

# The Son of God

J. G. Bellett.

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## Chapter 1

"The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father"

(John 1: 18)

I am sure that I dread *reasonings* where *affections* should animate us, and the withdrawing from the place of living power into anything like a region of notions or theories. But the mysteries of God are all of the highest practical value, in either strengthening for service, comforting under trial, or enlarging the soul's communion.

The apostle speaks of himself and others as "ministers of Christ," and also as "stewards of the mysteries of God." And so we, in our measure, are to be ministers (that is, servants), in all practical, personal readiness and devotedness; patient, diligent, and serviceable in labours; in all of which some of us may know how little we are in comparison with others.

But we are also to be "stewards"; and that, too, of "mysteries," keeping uncorrupt and inviolate the peculiarities of divine revelation. Reasoning men may not receive them. The cross was foolishness to such; and "the princes of this world," the men of philosophy who professed themselves to be wise, knew not "the wisdom of God in a mystery." But that mystery is not to be surrendered to them in anywise. Our stewardship is of such; and it is required of stewards, that a man be found faithful (1 Cor. 4: 1, 2).

The guardianship and witness of the personal glory of the Son of God form a chief part of this high and holy stewardship. I observe John guarding that glory with a jealousy quite of its own kind. There are, for instance, measures and methods recommended, when Judaizing corruptions or the like are to be dealt with. In the Epistle to the Galatians, where the simplicity of the gospel is vindicated, there is a *pleading* and a *yearning* in the midst of earnest and urgent *reasoning*. But in John's epistles, *all* is peremptory. There is a summary forcing out, or keeping out, all that is not of that unction of the Holy One, which teaches the *Son* as well as the *Father*, which will admit of no lie to be of the truth, and which distinctly says, "Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father" (1 John 2: 23).

This diversity of style in the wisdom of the Spirit has its value; and we should mark it. The observing of days or the not eating of meat are things which really depreciate the full glory and liberty of the gospel. But they are to be borne with (Rom. 14). But depreciation of the person of the

Son of God would not be thus borne with, or have a decree passed in its favour after this manner.

A mere journeying from Egypt to Canaan would not have constituted true pilgrimage. Many a one had travelled that road without being a stranger and pilgrim with God. Nay, though the journey were attended with all the trials and inconveniences of such an arid and trackless wild, it would not have been divine or heavenly pilgrimage. A merely toilsome, self-denying life, even though endured with that moral courage which becomes God's strangers on earth, will not do. In order to make that journey the journey of God's Israel, the ARK must be in their company, borne by a people ransomed by blood out of Egypt, and tending, in their faith of a promise, to Canaan.

This was the business of Israel in the desert. They had to conduct the ark, to accompany it, and to hallow it. They might betray their weakness, and incur chastening and discipline in many a way, and on many an occasion; but if their direct business were given up, all was gone. And this did come to pass. The tabernacle of Moloch was taken up, and the star of Remphan and this was despite of the ark of Jehovah; and the camp had, therefore, their road turned away from Canaan to Babylon or Damascus (Amos 5; Acts 7).

And what ark is in the midst of the saints now for safe and holy and honourable conduct through this desert-world, if not the name of the Son of God? What mystery is committed to our stewardship and testimony, if not that? "He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any one unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed" (2 John 9, 10). The wall of partition is to be raised by the saints between them and Christ's dishonour.

It is upon the heart a little to consider the Lord Jesus as Son of God; and, if He give help from Himself, the subject will be a blessing to us.

We are baptized "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matt. 28: 19). This carries with it the *formal* declaration of the mystery of the *Godhead*; the Son being a divine Person (in the recognition or declaration of this sentence), as is the Father, and as is the Holy Ghost.

It appertains to other scriptures to give us the same mystery (that the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are three Persons in the one divine glory or Godhead), in other and more moral ways; showing it in its grace and power, and in its application to our need, our life, and our edification. John's Gospel specially does this, drawing it out from its orderly form, as in the words of baptism, and giving it to our understanding as saints, our affections, and our consciences, making it our possession in faith and communion.

In connection with this, I might observe, that in John 1: 14, the saints are heard, as it were, interrupting the story of the glories of Jesus, and sealing, by their testimony, the great truth of "the Word" being "made flesh." And, in the fervour which became them at such a moment, they break or interrupt the current of their own utterances in that verse. For they begin to speak of the Word made flesh, but, ere they end that record, they (in a parenthesis) publish His *personal* glory, which they say they had seen, even "the glory as of the only begotten of the Father." And this only begotten of the Father is spoken of, very soon afterwards, as "in the bosom of the Father" — words to be deeply cherished by our souls\* (ver. 18).

\*He is *prototokos* or first-begotten in several senses: and we have companionship with Him, *prototokos* or First-born among many brethren. But He is also the *monogenes* or Only Begotten, and there He is alone.

I doubt not the Lord is called "the Son of God" in different respects. He is so called as being born of the Virgin (Luke 1: 35). He is such by divine decree, as in resurrection (Ps. 2: 7; Acts 13: 33). This is true, and remains true, though further revelation be made to us of His divine Sonship. He is the Son, and yet has obtained the name of Son (Heb. 1: 1-3). Matthew and Mark first notice His Sonship of God at His baptism. But John goes back farther still, even to the immeasurable, unspeakable distance of eternity, and declares His Sonship "in the bosom of the Father."

And there were, I doubt not, different apprehensions of Him, different measures of faith touching His person, in those who called on Him. He Himself owns, for instance, the faith of the centurion, in apprehending His personal glory, to be beyond what He had found in Israel (Matt. 8; Luke 7). But all this in no wise affects what we hear of Him, that He was the Son "in the bosom of the Father," or "that Eternal Life, which was with the Father," and was manifested to us (1 John 1).

We must not, beloved, touch this precious mystery. We should fear to dim the light of that love in which our souls are invited to walk on their way to heaven. And - what is a deeper and tenderer thought, if I may be bold to utter it — we should fear to admit of any confession of faith (rather, indeed, of unbelief) that would defraud the divine bosom of its eternal, ineffable delights, and which would tell our God that He knew not a Father's joy in that bosom, as He opened it; and which would tell our Lord that He knew not a Son's joy in that bosom as He lay there from all eternity.

I cannot join in this. If there are Persons in the Godhead, as we know there are, are we not to know also that there are relationships between them? Can we dispense with such a thought? Is there not revealed to faith, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit; the Son begotten, and the Spirit proceeding? Indeed there is. The Persons in that glory are not *independent*, but *related*. Nor is it beyond our measure to say that the great archetype of love, the blessed model or original of all relative affection, is found in that relationship.

Can I be satisfied with the unbelieving thought, that there are not *Persons* in the Godhead, and that Father, Son, and Spirit are only different lights in which the One Person is presented? The *substance* of the gospel would be destroyed by such a thought, and can I be satisfied with the unbelieving thought that these Persons are not related? The *love* of the gospel would be dimmed by such a thought.

It was once asked me, Had the Father no bosom till the Babe was born in Bethlehem? Indeed, fully sure I am, as that inquiry suggests, He had from all eternity. The bosom of the Father was an eternal habitation, enjoyed by the Son, in the ineffable delight of the Father "the hiding-place of love," as one has called it, "of *inexpressible* love which is beyond glory; for glory may be revealed, this cannot."

The soul may have remained unexercised about such thoughts as these, but the saints cannot admit their denial.

"Lamb of God, Thy Father's bosom

Ever was Thy dwelling-place!"

The soul dare not surrender such a mystery to the thoughts of men. Faith will dispute such ground with "philosophy and vain deceit." Even the Jews may rebuke the difficulty which some feel regarding it. They felt that the Lord's asserting His *Sonship* amounted to a making of Himself equal with God. So that, instead of Sonship implying a secondary or inferior Person, in their thought it asserted *equality*. And, in like manner, on another occasion, they treated Jesus as a

blasphemer, because He was making Himself God, in a discourse which was declaring the relationship of *a son to a father* (John 5, 10). The Jews may thus, again and again, rebuke this wretched, unbelieving difficulty which the "vain deceit" of man suggests. They were wiser than to pretend to test, by the prism of human reasonings, the light where God dwells.

"No man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father" (Luke 10: 22), is a sentence which may well check our reasonings. And the word, that the eternal life was manifested to us, to give us fellowship with the Father and the Son (1 John 1: 2), distinctly utters the inestimable mystery of *the Son* being of the Godhead, having "eternal life" with *the Father*. And again, as we well know, it is written, "The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." I ask, Can any but God declare God? In some sense God may be *described*. But the soul of the Church will not rest in descriptions of God; though the wisdom of the world knows nothing else. It asks for declaration or revelation of Him, which must be by *Himself*. Is not then, I ask, the Son in the bosom a *divine Person*?

Nothing can satisfy all which the Scriptures tell us of this great mystery, but the faith of this: that the Father and the Son are in the glory of the Godhead; and in that relationship, too, though equal in that glory. "He who was with God in the beginning, as eternal as God, being God Himself, was also the Son of God" — as another has expressed it; and then adds, "God allows many things to remain mysteries, partly, I believe, that He may in this way test the obedience of our minds; for He requires obedience of *mind* from us, as much as He does obedience in action. This is a part of holiness, this subjection of the *mind* to God; and it is something which the Spirit alone can give. He alone is able to calm and humble those inward powers of mind which rise and venture to judge the things of God, refusing to receive what cannot be understood; a disobedience and pride which has no parallel, except in the disobedience and pride of Satan."

Holy, seasonable caution for our souls! "Who is a liar," asks the apostle, "but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ?" And he immediately adds, "He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son." And again, "Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father" (1 John 2: 22, 23). These are very serious sentences under the judgment of the Holy Ghost. And how can there be knowledge of the Father, but through and in the Son? How can the Father be known otherwise? And therefore is it written, "Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father." I may say, "Abba, Father," in the spirit of adoption; a poet may say, "We are also His offspring"; but God is not known as *the Father*, if the Son in the glory of the Godhead be not owned (Rom. 8; Acts 17). Sure we may be, nay, rather, assured we are, on divine authority, that if the unction which we have received abide in us, we shall abide in "the Son," and in "the Father."

Can the Son be honoured even as the Father, if He be not owned in the Godhead? (John 5: 23). The faith of Him is not the faith that He is *a Son of God*, or Son of God as born of the virgin, or as raised from the dead; though those are truths concerning Him, assuredly such. But the faith of Him is the faith of His proper person. I know not that I can call Jesus "Son of God," save in the faith of *divine Sonship*. The understanding which has been given us, has been given us to know "Him that is true," as being "in Him that is true, even in His *Son Jesus Christ*"; and to this it is added, "This is the true God, and eternal life" (1 John 5).

Is not "the truth," in the sense of John's Second Epistle, "the doctrine of Christ," or the teaching which we have in Scripture respecting the *Person of Christ*? And in that teaching, is not the truth of Sonship in the Godhead contained? For what is said there? "He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, *he hath both the Father and the Son*." And the door is required to be shut against

those who bring not that doctrine; the very same epistle speaking of Him as "the Son of the Father"; language which would not attach to Him as born of the Virgin by the overshadowing of the Holy Ghost.

But still further. I ask, Can the love of God be understood according to Scripture, if this Sonship be not owned? Does not that love get its character from that very doctrine? Are not our hearts challenged on the ground of it? "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Again, ",Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." And again, "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him." Yet again, "We have seen, and do testify, that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world" (John 3; 1 John 4).

Does not this love at once lose its unparalleled glory, if this truth be questioned? How would our souls answer the man who would tell us that it was not *His own* Son whom God spared not, but gave Him up for us all? How would it wither the heart to hear that such a One was only His Son as born of the Virgin, and that those words, "He that spared not His own Son," are to be read as *human*, and not as *divine*? (Rom. 8: 32).

Good care are we to take not to qualify the precious Word, to meet man's prejudices. Was it with his servant, or with a stranger, or with one born in his house merely, that Abraham walked to Moriah? Was it with an adopted son, or with his own son, his very son, his only son, whom he loved? We know how to answer these inquiries. And I will say, I know not how I could speak of the *Son* loving me, and giving Himself for me (Gal. 2: 20), did I not receive Him by faith as Son in the bosom of the Father, Son in the glory of the Godhead.

The Son is the Christ. God, in the person of the Son, has undertaken all *office* work for us, all work for which anointing or Christhood was needed. And this He has done in the person of Jesus. We therefore say, "Jesus Christ, the Son of God." The Only Begotten, the Christ, Jesus of Nazareth, are one. But it is in *personal essential glory*, in *office*, and in assumed *manhood*, that we see Him under these different names.

We track His wondrous path from the glory to the heirship of all things. What discoveries are made of Him, beloved! Read of Him in Prov. 8: 22-31; John 1: 1-3; Eph. 1: 10; Col. 1: 13-22; Heb. 1: 1-3; 1 John 1: 2; Rev. 3: 14. Meditate on Him as presented to you in those glorious scriptures. Let them yield to you their several lights, in which to view the One in whom you trust, the One who gave up all for you, the One who has trod, and is treading, such a path; and then tell me, Can you part with either Him or it?

In the bosom of the Father He was. There lay the eternal life with the Father; God, and yet with God. In counsel He was then set up ere the highest part of the dust of the earth was made. Then, He was the Creator of all things in their first order and beauty; afterwards, in their state of mischief and ruin, the Reconciler of all things; and by-and-by, in their regathering, He will be the Heir of all things. By faith we see Him thus, and thus speak of Him. We say, He was in the everlasting counsels, in the virgin's womb, in the sorrows of the world, in the resurrection from the dead, in the honour and glory of a crown in heaven, and with all authority and praise in the heirship and lordship of all things.

Deprive Him of the bosom of the Father from all eternity, and ask your soul if it has lost nothing in its apprehension and joy of this precious mystery, thus unfolded from everlasting to everlasting? I cannot understand a saint pleading for such a thing. Nor can I consent to join in any

confession that tells my heavenly Father it was not His own Son He gave up for me.

If we could but follow the thought with affection, how blessed would it be to see the Lord all along this pathway to the throne of the glory!

And still further. *In each stage of this journey, we see Him awakening the equal and full delight of God; all and as much His joy at the end as at the beginning; though with this privilege and glory, that He has awakened it in a blissful and wondrous variety.* This blessed thought Scripture also enables us to follow. As He lay in the bosom through eternity, we need not — for we cannot — speak of this joy. That bosom was "the *hiding-place* of love"; and the joy that attended that love is as unutterable as itself.

But when His Beloved was set up as the centre of all the divine operations, or the foundation of all God's counsels, He was still God's delight. In such a place and character we see Him in Prov. 8: 22-31. In that wondrous scripture, Wisdom or the Son is seen as the great Original and Framer and Sustainer of all the divine works and purposes, set up in counsel before the world was; as several scriptures in the New Testament also present Him to us. See John 1: 3; Eph. 1: 9, 10; Col. 1: 15-17. And in all this He can say of Himself, "Then I was by Him, as one brought up with Him; and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him."

So, when the fulness of time was come, the Son of God lay in the Virgin's womb. Who can speak the mystery? But so it is. But it is only another moment, and a fresh occasion, of joy; and angels came to utter it, and tell of it to the shepherds in the fields of Bethlehem.

Then again, in a new form the Son of His love was to run another course. Through sorrows and services as Son of man, He is seen on earth; but all, and as unmixedly, awakening ineffable delight as in the hidden ages of eternity. "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased;" "Behold My Servant, whom I uphold, Mine Elect, in whom My soul delighteth," are voices of the Father, telling of this unchanging joy, while tracking the path of Jesus across this polluted earth (Matt. 3; Isa. 42).

And that same voice, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," is heard a second time; heard on the holy hill, as on the bank of Jordan. in the day of transfiguration as at the baptism (Matt. 17). And the transfiguration was the pledge and type of the Kingdom, as the baptism was entrance on His ministry and witness. But the same delight is thus stirred in the Father's bosom where the Son lay, whether the eye of God track Him along the lonely path of Jesus the Servant in a polluted world, or on the heights of the King of glory in the millennial world.

It is *delight* in Him, equal and full delight, all along the way from everlasting to everlasting: no interruption, no pause, in the joy of God in Him, though various and changeful joy; the same in its fulness and depth, let the occasions proceed and unfold themselves as they may. The One who awakens the joy is the same throughout, and so the joy itself. It can know no different *measures*, though it may differ *springs*.

And that One was alike unsullied through the whole path from everlasting to everlasting; as holy in the virgin's womb as in the Father's bosom; as spotless when ending His journey as when beginning it; as perfect as a Servant as a King; infinite perfection marking all, and equal complacency resting on all.

If the soul were but impregnated with the thought, that this blessed One (seen *where* He may be, or as He may be) was the very One who from all eternity lay in the divine bosom; if such a thought were kept vivid in the soul by the Holy Ghost, it would arrest many a tendency in the mind

which now defiles it. He that was in the virgin's womb, was the same that was in the Father's bosom! What a thought! Isaiah's enthroned Jehovah, whom the winged seraphim worshipped, was Jesus of Galilee! What a thought! As spotless as *Man*, as He was as God, as unstained in the midst of the human vessel, as in the eternal bosom; as unsullied in the midst of the world's pollutions, as when daily the Father's delight ere the world was!

Let the soul be imbued with this mystery, and many a rising thought of the mind will get its answer at once. Who would talk, as some have talked, in the presence of such mystery as this? Let this glory be but discovered by the soul, and the wing will be covering the face again, and the shoe will be taken off the foot again.

I believe the divine reasonings in John's First Epistle suggest, that the communion of the soul is affected by the view we take of the Son of God. For in that epistle, love is manifested in the gift of *the Son*, and love is our *dwelling-place*. If, then, I judge that, when the Father gave the Son, it was only the gift of the Virgin's seed, the atmosphere in which I dwell is lowered. But if I apprehend this gift to be the gift of the Son who lay in the Father's bosom from all eternity, my sense of the love rises, and hence, also the character of my dwelling-place. The communion of the soul is thus affected.

I know, indeed, from converse with saints, that many a soul, through simplicity of faith, has a richer enjoyment of a lower measure of truth, than some have of higher measures. But this does not affect the thoughts and reasonings of the Spirit in that epistle. It is still true, that love is our dwelling-place, and that our communion will therefore take its character from the love which we apprehend. And why, I ask, should we seek to reduce the power of communion, and thus hazard our enjoyment in God? The sorrow lies in this (if one may speak for others), *we but scantily care for the good things we have in Him*.

The Son, the only begotten Son, the Son of the Father, emptied Himself that He might do the divine pleasure in the service of wretched sinners. But will the Father suffer it, that sinners, for whom all this humiliation was endured, shall take occasion from it to depreciate the Son? This cannot be, as John 5: 23 tells us. Jesus had declared that God was His *Father*, 'making *Himself equal* with God.' It is a question, *Will God vindicate Him in that saying?* And yet, He is scarcely justified in it by the thought of those who deny Sonship in the Godhead. But the Father will not receive honour if it be not rendered to the Son, as we read, "He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent Him."

The Spirit was given, breathed out, by Jesus risen (John 20). The Holy Ghost then proceeded from Him, and in that way became the Spirit. But will it be thought that He was not "the Spirit" in the Godhead before? Never, by a saint. And so the Son. He was born of the overshadowing of the Holy Ghost, and so became Son of God; but, in like manner, shall that affect the thought that He was "the Son" in the Godhead before?

Look again at John's First Epistle. There he addresses "Fathers," "young men," and "little children" (1 John 2). And he distinguishes them:

The "Fathers" are they who "have known Him that is from the beginning." They abide in "the doctrine of Christ," having "both the Father and the Son." The unction is powerful in them, if I may so express it. They have listened, as it were, with deep attention of soul, to the declaration of the Father by the Son (John 1: 18). Having seen the Son, they had seen the Father (John 14: 7-11). They keep the words of the Son, and of the Father (John 14: 21-23). They know that the Son is in the Father, they in the Son, and the Son in them, They are not orphans (John 14: 18-20).

The "young men" are they who "have overcome the wicked one," that wicked one who animates the world with the denial of the mystery of the Christ (1 John 4: 1-6). But they are not in the full settled power of that mystery, as the "Fathers" are, and they need exhortation; so that the apostle goes on to warn them against all that belongs to the world, as they had already stood in victory over that spirit in it which was gainsaying Christ.

The "little children" are they who "have known the Father." But they are only "little children," and need warning, teaching, and exhorting. Their knowledge of the Father was somewhat immature; not so connected with the knowledge of the Son, of "Him that is from the beginning," as was that of the "Fathers." He, therefore, warns them of antichrists, describing them as set against "the truth," or "the doctrine of Christ." He teaches them that "whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father;" that if the anointing they have received abide in them, they will surely abide in the Son and in the Father; and that the house of God was of such a character as that none who savoured not of such anointing could remain there. He reminds them that the promise which the Son has promised is eternal life. And, finally, he exhorts them so to abide in what the "unction" teaches, that they may not be ashamed in the day of the Son's appearing.

It is, therefore, all about the *person of the Son*, or "the doctrine of Christ," that this distinguishing scripture deals. It is their attainment in *that* truth, their relationship to *it*, and not *their general Christian character*, which distinguishes them as fathers, young men, and little children. These addresses, therefore, hold in jealous view the great object of the whole epistle; and that is, *the Son of God*. For the mention of the Son of God pervades it all from beginning to end. Thus: It is the blood of *the Son* that cleanses. It is with the Father we have an Advocate; which intimates the Advocate to be *the Son*. It is in *the Son* the "unction" causes us to abide. It is *the Son* who has been manifested to destroy the works of the devil. It is in the name of *the Son* we are commanded to believe. It is *the Son* who has been sent to manifest what love is. It is *the Son*, faith in whom gives victory over the world. It is *the Son* about whom God's record or testimony is. It is *the Son* in whom we have life. It is *the Son* who is come to give us an understanding. It is *the Son* in whom we are. It is *the Son* who is the true God, and eternal life.

All this is declared to us in this epistle about the Son of God; and thus it is *the Son* who is the great object through the whole of it; and the fathers, the young men, and the little children, are distinguished by the apostle *because* of their relation to that object, I believe, *because of the measure of their souls' apprehension of it*. All is, in this way, divinely and preciously consistent.

And in this same epistle John speaks much of *love* and of *righteousness*, as necessary parts or witnesses of our birth of God. But, in the midst of such teaching, He speaks of *right or wrong confession of Christ*. Does he, I ask, treat the former as *living and practical* matter, and the latter as *speculative*? He gives no warrant to any one thus to distinguish them. Not at all. All are treated as being equally of one character, and he lets us know that the exercise of love and the practice of righteousness would not complete the witness of a soul being born of God, without the knowledge and confession of the Son.

Had the opened eye of Isaiah tracked the path of Jesus through the cities and villages of his native land, how must he have been kept in continual adoration? He had been taken into a vision of His glory. He had seen the throne, high and lifted up, His train filling the temple, and the winged seraphim veiling their faces as they owned in Jesus the Godhead-glory. Isaiah "saw His glory, and spake of Him" (Isa. 6; John 12). And it is the like sight, by faith, which we need — the faith of the Son, the faith of Jesus, the faith of His name, the apprehension of His person, the sense of the glory

which lay behind a thicker veil than a seraph's wing, the covering of the lowly and earth-rejected Galilean.

