

WORSHIP.

“God is a spirit; and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth.”—JOHN iv. 24.

THE habits of a vast number of Christians, and the moral atmosphere in which they are placed, have tended to produce very vague notions as to worship. Having turned away from formalism and superstitious views, which left the care of their religion to others, and feeling the need in which they stood of the truth, they have found in the recognition of the truth—in hearing and owning it—the sum total of their ordinary religious exercises. But surely this is not all that should be included in our religion while here below. In heaven doubtless the truth will be known in all its perfectness. Truth now received into the heart, will be actually realised there in the presence of the glory of God and of the Saviour about whom the truth treats. There will be no longer any need of hearing the truth—we shall live in it, and the power of it in our hearts will be expressed in adoration. Such is the characteristic of heaven. And undoubtedly this should be realised, in some measure, while on earth, by those who have received the truth, and who by it enjoy the knowledge of God, who has communicated it, and of the Saviour, who came to accomplish His work of love and of righteousness on our behalf. It should be realised by those who have received, not only the truth, but the very Spirit who gave the truth its place in their hearts, and who gives them the desire of glorifying Him whom He has revealed. When the Holy Spirit communicates

heavenly truth to the renewed heart, it always re-ascends in thanksgiving and praise. True worship is but the grateful and joyful response of the heart to God, when filled with a deep sense of the blessings which have been communicated from on high. The Holy Spirit causes the feelings produced by the revelation of God—of His glory—of His love in Jesus, and of all the blessings with which He loadeth us, to re-ascend to God in adoration. And surely the heart which is penetrated with the grace of God will find delight in rendering back to Him the homage of its adoration and gratitude for all these blessings, which are so many proofs of the infinite and eternal love which God has for us.

Let us then examine this subject according to the Scriptural light which the Spirit has given us.

What then is worship ?

It is the honour and adoration which are rendered to God, by reason of what He is in Himself, and what He is for those who render it.

Worship is the employment of heaven ; and a blessed and precious privilege for us upon earth, if the enjoyment of it be vouchsafed to us. One might, indeed, add to the above definition, by describing it as rendered in common.

In so speaking, I would not overlook the possibility of worship from an isolated individual. But it is not therefore the less true that in point of fact worship is a homage rendered in common, whether by angels or by men ; and hence communion in adoration partakes of the essence of the act, because the blessing is a common blessing, and the joy which one has in the blessing of others is part of one's own. Their blessing forms part of the grace to which my heart responds ; and love, which is the source and spring of it all, is defective, if I enjoy not their blessing. If I praise not God for it, I am myself incapable of worship ; for to praise God supposes that I am sensible of His love, and that I love Him in return.

I do not desire to confine myself to an abstract definition—quite the contrary ; but it is well to have a distinct idea of what the subject is of which we are treating.

No work of God towards man is worship ; nor any testimony respecting Him and His grace. Preaching the gospel to the unconverted is not worship. It may produce it, as being the means of communicating that knowledge of God in grace which awakens the spirit of adoration in the heart ; but the preaching itself, properly speaking (how blessed soever it may be), is not worship.

The gospel is a testimony rendered on God's part to man. Not recognising it as worship does not derogate from the value of such preaching : without it no Christian worship could exist, for the gospel makes known the God who ought to be adored, and, through the power of the Spirit, it leads the soul into the state in which it is able to render true homage to God, even that worship which is in spirit and in truth. But it is not therefore the less true, that no sort of testimony addressed to man from God is worship rendered to God by man. A sermon is not worship ; though it may be the means of producing it. The ministry of the word is a distinctive characteristic of the Christian economy. The Jewish people were regarded as already in relationship with God ; externally they were so. There was no question about bringing them to God ; they were already His people, and God dwelt in the midst of this people, as those whom He had redeemed. But now the kingdom of heaven and the grace of salvation are proclaimed to sinners, and there is a ministry of the gospel for inviting them to enter into relationship with God ; as in Israel there had been a priesthood for the maintenance of the relationship which had been already formed.

