as to sins of Rom. 3 — Rom. 5: 11, only that now verse 12, etc., carries it further and what we are *by nature from Adam* comes into view. And two or three elements at least of being in Christ, i.e. a reigning in life "through" Him in contrast to death reigning over all, and a *justification* of life towards all, "through" one righteousness (i.e. a life to which no charge of sin over did or could attach), and then the many under Him positively constituted righteous "through" the one obedience. All this involved His death, and the end of all we were in Adam, for God and for faith in His death, which becomes the basis of faith's reckoning in 6, 11, but which carries the truth one step further. "Alive unto God" *in that reckoning "in" Jesus Christ*. Now all this combines to set out the position which Romans 8 opens with. It does not seem to be the point of the Spirit how we enter into it, which after all must come in *second* to what it is we enter into, but to present this last as in the mind of God for us (we know from Eph. 1, in the counsels of eternity); first presenting simply that such a position carries with it all the impossibility of condemnation for Christ (it must first reach Him to reach those to whom it is *presented* that we are in Him, *that God's thought about us may become ours about ourselves* by faith). And then the power of the realisation of it is introduced in the Spirit, the position itself being opened out to us first in the light of the delivering power of the good (ver. 2), and then on the side of the total condemnation of the evil. "In Christ" of verse 1 answers now to "in the Spirit" of verse 9, as the power of the position, as Christ in us answers to the Spirit as life. (Ver. 10) As again the power of the reproduction of it. There is thus, I have no doubt, by divine wisdom a mingling of the Christian position as in the mind of God for us, and the power of our realisation of it by faith and the Spirit, which makes the difficulty, and yet the blessedness of the passage. (See ver. 2 for instance)

It is not simply now a soul brought to God, as up to verse 11, by the perfection of the work done for us, but involves the transference of our souls from conscious connection with Adam, with all its entail of sin and death, to Christ with its contrasted entail of life and righteousness, which is an experimental process; though it is deeply important that we should be able to present the position, or standing, as in God's mind, because it is faith laying hold of this by the power of the Spirit that leads us into it. And all the process of Romans 7 helps the soul to this by showing the hopelessness of the evil in which we were involved by Adam. The Lord help us to maintain the balance of the truth, and to learn, not by skilful manipulation, but by observing diligently the way things are presented to us in Scripture. I give you what I have seen for years on the subject, but should be thankful for any fresh light on it that preserves these foundation truths; but it must be from the epistle itself.

Eternal Life.

Eternal life may be truly said to be the life of the Eternal Son (as of the Father and the Holy Ghost); morally and essentially it is the life of God, and this life was in Him. For we must remember, if we speak of the Son in eternity, it is of God the Son we speak. His relationship and place with the Father in the Godhead, characterised the life in which He was manifested down here to us; but, to say of the Second Person of the Godhead that He was Eternal Life absolutely in His own Person from eternity (as of Him alone), seems to me to involve serious confusion, and to carry our thoughts beyond what creatures, such as we are, may affirm.

The only passage that I can find that presents "eternal life" before its manifestation in the Lord Jesus down here is 1 John 1: 2, and there it is such a life as was "with the Father." Now I believe this to refer to the Son — in the Son with the Father — but the force of the expression is to me the place and relationship implied and not specifically the Person. It is this that gives its characteristic blessedness to the divine life, as "eternal life," into which we are brought. It is a life such as was with the Father, and can be thus said to be in the Son because of His relationship and place with the Father from eternity; though, for us to be brought into such relationship, it must be brought into and revealed in the Son become man, and redemption be accomplished, that He may set us — not, indeed, in the relationship of the Eternal Son with the Father, but in the relationship of sons with the Father — in that place and relationship in which Jesus was seen as man down here (but "alone" then), and by reason of which (when redemption was accomplished) He can say, "My Father and your Father," etc. It appears to me, indeed, that this is the very reason why 1 John 1: 2, does not bring in expressly the Son, because, if before incarnation it could have been only as the Second Person of the Godhead He was brought in — a relationship that none other could be brought into — yet the life could be so characterised essentially and eternally, because of that relationship; nor did it cease to be a life with the Father when He entered into it as the Son become man, in which condition it was for the first time manifested to us, and so that we could be brought into it by His death and resurrection.

Christian Experience.

Philippians 3; Philippians 4: 4, 7.

I suppose there is no part of the Word of God so characterised by joy as this epistle to the Philippians. We might have thought that Ephesians would be the epistle of joy, where God has been pleased to give us the fullest unfolding of the blessedness of the Christian position, as in Christ in the heavenlies, both individually and corporately. But it is not so stamped with this character of joy as the epistle before us. In Philippians it is the path of the servant in which Christ is known as the power and joy of going on down here through the daily circumstances of the path, whatever they may be. We might have said that it was very fine in theory, but absolutely unworkable and impracticable if the Spirit of God had not been pleased to present this life of divine and heavenly joy in the experience of one of the Lord's beloved servants down here. He had been enabled to live out this life of joy in his own experience. It is not a joy that depends on the circumstances of the path. We are never left to be dependent on circumstances for joy. The keynote of the epistle is, "My brethren, rejoice in the Lord." When you think of Paul's circumstances you will admit they were anything but joyful. Brethren actually emboldened by his imprisonment to go and preach Christ out of contention, "supposing to add affliction to his bonds," but all only turns to joy for the Lord's dear servant. He reflects that it is only Christ they can preach. They would not be listened to if they did not preach Christ, and so in this he

finds joy. "I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice."

So we find the realisation of all this in one like ourselves, who writes not as an Apostle, but as a servant of Jesus Christ (Phil. 1: 1), and with the assurance that the resources that were available for this life of joy in him are available for us today. He evidently thought he was going to close his epistle at the opening of this third chapter, when his last word to us would have been, "Finally my brethren, rejoice in the Lord"; but the Spirit of God leads him to write on, and how well it is for us that he does. For he is led to glance at the various hindrances to the realisation of this blessed life of divine joy, not to occupy us with the hindrances, but with a power to carry us on in spite of every hindrance.

First there is the warning, "Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers," and he was evidently just going to say "the circumcision," but he is inspired to reserve this word now for the Christian; and accordingly he uses a term of reproach, indicating but a partial, instead of complete, cutting off: "Beware of the concision." Circumcision is now made characteristic of the Christian position. How and why? Because by infinite grace we have been brought to bow to the end of all that we are, under the judgment of God in the cross of Jesus Christ, instead of merely bearing a mark of that judgment in the flesh, and being left to cultivate it under law. This makes room for the next thing. "We worship by the Spirit of God" (as it really is). The blessed Spirit of God is the power for worship, while we find the spring of it in "rejoice in Christ Jesus." And now he touches upon the first great hindrance to this life of joy — "and have no confidence in the flesh" — it is religious flesh. There is no difference before God in the character of the flesh, religious or otherwise, but there is a great difference in our practical experience of it. In the case of one converted from open profligacy and the like, he, is not tempted to look back on himself; he only thinks of the past with a shudder; but in a case like that of Saul of Tarsus, one who has long cultivated the flesh, and won for himself a reputation beyond all his compeers by his religion, that is the man that is in danger. That is the character of the flesh that is the worst hindrance to this blessed life of joy. The danger is, in such a case, lest the eye should turn back on self, and be occupied with any supposed gain or progress made in the flesh. We learn from one of his sentences in the Acts that he was a strictly conscientious man, and here that he was earnestly religious, and blameless in outward life. He might have had confidence in the flesh if any man could. But when he was travelling to Damascus at midday a light above the brightness of the sun shone round about him, and he heard the voice of Jesus speaking to him, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" What then became of the flesh in which he had worked? By all his blameless life, and earnest religiousness, and strict conscientiousness, he was the worst enemy of the Lord Jesus Christ in glory the world had ever seen. There was no one could compare with him on the ground of carefully cultivated religious flesh, and that was what came of it. He was occupied in seeking to blot the very memory of the name of Jesus out of the earth, if he could.

But what a revolution in his soul in a moment! "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ." Nor was this only in the first flush of that wonderful revelation of Christ to his soul. "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." There was the sustained estimate of the worthlessness of everything out of Christ. And now what does he think of all he lost? "And do count them but refuse that I may win Christ."

Now, beloved friends, I want for myself and for you that we may get hold of what is presented as the power of practical deliverance from all that line of things, of self-occupation that has been such a snare to many. We see it here. It is the power of that which the soul has before it. It is not merely that as the circumcision we have looked back and bowed to the total judgment of all we were as children of Adam in the cross of Christ — blessed as it is to be brought to that point in the history of God's ways with the soul. But what had Paul before him? He says, "That I may win Christ, and be found in him, not

having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." He was looking to be found, on into the everlasting glory, in a righteousness which was divine in character, instead of the best human righteousness, and which only became his by faith in Christ Jesus, when all of self was absolutely excluded. Well, but you may ask, was not he already clothed in divine righteousness? Of course he was, or he could not have been looking to be found in it in the everlasting glory. But here it is the immense power of what he has before his soul as he looks on into the future. Instead of a subtle glance back upon all he had gained among his fellows by the earnest cultivation of the flesh, he was wholly occupied with the thought of being found before God in a righteousness which was wholly divine, and which was his by no legal effort or attainment of the flesh, but only by faith in Christ Jesus. No shred of religious self entered into such an anticipation. It makes powerfully for the practical deliverance of our souls from what is of man and the flesh to have nothing but the righteousness of God before us as eternally our place in Christ.

The next great hindrance the Apostle is led to look at is the scene that lies around us in the world, our surroundings — a very significant word. How is this hindrance to be met? It is again in the power of that which is before us, of that which the heart makes its object, "That I may know him." (Ver. 10) But, you may say, Who was there ever that knew Christ as he knew Him, who had suffered the loss of all things for Him, and counted all its loss but refuse? Ah, beloved friends, the knowledge of Christ is an insatiable thing.

The more we know Him the more we want to know Him. Nothing will satisfy the heart that knows Him but to know Him better. And it is by these very desires the growth of the soul is carried on. "He satisfieth the longing soul." If God in His grace awakens the longing, it is that He may satisfy that longing; and with every fresh satisfying there is fresh capacity for deeper longing and deeper satisfying. How much we have to seek that there may be these exercises of the soul. But he goes on, "And the power of his resurrection." That is the place where I am one with Him in glory. What for? That my blessing may be more assured? Nothing of the kind. "And the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death." That is, that in the power of the place where he was one with Him, he might go down more completely into identification with Christ in His rejection here, even to close his path, like his Master, by a martyr's death, if such was His will for His servant.

And now, mark: "If by any means I may arrive at resurrection from among the dead." That is what is before him; as to everything around him, only to taste more fully of the portion of a rejected Christ, while his eye is upon the glorious end of such a path, to be raised out from among the dead like Christ, in full conformity to Him in glory. What would the finest situation ever offered to a man down here be to one that had such a position before him? He can afford to despise it all. Does the verse express that he was uncertain about reaching the end? No, that is not it at all. It is that mind and heart are so upon the end of the way that he does not care what the character of the way that leads there. It may be rough or it may be smooth; it may be long or short. But he is not occupied with the way. His eye is wholly upon the end of it; and what an end — to be raised from the dead to be like Christ in glory. He is pressing on through everything here to reach that glorious consummation.

"Not as though I had already attained either were already perfect" — for there is no perfection of condition known in Scripture, short of reaching Christ in glory — "but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." He is not speaking here of any mental apprehension of things. He is using a word that is only used, so far as I know, in modern English, in the language of the police court: we know what it means by a policeman apprehending a man. It is then: If that I may lay hold of that for which Christ has laid hold of me. What did He lay hold of you and me for? Nothing short of being with Himself and like Him in the glory of God for ever. Now, he says, that

is what I am set for. "Brethren, I count not myself to have laid hold of it, but this one thing I do" — Not many things, as so often thought desirable. And what is it? "Forgetting the things that are behind" — that does not refer to the failures of the past: we were not meant to forget them — it is very profitable that we should remember the failures of the past, to be humbled by them. It means that he is not occupied with the milestones, the past points of progress or of victories won. He has no time to take account of the length of the way he has traversed. He views the race set before him with his whole mind on the end of it. "Reaching forth to the things that are before." He is using the most forcible words of the race-course: the attitude of a man in running, with his head and neck extended out beyond the rest of the body, in the earnestness of pressing on to the goal and the prize. "I press toward the goal for the prize of the calling on high of God in Christ Jesus."

What do we know, beloved friends, of the power of all that we have been thus called to in infinite grace? How few are the objects that God has set before us to those we set before ourselves! What could exceed the blessedness of them? What holy energy they would impart to the life, and be our very real deliverance from the things that so easily divert us in the scene we are passing through. The goal was Christ then, to reach Him in the glory where He is, and the prize was Christ thus reached. Nor is all this presented to us as a beautiful picture to admire — to make us think of the man or servant. Paul is inspired to give us his experience as true Christian experience — not that it is the experience of every Christian, but that which is only proper and normal to him as such. "Let us, therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded." Oh, but you say, I thought he had only just said, "Not as though I were already perfect." But that was when he was speaking of the condition of the Christian; but now he is speaking of our position in Christ, in which he could not be more perfect. Nobody could be more perfect as to his position than to be in Christ, and this is the common position of every believer. He speaks, then, to those who are in the faith of their souls in Christ before God, and what he desires for them is that they should have the same mind as the Apostle had, a mind concentrated on the things which are before, pressing on to reach the goal as their one pursuit, instead of being attracted by the hundred and one things that the enemy spreads out to turn them aside on every hand. Beloved friends, I do not think we estimate aright the power of an object worthy to control the heart. It has been often illustrated by a mother who hears that her child has been run over in the street. She is not attracted by the things that are in the shop windows. She has got an adequate object before her to engross her whole attention — she runs to reach her child, and she is not conscious of the things hung up in the shop windows. Oh, beloved friends, is Christ an adequate object to engross our souls? If He were before the soul in the excellency and glory of His Person, we should not have much difficulty in passing the various things by which the enemy would seek to attract or distract us in the scene of Christ's rejection. We should not be even conscious of their presence. Oh, what joy and satisfaction there comes with Christ so known and before the soul! Where is there anything to be found like being filled with the things that are before? If we rest in our place in Christ, let us see to it that we be minded as Paul was — to have nothing but Christ before him.

Alas! it was not so with all. "But if in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you." He cannot let down the standard of the Christian's object to anyone's imperfect apprehension of it.

"Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule." It might be thought that I have only to think of myself, and not mind anybody else; but that would not be Christianity at all. Christianity teaches me to think of everybody but myself. It may come to it at last that you have to go on by yourself alone, but it will not be before you have tried, by every means and resource of faith, to draw on the Lord's beloved ones with yourself in the path of pressing on to reach

Him. The last clause of the verse (16) is not Scripture; and it will be easily seen that it could not be, for the case he supposes is that we do not mind the same thing. It is sorrowful that it should be so, and it makes a difficulty. But at least we may seek out what we have in common, and not break the rank, but walk in step, as is the force of the expression, as long as it is possible without compromise of the truth.

"Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk, so as ye have us for an ensample." They had in Paul the true proper sample of Christian life and experience. And now all this is brought out the more forcibly by the contrast of the next two verses. "Many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ." He does not say they are the enemies of Christ; they profess to be His friends. But they hate the cross. The cross is the point and power of separation from all that is of man and the world: and this they would not have. "They were the enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things." And here the question is often introduced, "Is he speaking of mere professors?" But that is just where the passage is silent. It affirms nothing of the real relations of their souls with God. Paul judges by their outward course, and what he says applies in principle to all who profess Christ. It was not of heathen he was speaking. What else could the poor heathen do but mind earthly things? What he speaks of is meant to tell upon you and me. What have our minds been on today? Minding earthly things is the road to destruction. If the Lord's beloved ones get on that road, they will be delivered out of it before it reaches its fearful end.

"For our conversation is in heaven." It is difficult to represent the thought by any English word. It is literally "citizenship," but citizenship is a cold thing in England. To a Greek the word the Spirit uses here would express the deepest interest of his life. His citizenship came before his wife, his children, or any other interest. It serves the Apostle, therefore, to express that all the deepest springs of our moral life are in heaven now. We are only awaiting the Lord Jesus Christ to change our bodies of humiliation into the fashion of His body of glory, according to the power whereby He is able to subdue all things unto Himself. Thus he does not close the chapter without showing how we may reach the goal without death at all. Wherever you find something about death — and there are only four passages that speak of the death of the believer in the epistles — you will generally find what brings in the proper hope of the Christian; that is the coming of the Lord. Ever since the special revelation of it in the earliest of the Apostle's writings, he looks upon it as ingrained into the whole Christian life. There is nothing between these two aspects of what is before us to clash in the least. What could be more blessed than that when the Lord comes He should find His own pressing on with every energy of their whole being, not to reach some earthly object, but to reach Christ and full conformity to Him in glory. Then at His coming, in the twinkling of an eye, we have reached the goal without death at all, all that is mortal swallowed up in the power of that life we already possess in Him.

Now (Phil. 4: 4, 5) he reverts to the exhortation with which he was going to close his epistle, only adding strength to it by the word "always." "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, rejoice. Let your moderation [or rather yieldingness] be known unto all men." It is the opposite of standing on our supposed rights. The Lord is going to have His rights. He is at hand. It will be time enough for us to get ours when He gets His. Meanwhile, we can afford to yield. "Be careful for nothing." Ah! you say, there is just the thing I was listening for. My cares are the greatest hindrance to realising this life of blessed joy upon earth. But He says, "Be careful for nothing." But, you say, if you knew my circumstances, you would know that I could not but be careful for many things. The blessed God, He who says, "Be careful for nothing," knows your circumstances. But He does not leave you without a resource to carry you on rejoicing always, in spite of all that might suggest care. "In everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." There is your resource, whether it be in

trifles or in great things. What a wonderful resource it is, beloved friends. In *everything* by prayer and supplication with *thanksgiving*, and that not because of the expected blessing, but because we cannot draw near to God without thinking of the wonderful revelation He has given us of Himself in His beloved Son. "If he has not spared his own Son, but given him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things." And thus the heart knows it is all right and bows in thanksgiving at the same time, as you find relief in pressing all that was pressing on you on the heart of God, knowing now that it is well you should. With the result that "The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and thoughts [as it really is — often a very difficult part of us to manage] by Christ Jesus." He guarantees that if we only trust Him with our cares, He will put the peace in which He dwells Himself on the throne, where no breath of trouble ever came, into our hearts and thoughts. You say you cannot understand it. God has anticipated you, and tells us it passes all understanding. He does not expect you to understand it. Oh, beloved friends, only act upon it, only trust Him, and instead of carrying that load of care upon your heart all the hours of the day, carry all to Him — Put your care into His heart, and He guarantees that He will put His peace into yours. It *does* pass all understanding. You will be a wonder to yourself and to all who know you. How blessed it is to have had the hindrances looked at and owned, so far as that we are furnished with the resources that availed for the Lord's beloved servant, and are as good for us today, that we may ever realise this blessed life of divine and heavenly joy upon earth. It is His will for us. It is His command to us once more today "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, rejoice."

The Priesthood of Christ.

The present service of the Lord Jesus for His redeemed is presented to us in a double way, first as our High Priest with God for all that connects with our condition in weakness here, and then as Advocate with the Father in case of sin. The epistle to the Hebrews gives us His Priesthood; the epistle of John, His place as Advocate, which will form the subject of another paper if the Lord will. Priesthood we find from Hebrews is founded on the work the Lord Jesus has accomplished on the Cross, where for the moment He was both Priest and victim. (Heb. 2: 17) "A merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God to make propitiation" (as it is) "for the sins of the people." Hebrews 8: 4, "if he were on earth he should not be a priest" shows that this was not His proper priestly work, which as in the types only began on the death of the victim (with the remarkable exception of the great day of atonement, Lev. 16, when the *high* priest offered the sin-offering). He did not then enter upon Priesthood till He took His place on high, where the epistle steadily keeps Him before our eyes: Hebrews 1: 3, in the glory of His Person; Hebrews 8: 1, as to the character and perfection of His Priesthood displacing that of Aaron; Hebrews 10: 12, in the perfection of His work, set down uninterruptedly as having nothing more to do with sins as to which He has perfected our consciences uninterruptedly, and Hebrews 12: 2, as having reached the goal of the race of faith of which He is leader and finisher.