And let me, in closing, remember what the Lord says about giving the household their meat in due season (Matt. 24; Luke 12). We must be careful not to corrupt that meat. "Feed the Church of God, which He has purchased with His own blood," says one apostle. "Feed the flock of God which is among you," says another. And the Church of God or the flock of God is to increase with "the increase of God." Wondrous language!

Let us watch, beloved, against the attempt of the enemy to corrupt the meat of the household. The unfoldings of John about the *Son of God*, and of Paul about the *Church of God*, are meat in due season *now*; and we are not to attemper the food, stored up of God for His saints, to man's taste or reasonings. The manna is to be gathered as it comes from heaven, and brought home to feed the travelling camp with angels' food.

"I commend you to God," says one in the Holy Ghost, "and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified" (Acts 20: 32).

## Chapter 2

"The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us"

(John 1. 14).

In the history of flesh and blood, given to us in Scripture, we learn that *by sin came death*. To all, as headed or represented in Adam, it was this: "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Touching, however, the promised Seed of the woman, who was not thus represented, it was said to the serpent, "Thou shalt bruise His heel." The death of this Seed was thus to be as peculiar as His birth. He was, in birth, to be the *woman's* Seed; in death, He was to have His *heel bruised*. In the fulness of time this promised One was "made of a woman." The Son of God, the Sanctifier, took part of flesh and blood; He became "that holy thing" (Luke 1: 35).

Had death, I ask, any title? None whatever. Whatever title the everlasting covenant had on His heel, death had none on His flesh and blood. In this blessed One, if I may so express it, there was a capability of meeting the divine purpose, that His heel should be bruised; but there was no exposure to death in anywise.

Under the covenant, under this divine purpose, at His own divine pleasure, He had surrendered Himself, saying, "Lo, I come." For the great ends of God's glory and the sinner's peace, He had taken "the form of a servant." And, accordingly, in due time He was made "in the likeness of men," and being found in that "fashion," He went on in a course of self-humbling, even to "the death of the cross"\* (Phil. 2).

\*Had He not been equal with God, He could not have done *this*; because every creature, every one less than God, is *already* a servant to his Creator. One Jew might be a *voluntary* servant to another Jew — a servant with a bored ear (Ex. 21) - but no creature could be a *voluntary* servant to God, inasmuch as all creatures are already bound servants to Him by reason of the relationship of Creator and creature.

In such a course we see Him through life. He hides His glory, "the form of God" under this "form of a servant." He did not seek honour from men. He honoured the Father that had sent Him,

and not Himself. He would not make Himself known. He would not show Himself to the world. Thus we read of Him. And all this belonged to the "form" He had taken, and gets its perfect illustration in the histories or narratives of the Gospels.

Under the form of a tributary, He hid the form of the Lord of the fulness of the earth and sea. He was asked for tribute; at least, Peter was asked if his Master did not pay it. The Lord declares His freedom; but, lest He should offend, He pays the custom for Peter and Himself. But who, all the while was this? None less than He of whom it had been written, "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof." For He commands a fish from the sea to bring Him that very piece of money which He then passed over to the receivers (Matt. 17).

What an instance of the precious mystery that He who was "in the form of God," and "thought it not robbery to be equal with God," using thus the treasures of the deep, and commanding the creatures of God's hand as all His own, — took on Him "the form of a servant!" What glory breaks through the cloud in that passing and trivial occurrence! It was all between the Lord and Peter; but it was a manifestation of "the form of God" from beneath "the form of a servant," or of a subject to the power (Rom. 13: 1). The fulness of the earth was tributary to Him at the moment when He was consenting to pay tribute to others. As, on another occasion, the unnoticed guest at the marriage-feast spread the feast, not merely as though He had been "the bridegroom," but as the very Creator of all that furnished it. There again He "manifested forth His glory; and His disciples believed on Him" (John 2).

So again we read of Him, He would not strive nor cry, nor lift up His voice in the street. He would not break the bruised reed, but rather withdraw Himself. And all this because He had taken "the form of a servant." And accordingly, on that very occasion, the scripture is quoted, "Behold My Servant, whom I have chosen" (Matt. 12).

Very significant of His way, all this was. Show us a sign from heaven, was another temptation to Him to exalt Himself (Matt. 16). The Pharisees then tried Him, as the devil tried Him when he would have Him cast Himself down from the pinnacle of the temple; and as the kinsfolk were doing when they said, "Show Thyself to the world" (John 7). But what said the perfect Servant? No sign should be given but that of Jonas — a sign of humiliation, a sign that the world and the prince of the world were apparently to get advantage over Him for a moment, instead of such a sign as would awe and silence the world into subjection to Him.

Excellent, indeed, are these traces of God's perfect Servant. David and Paul, standing, as it were, on either side of Him, like Moses and Elias on the holy hill, reflect this Servant thus hiding of Himself, as a well-known tract has told us. David slew the lion and the bear, and Paul was caught up to the third heaven; but neither of them spoke of those things. And lovely reflections of the perfect Servant such actings were. But they, and all like them which we may find in Scripture, or among the saints, are more distant from the great Original than we have measures to measure. He hid "the form of God" under "the form of a servant." Jesus was the strength of David when he killed the lion and the bear; and He was the Lord of that heaven to which Paul was caught up; but He lay under the form of one who had "not where to lay His head."

So on the top of "the holy hill," and again at the foot of it. On the top of it, in the sight of His elect, for a passing moment, He was the "Lord of glory"; at the foot of it, He was "Jesus only," charging them not to tell the vision to any till the Son of man were risen from the dead (Matt. 17).

Observe Him again in the vessel on the lake during the storm. He was there as a tired labouring man whose sleep was sweet. Such was His manifested form. But underneath lay "the

form of God." He arose, and as the Lord who gathers the wind in His fists and binds the waters in a garment, He rebuked the sea into a calm (Prov. 30: 4; Mark 4).

It is in the full and varied glories of the Jehovah of Israel that Jesus passes at times before us. In other days, the God of Israel had commanded the creatures of the great deep, and "a great fish" was prepared to swallow up Jonah, and give him a burying-place for the appointed time. And so, in His day, Jesus approved Himself the Lord of the fulness of "this great and wide sea," summoning a host of the "small beasts," thereof into the net of Peter (Ps 104; Luke 5). "Both small and great beasts," that find their pastime therein, thus in earlier and later days, owned the word of Jehovah-Jesus.

So, the God of Israel, as the Lord of the fulness of the earth as well as of the sea, would use the dumb ass to rebuke the madness of the prophet. But more in character than even that, when the ark had to be brought home from the land of the Philistines, the God of Israel controlled nature, forcing the kine that were yoked to the cart on which the ark was placed, to take the right and ready road to Beth-shemesh, on the borders of Israel, though this journey was taken by them under the strong resistance of all the instincts of nature (1 Sam. 6).

The Lord Jesus acted afterwards in the very striking assertion of this same glory and power of the God of Israel. For in His day, He, the True Ark, had to be borne homeward. In the progress of His history the moment came when He needed, like the ark in the days of Samuel, to be borne from the place where He was. He had to visit Jerusalem in His glory. It was *needful* that as King of Zion He should enter the royal city; and He gets the ass, and the colt the foal of an ass, to do that service for Him. And He does this in all the conscious dignity and rights of the Lord of the fulness of the earth. The owners of the beast had to listen to this claim, "The Lord hath need of him;" and, contrary to nature, opposed to all that the heart of man would have stood for and pleaded, "straightway" they sent him (Mark 11; Luke 19).

Thus again was Jesus shining in the characteristic glory of the God of Israel. The veil may have been very thick, and so it was. It was no other than that of Jesus of Nazareth, the carpenter, the carpenter's son (Matt. 13: 55; Mark 6: 3). The cloud that covered was heavy indeed; the glory that was under it was infinite. It was the full Jehovah-glory; and no ray of all the divine brightness would refuse to assert and express it. He "thought it not robbery to be equal with God," though He "made Himself of no reputation." Faith understands this veiled glory, and affection guards it as with a wall of fire. "Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended? who hath gathered the wind in His fists? who hath bound the waters in a garment? who hath established all the ends of the earth? what is His name, and what is His Son's name, if thou canst tell?" (Prov. 30).

We will not attempt to tell it; but, like Moses, while Jesus passes by, we will learn to bow our head to the earth, and worship (Ex. 34).

What instances are these in which Scripture teaches us to trace "the form of a servant" hiding "the form of God." But so also, I am bold to say, of this same character and meaning, are those cases in which He appears to be sheltering Himself from danger, or securing His life. And a delightful task it should ever be to the soul to discover thus His beauty and His glory, which he hid from the eye of man. But many of us, who would not for worlds sully that glory, may still be unapt in apprehending it, and often mistake the way of it, or the form which it takes.

The Son of God came into the world the very contradiction of him who is still to come, and after whom, as we read, the whole world is to wonder. As He Himself says, "I am come in My Father's name, and ye receive Me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive"

(John v. 43). And, in accordance with this, if His life is threatened, He does not at once become a wonder in the eyes of the world, but the very opposite. He makes Himself of no reputation. He would be nothing and nobody. He refuses altogether to be a wonder in the sight of men — the great and glorious contradiction of him *whose deadly wound is to be healed*, so that the whole world may wonder and worship, whose image is to live and to be made to speak, that all, both small and great, may take his name in their foreheads (Rev. 13).

The Son of God was the very contradiction of all this. He came in His Father's name, and not in His own. He had life in Himself. He was equal with Him of whom it is written, "Who only hath immortality;" but He hid that *brightness of the divine glory* under the form of one who appeared to shelter his life by the most ordinary and despised methods. Blessed to tell it, had we but worshipping hearts! The other who is to come "in his own name" by-and-by, may receive a deadly wound by a sword, and yet live, that the world may wonder; but the Son of God will flee into Egypt.

Are we so far wanting in spiritual apprehension that we cannot perceive this? Is the sight of the glory thus hidden to be indeed forced upon us? If we need that, the Lord even so far bears with us, and gives it to us. For under this veil there lay a glory which, had it pleased, might, like the flames of the Chaldean furnace, have destroyed its enemies at once. For at the last, when the hour had come, and the powers of darkness were to have "their hour," the servants of those powers, in the presence of this glory, "went backward, and fell to the ground"; teaching us that Jesus was entirely a *willing captive* then, as afterwards He was a willing victim.\*

\*When I remember who He was, the woman's Seed, the Son of God, God manifest in the flesh; when I remember also that death, come he in what shape he may, had no title against Him, I can have no other thought. Considered in the flesh and blood which He took, death had no title, because there was no sin there: considered in His full person, death could not touch Him, save as He voluntarily met it under the everlasting covenant. So that the soul fully refuses the thought of His saying His life in the ordinary sense of these words.

In connection with this, look at Him on the occasion to which I have already referred, in Matt. 12. Did the Lord, I ask, *fear* at that moment the anger of the Pharisees, and feel as one that must provide for the safety of his life? That cannot be my thought. He was taking one suited and consistent stage in His beautiful and precious path as a servant, going on, not to get Himself a name of honour in the world, but such a name (through humiliation and death), as that the Gentiles might trust in it, sinners be saved through the faith of it.

Look at Him for another moment, when the sword of Herod a second time threatened (Luke 13). How did the Lord rise before it or above it? In the consciousness of this: that, let the king be as crafty as he may, let him add subtlety to force, He Himself must and would walk His appointed journey, and do His appointed work, and then be perfected; and His perfection, as He there speaks, was to come, as we know, not by any prevailing of Herod or of the Jews over Him, but by His surrender of Himself to be made the Captain of our salvation perfect through sufferings. And on the same occasion, He recognizes this: that, though as a Prophet He may have to die at Jerusalem, it is that Jerusalem may fill up the measure of her sins; for that He, all the while, was Jerusalem's God who throughout ages of patient love had borne with her, and pleaded with her, and would soon in judgment leave her desolate (vers. 31-35).

Again I say, What glories are hidden here under the lowly form of One who was threatened with the anger of a king, and had to meet the scorn and enmity of his people!

But I may refer to one or two cases still more marked than these. Look at One in the earliest time of His ministry, in His own city. There the same great principle is exhibited; for the hill of Nazareth is, in my sight, not a place of danger to the life of Jesus, but just what the pinnacle of the temple had been (Luke 4: 9, 29). The devil had no thought of the Lord's death at the bottom of the pinnacle; none whatever. He tempted Him - as he had tempted the woman in the garden — to magnify Himself, to make Himself, if I may so speak, as the devil had said to Eve, to be as God. He sought to corrupt the sources in Christ, as he had corrupted them in Adam, and to get "the pride of life" in as one of the master-springs. But Jesus kept "the form of a servant." He would not cast Himself down, but obediently remembered, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."

So at the hill of Nazareth. That hill was not higher than the pinnacle of the temple. Jesus was in no more danger at the one spot than at the other. He would have been as entirely unhurt at the foot of the hill as at the bottom of the pinnacle. But how then should the Scripture be fulfilled, that He came not to honour Himself? He, therefore, "passing through the midst of them, went His way." He retired unnoticed and unknown, fulfilling His form as a servant, and manifesting His grace in the thoughts of His saints.

We dare not speak of such things as being done to save His life. The thought is contrary to the glory of His person, "God manifest in the flesh." Jesus was again and again, in the days of His flesh, refreshed in spirit when faith discovered His glory under the veil. When the Son of David, or the Son of God, or the Lord of Israel, or the Creator of the world, was known to faith under the form of Jesus of Nazareth, Jesus rejoiced in spirit. And so now, we may say, at this time, when the form of a servant is afresh presented to our thoughts, He will joy in the saints' discovering the glory under the cloud.

The "flight," as we may call it, into Egypt, in earlier days, the days of the "young Child" of Bethlehem, is a very peculiar and beautiful incident. We may remember, that in the time of Moses, Israel in that land was like a bush in the midst of fire; but because of the sympathy and presence of the God of their fathers, the bush was unconsumed. Jehovah was above Pharaoh; and when Pharaoh would have destroyed the people, Jehovah preserved them, and caused them to multiply in the very heart of Pharaoh's land. And this was done, "not by might, nor by power"; for Israel was there no better than a bush, a bramble-bush which a spark might have consumed. But the Son of God was in the bush. That was the secret. He was with Israel in Egypt, as afterwards He was in the furnace with Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego; and the smell of fire, though the bush was burning, and the furnace was heated seven fold more than was wont, did not pass on them.

A "great sight," so that Moses turned aside to look at it. And we may still, in the spirit of Moses, turn aside and visit the same spot. We may read Ex. 1-15, and then look again at this strange sight, why the bush was on fire, and the bush was not burnt; how the poor bramble of Israel was kept in the midst of the Egyptian furnace unhurt, because of the presence of the Son of God.

Let the fire be heated again and again, it never prevails. And how at the last does Israel leave Egypt? Just as the three children afterwards left the furnace which Nebuchadnezzar had heated: in triumph; with nothing burnt but the bands which bound them. Pharaoh and the Egyptian host perish in the Red Sea, but Israel goes out under the banner of the Lord.

But was Israel in Egypt with the *sympathies* of the Son of God more secure than Jesus, "God manifest in the flesh"? Shall the Israelitish bush be proof against the strength of the Egyptian fires, and shall not the lowly flesh of Jesus though in the full enmity of man, the hatred of the king, the envy of the scribes, and the rage of the multitude, be unassailable when God Himself is manifested

in that flesh? The full mystery of the burning and unconsumed bush lies in that. Israel could not suffer beyond divine appointment, because of the *sympathies* of the Son of God; Jesus could not be touched beyond His pleasure, because of the *incarnation* of the Son of God.

"Out of Egypt have I called My Son," was true of Jesus as of Israel. Both Jesus and Israel, in their day, were burning, unconsumed bushes; weak things, to all appearance, and in the judgment of men, but unassailable. Both may know their sorrows in this Egyptian world, but life is unreached; Israel from the sympathies they enjoyed, Jesus because of the Person that He was.

Was it, then, to save His life that "the young Child" was carried into Egypt? Did Israel of old leave Egypt to save their lives? Did Shadrach and his companions leave the Chaldean furnace to save their lives? Israel's life was as safe in Egypt as out of it. The Jewish children were as little hurt by fire in the furnace as out of it. Israel left Egypt to witness the glory of Jehovah their Saviour; and so did Israel's children the Chaldean fires. In like manner, and for the like end, "the young Child" was taken from Judea, from the wrath of Herod the king. The Son of God had taken the form of a servant. He had not come in His own name, but in His Father's. He had emptied Himself, made Himself of no reputation, and in the fulfilling of that form He began His course while yet but a "young Child"; and He was, among other humiliations, obedient even to a flight into Egypt, as though to save His life from the wrath of the king, for the glory of Him who had sent Him.

We must watch indeed against taking these instances of His perfect servant-form, and using them to the depreciation of His person. He was unassailable. Till His hour came, and He was ready to surrender Himself, captains and their fifties again and again would fail ere they could reach Him; but rather than this, He would again and again "humble Himself," going into "Egypt" on one occasion, and into "another village" on another, the scorned, rejected Son of man.

Shall we treat this mystery of the subjection, the voluntary subjection of the Son of God, with a careless mind? Shall we draw aside the veil irreverently? And yet, if these instances to which I have referred, and others kindred with them, be cited to prove the *mortal* condition of the flesh and blood which the Lord took, we do draw aside the veil with an irreverent and unskilful hand. Yes, and with more than that. We do Him double wrong. We depreciate His person through acts which manifest His boundless grace and love to us, and His devoted subjection to God.

And yet it is now said, that nature or violence or accident would have prevailed over the flesh and blood of the Lord Jesus, to cause death as with us. But does not such a thought, I ask, connect the Lord Jesus Christ with sin? It may be said that it is not meant to do so. That may be. But is it not really so? Does it not link the Lord with sin, inasmuch as in the inspired history of flesh and blood — and we are to be wise only according to what is there written — death attaches to it *only* through sin? If flesh and blood in His person were liable to die, or by its own nature and condition capable of dying (save by His gracious surrender of Himself), is it not therefore connected with sin? And if so, is Christ before the soul? This suggestion treats Him as one *exposed* to death. It takes such knowledge of Him as leaves Him liable to die in a way which *He could never have taken up* in the fulfilling of His form as a servant. *And beyond what he took up in that character He was liable to nothing.*

There is, indeed, something in this suggestion to make one fear that "the gates of hell" are again attempting the "Rock" of the Church, the person of the Son of God. And if it be vindicated on this plea, that it is designed only to illustrate the Lord's true humanity, the vindication itself becomes matter of increased suspicion. For, is it mere humanity, I ask, I get in the person of Christ? Is it not something immeasurably different, even "God manifest in the flesh"? He would not, as a

Saviour, do for me, a sinner, if He were not Jehovah's Fellow. Every creature owes all that he can render. None but One who thinks it not robbery to be equal with God can *take* "the form of a servant"; for he *is* a servant already, as I have said before. No creature can supererogate, as another has said; the thought would be rebellion. None could be qualified to stand surety for man, but One who could without presumption claim equality with God, and consequently be independent.

True humanity was capable of *sinning*. Adam in the garden was so, for he did sin. We may say, more simply and certainly, that he was capable of *sinning*, than that he was capable of *dying*. The history shows us the first, but forbids us to determine the second; inasmuch as it tells us, that death came in by sin. By nature there was a capability of sinning, but we are not told the same as to a capability of dying.

If, then, by and by, another were to come, and, just to illustrate, as he might say, the true humanity of Christ, were to suggest the capability or possibility of His sinning, I ask, What would the soul say to him? We may leave the answer to those who know Christ. But we may, at the same time, be sure of this: that the devil is in all these attempts upon the "*Rock of the Church*", which is the *person of the Son of God* (Matt. 16: 18). For His work, His testimony, His sorrows, His death itself, would be absolutely nothing to us, if He were not God. His *person* sustains His *sacrifice*, and in that way His person is our Rock. It was a confession to His person, by one who was at that time ignorant of His work or sacrifice, which led the Son of God to speak of the "Rock" on which the Church was to be built, and also to recognize that truth or mystery against which "the gates of hell," the strength and subtlety of Satan, were to try their utmost again and again.

And they have been thus engaged from the beginning, and are still so. By Arians and Socinians, the full glory of "God manifest in the flesh" was clouded long ago with either a deeper or a more specious falsehood. Lately, the *moral* nature of the Man Christ Jesus, "over all, God blessed forever," was assailed in Irvingism, and it was blotted and tainted, as far as that evil thought could reach. Still more lately, the *relationships to God* in which Jesus stood, and the *experiences of the soul* in which Jesus was exercised, have been the unholy traffic of the human intellect; and now *His flesh and blood*, the "temple" of His body, has been profaned.

But one can trace a kindred purpose in all, *the depreciation of the Son of God*. And whence comes this? And whence comes the very opposite and contradictory energy? What is *the Father* occupied with, or jealous about, if it be not the glory of the Son, in resistance of all that would depreciate Him, be it gross or subtle? Read, beloved, the Lord's discourse to the Jews in John 5. There that secret is disclosed, that though the Son has humbled Himself, and can, as He says, "do nothing of Himself," the Father will see to it, that He be not thereby dishonoured, or in anywise depreciated; watching over the rights, the full divine rights, of the Son, by this most careful and jealous decree, "He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father which hath sent Him."

Patience in teaching, patience with the simply ignorant, is surely the divine way, the way of the gracious Spirit. The Lord exercised that way Himself: "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip?" But no allowance of any depreciation of Christ is the divine way also. John's writings prove this to us - the most awful portion of the oracles of God, as well as being so peculiar and precious, because they so concern the personal glory of the Son. And they seem to me to show but little, if any, mercy to those who would sully that glory, or carelessly watch over and around it.

And, let me add, other facts in the history of the blessed Lord, such as hunger and thirst and weariness, are not to be used as the least warrant for this thought about the mortality of His flesh

and blood. The Son of God in flesh was exposed to nothing. Nothing outside the garden of Eden was His portion. He was hungry and wearied at the well of Samaria. He slept in the ship after a day of fatiguing service. But whatever of all this He knew in the place of thorns and thistles and sorrow and sweat of face, He knew it all and took it all, only as fulfilling that "form of a servant" which in unspeakable grace He had assumed.

The "Man of sorrows" may be addressed on one occasion as though He appeared to be nearly fifty years old (John 8: 57). But I am to know, from that, only how He had borne sorrows and services for our blessing and the Father's glory. In such features I am to read Him whose "visage was so marred more than any man," because of His endurements for us, and the contradiction of sinners against Him; and not because of the decaying tendencies of natural old age in the smallest measure of them, as though such tendencies by any possibility could attach to Him.

The Jews are again and again charged with being His murderers (Acts 2: 36; Acts 3: 15; Acts 7: 52). Surely they are, and rightly so. We are all in the same condemnation. It is the guilt of murder that lies at our door. In a full judicial sense, they were His "betrayers and murderers." Strange it may seem to reason, but what we read touching this is perfect in the esteem of faith: "No man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of My Father" (John 10: 18). He was *free*, and yet under *commandment*. Strange all this, again I admit, to reasonings and unbelief, but perfect in the judgment of faith.