Prayers addressed to God, in order to obtain that of which we stand in need, are not worship, properly so called. They more immediately connect themselves

with it, because they suppose the existence of the knowledge of God, and of confidence in Him. They suppose also that we draw near to Him by virtue of that which He is, and which He is for the person who presents his prayers to Him. But supplications addressed to God, although founded upon confidence in Him, and thus intimately allied to adoration, have not the characteristic proper to adoration itself. Praises and thanksgivings, and the making mention of the attributes of God and of His acts, whether of power or in grace, in the attitude of adoration, constitute that which is, properly speaking, worship. In it we draw near to God and address ourselves to Him. To make mention of His praises, though not in an address to Himself, is undoubtedly connected with worship, and the heart refers them to Him ; but the doing so has not the form proper to worship, although it may enter into worship in a subordinate way, as also may the prayers which adoration itself suggests. And this distinction must not be treated as of little importance. Sweet is it to rehearse, the one to the other, the excellencies of Him whom we love ; but the redeemed delight to have God Himself in their thoughts. They delight to address themselves to Him, to speak to Him, to adore Him personally, to converse with Him, to open the heart to Him, to tell Him that they love Him. To the redeemed it is a delight that these communings pass between God personally and themselves. They delight to testify to Him the sense they have of His greatness and of His goodness. In this case the communion is between ourselves and God ; and God is more precious to us than are even our brethren. Such is the feeling of our brethren also : God is the portion of all in common. In short in the former cases we speak to ourselves, or to one another, telling each other how worthy God is to be praised ; in the latter we address ourselves to God personally. It is plain—to him at least who knows God it is plain—that the latter is the more excellent employ ; that it has

a charm, a blissfulness, which the other possesses not. The spiritual affections are evidently of a higher tone ; the communion is more complete.

Having presented these general thoughts as to the nature of worship, or rather, having distinguished that which is properly signified by the word worship from other acts, which are commonly associated with it in the mind, I will now inquire—What is christian worship according to the word ? I remarked by the way that there is a ministry in the christian economy, as there was a priesthood in that of the Jews. I return to this observation, in order to develope my subject, strengthened by the recollection that the Lord connects what He says concerning the worship which the Father seeks with that which formerly existed at Jerusalem.

The worship of Israel supposed, it is true, that the people were in a peculiar relationship with God ; it even assumed that God dwelt in the midst of them ; but in all the circumstances which characterise that worship God made it plain that the people themselves could not draw near to Him. Moreover, this was a thought which was essential to all the relationships which existed between God and the people. God had redeemed them out of Egypt with a strong hand and an outstretched arm, had borne them as upon eagles' wings and had brought them even to Himself. He had given them, as a token of their deliverance, the promise that they should worship Him upon Mount Sinai, to the foot of which He in truth conducted them, with proofs innumerable of His patience and His goodness. There God manifested Himself to them ; but it was amid thunders, and fire, and the voice of a trumpet, which made even Moses to tremble, familiar as he had already been with the wondrous manifestations attendant upon the presence of God. In harmony with such a revelation of His glory, the Lord commands that bounds be set around the mountain, and that, if even a beast approach unto it, it should be stoned, or thrust through with a dart. He

spoke indeed directly to the people, but in such a way as made the people ask that He should speak unto them no more : and God Himself approved the request. The ordinary worship of the people in the tabernacle and in the temple, while wearing an appearance more gentle and calm and less terrific towards the worshipper, contained in its basis the same character. If God did not shake the earth with His voice—if His presence did not cast terror amid the people—it was because He was hid behind the veil which concealed Him from their sight. He made Himself known only by His acts of blessing and of judgment, and did not reveal Himself to the hearts of the people. The consequence of this was natural and evident. The people came to acknowledge His benefits, and to humble themselves in the acknowledgment of His just judgments, while they drew near towards the holy place ; but to Himself, within the veil, they never drew near. They did not even enter into His house. Within the veil the high priest alone was wont to enter once every year, in order to carry in the blood of the ram and of the bullock—the propitiatory victims—in order to make reconciliation for the people with a God who could not endure iniquity, and thus to renew their relationships with Him, who demanded that His abode also should be purified from the defilements of the people, among whom He vouchsafed to dwell. Doubtless if, dwelling between the cherubim, He judged from His throne that which was evil, He also heaped up blessings upon the people whom He had redeemed, with the assurance that, if they were faithful, they should be protected from all their enemies. The people sought His protection, and worshipped Him for the benefits He had conferred. The faith of the individual seized perhaps more immediately the glory of the Lord ; but it did not go, and could not go, beyond the revelation which He had given of Himself in the government of Israel. The institution of the priesthood was the natural consequence of such a state of things ; but