This is important as to the place of Priesthood, because it proves that it has nothing to do with any question of sin, being only taken up on the ground of an eternal redemption that has put away sin for ever for God and the faith of our souls. A merciful and faithful High Priest exercises it for us that we may not sin, sin being looked at as hopeless apostasy in the epistle. It is too sadly possible that we may sin, nor does the service of the Lord Jesus fail for us in that case; but that is as Advocate with the Father. (1 John 2: 1)

Priesthood is with God for weakness, which is our only true condition as long as we are here. It supposes then a justified and delivered people, as Israel were in type, when brought to God through the Red Sea, with the wilderness lying before us, and the rest and glory of God at the end. He who is our Moses, the leader of our salvation is conducting us there as the sons of God, Hebrews 2: 10; whom He has brought to His own ground as set forth in the risen man, Christ Jesus, the sanctifier and the sanctified all of one, not ashamed to call them His brethren, in the midst of whom He can take His place to lead us in our song of redemption (Ex. 15), at the very opening of the path. (Ver. 12) The path in which He would sustain us by Priesthood is His own in which He has gone before as opened out in three great characteristics of it in the epistle — perfect dependence, "I will put my trust in Him," verse 13; obedience learned by the things He suffered (Heb. 5: 8), and faith, of which He is the great prototype. (Heb. 12: 2)

So much as to the epistle generally, and the Christian's place in it, will help as to the precious details of the service of Priesthood in which He is ever in love actively engaged for us. And first, "in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour the tempted." With what reality it brings Him before us as having been in our path, to know that He was tempted. At the very opening of His public path in the Gospels He had to meet the temptations of Satan in the wilderness. His perfection is seen in that He *suffered* being tempted: with Him the effect of the presentation of anything contrary to God was only to produce suffering. With us, if not by faith reckoning ourselves to be dead to sin, and walking in the Spirit as the power of the deliverance that Christ has wrought for us, there is the horrible answer of the flesh within to the temptation, presented from without. There was none such with Him: He suffered being tempted, and that is the absolute opposite of sinning. He that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin, as Peter (1 Peter 4: 1) says, exhorting us to arm ourselves with the same mind as Christ. Tempted we shall be, but just at the point in which in weakness we take sides with God against ourselves refusing the evil, the mighty succour of the Lord comes in to our support, lest weakness without support should turn to wilfulness and sin.

In Aaron's garments of glory and beauty in type he bore the names of the children of Israel engraved upon the onyx stones on the shoulders of strength, and also upon the breastplate of judgment upon his heart. We have the reality of both as we consider the High Priest of our confession. For besides strength to succour as in Hebrews 2, Hebrews 4 brings out the wonderful sympathy of His heart. "We have not an high priest who cannot sympathise" (for this is the literal translation) "with our weaknesses but was in all points tempted like as we, without sin" (or "sin apart"). I use the word "weaknesses" because there is but one word to express our two English words "weakness" and "infirmity" in Greek. There is no shade of any other meaning than weakness in the passage. The last clause excludes what is sinful. Besides no Christian would look for the sympathy of the Lord Jesus with what had that character. Weakness is not sinful. Christ was crucified in weakness. We have to be reduced to it as Paul in 2 Corinthians 12, who glories in it because of the proved strength of Christ made perfect in it. It is in weakness that our path has to be made good for God in the midst of temptations, subject to the assaults of the enemy, in the teeth of the opposition of every principle of man and his world, in need of patience in carrying out the will of God, in danger of being wearied and faint in our minds, and through varied exercise. How blessed that there is not a detail of our weakness, under every form of trial and testing, that Jesus, our great High Priest, the Son of God who is passed through the heavens, does not enter into, in the perfect sympathy of a human heart on the throne of God, and with all the divine strength of His compassion. So that the throne where He sits becomes a throne of grace where we can come boldly with every phase of need and obtain mercy and grace for seasonable succour.

But the question may arise how can one so exalted as the Son of God enter into all the details of His people's weakness and need down here. The answer is given us in Hebrews 5. He has been here, and in circumstances of pressure and sorrow such as never fell to the lot of man beside. Not that He is in them now. For it is a common mistake that I must be in the same circumstances as another to be able to sympathise. It is not true. If in them myself I am not so free to enter into those of another. But if I have been in them, and am now out of them, I can fully sympathise with those of another. How infinite the love and grace that brought the Son of God into the path of testing, "who in the days of his flesh when he had offered up strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him out of death, and was heard for his piety" (that is, His meek submission to God). "Though he were a Son yet learned he obedience by the things that he suffered." It is Gethsemane that comes before us, with all its unfathomable sorrow, the last and most crucial of all the scenes of testing and trial He had to go through, and that fitted Him perfectly for our hearts to be all we need in our High Priest. Out of His own deep experience of human sorrow and trial, we have the consciousness that there is nothing that we have to pass through that He cannot enter into, to sustain us as we seek to walk in the same path of His obedience.

But the truth of Priesthood goes farther. I do not here refer to the order of it as that of Melchisedek, proved to be superior to that of Aaron by so many points of contrast in Hebrews 7: because the present exercise of it is analogous to Aaron's as having to do with the sanctuary. The Melchisedek priesthood will not be in exercise till He comes out in manifested glory, and takes His place as Priest upon His throne. But at the close of Hebrews 6 He is presented as having entered within the veil, and that as our forerunner. So that, not only have we the immutability of God's counsel confirmed by an oath, as Abraham for the fulfilment of promise, — and we are just where he was as to the rest and glory of God, — but we have a personal guarantee for its fulfilment in the place "whither the forerunner has for us entered, Jesus made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedek": and this also gives us the sanctuary of God as the refuge and home of our hearts. He had, indeed, first of all secured all that was needed for us in the way of succour and sympathy for the path through the wilderness, but this was our ride of things. Now He seeks to conduct our hearts to where He is, to His side of things in the bright scene of God's presence, so that we be not slothful but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

Nor is He inactive there, for we are still on the way, and love engages Him in His intransmissible priesthood to be ever occupied with us, "able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." (Heb. 7: 25) It is thus the dependent life of Christ in us is sustained by the resources of grace and strength that are ministered to us by His priestly intercession and service. Were that exercise of priesthood to cease for a moment we should soon find out where we were, and how dependent we are upon it. But it is not possible: it says, "He *ever liveth* to make intercession" for us, as if He had nothing else to do but to think of and care for us. All our resources thus being derived moment by moment from what Christ is, "made higher than the heavens" (Heb. 7: 26), we are prepared for what I may speak of as the full positive side of Priesthood, which we hear from Hebrews 8 - 10, and which carries us in heart and spirit into the heavenly scenes themselves. For as the epistle says (Heb. 8: 1), "Of the things which we have spoken this is the sum" (or summing up): "we have such an high priest who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; a minister of the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched and not man," of which the tabernacle in this world was but the type and shadow. (Ver. 5) But if the perfect heavenly sanctuary of God's presence is what is in question now, there is a perfect sacrifice that answers to it (Heb. 9: 11-14), and that introduces us there as perfected worshippers, having no more conscience of sins. (Heb. 10: 1) It is the witness of the Holy Ghost to the work of the Son of God to make good the counsels of the divine

will that gives us this perfect conscience, our sins and iniquities remembered no more.

And now (ver. 19) the Spirit of God summons us to take up our place before God accordingly "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, His flesh; and having a great Priest" (as it is now) "over the house of God, let us draw near." Thus once more Christ is presented to us as Priest when He appears representatively for us in the presence of God (see Heb. 9: 24), giving us a home link to connect our hearts in the most intimate way with all that is there. The house of God over which He is Priest consists as we know from Hebrews 3, of all who are Christ's, "whose house are we if we hold fast the confidence and rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end." Each true Christian then has this wondrous place of unhindered access to God in the sanctuary of His own presence. "With a true heart," it is added and in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water," applying this typically without further development, the two parts of the consecration of the priests. Not only perfect rest of conscience and heart as to all the past in the presence of God through the blood of Christ, but the water of the word applied to bring us into a nature capable of enjoying and free to enjoy that holy presence. We are in truth a consecrated priesthood, but it was not the object of the epistle to bring out our priesthood but that of Christ, and so it is left thus in the language of the type.

Nor do I seek to follow out the glorious consequences for us further. Let it suffice that all has been thus prepared for worship, only needing the added truth of the revelation of the Father, as in John 4, for it to burst forth from full hearts, who having access to God within the holiest, have gone forth without the camp, from all that was once instituted of God as a religion for men upon earth, to Christ, bearing His reproach. (Heb. 13: 13)

May it be ours then by His grace to realise more and more not merely the blessedness of having every need of our way in weakness through a wilderness world met by the priesthood of Christ, but of becoming more familiar with the sanctuary of which He is the minister, and the holy occupation of it that He connects us with and would maintain us in the enjoyment of, by His priesthood, when first by His work, finished on the Cross, He has given us our title and fitness for the unclouded light of the presence of God.

The Advocate with the Father.

1 John 2: 1.

In considering the subject of the Priesthood of the Lord Jesus in a previous paper, it was recognised that there is another aspect of the wonderful service that His love for His own engages Him in, in their passage through the world. It is that which is presented to us in the text at the head of this paper, "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." The Priesthood of the Lord Jesus as was seen from the epistle to the Hebrews is with God, and is in exercise for us that we may not sin. It is to maintain us in spite of weakness here, in consistency with a heavenly calling; meeting us (in every form of testing and exercise and conflict with the opposing forces of Satan) with His powerful succour and precious sympathy, that we might hold fast the confession of His Name, and be free for the occupations of the heavenly sanctuary which He has opened to us by His perfect sacrifice.

Priesthood does not contemplate sin in the people of God. It is founded normally on the perfection of the sacrifice by which sins were removed from before God for ever, and removed therefore from the conscience of the believer. Yet, as James says, "In many things we all offend." If there were no provision, then, for failure and sin in the believer, with all our humbling experience of how possible it is, how terrible it would be.

Now it is just here that in infinite grace the epistle of John brings in the office of Christ as Advocate. Let us weigh well the way He is presented, in connection with what has gone before, to which the Apostle refers. Addressing the whole family of God, in the endearing term of "Children," he says, "these things I write unto you, that ye sin not." He refers, of course, to what has gone before in 1 John 1. Three things belong to the Christian position. First we walk in the Light: the light is God perfectly revealed and known. Then, we have fellowship one with another in that light. And the blood of Jesus Christ, which cleanseth us from all sin, is the basis of the whole position, alone making it possible for sinners such as we.

All that has thus gone before in 1 John 1 is brought to bear upon our souls that we sin not, in 1 John 2. But he immediately adds: "If any sin we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous, who is the propitiation for our sins." Thus even when the sin of one of His is in question, the love of the Lord Jesus does not fail. Nor does He leave us to ourselves. He takes up our case and acts for us, according to the deep necessity of it. For this is just the force of "Advocate." It is the same word in the original as "Comforter" applied to the Holy Spirit in John's Gospel. It is one who acts for us in the circumstances, whatever they may be, wherein we have need of Him. Then it is to be noted "Advocate with the *Father*." The sin of the believer has not changed the relationship in which he stands with the Father. We have changed our place as criminals at the bar of God, for that of children with the Father. We can never even on the worst failure be disowned as such. This makes sin a far more heinous thing — being committed against all the light and relationship and love into which we have been introduced.

But there is the blessedness of the man to whom the Lord does not impute sin. There is no more conscience of sins (according to Heb. 10) for those who have believed God's testimony to the perfection of the finished work of His Son. That is, the conscience never again connects sin with judgment to come; but always with a judgment that has *taken place* in the death of Christ, and is for ever *past*. The conscience rests where God rests, and He remembers our sins and iniquities as such no more.

But the accuser might seek occasion to tempt the fallen one to think he could never call God his Father again. Just in this very connection John is inspired to present the Advocate with the Father, that we might know the relationship to be immutable. And besides, it is "Jesus Christ the righteous." He is there in all His own personal perfection, and "the propitiation for our sins," in all the abiding and uninterrupted efficacy of His work; so that no charge can stand against those whom God has justified. Hence, sin has become a question of holiness and communion that has been absolutely interrupted by it. And the blessed service of the Lord as Advocate is to restore that communion. Nor is it that we have to go to Christ to intervene for us. "If any man sin we have an Advocate." He acts from Himself to bring about in us all that is needed for restoration.

We must now look a little into the character of that wonderful action of His grace. The object of it is to bring us to detect and judge in ourselves that wherein we have failed; to confess our sins, that we may know a Father's forgiveness and be restored to the joy of communion with Him.

This precious service of the Lord for us has been illustrated for us by His ways with Peter in the

gospel of John, to which I turn. John 13: 1-11, gives us the principle of it in the symbolic washing of the disciple's feet. I say symbolic, because of the Lord's words to Peter, "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." There was clearly something far deeper in it than the mere lesson of humility. But verse 1 shows us the new position that the Lord was taking, that gives its character to all the subsequent communications. "Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father." And we have to go through the world out of which He had to depart; but He would not forget us in all our need. For "having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end." In His blessed and unending love was found the spring of His action that follows. In marvellous grace Peter was one who was allowed to hear of a love so beyond all our thought, the very night he was to deny that he ever knew Him. But who is it that undertakes the cause of those who are beset with danger in such a world as this, and are so liable to fail; stooping even to take their feet into His hands to wash them? It is none other than He into whose hands the Father has given all things. But what light is thrown on the defilement we so easily, and alas! too often carelessly contract in our walk, that it necessitates the action of the Son of God to remove it.

Peter resents the humiliation of the Lord in stooping to wash his feet, till he learns that it is essential to his having part with Jesus where He was going. And thus we learn that while His wonderful service for us includes recovery from sin, and the soul's restoration, yet it goes much further in love that cannot bear a cloud between us and Him; and He provides for the removal of whatever would intercept the light and joy of His presence. Peter thought he could not have too much of such washing — "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head."

This leads the Lord to distinguish between two applications of the water. In type, *water*, everywhere in Scripture, represents the word of God applied in the power of the Spirit. The first is that by which we are born wholly anew, and made partakers of a new life and nature? This application can never be repeated. The second is what the washing of the feet implied; namely, the constant application of the Word to preserve or deliver us from what would hinder blessed nearness to Him. Nor are we left to apply it to ourselves: "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me." We see it as we follow out His ways with Peter in the unutterable grace of the Lord to His poor servant; and with each of us. No warning led him to suspect the danger he was in from confidence in himself. He thought that a warm heart would carry him through anything for the Lord: "I will lay down my life for thy sake." But nature's energy must fail in such a path as that, and he succumbs before the taunt of a servant girl, even to deny repeatedly that he ever knew the Lord. "And the Lord turned and looked upon Peter." That look broke his heart. It told of a love that know no change. He knew that he was forgiven even before the special message from His risen Lord, or the personal interview that was accorded him.

But communion was a very different matter, and had yet to be restored. There was still the sense of distance, and a void in his heart that none but Christ could fill. He seeks back to the old occupation once so willingly surrendered for Him, leading others with him. It was a profitless night, but made way for the blessed Lord to intervene in His power and grace, and lead Peter into the reality of what He could not understand when the Lord wanted to wash his feet. "Jesus stood on the shore." The net was now well filled, and all brought to land, where already a meal was prepared for them by the Lord Himself. When it was over, Jesus said to Peter, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these." How gently and yet irresistibly the question would recall his boast. "Although all shall be offended, yet will not I." Who had failed so appallingly as he? What can he say? To whom can he turn but to the One so sinned against? "Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee." But it is to be noted in the original that Peter does not content himself with using the general word for love that the Lord employed; but uses the word for the special love of a friend "Thou knowest that I am attached to thee"; and so again when

the Lord repeats His question. But three times he had denied Him. It was painful work, but the conscience must be deeply probed, and the root of his failure laid bare, that the recovery might be thorough. The third time the Lord puts the question, but with a touch of inimitable grace He adopts Peter's word already implying that He trusts him; "Simon, son of Jonas, art thou attached to me?" Peter could not but feel it, but under that all-searching eye fixed on him in such love he could only answer "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I am attached to thee." The work is done. The defiled feet are washed, and the Lord can confide to Peter His most precious interests here — His lambs and sheep, to shepherd and to feed. And now He gives him, in the power of communion fully restored, to take the path in which once he had broken down so utterly. He should go to death for the Lord.

Thus we are permitted to have a precious sample of the action of the Advocate in the case of the sin of His own. It is the Lord who sets Himself to apply His word to the conscience and heart, to detect and bring to light what it is that has broken communion, or hindered the enjoyment of His presence; so that we may confess it, and judge ourselves. The moment that point is reached He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.

How blessed the revelation of these distinct aspects of the service of the Lord Jesus for us, whether as Priest with God, or as Advocate with the Father. And the ways of His unfailing grace and love to maintain us in the enjoyment of our heavenly relationships; or, when we have failed, to restore us to fellowship with the Father and with Himself, which is the most precious privilege. "Having loved his own which are in the world, he loved them to the end" — till we shall need the assurance of it no more. But oh! how it should make us abhor the defiling thing, whatever it may be, which has needed the service of the Son of God to deliver us from it. "He desireth truth in the inward parts," but He has to work to produce it, so that with a heart that has nothing to condemn us we may have confidence before Him.

Saved with Difficulty.

"For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God; and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God." (1 Peter 4: 17)

There is a double aspect in which Christians are looked at as suffering in this passage, from verse 12. First as suffering under persecution, and the like, directly for Christ's sake; and in this they are partakers of Christ's sufferings, which carries with it the rich recompense of exceeding joy in the day when His glory shall be revealed, while even now the Spirit, the firstfruits of that day of glory, rests upon them. This is the reproach of Christ; it is individual, and the highest character of Christian suffering as allowed of God.

But the Christian also belongs to the house of God, which consists of all who profess Christ's name, and cannot but be involved in its state and God's dealings with it. God looks that His house should answer to His own nature: "Holiness becometh thy house for ever." Has it answered to Him? The addresses to the seven churches in Revelation 2, 3 give us the answer, being the Lord's judgment of its whole course since it fell from its first love in Ephesus, till He has to spue it out of His mouth in Laodicea, taking home all His own out of it at His coming.

The time was come in Peter's day when in God's holy government of that which bears His name, judgment by the chastisements He inflicts must begin at His house, as it will surely extend out to the unbelieving and ungodly world.

The individual child of God knows how to discern in these ways of God the discipline of a Father's love; he may be perfectly apart in spirit and walk from that which brings on the chastisement, kept so, indeed, by these very dealings of God, whose faithful love he recognises in them. But as Caleb and Joshua, true and whole-hearted as they were, had to tramp the wilderness for all the years of Israel's wanderings, brought upon them by the nation's unbelief and rebellion, so with His own in the midst of the profession of Christ's name now. To Laodicea He says: "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten" — the very means God takes that they may be kept out of the fatally insidious current of indifference to Christ that had set in.

In verse 18 it has been noted that "scarcely saved" as to the righteous hardly conveys the true sense. It is, "If the righteous be saved with difficulty," not implying any uncertainty in their being saved. It must be remembered that the salvation of this epistle is the full, final deliverance of the believer at the coming of Christ in glory. (See 1 Peter 1: 10-13) The righteous saved with difficulty! yes, because it contemplates all the conflict and opposition of every principle of the world and power of the enemy, all the trial and danger through which their path lies. It is by the power of God through faith the Christian is kept, and brought through safely to the glorious end. But, if this be only accomplished by divine power for the righteous, where will the ungodly and sinner appear?

The Scapegoat.

J. A. Trench.

Article 19 of 55 from '**Truth for Believers**' Volume 2.

"The scapegoat shall bear upon him all their iniquities into a land not inhabited, and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness." Leviticus 16: 22 brings before us one of the most striking types of the atoning work of Christ that the O.T. gives. It was the day of atonement, and there were two parts to it. First, that which was needed to make atonement for Aaron and his house, verses 3, 6, then also what was needed for the congregation of Israel. For the priestly house it was a young bullock for a sin-offering: for the congregation two kids of the goats. In the latter case lots were to be cast upon the goats — one for the Lord and the other for the scapegoat. The one upon which the Lord's lot fell was to be offered for a sin-offering. If we follow what took place with it we shall the better understand the significance of the scapegoat, and why there was nothing answering to it in the case of the priests. In both, the blood of the sin-offering having been shed outside the tabernacle had to be brought in within the veil and sprinkled upon the mercy-seat which covered the ark: it was where the glory of God abode in Israel. Once was enough for God who could estimate the value of the blood presented to Him in type, but it was His will that there should be the sevenfold sprinkling of it before the mercy-seat for Aaron to give him complete evidence that the need of God's glory having been met as to sin he might safely draw near to God. Aaron's eye rested where God's did, and that was enough for him. But for the sins of the people generally, what went on within the holiest was not within their ken. Yet all depended for them on the acceptance before the Lord of the blood of the goat upon which His lot had fallen. God had to be met for their sin according to all that He is in His own holiness and righteousness, in order that there might be the removal of their sins. The glory of God shining down upon the blood-stained golden mercy-seat was the beautiful expression in type of how He had been glorified by the propitiation work of Christ on the Cross as in Romans 3: 22-26. But the people knew nothing of this till the high priest came out. Then he was to bring the live goat and lay both his hands upon its head and confess over it "all the iniquities of the children of Israel and all their transgressions in all their sins, *putting them upon the head of the goat.*" We can picture the scene to ourselves as every eye in Israel, at least of any who believed God, would be fixed on the spot where the goat stood, and as the priest's lips

moved to confess their sins they would know that that goat stood representatively before God as bearing their sins. And now if they could only ascertain what was done with the goat they would know what was done with their sins. How deeply they would be interested then in seeing the goat being led away by a responsible man into a land not inhabited so as not to be seen any more. They would know then that the sins of one year, at least, for anyone who believed God were gone from God's sight and mind.