The Son of God died on the tree, where the wicked hand of man had nailed Him, and the eternal purpose and grace of God had appointed Him. There He died, and died because He was there. The Lamb was *slain*. Who would think of gainsaying such a thought? Wicked hands murdered Him, and God provided Him as His own Lamb for the altar. Who would touch for a moment so needed and precious a mystery? And yet the Lamb gave up His own life. No exhaustion under suffering, no pressure of the cross, led Him to the death; but His life He yielded of Himself. In token of being in full possession of that which He was rendering up, "He cried with a loud voice," and then "gave up the ghost." The history of the moment admits of no other thought; and, I will add, neither should the worshipping affections of the saints. Pilate marvelled that He was dead already; he would not believe it; he had to satisfy himself of it. No time had been passed on the cross sufficient to extort the life, so that the legs of the others had to be broken. But He was dead already, and Pilate must make inquiry, and call for the witness, ere he would believe it.

*The thought we claim is thus the only interpreter of the strict, literal history of the fact.* And our souls, had we grace, would bless God for such a picture of His slain Lamb, and of our crucified, dying, killed, and murdered Saviour. Do we blot out the record that He was the slain Lamb, or silence the song in heaven which celebrates that mystery, when we say, that His life the slain Lamb rendered up Himself? The history of Calvary, which the Holy Ghost has written, sustains this thought; and again we say, What we claim is the only interpreter of the strict history of the fact. He was *free*, and yet under *commandment*. Faith understands it all. And according to this mystery, when the hour had come, as we read, "He bowed His head, and gave up the ghost" (John 19: 30). He owned the commandment which He had received, and yet of Himself yielded up His life. He was *obedient* unto death, and yet laid down His life as of Himself.

Faith understands all this without difficulty; yea, understands that herein alone lies the true and perfect mystery. He died under covenant counsels, to the which He willingly yielded, being the "Fellow" of the Lord of hosts.

But, as we have already said to His praise, the Son of God on earth was ever hiding His glory, "the form of God," as we have been seeing, under "the form of a servant." His glory had been owned in all parts of the dominions of God. Devils owned it, the bodies and the souls of men owned it, death and the grave owned it, the beasts of the field and the fish of the sea owned it, winds and waves owned it, and so did the corn and the wine. I may say that He Himself was the only One who did not own or assume it; for His way was to veil it. He was "Lord of the harvest," but appeared as one of the labourers in the field; He was the God of the temple, and the Lord of the Sabbath, but submitted to the challenges of an unbelieving world (Matt. 9: 12).

Such was the veil or the cloud under which He thus again and again causes the glory to retire. And so, in entire fellowship with all this, as we have already said, did He carry Himself on those occasions when His life was threatened. Under despised forms, He hid His glory again. At times the favour of the common people shelters Him (Mark 11: 32; Mark 12: 12; Luke 20: 19); at times He withdraws Himself in either an ordinary or a more miraculous manner (Luke 4: 30; John 8: 59; John 10: 39); at times the enemy is restrained from laying hands on Him, because His hour was not come (John 7: 30; John 8: 20); and on one distinguished occasion, as we have seen, a flight into Egypt removes Him from the wrath of a king who sought His life to destroy it.

In all this I see the one thing from first to last — the Lord of glory hiding Himself, as One who had come in Another's name, and not His own. But He was "the Lord of glory," and "the Prince of life." He was a willing *captive*, as I have already observed, and so was He at the very last a willing *victim*. He *gave* His life a ransom for many"\* (Matt. 20: 28 Titus 2: 14).

\*The Son put Himself under the commandment of the Father, for the ends of God's glory in our salvation (John 10: 18; John 12: 49); and now the Father delivers a commandment to us, to give all divine honour to the Son, or, in other words, to walk in the truth of His person (John 5: 23; 1 John 3: 23: 2 John 4-6).

In other days the ark of the Lord was in the hands of the enemy; it had been taken captive by the Philistines at the battle of Ebenezer. Then God "delivered His strength into captivity, and His glory into the enemy's hand;" but it was unassailable. It was apparently a weak thing, a thing of wood and gold. Its presence troubled the uncircumcised, their gods, their persons, their lands. It was all unaided and alone, and in the midst of enemies who were fresh in the heat and pride of victory. Why, then, did they not break it to pieces? Apparently, to dash it against a stone would have been to destroy it. It was constantly in their way, and appeared to be always at their mercy. Why, then, did they not rid themselves of it? *They could not*: that is the answer. The ark among the Philistines was another burning and unconsumed bush. It might appear to have been at the mercy of the uncircumcised, but it was unassailable. The Philistines may send it from Ashdod to Gath, and from Gath to Ekron; but no hand can touch it to destroy it (1 Sam. 4-6)

And so the True Ark, the Son of God in flesh, may be the sport of the uncircumcised for a little season: Pilate may send Him to Herod, and Annas to Caiaphas; the multitude may lead Him away to Pilate, and Pilate may give Him up again to the multitude; but His life is beyond their reach. He was the Son of God, and though manifested in flesh, still the Son as from eternity. Whatever sorrows He had gone through, whatever weariness He had endured, or hunger or thirst, all had been filling out "the form of a servant," which He had taken. But He was the Son who had "life in Himself," the unassailable Ark, the Bush, even in the midst of the raging flames of the world's full hatred, unconsumable.

Such was the mystery, I doubt not.

But while saying this — while going through the meditations of this paper with some desire of my soul, and, I trust, profit also — there is nothing I would more cherish than to feel as a true Israelite should have felt on the day when the ark of God returned home out of the land of the Philistines. He should then have rejoiced and worshipped; he should have been very careful to assure himself that this great event had indeed taken place, even though he were living at a distance from the scene. As an Israelite of any of the tribes, this thing deeply concerned him, that the ark had been rescued, and that the uncircumcised were not still handling it, or sending it hither and thither among their cities. But being satisfied of that, he had to be watchful that he himself did not touch it or inspect it, that he did not sin against it, like a Bethshemite, even after it had come from among the Philistines.

We are right, I am sure, in refusing those thoughts upon the *mortal* condition of the blessed Lord's body. All such words and speculations are as the handling of the ark with uncircumcised or Philistine hands. And we are to show the error of the thought itself, as well as its *irreverence*; that is, we are to be satisfied only with the full deliverance of the ark, and its return to us. But then, another duty becomes us: we are not to handle it, or inspect it, as though it were ordinary. Our words are to be few; for in "the *multitude* of words" on such a matter, "there wanteth not sin." Physical considerations of such a subject are not to be indulged, even though they may be sound and not to be gainsaid; for such considerations are not the way of the Spirit or of the wisdom of God. The Lord's body was a *temple*, and it is written, "Ye . . . shall reverence My sanctuary: I am the Lord."

If one were to refuse to follow these speculations, and instead of *answering* them to *rebuke* them, I could say nothing. It might be with many a soul a holy, sensitive refusal to meddle beyond one's measure and the standard of Scripture with what must ever be beyond us. I remember the words, "Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest thou also be like unto him." But these speculations on the person of the Son of God began in other quarters. The ark got into uncircumcised hands — and this word which I have taken on me to write is an endeavour to recover it thence; — and what I would indeed desire, is to take it down from "the new cart" with the reserve and holiness that become the soul in doing such service.

I will just add, that all this present question is made to profit the soul. A lion's carcase (forbidding as such an object must have been) of old time was forced to yield even honey, delicate as it is, and good for food. Paul had to do the forbidding work of vindicating the doctrine of resurrection in the very face of some among the saints at Corinth; but that was made fruitful, like the carcase of the lion. For not merely does a vindication of the doctrine itself come forth, but glory after glory, belonging to that mystery, passes before him. He is given, through the Spirit, to see resurrection in its order, or in its different seasons; the interval between such seasons, and the business to be done in each of them, according to divine dispensations; the scene which is to succeed the last of those seasons; and also the great era of the resurrection of the saints, in all its power and magnificence, with the shout of triumph which is to accompany it (1 Cor. 15). Here was honey, and honey again, I may say, out of a lion's carcase, for such is controversy among brethren.

But as it was once written, so is it, in the abounding grace of God, still existent: "Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness."

"NOT UNTO US, O LORD, NOT UNTO US, BUT UNTO THY NAME GIVE GLORY,  
FOR THY MERCY, AND FOR THY TRUTH'S SAKE."

## Chapter 3

"I will put My trust in Him" (Heb. 2: 13).

What a moment it must have been when the Lord stilled the wind on the Lake of Galilee! It must have been wondrous and beautiful to witness it; as it would be now, had we but hearts sensible of the glories of Christ, to think of it. People may talk of the necessary course of principles, of laws of nature, and of the course of things; but surely it is the first law of nature to obey its Creator. And here, in the twinkling of an eye, the Sea of Galilee felt the presence, and answered the word, of Him who at His pleasure transfigures the course of nature, or by a touch unhinges it all (Mark 4).

This was Jesus-Jehovah. This was the God whom Jordan and the Red Sea had, of old, obeyed: "What ailed thee, O thou sea, that thou fleddest? thou Jordan, that thou wast driven back? ye mountains, that ye skipped like rams, and ye little hills, like lambs? *Tremble thou earth, at the presence of the Lord.*" The answer lies there, whether we listen to the voice of the Red Sea in the days of Exodus, or to the Sea of Galilee in the times of the gospel. The presence of God tells the secret. "He spake, and it was done."

We read that when the sun and the moon stood still in the midst of heaven, the Lord hearkened to the voice of a man. Joshua spake to the Lord then; and the Lord fought for Israel. And the occasion was full of wonder. The Holy Ghost, who records it, gives it that character. "Is not this written in the book of Jasher? So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and hasted not to go down about a whole day. And there was no day like that before it, or after it, that the Lord hearkened unto the voice of a man." But Jesus acts at once, and from Himself, and no wonder is made of it. All the amazement that is felt comes from the *unprepared, unbelieving* hearts of the disciples, who knew not the glory of the God of Israel. But under His teaching who takes of the things that are Christ's to show them to us, we, beloved, should the better understand it, discerning it alike, whether at the divided Red Sea, or at the Jordan that was "driven back," or on the stilled Lake of Galilee.

But there is more of Jesus at the Red Sea, than the dividing of its waters. The cloud which appeared to Israel as soon as they had been redeemed by the blood in Egypt, and which accompanied them through the wilderness, was the guide of the camp. But it was also the veil or the covering of the glory. In the midst of Israel such was that beautiful mystery. Commonly it was a hidden glory; at times manifested, but always there; the guide and companion of Israel, but their God also. He who dwelt between the cherubim, went along the desert before Ephraim, and Benjamin, and Manasseh (Ps. 80). The glory abode in the cloud for Israel's use, but was in the holy place also; and thus, while conducting the camp in its veiled or humbled form, it assumed the divine honours of the sanctuary.

And such was Jesus, "God manifest in the flesh," commonly veiled under "the form of a servant," always without robbery equal with God in the faith and worship of His saints, and at times shining forth in divine grace and authority.

Now, just as they were approaching the Red Sea, Israel had to be *sheltered*. The cloud does this mercy for them. It comes between the Egyptians and the camp, and is darkness to the one and light to the other, so that the one came not near the other all the night; and then, in the morning, the Lord looked to the host of Egypt through the pillar of cloud, and troubled the host of Egypt. And so, on an occasion kindred with this at the Red Sea, Jesus acts as the cloud and the glory. He comes

between His disciples and their pursuers: "If therefore ye seek Me, let these go their way." He shelters them with His presence as of old. And He looks through the cloud, and again, as of old, troubles the host of the enemy. "Jesus saith unto them, I am He . . . As soon then as He had said unto them, I am He, they went backward, and fell to the ground." He did but look out, and His arm was found not to be shortened. With like ease and authority, the God of Israel does His proper acts at the Red Sea, and Jesus the same in the garden of Gethsemane (Ex. 14; John 18). The gods of Egypt worshipped Him at the Red sea, the gods of Rome worshipped Him in Gethsemane, and when brought again the second time into the world, it shall be said, "Let all the angels of God worship Him."

But further. In the progress of their history, Israel had to be *rebuked* as well as to be sheltered; to be disciplined as well as to be redeemed. This we see, as we leave the Red Sea and enter the wilderness. But the same glory hid within the cloud will do this divine work for them, as it did the other. In the day of the manna, in the day of the spies, in the matter of Korah, at the water of Meribah, Israel provokes the holiness of the Lord, and the glory is seen in the cloud witnessing the divine resentment (Ex. 16; Num. 14, 16, 20).

And just so, Jesus again. When grieved — as the Glory in the cloud was — at the hardness of heart, or unbelief of the disciples, He gives some token, some expression, of His divine power, with words of rebuke. As on that occasion I have referred to, on the Lake of Tiberias; for there He said to the disciples, "Why are ye so fearful?" as well as to the winds and the waves, "Peace, be still." And so again and again, when the disciples betray ignorant and unbelieving thoughts of Him. As, for instance, to Philip, on one distinguished occasion, He says, in the grief and resentment of the Glory in the cloud, "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? (John 14).

Surely here also was the same mystery. Was not the Lord here again shining through the veil for the confounding of the disobedience or unbelief of Israel? This was the glory seen in the cloud as in the day of the manna, or kindred cases already referred to. Very exact is the corresponding of these forms of divine power. The cloud was the *ordinary* thing; the glory within *was now and again manifested*, but was always there. The guide and companion of the camp was the Lord of the camp. And is not all this Jesus in a mystery? The glory was the God of Israel (Ezek. 43: 4; Ezek. 44: 2), and Jesus of Nazareth was the God of Israel, or the glory (Isa. 6: 1; John 12: 41). The Nazarene veiled a light, or manifested in flesh a glory, which, in its proper fulness, "no man can approach unto" (1 Tim. 6: 16).

Moses beautifully *refused* glory, but Jesus *hid* it. "Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter" (Heb. 11: 24). And a lovely victory over the world that was. We like to wear our honours, to make the most of what we are, and even to take more than we are entitled to, if men will make mistakes in our favour. But Moses humbled himself in the Egyptian palace; and that was a beautiful victory of faith over the course and spirit of the world. But Jesus did more. It is true, He had not servants and courtiers to teach, for He was a stranger to palaces. But the villagers of Nazareth adopted Him as "the carpenter's son," and He would have it so. The Glory of glories, the Lord of angels, the Creator of the ends of the earth, the God of heaven, was hid under that common report, and there He lay without an answer to it.

It is the gracious office of the Holy Ghost, in Heb. 2, to open the sources of this great mystery. The *grace* of God would fain exercise or indulge itself — precious as such a thought is —

and the *praise* of Him "for whom are all things, and by whom are all things," demanded the mystery, so to speak (ver. 9, 10). These things are told us there. These are the rich fountains whence the great purpose and transaction flow; that transaction, that unspeakable mystery of redemption through the humiliation of the Son of God, which is to give its character to eternity. Divine grace sought to gratify itself, and divine glory would be displayed to perfection. All issues from such springs. Flesh and blood was taken up by the Sanctifier; death was undergone; like temptations with the brethren, apart from sin, were endured; relationships to God, experiences in Himself, and sympathies with the saints, were borne and known; the life of faith on earth, with its prayers and tears, to Him that was able to save from death; life of intercession in heaven; all fitness to be both a sacrifice and a priest accomplished; ability to succour, and worthiness to cleanse, as well as resurrection, ascension, present expectancy, and a coming Kingdom and glories — all these find their springs and sources there.

The Son of God took His place in connection with all this. He was dependent, obedient, believing, hopeful, sorrowful, suffering, despised, crucified, buried; everything which the great eternal plan made necessary to Him. He emptied Himself for all this, but all that He did was *infinitely worthy of His person*. The word at the beginning, "Let there be light: and there was light," was not more worthy of Him, than were the prayers and supplications "with strong crying and tears," in the days of His flesh. He could never have been allied with anything unworthy of Godhead, though found, abundantly and at all personal cost, in conditions and circumstances into which our guilt and His grace in putting it away brought Him.

The Person in the manger was the same as on the cross. It was "God manifest in the flesh." And in the full sense of that glory we can but speak of His humbling of Himself from the earliest to the latest moment of that wondrous journey. Led of God, the wise men of the East worshipped "the young Child" at Bethlehem. Simeon, I may say, worshipped Him at an earlier moment, in the temple; and strangely — which nothing can account for but the light of the Holy Ghost who then filled him — he blesses the mother, and not the Child. He had the Child in his arms, and naturally he would, on such an occasion, have given the Infant his blessing. But he does not. For he had that Child in his arms, not as a feeble infant whom he would commend to God's care, but as God's Salvation. In that glorious character, in the hour of nature's perfect feebleness, he held Him up, and gloried in Him. "The less is blessed of the better." It was not for Simeon to bless Jesus, though without wrong or robbery he would bless Mary.

Anna, the prophetess, receives Him in like spirit. And earlier still, while yet unborn, He was worshipped I may say, by the leaping of the child in the womb of Elizabeth, at the salutation of Mary. As also, ere He was conceived, the angel Gabriel owns Him as the God of Israel, before whose face the son of Zacharias was to go; and then, also, Zacharias in the Holy Ghost owns Him as the Lord whose people Israel were, and as "the Day-spring from on high."

Self-emptying obedience, subjection of a kind quite its own, is, therefore, to be seen in every stage and action of such a One. And what was that course of service in the esteem of Him to whom it was rendered? As the *born* One, the *circumcised* One, the *baptized* and *anointed* One, the *serving*, *sorrowing*, and *crucified* One, and then as the *risen* One, He has passed here on earth under the eye of God. In the secrecy of the Virgin's womb, in the solitudes of Nazareth, in the activities and services of all the cities and villages of Israel, in the deep self-sacrifice of the cross, and then in the new bloom of resurrection, has "this wondrous Man" been seen and delighted in of God - perfect, untainted, recalling the divine delight in man more than when of old he was made in God's image, and more than annulling all the divine repentings of old, that man had been made on the

earth.

His person lent a glory to all His course of service and obedience, which rendered it of unutterable value. Nor is it merely that His person made all that service and obedience *voluntary*. There is something far more than its being thus voluntary. There is that in it which the *Person* ("My Fellow, saith the Lord of hosts") imparts: and who can weigh or measure that? We know this full well among ourselves. I mean *in kind*. The higher in dignity, in *personal* dignity, the one who serves us is, the higher the value of the service rises in our thoughts. And justly so; because more has been engaged for us, more has been devoted to us, then when the servant was an inferior; more has the heart instinctively learnt, that our advantage was indeed sought, or our wishes and desires made an object. We do not forget the *person* in the *service*. We cannot. And so in this dear mystery we are meditating on. The service and obedience of Jesus were perfect; infinitely, unmingled, worthy of all acceptance.

But beyond that, beyond the *quality* of the fruit, there was the Person who yielded it; and this, as we said, imparted to it a value and a glory that are unutterable. The same value rested on the services of His life which afterwards gave character to His death. It was His person which gave all its virtues to His death or sacrifice; and it was His person which gave its peculiar glory to all He did in His course of self-humbling obedience. And the *complacency* of God in the one was as perfect as His *judicial acceptance* of the other. Some symbol (like that of the rent veil) is seen by faith uttering that complacency and full delight of God over *every* passing act in the life of Jesus.\* Would that we had eyes to see, and ears to hear that, as we pass on through the ways of Jesus from the manger to the tree! But so it was, whether seen or not by us. Complacency of God beyond all thought to conceive, rested on all He did and all He was, throughout His life of obedience. As another has said, "Divine wisdom is the way of our recovery by Jesus Christ, God manifest in the flesh,' designed to glorify a state of obedience. He would render it incomparably more amiable, desirable, and excellent, than ever it could have appeared to have been in the obedience of all the angels in heaven, and men on the earth, had they continued therein, in that His own eternal Son entered into a state of obedience, and took upon Him the form or condition of a servant unto God."

\*I speak of the rent veil as the symbol of *divine acceptance*. No living obedience of Christ could have rent it; only His death.

These are strengthening thoughts about the ways of Jesus. These ways of service and subjection to God are to get their own peculiar character, and in our sight. Obedience has been glorified in His person, and shown in all its ineffable beauty and desirableness; so that we are not merely to say, that the complacency of God in Him was ever maintained in its fulness, but that it passes beyond all created thought. "The form of a servant" was a reality, just as much as "the form of God" in Him; as truly an *assumed* reality, as the other was an *essential, intrinsic* reality. And being such, His ways were those of a servant; just as, being the Son, His glories and prerogatives were those of God. He prayed; He continued whole nights in prayer. He lived by faith, the perfect pattern of a believer, as we read of Him: "The Leader and Completer of faith." In sorrow He made God His refuge. In the presence of enemies He committed Himself to Him who judged righteously. He did not His own will, perfect as that will was, but the will of Him who sent Him. In these and in all kindred ways was "the form of a servant" found and proved and read and known to perfection. It is seen to have been a great and living reality. The life of this Servant was the life of faith from beginning to end.

In the epistle to the Hebrews we are taught to consider Jesus as "the Apostle and High-Priest

of our profession"; and also as "the Leader and Completer of faith" (Heb. 3: 1; Heb. 12: 2, 3). As the one, He is set before us for the relief of our consciences and the succour of our times of temptation; as the other, for the encouragement of our hearts in the like life of faith. As "the Apostle and High-Priest of our profession," He is alone; as "the Leader and Completer of faith," He is connected with a great cloud of witnesses. As the one, He is for us; as the other, He is *before* us. But even when before us, as in the fight and life of faith, there is some distinctness; for the Holy Ghost calls on us to look at this "Leader and Completer of faith" in a way in which He does not speak touching any other. He speaks of our being *compassed about* with them but calls on us to *be looking to Him*.

And further: it was the "contradiction of sinners against Himself" that formed the life of trial and of faith in Jesus; and those are peculiar words. Others, like Him, in the fight of faith had cruel mockings and scourgings, the edge of the sword, the caves of the earth, tortures, bonds, and imprisonments; and all from the enmity of man. But their conflict in the midst of such things is not thus spoken of. It is not called the "contradiction of sinners against themselves." There is a force and elevation in such words that suit only the life of faith which *Jesus* led and contended in.

How perfect are these minuter paths of the Spirit's wisdom in the Word! Ps. 16 gives us Jesus in this life of faith. There the Son of God is One in whom "faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen," as in Heb. 12: 2, 3. He enjoys the present portion of a priestly man. He sets the Lord always before Him, and knows that as He is at His right hand, He shall not be moved. He looks also for the pleasures at the right hand, and for the joy of the presence of God, in other regions.

Ps. 116 is the end of His life of faith in - resurrection, joy, and praise; and the apostle, in "the same spirit of faith," can look to share like resurrection-joy with his divine Lord and Fore-runner (2 Cor. 4: 13, 14).