Taken out of type we find the accomplishment of what the scapegoat represented in another aspect of the work of the Lord Jesus in His death and resurrection. Propitiation, as in the first goat whose blood was shed and sprinkled on the throne of the Lord in Israel, was world wide; and laid the ground in divine righteousness, not only for the passing over of the sins of past ages in God's forbearance, but for God now to be just and the justifier of any poor ungodly sinner that believes in Jesus. But now for the scapegoat we find the antitype in Christ having been delivered for our offences and raised again for our justification according to Romans 4: 25. That is, as Isaiah 53 had foretold, where in repentance souls were brought to take the only true place for any of us before God, owning that "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way," then it became also true to such that "the Lord had laid on Him the iniquities of us all." And Peter, looking back on the wonderful accomplishment of the prophecy (1 Peter 2: 24, 25), can say, "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree." The two goats were necessary to present to Israel in type, these two aspects of the work of the Lord Jesus. But how far does the glorious antitype exceed anything thus given them. For when the eye of faith looks back to see Christ as having borne my sins, all my sins, on the Cross; it can now look up to see Him risen and glorified at God's right hand. And as it says in 1 Corinthians 15: 17, "If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain, ye are yet in your sins": we know that as He is risen, the faith of the simplest believer is not in vain — we are no longer in our sins. Moreover, for Israel the atonement in type was only available for one year, as we see in the last verse of Leviticus 16. But because of the infinite satisfaction found by God in the one perfect offering of Christ, our sins and iniquities are remembered no more: there is no more conscience of sins for the believer. (See Hebrew 10: 1-18)

And thus is made good to us what only belonged to Aaron and his house in type in Leviticus 16, i.e. that not only are our sins gone by the work of Christ, but that we have unhindered access to God in the holiest. For verse 19 of Hebrew 10 goes on, "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, his flesh, and having a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near." Thus we need the epistle to the Hebrews as well as that to the Romans to complete for us the instruction conveyed in the type of the great day of atonement in Leviticus 16. And I trust that no believer will be satisfied in merely seeing that his or her sins are gone for ever by what answers to the scapegoat — Christ as the substitute for His people — but will also realise by faith and the power of the Holy Spirit what is their portion now of access to God in the unclouded light of His own presence, which even could not be conveyed to Aaron when he went into the holiest made with hands with the blood of the bullock. For "the Holy Ghost this signifies that the way into the holiest was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing" (or literally "had its standing," Heb. 9: 8). Now He signifies, as in Hebrews 10, that no veil exists any longer, nor any unsettled question of sin, to hinder our drawing near to the very presence of God. The blow of divine judgment, that, as it fell upon Christ for our sins, rent the veil that barred the way, has removed for ever the sins from before God, that would have hindered our availing ourselves of the opened way.

What blessed instruction the types afford us now that we have the key to all in the Person and

work of Christ.

Christ the Centre.

John 1: 35-45; Ephesians 1: 9-11; Revelation 5: 6-14.

It is a blessed thing if our hearts know anything of the wonderful attraction of God's grace, leading us to the Centre of His own thoughts and counsels — His beloved Son. I want to enter a little into the way it affects us. In Old Testament times God had been acting in view of the object of His counsels — His Son; but the Object was not revealed; God Himself was not revealed. Now, by all that His Son has done, He has set our hearts free: not merely by the work which has been the end of all that we were, but by the setting up of the Lord Jesus Christ, raised from the dead and the Spirit of God given to us.

I think it is in the individual aspect that John bears testimony to the One who baptises with the Holy Ghost. Even the very place He has in His Father's love is made ours. We hear Him say when on earth, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit" (John 12: 24), but now He is no longer alone.

What a wonderful divine clearance of everything that would otherwise have occupied us, so that God's Centre might be before our souls.

We see this in Ephesians. It is only when the soul is, by the power of the Holy Ghost, consciously as Christ is before God, that we can be occupied with the glory of God's beloved Son. When we have been brought into the consciousness of this place, as in Ephesians 1: 4-6, the Father counts on being able to interest His own in all that He has counselled for the glory of Christ.

My thought in turning to John 1 is that now for the first time we have that Centre appearing on earth. All the divine glory of His person shines before us as revealed from the very first chapter. There was here for the first time a Centre of gathering on earth, now that the only begotten Son was here to declare and make known all that God was. One heart after another falls under the mighty attraction of that revealed Centre.

In John 10 you get the main thought in verse 16. One *flock* (not one fold). His word coming home in divine power to the heart and conscience established a link between Himself and His own sheep. They had heard His voice. When they heard the stranger's voice they knew it was not His. That personal link had been established between each sheep and the Shepherd. The Shepherd is the Centre of attraction for the flock — for each sheep of the flock.

Now let us look at John 12. He had always been the Centre of all that God was doing, but this was not revealed before. (Vers. 31, 32, 33) "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This he said signifying what death he should die." The lifted up One on the Cross was to be the centre of attraction, that now there might be a true gathering around Him.

In Ephesians 1 we find Him as raised from the dead and seated at God's right hand. As one soul after another is reached by the gospel and attracted to Him, we see Him as the Centre of all God's work. It was the eternal counsel of God to head up all things in Christ. Everyone who receives the glad tidings of salvation receives the Holy Ghost to unite him to Christ at the right hand of God.

In chapter 1 the Apostle prays that we may be in the intelligence of what God is doing. In Ephesians 3: 16, 17 that we may be "strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith": that the One who has been the Centre of all God's thoughts may now be the Centre for our hearts. Do we know what it is to be in true relation to the centre of all that God is doing in grace?

Matthew 18, 20. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." With what interest that invests the smallest company gathered in His Name! The Lord Himself in our midst — the Centre to which we are gathered. In Hebrews 10: 25 the Apostle exhorts them not to forsake the assembling of themselves together. These Hebrew Christians had learnt that they could draw near to God. They might have thought, now we can each draw near to God alone in our own houses, and there will be no reproach. But God summons them together in the face of the world, out from the privacy of their houses. In one other passage that word "assembling" occurs. (2 Thess. 2: 1) "We beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our *gathering together* unto him." He will be the Centre in the air of what God will be doing. He is going to be the wonderful magnet of attraction then. "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout . . . then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up . . . to meet the Lord in the air." (1 Thess. 4: 16, 17) And now the Apostle bases His exhortation on this. What a moment that will be! Then we shall be assembled to Him — gathered round Him — in the air! And this will be only the ushering in of the eternal glory. In Revelation 5 we find the whole universe ordered round the same Centre, redeemed to God by His precious blood: all in perfect order — no one missing there. All will be gathered on the same ground of redemption and round the same Centre as we gather around already here on earth. And then there will be one burst of everlasting praise. They are not occupied with themselves; that word "us" is not really in the text. He was worthy who had accomplished the work. That was what occupied them. And then we see all things in heaven and on earth headed up in Him. The inheritance of Christ becomes the inheritance of His people, according to the everlasting counsels of God. He who is ever before the heart of God, becomes the all-absorbing object of our hearts. May He grant it to us now more and more for His precious name's sake.

"Water" in the Word.

John 3: 5.

Water is the symbol of the Word of God applied to the soul, in power, by the Spirit of God. A reference to other Scriptures will prove this.

Compare the expression we are considering in John 3: 5, "born of water," with James 1: 18, where we read, "Of his own will begat he us by the word of truth"; and with 1 Peter 1: 23, which runs, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." Then turn to Ephesians 5: 26, where we find the water definitely identified with the Word in the expression, "The washing of water by the word."

Water purifies; hence by the use of the symbol more is conveyed than if it had been simply said "born of the word." It includes the effect produced, as well as the instrumentality used of God in this, the beginning of all His ways with us in grace.

In the types water has as large a place as the blood. Both flowed from the pierced side of the Lord

Jesus in death. (John 19: 34) This is the historic order, and in it, the blood comes first, as the basis of everything for God's glory and our blessing. In the order of application to us, as John in his epistle (1 John 5: 6) gives it, the water comes first, "This is he that came by water and blood . . . and it is the Spirit that beareth witness." The Spirit it is who applies the Word to the conscience, by which mighty operation of sovereign grace we are born absolutely anew. The effect in us is the conviction of sins; and when faith rests on the testimony of the Spirit to the value of the blood of Christ that cleanseth from all sin, He (the Spirit) can take up His dwelling-place in us to be the power of the enjoyment of all that we have been brought into by the water and the blood: and the Christian position is then complete.

But fastening our attention on the water, it is important to see that there is a double application of what it represents as in John 13: 10: "He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit." There is first, as we have seen, being "born of water and of the Spirit"; this answers to the first washing mentioned here, and, as it is the communication of a new life and nature, cannot be repeated; we are "clean every whit." Nor is this by any change in the character of the flesh in us; "that which is born of the flesh is flesh," and there can be no purification of it. The Word applied by the Spirit to our souls carries with it the sentence of death upon all that is of the flesh. God could do nothing with it but end it in judgment (Gen. 6: 13), a judgment He carried out for faith in the death of His Son. (Rom. 8: 3) Thus the water was found where the blood was in His death. It is, on the one hand, the end of the flesh in total condemnation, and on the other, the introduction of a life in which we can live to God and enjoy Him for ever.

But we have to pass with this life through a defiling world, where all that meets the senses tends to hinder communion with Him who is our life. Hence the need of the second application of the Word, symbolised by the Lord's touching service to His disciples. (John 13)

He girded Himself with the towel, and, pouring water into a basin, He began to wash their feet, and wipe them with the towel wherewith He was girded. It was, as Jesus tells Peter, that we might have "part with him" when He is gone, that is, as having departed out of the world to the Father. (Ver. 1) We have to go through the world out of which He has had to depart, and therein lies all our need: liable to contract defilement at every step, or at least that which would bring moral distance between our souls and Him, He knows how to apply His word to bring back the soul to the enjoyment of His presence, in His ever faithful and unfailing love, that there may not be even a shade of reserve between us and Him. That first action of His word by which we were clean every whit in the divine nature could never be repeated; this is needed continually. Nor does He leave us to apply it to ourselves (if I wash thee not), though He may use any of us who have learned in the school of His grace, in this privileged service to others. (Ver. 14)

It is of interest, as helping to bring out the distinction all the more clearly, that the Lord employs two different words in this tenth verse according to their clearly defined usage in the Greek version of the Old Testament. "He that is washed" (or "bathed"), as applicable to the whole person, is the word *louo*, used of the washing of the priests on the day of their consecration. (Ex. 29: 4) "Needeth not save to wash (*nipito*) his feet," is that used for the washing of their hands and their feet in the laver at the tabernacle door, every time they went into the sanctuary. (Ex. 30: 18, 21) And the words are never interchanged. But, in noting this, we must remember the difference between preparation for priestly entering into the holy places, as in the Old Testament, and this wonderful service of the Lord for us, that we may have the constant enjoyment of His presence as having gone to the Father.

May our hearts be more deeply affected by the love that would not leave a spot on our feet; and may we yield ourselves up to the searching action of His word upon us, when it is needed that He

should apply it, rather than be content to walk at a distance from Him, clinging to something that maintains that distance, to His dishonour and our own incalculable loss.

"Born of Water."

John 3: 5.

It is very helpful to the soul to see the place that "water" has typically in Scripture as well as the blood; for though, in the ordinary testimony of evangelical Christendom, the latter occupies nearly the whole ground, the former has, in Scripture, an almost equally important place. Both flowed from the side of the Lord Jesus in death, as John bears witness to it. (John 19: 31-35)

And note the order, historically — the blood first, as the basis of all for God's glory. In that precious blood-shedding, all that He is in holiness and righteousness against sin and in love to the sinner has been made good, involving pardon and peace for us. But when we come to the application of these blessed realities to us, in the First Epistle of John (ver. 6), the order is reversed. "This is he that came by water and blood, Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood." There is something needed before the blood, namely, the Word, of which water is ever the symbol. This needs to be applied to the soul in the power of the Spirit, that there may be the awakening of the conscience and the conviction of sin, to which the blood applies. The Spirit, the water, and the blood, is the order of application.

But it is especially with the water we are now engaged.

Very early we find it in the types. For on the day of the consecration of Aaron and his sons they were washed with water (Lev. 8: 6), as well as sprinkled with blood later on. (Ver. 23) This washing was never repeated, though in the laver between the tabernacle of meeting and the altar they washed their hands and their feet when they went into the tent of meeting and came near unto the altar. (Ex. 40: 31)

This becomes of great interest to us when we know that the Lord Jesus speaks of this double action of water, in that wonderful scene of John 13. Under the symbol of the washing of His disciples' feet He brings out His present service for His own as having departed out of this world unto the Father. Peter, with his warm, impulsive nature, resented the apparent humiliation of the Lord, saying, "Thou shalt never wash my feet." But this leads the Lord to the true character of the service, of which His action was symbolic — a service of deep significance for us. "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me." This washing is essential to our having part with Him in the realisation and enjoyment of His presence where He has gone. "Lord," he says, "not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." Jesus saith to him, "He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit." He declares there was that one first application of the water that needs never to be repeated, being connected with the communication of a new life and nature by the Spirit in which alone there is true cleansing. Secondly, there should be the constant need of the application of the water to our ways, wherein in such a world we are so easily defiled and rendered unfit for the enjoyment of the presence of the Son with the Father. Briefly, it is the Word as applied to the soul first at the new birth; and secondly, by the Lord in His constant service for us in grace, of which the Lord speaks under the symbol of water.

This brings us to the beginning of all God's ways with us in grace — the new birth. Without it our

eyes will never be opened on the kingdom of God, as it was manifested in every characteristic trait of its blessedness in the Person of Christ when He was here; nor can we ever enter into it when set up. "Ye must be born again."

"Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God." That which is born of the flesh may be religious, as it was in Nicodemus; amiable, cultivated, strictly conscientious, and even blameless in outward life, as in Saul of Tarsus; but it is flesh and never can be anything else than flesh, and is only fit for the judgment of God. But that which is born of the Spirit is spirit; that is, it has the essential nature and characteristic of its source, as the flesh has of its source. There can be no purification of the flesh. There is but one way God can deal with it — as He said in Genesis 6, "The end of all flesh is come before me." It must be dealt with either in the Cross — for faith that submits to the sentence — for "God, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh," or else in the lake of fire.

This helps, then, as to why the water for purification, as well as the blood for propitiation, came from the side of Jesus in death. For it is the Word applied by the Spirit that is the mighty instrument of this change. This participation in the life and nature of God carries with it the sentence of God's judgment upon all that is of the flesh in one reached by it. And the purification is by the communication of a new life and nature in which we are clean every whit. Thus in John 13, while Judas was yet present, the Lord has to say (ver. 11), "For he knew who should betray him . . . Ye are not all clean," Judas having gone out (ver. 30), in John 15: 3, He can say, "Now ye are clean, through the word which I have spoken unto you."

Both James and Peter confirm the force of the constant symbol of water. "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth." (James 1: 18) "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but, of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." (1 Peter 1: 23) But by the use of the symbol we are carried beyond the instrumentality of the work to take in also its effects in the cleansing from the defilement of sin, as the blood was needed for cleansing from its guilt.

Paul comes in to complete the testimony, for in speaking of Christ's love to the Church, who gave Himself for it, we learn that His was not only a love of the past, but of the present. If He has cleansed it with the washing of water by the Word, it is that He may form it more and more like Himself by the same means. For the Word is the revelation of all that He is, who has set Himself apart in glory, as the object for our souls, thus to be the source, measure, character, and power of our sanctification, and of our being formed like Him. Nor is this all, for His love will never be satisfied till He can present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot of defilement or wrinkle of old age, or any such thing, but all that His heart can delight in for ever. (Eph. 5: 25-27)

The parable of the Unjust Steward.

Luke 16.

Man is set forth in the unjust steward, who, failing in every aspect of his responsibility, has been proved to be no exception to the rule, when entrusted with the stewardship of his lord's goods. He wasted them, and must lose his position as steward. But the goods lie over in his hands for the present; and the point of the parable is the *prudent*, if unscrupulous, use he makes of this his opportunity, in view of the future.

There were these debtors of his lord's; he will reduce his master's claim upon them, by half in one case, by a fifth in another, and so make friends of them for his own prospective advantage, when put out of the stewardship. "And the lord" mark, not the Lord Jesus, but the lord of the steward in the parable "commended the unjust steward because he had done wisely [or rather 'prudently,' a word more suited to worldly wisdom]: for the children of this world are in their generation more prudent than the children of light." So much for the parable; now for the application. (Ver. 9) "And I say unto you, make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that when ye fail [that is, when ye die] they may receive you" — or rather, for it is a common usage of Luke's (see Luke 12: 20; Luke 6: 38, 44; Luke 23: 31) — "ye maybe received into everlasting habitations."

But why is it called "the mammon of unrighteousness"? Because all accumulation of property in one man's hand, more than in another's, belongs to man's fallen state in this world, since sin entered into it — a condition of unrighteousness. Hence in verse 11 the Lord speaks of it as "unrighteous mammon." But can what is thus solemnly characterised be possibly fit to be turned to profitable account by the Christian? It can; he can use it in view of where he looks to find his eternal home. It is "that which is least" (vers. 9-10) in the estimate of God. But how many have found the possession of wealth the most crucial test. Only by all the grace revealed in Luke 15 can any of us know "how to abound" — ("to be abased" is not so testing) — and be faithful in it. Possessions here wind themselves round the heart, and give man a false place among his fellows, ministering to his pride, and shutting out God. Hence (ver. 13) it is impossible to make both God and mammon the object of the heart — impossible to make the best of both worlds; either one or the other, but not both. Grace teaches us to sacrifice the one in view of the other, the present in full view of the eternal.

"If, therefore, ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?" And herein lies what is so important as to possessions here, in the moral bearing of the parable. They are not our own. They are "that which is another man's" — the master's goods, according to the parable, which happen to lie over in our hands before our stewardship has been finally taken away. If looked upon as our own we might be tempted to spend them upon ourselves, or hoard them up — heaping treasure together in the last days, as James 5: 3 says. But seen to be wholly "another man's," we can afford to be liberal in our use of them, and to lavish them on every interest of His, in view of that scene where we shall receive our own things. All we have here is His, then, to be used in view of eternity; our own things lie there with Him, where we look to be received, when our earthly course is closed. It is only by such an estimate of money, to speak plainly, that we can be delivered from the influence of what governs so powerfully the heart of man.

Not that in any way faithfulness here, gives or enters into a title to be received there. This is found alone in the grace that receiveth sinners, and first has to *seek* them (Luke 15: 4-10), that there might be any to be received (vers. 11-24). And what a reception! But the same grace thus known and bestowed, produces a character suited to itself in the objects of the grace: that having been faithful in that which was another's, we may receive our own things in His blessed presence for ever. It is to be observed that, so far from any condoning of the steward's dishonesty, he is given the title of "the unjust steward" (ver. 8); and that when verses 10-12 apply the instruction of the parable to the disciples, it is not prudence, but faithfulness, in the disposal of earthly things that the Lord commends.

I conclude by noting that the connection of the Lord's teaching in these chapters 14 - 16 is very apparent, not only as we have seen in the revelation of grace, and its objects and effects; but also in the unbelief that in Luke 14 refuses the invitation of grace and is exemplified in Luke 15 in the unbroken, self-righteous, elder son, who is able to pretend that he never "transgressed at any time thy

commandment," because, in fact, he had reduced its righteous claims, like the unjust steward, in order to prosper, it may be, in this world, as the rich man in the last parable in Luke 16, but only to find his end in a hell of torments. It is the same character of proud unbelief that runs all through.

"Quench not the Spirit."

1 Thess. 5: 19.

The connection in which the exhortation, "Quench not the Spirit" occurs, shows to what it refers. The next sentence is, "Despise not prophesyings." It has to do with the gifts of the Spirit and their exercise in the holy liberty and power of the Spirit. These gifts are enumerated in great variety in 1 Corinthians 12: 8. The Word of wisdom, of knowledge, faith (not that which believes the gospel, but that which could remove mountains and the like), gifts of healing, working of miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, divers kinds of tongues, the interpretation of tongues — of which it is said, "All these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will."

But, after 1 Corinthians 13 has brought in the spirit of love, in which alone they can be profitably exercised, we learn from 1 Corinthians 14 that all the gifts were not of the same value. For instance, tongues were for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not, but prophesying serveth, not for them that believe not, but for them which believe. (Ver. 12) Hence, the Apostle bids us "follow after love (as the R.V. gives it rightly) and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy." (Ver. 1) Only we must not think of prophecy, in the N.T., at least, as limited to foretelling events. It is that character of ministry of the Word, by which souls are brought consciously into the presence of God. As with the woman of Samaria, when her conscience was reached by the searching words of the Lord, "Go, call thy husband" — "Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet." And her testimony, "Come, see a man that told me all things that ever I did," shows how she was affected. This is prophesying in the N.T. sense. Hence, it was the most valuable of the gifts: "He that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort." (Ver. 3) But it did not set off and display the man so much as some of the other gifts. And there was the tendency — such the treachery of our hearts — to make much of the more showy gifts, as of tongues, etc., and to undervalue the gift which was most especially intended for the edification of the Church. Hence, the need of the word, "Despise not prophesyings."

Still "Quench not the Spirit" would go further, and warns us against any attempt to shut out, or impose limits on the free action of the Holy Spirit in the gifts He has entrusted to the saints. The important thing is to see that the exhortation does not refer to any conduct of the individual believer, as to the Spirit who dwells in him; as, for instance, when it is said in Ephesians 4: 30, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." But it refers to anything that, whether by human arrangement or the like, would interfere with His operation in gift in the Church.

"The Chief of Sinners."

1 Timothy 1: 15.

It is important to see that the Apostle looks at his conversion in a double way; first, as the

expression of the mercy of God to one in ignorance and unbelief, which yet was no excuse for his sin. (He was not sinning in high-handed rejection of the known grace of the Gospel, which would have made mercy impossible) And, secondly, as bringing out all the exceeding grace of God, which abounded in his case, for he was the chief of sinners, and made him a pattern of all (as it must be read) who should believe, and who have believed on Christ ever since. "That in me" he could say (ver. 16) first "(or "chief," it is the same word in the original) Jesus Christ might show forth the whole long-suffering" (as it reads literally). How this was so, will be seen if it be remembered that Saul came in for the blessing, after the whole history of God's ways of putting man to the test was over. Israel had been chosen out of all the nations of the world, and hedged in by God, that the great trial of man in the flesh might be made under the most favourable circumstances. Stephen sums up the result in his remarkable address in Acts 7. What was the solemn history? The promises despised, the law transgressed, the prophets persecuted and slain who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom they had been now the betrayers and murderers, and the Holy Spirit resisted all along the line. Moreover, now that He was given from Christ glorified, witnessing in power through Stephen, the young men that stoned him, laid down their clothes at Saul's feet. He thus became the formal witness of man's rejection, not only of Christ come in humiliation, but of the Holy Ghost's testimony to His glory at the right hand of God. That was the Spirit's last testimony to the nation in answer to the intercession of Jesus on the Cross, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

The chief priests had resisted that testimony to the full; and Saul not only helped them in it, as their willing tool, but being exceedingly mad against the saints himself persecuted them to strange cities, dragging them to prison and to death, seeking to blot the very memory of the Name of Jesus out of the earth. Thus he was not only the chief representative of the resistance of the Jew to the grace of God, but the vessel of the last possible expression of the enmity of the heart of man against Him whom God had glorified. Who fitter — when grace had triumphed, and it pleased God to reveal His Son in him — to become the vessel of the fullest possible expression, in testimony, of the grace of God to man. When "the whole long-suffering" had been gone through, man had been proved to be only enmity against Him. "This is a faithful word, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief."

It characterises all Paul's ministry, as in his own personal history he was "pattern" of the full extent of that grace, by which alone any of us are saved.

"Not Peace — but a Sword."

Matt. 10: 34, 35; Luke 12: 51-53.

From the words of praise of the multitude of the heavenly host, the day that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, as given in Luke 2: 14, peace did certainly seem to have been presented to the earth in the Person of the Saviour. "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, goodwill" (or good pleasure) "in men" — as the last clause must be read. And if the object of God in His coming into the world was that a testimony of peace on the part of God should go out to the guilty rebel children of men — as Peter tells us it was (Acts 10: 36): "the word which He sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ" — could any embassy of peace have been more wonderfully devised, or better calculated to win men's hearts than that God should present Himself in Israel, as a babe, the perfect expression of human weakness; putting Himself, so to speak, completely within their power.

But what was the effect? The first three Gospels give us the history of the rejection of God come in such infinite grace in the midst of His own. As it is summarised in the fourth gospel, and characterises it from the start, "He was in the world, and the world was made by him and the world knew him not. He came unto his own" (that is, His special nation of Israel) "and his own received him not." But as I have said, we can trace the stages of His rejection in the earlier chapters of Matthew when first the call to repentance in view of the proclamation of the kingdom of heaven had gone out in the ministry of John the Baptist, and His own ministry. (Matt. 3, 4)

Then when great multitudes followed Him from all parts of the land, it became necessary that the true character of the kingdom He was prepared to set up, should come out. And the Lord unfolds the principles of it to His disciples in what we know as the Sermon on the Mount. (Matt. 5 - 7)

In Matthew 8 and 9 incidents in His life are grouped together in an order more perfect than the historic, to present to us the King Himself (chap. 8) in His tender heart, afflicted in the afflictions of His people, and in Matthew 9 in the principles of grace, in which He came, not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. At the close the Pharisees denounce Him as working by the power of the prince of the devils. In Matthew 10 on the occasion of the Apostles being appointed, the Lord first indicates plainly what would be the consequence to them of this rejection of the Messiah, at least from verse 16 of His instructions. He was sending them forth as sheep in the midst of wolves; they were to beware of men; they would share the Master's portion fully.

This rejection of the Messiah accounts for what follows. How could peace be counted on any longer in the world to which it had been presented in the lowly coming of God in Christ into it, when His presence here only drew out the irreconcilable enmity of man's heart against God? Hence it is that in Luke 19 the disciples who greet the Lord on His entry into Jerusalem as her King, can only say "Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest." The peace presented to the earth, in the Saviour (Luke 2) is not to be found upon earth, if He is rejected out of it. And in Luke 12, as well as the parallel passage quoted from Matthew 10, the worst state of things in Israel, as depicted in Micah 7: 5, is referred to by the Lord, as the result of His having been among them. The powerful ties of family relationship will not be sufficient to hold together when Christ becomes the object of any in it. A man's foes shall be they of his own household. And this becomes the test of being wholly for Him.

Peace upon earth is postponed until He shall be manifested in glory. Meanwhile the ground of this peace is laid in divine righteousness, as also, for peace in heaven in the richest way, and where we needed it most — by the blood of the Cross. (Col. 1: 19, 20)

Take the three passages of Luke referred to in Luke 2, Luke 12 and Luke 19, and they give us the history of peace as so far accomplished, in the most striking way. Observe, too, that there is no change as to Glory to God in the highest. That was made good in the fullest way, in the full revelation of God in goodness in Christ in all His path down here, and of what He is against sin in the cross. This has made way for the bringing out of how the good pleasure of God in men has taken effect according to His eternal counsels (see Eph. 1: 3, 4), while the earth must wait for the long proffered peace, till it receives the Prince of Peace.

The Lord's Day.

It is simple ignorance of the facts to put down the origin of the observance of the Lord's Day to Roman Catholicism. I do not now refer to the Biblical grounds for it, having been asked as to the

historical proofs. There was no Council (so-called) of the year A.D. 200; the first of those recognised as Church Councils being that of Nicaea belonging to A.D. 325. In A.D. 321 an edict of the first *Emperor* embracing Christianity was issued for the general observance of Sunday. Up till then, of course, it was impossible for most Christians to make it a day of rest. But the recognition of it as taking the place of the Jewish Sabbath was universal in the second century, i.e. as far back as writings of those who followed the Apostolic age are extant as witnesses to this. Ignatius, the disciple of the Apostle John, contrasts Judaism and Christianity and "opposed the keeping of the Sabbath to living according to the Lord's life." The epistle of Barnabas, in existence in the early part of that century, says "We celebrate the eighth day with joy on which, too, Jesus rose from the dead." Justin Martyr (A.D. 140) assigns the reason Christians had for meeting on Sunday because it is the first day on which God dispelled the darkness, etc., and because Jesus Christ our Saviour rose from the dead upon it. And he carefully distinguished Saturday from it. Bardesanes in a book addressed to the Emperor M. Aurelius Antoninus (A.D. 121180), writing of the new race of Christians "wherever we be, called by the one name of the Messiah (as such), says, 'upon one day, the first of the week we assemble ourselves together.'" Dionysius (A.D. 170) in a letter to the church at Rome calls it "the Lord's holy day" in bearing witness to the same assembling of themselves. Irenaeus (A.D. 178) asserts that the Sabbath is abolished, his evidence to the existence of the Lord's Day being clear and distinct. A record of him in the history of Eusebius shows that in his time it was an institution beyond dispute. Clement (A.D. 194) contrasts the seventh day of the law with the eighth day of the Gospel, and so on, proof might be multiplied. But this may suffice. I have many of the authorities myself and have referred to them, but have found it convenient thus to summarise this early testimony from Smith's *Dictionary of the Bible Vol. II* (1st ed.), under the Lord's Day. It is a great and indisputable fact that four years before the first General Council the Emperor Constantine recognised it as "the venerable day," only now giving it legal sanction, insisting that worldly business should be intermitted during its continuance. The Council of Nicaea, referred to four years later, assumes the obligation of the day as an existing fact only, regulating the posture of worshippers.

The Atonement: When was it Made.

On this great subject it may be helpful to note that the word so often in the Old Testament is only found once in the New, namely (Rom. 5: 11), where it ought to be rendered "reconciliation." Perhaps through the erroneous use of the word here, atonement has been confounded with reconciliation, to which it stands in relation as cause to effect, reconciliation being one of the sweetest consequences of the atoning work of the Lord Jesus. For if the word is not used, the idea expressed by atonement is very fully brought out in the New Testament. And first as to the place where it was wrought, Romans 3: 25 gives us "Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation [a 'mercy-seat' as constantly in the Old Testament and so translated, Hebrews 9: 5] through faith in his blood." Then as to the work wrought there we have "to make propitiation for the sins of the people" (R.V.). Hebrews 2: 17, and in 1 John 2: 2, "He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours [Jews] only, but also for the whole world." Again 1 John 4: 10, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Two things thus come out very fully: first, that atonement or propitiation is for God, as it is against Him all our sins have been; He it is who needs to be propitiated. But that if this is so, it is His own love that has provided the propitiation in sending His Son into the world. On the other hand, if the subject is reconciliation, it is not God that needs to be reconciled, but the sinner who was alienated from Him. Hence the importance of not mixing up the two thoughts.

As to where atonement took place, the testimony of Scripture is decisive: it took place at the Cross.

It is there that, when God had provided for Himself a lamb for the sacrifice, when Christ through the eternal Spirit had offered Himself without spot to God to be the willing victim, God made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that He laid upon Him the iniquities of all who have been brought to the confession of their sins under divine conviction. It was there Jehovah had made His Son an offering for sins. It was there He bore our sins in His own body on the tree, and endured the judgment of God due to them in divine righteousness. It was there He drank the bitter cup to the last dreg, even the hiding of God's face from Him, till He could say, "It is finished." It was there His precious blood was shed, without which there is no remission. Nor must the value of the *offering* be separated in any way from the *suffering* that accompanied it. (See Heb. 9: 25, 26) "Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; for then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world." And how infinite the glory of that work for God, when for the first time, all He is in every moral attribute of His being was revealed. There all divine holiness was manifested as He hid His face from Jesus; there divine righteousness was declared in sin's righteous judgment; there the Majesty of His throne was vindicated against the outrage of my sins and very existence as a rebel creature; there His truth was maintained and His love to the sinner found full expression; and all this in the place where nothing but sin was in question. How great the triumph of the Lord Jesus in being able to turn sin, the worst work of the enemy, into the brightest revelation of the glory of God.

Now this is just where the resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus come in. They add nothing to the work, but are the answer of God's righteousness to the perfection of it. The Lord Jesus appealed to this as the proof of God's having been glorified in it. (John 13: 31) "If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him." And He did, for as we know from Romans 6: 4, before the dear women that loved Him could be at the sepulchre, He was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father. And here is to be found the full positive revelation of God's righteousness in setting the One that had so glorified Him in the highest heavenly glory; the Spirit there witnesses of that righteousness "because I go to the Father," as the Lord Jesus says.

Thus we learn (Heb. 1: 3) that when He had by Himself purged our sins — or made purification for sins — He sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high. He never sat down there until He had settled the whole question of sin. And this is pressed to its full consequences for us in Hebrews 10 "that this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God . . . for by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us . . . their sins and iniquities will I remember no more."

Again, "if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain, ye are yet in your sins." But if He *be* raised, it is the magnificent proof to everyone that believes in Him, that the sins that He bore on the Cross are gone for ever.

Nothing can be more conclusive, then, than the testimony of Scripture to the Cross as the place where the atoning work was done. The resurrection is the necessary answer to its perfection in the righteousness of God, and for the satisfaction of His own heart. In all this we must ever remember that if the righteousness of God demanded the sacrifice, His love it was that provided it; a love that found its answer in the devotedness of the Son to the Father's glory, that would give Himself even to death for the accomplishment of the counsels of divine and infinite love.

"Repentance unto Life."

As to the expression "Repentance unto Life" being given to the Gentiles (Acts 11: 18), I believe it to be an inclusive statement of what repentance toward God involves, and leads into, and thus to go further than the remission of sins (Luke 24) and faith in the Lord Jesus. The first. has to do with the guilty past: the second is inseparable from true repentance; there would be no ground upon which to repent, if it were not for faith in the testimony presented.

But if there is reality in repentance it is blessed to know that it involves life, and life before God for ever, taking the character of eternal life when the Father is known as revealed in the Son. The record by Peter of what had taken place, with the crowning gift of the Holy Ghost, left it only possible for those who had received the same to glorify God for the introduction of the Gentiles into the wonderful life of the Christian.

The different point of view of the sinner in Romans and in Ephesians may be a question of after teaching; but it was too early for a doctrinal treatise, such as this would have required, for Cornelius' interesting company. But when all is out later in the Apostle's teaching, it interests me in this connection, that when in Titus 3 Paul comes to the mercy that has saved us, and that by the washing of the Word and Spirit (new birth according to John), and, finally, the Holy Ghost being shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour, he looks *back* to our *being justified by grace*, and on to being made heirs according to the hope of *eternal life* — always in Paul the full consummation of God's ways and counsels of love with us in grace. The doctrinal development was still wanting in the Acts, but I believe the full character of the blessing they had been brought into was rightly apprehended by the Apostles and brethren at Jerusalem. By the Holy Ghost given they had not only what was afterwards to come out so fully through Paul, but also of what John's teaching would lead into.

The Contradiction of Sinners.

Question. — In the *Revised Version*, Hebrews 12: 3 is translated, "For consider him that endureth such contradiction of sinners against themselves." To me this seems neither sense nor grammar; should be glad if you could give some light on it. Mc. E.

In considering such a verse it is well to review the connection in which it occurs. The division of the chapter at verse 1 seems, as often, to obscure this for the ordinary reader, and here with more than ordinary loss. A "great cloud of witnesses" had been adduced from Old and even New Testament times to illustrate the principle of the Christian's practical life, stated in Hebrews 10: 38 (from the prophet Habakkuk, that "the just shall live by faith." But there was One, pre-eminent above all, who was yet to be presented to us "Jesus, the author" (in the sense of "leader") "and finisher" (or "completer") "of faith." In a great variety of testing circumstances the saints of Hebrews 11 had proved and expressed the power of faith, in what is recorded of them. But the Lord Jesus had gone through the whole career of faith; in His path as man He had begun, gone through, and completed it with the outlook of His soul upon God ever perfect. There was no trial His people were called to that He had not experienced, and beyond them all He had endured the cross, despising the shame: this was the last crucial test He had met in the path of the accomplishment of God's will, and for the joy set before Him He had endured it, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

For it is thus that, in the epistle where the Cross, in the atoning aspect of the work wrought therein, has such a central place,* now, as it draws to a close in practical exhortation, the crucifixion is presented. In every way He has been the Leader in the path His saints have to tread: "When he put forth his own he goeth before them." The main characteristics are marked in the epistle: dependence (Heb. 1: 13), obedience (Heb. 5: 8, 9), faith as here — Himself the perfect example in all. It is the path in which He lives to maintain us in infinite grace by the exercise of His Priesthood. The cross, or perhaps more strictly "crucifixion," which He endured (ver. 2), is not here what He suffered from God for sin, in which we had no part, "despising the shame" could not be said in such case — but what He had to encounter at the close of His life from man's hand, the sinners of verse 3, the contradiction and opposition of every principle of man and his world against Him, in which His perfection only shone out the brighter: who for the joy set before Him endured the Cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

* Heb. 1: 3; Heb. 2: 9, 10, 17; Heb. 7: 27; Heb. 9: 11-15, 25, 28; Heb. 10: 1-18; Heb. 13: 11-12.

But looking back at verse 1 for a moment, we must not think of the cloud of witnesses, as if they were overlookers of the scene of our conflict like spectators in the amphitheatre. Our English word "witness" indeed conveys this sense, but has another, namely, one who bears witness. The Greek word has the latter meaning only: they are witnesses by the testimony they bore, or that was borne to them in Scripture. And now they are summoned, as it were, each in the special circumstances in which by faith they triumphed, to encourage us in the race.

For we are exhorted to lay aside every weight and sin which doth so easily beset, and to run with endurance the race set before us. A weight is not then something necessarily sinful, being distinguished from it. It would be anything that impedes in running on to the goal, only discovered perhaps in the energy that presses on. With uncompromising decision it is to be put off, as also sin — all sin; for it is not here that individually we may have some special form of besetment, however true that is. But we are warned against sin generally, as lying all around so as easily to entangle the feet, which is the force of this expression. We have to lay it aside, for the epistle contemplates nothing short of the true liberty of grace for the Christian, and indicates at once whence power is found to carry out what would be impossible in any natural way; "looking unto Jesus" — free for this simple blessed exercise of faith in occupation with Him instead of with ourselves; and this not that there might be an occasional spurt now and again, but to run with endurance the race that is set before us, on and on through the day and every day whatever the opposing circumstances.

The word for "looking" is found only here in the Greek Scriptures, having the force of turning the eyes away from other things and fixing them on one. Much blessed encouragement for faith may be found in the testimonies of Hebrews 11, but none of the witnesses could be an object for the eye of faith to rest on. There is but One who could take that place, and He must have it exclusively; "Jesus, the leader and completer of faith" — "Jesus the same yesterday, today, and for ever." And it is His, not only in the divine glory of His person (compare Heb. 1: 12 and Heb. 13: 8), but as having become Man and run the race before we were called into it — our Forerunner indeed — and having reached the glorious goal at the right hand of God. Nothing could bring Him more wonderfully before our hearts in His tested path as man than the thought that He was sustained in it by the joy set before Him. In John 14: 28 He gave us an intimation of what that joy was: it was when His work was done He was going to the Father, which would not exclude that He would have His own with Himself there. Only that it must be something personal to Himself first, and He would have those who love Him enter into this, His joy.

It is in such association of thought that the Spirit of God would keep before the saints addressed

what Christ had endured (ver. 3), in view of what they had gone through (Heb. 10: 32-34) and might still have to face.

Using a word only found here in New Testament Greek, and difficult to represent in English, he would have them and us "Consider well ['ponder' in the early sense of it — weigh in seeking to estimate] him that endured so great contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds." But here the unhappy Revised Version confronts your correspondent with a rendering that, if it could be sustained, would seem not a little to affect the power of the passage for our hearts. The Revisers read "against themselves." In this they differ from the American revisers (see list of their differences at the end of R.V.) who accord with our version, though admitting in the margin that "many ancient authorities read, themselves." The fact is that our version is well attested and supported by the editors Lachman, Tischendorf and Tregelles. The passage in Numbers 16: 38: "The censurers of these sinners against themselves," may have accounted for the variation. But as the late Mr. Kelly says of our text in his commentary on the epistle, "they were sinners against themselves undoubtedly, as read the Sinaitic and the Clermont MSS., etc., but the far more solemn fact is that they were 'the sinners against himself,' who endured all to win them to God."

Revelation 5: 13; Revelation 10: 7.

It is the way of the Holy Spirit in this prophetic book to carry us on here and there to the finish in God's purpose before opening out the definite course of things necessary to bring it about. This is a gracious way, and calculated to lead into increased intelligence of what God is about in His actings and orderings. Thus Rev. 4 and Rev. 5 bring us to the full result, in kingdom-blessing, of the judgments, at first providential and in ever-increasing intensity under the seals, trumpets, and vials, and then by the Lord coming from heaven to execute the last stroke of them in person. By these judgments the scene will be cleared for the manifestation of His glory; and this, too, on the occasion of the Lamb's title to the inheritance of all things having been owned in the first part of chapter 5. You are undoubtedly right in seeing representatively in the twenty-four elders all who are Christ's at His coming, including the saints of the Church period. These are the nearest circle round the throne, and the Lamb in the midst of it. In Rev. 4: 4 they are enthroned around the throne of glory, with priestly garments and royal crowns, which they cast before the throne when the Creatorship glory of Him who sat on it is proclaimed. Here they sing a new song, clearly showing who they are, of redemptive glory: "Thou art worthy to take the book [or roll], and open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made them unto our God kings and priests, and they shall reign over the earth." In verses 11, 12, angels in outer circles add their special ascription of glory to the Lamb that was slain, though not able to speak of redemption as we can, while in verse 13 the whole creation is brought in saying, "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever." It is the glad anticipation of the whole universe ordered around the Lamb, as slain, as its centre and ground of blessing.

What has been noted above as to what is characteristic of the book settles also the question as to the Church going through the tribulation. Its earthly history closes in Rev. 2, 3. The saints of it have their place thenceforward in heavenly glory. Besides the express promise to those of Philadelphia (Rev. 3: 10), which cannot leave out any true saint when its fulfilment comes, of being kept out of the hour, which shall come upon the whole habitable world to try the dwellers upon earth. In Rev. 7 a parenthesis arrests the progress of the seals, between the sixth and seventh, to bring in the sealed remnant of all the

tribes of Israel, and the innumerable multitude of the nations who will be blessed through the Gospel of the Kingdom, which as we know from Matthew 24: 14, will go out to them before the end comes. They, indeed, come out of the great tribulation, and again the prophecy leads on to their blessed position in the kingdom, who along with those preserved of Israel will form the *subjects* of it — not *reign* as the heavenly saints in Rev. 5.