"I will put My trust in Him" may be said to have been the language of the life of Jesus. But His faith was gold, pure gold, nothing but gold. When tried by the furnace, it comes out the same mass as it had gone in, for there was no dross. Saints have commonly to be set to rights by the furnace. Some impatience or selfishness or murmur has to be reduced or silenced, as in Ps. 73 and 77. Job was overcome: trouble touched him, and he fainted, though often he had strengthened the weak hands, and upheld by his word them that were falling. "The stoutest are struck off their legs," as an old writer says. Peter sleeps in the garden, and in the judgment-hall tells lies, and swears to them; but there has been One whom the furnace, heated seven times, proved to be precious beyond expression.

Read Luke 22; see this One in that great chapter; see Jesus there in the hour of the trial of faith. He is first in company with *the sorrow that was awaiting Him*, then with *His disciples*, then with *the Father*, and then with *His enemies*: and mark it all, beloved. How unutterably perfect all is! this faith in its unalloyed preciousness, when tried in the fire! But *all* the life of Jesus was the life and obedience of faith. In one light of it, it was most surely the life of the Son of God, in "the form of a servant," humbling Himself even unto death, though "in the form of God," and though He "thought it not robbery to be equal with God"; but in another, it was the life of faith: "I will put My trust in Him," "I have set the Lord always before Me: because He is at My right hand, I shall not be moved." These are His breathings, and we celebrate Him, after our own way, in His life of faith, and sing together of Him

"Faithful amidst unfaithfulness,

'Mid darkness only light,  
Thou didst Thy Father's name confess,  
And in His will delight."

And all this precious life of faith was answered by the care and keeping of God. "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." The faith of Him who was serving on earth was perfect, and the answer of Him who dwelt in the heavens was perfect (Ps. 91).

The care which watched over Him was *unceasing from the womb to the grave*. So had it been of old declared by His Spirit in the prophets: "I was cast upon Thee from the womb. Thou art My God from My mother's belly." "Thou didst make Me hope [or, Thou keptest Me in safety] when I was upon My mother's breasts." It was *unwearied throughout*. "Thou maintainest My lot." "My flesh also shall rest in hope. For Thou wilt not leave My soul in hell; neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption" (Ps. 22, Ps. 16). This help, and care, and watchfulness, in one aspect of His history, was everything to Him. It watched over Him that very night in which the angel warned Joseph to flee into Egypt. It was the Father's unspeakable joy to exercise the diligence of that hour. He who kept *that* Israel could not slumber *then*.

But all this, instead of being inconsistent with the full divine rights of His person, gets its special character from them. The glory of this relationship, and of the joy and complacency which attended it, is gone, if the Person be not vindicated and honoured. Such was the Person, that His *entrance* into the relationship was an act of self-emptying. Instead of beginning a course of subjection, either at the flight into Egypt, or at the manger at Bethlehem, He had taken "the form of a servant" in counsel before the world began; and, as fruit thereof, He was "found in fashion as a man." And all His doings and services were the ways of this self-emptied One: all of them from the earliest to the last. For He was as truly "God manifest in the flesh" when on the journey to Egypt in His mother's arms, as when in Gethsemane, in the glory and power of His person, the enemy coming to eat up His flesh stumbled and fell. He was as simply Emmanuel as an Infant in Bethlehem, as He is now at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens.\* All was humbling of Himself, from the womb to the cross. I for, get His person or who He was, if I doubt that. But in another light of the glorious mystery, we are to see the relationship, and the tender, perfect care and help which, according to it, the Father was ever rendering Him. But these things are only like the various lights or characters in which the different evangelists present the Lord, as we are generally acquainted with. He was the Object of the Father's care, and yet Jehovah's Fellow; and we may look at His path in the chastened light with which that divine care and watchfulness invest it, as we may gaze at it in that brightest light and most excellent glory in which His rights and honours as the Son of God present it to us. If He had this relationship to the care of God, assumed as it was according to eternal counsels, so had all creatures, earthly and heavenly, angelic and human, throughout the universe, the same relationship to Him.

\*I do not mean that on the occasion of the journey to Egypt "the young Child" exercised mind or will. That would be precision beyond the way of Scripture. But that act, like all from Bethlehem to Calvary, has the one character of self-humbling obedience in it.

By reason of such various truth as this, He could say, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up;" and yet the Holy Ghost could say of Him, that the God of peace brought Him again from the dead (John 2: 19; Heb. 13: 20). His enemies who sought His life fell before Him at a word; and yet, so did His perfect faith acknowledge God's perfect care and guardianship, that He could

say, "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He shall presently give Me more than twelve legions of angels?" (John 18: 5, 6; Matt. 26: 53). He could, with a touch, heal the ear of the servant, nay, restore it when cut off, when just at the same time He would have His own brows bleed under the crown of thorns (Luke 22: 51; Mark 15: 17-19). In the perfection of His place, as the emptied One, He would ask for sympathy, and say, "Could ye not watch with Me one hour?" and shortly after, in a moment of still greater gloom, in one sense, He could be above the pity of the daughters of Jerusalem, and honour by the promise of Paradise the faith of a dying malefactor (Matt. 26: 40; Luke 23: 28, 42, 43). For in brightness He shines, even in the deepest moment of His humiliation: and let sinners know that it is not the compassion of men His cross seeks, but their *faith*; that it does not ask them in human kindness to *feel that hour*, but in faith of their hearts and to the full peace of their consciences to be *blessed by that hour*; not to *pity* the cross, but to lean on it, and to know, that though accomplished in weakness, it is the very pillar which is to sustain the creation of God forever.

In such different, but consistent forms, we read the life of the Son of God in flesh. Is the one the less real because the other is true? The tears of Jesus over Jerusalem were as real as though there was nothing in His heart but the sorrow of an ill-requited Lord and Saviour over a rebellious, unbelieving people. And yet His joy in the full purpose of divine wisdom and grace was just the same unmixed, undivided reality. The "Woe unto thee, Chorazin!" and then the "I thank Thee, O Father," were equally living and true affections in the soul of Jesus (Matt. 11). There was no want of full reality in either; and so "the form of a servant," with all its perfect results, and "the form of God," in all its proper glories, were, in the like way, real and living mysteries in the one Person.

And may we not, at times, turn aside to gaze more intently at His person, while we are tracing either the acts of His life, or the secrets of His love and truth? It is a part of the obedience of faith to do so. "The fear of the Lord is clean;" but there is a fear that is not altogether clean, having some spirit of bondage and unbelief in it. The refusal to turn and look at such great sights as these may be such. I grant the "mystery," and that the mystery is "great." So was it a great and mysterious sight which Moses turned to look at; but with unshod feet he might still look and listen. Had he not done so, he would have gone away unblest. But he listened, till he discovered that the "I AM" was in the bush; and, further, that "the God of Abraham" was there also. A strange spot for such glory to enshrine itself! But so it was. In a burning bramble-bush, the Lord God Almighty was found (Ex. 3).

And supposing I go to Calvary, and look there on the smitten "Shepherd," whom shall I discover, if I have an opened eye, but the Fellow of the Lord of hosts? (Zech. 13). And if I go into the midst of the rabble which surrounded Pilate's judgment-hall at Jerusalem, whom shall I find there, even in the One spit upon and buffeted and derided, but Him who of old dried up the Red Sea, and covered the Egyptian heavens with sackcloth? (Isa. 1: 3).

And I ask, When I have so looked, and by the light of the Spirit in the prophets made these discoveries, am I quickly to retire? If I had bowels, I might ask, Where can I go for richer refreshment of spirit? If my faith discover, in the grieved and insulted Jesus, amid the men of Herod and the officer of the Romans, the God who did His wonders of old in the land of Ham, am I not to linger on that mount of God, and Moses-like to turn aside and look and listen? I cannot treat the sight as too great for me. I do not believe such would be the mind of the Spirit. Liberty of thought, while I stay at the mount, shall be rebuked if it transgress; but to linger there is not transgression, but worship. I speak, the Lord knows, of *principles*, not of *experiences*. The exercises of the heart there are dull and cold indeed; and the sorrow is (if one may speak for others), not that we spend

too much thought over the mystery of the person of the Son of God, but that we retire to other objects too quickly.

That Person will be "the eternal wonder and ornament of the creation of God." Some may own, in general, the manhood and the Godhead in that Person. But we are also to own the full, unsullied glory of each of these. Neither the soul or moral man, nor the temple of the body, is to be profaned. The whole man is to be vindicated and honoured.\* And though the relationship in which Jesus stood to God, the care which that induced, and the obedience which that involved, may well be another great sight for us to turn aside to look at, still we shall fail to see it aright, and to eye it in its glory, if we forget in anywise the person of Him who sustained it.

\*One of the martyrs in the days of Queen Mary wrote thus from his prison: "He hath made all, bought all, and dearly paid for all: with His own immaculate body hath He discharged your bodies from sin, death, and hell, and with His most precious blood paid your ransom and full price once for all and forever."

The divine reasoning in the epistle to the Hebrews, among other things, evinces this: that the efficacy of the priesthood of Christ depends entirely on His person. Read the first seven chapters: what a writing it is! In our Priest we must find *a man*; one capable of succouring the brethren, from having been tempted like them. So that we must see our High-Priest passing into the heavens from *amid the sufferings and sorrows of the scene here*. Most surely so. But in our Priest we must find *the Son* also, because in none other partaker of flesh and blood was there "the power of an endless life." And, accordingly, Melchisedec represents the person as well as the virtues, dignities, rights, and authorities of the true Priest of God; as we read of him: "Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually" (Heb. 7: 1-3).

And what a sight does all this give us of "the High Priest of our profession"! He came down from heaven, in the full, personal glory of the Son; and in the due time He went up to heaven, bearing the virtue of His sacrifice for sin, and those compassions which succour saints. Faith acquaints itself with this whole path of Jesus. It owns in Him the Son while He tabernacled in the flesh among us; and when His course of humiliation and suffering had ended here, faith owns the once rejected and crucified Man glorified in the heavens — the one Person: God manifested in the flesh here, Man hid in the glory there. As we read of Him and of His blessed, wondrous path: "God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory" (1 Tim. 3: 16).\*

\*He was, indeed, very Man and very God in one Person. All depends on this "great mystery." The death of the cross would be nothing without it, as all would be nothing without that death.

In "the form of God," He was God indeed; in "the form of a servant," He was a Servant indeed. He "thought it not robbery to be equal with God"; exercising all the divine rights, and using all the divine treasures and resources with full authority; and yet making Himself of no reputation, emptying Himself, and being obedient. This tells the secret. All that appears in the *history* is interpreted by the *mystery*. It is as the glory in the cloud again. The companion of the camp, in all its afflictions afflicted, was the Lord of the camp. The glory which traversed the desert in company with the wanderings of Israel, was the Glory which dwelt between the cherubim in the holy of holies.

But the further words of this scripture (Phil. 2: 5-11) invite me onward for a little still. "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him" (ver. 9). We are only in new wonders, when we

read these words. For what, we may ask, could exalt Him? Ere He entered upon His course of sufferings and of glories, He was in Himself infinitely great and blessed. Nothing could personally exalt Him, being, as He was, "the Son." His glory was divine. It was unspeakable and infinite. No other honours could ever increase His personal glory. But still we see Him traversing a path which conducts Him to honour and glory still.

Strange and excellent mystery! And — still stranger, and more excellent, as we may say — these new and acquired glories are, in some sense, the dearest with Him. Scripture entitles us thus to speak; as it does to speak of many things of His grace, which the heart would never have conceived. And yet, with all this — to compare divine things with human, as is the way of the Spirit's instruction — what I now speak of is known among men. Let the highest by birth among us, let a prince, the son of a king, go forth and acquire dignities: his acquired dignities, though they cannot raise him personally, will be his dearest distinctions, and form the choicest materials of his history in the esteem of others. Such a thing as that is instinctively understood among us. And so is it (in the unspeakably precious mystery of Christ) with the Son of God. According to eternal counsels, He has gone forth to battle; and the honours He has acquired, the victories He has won, or is still to win, will be His joy for eternity. They are to form the light in which He will be known, and the characters in which He will be celebrated forever; though, personally, He dwells in a light which no man can approach unto. And this He prizes: "Jehovah-jireh," "Jehovah-rophi," "Jehovah-shalom," "Jehovah-tsidkenu," "Jehovah-nissi," are all *acquired* honours. And how are these *chief* with Him in the unspeakable ways of boundless grace! In Ex. 3, He communicates His *personal* name to Moses, saying out of the bush, "I AM THAT I AM." But then, He communicates His *acquired* name also, calling Himself "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob"; and to this second, this acquired name, He adds, "This is My name forever, and this is My memorial unto all generations:" words which deeply tell us how He prized that glory which He had acquired in His doings for sinners. As also in the tabernacle, or temple, where His *name* was recorded, it was His *acquired* and not His personal name, that was written and read there. The mysteries of that house did not speak of His essential omnipotence, omniscience, or eternity, or like glories, but of One in whom mercy rejoiced against judgment, and who had found out a way whereby to bring His banished ones home to Him.

Surely these are witnesses of what price in His sight is His name *gained in service for us*. But "God is love" may account for it all. There the secret is told. If the manifestations are excellent and marvellous, the hidden springs which are opened in Himself give us to know it all.

We are to know Him as "made under the law," as surely as we know Him in His personal glory, far above all law. All His life was the life of the obedient One. And so, though God over all, the Jehovah of Israel, and the Creator of the ends of the earth, He was the Man Christ Jesus. He was Jesus of Nazareth, anointed of the Holy Ghost, who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil: for God was with Him. In these lights we see Him, and in these lights we read His varied, wondrous history. He *imparted* the Holy Ghost, and yet was *anointed* with the Holy Ghost.

The Son came forth to take part of flesh and blood. So had the way and the grace of the eternal counsel run; so had our necessities required it. He was found "in fashion as a man." He was exercised in a life of entire dependence on God, and accomplished a death which (among other virtues) was in full subjection to Him. This was His covenant place, and in such place He acted and suffered to perfection; and thence came the services and the afflictions, the cries and the tears, the labours and the sorrows, of the Son of man on earth.

But still more: even now that He is in heaven, it is, in a great sense, the same life still. A promise awaited Him there, and that promise He received and lives on to this hour: "Sit on My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool," was said to Him as He ascended; and in the faith and hope of that word, He took His seat in heaven, "sat down on the right hand of God; from *henceforth expecting* till His enemies be made His footstool" (Heb. 1, 10). Here was hope answering promise, and this found in the heart of Jesus as He ascended and sat down in heaven, just as He was the believing One, and the hoping One, and the obedient One, and the serving One, when on this earth of ours.

And further still: in His onward ways of glory, will He not continue to be subject? Every tongue is to confess Him Lord; but is not this to be "to the glory of God the Father"? And when the Kingdom is given up, is it not still written, "Then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all"? And as subject thus to Him who puts all things under Him, so in the same regions of coming glory will it be His gracious delight to serve His saints; as we read: "He shall gird Himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them." And again: "He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes" (1 Cor. 15; Luke 12; Rev. 7).

## Chapter 4

"Received up into glory" (1 Tim. 3: 16).

In earlier days, the angels had desired to look into the things of Christ (1 Peter 1: 12). When these things themselves were manifested and accomplished, this desire was answered; for in the history, as we find it in the evangelists, the angels are set to be eyewitnesses of that which they had thus long desired to look into. They are privileged to find their place and their enjoyment in the history of Christ in "the mystery of godliness"; and to find it, just as of old they had found it, in the sanctuary of God. In that sanctuary, all, it is true, was for the use and blessing of sinners. The altars, and the laver and the mercy-seat, and all else, were provided for us. The action and the grace of the house of God were for sinners. But the cherubim gazed. They were set in that house to look at its deepest mysteries. And so, in the same condition shall we find them, in the day of the great originals, or of the heavenly things themselves, when "God was manifest in the flesh." For then, it is equally true, all was for the service and salvation of us sinners, or that God, so manifested, might be "preached unto the Gentiles," and "believed on in the world;" but still all was as surely for this end, that He might be "seen of angels."

Thus they took the same place in the sanctuary of old, and in the great mystery itself. They looked; they gazed; they were eyewitnesses. And further, the sight they took of the mystery was of the same intense and interested character as the cherubim had before expressed in the holy of holies. "And the cherubim spread out their wings on high, and covered with their wings over the mercy-seat, with their faces one to another; even to the mercy-seat-ward were the faces of the cherubim" (Ex. 37). And so, in the history of Christ, the True Ark, they will be thus again seen.

The angel of the Lord comes, in his commission and ministry from heaven, to announce to the shepherds of Bethlehem the birth of Jesus. But as soon as he had fulfilled his service, "suddenly there was with him a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men" (Luke 2). And when the time came for another

great event, and "God manifest in the flesh" was raised from the dead, soon to be "received up into glory," the angels are again present with the like intense and interested delight. At the sepulchre, as Mary Magdalene looked in, two of them were sitting, "one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain;" and at the crisis of the ascension itself, they are again present, instructing the men of Galilee in the further ways of Him who had just then gone up on high (John 20; Acts 1).

What hanging over the mercy-seat was all this! What cherubim-gaze again and again was this! This utterance of the heavenly host in the fields of Bethlehem was not part of their ministry to man, but an act of worship to God. They were not then instructing the shepherds, nor even formally addressing themselves to them; but breathing out the rapture in which their own spirits were held in thoughts of the One that had been then born. And so their attitude in the sepulchre. When Mary appears, they have, it is true, a word of sympathy for her; but there they were in the sepulchre before she had come, and there they would have been though she had never come. As the cherubim in the tabernacle had hung over the ark and mercy-seat, on either side one, so now in the sepulchre the angels hang over the place where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and the other at the feet.

What ways of *seeing* Jesus were these! As we read, "God was manifest in the flesh — seen of angels." Well may we, beloved, covet grace to have like utterances and like attitudes over Jesus. And well may we grieve over what in our hearts is short of this; great indeed as some of us know that to be. I believe that many of us need to be attracted more than we are wont to be by these things. Many of us have dwelt (if I may distinguish such things by such terms) more in the *light* of the knowledge of the divine *dispensations*, than in the *warmth* of such *mysteries* as Bethlehem, the garden, and the Mount of Olives, revealed to the enraptured angels. But in this we have been losers — losers in much of that communion which marked the path and the spirit of others in other days. My desire has been to turn to this "great sight," led that way by the condition of things around and among us. Glorious, I need not say, is the Object — the same Person, "God manifest in the flesh," followed by faith from the manger to the cross, from the cross through the grave up in resurrection, and thence to the present heavens, and eternal ages beyond them.

The Holy Ghost — in a way which we will now consider for a while — makes it His gracious business to aid this vision of faith, by carefully forming before us (so to express myself), the *links* between the parts or stages of this wondrous journey, "God was manifest in the flesh — received up into glory." By the apostle John, as our previous meditations may have led us to see, the Spirit very specially reveals or declares the link between "God" and "flesh" in the person of Jesus. We listen to this at the opening of his gospel and his epistle. I need not repeat it. But, of course, all the divine writings either assume or utter this truth, in their different ways, as well as John. But it is the other link, or that between "God was manifest in the flesh" and "glory" or the heavens, which is rather our *present* matter in the progress of these meditations; so that we will now pass on with evangelists and angels, from Bethlehem to the garden of the sepulchre, and to the Mount of Olives.

The Gospel by Matthew, in a general way, witnesses the resurrection. To be sure it does. The angels at the tomb declare it; the women on the road back to the city hold the feet of the risen Saviour; and the disciples meet Him on the mountain in Galilee.

Mark tells of several appearances of the Lord, after His resurrection, to His own whom He had chosen; as, to Mary Magdalene, to two of them as they walked into the country, and to the eleven as they sat at meat.

Luke, however, goes more carefully into the *proofs* which Jesus gave His disciples, that it was indeed He Himself, and none other, who was in the midst of them again. He eats before them. He shows them His hands and His side. He tells them that a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as they saw He had. He shows them out of the Psalms, and out of the prophets, that thus it was to be.

John has his own peculiar style still, while dealing with this common testimony. In his gospel, we may say, all with the Lord is strength and victory; and so is it at the sepulchre, as well as everywhere else. When the disciples visit it, they see the linen clothes lying, and the napkin, that was about the Lord's head, wrapped together in a place by itself. There was no disturbance, no symptom of effort or of struggle, no sign as though something arduous had been accomplished there. All is as the trophy and witness of victory, rather than the heat and strife of battle. "Bless, bless the *Conqueror* slain," is the voice from the tomb, as it is opened before us by John. And if the place thus speak, so does the Lord Himself afterwards. It is not that He verifies His resurrection after the same manner as we find Him doing in Luke. He does not, so properly, give them *sensible* signs that He Himself was in the midst of them again. He does not eat and drink with them here, as He had done there. The broiled fish and the honeycomb are not called in to stand in evidence. But in other courts, so to speak, the truth of His resurrection is recorded. He makes it good to the *hearts* and to the *consciences* of His disciples. His voice on the ear of Mary tells her who He was, because her heart had been familiar with that name on those lips; and His pierced hands and side were shown, that they might speak peace to the conscience of the others, in the assurance of the accepted sacrifice; yea, even to the drawing out, from the depths and secrets of the soul of one of them, the cry of thorough conviction, "My Lord and my God! "

Thus do the evangelists lead us into the garden of the sepulchre. The Mount of Olives has its witnesses likewise — the ascension as well as the resurrection of Jesus. And again I would say, To be sure it has.

Neither Matthew nor John, however, declares it. The Lord is still on the mountain in Galilee when Matthew's Gospel closes. Neither does John take us to the Mount of Olives or to Bethany, the same thing. In a parabolic action, as I judge, after the disciples had dined in His presence on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, He intimates His going up to the Father's house, and their following Him there; but it is not the ascension itself; it is not the scene at Bethany; it is not the actual translation of the Lord from earth to heaven (John 21).

Mark, however, asserts the fact: When the Lord had done speaking with His disciples, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. Here the fact, the very moment, of the ascension is declared. But, I may say, that is all. It is simply the ascension of One who had all rights and honours belonging to Him, and awaiting Him on high; but among the disciples there is no communion, in spirit, with that event. The story in Mark does not so much as tell us whether or not the disciples were eyewitnesses of it.

But Luke gives us something quite beyond this. In his Gospel, the ascension of the Lord is witnessed by eyes and hearts which had, and felt they had, their own immediate and personal interest in it: "And He led them out as far as to Bethany, and He lifted up His hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven. And they worshipped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy; and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God."

Thus, then, as the risen Man, from among a throng of witnesses that He was indeed the same Jesus, Jesus reaches the heavens. And though a cloud received Him out of their sight, He was thus

known to be beyond it, in the highest, *the same Jesus still*. Jesus, who had eaten with them in the days of His sojourn with them, had now eaten with them in His risen days. Jesus, who had given them draughts of fishes in the days of His sojourn with them, had now given them draughts of fishes in His risen days. Jesus, who had blessed the meat and given it to them then, had done so in like manner now: and this was He who had now ascended in their sight. How are all the stages of this wondrous journey thus tracked distinctly, though variously, for us, by the same Spirit, in the evangelists! We hold the same blessed One in view at Bethlehem, in the garden of the resurrection, and at the mount of the ascension. Manifest in flesh, the Son journeyed from Bethlehem to Calvary. Risen from the dead, with His wounded hands and side, He ate and drank with His disciples during forty days; and then, with the same wounded hands and side, He ascended the heavens. He gave them counsel after He rose, as He had done before. He entrusted a commission and ministry to them then, as before. He knew them, and called them by name, just as before. And, at the last, when they looked after Him as though they had lost Him for ever, the angel appears to them to tell them that "this same Jesus" had other ways still to accomplish for them: "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? THIS SAME JESUS, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven."