The mystery in Revelation 10: 7, must in no way be connected with that which formed Paul's ministry so largely, i.e. the heading up of all things in Christ of which the present aspect is that He is given to be head over all things to the Church which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all. (Eph. 1, 3; Col. 1, 2). There are other mysteries, as that of godliness (1 Tim. 3: 16), and lawlessness. (2 Thess. 2: 7) In Revelation it is that passiveness of God that permits evil to go on and prosper that would be a still greater mystery if we did not know by revelation that the time of His keeping silence, as He speaks in Psalm 50, and of His non-intervention will come to an end. Here it does so in the prophecy, "in the days of the voice of the seventh angel," the last of the woe trumpets, when he is about to sound, the mystery of God will be finished. Henceforward it will be the time of His direct power being manifested. See Rev. 11: 15-17, and the summary of the far-reaching consequences in verse 18.

"Seek Ye My Face."

Ps. 27: 1-8; Rev. 22: 4, 5; John 17: 24.

How blessed that the Lord Himself has become our "Light." He is not often so presented in the Old Testament. We could not have borne it unless His love had been revealed with it; hence it comes out more in the New Testament. The One who has become our Light, with the necessary exposure of all our ruin, has also become our "Salvation." When that is so, we can say, "Whom shall I fear?" All the exercise that the heart is brought into, finds its answer here; He is "the Strength of our Life," so we can be fearless before the foe. We have confidence and boldness.

It is just this that made me turn to this Psalm — "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after." It is undividedness of heart that comes out here. "ONE thing"; what is it? "That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life": not merely when I go to heaven. His presence has become the sanctuary of our hearts. Unhindered access has been opened to us. There is no veil now. We may in spirit dwell there now, "to behold the beauty of the Lord." He had not yet been revealed when these words were written; He had not yet assumed the form of a Servant. His face, once more marred than that of any man, is now radiant with the glory of God. We know Him. But no visible form could have been before the Psalmist as he uttered these words. But we know what he spoke of anticipatively. once we saw no beauty in Him that we should desire Him; but now He is the chiefest among ten thousand, the altogether lovely. How far are our hearts dwelling in His presence, beholding His beauty, and enquiring in His temple, with a deepening entering into His mind?

"That will I seek after." We desire it, and perhaps we seek it in prayer in the morning, but soon forget it. We fail to seek in the energy of faith what we have desired of the Lord.

And now look at verse 5: "In the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion; in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me." How often we need trouble to recover our hearts to the Lord. But it was not trouble that led the Psalmist to seek the Lord. He sought Him for His own sake, and then when

trouble did come, it finds him hid in the innermost part of His pavilion, in all the intimacy of the home-circle with Him.

I think especially of those who are young. What an encouragement it is to find God coming in to confirm us in our desires to seek Him. "Seek ye my face," He says. It is sweet to Him that we should seek Him. What a compensation for the soul that knows what it is to be set on this one thing, to be in His presence beholding His beauty. He satisfies the longing soul. He creates the longing that He may satisfy it. And with the satisfying comes a capacity for deeper longing. It is blessed to know what it is to have these divinely created longings. It is thus He carries on the growth of our souls.

Revelation 22 leads us on to the fulfilment of it all. The subject has been, in Revelation 21, the manifested glory of the Church, His Bride, in the kingdom, when we shall share His glory. But now it goes on to this — "They shall see his face." That is not manifested glory; that belongs to the intimacy of divine affections. There is where He fixes our gaze.

In John 17: 22, and 23, He speaks of the manifested glory, "the glory which thou gavest me I have given them," etc. All that will be manifested when the astonished world will see us displayed in the same glory as Christ. But something more is needed for His heart: "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory." That is not for display. It is beyond all that can be displayed. It is what He brings us into to satisfy His own heart; and it will satisfy our deepest longings.

His word for us now is, "Seek ye my face"; that is what He is going to bring us into in eternity. Oh, let us undistractedly desire this one thing and seek after it — "that I may dwell in the house of the Lord," beholding His glory.

The "Word."

It is lamentable to me in the extreme, that in presence of the most subtle and virulent assault upon Scripture, brethren so privileged as we have been should not have made up their minds as to what the Word of God is, as the expression is commonly used in Scripture. And I cannot but ask myself what it is that has involved this great truth, like so many others, in confusion. For there used to be no uncertainty about it, nor anything upon which you could count for a more united testimony among those in fellowship.

Mark 7: 13 does not stand alone, as clearly indicating the Scriptures as far as they then were written.

If in the parable of the Sower the seed was the Word of God (Luke 8: 11), it was that, and nothing different that the devil took out of the hearts of the wayside hearers lest they should believe and be saved (ver. 12); the same that was received with joy, and so without root (ver. 13); the same that fell on good ground, as those that with an honest and good heart heard and kept it, and brought forth fruit with patience (ver. 15); and who could be owned as in relationship characteristically with the Lord in verse 21. Thus, whether the sowing was effectual or ineffectual, the thing sown was the Word of God. So it might be handled deceitfully (2 Cor. 4: 2), or made a trade of (2 Cor. 2: 17) And it might be blasphemed if men and women did not observe the proprieties of life, and of the relations in which they stood to one another. (Titus 2: 5) I have put these negative cases together, first because the theory is that the Word of God can only be true of what is brought home in power to the soul. The Lord identifies it clearly with the Scriptures as then possessed, in John 10: 35, and I need hardly quote the

passages that prove the claim of the New Testament writings to the same place. Filled with the Holy Ghost we find them speaking the Word of God with boldness, in Acts 4: 31. So it was in Phil. 1: 14, with the brethren that had become confident as to the character of the Apostle's imprisonment; they were much more bold to speak the Word of God (as the undoubted reading is) without fear, though we know the motives of all in so doing were not such as would bear the light. It was this that the Gentiles had also received in Acts 11: 1, as Samaria had before (Acts 8: 12). We find it preached in Acts 13: 5, 46 (compare vers. 7, 44, 49); Acts 17: 13 (compare ver. 11); and taught in Acts 18: 11. The Thessalonians received it as such, "not as the *word of men*, but as it is in truth, the *Word of God*." (1 Thess. 2: 13)

The leaders might then well be characterised as those that had spoken to the saints the Word of God. (Heb. 13: 7) It enters into all the practical life of the believer, for even his food, as provided of God for him, is sanctified in his use of it by the (here anarthrous, and so characteristic) Word of God, and intercourse with Him (1 Tim. 4: 5), while it is intimately connected with the source of the young man's strength in the family of God — the Word of God abiding in him, recalling the use of it made by the Lord Jesus in the temptation. But when the general force of the expression is seen by the Scripture use of it, we are not surprised to find it identified with the effects produced by it, as, for instance, when I find in 2 Timothy 2: 9, "the word of God is not bound," however the greatest preacher of it might be.

It is remarkable, too, that in the parable of the Sower, as given by Matthew and Mark, "he which received seed" (Matt. 13: 19-23) is "he which was sown," or as Mark has it even in the A.V., "these are they which are sown"; and in the parable of the tares, "the good seed are the children of the kingdom." (Matt. 13: 38) Thus it says "the word of God increased" (Acts 6: 7), the connection is "and the number of the disciples multiplied." Similarly, "the word of God grew and multiplied." (Acts 12: 24) So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed (Acts 19: 20). I never heard of these passages being a difficulty to anyone. It was the mighty effect of the "manifestation of his word in preaching," that is marked in the passages of this class — the effects produced being identified with their source.

It is extraordinary to me how the plainest force of passages is made to bend and give way to a theory. I heard A — say that he supposed no one would question that the Word of God in 1 Peter 1: 23, the incorruptible seed by which we were born again, that liveth and abideth for ever, is Christ; turn to Isaiah 40: 5, 8 from which Peter is quoting, to see the folly of it; it is the Word of our God that the mouth of Jehovah hath spoken, that is contrasted with the corruptible fading-away glory of man.

Born of Christ is not a scriptural thought: and we can easily see what would be enfeebled by the substitution, i.e. the communication of the nature of God that is implied in being born of God. But Peter does not stand alone in attributing the instrumentality of this mighty work to the Word of God. James 1: 18 affirms nothing less; nor John 15: 3, and John 3: 5 — if under the symbol of water more is conveyed than if "the Word" were used, even the purification produced by it in a new life and nature involving the end of the old under God's judgment. For the water, as well as blood flowed from the side of the blessed Lord in death. But there is what carries us deeper, and marks the fitness of the Scriptures being so named and characterised.

"This Word, being divine, being inspired, is the divine expression of the divine nature, Persons, and counsels. Nothing that is not inspired in this way can have this place, for none but God can perfectly express or reveal what God is. Hence it is infinite in what flows in it, because it is the expression of and connected with the depths of the divine nature, and so, in its connection infinite, though expressed in a finite sense, and so far finite in expression, and thus adapted to finite man."

I wish you would refresh your memory by reading what I am quoting from now, i.e. the Synopsis

on 1 Timothy 1, in a dozen pages. It is a profitable study. But this accounts for the divine powers that are attributed to the Scriptures. Compare Romans 9: 17; Galatians 3: 8, 22; 4: 30; James 4: 5. Thus in Hebrews 4 the Word of God is living and powerful, and sharper, etc., and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart, with the effect of (next verse) bringing out all that is in us, consciously under the eye of God. Again, nothing of it can fail; "not as though the word of God hath taken none effect." (Rom. 9: 6) Though "this is hidden from them [the mockers of the last days] through their own wilfulness, that heavens were of old, and an earth, etc., by the word of God. . . . But the present heaven and the earth *by his word*" (true text) "are laid up in store kept for fire." (2 Peter 3)

I believe I have run through all the passages where *logos* is used for the expression in all the fulness and depth of that rich word, save the use of it in Revelation 1: 2, 9, where we find, that however slow men may be to give it its divine place, it has it fully before God; and Rev. 19: 13.

I know not what to say to the theory that takes the application of the name the Word of God (it does not say He is — He is much more than this, He is the Word, and the Word was God — but "his Name is called the Word of God") in Revelation 19 to the Son of man who comes forth to judge (for all judgment is committed to Him as such), as though it was equivalent to John 1: 1-4. Though it could not be applied to Him, if He were not the revelation of God, as we have seen of the Scriptures, I do not believe it sets forth directly the full divine glory of His Person (though it does by implication, for none but God, or that which is divine, could be the revelation of God) as verse 16 taken in connection with 1 Timothy 6 does. He is the Word of God here to make good the nature of God in judgment against those who have rejected the testimony that called them to repentance.

rhema does not go far as you will know, not being a word of the same fulness. It is used without the objective article, and therefore more as in character (Luke 3: 2; Eph. 6: 17; Heb. 6: 5; Heb. 11: 3); throughout anarthrous — and "Word of the Lord." (1 Peter 1: 25)

Only recently I heard of a real student of the Word, who would have no sympathy with the expression of which you speak so revolting to the heart, saying that it would be rather the characteristic form "God's Word" when it meant the Scriptures, and "the Word of God" when applied to Christ. But this was his theory.

The fact is that only in four cases is the anarthrous form used. I have noted one of them above. So that there is no such use of Scripture — no scriptural support for the idea, as he now knows, and has abandoned it.

I believe, then, the Word of God to be the testimony of God from the first with ever-increasing fulness, in the Law, the Psalms, and the Prophets, by Christ when on earth, and then by the Apostles as empowered for it by the Spirit, and now recorded for us in the Scriptures as completed — the complete revelation of God in them.

Only wishing as you do I am sure, to take our thoughts from Scripture on this subject of the "Word of God," I am unable to accept your main definition of it, as the voice of God by His Spirit to my soul. I do not find that the expression undergoes any change in its essential force from Christ being glorified, although now that the last subject of revelation has been supplied by the Mystery, it is completed, and has thus gained in the fulness of the term.

But just as it was possible before Christ was glorified, or come at all, to make the Word of God of none effect through the traditions of men (Mark 7: 13), and after He came was the seed of His sowing whether it fell on ground where it made no impression, or upon good ground and brought forth fruit (Luke 8: 11, 21), so after He was glorified it might be corrupted (2 Cor. 2: 17) or, handled deceitfully

(2 Cor. 4: 2), I do not see how these passages consist with your theory of it.

But there is another line of its use, or class of passages, that I cannot fit in your definition. How could the voice of God by His Spirit to the soul, be *preached*? (Acts 13: 5, 44) Was it not the Word of God still, supposing no voice of God was heard in it by the Spirit in a single soul: nay, that it should be contradicted and blasphemed by those to whom it was first spoken? (Ver. 46) So at Berea, under happier circumstances, we know from Acts 17: 13, that it was the Word of God Paul preached, and they received (ver. 11) with all readiness of mind. Yet it could not *as preached* have been the voice of God by His Spirit to their souls, for they searched the Scriptures daily whether these things were so. The effect of their searching would then be doubtless as at Thessalonica, that they received the Word of God they heard of the Apostles not as the word of men, but as it is in truth the Word of God, which *effectually worketh also in you that believe*. (1 Thess. 2: 13) But this *effect* was *another* point, for as we have seen it was as fully the Word of God when nothing but opposition was produced. Nor is this preaching confined in any way to Apostolic testimony; for the Apostle uses the expression as you know in Phil. 1: 14 (see N.Tr. and R.) when it is of the preaching of the brethren who had gained confidence as to the character of his bonds, and were much more bold to preach it.

Again, I doubt exceedingly whether your definition would not (as in all the above passages) limit too much the thought of God in 1 Timothy 4: 5; or 1 Peter 1: 25, where the connection with Isaiah 40: 5-8 gives it the widest possible force. In 2 Peter 3: 5, I suppose it is the mighty fiat of creatorial power for which *rhema* is used in Hebrews 11: 3. (As also Eph. 6: 17, not the book merely but the text, as it has been shown, with which compare Matt. 4: 4 Gr.) Otherwise you have improved your paper, giving more justly the force of *logos*, which, as you say, is difficult to present to an English mind. But I should advise you not to print. We so stereotype in our minds what we put in print, and thus hinder enlargement in the thoughts of God.

Baptism and the Remission of Sins.

Question. — Kindly explain the relation of baptism to the remission of sins and the subsequent gift of the Holy Ghost. (Acts 2: 38 and 22: 10)

The great truth involved in the reply of Peter to those who were convicted under his address and asked, "Men, brethren, what shall we do?" was that that day, by the descent of the Holy Ghost, God had taken up His dwelling-place amongst the redeemed. Thenceforward His habitation on earth was to be found in the assembly of those who professed Christ's name. They were to repent, therefore, and be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. These two were the first of the characteristic blessings of that place. Baptism as the normal confession of His name was the door of entrance therein: he who was baptised was received outwardly into the house of God as set up in the world; entering by faith in Christ's name, he got the forgiveness of sins as administered there, and was thereupon made a recipient of the Holy Ghost.

The fact of the house of God being here may be difficult to discern now, as from early times, through the failure of everything in which man has his part; the reality of God's building has been obscured by the wood, hay, and stubble of man's work. But, even if defiled, it is the dwelling-place and temple still. (1 Cor. 3) The house of God, the assembly of the living God, has the responsible place of being the pillar and ground of the truth (1 Tim. 3: 15), which is to be found, not in Judaism, or heathenism, or Mohammedanism, but only in Christendom. Judgment, too, will begin at "the house of

God" (1 Peter 4: 17), because of its failure to answer to its privileged place as such. Thus it may be terribly corrupted; but till God judges it, it is still the place where His blessings are found, and baptism is the formal admission therein.

That it was regarded as a privilege to be conferred we may see from the Ethiopian official in Acts 8, who, having heard from Philip the glad tidings of Jesus, sought at once to be identified with His name, "What doth hinder me to be baptised?" Thus also in the case of Cornelius and his company. Who could refuse to receive them amongst professing Christians whom God had already marked as His by the gift of the Holy Ghost? It is the same great truth that leads Ananias in Acts 22: 16 to call upon Paul to arise and be baptised, and so enter where *administratively* his sins might be washed away; baptism being the symbol of that to which the death and resurrection of Christ was available.

Heaven Our Present Portion.

It is one thing to know so little of heavenly things, as to be in a difficulty to define them, but another to say that we know absolutely nothing about them. Christianity is the revelation of heaven to our hearts now. If the prophet is quoted that "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him," it is to contrast the Christian state of things. "But God *hath* revealed them unto us by the Spirit." And it is added, "For the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deeps of God." The depths of His own being and blessedness being revealed, are then, where we find the sum of the things prepared for us in the eternal counsels of His love, revealed now that we may enjoy them.

I think it is of immense practical importance for our souls to see that there is, therefore, no new element of blessing, or of joy before us, none that is not already revealed. There will be increased power of enjoyment of them, for the Spirit dwelling in us, now so often necessarily occupied with the negative work of opposition to the flesh — ("that we might not do the things that we would") will then be for ever only the power of our positive enjoyment of these things. The heart will then be enlarged to its full capacity of enjoyment. "For now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face: now I know in part, but then shall I know even as also I am known." Everything that now puts bounds and limit to our enjoyment will be gone, for in this tabernacle we groan, being burdened, like birds in a cage that long to be free to soar into our own native air. But admitting all this, and the vast difference it will make, all the things we shall live in and find our joy in for ever, are revealed that we may live and find our joy in them now. "Our *politeuma* — citizenship — is in heaven."

To begin with — John's Gospel is the revelation of our *home* in heaven. Beautifully in keeping with his manner in minor divisions, he opens with an historic scene that illustrates the doctrine of the book. The moment the testimony of John the Baptist has reached the point of bringing out the glory of the Person of the Son of God in connection with His work, and in both its parts as *taking away* the sin, and *baptising* with the Holy Ghost, the hearts of two of his disciples are drawn after Jesus. with a longing He has awakened in them, that He may satisfy it. "Where dwellest thou?" The other Gospels could only tell us that foxes had holes, and the birds of the air had nests, but the Son of Man, Creator of them all, had nowhere to lay His head in the scene He had created. But in John the answer is "Come and see." And this gospel is the revelation of the heavenly home of the Son of God, as dwelling in the bosom of the Father, and come to reveal and make known the Father according to the love in which He dwelt, that we might know the Father in the Son, and thus the Father's house.

So later on, when He definitely directs their hearts there. (John 14) He treats heaven as a familiar place to them. "Whither I go ye know." As though He said, You know heaven quite well. Philip hits off the truth exactly, "Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us." He feels if only he knew the Father, he would know the Father's house. And the answer is simple, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." Thus every characteristic trait of heaven's blessedness had been presented to them in the Person and path of the Son of God. But now He was going to take His place as the Centre of the whole revealed scene. Thus He *prepared* and made it perfectly the home of our hearts. Further, He has given us the Holy Ghost. And when He was come, He was to glorify Christ, "For he shall receive of mine and shall show it unto you." And now mark, "All *things* that the Father hath *are mine*, therefore said I that he shall *take of mine and shall show* it unto you."

Thus it is that in Romans 8 it can be brought out, that if the flesh has its things, the scene and element suited to it — they that are after the Spirit have theirs. And it is the second great point of our deliverance in answer to the cry of Romans 7 — not only that of life and nature, "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death" but of, and by the power of, objects suited to that life. Else we would be like fish out of water; that is, with a new life and its affections, capacities, tastes and desires, and no sphere of things suited to them.

Now the things of the Spirit are the things of Christ, "all that the Father hath." Are these things less real and substantial than the things of the flesh? (Heb. 11: 1) What of our home there with its new relationships and joys? What of the fellowship which is ours with the Father in His thoughts of, and plans and counsels and work for, the glory of the Son? For which we need, indeed, Christ dwelling in the heart, that we may comprehend the breadth and length and depth and height, but are strengthened by the Spirit in the inner man for this very purpose. What of the new objects thus presented to us, instead of the poor things we were pursuing after the flesh? What of the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, to which we are called? Is it more or less powerful to our poor hearts than the association and fellowship of men we once belonged to and took such deceived interest in? What of the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world unto our glory — which none of the princes of this world knew — to replace and displace for us for ever its wisdom and learning and philosophy.

What is the Christian characteristically, according to 2 Corinthians 4: 18, but one who looks at the things which are not seen? They must be perfectly revealed to do so. Then there is that for which Christ has apprehended us — "the things that are before us." The goal — the prize of the calling of God on high. So that if the Apostle breaks his heart over those inside the circle of the profession of Christ "who mind earthly things," he can state what the Christian is as having his "conversation" — all that forms the life morally — "in heaven." How could this be so if we knew absolutely nothing of what was there! What of the Tree of Life, the hidden manna, the white stone, the white raiment, the new Jerusalem? Shall they be of less reality and power to our hearts than the promises to the fathers, who only saw these heavenly things from afar off, but embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth?

What of the glory to be revealed to us, and the *earnest* of all that is before us in it — of the inheritance — the Holy Ghost possessed already? Are the grapes of Eschol, borne to the children of Israel in the desert to have for us no antitype?

The heavens, with Christ there as the intimate link that connects us with all that is there, are the present revealed scene of our home, relationships, objects, hopes, joys, interests and pursuits, that thus a heavenly people may be formed practically as such, by what is heavenly on the earth — showing out

nothing but what is heavenly.

The House and Temple of God.

As to the house of God, and temple of God, the two thoughts are closely allied as applied to the Church's relationship with God, though with a divine fitness in the use of them. When it was a question of the material building in the Old Testament it would readily be seen that the house and temple of God were one and the same: and that this was the use of Scripture such passages as 1 Kings 6: 3; 2 Chronicles 4: 22; Psalm 65: 4 ("tabernacle" and "sanctuary" being also identified in Ezek. 37: 27, 28, temple and house by the Lord in Matt. 21: 12, 13) prove.

When we turn from the material temple in Jerusalem to the far more intimate way in which God has taken up His dwelling-place among His people now in the Church, the same terms are used, as also "God's building," and "habitation of God," for this aspect of its wonderful relationship. For there is also its relationship to Christ, as His body, which is not before us. At Pentecost the Church became the "habitation of God through the Spirit."

But it is important to see that as such it is presented to us in two ways. *First*, according to the mind of God as the fruit of a wholly divine work, with no intermingling of human responsibility. This is found in Matthew 16: 18, where Christ is the builder, and no power of Satan can prevail against it, with which may be compared 1 Peter 2; Ephesians 2: 21; Hebrews 3: 6, and Revelation 21: 3. *Secondly*, as an existing fact on earth in connection with which His servants have their part, with the alas! inevitable result of failure. (See 1 Cor. 3: 9-17; Eph. 2: 22; 1 Tim. 3: 15; 1 Peter 4: 17) Even in Apostolic times a Simon Magus, who had "no part nor lot in the matter," could be introduced; and we learn from 1 Corinthians 3 how the door could be opened wider and wider to take in a vast mass of profession, with so little reality, as now. Paul had laid the foundation, but the labourers are warned of their responsibility. "Let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon." Wood, hay, and stubble might be built upon the foundation as well as gold, silver, and precious stones. The fire in which the day will be revealed should try every man's work of what sort it is; and in result we see that there are three classes of workmen at the building — those who being true men themselves, build nothing but work that will abide, and who will have their reward (ver. 14); those who though personally saved, have all their work burned up and suffer loss of reward; and finally, those who, being only professors, defile the work at every touch and are destroyed with their work.

Now it is significant that just at this point, where failure in the character of the work is contemplated (ver. 15), the building is characterised as the Temple. (Compare verses 9 and 16) "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" Serious as it would be to corrupt God's *building*, the heinous nature of the corruption would be shown out in that — in a sense in which no other house but God's ever was — it was His *temple* or sanctuary. "If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the *temple of God is holy*, which temple ye are."

With the same force and fitness we see the temple of God introduced in 2 Corinthians 6: 14, when the Apostle is seeking to bring home to the saints the separation that becomes them from unbelievers. "What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath the believer with the unbeliever? And what agreement hath the *temple of God* with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said: "I will *dwell* in them," etc., to verse 18. It is as His temple that the full character of false association would be discovered.

"Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the *unclean thing*."

Even where not the Church, but the individual believer is in question in 1 Corinthians 6: 15-20, the solemn power of the application of "the *temple* of the Holy Ghost" (not merely His dwelling-place) to the body in the *connection of the Apostle's thoughts* will be felt.

That which is ever associated with the thought of temple is plainly expressed in Ephesians 2: 21, where we find "all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an *holy temple* in the Lord." The work being wholly God's, from the point of view of the verse, will result in that perfection of holiness suited to Him, whose temple it is, in the eternal glory.

Possibly it may be asked why then, when in Revelation 21: 1-8, we come to the eternal state — a new heaven and a new earth where the Church is seen still in its double relationship to Christ as His bride, and to God as His tabernacle — it should be called the tabernacle of God rather than the temple? Perhaps it lies in the force of the word by which He expresses His use of it as His dwelling-place — "and He shall tabernacle with them" (see N.Tr.); confirmed as this is in its significance by the same word in the original, being used in John 1: 11 to express the way He came amongst men as the Word become flesh — "and tabernacled among us"; when the opened eye of faith beheld "His glory, a glory as of an only begotten with a Father." It is thus God has been revealed, and will be for ever known, if "unto him be glory *in the Church in Christ Jesus* unto all generations of the age of ages." (Eph. 3: 21)

It may be noted lastly, that when in Revelation 21: 9 to 22: 5, we have the millennial display of the glory of Christ in the Church, in the symbol of the holy city Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, John saw "no temple therein" for the beautiful reason that the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. His presence made the whole city a sanctuary.

The Affliction of Christ.

Col. 1: 24.

There could not be a more wonderful expression of what the Assembly is to a heart devoted to Christ's interests on earth, as Paul's was. Time does not enter into account in that which is the fruit of God's eternal counsels for the glory of Christ. Thus the Apostle looks at the present sufferings of the saints that compose the Assembly, as one complete whole from Pentecost till He comes. At his conversion by the revelation of Christ to him he had learned that they were one with Him in glory; "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." The afflictions of the members of the Body were the afflictions of the Head. Paul had endured much of them in his flesh for the sake of what was so dear to Christ as His Body, the Assembly. But as long as there was a persecuted and suffering saint on earth, there was what yet lacked of the afflictions of Christ. For as we have seen all the tribulation that His saints are called to pass through here, as their appointed path to the Kingdom, is counted by Him as His own. Even of the remnant of Israel it could be said, "in all their afflictions he was afflicted." But now the identification of His people's lot with His, flows from their union with Him by the Holy Ghost, as the Head of His Body.

In the largeness of Paul's heart and the devotedness of a love that left no room for self-consideration, his desire was to fill up in his own experience so much of the afflictions of the Assembly that yet remained, that there might be the less left for those who should come after him: he could

rejoice in his sufferings with this thought, that he was filling up what yet lacked of the afflictions of Christ, that is, of the saints whom He regarded as Himself. "No man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as Christ the church, for we are members of his body." As to the Apostle personally and the spirit that characterised him, we may indeed rightly compare 2 Timothy 2: 10: "I endure all things for the elect's sake."

The Lamb in the Midst of the Throne.

Rev. 4: 1-6; Rev. 5: 6-14.

One is almost afraid to say anything about such a scene as this, lest one should detract from its glory, and hinder our own joy in contemplating it. My thought about it is that which forms our link with the scene. It is nothing less than He who is the central object of it all, the One around whom we are gathered. In reading chapter 4 you cannot fail to feel that in all the glory of it — wonderful as it is — there is a lack, something wanting to fix the heart. John finds in it no borne object; but this lack is more than filled up in chapter 5, when we get for the first time the *centre* of all these circles of glory. "In the midst of the throne, and of the four living creatures and of the elders, stood a Lamb." They said to John, "behold the Lion," and he looked and beheld a Lamb! yes, and a Lamb *as slain*. John recognises in Him the very One he had known and loved on earth. His first sight of Him in heaven is in the same character, too, as that which had first attracted him away from all else, to follow Jesus on earth.

It was at the testimony of the Baptist, "Behold the *Lamb* of God" that his two disciples dropped off from him, and followed Jesus. Peter's brother Andrew we know was one of them, and I have no doubt the nameless one was John himself, for he avoids mentioning himself in writing the Gospel. Jesus hears the question "Master, where dwellest thou?" and replied "Come and see." They came and saw where He dwelt and abode with Him that day. Precious unison with the heart of God, that found all its delight in that lowly One on earth. And now John sees this same Lamb in heaven, as slain. That linked him with the scene, and us too, beloved.

It is true we have in these chapters our own place, and I need hardly say we are not there yet; but, the Lamb in the midst of it all is the sum and substance of all our blessing. He has redeemed us by His blood. All in heaven fall down before Him and worship; but *we* lead the song. We are able to say as angels cannot, "Thou art worthy, for thou wast slain, and hast *redeemed* us to God by thy blood."

Here around His table we have the same object before us; the same occupation, worship. In John 3: 34-36, we find how this brings us into communion with the Father. "The Father loveth the Son." All His delight is in the Son; and in this we have common thoughts with Him, for He has become the object of our delight too. All the Father's counsels are for Him. When once He is put forth, everything is decided in reference to Him. This is the connection of verse 36, "He that believeth," etc. Those who honour the Son by believing on Him, the Father will bless; those who do not, the wrath of God abides on them. Thus we see He was the Father's object upon earth, as in Revelation 5 we find He is in heaven.

John 12 gives us a new centre of attraction; yet the same Jesus. "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." It is the cross; there He was lifted up between the earth and heaven; to be the centre to which everything that is of God on earth must flow. But further, He is exalted to the

Father's right hand. It is there that we know Him, Hebrews 2: 6-9 (read), made a little lower than the angels; now crowned with glory and honour. The day is coming, when all things shall be put in subjection under Him. But "we see not yet all things put under Him, but" (as we gaze into the open heaven) "*we see Jesus.*"

Ephesians 1 connects us with Him there. He is Head over all things to His church, which is His body. When He ascended, the Holy Ghost came down to earth; was it that the object of the Father's interest was changed? Had the Holy Ghost come down to take the place of Christ on earth, or to be a new centre for our hearts? Oh, no, beloved! The Holy Spirit is here to associate us with Him there, and to lead up our hearts into constant occupation with Him to unfold all His perfections to us, that we may love Him better and count Him to be the alone worthy One in heaven or earth of our adoration.

Now we are prepared for such a word as Hebrews 13: 13, "Let us go forth *unto him*, without the camp." The camp was the earthly system of religion, once ordained by God, but now set aside; we are to go forth to Him and that will necessarily lead us *outside* all that is recognised among men as religion — all accredited systems. For as truly as He is the centre and gathering point in heaven, so truly is He the only divine centre and gathering point on earth; and to follow Him *must* take us outside all that is owned by men.

2 Thessalonians 2 is deeply interesting from this point of view. "We beseech by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and *our gathering together unto him.*" Impossible that He should come, and we not be gathered to Him! His place always decides ours. If He is "outside the camp," we *must* go forth unto Him. If He comes, we. *must* be gathered to Him. When He moves, we move. When He moves from the throne on which He sits, to the air, we move from the earth to the air — our new gathering point, where He is coming to take us back with Him to the Father's house. Think what the Father's house will be! The home of such a heart as Christ's! Where all His divine affections flow out, and are fully answered. That is where He is going to take us to, where He is at home! Oh, beloved, truly our blessing and joy will be full then!

It is the same people who are now gathered round the Lamb on earth — their object the same — their occupation the same. The difference is, that then the worship will be unrestrained, unhindered by the flesh, in the full energy of the Spirit of God. Now we have so often to mourn over failure — to grieve that our hearts are so slow to lay hold of what is before us. Then, blessed be God, there will be no failure to mourn over — nothing to turn us aside from absorbing occupation with Christ.

The Revelation of Divine Persons.

John 14 - 17.

How wonderful the thought is, that it is in the revelation of divine Persons, and the circle of relationship and intimacy into which we are brought with them, that our portion is for ever, a portion that we are brought into already. It is to the Gospel of John, of course, that we must turn for all this richest character of blessing. Chapters 1 - 3 lay the basis, as *all* the varied glories of the Person of the Lord Jesus come before us — all at least that belong to His *manifestation* here, (John 1, 2) and the essential work of God in the soul (John 3) by which alone our hearts opened to receive Him, whether on the side of earthly things — the new birth meeting the necessity of man's condition — or that of heavenly things, into which the cross introduces. Then after this wonderful introduction, we have all

the great elements of the Christian position brought out in the Lord's ministry from John 4 - 7. The Spirit given from Christ as the power of the life within, springing up into that heavenly relationship with the Father in which eternal life consists. (John 4) The Son quickening in a power of life that extends to the resurrection of the body. (John 5) The Son of Man in death as the food and sustenance of the life. (John 6) And the Holy Ghost given from the glory of Christ, to put more than all the joy of the feast of Tabernacles into our hearts as a present thing, that out of the joy there might flow in testimony *rivers* of living water to the poor thirsty scene around us. John 8 - 10 are supplementary, developing John 1: 1-4; the Divine Word that convicts in John 8 applied in power in grace, John 9, to open the eyes of one naturally blind to the Person of the Lord Jesus in Whom is life — the Word, Light and Life — and who on confessing Him, according to the light he gets, is cast *out* of the synagogue, and *into* the company of the Son of God; who here only in the Gospels, *reveals Himself* personally in this, the full glory of His Person, to anyone.

And now it is at this point — John 9 being used to illustrate the teaching of the Lord that comes out in John 10 — the Lord having come into the Jewish fold to attract hearts to Himself out of Judaism — a clean break made with man and man's world, and all that was once recognised of God in it, as a religion for man, "the Camp," out of which Jesus and those who would confess Him, are cast, — it is at *this point that we begin to find the circle of divine relationship and intimacy* opening out to us.

See John 10: 14, 15, reading the two verses connectedly thus, "I know my sheep, and am known of mine, as the Father knoweth me and I know the Father." It is the wonderful *character* (I say not measure) of intimacy into, which the Lord introduces us with Himself — namely, such as He was in with the Father.

In John 12: 24, He must die, to end all that was of the first man in death, to be able to associate us with Himself for this intimacy in the new place He takes as man in resurrection.

In John 13: 1-8, He provides by His service for us for our enjoyment of it now that He has departed out of the world to the Father. For when we might have thought that when He was gone it was all over, really it was only then begun in the full character of it. This is, I believe, the force of the Lord's words "Touch me not" in John 20. Mary thought she had Him back on the old ground, but the Lord was going to introduce her into an association and nearness and intimacy with Himself, *impossible* till He was risen and ascended; such as had never been known upon earth, and in which John 10: 14, 15, would be found fully realised.

In John 14, all from verse 16, being the effect of the Holy Spirit's indwelling, He comes to — He manifests Himself to — one living of His life, and in whom that life is displayed in the love and obedience that *constituted* the life in the blessed Lord; and the Father and the Son *make their mansions* with such, before we go to have our place in *their* mansions; the word of verse 23 and verse 2 being the same. What provisions for hearts that miss Him in His absence from this world! The two things that constitute heaven's joy, Christ's presence (compare ver. 3 with 18, 21) and the mansions above brought down to our hearts in the path of the life we have in Him down here!

In John 15 we have further, the character of the *Lord's* love to us; it is that of His Father to Him, and to be enjoyed by us, as the Father's was by Him; namely in the path of obedience. He gives us His own path, and the joy *He* had in the Father's love, now to be in us, and *be full*, as walking in that path we enjoy our place in Christ's love.

In John 16 He leads us higher still, verses 26-28 putting us directly before the Father, as the objects of the Father's love, in having a common object of love with the Father in the blessed Lord Himself ("because ye have loved me.")

But the climax is not reached till John 17, where on the ground of the work, and its results for Him (ver. 1-5) He now claims to put us into all His own place and relationship with the Father (vers. 6-13), providing for our full enjoyment of it, by passing on the *words* that belonged to Him in it (vers. 8 and 13); and carrying us on to the given glory (vers. 22, 23), in which He will display us to the world, and it will know that we have had the very same place in the Father's love that He had when He was here. And we are allowed to hear Him say it, while *before* that day verse 26 tells of how He lives to make known to us the Father's Name, so as to bring more and more all the sweetness and power and joy of the love of which He was the object into our hearts, as the objects consciously of the same love, and He in us to be our strength to enjoy it.

With such a provision for divine intimacies and fellowship, shall our hearts be satisfied with anything short of an increasing realisation of them? The position of the Christian, so infinitely beyond anything known upon earth before, is one thing. But how great the loss, if we were to miss here the enjoyment of what it leads us into, in such communion of divine joy.

Divine Prerogatives.

As dependent upon the Father for the object of His coming the Lord Jesus acted again and again in divine prerogative of will, knowledge and power. Scripture connects attributes which are exclusively divine with divine Persons viewed in their distinctness; as, for instance, "will" (Matt. 11: 27) with the Son expressly distinguished from the Father: "His oneness with the Father made known in his competency to reveal and supremacy of will in revealing the Father." So again John 5: 21. So also as to the Spirit, 1 Corinthians 12: 11, "dividing" (all these manifestations of spiritual power) "to every man severally as he will."

Then as to power, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up again." John 2 and John 10: 18 — though only exercising will or power in carrying out the will He came to do; in no way independently, yet as possessing all, which was His perfection. He who could say "I Am," John 8, and before whom the cohort of soldiery that came to take Him fell to the ground powerless, cannot be limited to a vessel to set forth what God was. He was God manifest in the flesh. The simple soul will turn to Scripture and find abundant proof that the humanity of the Lord Jesus consisted of spirit as well as body and soul, and this as distinct from the Holy Ghost given to Him: Mark 2: 8, "knowing in His spirit"; Mark 8: 12, "groaned in His spirit"; Luke 10: 21, "rejoiced in spirit": "Into thy hands I commend my spirit" — exactly as His servant "Lord Jesus receive my spirit," — Matthew 27: 50, John 19: 30; John 11: 33, "deeply moved in spirit"; John 13: 21, "troubled in spirit."

Knowing Christ after the Flesh.

2 Cor. 5: 16.

A few words as to the setting of the truth in which this verse is found, may be helpful. The immediate connection is the way the love of Christ has been shown in His death, which brought out the truth of man's condition, "because we thus judge that if one died for all, then were all dead." So that, if, as the result of His having died for all, there were those that live, they do so according to the power of

life seen in verses 1-4 of the chapter, as expressed in a risen Christ and involving a new creation. For "if any man be in Christ, there is a new creation" (ver. 17); while the basis of the whole new and wonderful position for us is found in Christ having been made sin for us, in verse 21.

Up to the cross God had been dealing with man as alive in the flesh in successive dispensations to bring out the state of the flesh, as, for instance, without law, under law, and by the testimony of prophet after prophet. But now the last test had been supplied in Christ come after the flesh. God having yet one Son, His well-beloved, sent Him also last unto them saying, "They will reverence My Son." But they took Him and killed Him and cast Him out of the vineyard. (Matt. 21) It was the first great fact in the ministry of reconciliation given to the Apostles (vers. 18, 19), that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." He had come in Christ into the world not to raise any question of sins, but to let all His goodness be manifested, if by any means to win this poor world's heart for Him. But the rejection of Christ proved that if alive and active enough in seeking the things of the world, man was perfectly dead to God, nothing in man's heart to answer to anything in God's, further evidence of this as the full truth of man's condition, being given in God having to give up Christ to death in order that any might live; if one died for all, then were all dead. It was plain, then, that all probationary dealings of God with the race were over. All possible sin had been consummated against God in the cross of Christ. When God had been manifested in nothing but goodness to man, man had been manifested in nothing but enmity against Him. The synoptic Gospels give us the history of this side of Christ's presentation in the world, and trace it to its close in His death. We know Him no more after that order of things.

But now the word (LOGOS) of reconciliation (namely, that in which reconciliation was actually effected) is added to all that brought out man's hopeless state in the flesh, in his rejection of Christ when presented to him in the full revelation of God's goodness. Now, instead of God not imputing or passing over sins any longer, He who knew no sin has been made sin for us, and the full end of all we have done and been after the flesh has come for God, and for the faith of our souls, in the judgment of the cross; so that we have become God's righteousness in Christ raised from the dead. "Therefore if any man be in Christ there is a new creation" (N.Tr.): "old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new; and all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ." Nor could there be any sweeter fruit of what God has wrought for us than that in a new creation there should be no disturbing element found between our souls and God.

But if the truth of this be apprehended in any measure it will be readily seen that it involves, not only that we know Christ after the flesh no more, but henceforth *no man* on that ground. And this first supplies a needed test as to the reality with which we have entered into it. How do we regard an old acquaintance? It is no longer a question of "auld lang syne," or anything of that sort. If he is in Christ old things are passed away in the wonderful position we have in common by God's infinite grace according to a new creation; but if not in Christ he is dead, dead in his sins though still within the reach of Christ being presented to him that he may live. Note, too, how really all things have become new: as to the *new spring* of life, it is the love of Christ that constrains us (ver. 14); as to the *new object*, He who died for us and rose again has become the centre of our new existence instead of self as formerly; while our *new motive* is, whether present in the body when He comes or absent from it, whether amongst those who are alive and remain or those who sleep in Him, we may be well pleasing to Him (ver. 9.) When the passage is taken thus in its connection it does not need to be said that it in no way excludes other aspects of Christ's presence in the world, which abide for us in all their eternal significance. Here was found for the first time the lovely path of perfect man before God, and over Him heaven opened and the Father's voice expressed His perfect delight in Him. Here, too, was God

manifest in the flesh, and the Father revealed in the Son. Eternal life, too, brought to light in this relationship of Him with the Father as never before; here, as come down out of heaven to be governed only by the will of Him that sent Him. He is the bread of God, the food of God's own deepest joy, in which we are given to have part when we reach Him through His death. (John 6: 33, 53, 57)

It is well, too, to remember, in such a connection, that, if it is only as ascended up where He was before that all the light of the glory is shed back upon what He was down here, we know nothing of Him in the glory — not one characteristic trait of His blessed perfection, that was not manifested in Him here, who is the same yesterday, today, and for ever. Yet the Spirit has been given to us to bring to our remembrance by the Gospels all things whatsoever He said unto us, and He is essentially what He spake (John 8: 25, N.Tr.), not only that the thrilling memory of all He was may ever be in our hearts, but that He may be the present living object before our souls in glory, according to all that He was manifested to be down here.