And this is the secret or the principle of all divine religion. It is "the mystery of godliness." Nothing recovers man to the knowledge and worship of God, but the understanding and faith of this, through the Spirit. This is the truth which forms and fills the, house of God: "God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory."

Do we, indeed, beloved, vividly and constantly hold this one Person in view from first to last? He journeyed through the fatigues and sorrows of life, died upon the cross, rose from the bowels of the earth, and ascended to the very highest place in heaven. The links are formed never to be broken, though they bind together the highest and the lowest. The Spirit holds them in our view, as He has formed them, and holds them in view at times with divine desire and delight. In such breathings as Psalms 23 and 24, how rapidly does He carry His prophet from the lowly life of faith, of dependence, and of hope, which Jesus passed here in the days of His flesh, onward to the day of His entrance as "the Lord mighty in battle," "the Lord of hosts," "the King of glory," into the "everlasting doors" of His millennial Jerusalem!

Are we, in spirit, on that road with Him also? And as a further question for our souls, which may well humble some of us afresh, Are we, in real, living power, with our Lord in the *present* stage of this mysterious journey? For He is still in this world, the *rejected* Christ. How far are we, in spirit, with Him as such? Are we considering "this poor man," or continuing with Jesus in His temptations? (Ps. 41: 1; Luke 22: 28.) "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?" (James 4: 4) Jesus was no more any *one* in the world after His resurrection than He had been before it. The resurrection made no difference as to this. The world was no more to Him then than it had been in other days, when, as we know, He had not where to lay His head. He left it for heaven then, as He had left it for Calvary before. When He was born, the manger at Bethlehem received Him: now, when risen from the dead, heaven receives Him. As born, He had proposed Himself to the faith and acceptance of Israel; but it was to be refused by Israel. As risen, He published Himself through the apostles to Israel again; but it was to be refused by Israel again; and Jesus is still the Stranger here. The present time is still the age of His rejection. He was a lonely One on the road from Jerusalem to Emmaus, though then the Risen Man, as He had been before on the way from Bethlehem to Calvary. But, beloved, is it in such a

character that you and I have joined Him on the road?

Many a thought would be too much for us, were we not trained for it after the method of the divine wisdom: "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now," says our divine Teacher to us; and in this way His "gentleness" makes us "great." We are prepared for enlarging communications from Him. Jesus can annihilate distances as He can control oppositions. On the Lake of Tiberias He trod the troubled waters outside, and then, when He entered the ship, immediately it was at the land whither they went (John 6: 18-21).

As the irradiations from the hidden glory that was there break through, after these manners, and enter the soul, how welcome they are! And what have we to do but to open all the avenues of the soul, and let Jesus enter? Faith listens. The Lord would have had the poor Samaritan at the well simply a listener from beginning to end. She may speak, and does speak; but what are her words but the witness of this: that understanding, conscience and heart were all opening to His words? And when the whole vessel was open, Jesus poured Himself in.

It is this listening attitude of faith we long more simply to occupy; and surely specially so, when tracing these profound and holy subjects.

The links between the parts of this great mystery, the transition-moments in the progress of the way of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, we have been now shortly considering with the evangelists. In other words, we have been with angels and with disciples at Bethlehem, in the garden of the sepulchre, and on the mount of Olives.

As we enter, immediately afterwards, the book of the Acts of the Apostles, we shall be struck with this: that what fills the mind of the apostles, and forms the great burthen or thought of all their preaching, is that Jesus, Jesus of Nazareth, the Man denied and crucified here, was now in heaven. Peter makes it his first and constant business to link with the fact of the ascension of Jesus of Nazareth all the grace and power which were then (in that day of his testimony) ministered from heaven in the midst of the Jewish people. On the descent of the Holy Ghost, the prophecy of Joel becomes (properly and naturally, nay, necessarily) the text of Peter's sermon. But the manner in which he preaches from it is this: he finds Jesus of Nazareth, the Crucified One, in it. He declares the man who had been lately approved of God in the midst of them by miracles and signs, to be now in heaven, and, as the *God* spoken of in that prophecy, to have now shed forth the promised Spirit; and moreover, that this same One was the *Lord* spoken of in that prophecy, whose *name* was for *salvation* now, but whose *day* would be for *judgment* by and by.

This is Peter's sermon and exhortation upon the text from Joel. It is the Man now in heaven whom he finds or declares in all the parts of that magnificent oracle. If John, I may here say, find in Jesus on earth full, unsullied glory; so Peter now finds in heaven, in the place there of all grace and salvation and power, the Son of man, the Nazarene, who had been despised and rejected here.

So, in the next chapter, it is Jesus of Nazareth, (the name of all slight and scorn among men) now glorified on high, of whom Peter speaks, and by whom he acts. The lame beggar at the Beautiful gate of the temple is healed by the faith of that name; and then the apostle further declares, that this same Jesus the heavens had received, and would retain, till the time when His restored presence should bring refreshing and restitution with it. And being challenged by the rulers, in the chapter that follows, on the ground of this miracle of healing, Peter publishes this same despised Jesus of Nazareth, as the Stone set at nought by the builders here, but made "the Head of the corner" in heaven.

This is the name, and this the testimony. Whether we see the apostles in the face of the power of the world, or in the midst of the sorrows of the children of men, this is their only thought - here all their art is found, their virtue and their strength. And immediately after this, this same name of Jesus is all their plea and ground of confidence in the presence of God. The weak One, as men might say, the "Holy Child Jesus," whom Israel and the Gentiles, Herod and Pilate, the kings of the earth and the rulers, had stood against and refused, this One they hope in before God. They know Him in the sanctuary now, as they had known Him among men before. And mark their different style in using that name. Mark the *assurance* with which they pledge it to the needy, the *boldness* with which they contend for it before the world, and the *tenderness* ("Thy Holy Child Jesus") with which they plead it with God. The beggar at the gate of the temple had been healed by it; and the place where they had thus named that name before God is shaken, and they are filled with the Holy Ghost. All power is now owned in heaven as belonging to that name, as before all power had flowed out of it here. Yea, more; the world, or hell itself, is moved at it, for the high priest and the Sadducees are filled with indignation, and cast the witnesses of that name into the common prison.

With all this, Peter, in the fullest manner, sets forth the weakness and humiliation of the Jesus whom he was thus again and again testifying to be now exalted to the highest in the heavens. This is very striking in these early preachings of his. Jesus had been slain, Peter says, set at nought, delivered up, denied, taken, killed, hanged on a tree. He puts no restraint on language like this. And, in the same spirit, he seems to glory in the despised name of "Jesus of Nazareth." He has it on his lips again and again. All the forms of sorrow and of scorn which "the Prince of life," "the Holy One and the Just," wore or carried in His heart, His body, or His circumstances here among men, are remembered and rehearsed by him in his fine, vivid style, under the fresh anointing of the Holy Ghost. This is the One he glories in, all through these chapters of his earliest ministry to the Jews. (Acts 2, Acts 5) And yet this One who had been thus dealt with here he declares to be God's great Ordinance, "Lord and Christ." That a Man in heaven was David's Lord; that the Seed of Abraham was raised up for blessing; that the promised Prophet, like unto Moses, was ascended on high; - this was the word that he spoke with boldness.

And as this *anointing* of the Holy Ghost thus leads Peter to testify of the Man in heaven, of Jesus of Nazareth, once denied here, but now exalted there, so *rapture* in the Holy Ghost, immediately afterwards, does the same for Stephen. If Peter *speaks* of Him in heaven, Stephen *sees* Him in heaven. The preacher declares Him without fear, and the martyr sees Him without a cloud: "But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, and said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God." (Acts 7)

Thus, after this manner, the Spirit gives Jesus in heaven to the lips and the eyes of His different witnesses. But it is blessed to add, that Jesus in heaven was as great a reality to Peter as He was to Stephen, though Peter knew that mystery under an anointing only, while Stephen knew it under a rapture, in the Holy Ghost. May we, beloved, know it in our own souls in more of the like power. May we enjoy it in the light of the Spirit now, as we shall enjoy it in more than the vision of it for ever.

Such is the first preaching in the Acts, after the great link had been formed between "God" and "flesh," and between "God manifest in the flesh" and "heaven." But what a vast and wondrous scene is in this way kept within the view of faith; and all for our blessing and light and joy! We see the links between heaven and earth, God and sinners, the Father and the manger at Bethlehem, the cross of Calvary and the throne of the Majesty in the highest. Could human thought have ever

reached or planned such a scene as that? But there it is before us, a great reality at this hour, and for eternity. "Now that He ascended, what is it but that He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things" (Eph. 4). The Spirit had revealed the God of glory in the Babe of Bethlehem: and now, when all power and grace is ministered from heaven, the shedding forth of the Holy Ghost, the healing of the sorrows of the children of men, the salvation of sinners, the promise of days of refreshing and restitution, — all this is found and declared to be in and from the Man glorified in heaven.

What divine mysteries are these, passing all conception of the heart! "Whom do men say that I, the Son of man, am?" was the inquiry of the Lord in the day of His humiliation; and the only right answer was this: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." And now, in this season, when it is asked of the apostles in the day of their preaching, "By what power, or by what name, have ye done this?" the divine answer is this: "By the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by Him doth this man stand here before you whole."

This is the One, the same One, the only One. He has left His memorial in "the lower parts of the earth," and borne it with Him upward, "far above all heavens." He fills all things. God has been here; Man is there. That God was here on earth in full glory was told to faith in other days, the Son among the children of men; that Man was now in heaven, having passed in there from amid the slight and the scorn, the weakness and the humiliation of the scene here, was now told to faith, in like manner, in these days. And faith apprehends the mystery, that it is the One, the same One, the only One; that He who ascended is He also who had descended; that He who descended is the same also that ascended.

"His glorious meetness," to use very much the language of another, "for all the acts and duties of His mediatory office is resolved into the union of His two natures in the same Person. He who was conceived and born of the Virgin was Emmanuel; that is, "God was manifest in the flesh": "unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; . . . and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace" (Isa. 9). The One who spake to the Jews, and as a man was then only a little more than thirty years old, was "before Abraham" (John 8). The perfect and complete work of Christ in every act of His office, in all that He did, in all that He suffered, in all that He continueth to do, is the act and work of *His whole person*."

This is the mystery. Faith apprehends it in the full certainty of the soul. And faith apprehends more of the same mystery, and listens with intelligence and delight to this: "Justified in the Spirit, . . . preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world." God, though manifest in the flesh, was justified in the Spirit. All in Him was perfect *moral* glory; all was, to the divine mind, and for the divine acceptance, infinitely, ineffably right. *We* have need of a justification from without or through another. - *Nothing* in *us* stands justified in itself: *all* in *Him* did so. Not a syllable, not a breath, not a motion, which was not an offering acceptable, well-pleasing to God, an odour of sweetest smell: "He was as spotless as Man as He was as God; as unsullied in the midst of the world's pollutions as when daily the Father's delight before the world began." Faith knows this, and knows it well, without a thought to cloud it. And, therefore, faith also knows that His history, the toils and sorrows, the death and resurrection of this blessed One, "God manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit," was not for Himself, as though He needed it, but for sinners, that He and His precious history might be "preached unto the Gentiles," and "believed on in the world." In the sacrifice He accomplished, in the righteousness He wrought out and brought in, He is presented to

sinners, even the most distant, be they who they may, far off or near, Gentile or Jew, that they may trust in Him, though still in this world, and be assured of their justification through Him.

Time would fail me to watch and follow, throughout, the Word of God upon this mystery; but I would add that among all the epistles, as they follow the book of the Acts, that to the Hebrews is pre-eminent in doing for our souls service connected with it. "Received up into glory" is a voice heard throughout that divine oracle from beginning to end. Would that the soul had in power what the mind has in enjoyment, when listening to such a voice! One *cannot* write but with the sense of this, and one *would not* write but with the confession of it.

Each chapter of this wondrous writing, or each stage or period in the argument of it, gives us a sight of the ascended Jesus. It opens directly and at once with this. *It seems as though it were forcing this object upon us somewhat abruptly.* (Heb. 1) Most welcome indeed all this is to the soul, but this is the style of it. The Son, the brightness of God's glory, and the express image of His person, is seen — after having by Himself purged our sins here — in His ascended place in heaven, inheriting there a name more excellent than that of angels, getting title to a throne which is to endure forever, and filling a seat in highest dignity and power, till His enemies be made His footstool.

The second chapter (Heb. 2) gives us another sight of the same object. The Sanctifier having descended to be the Kinsman of the seed of Abraham, and to do for them a kinsman's part, is then in His assumed manhood declared to have re-ascended the heavens, there to fulfil for us the services of a merciful and faithful High Priest. And this scripture, I may say, so abounds with this thought that this same chapter gives us this same object a second time. It shows us, as from Ps. 8, that "wondrous Man," made for a season lower than the angels, now crowned on high with glory and honour.

The next chapters (Heb. 3, 4) are but parenthetical, incidental to previous teaching; but still this sight of Christ is kept before us. He is declared to have been here on earth, tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin; but now to have passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, to give us grace and help from the sanctuary there.

In the next subject, that of the priesthood (Heb. 5-7) we have the same ascended Lord still in view. The Son is declared to be made a Priest, "higher than the heavens." He had descended to come to the tribe of Judah, and to perfect Himself in the days of His flesh here; but was now ascended again, the Author of eternal salvation to all that obey Him.

And so, in the next great matter dealt with — the covenants (Heb. 8, 9). Immediately on their opening before us, we see Jesus in the tabernacle in the heavens; that tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man; and therefrom ministering "the better covenant."

So again, in the next chapter (Heb. 10) when the victim is the thought, as the priesthood and the covenants had been before, we have the same ascended Jesus in view. It is the One who could say, "Lo, I come!" that is, revealed as having sanctified sinners in the body prepared for Him on earth; but then to have gained the heavens; opening for us a way to tread with all boldness those highest, purest, brightest courts of God's presence.

Here the doctrine of the epistle formally closes; and, after this manner, we see, in various lights and characters, the same glorious and wondrous Person, the ascended Son of God. And, I may add, so rich is this epistle in this thought, so faithful is it to this its object, that after we formally leave the doctrine of it, we soon find that we have not left this great mystery — Christ in

heaven. In the practical warnings that follow, we find it still. Jesus, as "the Leader and Completer of faith," is seen at the end of His life of faith *in heaven*: "Looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of faith. who, for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb. 12: 2). Thus is He seen in heaven in this new character: the life of faith leads Him thither; as all that He did and suffered for us in divine grace leads Him thither. And there He shines before the eye of faith: and had we but senses to discern it, and a heart to enjoy it, we should know it — that heaven itself is bright with beauty and glory unknown to it before, since Jesus in all these characters, won and acquired on earth, and for us sinners, has reached there.

And this is the mystery; the assumption of flesh and blood by the Son, so that He became the Kinsman of the seed of Abraham, and then the assumption of that wondrous Person into heaven: "God was manifest in the flesh — received up into glory." And blessed is the task of inspecting, as we have been seeking to do, these mysterious links. And these links are formed never to be broken, though they bind together what lay at distances beyond all created thought to reach. The Spirit holds them in our view, as He formed them for the divine delight and glory, according to divine, eternal counsels. "The Word made flesh" of John 1 is the "good thing" out of Nazareth (vers. 14, 46). The Emmanuel of Matthew was the Babe who lay in the manger at Bethlehem. In the midst of the throne, there has been seen a Lamb, as it had been slain (Rev. 5). In the Person of the One whose lips were telling of wisdom suited to the commonest traffic of human life, He was found who had been set up, in the secrecy of the Godhead-Persons, as the foundation of all the divine way (Prov. 8). In the bush of Horeb, there was the God of Abraham; in the cloud of the wilderness, the Glory; in the armed man of Jericho, the Captain of the Lord's host; in the stranger that visited Gideon in his threshing-floor, and Manoah in his field, the God to whom alone worship is due throughout the whole creation.

These are among the witnesses that (in unspeakable grace, and for the divine delight and glory) the highest and the lowest are linked together: "No man hath ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven" (John 3: 13).

How finely that thought of the apostle, which we get in the epistle to the Ephesians, rises upon the renewed mind: "Now that He ascended, what is it but that He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?" (Eph. 4: 8). The dignities, the offices, the services, which the ascended One fills and renders, are of so eminent a character, that they tell us He must be He who had already descended, already been One in heaven "above all;" as it is written: "He that cometh from above is above all" (John 3: 31). The dignity of His person is involved in this mystery of His ascending and descending. That challenge in Ephesians 4: 8, 9 seems to intimate this; and the Epistle to the Hebrews opens the reasons of it more fully. For it tells us, that ere He ascended, He had accomplished the purging of our sins; that ere He ascended, He had destroyed him that had the power of death, and delivered his captives; that ere He ascended, He had perfected Himself as the Author of eternal salvation to such as we are (Heb. 1, 2, 5). In these characters, and in such others, He went up: and when He had actually ascended, He filled the true sanctuary in the heavens, the tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man, there to secure to us an eternal inheritance (Heb. 8, 9).

Who could have ascended in such glory and strength as this and far more than this — but One who had been already in heaven "above all"? "Now that He ascended, what is it but that He also descended first?" The offices He fills tell who He is. His sufferings, even in weakness and humiliation, bespeak His person in full divine glory.

But then again: "He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things." This follows, and this tells us the boundlessness of His sovereignty, as the other had revealed to us the dignity of His person. In His works, His journeys, His triumphs, the highest and the lowest regions are visited by Him. He has been on earth, in the lower parts of the earth. He has been in the grave, the territory of the power of death. He is now in the highest heavens, having passed by all principalities and powers. His realms and dominions are thus shown to the eye of faith. No pinnacle of the temple, no exceeding high mountain, could have afforded such a sight. But it is shown to faith: "He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things."

This is the mystery. It is the same Jesus, Emmanuel, the Son, and yet the Kinsman of the seed of Abraham. And here I would say — for there is a call for it — I know we are not to confound the natures in this glorious and blessed One. I fully bow in faith to the truth that the Sanctifier took part of flesh and blood. I avow with my whole soul the true humanity in His person; but it was not an *imperfect* humanity, in the condition or under the results of sin, in any wise. But I ask, with that, Is there not some unsuspected and yet real unbelief touching the mystery of the Person in the minds of many? Is the *undividedness* of the Person throughout all the periods and transitions of this glorious, mysterious history kept in the view of the soul?

I would have grace to delight myself in the language of the Holy Ghost, and speak of "the Man Christ Jesus." The "Man" that is risen is declared to be the pledge of resurrection to us (1 Cor. 15: 21). The "Man" that is ascended is the great assurance to us that our interests are, every moment, before God in heaven (1 Tim. 2: 5). The "Man" to return from heaven by and by will he the security and joy of the coming kingdom (Ps. 8). The mystery of the "Man, *obedient, dead, raised, ascended, and returned*, thus sustains, we may say, the whole counsel of God. But still, again I say, the Person in its undividedness is to be kept in the view of the soul. "The perfect and complete work of Christ in every act of His office, in all that He did, in all that He suffered, in all that He continueth to do, is the act and work of His whole person." Yea, indeed, and His whole Person was on the cross, as everywhere else. The Person was the sacrifice, and in that Person was the Son, "over all, God blessed forever." He "gave up the ghost," though He died under God's judgment against sin; and though He was by the hands of wicked men crucified and slain. And this is an infinite mercy.

It was *Himself*, beloved, from first to last. He trod the mysterious way Himself, though He trod it unaided and alone. None other than He, "God manifest in the flesh," could have been there. The Son became the Lamb for the altar here; and then the Lamb that was slain reached the place of glory, far above all heavens. It is the Person which gives efficacy to all. Services would be nothing; sorrows would be nothing; death, resurrection, and ascension, all would be nothing (could we conceive them), if Jesus were not the one He is. His person is the "Rock;" therefore "His work is perfect" (Deut. 32: 4). It is the mystery of mysteries. But He is not presented for our discussion, but for our apprehension, faith, confidence, love and worship.

God and man, heaven and earth, are together before the thoughts of faith in this great mystery. God has been here on earth; and that too in flesh; and Man glorified is there on high in heaven. It is the *links* between these great things that I have sought to look at particularly; fitted as this exercise is to make the things of heaven and eternity *real* and *near* to our souls. The moral distances are infinite; but the distances themselves are now nothing. Nature, beset with lusts and worldliness, makes it hard indeed for the soul to pass in; but the distance itself is nothing. Jesus, after He was in heaven, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, showed Himself to Stephen; and,

in a like moment of time, shone across the path of Saul of Tarsus, as he travelled from Jerusalem to Damascus; and though we have not like visits from the glory, the nearness and reality of it are pledged afresh, and made good to our souls, by the sight of these great mysteries.

And is not the kingdom to be the exhibition of the results of these mysterious links? For heaven and earth, in their different ways, shall witness and celebrate them. "Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad" (Ps. 96: 11). The Church, one with this exalted, glorified Man, will be on high, far above all principalities and powers. The ladder which Jacob saw, shall (in the mystery) be set up; the Son of man shall be the centre as well as the stay of all this predestinated system of glory and of government. The nations shall learn war no more. The stick of Judah and the stick of Ephraim shall be one, and one King shall be to them both. "It shall come to pass in that day, I will hear, saith the Lord, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth; and the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil; and they shall hear Jezreel" (Hosea 2: 21, 22). And what is all this, but the happy fruit, to be gathered in the days of the coming kingdom, of these links which, as we have been seeing, have been already formed? The germs and principles of all these manifestations in heaven and on earth, among angels, and men, and all creatures, and the creation itself, are found, so to speak, at Bethlehem, in the garden of the sepulchre, and at the Mount of Olives.

May the heart and conscience learn the lesson. May we gaze on these mysterious links of which we have been speaking, more in company with the angels in the fields of Bethlehem, and in the tomb of Jesus, or, I might here add, more in the dear mind of the disciples on the Mount of Olives, as they gazed there on the glorious link which was then forming between Jesus and the heavens. See them in Luke 24: 44-52. They were then like Israel in Leviticus 23: 9-14, celebrating the waving of the sheaf of first-fruits. Jesus, the True First-fruits, had just then been gathered, and He had, as their divine Teacher, expounded to them the mystery of the gathered sheaf, that is, the meaning of His resurrection. They then watched that mysterious moment They looked as their risen Lord ascended, and they kept the feast as with a sacrifice of burnt-offering. "They worshipped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy."

Surely we may say, "Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory."