When, then, the force of no man or even Christ being known any more after the flesh is apprehended, it will be seen that it in no way touches the question of the natural relationships in which we have been placed by the will of God towards one another. It is, in fact, only in the Epistles that bring out our full place in the risen Christ that we find the full recognition of those relationships, as furnishing us with the heavenly springs and motives for a walk in them according to God.

The Lord's Supper.

When we consider what the Lord's Supper is as presented to us in the Word, first of all in the Gospels, and especially Luke, as the expression of hearts that love Him recalling Him to remembrance in that which told out all the depth of His love to us, we want no other proof of the deep dishonour done to Him by partaking of it on any principle such as that of the Church of England, which makes it an ordinance for the parish or the world. When the Assembly was formed, as at Pentecost, it is given its place by the introduction of not only 1 Corinthians 11 but 1 Corinthians 10 — too often passed over. It is first of all the communion or fellowship of His death and involves that we have accepted His death as the end of all we are as by nature children of wrath. His death has been thus our happy deliverance, not only from the judgment of God, but from the dominion of sin. Then verse 17 we are shown that in partaking of the one loaf we express that we are one body, i.e. united to Christ in glory, and to all who are His, by the Spirit given to dwell within us.

This distinguishes the Lord's table from that of a sect, such as any of these systems of men, who thereby express their membership of their denomination whatever it may be. Thus what was given us to express that all who are Christ's are one, has been turned into the formal denial of that unity, and made the symbol of their disunity and shame.

Then in the Supper, chapter 11, we get the additional feature, that in partaking of it we announce His death, till He come, as those that miss Him in the world that cast Him out of it. Could anything be more false than to the calling of the Christian than to partake of it with the open worldling or unbeliever? 2 Timothy 2: 19-22, surely gives us the path of one that would be true to the Lord in such circumstances, i.e. to purge myself by separating myself from all that has come into what professes to be God's house, to His dishonour: that is the first step. Then verse 22, watch myself lest the enemy mock my path of outward separation from evil by the ungirded loin, and thirdly, seek out any similarly in separation from evil to follow what is suited to His name and nature with them. Jeremiah 15: 16, 17,

is a great strengthening to the man of God under such circumstances. First, "Thy words were found," etc., and then, "I sat not in the assembly of the mockers. . . . I sat alone, because of thy hand," and verse 17.

"First Love": "First Works."

Revelation 2.

The full force of these words of the Lord will only be appreciated when it is seen that in addressing these seven then existing assemblies (in a little province of what is now known as Asia Minor), the Spirit presents to us prophetically the main features that mark the history of the professing Assembly as a whole, from the beginning of it, in this first assembly addressed, to its close in the last — Laodicea. How soon departure had begun. In Ephesus, too, which had been so privileged in the revelation of the Assembly's highest position and blessing through Paul's epistle and labours there; and where the saints had the watchful care of Timothy by the Apostle's appointment when he could no longer visit them. (1 Tim. 1: 3) There it is, that He who walks in the midst of the seven candlesticks has to say, "But I have against thee that thou hast left thy first love." It is the old story: in everything entrusted to man failure sets in. For be it observed, we do not find the Assembly here as the Body of Christ, where the workmanship is divine and failure impossible. In these addresses it is the Assembly in responsibility as the vessel of Christ's testimony upon earth, to bear the light He has set in it. It is the House of God where, as we learn from 1 Peter 4: 17, already the time was Come that judgment should begin.

Outwardly all looked right enough at Ephesus. The Lord could recognise works, labour, and patience: though it is significant that He cannot connect these with the proper springs of Christian life as in the babes at Thessalonica. There the work was of faith, the labour of love, and the patience of hope in the Lord Jesus Christ. Here the faith, love, and hope in Himself were wanting. Still the Lord would note what He can approve as the fruit of His grace in them. "Thou canst not bear them that are evil," and there was faithfulness in testing the pretensions of false apostles, and in bearing for His Name. Yet with all this His eyes as a flame of fire could detect failures, and just where it was most serious. They had begun to decline from their first freshness of love for Christ — "the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in a land that was not sown," as Jehovah expresses it so touchingly to Israel in Jeremiah 2. And it is always there that failure has its roots, in the individual as in the Assembly. The outward fall or lapse is not first, but is only the manifest effect of heart departure from Christ that has preceded it. What this is to Him we may learn from His words that follow, "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen": from what a height and to how great a depth! He calls, indeed, to repentance and the "first works"; that is, such as flowed from the place that Christ had had in their hearts, works that spring from devotedness to Him, for the lack of which no outward activity could compensate.

"Or else I will come to thee" (He does not here say "quickly," though we have it in our text, as in later development of evil, verse 16) "and remove thy candlestick out of its place." He is slow to execute judgment. For this is the warning of the final removal of the Assembly from its place of candlestick responsibility, which is only put in force in Laodicea; when after the gracious revival in Philadelphia, the last phase of assumption of spiritual prosperity in nauseous indifference to Christ and the truth had set in, and He can bear with it no longer. But the sentence, only to be executed when space for

repentance was given and after long centuries of forbearance, is pronounced on the Assembly's leaving its first love. No recovery was possible, though by His grace there have been every now and then, times of revival throughout the humbling history. As to the Nicolaitanes, whose works they hated in Ephesus, but later on, when declension became more marked in Pergamos, whom they tolerated even in their doctrines, I know of no light from Scripture but that which is to be gathered from the meaning of the name itself, treated as symbolic, and thus giving us the clue. It expresses rule over the people, the lording it over the many by the few, that began so early in clerisy. (See, 1 Peter 5: 3)

The promise to the overcomer, forming one of the four parts of each of the addresses here, answers to the general character this first of the addresses has. The overcomers are those who are Christ's in each phase of the profession characterised in grace by that which ought to mark them. Access to Christ as the Tree of Life will be the eternal portion of all that are His. Only let it be carefully noted that the words in "the midst of" have no place in the true text here, and are rightly omitted in the R.V. It was doubtless a thought of Eden in the transcriber's mind that put them in. For there were two trees in the paradise God made for man in Eden, the tree of responsibility, of the knowledge of good and evil, as well as the tree of life. But in the Paradise of God there is but one that absorbs the whole sphere. It is Christ. All the history of our responsibility and failings met by Him who endured the judgment of it on the cross, and became our life, will be for ever over, blessed be God; unhinderedly and for eternity we shall feed upon Him who is the Tree of Life.

"Peace" and "My Peace."

In comparing different aspects of peace it is helpful to note that in John 14: 27, the Lord distinguishes between peace left to us and peace given to us. "Peace I leave with you" is peace with God as to every question of sin. He has made it by the blood of His cross, and brought the tidings of it on the evening of the day of His resurrection, when He stood in the midst of His own and greeted them with "Peace be unto you." He showed them, too, His hands and side as the witness of the work in which it had been accomplished, and commissioned them to go forth with it to others. (John 20: 19-21) It was the precious legacy of His death. We have it (Rom. 5: 1) as we believe the testimony of God to the facts of His having been delivered for our offences and raised again for our justification. It is *peace of conscience*. He could not speak of it as His. He never needed it: we did, and He made it and left it to us.

But the Lord goes on to speak of a deeper character of peace "My peace I give unto you." It is the peace in which He ever walked with the Father, the calm unruffled peace which resting in His love and submitting Himself absolutely to all His ways afforded. He characterises it as His, and has given it absolutely to be ours — not as the world gives indeed, for though it may give largely and generously it gives away; but He gives as bringing us into the possession of it with Himself. It is here applied to His peace, but the principle is true of all He gives — as His joy (John 15: 11),

His glory (John 17: 22), and the place He has in His Father's love (John 17: 23, 26). How surely our hearts would own that the way He gives it; the richest thing in what He gives, even that we possess it all in and with Himself. This second peace, then, coming in its own perfect order, is *peace of heart*, of the heart that has found Christ's own resting place as its own in a Father's love well known. We are entitled to count it ours, and that by His absolute gift, now to live in it practically through all the stress and strain of circumstances. Once again it is formally referred to in the Epistles (Col. 3: 15): "Let the peace of *Christ* rule in your hearts" (N.Tr. and other critical versions), holding its blessed sway in all

that is there, "to which ye have been called in one body," and thus in all our relations with our fellow-Christians.

It only remains to emphasise the strongly conditional character of the peace promised in Philippians 4. But the condition is only that we trust God with what would suggest care to us, putting the care upon Him instead of carrying it as a burden upon our hearts. And now it is not the peace of Christ, who as Man passed through the scene of trial, but the peace of God on the throne where no breath of trial ever came, which He guarantees shall keep our hearts and minds. And if our poor hearts would say that it is utterly incomprehensible, God has anticipated us and tells us that it passeth all understanding. He does not expect us, then, to understand it, but acting upon His word in simple confidence of heart in Him we shall realise the truth of it. May it be ever more and more so with us.

Some Better Thing.

Hebrews 11: 39, 40.

There are three things alluded to in these verses that claim our attention. The promise not received by those spoken of in the chapter; "some better thing" for us; and our being perfected together in resurrection. First, as to the promise. The great principle of faith as the power of the just man's life had been wonderfully illustrated in those who had gone before, and that in a great variety of testing circumstances. For like those addressed in the epistle, they had not received — that is, enjoyed possession of — what had been promised them. Even if the patriarch's faith went beyond the promise, and looked for the city which hath foundations, that God had prepared for them, they had not entered into it; it has not come yet. God would not bring them into their promised portion without us. They, like us, had to live by the faith of it.

But meanwhile some better thing had been foreseen by God for us. It is not the object of the epistle to develop this better thing in all its extent, for it does not bring out the Church's place as united to Christ in glory. But the heavens are opened now to faith as they were not to them; and Christ who has passed into the heavens has become the present object of faith, having taken His place there, on the ground of accomplished redemption. Thus heavenly things are revealed as the present portion of Christians. Our citizenship is there. God has come out of the thick darkness of Sinai, in the full revelation of Himself in the Son, and we have unhindered access to Him in the sanctuary of His presence by the perfect work of the Son of God. All this wonderful place of privilege belongs to the calling of the Christian, that is, to those called in this time of Christ's rejection from the earth, as it did not belong to saints before He came and died and rose again.

If it be remembered that Christ is in the heavenly glory, and the Holy Spirit come down from it to dwell in the believer and unite us to Him there, the difference between saints now and those of the Old Testament times will be more and more understood. But the last clause carries us on to the time of the full accomplishment of God's eternal counsels for us all — "that they without us should not be made perfect." There is no perfection, as such, short of resurrection, and bearing the image of Christ in glory. For this we wait. It may be realised at any moment by the coming of the Lord, and without death for us who are alive at His coming. For if the dead in Christ (all that are Christ's) shall rise first at His shout, and in bodies of glory, we who are alive and remain shall be changed in the twinkling of an eye, and caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air. And so we shall be perfected together; though even in the eternal glory, the Church — embracing all who are Christ's between

Pentecost and His coming — will never lose its distinctive place and relationship to Christ as His Body and Bride, and to God as His dwelling-place, as we see from Revelation 21: 2, 3: "And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them."

Matthew 5 - 7.

The Sermon on the Mount (as Matt. 5 - 7 is called) does not suppose the Kingdom to be established. There is a tone of the rejection of Christ running through it all. See verses 10-12, as also Matthew 6 and many of the exhortations of Matthew 7 which would not apply to that time of blessing on the earth. But coming to verses 20 and following, it will be observed that it is not the spiritualising of the law as often expressed, but the contrast drawn between the mere outward observance of it in Pharisaical righteousness and an internal reality looked for by Christ, and this as characteristic in this present time of those who, when Christ sets up the Kingdom, should have entrance into it. Thus He takes up the two forms of human evil, violence and corruption (vers. 21, 27), and gives the law that forbids them a new force. He judges the feelings and state of the heart. It was not enough not to kill: to cherish anger or contempt was of the same character as murder in His sight; His judgment of it expressed in the terms of the judicial proceedings with which they were familiar in their local and superior courts. "The judgment" inflicted death by the sword; "the council" (Sanhedrim) by stoning; and "the Gehenna of fire" would intensify the horrors of it. (See Alford in loc.) In what follows we see the Lord in the way with the Jew to judgment; — "thine adversary," because of His rejection, — to come under His hand in governmental dealing till they had received double for all their sins as Isaiah 40: 2 puts it, or to be reconciled with Him while it was yet possible, as Psalm 2: 12 warned them.

"Washed Their Robes."

Revelation 22: 14.

The real difficulty would be if the text as it stands in the A.V. could be maintained: "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right, etc." But the true reading is that of the R.V., "Blessed are they who have washed their robes." There was a similarity in the sound of the words in the original that misled some of the copyists. But the best authorities for the text leave no uncertainty, as to "wash their robes." Revelation 7: 14 completes the thought, referring to the blessed inhabitants of the millennial earth, at least as to the innumerable multitude of all nations that stand in presence of the throne: "These are they which came out of the great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in *the blood of the Lamb.*" Access to the Tree of Life and entrance into the city seem to belong to the heavenly side of the kingdom in which the righteous shall shine forth, as we see them doing in the displayed glory of Christ, in Revelation 21: 9 into chapter 22. In the millennial earth — that is, during the kingdom of the Lord, Jesus Christ — besides the company referred to above in chapter 7, of the Gentile nations, there will be as inhabitants of the earth the 144,000 of the beginning of the same chapter, the sealed remnant of the twelve tribes of Israel. These will, of course, be in their natural bodies. Those who have their part in the Tree of Life and in the heavenly city will be the

glorified saints; that is, all who are Christ's at His coming, who when He appears will appear with Him in glory.

The fruit of the Tree of Life had been forfeited in Eden by man's sin, and he was shut out from it by the cherubim and the flaming sword placed "to keep the way of the Tree of Life." But now the great redemption work has been accomplished. The sinner's Saviour has borne the judgment brought in by the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, of which man had partaken, and by which his conscience was defiled. So that in the Paradise of God nothing remains but the Tree of Life — and all who are washed in the blood of the Lamb have access to it. No flaming sword now barring the way for the simplest believer in Jesus.

But, who will inhabit the new earth? This refers to the new heaven and new earth of Revelation 21: 1-8, which is the eternal state, fruit of a wholly new creation, after the kingdom of the thousand years' reign of Christ is over, and all enemies, even the last enemy — death — have been subjugated to Him, and the present heavens and earth have passed away. The answer is — all the redeemed. No more Jew or Gentile, but those who are redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, now all glorified, and with whom God will dwell; finding all their blessing summed up in His blessed presence for ever, God all in all.

The only distinction between the redeemed will be the Church, seen in its relation to Christ, as the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride for her husband; and in its relation to God as His Tabernacle, the centre of the brightest manifestation of His glory for ever.

"The Communion of Saints."

Though not exactly expressed in these terms in Scripture, this is a very blessed reality, when seen in its true character. Grace has accorded it to us even here below; and we have the power and conditions necessary to its enjoyment. Let me say first, that the words "communion" and "fellowship" (in the passages that will come before us) are the same in the original, and have exactly the same sense, therefore, for the English reader. Let us look at what sets this fellowship (or communion) on its highest plane. (1 John 1: 7) "If we walk in the light . . . we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." It is a wonderful statement of the Christian position. We must always bear in mind that in John's writing, *light* is God fully revealed and known; whereas *darkness* is God unknown.

We walk, then, in the cloudless light of that wonderful revelation; and we have fellowship with all our fellow-believers, as enjoying the same light, and partaking of the same life, and of the nature of Him Who is Light. This gives us capacity for such fellowship. And then the basis of the whole position is brought out in the third clause, that states the infinite value of the blood of Jesus — it "cleanses from all sin." So that though we "were sometimes (or formerly) darkness," we are now righteously introduced into this position.

The power for the enjoyment of this fellowship is the Spirit of God, given to dwell within us. Hence, 2 Corinthians closes with the words, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all." And Philippians 2: 2 gives us to see the practical bearing of it, on the walk of the saints, as the Apostle so touchingly refers to it in his appeal, "if there be any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, fulfil ye my

joy, that ye be like minded, having the same love, of one accord, of one mind." This is the normal effect of the power of the Spirit, where He is ungrieved in us. He produces this unity among Christians, where self can have no place.

It will be helpful also to look at this fellowship in the light of the calling of God. We find it in the preface to the first epistle to the Corinthian saints. "God is faithful" — he could not say they were, as we know too well from the rest of the epistle. But that does not hinder the Apostle casting them upon God's faithfulness — "by Whom ye were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord." Here again we find it set higher than if we confined our thoughts of it to "the communion of saints." It is the communion or fellowship of the Son of God. Observe, not — fellowship *with* His Son, in this passage — which is the wonderful privilege of those who possess eternal life, and which we find in 1 John 1: 1-4. This fellowship with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ, is individual, and true of each child of God if there had not been another to enter into it on earth. And the express object of John's epistle was that we might be brought into what had first been the privilege of the disciples, who had heard and seen the Word of Life when manifested in the world.

But in Corinthians it is the privilege of the assembly of God as such. The Son of God has this fellowship of His, on earth; and all Christians are called into it.

The conditions of enjoyment of it will be found in 2 Corinthians 6, where we are commanded not to be unequally yoked with unbelievers. There must be separation from the world. "For what fellowship" (or 'participation,' as the word is here) "have righteousness and iniquity? or what fellowship of light with darkness? what concord of Christ with Belial? or what part hath a believer with an unbeliever? what agreement of the temple of God with idols? . . . wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

Thus we see what a real thing the communion of saints is. Nothing of what is of the flesh enters into it. It is characterised by the nature of the divine life we possess in Christ, and can only be known and enjoyed in the power of the Spirit, and in separation from the world.

Eternal Counsels.

Proverbs 8: 22-32; Ephesians 1.

There are two very distinct aspects of the glad tidings of the revelation of God and the riches of His grace. We are in danger of limiting the work of Christ to the measure of our need. In Ephesians 1 God carries us back into the eternal counsels of His own heart, and, wonderful to find, He has not been only meeting my need, but the need of His own heart — He had need of me.

It is important that we should be able to take our place at this standpoint.

In Proverbs, where we might least expect to find it, we find the delight of the Father in the Son. What communion of divine joy! And here in this wondrous scene we find the direction and tendency of their thoughts — "Rejoicing in the habitable parts of the earth; and my delights were with the sons of men." Before the second verse of Genesis 1, or even the first verse, the heart of God was going out into the habitable parts of the earth. What a word for us! It passeth all that we can understand, His delights with the sons of men! Where shall we look for the accomplishment of these thoughts? Not in the

history of the first man; it is in the second Man already before Him in His eternal counsels.

What a scene it is as we look over the history of the first man; blessed be God that it has come to an end in the cross of Christ, but this has to be learnt individually in the history of our own souls.

Stephen sums up the history of the ages in Acts 7. The promises were despised, the law transgressed, the prophets slain, the Just One betrayed and murdered, and the Holy Ghost always resisted. God has brought us to the consummation of the ages to see the close of its history in the culminating sin of man. We must turn away our eye from all that is of the first man. Here (Prov. 8) we find One over whom the heavens could open at His birth and the angels say, "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, divine delight in men." It was the dawn of the accomplishment of God's eternal counsels.

In Matthew 3, in the first step of His public path, we find Him identifying Himself with all that was for God in Israel, according to His own precious word in Psalm 16. "Thou art my Lord; my goodness extendeth not to thee: but to the saints that are in the earth . . . in whom is all my delight." How wonderful to think who those were, ungodly and despised, but taking their right place, confessing their sins. At that very moment — "Jesus when he was baptised, went up straightway out of the water; and lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him; and lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (Matt. 3: 16, 17)

Now for the first time the heavens found a Man on earth worthy of their opening upon, and the Spirit descended in the form of a dove — long since departed, finding no rest for the sole of its foot in the scene under God's judgment (Gen. 8) — and rested on Jesus. We see set forth in all its perfection the place that He now gives us before the Father. (Matt. 12: 18) "Behold my servant whom I have chosen; my beloved in whom my soul is well pleased." And again in Matthew 17 we hear the voice from heaven acknowledging Him as God's beloved Son, in whom He was well pleased.

In all this we have seen only one Man before God declared to be the Object of His pleasure, but that was not the thought of Proverbs 8. No one could have disputed His right to take His place in the glory from the Mount of Transfiguration, but then He would have been alone there, and He turns down from the mountain with His face toward Jerusalem. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." (John 12: 24) He would not be alone in that glory, the eternal counsels of the heart of God would not have been fulfilled: He must go down to death in order to associate others with Himself.

After revealing all that God was down here, the only answer of our hearts was, "Away with Him, crucify Him." Out of that scene of universal death, where no leaf of life stirs in all creation (so to speak), God raises up not the first man, but the second — the One who loved us and gave Himself for us, to be Head over all things. The scene clear for God and for faith of all that we have done or been, God carries us back to the eternal counsels of His heart in His beloved Son to what He chose as suited to His own heart. "According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love." (Eph. 1: 4) In His presence, before His gaze, suited to Himself.

It is an immense help to remember the path of the Lord Jesus before God. Surely He was holy and without blame before Him in love, and all that He was down here upon earth is now unfolded to us in a risen Christ in glory, where it is what we are in Him according to God's counsels.