He was received up gloriously, or in glory, as well as into glory. He entered the light of the highest heavens; but He entered it glorious Himself. and there He now is, a glorious body, the pattern of what ours is to be. The real manhood is there, in the highest heavens; but it is glorified. And though thus glorified, yet it is the real human nature still. "Jesus is in the same body in heaven wherein He conversed here on earth. This is that 'Holy Thing' which was framed immediately by the Holy Ghost in the womb of the virgin. This is that 'Holy One' which, when He was in the grave, saw no corruption. This is that body' which was offered for us, and wherein He bare our sins on the tree. That individual nature wherein He suffered all sorts of reproaches, contempts, and miseries, is now unchangeably seated in incomprehensible glory. The body which was pierced is that which all eyes shall see, and no other. That tabernacle shall never be folded up. The person of Christ, and therein His human nature, shall be the eternal object of divine glory, praise, and worship."

Thus speaks one for our edification and comfort. And one of our own poets has thus sung of Him, looking after Him up to heaven:

"There the blest Man, my Saviour, sits,

The God, how bright He shines,  
And scatters infinite delights  
On all the happy minds.  
"Seraphs, with elevated strains,  
Circle the throne around,  
And charm and fix the starry plains  
With an immortal sound.  
"Jesus the Lord their harps employs;  
Jesus, my Lord, they sing;  
Jesus, the name of both our joys,  
Sounds sweet on every string."

"His present state is a state of the highest glory of exaltation above the whole creation of God, and above every name that is or can be named."

He was received up with the unspeakable love, and with the boundless, unmeasured acceptance of God the Father; as He had wrought out and accomplished the purpose of His grace in the redemption of sinners. He was received up in triumph, having led captivity captive, and spoiled principalities and powers; and there He took His seat at the right hand of the Majesty on high, with all power given to Him in heaven and on earth. He was received up as the Head of His body, the Church, so that out of the fulness of the Godhead which dwelleth in Him bodily, it "increaseth with the increase of God," through the Holy Ghost given to us. He was received up as into a temple, there to appear in the presence of God for us, there to sit as the Minister of the true tabernacle, there to make continual intercession for us; and in this and in like ways of grace to serve in His body before the throne. He was received up as our Forerunner, as into the Father's house, there to prepare a place for the children, that where He is, there they may be also. And further: as He sat down in heaven, He sat down as an expectant; He waits to come forth to meet His saints in the air, that they may be with Him forever; He waits till He is sent to bring times of refreshing to the earth again by His own presence; and He waits till His enemies be made His footstool.

Cold is the affection, and small the energy; but in principle I know nothing at all worthy of such visions of faith, but that spirit of *devotedness* that can say with Paul, "I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound," and that spirit of *desire* which looks after Him still, and says, Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.

Beloved, our God has joined Himself thus by links which never can be broken, which His own delight and glory in them, as well as His counsel and strength, will secure forever. These links we have gazed at, mysterious and precious as they are. Himself has formed them, yea, Himself constitutes them, faith understands them; and on the Rock of Ages the believing sinner rests, and rests in peace and safety.

With my whole soul I say, May these meditations help to make these objects of faith a little nearer and more real to us! They will be worthless if they tend not to glorify Him in our thoughts, to give Him, with a fresh pressure, beloved, to our hearts.

"Nearer, my God, to Thee,

Nearer to Thee."

May that be the breathing of our souls, till we see Him. Amen.

## Chapter 5

"Thou hast put all things in subjection under His feet"

(Heb. 2: 8).

In the opening of the Gospel of Luke one is struck by the deep and vivid expression of intimacy between heaven and earth which is found and felt to be there. It is man's necessity and weakness which open the heavenly door; but once open, it is thrown wide open.

Zacharias and Elizabeth were both righteous before God, walking in all the ordinances and commandments of the Lord blameless. They were of the priestly family, the seed of Aaron. But it was not their righteousness that opened heaven to them, but their need and infirmities. Elizabeth was barren, and they were both now well stricken in age; and their point of real blessing lay there, lay in their sorrow and weakness. For to the barren wife and the childless husband Gabriel comes with a word of promise from heaven. But, as we said, the door of heaven, being once opened, is flung wide open. Angels are all action and joy; and no matter whether it be the temple in the royal, holy city, or a distant village in despised Galilee, Gabriel with equal readiness visits either and both. The glory of God, as well as hosts of angels, fills also the fields of Bethlehem. The Holy Ghost, in His divine light and power, fills His elect vessels, and the Son Himself assumes flesh. Heaven and earth are very near each other. The action and the joy which had begun on high, are felt and answered from the scene here below. The shepherds, the favoured women, the aged priest, and the *unborn child*, share the holy enthusiasm of the moment, and waiting saints go forth from the place of expectation.

I know no scripture finer than Luke 1, 2 in this character. It was as in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye; but a blessed transition was accomplished -

"Heaven comes down our soul to greet."

Earth learns, and learns in the mouth of these wondrous witnesses, that the door of heaven was indeed thrown wide open to her. And the intimacy was deep, as the services and grace were precious. The angel calls Zacharias and Mary by their names, and speaks to them also of Elizabeth by name — a language or style which lets the heart know its meaning at once.

We might bless the Lord for this; and we should do so, did we a little more simply, a little more believingly, walk on in the sense of the nearness and *reality* of heaven.

Jacob and Stephen, in their day, and in like manner, had heaven opened to them, and were given also to know their own personal interest in it. A ladder was set up in the sight of Jacob, and as the top of it entered heaven, the foot of it rested just on the spot where he was lying. It was a mean, dishonoured place; the witness, too, of his wrong, as well as of his misery. But the ladder adopted it; and the voice of the Lord, who was in His glory above it, spoke to Jacob of blessing, of security, of guidance, and of inheritance.

Stephen, likewise, saw the heaven opened, and the glory there; but the Son of man was *standing* at the right hand of God. And this told the martyr, as the ladder had told the patriarch, that he and his circumstances at that very moment were the thought and object of heaven.

Thus was it, after these same ways, in these distant days of Jacob and Stephen — distant from each other as well as distant from us. But time makes no difference. Faith sees these same opened heavens *now*; and learns, too, like those of old, that they are ours. It learns that there are links between them and our circumstances. In the eye of faith there is a ladder., heaven stands open before it, and "the Man Christ Jesus" is seen there — the Mediator of the new covenant, the High-Priest, the Advocate with the Father, the One who sympathizes; the Forerunner, too, into those places of glory.

Jesus has ascended, and the present action in the heavens, where He is gone, is known by faith to be all "for us." Our need, as well as our sorrow, is in remembrance there. Jacob's sufferings were those of a penitent; Stephen's were a martyr's: but heaven was the heaven of Jacob as well as of Stephen.

But, though this is so, this is not all. Faith knows another secret or mystery in heaven. It knows that if the Lord took, as He surely did take, His seat there in these characters of grace for us, He took it likewise as the One whom man had despised and the world rejected. This is equally among the apprehensions which faith takes of the heavens where the Lord Jesus, the Son of God, is now seated.

The Lord Jesus died under the hand of *God*; His soul was made an offering for sin. "It pleased the Lord to bruise Him" (Isa. 53: 10). And He rose as the One who had thus died, His resurrection witnessing the acceptance of the sacrifice; and He ascended the heavens in the same character also, there to carry on the purpose of the grace of God in such a death and such a resurrection.

But the Lord Jesus died also under the hand of *man*; that is, man's wicked hand was in that death, as well and as surely as God's infinite grace. He was refused by the husbandmen, hated by the world, cast out, crucified, and slain. This is another character of His death. And His resurrection and ascension were in that character also, parts or stages in the history of One whom the world had rejected; His resurrection, consequently, pledging the judgment of the world (Acts 17: 31); and His ascension leading Him to the expectation of a day when His enemies are to be made His footstool (Heb. 10: 13).

These distinctions give us to understand the different sights which faith, in the light of the Word, gets of the ascended Jesus; seeing Him, as it does, in priestly grace there, making intercession for us, and, at the same time, awaiting, as in expectation, the judgment of His enemies.

The gospel publishes the *first* of these mysteries; that is, the death of the Lord Jesus under the hand of God for us, and His resurrection and ascension as in character with such a death. And this gospel is rightly gloried in as all our salvation.\* But the *second* of these mysteries, the death of the Lord under the hand of *man*, may be somewhat forgotten, while the first of them is thus rightly gloried in. But this is a serious mistake in the soul of a saint, or in the calculations and testimony of the Church. For let this great fact, this second mystery, as we have called it, the death of the Lord Jesus under the hand of *man*, be forgotten, as it may be on earth, it is surely not forgotten in heaven. It is not, it is true, the occasion of *present* action there; it is the death of the *Victim*, and the intercessions of the Priest upon such death, which form the action that is there now. But as surely it will be the death of *the divine Martyr*, the death of the Son of God at the hand of *man*, that will give character to the action there by and by.

\*In preaching the gospel, the *sin of man* in putting the Lord of glory to death will surely be declared; but it is the death of the Lord as *the Lamb of God* which is the ground of the grace published by the gospel; and that is what I mean here.

These distinctions are very clearly preserved in Scripture. Heaven, as it is opened to us in Rev. 4, is a very different heaven, differently minded, I mean, differently moved and occupied, from the heaven presented to us in the epistle to the Hebrews; just as different, I may say, as the death of the Lord Jesus looked at as under man's hand (that is, perpetrated *by us*), and as under God's hand; that is, accomplished *for us*. We may have the same objects or materials in each, but they will be seen in very different connections. We have, for instance, a throne and a temple in each of these heavens, the heaven of Hebrews and the heaven of the Apocalypse; but the contrasts between them are very solemnly preserved. In Hebrews, the throne is a throne of grace, and whatever our present time of need and sorrow may require is found there and obtained there. In the Apocalypse, the throne is one of judgment, and the instruments and agencies of wrath and of vengeance are seen to be lying before and around it. In Hebrews, the sanctuary, or temple, is occupied by the High-Priest of our profession, the Mediator of the better covenant, serving there in the virtue of His own most precious blood. In the Apocalypse, the temple gives fearful notes of preparation for judgment. Lightning and earthquake and voices attend the opening of it. It is as the temple seen by the prophet, filled with smoke, and the pillars of it shaking in token that the God to whom vengeance belongs was there in His glory (Isa. 6).

The sight we get of heaven in the Apocalypse is thus very solemn. It is the place of power furnishing itself with the instruments of judgment. Seals are opened, trumpets are blown, vials are emptied; but all this introducing some awful visitation of the earth. The altar that is there is not the altar of the epistle to the Hebrews, where the heavenly priesthood eat of the bread of life, but an altar that supplies penal fire for the earth. And there is also war there; and at the last it opens for Him whose name is called "The Word of God," whose vesture is dipped in blood, and who carries a sharp sword in His mouth, that with it He may smite the nations.

Surely this is heaven in a new character. And the contrast is very solemn. This is not the heaven which faith *now* apprehends, a sanctuary of peace filled with the provisions and witnesses of grace, but a heaven which tells us that though judgment is the Lord's strange work, yet that it is His work in due season. For heaven in its revolutions, is, as we may say, the place of the witness of *grace*, of *judgment*, and of *glory*. It is the heaven of *grace* now; it will become the heaven of *judgment* in the day of Rev. 4, and so continue throughout the action of the book of Apocalypse; and then at the close of that book, as we see in Rev. 21, 22, it becomes the heaven of *glory*.

The soul should be accustomed to this serious truth, that judgment precedes glory. I speak of these things in the progress of the history of the earth or the world. The believer has passed from death into life. There is no condemnation for him. He rises not to judgment but to life. But he ought to know, that in the progress of the divine history of the earth or the world judgment precedes glory. The kingdom will be seen in the *sword* or "rod of iron," ere it be seen in the *sceptre*. The Ancient of days sits in white garments on a throne of fiery flame with the books opened before Him, ere the Son of man comes to Him with the clouds of heaven to receive dominion (Ps. 2; Dan. 7).

These lessons are very clearly taught and marked in Scripture. In the day of Rev. 4 it is Christ *rejected* by man, and not Christ *accepted of God for sinners*, that has become its thought and object. And, accordingly, preparations are being made to avenge the wrongs of the Lord Jesus on the world, and to vindicate His rights in the earth: in other words, it is heaven beginning that action which is to seat Him in His Kingdom upon the judgment of His enemies.

But all this shows us again, according to my leading thought in these meditations on "the Son of God," how it is the *same* Person that is kept before us, and to be known by us, in each and all of

the stages or periods of the same great mystery. We are still, at whatever point we may have arrived, in company with the same Jesus. For these distinctions, which I have been now noticing, tell us that He has been received up into heaven, and is now seated there, in the very characters in which He had been before known and manifested here on earth, For He had been here as the One who accomplished the grace of God toward us sinners to perfection, and as the One who endured the enmity of the world in its full measure; and it is in these two characters, as we have now seen, that He is seated in heaven.

He does not quickly take this second character, or appear actively in heaven as the One who had been despised and rejected on earth. He lingers ere He reaches the heaven of the Apocalypse. And in this feature of character, in this delaying of His approaches to judgment, and tarrying in the place of grace, we have a very sweet expression of the Jesus whom faith has already known. For, when He was here, as the God of judgment He approached Jerusalem with a very measured step. He said to her, "How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings," ere He said, "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate" (Matt. 23: 37, 38). He lingered in the plains below, visiting every city and village of the land, in patient service of grace, ere He took His seat on the mount, to speak of judgment and of the desolations of Zion (Matt. 24: 3). And now of Him who, after this manner, trod softly the road which led Him to the Mount of Olives, the place of judgment, is it written, "The Lord . . . is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3: 10).\*

\*"Son of man" is the characteristic of His person when presented in His judicial glory, as also in His place of dominion in the earth (Ps. 8; John 5: 27; Matt. 19: 28).

How do we thus hold in view the same Person with like character attaching to Him, whether when He was here on earth, or as He is now in heaven, — the Person one, the moral one, though scenes and conditions change! "The grace that was in Christ in this world is the same with that which is in Him now in heaven." Comforting words! How truly should we know we speak truly when we say, *We know Him!* We have been considering Him from the beginning. He came down from heaven; He lay in the virgin's womb, and in the manger at Bethlehem; He traversed the earth in full, unsullied glory, though veiled; He died, and was buried; rose, and returned to heaven; and, as we have now been meditating, faith sees Him there, the One whom faith had known to be here, the very One, the Minister and Witness of the grace of God to man, the Bearer of man's full enmity against God, and yet the reluctant God of judgment.

But I must notice still more of this same Jesus, and something still more immediately in connection with my present meditation.

When the Lord Jesus Christ was here, He looked for His Kingdom. He offered Himself as her King, the Son of David, to the daughter of Zion. He took the form of the One who had been of old promised by the prophets, and entered the city "meek, and sitting upon an ass." In a still earlier day, His star, the star of the kingly Bethlehemite, had appeared in the eastern world, summoning the Gentiles to the Son of David, born in the city of David. But what He then looked for He found not: "His own received Him not." But He carried with Him to heaven this very same mind, this desire for His Kingdom! "A certain nobleman went into a far country, to receive for himself a kingdom." He thinks of His Kingdom, though now on the throne of the Father, as He had thought of it and looked for it when here. And I may again say, How strictly, in this fine characteristic, are we kept in communion with the *same* Jesus still! Once on earth He was, and now in heaven He is; but we know Him, after these manners, as the same Lord, — in person one, in purpose and desire one,

though places and conditions change. He was King of Israel when here, and with desire claimed His Kingdom; and being refused it at the hands of the citizens, He has received it in heaven, and in due time will return, in a day of the gladness of His heart, to administer it here, where at the first He sought it: "I saw in the night visions, and, behold, One like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought Him near before Him. And there was given Him dominion, and glory, and a Kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve Him: His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His Kingdom that which shall not be destroyed" (Dan. 7).

We are, after this manner, viewing the one Person, the same Jesus, and the heart prizes this when we think upon it. And there is one other feature of this identity, surpassing, yea, far surpassing, all that I have already noticed.

When He was here, He desired to be known by His disciples, to be discovered by them, sinners as they were, in some of His hidden glories. He rejoiced likewise in all the communications of His grace to faith. The faith which drew upon Him without reserve, the faith which used Him without ceremony, the faith which could outlive apparent neglect or repulse, was precious to Him. The sinner who would cling to Him in the face of the world's scorn, or would trust in Him all alone, without countenance or encouragement from others, was deeply welcome to Him. The soul that with freedom would ask for His presence, or seek communion with Him, seated at His feet or standing by His side, might get from Him what it would, or, like interceding Abraham, have Him as long as it pleased.

He desired oneness with His elect, full, personal, abiding oneness, ready as He was to share with them His name with the Father, the love in which He stood, and the glory of which He was Heir.

He sought for sympathy, He longed for companionship in both His joys and His sorrows. And we can by no means appreciate the disappointings of His heart, when this He sought, but found it not; deeper, at the least we may say, far deeper than when He claimed a kingdom, as we have already seen, and received it not. "Could ye not watch with Me one hour?" spoke a lonely heart.

And further still. He purposed, when He was here, that He would share His throne with His people. He would not abide alone. He would share His honours and His dominions with His elect, as He would that they, in sympathy, should understand and share His joys and sorrows with Him.

And now (excellent and wonderful as is the mystery which speaks it to us), all this is, or is to be, made good to Him in and by the Church. The Church is called to answer the desires of the Lord Jesus in all these things, to be all this to Him, either in the Holy Ghost now, or in the Kingdom by and by; to enter now, in spirit, into His thoughts and affections, His joys and His sorrows, and hereafter to shine in His glory, and to sit on His throne.

What a mystery! The Church, now endowed with the indwelling Spirit, and destined to sit, glorious herself, in the inheritance of His dominion, is the answer to these *deepest* desires of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, in the days of His flesh. And again I say, What a mystery! We may well admire those harmonies which tell us of the SAME Jesus, the ONE Person in these different parts of His wondrous ways. He sought and claimed a kingdom when He was here, and when He was here desired the sympathies of His saints. But His people were not prepared to own His royalty, His saints were not able to give Him this fellowship. A kingdom, however, He is receiving now in heaven, and He will return and administer it here. This fellowship He is beginning to find now through the Spirit indwelling His elect; and it will be in its fuller measure made good to

Him in the day of their perfection. The Kingdom will be His glory and His joy. It is called "The joy of the Lord," for it will be said to them who share it with Him, "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." But this fellowship, in which the Church will stand with Him, will be still more to Him. It was His *deepest desire* here, and it will be His *richest enjoyment* by and by. Eve was more to Adam than all his possessions beside.

Have we, beloved, any power in our souls to rejoice in the thought of the heart of the Lord Jesus being thus satisfied? We may trace the forms of these joys which thus await Him as in the day of His espousals, the day of the gladness of His heart; but have we capacity, in spirit, to do more? It is humbling to put such inquiries to one's own soul, we may surely say, with all unfeignedness.

But these will be His, the Kingdom and the Church.

The Kingdom will be His by many titles. He will take it UNDER COVENANT, or, according to counsels which were taken in God before the foundation of the world. He will take it BY PERSONAL RIGHT; for He, the Son of man, never lost the image of God. Of course, He could not; because, though Son of man, He was Son of the Father. But He *did not*; and, having that image, dominion is His by personal title, according to the first great ordinances of power and rule: "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth" (Gen. 1). He will take it likewise by title Of OBEDIENCE; as we read of Him: "Being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow" (Phil. 2). He will take it, too, by title of DEATH; for we read again: "And having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; . . . whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven" (Col. 1). And the cross, on which He accomplished that death, had written upon it, and kept there unblotted, uncanceled, in a single letter of it, by the strong prevailing hand of God Himself, "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews" (Matt. 27: 37).

Thus, dominion is the Son of man's by covenant, by personal title, by title of service or obedience, and by title of death or purchase: and, I may add, BY CONQUEST also; for the judgments which are to clear His way to the throne, and take out of the Kingdom all that offends, are, as we know, executed by His hand. "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord *mighty in battle*" (Ps. 24).

What foundations are thus laid for the dominion of the Son of man! How does every title join in subscribing itself to His honoured and glorious name! As we see in Rev. 5, none in heaven or earth could take the Book but the Lamb that was slain, who was the Lion of Judah: but into His hand He that sits on the throne lets it pass at once; and then the Church in glory, angels, and all creatures in all parts of the great dominions, triumph in the Lamb's rights and title. And if the title is thus sure, sealed by a thousand witnesses, and wondrous too, so will be the power and kingdom which it sustains. In the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, "the Lord from heaven," as well as "the Son of man," all the great purpose of God in the rule of all things stands revived and established. We may say, As "all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him amen," so all the destinies of man under God are alike in Him yea, and in Him amen.

There was dominion in Adam; government in Noah; fatherhood in Abraham; judgment in

David; and royalty in Solomon. In Christ all these glories will meet and shine together. In Him, and under Him, will be "the restitution of all things." Many crowns He will wear, and many names He will bear. His name of "Lord" in Ps. 8, is not His name of "King" in Ps. 72. The form of glory in each is peculiar. The crowns are different, but both are His. And He is likewise "the Father of the everlasting age"; a King, and yet a Father — the Solomon and the Abraham of God. In Him all shall be blessed; and yet to Him all shall bow. The sword, too, is His; the "rod of iron," as well as the "sceptre of righteousness." He will judge with David, and rule with Solomon.

As Son of *David*, He takes power to exercise it in a given sphere of glory. As Son of *man*, He takes power, and exercises it in a wider sphere of glory. He comes likewise in His own glory, in the glory of the Father, and in the glory of the holy angels. And as the risen Man He takes power. This is shown us in 1 Cor. 15: 23-27. And in that character He has His peculiar sphere also. He puts death, the last enemy, under His feet. And this is so fitting, like everything else, perfect in its place and season, that as the risen Man He should put down death.

Scenes of various glory will surround Him, and characters of various glory will attach to Him. The very bearing of the Kingdom will be this: *it will be full of the glories of Christ*; varied, yet consistent and blending. The cross has already presented a sample of this perfect workmanship. "Mercy and truth" met together there. There God was "just," and yet a "Justifier." And it is to be after this same manner in coming days of strength, as it has been thus in past days of weakness. As mercy and truth, righteousness and peace, once met and embraced each other, so authority and service, blessing and yet rule, a name of all majesty and power, and yet such a name as shall come down like showers on the mown grass, shall be known and enjoyed together. There shall be the universal dominion of man in the whole range of the works of God; the honours of the Kingdom in holding all nations under rule, together with the presence of "the Father of the everlasting age" holding them all in blessing. "His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace" (Isa. 9).

All is tending to this blessed and glorious lordship and headship of the Son of God, though it be through "seas of tribulation" to some, and through the full judgment of "this present evil world." God is leading this way, and man cannot hinder it, though he seek to fix the earth on its present foundations, refusing to learn that they are all out of course, that the earth and its inhabitants are dissolved, and that Christ alone bears up its pillars. "The bundle of life" (as she spoke who confessed to David's glory in the day of David's humiliation) is a firm bundle, well compacted and sure, because the Lord Himself is in it, as of old He was in the burning bush. But beyond the measure of that bundle (weak and despised in the thoughts of man, like a bramble-bush), all is tottering; and times are surely at hand, that will teach this in *history* to those who will not learn it, nor seek to learn it, watch and pray to learn it, in *spirit*.