In the next verse we find the relationship that could alone satisfy His heart, "Having predestinated

us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will." To Himself; not something for you and me merely, but for Himself according to His own counsel; far beyond angels — we are sons. He wanted to surround Himself in His own home with the cry of Abba Father, and nothing short of this would satisfy Him. From the mouth of the opened sepulchre He could send by Mary Magdalene the wondrous words of association with Himself — ("My Father and your Father, my God and your God") in His double place as Man before God and as Son before the Father. Here it is the latter. The Spirit of the Son sent into our hearts to cry Abba Father. This is our place as the fruit of redemption, God acting to the praise of the glory of His grace has taken us into favour in the Beloved. Wondrous words! — Here, redemption, so largely developed in other places is dismissed in one little verse, only as a means of introducing us into the wonders of His love. It was according to the riches of His grace that He met us in our poverty and need. In Matthew 3 it was what He was personally in Himself (personally in ourselves we were only fit for hell), but it is as the result of having believed the glad tidings of His grace that we receive the Holy Ghost. On Him He could descend without blood, with us it is through the value of that blood that we are sealed with the Holy Spirit. And now the heavens are thrown open, oh! how widely; what can we do but adore and worship Him. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." We have thus seen Christ as the pattern of the position we are in according to the eternal counsels of God, in three points: the heavens that opened to Him are now the sphere of our blessing in Him, in the place He had as Man before God (ver. 4) answering to "In whom I am well pleased." In His relationship as Son with the Father, "having predestinated us unto sonship by Jesus Christ," and, the seal of the Holy Ghost. Only we must ever remember that in His case it was what He was personally in Himself — with us it is what we are in Him. What a position! And this the fruit of God's everlasting counsels revealed that we may be able to take up our place before Him according to this wonderful plan. Are we walking in the sense of these things, beloved? Are we walking in the consciousness of being His delight, of being sons before the Father, so as to bow down before Him in worship, not now as God Almighty, not as Jehovah, but as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, reminding us of all that He is before God, the only measure of our place in Him!

But now having set us in this place in all the nearness and intimacy of relationship, He counts on our hearts entering into His counsels for the glory of His Son. "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance." We find the expanse of the glory of the inheritance, and then we find that we have been made heirs in Him; no wonder that the Apostle betakes himself to prayer. (Vers. 17, 18, 19) The way in which we enter into the inheritance comes before us; even as when the first Adam was set as head over all creation Eve was given him to share all with him, so the second Adam as Head over all things has His heavenly Eve, as heir and sharer of all with Him. Quickened together, raised together and made to sit together. This is the way I know it is all for me. God found us dead in trespasses and sins when there was not one movement of our hearts towards Him. There would have been no glory for God if He had taken a good man to heaven (had there been such), but in the ages to come we shall do to show how far the grace of God could go. We are created in Christ Jesus unto good works — the new creation — there could be none in the old; they are the fruit of His eternal counsels, and the rest of this epistle is the development of these good works.

I feel the difficulty of speaking of these things; one's heart can only find relief in turning to Him with praise and thanksgiving, and as our hearts bow and worship before Him, surely all this will be an incentive to seek out the path in which He would have us.

Life More Abundantly.

John 20: 22, 23.

The setting of the verses in relation to other truths in the passage is important. It is into the midst of the disciples, found together within closed doors for fear of the Jews, that the Lord Jesus came, that memorable first day of the week upon which He rose from the dead. He greets them with the peace He had made for them through the blood of the Cross, and shows them His pierced hands and His side. Then He sends them forth to carry that peace to others. Next he breathes on them and says, "Receive ye the Holy Spirit." This recalls to us the action of God with Adam in Eden, when He "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life." Now, He who had ever given life to whom He would, stands forth as the "last Adam" in all the triumph of His work accomplished for the glory of God, to bring them into the possession of life in a new way, in *which it never had existed before*; namely, in a risen Christ, past every question of sin, death, the judgment of God, and the power of Satan. He breathes on them — not giving them the Spirit — they had still to wait for Him as the promise of the Father till the Day of Pentecost, as we know. It was the Holy Spirit as the power of life (as Rom. 8: 2). For we must distinguish the Spirit as the power of "life in Christ Jesus," from the Spirit indwelling; though now that He has come, both are made good in fact to the believer at the same moment, that is, when he receives the Spirit. This was the more abundant life of which the Lord spoke in John 10: 10, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" — a life of peace and liberty and power then, and of conscious association with Christ in the position and relationships into which He has entered as Man risen from the dead.

There is nothing official in all this. It brings before us so blessedly the individual Christian position, which is true of all who are in Christ. It is the same in the following verse, which is our subject. Neither is it here the assembly of the two or three gathered to the Name of the Lord with authority to act as such. Here it is individual, and gives us the Lord's sanction for the testimony of the forgiveness of sins in His Name, and for following it up in the care of those who receive it; not leaving them in half-fledged condition, but seeking to lead them to peace, and to confession of the name of the Lord Jesus. When satisfied that there has been a true work of God in the soul, the servant of the Lord would receive them as Christians. This is called remitting, or putting away their sins. When all was in normal order, this would no doubt be done by baptising them. But if on the other hand there was doubt as to the reality of the profession, and fear that the conscience was not reached, the faithful servant would be careful not to own them as Christians, until the work of God should be more manifest in their souls. This would be retaining their sins.

What could be better calculated to give sobriety and seriousness to the workman, than to realise the importance the Lord thus attaches to dealing with souls? If in His grace He deigns to entrust His servants with a work so near to His own heart, and to sanction their acts — which, be it remembered, only affect the condition of souls in this world — this is totally different from pretending to confer or to withhold eternal forgiveness, which God alone can do.

The ordinary evangelical interpretation of it seems to fail through not recognising that there is such a company of the Lord's forgiven ones upon earth — the Church, or "Assembly" as it is really — amongst whom those who are reached by the individual labours of His servants can be introduced when there is proof of a real work of God wrought in their souls, and whose sins are thus remitted: with the opposite result in the case of those of whom there may still be the question whether there has been any

true work of God in the conscience. They are not thus given the place of Christian recognition and fellowship, their sins being retained. Ordinary evangelicalism that leaves the soul uncertain as to its own relations with God till a supposed day of judgment (into which the Christian never shall come) leaves no room for this very important work in caring for souls by seeking to bring them on to Christian ground. Of course, all this has only to do with the present service of His people, and has nothing to do with the soul's eternal relations with God. This is what Romanism has imported so falsely into it, knowing nothing of a gospel that would bring the soul into present assured forgiveness with God, which is eternal; and assuming to do this by officialism, of which there is nothing in the passage, either here, where all is individual or in Matthew 18, where it is the Assembly of the two or three gathered to Christ's Name who are given authority to act In the same way. I may be used in blessing to someone, and baptise him, giving him my right hand of fellowship as a believer, but the Assembly may still have to be satisfied as to the proof of God's work in order to receive him into their midst. The first is John 20: 23; the second is Matthew 18: 18. They differ only in this that, in the last case, there is the presence of the Lord in the midst to guide the two or three in the exercise of the authority committed to them.

"Our Earthly House of this Tabernacle."

As to 2 Corinthians 5: 1, do not let us make difficulties for ourselves by putting into the verse what is not there. Nothing comes out of heaven in that verse. The dissolution of the body is in view, and the contrast is drawn between "our earthly house of a tent" — the most transitory of all dwelling places, so easily shifted from one place to another — and a *building*, and that "of God," in contrast with being "made with hands"; eternal in the heavens, instead of temporal and earthly.

The conscious knowledge of it (*oidamen*), of such a condition makes us groan (would God it were more commonly the effect!), earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with, or "to have put on," our house which is from (*ek*) heaven, i.e. heavenly in character. The third verse answers to many another warning note, in the first epistle especially, that all the profession that he has to deal with may not be real — that in the day when there will be no more an unclothed spirit (i.e. spirit apart from body), some will be found awfully *naked* as never having had Christ as their righteousness; verses 1 and 2 then only belong to true Christians. Then in verse 4 he develops the thought of verse 2 and explains the designed use of the expression "clothed upon." We groan, but not to be unclothed — not to lay down the body in death — but to be clothed upon, which brings in (in one of its effects) the true normal hope of the Christian, that is, the Lord's coming, which is so ingrained into the Christian's life that it does not need to be stated, when all that is mortal will be swallowed up by the power of the life we possess in Him.

Nothing is stated in the passage of the time or manner of the transference from our earthly condition to the glorified one that awaits us, of which the Holy Ghost in us is an earnest; only that we find there, it was no shrinking from the dissolution of the body that made the Apostle turn to the effect of the Lord's coming, for in verse 6 he reverts to the former with all the additional confidence that the knowledge of God's purpose, and the earnest of its accomplishment gives — "knowing that if present in the body we are absent from the Lord," for (ver. 7) we walk by faith, and not in the actual sight of the things we enjoy, "willing rather to be absent *from the body and present with the Lord.*" Thus we have the clear disproof of the thought imported into verse 1, that those who have gone to be with Christ are in the body.

The deeply serious error of such an idea is, that it is the denial of resurrection from among the

dead, of which Christ's resurrection was the first-fruits, and that we shall share with Him "at His coming." For in the great chapter, 1 Corinthians 15, the *time* and *manner* of our being endued with a body of glory is given us. For if first we have the resurrection of the dead, and the order of it proved by Christ's (vers. 1-23), we have, secondly, that our bodies shall have part in it (vers. 35-49), and finally the manner of its accomplishment — "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump . . . the *dead* shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." It is the first action of the hour that is coming (John 5: 28, 29), in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth, though (with a thousand years between) that coming hour will take in the resurrection of the unjust.

If the theory of 2 Corinthians 5: 1 in question could be maintained, to whom would the resurrection apply at His coming? Not to those who have fallen asleep, for each one got his glorified body when he went to be with Christ, and not to those who are alive and remain, for "whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." The power of Him who is the Resurrection and the Life will be made good to such in the same twinkling of an eye by their being "changed"; the corruptible putting on incorruption, and the mortal immortality. The character of the change, and the time of it, being also more particularly defined in Philippians 3: 20, where "we await the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour, who shall transform our body of humiliation into conformity to His body of glory," by the magnificent display of His power.

If, again, it had been true, would it not have been strange that the Apostle should keep it back from the Thessalonian saints who were sorrowing over those that had fallen asleep, while they had learned to await the Son of God from the heavens, as though they might miss something at His coming? But that rather in the express revelation then first given for them and us (1 Thess. 4: 15-18), they are comforted by the fact that they will be the first objects of the attention of the Lord Jesus when He comes. "The dead in Christ shall rise first, then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up *together* to meet the Lord in the air."

"At His Coming."

1 John 2: 28.

First: as to the rendering of the verse, the translation you refer to gives it truly: "And now children, abide in Him, that if He be manifested we may have boldness and not be put to shame from before Him at His coming." It is "if" as to the *fact* of His manifestation, which may be at any moment, not "when" of the actual time. But "we may have boldness" does not refer to those he is addressing, but to those who have laboured amongst them; as the Apostle himself or any others who have had a true care for those reached by their ministry. The principle is found elsewhere in Holy Scripture. In his second epistle (ver. 8) John speaks of it again. "Look to yourselves, that we may not lose what we have wrought, but may receive a full reward." Paul, too, with the same holy sense of responsibility and tender solicitude for the fruit of the ministry entrusted to him, exhorts the Philippians (Phil. 2: 14-16) as to what became them as set to shine in such a world, "holding forth the word of life, that I may rejoice [or as N.Tr., "so as to be a boast for me" — the opposite of being ashamed] in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain." "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of boasting?" as he says to the Thessalonians 1 Thess. 2: 19). "Are not even ye before our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?" Now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord." (1 Thess. 3: 8) See also Hebrews 13: 17. Those

whom the saints could recognise as leaders were men that "watch for your souls as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy and not with grief."

Not much effectual labour can be carried on without something of the same exercise on the servant's part, as the perfection of it was found in the blessed Lord: witness the expression of His Spirit in the remnant in Psalm 126: 5, 6. It has been truly said, Christianity was sown in the tears of the Son of God.

"Be ashamed from before Him at His coming" is literal enough. But the force that Alford finds in the preposition, "flee from Him with shame" (quoting from another) can hardly be maintained in face of its use in Hellenistic Greek (which is often, as the Egyptian papyri prove, simply vernacular) See the lxx. translation of Isaiah 1: 29, Jeremiah 12: 13 for the same form, and for those who care to refer to it Ecclesiasticus 21: 22 and 41: 17. Compare the use of the same preposition (*apo*) with verbs of kindred force in Deuteronomy 5: 5; Psalm 90: 5; Matthew 10: 28; Luke 12: 4. It may in some cases "embrace the prompting of outward act or gesture by the inward feeling." That is the most that can be said of it, as Green's *Grammar of the New Testament*. "Flee from" goes too far.

Certainly no such inference can be drawn from this passage as that "when the Lord comes from heaven for His saints some of His children will be left, having fled from His presence from very shame" for their unfaithfulness. No one who knows the grace wherein the believer stands could think of such a thing for John, or any other of His saints. How utterly opposed to the verses that follow in the same connection. 1 John 3: 1-3 and 1 John 4: 17, where "love has been perfected with us that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, that even as he is, we also are in this world." Where, then, would be the boldness, wherewith we enter into the holiest even now by the blood of Jesus (Heb. 10), or "the boldness and access with confidence" in Him which we have by faith in Him? — the present effect of the place the Christian has according to eternal purpose. (Eph. 3: 11, 12)

We are thankful that you feel that the idea of some of His own being left when the Lord comes would contradict (and there can be no contradiction in the inspired Word) such passages as 1 Thessalonians 4: 16, 17 and 1 Corinthians 15: 51, to which may be added verse 23, and this when the saints are only looked at individually. Bring in the truth of the relationship of all who are Christ's to Him as His body, the Church, and how impossible the whole conception becomes!

Since Pentecost those who have received the forgiveness of sins, and the Holy Ghost to dwell within them, are united by Him to Christ in glory, the exalted Head of His body on the earth, which is the fulness of Him that filleth all in all. (Eph. 1: 22, 23; Col. 2: 19; 1 Cor. 12: 22-27) He loved the Church and gave Himself for it, and lives to form it more and more like Himself by the revelation of all that He is. He comes to present it to Himself a glorious Church, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. Meanwhile He nourishes and cherishes it as Himself, "for we are members of His body." (Eph. 5: 30)

No one who has entered in faith into the reality and preciousness of such a relationship to Christ, not to say to us, could entertain the thought that when He comes He could leave a part of Himself behind when the remainder go to meet Him in the air; and that just when He is about to display us perfect in one, in the glory given Him of the Father, that the world may know that the Father sent Him and loved us as He loved Him. (John 17: 22, 23)

The whole thought is unworthy of the unfathomable grace that has given us our place and relationship in Christ before God, according to the everlasting counsel of divine love.

Once more looking at the verse in question in its connection. The epistle contemplates a very

serious state of things among those that have professed the Name on earth. He had written from chapter 2: 18 to the "little children" in the divine life to warn them concerning those who would lead them astray. They had not been left to the reaching of man; they had the Spirit abiding in them, not only as divine capacity to enter into divine things (ver. 20), as the natural man receiveth them not, but as their Teacher to communicate them to them. (Ver. 27). The end and object, as it was also the test, of all divine teaching was that they should abide in Christ. They had all in Him that was from the beginning; even in promise there was nothing beyond the eternal life they possessed in Him. (Ver. 25) No schools of philosophy or human reasoning could add anything to them. "Even as He has taught you, ye shall abide in Him." And then, resuming the normal address of the epistle to the whole family of God (after the parenthesis of special words to the fathers, young men, and little children, verses 13-27): "And now, children, abide in Him." There was nothing outside Him. All fruitfulness and growth and the joyful progress of the saints were to be found in that abiding; and then the Apostle and all true labourers in God's husbandry would find their joy and boast in them and not be put to shame from before Him at His coming.

"Converted" and "Saved."

Acts 2: 37-41.

It would not be scriptural to say that those who were pricked in their heart and said to the Apostles, "What shall we do?" were already saved. For this would set aside what Scripture means by being saved in the full sense of the word. It is often used as if it were equivalent to being converted or turned to God. But Cornelius' case (Acts 10) and Peter's narrative in Acts 11 show the force of it. That the devout centurion had been born again no one can doubt, for he manifested the fruit of this work of grace in his prayers and alms, which would not otherwise have been acceptable with God. But according to the angel's direction, he had sent for Peter to tell him words whereby he and his house should be saved. We turn then to Peter's address to find what these words were. He had hardly begun to speak, he tells us, when having adduced the testimony of all the prophets to Christ, "that through His Name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins," the Holy Ghost fell on all that heard.

To be *saved*, then, is to be brought consciously in the faith of the soul on to the ground of accomplished redemption through believing the glad tidings of the remission of sins. And this is accompanied by the Holy Ghost taking up His dwelling-place in the forgiven person.

In the type (Ex. 12) the children of Israel were safe enough from the judgment of God within the bloodstained lintels of their houses in Egypt. But it was in view of deliverance from all the power of the enemy through the Red Sea — a figure of the death and resurrection of Christ for us — that the word "stand still and see the *salvation* of God" was given. (Ex. 14: 13) There had been safety for the sheep in the Jewish sheepfold into which the Lord entered (John 10) to call out His own. But it was by Christ as the Door that those who had heard His voice entered into the first characteristic of the new blessing: "By me if any man enter in, he shall be *saved*," though much more lay beyond.

Nor was it otherwise in Acts 2, when the Jews were brought to deep concern of heart by the testimony of Peter to the One whom they had crucified being raised, and made by God both Lord and Christ. The question was, What were they to do? The answer came, "Repent and be baptised everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy

Ghost." Thus they would save themselves from the guilt of that untoward generation. Three thousand of them received the Apostle's testimony, and were baptised, the Lord forming them as the saved remnant of His ancient people into the Assembly.

The Philippian jailer was a similar case of the conviction of conscience essential to any real work of God in the soul. The case of the disciples at Ephesus (Acts 19) in connection with what the Apostle recalls in Ephesians 1: 13, confirms what we have seen to be the force of salvation. They had been truly converted through John the Baptist's testimony to a Christ who should come after him. Paul brought them the tidings that He had come, and of His finished work, "the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also having believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise."

The Beast and the False Prophet.

Questions as to the Beast and False Prophet may need a more extended view of the scope of prophecy to make the answer intelligible than would be possible in our limited space.

It may be briefly noticed that there are two beasts in Revelation 13. The first, while it is identified by its seven heads with the past forms of the Roman Empire, owes this, its last phase, to Satanic power. (Ver. 2) One of its heads, doubtless the imperial, was wounded to death; but in the survival of this form of government at the close, all the world wondered after the beast. It is, in other words, the Satanically revived Roman Empire, which the world has yet to see. It is to continue for the last half of Daniel's seventieth week; variously described as "time, times, and half a time," or forty-two months, as here, or 1260 days (Rev. 11: 3; Rev. 12: 6), that is, the last three and a half years before the Lord comes to set up His kingdom. The character of the power is blasphemous, specially virulent against God and the heavenly saints. All that dwell on the earth — that characteristic class through the book of Revelation, who having had the heavenly calling presented to them, prefer the earth — worship him. Namely, all they whose names had not been written from the foundation of the world, in the book of life of the slain Lamb (as the verse ought to read.)

From Rev. 13: 11, we have the second beast with lamb-like horns, counterfeiting Christ (as in Rev. 5: 6), but with two horns instead of seven, while his mouth betrays his Satanic origin. He deceives the dwellers on earth by the great wonders he has power to do in the presence of the first beast. He is the Man of sin, the lawless one of 2 Thessalonians 2, who thus plays into the hands of the Roman power in the West, causing all to worship his image on pain of death; while in the East he comes out in his true character as the Antichrist, opposing and exalting himself against all that is called God, and setting up himself as the object of worship, in the rebuilt temple of God in Jerusalem.

We have this Satanic trinity of evil in Revelation 16: 13, where unclean spirits come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. Revelation 19: 20, gives us the end of the two last, who are taken in the last great confederation of the nations under their leadership against Christ and the saints who come with Him from heaven, and are cast into the lake of fire.

If the identification of the second beast with the man of sin be correct (as I have no doubt), 2 Thessalonians 2 shows that before his manifestation there must be the coming of our Lord Jesus, and our gathering to Him. Now, the powers that be are ordained of God, and exercise a restraint upon the full outbreak of lawlessness, headed up in the lawless one. Then they will be removed. "Ye know what withholdeth," verse 6, and then besides "He who now letteth" (or hindereth) "will let until he be —

taken out of the way" — namely the Holy Ghost in the Church, before the manifestation of the man of sin.

In the study of Revelation it is most important to give heed to the threefold division of the book given us in Revelation 1: 19, "the things which thou hast seen," namely the way the Lord presents Himself to John in chapter 1. Secondly, "the things which are," namely the present epoch, as long as the Church is still on earth, as Revelation 2, 3, and lastly, "the things which shall be after these things," namely from Revelation 4 on, when we bear no more of the Churches, but we all who are Christ's in the full effect of His coming, are enthroned, and with priestly robes and kingly crowns around the throne of God. Thus, however, — as often in prophecy, there may be a partial fulfilment of what is foretold, before the final accomplishment of it — all that follows upon Revelation 3, awaits its full fulfilment till the Church's history and existence upon earth is closed.