The sword and the sceptre of this coming day of power are *alone* in their glories. There is no other sword, no other sceptre, that is or can be like them. The sword is to be "bathed in heaven" (Isa. 34: 5). What an expression! The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, the powers of heaven shall be shaken, darkness shall be under His feet, and thick clouds of the sky shall accompany Him, in the day when that sword is drawn for the slaughter. And the power of it is the treading of the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. Everything that is high and lifted up, the principalities and powers that rule the darkness of this world, the beast and his prophet, kings, captains, and mighty men, as well as the dragon, that old serpent, which is the devil and Satan, are among the enemies which are made to feel it; "the host of the high ones that are on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth." The sources, as well as the agencies, of evil, are

searched out and visited by the light and strength of it.

Is not such a sword *alone* in its glory? Could Joshua's or David's have wrought such conquests as these? Would principalities of darkness have yielded to them? Would death and hell have submitted themselves? "Canst thou draw out leviathan with an hook?" But "He that made him can make His sword to approach unto him."

In whose hand, then, I ask, must that sword be, which can quell hosts like these? The very service in that day of power, like every other service of His, whether in weakness or in strength, tells us who He is. There is this beautiful and divine self-evidencing light and power to Him, and about Him, and around Him, let Him act as He may, yea, let Him suffer as He may, which we have been feebly tracing and admiring, but which we will still acknowledge, and worship. The victories of this God of battles, in other days, were of the same high character. For of old His warfare bespoke His person and glory, as it is still to do. Therefore is it written of Him, "The Lord is a man of war: *the Lord is His name*" (Ex. 15: 3). His warfare, in this utterance of the Spirit, is said to reveal His lordship, His glory, His name, His person. In Egypt the gods felt His hand, as they did afterwards among the Philistines, and again in Babylon. Dagon fell before the ark, Bel bowed down, Nebo stooped. These were days of the same hand.

And as is the sword, so is the sceptre. Solomon's was but a distant shadow of it, and Noah's government and Adam's dominion shall be thought of no more, in comparison with it.

*All* shall be the subject world then, the subject *creation* as well as the subject *nations*. "O sing unto the Lord a new song; sing unto the Lord, all the earth. Sing unto the Lord, bless His name: show forth His salvation from day to day. Declare His glory among the heathen, His wonders among all people" (Ps. 96). Under the shadow of this sceptre, and in the light of this throne of glory, shall dwell from one end of the earth to the other the "willing" and the "righteous" nations. There shall be a covenant between men and the beasts of the field. The wilderness too shall rejoice. The lame shall leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing. The sun of that Kingdom shall not go down, nor the moon withdraw herself, for the Lord shall be its everlasting light. Nothing shall hurt nor destroy in all God's holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

Israel shall revive, the dry bones shall live. The stick of Judah and the stick of Ephraim shall be one again. The city shall be called "The Lord is there." Of the land it shall be said, "This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden." And again, she shall be saluted in words that speak her holy dignities: "The Lord bless thee, O habitation of justice, and mountain of holiness" (Jer. 31: 23).

The Gentiles shall be brought to a right mind. Their reason will return to them. The senseless world, though "made by Him," yet "knew Him not." The kings of the earth, and the rulers, stood up against the Anointed. They kicked against the pricks, betraying their madness and folly. But their reason will return to them. The story of Nebuchadnezzar will be found to be a mystery as well as a history. The reason of that head of gold, that great head of Gentile power, returned to him after his term of judicial folly; and he knew and owned that the heavens did rule. And so the world by and by will no longer senselessly not know its Maker, but as deeply own Him as once it madly refused Him. For "kings shall shut their mouths at Him," in token of this deep and worshipping acknowledgement. The beast's heart shall be taken away from them, and a man's heart be given them. No longer shall they be rebuked as by the ox that knoweth his owner, and by the crane, the turtle, and the swallow, that observe the time of their coming, but they shall fly "as doves to their

windows." "Behold, these shall come from far; and, to, these from the north and from the west; and these from the land of Sinim (Isa. 49: 12).

The works of God's hand, as well as Israel and the Gentiles, shall rejoice in the same sceptre. "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid" (Isa. 11: 6). The very soil shall own again the early and the latter rain, and the tillage as of a divine husbandman. "Thou visitest the earth, and waterest it: Thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God, which is full of water: Thou preparest them corn, when Thou hast so provided for it" (Ps. 65: 9).

What a sceptre! Is not such a sceptre, as well as such a sword, *alone* in its glory? Was ever sceptre like it? Could power in any hand but one be such as this? What Adam lost in the earth; what Israel lost in the land of election and of promise; what Abraham lost in a degraded, disowned, and outcast seed; what the house of David lost in the throne; what the creation itself lost by reason of him who subjected it to bondage and corruption, — all shall be gathered up and held and presented in the presence and power of the days of the Son of man,

"The Son" alone could take such a kingdom. The virtue of the sacrifice already accomplished, as we have seen in earlier meditations on this blessed Object, rests on the *person* of the Victim; the acceptableness of the sanctuary now filled and served, rests, in like manner, on the *person* of the High-Priest and Mediator who is there; the glories and the virtues of the Kingdom that is to be, could be displayed and exercised and ministered only in and by the same *Person*. The Son of God serves in the lowest and in the highest - in poverty and in wealth; in honour and dishonour; as the Nazarene and as the Bethlehemite; in earth and in heaven; and in a world of millennial glories both earthly and heavenly: but all service, from beginning to end, in all stages and changes in the great mystery, tell *who* He is. He could no more have been *what* He was on the cross, were He not there *the One* He was, than He could now be sitting on the Father's throne were He not the same. Faith cares not where it sees Him, nor where it follows Him: it has the one bright, ineffably blessed Object before it, and resents the word that would presume to soil Him, even though ignorantly.

We must still, however, look at other glories of this coming Kingdom of His.

"The Second Man is the Lord from heaven," and a glory must attend on the rising of such a One, which the throne of Solomon could never have measured. Yea, in the presence of this "Lord from heaven," far brighter glories than that of Solomon will be outdone. "Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the Lord of hosts shall reign in Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before His ancients, gloriously" (Isa. 24: 23). There will be heavenly things in His Kingdom, as well as restored earthly things. Adam had the garden, and all its teeming beauty and fruitfulness. But beyond that, the Lord God walked there with him. Noah, Abraham, and others, in patriarchal days, had possession of flocks and herds, and in Noah we see power and lordship in the earth. But beyond all this, they had angel visits, yea, and visits and visions and audiences of the Lord of angels. The land of Canaan was a goodly land, a land of milk, and of oil, and of honey; but more than that, the glory was there, and the witness of the divine presence dwelt between the cherubim.

So will it be in the coming days of the power of the Son of God. Heaven will grace the scene with a new and peculiar glory, as surely as of old the Lord God walked in the garden of Eden, or as surely as angels passed up and down in the sight of the patriarch, or as surely as the divine presence was known in the sanctuary in Jerusalem in the land of promise. And not merely will there be this visitation of the earth again, and the glory from heaven again, but this will all be of a new and

wondrous character. The earth will have the witness of this strange, surpassing mystery, that she herself, from her very dust and bonds, has supplied a family for the heavens, who, in their glories, shall revisit her, more welcome than angels, and, in their appointed authorities and powers, shall be over her in government and in blessing. "For unto the angels hath He not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak. But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is *man*, that Thou art mindful of him?" (Heb. 2: 5, 6).

What links between the highest and the lowest are these! "The Second Man is the Lord from heaven." The holy city will descend out of heaven, having the glory of God, and in the presence of it will the rule of the Kingdom or power over the earth be ministered. This shall be something outreaching Adam's sovereignty and Solomon's brightness.

In the scene on the holy hill in Matthew 17, and in that of the royal visitation of the holy city in Matthew 21, this day of the power of the Son of God, this "world to come," is entered (in a mystery) in both its heavenly and its earthly places. The heavenly glory shines on the holy hill. Jesus is transfigured. His face shines as the sun, and His raiment is white as the light; and Moses and Elias appear in glory with Him. So, on the occasion of the royal entrance into the holy city, the same lowly Jesus assumes a character of glory. He becomes the Lord of the earth and its fulness, and the accepted, triumphant Son of David. Here, on the road between Jericho and Jerusalem, He is seen, for a mystic moment, in His rights and dignities in the earth; as, for another like moment He had appeared on the "high mountain apart," in His personal, heavenly glory. These solemn occasions were, each of them in its way, as I may say, a *transfiguration*; though the glory of the celestial was one, and the glory of the terrestrial was another. But equally on each occasion Jesus was glorified; borne away for a moment from His then lowly path, as the humbled, toiling, rejected Son of God. The two great regions of the millennial world spread themselves out before us, in vision or in mystery, then. Such sights were but passing, and quickly lost to us; but what they pledged and presented are to abide in their brightness and strength in the coming day of glory. For that bright day, that happy world, will be full of the glories of the Son of God. It is *that* fulness which will give it its bearing and its import, as we have said before. Head of the risen family, or Sun of the celestial glory, He will then be Lord of the earth and its fulness; and King of Israel and the nations, He will then be also. Strangely, mysteriously, in that system of glories, will all be linked together, — "the lower parts of the earth" and "far above all heavens." "God was manifest in the flesh — received up into glory." "The Second *Man*" is no less than "the Lord from heaven."\*

\*The happy, gladdening virtue of that millennial world is also strikingly witnessed. Peter, on the holy hill, speaks of the common joy which it imparted; so that he and his companions would have remained there for ever, if they might. But it was not he who spoke, but the power of the place which spoke in him. So on the king's highway from Jericho to Jerusalem: the owner of the ass bows with full readiness of heart to the claims of the Lord of the earth; and the multitudes of Israel triumph in the Son of David, their palm-branches and their garments, strewn in the way, bespeaking their homage and their joy, as in a feast of tabernacles. But here again, it was not so properly they who act and speak, as the power of the occasion acting and speaking in them.

What mysteries! what counsels of God touching the ends of creation, in the hidden ages before the beginnings of creation! Would that the affection and worship of the heart followed the meditations of the soul! The Son, who lay in the bosom of the Father from all eternity, lay in the Virgin's womb, assuming flesh and blood with the children; as Son of man, God in flesh, He journeyed along the rugged paths of human life, ending them in the death of the cross: He left the grave for the glory, the lowest parts of the earth for the highest places in heaven: and He will come

again on the earth in dignities and praise, in rights, honours, and authorities, of ineffable, surpassing greatness and brightness, to make glad "the world to come."

But there is another mystery ere this scene of glories, "the world to come," can, in the way of God, be reached. The *Church* must be linked with the heavens, as her Lord has already been.

The path of the Church across the earth is that of an unnoticed stranger. "The world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not" (1 John 3: 1). And as her path *across* the earth is thus untracked, so is her path *from* it to be. All about her is "the stranger here." And as the world around knows not the Church, nor will be a witness of the *act* of her translation, she herself knows not the *time* of such translation. But we know this link between us and the heavens will be formed ere the Kingdom, or "the world to come," be manifested; because the saints are to be the companions of the King of that Kingdom in the *first* acts of it; that is, when He bears the sword of judgment, which is to clear the scene for the sceptre of peace and righteousness; as He has promised: "He that overcometh, and keepeth My works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron" (Rev. 2: 26, 27).

"I will give him the morning star" (ver. 28).

Is there not something of a link, something of an intermediate, connecting action, intimated by this? The sun is that light in the heavens which connects itself with the earth, with the interests and the doings of the children of men. The sun rules the day, the moon and the stars the night. But "the morning star" receives no appointment in such a system. "He appointed the moon for seasons: the sun knoweth his going down. Thou makest darkness, and it is night, wherein all the beasts of the forest do creep forth. The young lions roar after their prey, and seek their meat from God. The sun ariseth, they gather themselves together, and lay them down in their dens. Man goeth forth unto his work, and to his labour, until the evening" (Ps. 104). The morning star has no place in such arrangement. The children of men have laid them down, and their sleep, in divine mercy, is still sweet to them, while the morning star is decking the face of the sky.

The season in which the sun shines is *ours*. I mean, the sun is the companion of *man*. But the morning star does not, in this way, recall man to his labour. It appears rather at an hour which is quite its own, neither day nor night. The child of the *earlier* morning, the one who is up before the sun, or the watchman who has gone through the night, sees it, but none else.

The sun, in the language or thought of Scripture, is for the *Kingdom*. As we read: "He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God: and He shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth" (2 Sam. 23: 3, 4. See also Matt. 13: 43; Matt. 17: 2-5).

I ask, then, Is there not to be expected by us a light before the light of the Kingdom? Are not these signs in the heavens set there for times and seasons? Are there not voices in such spheres? Is there not a mystery in the morning star, in the hour of its solitary shining, as well as in the sun when he rises in his strength upon the earth? Is not the morning star the sign in the heavens of One whose appearing is not for the world, but for a people who wait for an early, unearthly Lord? The hope of Israel, the earthly people, greets the "day-spring" (Luke 1: 78); but the Church welcomes "the morning star." "I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star. And the Spirit and the bride say, Come" (Rev. 22: 16, 17). All is ours; and among this glorious *all*, "the morning star" for our transfiguration to be *like* Jesus, and "the rising sun" for our day of power *with* Jesus.

How are the mysterious link thus formed, and the wondrous journeys thus tracked and

followed, from first to last, from everlasting to everlasting! We never lose them, nor our interest in them, even in the most sacred, intimate moment.

We have now, in the progress of our meditations along this glorious pathway of the Son of God, watched a light in the heavens earlier than that of the day-spring, a light which Jesus, the Son of God, amid His other glories, claims to be, and to share with His saints: "I will give him the morning star."

And after the morning star has shone for its brief hour, the sun in his appointed season will rise: "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father" (Matt. 13: 43). And it shall be "a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain." "Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof. Let the field be joyful, and all that is therein: then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice before the Lord: for He cometh, for He cometh to judge the earth (Ps. 96).

"Scenes surpassing fable, and yet true."

One has said, "Faith has a world of its own." Surely we may say, after tracking these ascendings and descendings of the Son of God, linking all together, the highest and the lowest, and introducing all into the brightness of such a Kingdom, This is so: faith has indeed "a world of its own." Oh for that power in the soul to walk there! and that power lies in the earnestness and fervour of faith, which is but the simplicity and reality of faith.

David and Abigail walked in the world which was faith's world, when they met in the wilderness of Paran. To all appearance, or in the reckoning of men, David at that time was but the sport of the wicked, and wandering in caves and dens of the earth: he would have been debtor, if it might be so, to a rich neighbour for a loaf of bread. But faith discovered another in David; and in the eyes of Abigail, all was new. In that favoured though unnoticed hour, when the saints of God thus met in the desert, the Kingdom, in spirit, was entered. The wilderness of Paran was the Kingdom in the communion of the saints. The needy, hunted, persecuted fugitive was, in his own eyes, and in the eyes of Abigail, the lord of the coming Kingdom, and the "anointed of the God of Jacob." Abigail bowed before him as her king, and he, in the grace of a king, "accepted her person." The provisions she brought in her hand, her bread, and her wine, her clusters of raisins, and cakes of figs, were not her bountifulness to the *needy* David, but the tribute of a willing subject to the *royal* David. She deemed herself too happy and too honoured if she might but minister to his servants. It was after this manner, that by faith she entered another world on this fine and beautiful occasion, as I may call it; witnessing to us that *faith has indeed "a world of its own."* And that world was far more important to Abigail's heart than all the advantages of her wealthy husband's house. The wilderness was more to her than the fields and flocks of Mount Carmel. For there her spirit drank of those pleasures - which faith had discovered in the pure though distant regions of glory.

Blessed, beloved, when we have like power to enter and dwell in our own world! Had not Noah such a world when he built a ship apparently for the land, and not for the water? Had not Abraham such a world when he left country and kindred and father's house? Had not Paul such a world when he could say, "Our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ; who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body"? Have we not all our own world at this moment, when by faith our souls have access "into this grace wherein we stand"? This grace is the present, peaceful, happy dwelling-place of the *conscience* sprinkled and purified, and the bright dwelling-place of *hope*, whence it looks out

for "the glory of God" (Rom. 5: 1, 2). It is but poorly known, if one may speak for others; but it is ours. And amid all this conscious infirmity, our faith has but to glorify the Son of God; for deeper enjoyment of Him is the diviner progress.

In closing this meditation, in which we have looked (according to our measure), at "the world to come," I would say, that few lessons lie more on the heart at the present day, than *the rejection of Christ*. I might naturally say so in this place; for if He shall be thus *glorious*, as we have seen, in "the world to come," so surely is He *rejected* in "this present evil world."

But this is easily forgotten; and the god of this world would have it so. There is large and increasing accommodation and refinement abroad; social, intellectual, moral, and religious improvement; and all helping to keep an *unworldly* Christ out of sight. But faith eyes a rejected Jesus and a judged world. Faith knows that though the house be swept, and emptied, and garnished, it has not changed its master or owner, but is only made the more fit for the ends and purposes of its master.

Solemn mistake, beloved, to think of refining and cultivating "this present world" for the Son of God? If David, on one occasion, were careless about the mind of God as to the carriage of the ark, so was he, on another occasion, ignorant of the mind of God as to the building for the ark a house of cedars. He sought to give the Lord an abiding habitation in an uncleansed, uncircumcised land. He therefore did greatly err, not knowing the *purity* of the glory of the Lord; and so with those who link the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, with the earth as it is now, or with the kingdoms of "this present world." With whatever right desire of the heart this may be, as with David, again we say (and how surely, in our own convictions), They do greatly err, not knowing the *purity* of the glory of the Lord. This is a lesson we need to learn with increasing power. The Son of God is still a Stranger on the earth; and He is not seeking it, but seeking a people out of it, to be strangers for a while longer with Him, on the face of it, and amid all the vanities and ambitions which constitute the history of its every hour.

"Ye are they which have continued with Me in My temptations. And I appoint unto you a Kingdom, as My Father hath appointed unto Me" (Luke 22: 28, 29).

"Through the dark path of sorrow which Jesus has trod,  
Thy feeble ones wander, our Father, our God!  
And the thick clouds that gather but turn us away  
From the waste, howling desert where He could not stay."

## Chapter 6

"Then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him" (1 Cor. 15: 28).

It is happy and establishing to the soul to bear in lively faith and recollection that it is the very same Jesus who was here on earth that is now in heaven, and whom we are to know "through His own eternity." When we keep this in memory, every passage of His life here will be introduced afresh to us, and we shall feel and own that we have in the evangelists a more wonderful page to meditate, yea, and in some sense a much happier one too, than we once counted upon.

In the days of His sojourn among us, everything was a reality to Him; all was living and

personal. He did more than touch the surface. When He healed a wound or removed a sorrow, He in a way felt it. "Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses." His spirit drank of the *springs*, as of the stream; for not only were His joys real, His sorrows real, His fears and disappointments, and the like, real, but He entered into every occasion in *all* its character. He knew the unuttered language of that needy soul that touched Him in the crowd, and felt that touch in all its meaning. He was filled with delight at the faith of that Gentile who pierced the thick cloud of His humiliation, and reached the divine glory which shone in His person beneath it; and He alike feasted on the bold — but not too bold — faith of that sinner of the city who pierced the *dark* cloud of her own sin and shame, and reached the divine grace which could heal it all (Luke 7). He understood the hasty step of Zacchaeus as he climbed the sycamore-tree, and the thoughtfulness of Nathanael as he sat under the fig-tree. He heard the strife of the disciples by the way as they went up to Jerusalem; heard it in the tumult of the lusts within, ere it broke out in wars and fightings. And He knew the love as well as the self-confidence which drew Peter from the ship to the water.

Surely, then, it is for us, as we read "the wondrous story" in the recollection of this, to feel after *Himself*, as we mark the hand that did the deed, or track the foot that was treading the path. Every act and word would be felt with something of a new impression; and if so, what more blessed advance could we be making? Would it not be edifying in a high sense indeed, if we could be thus acquainting ourselves more really with a living, personal Jesus? At this time of ours, beloved, there may be a tendency to forget His *Person* or *Himself*, in the common testimony that is now borne so extensively to His *work*. The region of doctrine may be surveyed as with a measuring line and a level, instead of being eyed, with an admiring, worshipping heart, as the place of the glories of the Son of God. And yet it is this He prizes in us. He has made *us personally* His objects; and He looks for it that we make Him ours.

And I ask myself, Is not this, in a sense, the very topmost stone? Is not this personal desire of Christ toward us chief in the ways of His grace? Election, predestination, pardon, adoption, glory, and the Kingdom, — are they not only crowned by this desire of Christ toward us, this making of us an object to Himself? Surely it crowns all; surely it is the topmost stone; lying above and beyond all; fuller and richer and higher than any. Adoption and glory, welcome into the family and participation in the Kingdom, would be defective, were there not also this mystery — the Son of God has found in us an object of desire. It assumes all the other works and counsels in the history of grace. and is thus beyond them all.

The Spirit delights to tell of the work of Christ, and to bear it in its preciousness and sufficiency to the heart and conscience. Nothing could stand us for a moment, had not the work been just what it was, and so counselled and ordered of God. But still the work of the Lord Jesus Christ may be the great *subject*, where He Himself is but a faint *object*; and the soul will thus be a great loser.

But these meditations on the Son of God, which I have been following now, I may say, to their close, suggest to me another thought just at this time.

When considering the deeper and more distant parts of God's ways, we sometimes feel as though they were too much for us; and we seek relief from the weight of them by going back to earlier and simpler truths. This, however, need not be. If we rightly entertained these further mysteries, we should know that we need not retire from them for relief; because they are really only other and deeper expressions of the same grace and love which we were learning at the very beginning. They are but a more abundant flow, or a wider channel, of the same river, just because

they lie somewhat more distant from the source.

Till this assurance be laid up in the soul, we are ill prepared to think of them. If we have a fear, that when we are looking at *glories*, we have left the place of *affections*, we wrong the truth and our own souls. It is not so by any means. The more fully the glories unfold themselves, the more are the riches of grace revealed. The rising of a river at its birthplace, where we take in the whole object at once, without effort or amazement, possesses, as we know, its own peculiar charm; but when it becomes, under our eye, a mighty stream, with its diversified banks and currents, we only the rather learn why it ever began to flow. It is the same water still; and we may pass up and down from its source, and along its channels, with various but still constant pleasure. We need seek no relief by turning to its source, as we survey it in its course, along and through the ages and dispensations. When, in spirit (as now in the way of these meditations), we reach the "new heaven" and the "new earth," we are only in company with the same glorious Person, and in fellowship with the same boundless grace, whom we knew, and which we learnt, at the very beginning.

The *same* One made *real* to the soul, and brought *near*, is what I would desire, in God's grace, to be the fruit of these meditations: "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and forever." He is so both in His own glory and to us.

In earlier days there were manifestations of Him, the Son of God, sometimes in *veiled*, sometimes in *unveiled* glory. To Abraham at the tent door, to Jacob at Peniel, to Joshua under the walls of Jericho, to Gideon, and to Manoah, the manifestations were veiled, and faith, in more or less vigour, through the Spirit, removed the covering, and reached the glory that was underneath. To Isaiah, to Ezekiel, and to Daniel, the Son of God appeared in unveiled glory; and He had, by a certain gracious process, to make the brightness of the glory tolerable to them (Isa. 6; Ezek. 1; Dan. 10).

The Person, however, was one and the same, whether veiled or unveiled. So, in the days when He had really (and not as in those earlier days), assumed flesh and blood, the glory was veiled, and faith was set to discover it, as in the time of Abraham or of Joshua; and after He had ascended, He appeared to John in such brightness of unveiled glory, that something had to be done by Him in grace, as in the case of Isaiah or of Daniel, ere His presence could be sustained (Rev. 1).

Times and seasons in this respect made no difference. Of course, till the fulness of time came, the Son was not "made of a woman." Then it was that "the Sanctifier," as we read, "took part of the same" flesh and blood with the children (Heb. 2: 11, 14). For flesh and blood indeed He took then, and not till then; very Kinsman of the seed of Abraham He then indeed became. "It behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren" (ver. 17). And all this waited for its due season, "the fulness of the time," the days of the Virgin of Nazareth. But those manifestations of the Son of God in earlier days were pledges of this great mystery, that in due time God would send forth His Son, "made of a woman." They were, if I may so express it, the shadows of the forthcoming substance. And what I have been observing has this in it — which is of interest to our souls — *that those foreshadowings were beautifully exact*. They forecast, in forms both of glory and of grace, the ways of Him who afterwards travelled and sojourned here on earth in humble, serving, sympathizing love, and is now set as glorified in heaven, the Son of man, the Virgin's Seed, forever.

It is delightful to the soul to trace these exact resemblances and forecastings. If we have a veiled glory at the threshing-floor at Ophrah, so have we at the well of Sychar. If we have the brightness of the unveiled glory by the side of the Hiddekel, so have we the same in the Isle of Patmos. The Son of God was as a travelling man in the sight of Abraham in the heat of the day, and

so was He to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus as the day was fast spending itself. He ate of Abraham's calf, "tender and good," as He did of "a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb," in the midst of the disciples at Jerusalem. In His risen days, He assumed different forms, to suit, in divine grace, the need or demand of the moment; as He had done of old, whether as a stranger or a visitor, whether as simply a "man of God" to Manoah and his wife in the field, or as an armed soldier to Joshua at Jericho.

And it is this, I think I can say again, which I specially value in following these meditations upon Him — to see Jesus *one* throughout; and that, too, *near* and *real* to us. We need (if one may speak for others), the purged eye that is practised to see, and delight in, such a heaven as the heaven of *Jesus* must be. Will it be nothing, we may ask our hearts, will it be nothing to spend eternity with Him who looked up, and caught the eye of Zacchaeus in the sycamore-tree, and then, to the thrilling joy of his soul, let his name fall on his ear from His own lips? With Him who, without one upbraiding word, filled the convicted, quickened heart of a poor sinner of Samaria with joy, and a spirit of liberty that far more than abounded? Surely we want nothing but the child-like, simple, believing mind. For we are not straitened in Him, and there is nothing *to* Him like this *believing* mind. It glorifies Him beyond even the services of eternity.

Nature, it is indeed true, is not equal to this. It must come from the inworking and witness of the Holy Ghost. Nature finds itself overwhelmed. It always betrays itself as that which, as the apostle speaks, comes "short of the glory of God." When Isaiah, on the occasion already referred to, was called into the presence of that glory, he could not endure it. He remembered his uncleanness, and cried out that he was undone. All that he apprehended was the glory; and all that he felt and knew in himself was his unfitness to stand before it. This was *nature*. This was the action of the conscience which, as in Adam in the garden, seeks relief from the presence of God. Nature in the prophet did not discover the altar which, equally with the glory, lay in the scene before him. He did not perceive that which was fully equal to give him perfect ease and assurance, to link him (though still a sinner in himself) with the presence of the glory in all its brightness. Nature could not make this discovery. But the messenger of the Lord of hosts not only discovers but applies it; and the prophet is at ease in the possession of a cleanness or a holiness that can measure the very "holy of holies" itself, and the brightness of the throne of the Lord of hosts.

The Spirit acts above nature, yea, in contradiction of nature. Nature in Isaiah — in us all — stands apart, and is abashed, unable to look up: the Spirit draws us right inward and upward in liberty. When Simeon is led by the Spirit into the presence of the glory, he goes up at once in all confidence and joy. He takes the Child Jesus in his arms. He makes no request of the mother to suffer it to be so; he feels no debt to any one for the blessed privilege of embracing "the Salvation of God," which his eyes then saw. He through the Spirit had discovered the *altar*; and the *glory*, therefore, was not beyond him (Isa. 6; Luke 12).

And true still, as true as ever, as true as in the days of Isaiah and of Simeon, are these things now. The Spirit leads in a path which nature never treads. Nature stands apart, and is afraid; yea, will rebuke where faith is full of liberty. And these diverse ways of nature and of faith we may well remember for our comfort and strengthening, as we still look at the Son of God, and meditate on mysteries and counsels of God connected with Him.

Our meditations have waited on the Lord from the eternity of the Father's bosom to the coming days of the millennial kingdom. We have watched His ascendings and descendings in the intermediate dispensations, and marked the links between the successive parts in this great mystery,

or the transition-moments in the stages of these wondrous journeys. We have but little liberty from

Scripture (our only chart and compass) to follow Him farther. The Psalms and the prophets open the door into the coming Kingdom, and open it widely. But they scarcely carry us beyond it. At least, if they lead us to know that there are regions still in the farther distance, that is almost all they do. They never give us to *survey* them.

This coming Kingdom they again and again speak of as everlasting. Rightly so, as I need not say; but rightly so in this sense : that it is not to give place to any other kingdom. As Daniel says of it, "The Kingdom shall not be left to other people" (Dan. 2: 44). It is to be as untransferable as the priesthood of the same Christ, the Son of God. It is to be as enduring as royalty, as long continued as power "ordained of God" is to be; for it shall not cease while He "to whom power belonged" has anything to do by means of power. But still, it will, in season, have discharged its office and service, and then cease.

Of this mystery, this ceasing or delivering up of the Kingdom, we have a *verbal* or *literal* intimation in Ps. 8. That psalm celebrates the lordship of the Son of man, in the day of His power, over the works of God's hands. But it contains an intimation (as we find from an inspired commentary upon it in 1 Cor. 15: 27, 28) that that day of power shall yield to another order of things,

We have also *moral* intimations of the same mystery. For instance, the age or dispensation we are now contemplating is, as we see, to be a *kingdom*, the time of a sceptre; and, as such (may I not say?) it must have an end. Could a sceptre be a symbol of the *divine eternity*, the eternity of God's presence? A sceptre may exercise its prerogative power for its season; but Scripture would lead us to say that it could not be a symbol of our eternity in the blessed presence of God. Even Adam can scarcely be said to have had a sceptre. He had dominion; but was it exactly that of a king? His was lordship and inheritance, more properly, not a kingdom. It was not royal rule, though there was the fullest subjection to him, and the most perfect order. A kingdom was not developed, in the progress of the divine way and wisdom, for a long time. And all this suggests, that when the time of a kingdom, or the rule of a sceptre, or the exercise of royal power, comes, such a form of things will not be final or eternal. It cannot, I judge, give rest to the thoughts which are spiritually or scripturally exercised toward God and His ways. A *sceptre* of righteousness is not so high nor so eternal a thought as a *dwelling-place* of righteousness; and that is what Scripture confirms (2 Peter 3: 13).

And, further, as another moral intimation of this same truth, the coming Kingdom will be but an *imperfect* condition of things. We need not determine how far there may be the need of it, or the demand for its exercise. still, *power* will be present to put itself forth. The prophets, as we said, widely survey this Kingdom, in its strength, its extent, its duration, its glory, its peace and blessedness, and the like; but withal, the presence of evil and of sorrow is contemplated, though with authority to control, and resources to relieve.

Is not this, then, I ask, a further intimation of a moral character, that such an order of things is to yield to a better? Surely it is. But there is more than even this: the Kingdom is a *delegated* thing, a *stewardship*; and being such, we may say, in divine or scriptural reasoning, it must give an account of itself, and be delivered up. But here, beloved, meditations on Jesus Himself, the Son of God, afresh invite the soul.

In this character of it, to which I have now referred, His Kingdom is like His past time of humiliation on earth, and His present time of priesthood in heaven. All, in a great sense, was, or is,

or will be, *stewardship*. He came here to this earth of ours to do God's will, and when He had accomplished it, He rendered it up as in sacrifice; His present seat in heaven is a stewardship. As a High-priest there, He is faithful, "faithful to Him that appointed Him, as also Moses was faithful in all His house" (Heb. 3: 2; Num. 12: 7). And after these patterns will be His coming Kingdom and power. It will be, like the rest, a stewardship, though of something *new*, something which had not been committed to Him or put into His hands before; something, too, very glorious and excellent: still, it will be a stewardship. And, being such, it will have, in due season, to be accounted for, and delivered up. And such a mystery is full of blessedness, had we but faith and bowels to enjoy it. For, after this wondrous manner, *subjection and obedience to God* — which man, a creature of the dust, cast off and refused, — from the unutterable glory of the person of Him who owns it and renders it, receives such value as all creatures, from the highest to the lowest, though they had all continued in unintermitting and full service, could never have imparted to it.

And this is a precious truth, which the soul loses just so far as the enemy robs it of the sense and apprehension of the person of the Son.

The Son Himself delights to be all this — the Steward or Servant of the will of God, whether in grace or in glory, in humiliation or in power. And when we, in the spirit of worship, consider or recollect who He is throughout all changes and conditions, we can and will say, that changes and conditions, whether the highest or the lowest, are as nothing. What, in one sense, can raise such a One? Can glory and a kingdom elevate Him? Faith finds it easy indeed to see such a One a Steward of power and dominion and royal honours, when He comes to sit on a throne, just as He was a Steward when He traversed in weakness and humiliation the path of life. Such distances, in one sense, are nothing to such a One as "the Son." In another sense, the distance, we surely know, is immense; for He entered into sorrow in its season, and will enter into joy in its season. All was, and is, and will be, real to Him, as we said before; and, therefore, in another sense, the distance is immense. The "Man of sorrows" will take "the cup of salvation." Will that be nothing? To Him who was despised and rejected, insulted and scorned, every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear. But the Person is the same throughout, God and man in one Christ; and faith, therefore, receives it, that, having been the Steward of the Father's will and grace in days of humiliation, He may still be Steward of the Father's Kingdom in days of exaltation and strength.

And so it will be, as scripture after scripture tells us. "When I shall receive the congregation," says Christ, anticipating the Kingdom, "I will judge uprightly" (Ps. 75: 2); thus owning that He is under commission, or in stewardship, when in the Kingdom. So, to the like intent, He owns that *the time of His receiving* the Kingdom, and *the distribution of the rewards and honours* of the Kingdom, are not in His hands, but in the Father's (Mark 13: 32; Matt. 20: 23). Every tongue in that day, it is most sure, shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord; but then, this is to be "to the glory of God the Father." The Lord Himself again and again calls it *the Father's Kingdom*. And further, He will be *anointed* for the ministry of it, just as He was anointed for the ministry of the days of His flesh (Isa. 11: 1-3; Isa. 61: 1, 2). And further still (may I say?), He will be a *Dependent* on God during His day of strength, as He has already been, or as He once was, in His day of sorrow and weakness. Therefore we read, "Prayer shall be made for Him continually"; as Solomon, the typical king, by a public act of intercession, put under the care of the God of Israel the kingdom which he had received (Ps. 72; 2 Chr. 6).

All this is *moral* intimation that there must be a delivering up of the Kingdom; for all this shows us that the Kingdom is a delegated thing, a stewardship; and, as we said, this moral intimation is affirmed by the divine reasoning in 1 Cor. 15 and Ps. 8. *All* is subjection: the kingly

days of power, the self-emptying days of sorrow, the heavenly days of priestly ministry; all is alike subjection and service. As Christ did not glorify Himself to be made a High-Priest, but He who said unto Him, "Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten Thee"; so, we may say, neither did He glorify Himself to be made a King, but He which said unto Him, "Sit Thou at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool." "I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought Him near before Him. And there was given Him dominion, and glory, and a Kingdom" (Ps. 2: 7; Ps. 110: 1; Dan. 7: 13, 14).

This is the institution of the coming Kingdom of Christ. And thus it is a *delegated* thing, taken from the hands of Another, in its time to be delivered back. The Son, most surely, will be faithful, where all others have been found wanting. Of them it is written, "God standeth in the congregation of the mighty: He judgeth among the gods," but of the Son it is written, "Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of Thy Kingdom: Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows" (Ps. 45; Ps. 82; Heb. 1).

But all this still tells us that He holds the Kingdom as a stewardship. Whether it be the *sword* or the *sceptre* of the Kingdom, whether He act as the David or as the Solomon, He will be alike faithful. When He goes forth to the judgment, or to fight the battles of the Lord, this will be so; as it is said of Him, "The Lord at Thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of His wrath" (Ps. 110: 5). And again, "Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations He hath made in the earth" (Ps. 46: 8). When He sits on the throne, or ministers the Kingdom in peace, this will be so. "I will walk within My house," says Christ the King, "with a perfect heart" (Ps. 101: 2). And it is said of Him to Jehovah, "He shall judge Thy people with righteousness, and Thy poor with judgment" (Ps. 72: 2). But, again I say, all this intimates delegated power, though in a peculiar hand. His Kingdom shall perfect that which concerneth it, as did His death once and forever, and as His heavenly priesthood is now doing day by day. And then His sceptre shall be laid aside, the Kingdom shall cease. As it is written, "He shall have delivered up the Kingdom to God, even the Father." And again, "Then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all."

"That God may be all in all." Yes, God, by the Son, made the worlds or the ages. And when the worlds or the ages have run their course, and discharged their trust; when dispensations have manifested the counsels and the works and the glories appointed them; the Son, as the One in whom they were laid, and by whom they were ordered, may well be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.

It is the subjection of office, the subjection of Him who had all things put under Him to Him who did put all things under Him. That is the character of this subjection. As to the Person, unlike the office, it is eternal. The Son is of the glory of the Godhead, as is the Father, and as is the Holy Ghost.

"Thou art the everlasting Word.  
The Father's only Son;  
God manifest, God seen and heard,  
The Heaven's beloved One.  
"In Thee. most perfectly expressed,

The Father's self doth shine;  
 Fulness of Godhead, too; the Blest,  
 Eternally divine.  
 "Image of th' Infinite Unseen,  
 Whose being none can know;  
 Brightness of light no eye hath seen.  
 God's love revealed below.  
 "The higher mysteries of Thy fame.  
 The creature's grasp transcend:  
 The Father only Thy blest name  
 Of Son can comprehend;  
 Worthy, O Lamb of God. art Thou,  
 That every knee to Thee should bow."

It is the mystery of mysteries, the *Person*, we are here looking at. When we think rightly of Him, even all the brightness of the coming Kingdom will be seen but as a veil. Can the splendour of the throne display Him? Would not the honours of Solomon, yea, of the kingdoms of the world, be a veil over the glory of the Son, as really as the scorn of Pilate's judgment-hall, or the thorns of Calvary? Is the *Bethlehemite* the measure of His personal worth a single title more than the *Nazarene*? Therefore, to faith it is easy to see the Servant still, in days of exaltation as in days of sorrow. He served as a Servant, He serves as a Priest, He will serve as a King.

It is the link of links, this mystery we are here contemplating; and in the faith of it, all distances and intervals vanish. Heaven and earth, God and man, the Sanctifier and the sanctified, the highest and the lowest, are introduced to each other in ways of unutterable glory to God and blessing to us.

What links, indeed, what mysteries, what harmonies, what counsels about the ends of creation, in the hidden ages of divine, eternal wisdom before creation! "Vast as is the course which Scripture has traced, it has been a *circle* still; and in that most perfect form comes back to the point from which it started. The heaven which had disappeared since the third chapter of Genesis, reappears in the latest chapters of the Revelation. The tree of life again stands by the river of the water of life, and again there is no more curse."

"Even the very differences of the forms under which the heavenly Kingdom reappears are deeply characteristic, marking, as they do, not merely that all is won back, but won back in a more glorious shape than that in which it was lost, because won back *in the Son*. It is no longer Paradise, but the New Jerusalem; no longer the Garden, but the City of God; no longer the Garden, free, spontaneous, and unlaboured, as man's blessedness in the estate of a first innocence would have been, but the City, costlier indeed, more stately and more glorious, but at the same time the result of toil and pains, reared into a nobler and more abiding habitation, yet with stones which (after the pattern of 'the elect cornerstone'), were, each in its time, laboriously hewn and painfully squared for the places which they fill."

We may join in these thoughts, but having reached the delivering up of the Kingdom, we are on the borders of the "new heaven" and the "new earth." The heavens and the earth which are now will have been the scene of the Son's exercised energies, and the Witness of His perfections in grace and in glory, in humiliation and in power, in the services of the Servant, the Priest, and the King, in the life of faith and in the lordship of all things. And when the Son has been thus displayed, as in weakness and in strength, as on earth and in heaven, from the manger to the throne, as the Nazarene and the Bethlehemite, the Lamb of God and the anointed Lord of all, according to predestination of eternal counsels, these heavens and earth which now are will have done all they had to do; *when they have continued unto this display of the Son, they have continued long enough.* They may give place; and the soul that has surveyed them as having accomplished such a service may be prepared to hear this from the prophet of God, "I saw a new heaven and a new earth.. for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away" (Rev. 21).

But, as I said before, we have but little liberty from Scripture (our only chart and compass) to follow the Lord farther than the Kingdom. There are, however, characteristics of the "new heaven" and the "new earth," given to us in the passing or occasional notices of the Spirit.

Isaiah speaks of the former heaven and earth not being remembered when the new creation comes; thereby intimating the abounding excellence of the latter. And, again, he says, "The new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me," thereby suggesting that it is the *eternal* state (Isaiah 65, 66).

Paul says, that after the delivery of the kingdom, God shall be "all in all; by that intimating, I judge, that all delegated power, all stewardship, of which I have spoken, even in the hand of the Son, is over, as having completed its purpose.

Peter speaks of the "new heavens" and the "new earth" as being the *dwelling-place* of righteousness; by such a thought carrying our minds beyond the time of the *sceptre* of righteousness.

But John, in the Apocalypse, is more full: "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea." And, again, John says of the same new heaven and new earth, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away" (Rev. 21).

This is blessed: "The former things are passed away." Tears are gone; death is gone; sorrow and pain and crying are gone. No trace remains of the former things of sin and death. The millennial earth will not be a witness of so high an order as that.

"The former things are passed away." Not that we lose anything which has been given or communicated in His counsels of grace and glory, in the services of the Son, and in the operations of the Spirit. Nothing will be lost to us, which we have gathered in the progress of the divine dispensations. That could not be. Even the passing refreshments of the Spirit, which the inworking of corruption spoils us of for many and many a season, are not lost to us. They are the witness of that which is eternal in its very essence. And in like manner, all the unfolded wisdom of God must be enjoyed forever in its bright result. It is itself essentially eternal, and cannot be lost to us. These manifestations of God in His wisdom and power, and grace and glory, have come forth and shown themselves in the progress of the ages, and they have found a struggle in an injured, ruined,

degraded scene of action, like this world of ours; but in the "new heavens" and the "new earth" all this struggle in every form of it is over, and these manifestations will be known in their full, triumphant, and glorious result.

Before Him that sits on the white *horse*, the apostate powers of "this present evil world," in the hour of their fullest pride and daring, are smitten. and the Lord and His saints take righteous rule in the earth for the appointed millennial age. Before Him that sits on the white *throne*, the present heaven and earth pass away, and there is found no place for them; and He that sits on the throne says, "Behold, I make all things new." Surely these are distinctions — distinctions, too, full of meaning, and as significant of advance and development in divine counsels and ways, as any earlier moment.

It will not be the *sceptre* of righteousness, but its *dwelling-place*; and accordingly it will not be *the throne of the Son*, but "*the tabernacle of God*." It is not *divine authority over the scene*, but *the home of God in the scene*.

It will no longer be the earth that was once stained with the blood of Christ, and has been the grave of a thousand generations, but "a *new earth*;" no longer the heavens that have been clothed in sackcloth, and where thunders and wind and deluge have done the work of judgment, and borne witness of righteous wrath, but "*new heavens*."

He that is *athirst* shall drink of the fountain of the water of life; he that *overcometh* shall inherit all things (Rev. 21: 6, 7). Blessed characters of the saint! How little realized in the souls of some of us! But still blessed, when we can but read of them or think of them; to be longing after the living God, and conquering the course of this evil world.

I would, however, say but little more. We must not speculate where we cannot teach; we must not listen where we cannot learn from *Him*. His Written Word is the standard of the thoughts of all His saints, while some have that Word more largely made the possession of their souls, through the Spirit, than others. We are to know the common standard, and also our personal measure in the Spirit. I would, therefore, pause here; just adding one thought which has been happy to myself: that though we see not those distant regions, we may trust them — trust Him, rather, who is the Lord of them. We may assure our hearts in His presence, that they will be just what we would have them to be, just what our new conditions would ask for.

Heaven has always been what the earth needed. At the beginning, the sun was there to rule the day, and the moon and the stars to govern the night. Those ordinances were set in heaven then, for they measured the earth's need then. But there was no rainbow in the sky, for the earth needed not a token that God would debate with judgment. Judgment was not known. But when conscience had been quickened, and judgment was understood and feared, when God was known (in the doings He had accomplished) to be *righteous*, and earth needed a pledge that in wrath He would remember mercy, heaven wore the token of that mercy, and hung it out as on its very forehead.

After this manner, heaven has already changed itself, or arrayed itself anew, with the changing need of the earth; and the past pledges the future, though "a new heaven and a new earth" be to be revealed. Yea, I may add, the *millennial* earth, in its day, will know the same fidelity of heaven to it. For the habitation of the glory shall be seen to be there then (as the sanctuary of peace is known by faith to be there now), and the heavenly city of that age will descend in that very character which the nations of the earth, their kings, their glory, and their honour, will both need and delight in. The God of heaven and earth, in boundless and unwearied goodness, will, after this old, and constant, and undeviated way, be ever and alike true to the blessing of His creatures.

"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (James 1: 17). And the "new heaven" and the "new earth" will but take up the same tale of various but exhaustless goodness.

We need only the happy faith which realizes it all to the soul.

"Our Father's house! no more our souls

"At fearful distance bow;

We enter in by Jesus' blood,

With happy boldness now.

"Our Father! thought had never dreamed

That love like Thine could be -

Mysterious love which brings us thus

So very near to Thee."

May these meditations help our souls to know this nearness and this reality of the blessed things of faith. Amen.

THE END