the priests themselves fulfilled their service outside the veil, which hid from them the God whom they adored. The way into the holy place, says the apostle, was not yet made manifest, while the first tabernacle was yet standing. Here then we see the character of Jewish worship as God established it. But all is changed now. Christian worship is founded upon principles which are in direct contrast with all that we have been describing. There was, as to Jewish persons and circumstances, a foreshadowing of the facts and truths in connection with which worship is now carried on; but the principles of its exercise at that time were in perfect opposition to those upon which christian worship is based.

The honour and adoration to be rendered to God on the ground of that which He is, and that which He is for us, depend necessarily upon the revelation which He makes of Himself. God changes not; but no one draws near to Him in the light to which no man can approach. It is when He reveals Himself to us that our relationships to Him begin, whether the revelations be partial or perfect. Now God, under the law, manifested Himself as requiring of man that which man ought to be, and having placed him, by divine power, in a position in which he ought to have brought forth fruit to the glory of Him who had chosen Israel to be His own vine, He blessed man, if he was faithful to his duty, and He judged him if he was not so. Under such circumstances God could not fully reveal Himself. Man was capable of bearing neither the brightness of His majesty, nor the light of His holiness. His sovereign love, as Saviour, did not accord with the peremptory demand for services under pain of a curse—a just demand nevertheless, which served to manifest man's need of that grace which brings salvation. In that dispensation God might act—bless or punish; but if He fully revealed Himself, it must needs be in order to be known in a relationship which perfectly responds to that which He is in Himself; and this was impossible under the law.

If God did not reveal Himself in a manner which reconciles His attributes of holiness and love, He would either tolerate iniquity, or have to banish those involved in it, absolutely and eternally from His presence. Under the law God did not reveal Himself, but put Himself in relationship with man as a sinner though responsible : He acted, but concealed Himself.

Now Christianity is based upon an interposition of God altogether new—an interposition arranged in His counsels before the world was. The accomplishment of His purpose waited, not only for the development of sin in man, but for its arrival at its full height of enmity against God, in the most perfect manifestation which was possible of His goodness and of His authority. Christ appeared, and man crucified Him !

What relationship then was possible between man and God ? All must be judgment, or all must be grace. Judgment, which will surely be exercised against all iniquity, and specially against the rejection of grace, is not, I thank God, our present subject. It forms only the dark and solemn background of the picture, and throws into relief the perfection and brilliancy of grace.

It is with grace (blessed be God !) that we are now occupied. Now, if man crowned his iniquity, in rejecting, in the person of Jesus, not only the authority but also the goodness of God, the same act which perfectly manifested the sin which was in the heart of man, and fully developed the positive evil which flowed thence, accomplished at the same time all that the justice of God required with regard to that sin, whilst manifesting also His perfect love to man. The cross has fully manifested what man is. There also has God acted in all the plenitude of His holy justice against sin. In Christ He was perfectly glorified in that respect. The majesty of God has no longer aught to claim from him who comes to God by Jesus Christ. His love is free to bless. The holiness of God is an infinite delight to those who can draw near to Him ;

for there is no longer any question about guilt between the worshipper and God. Christ has abolished it by the sacrifice of Himself. Entirely cleansed from sin—cleansed according to the efficacy of the work of Christ Himself—we draw nigh to that meeting-place between God and the sinner, where there is no guilt, where His love has free course, there to enjoy all that God can heap upon us of blessing. Being reconciled unto God through the work of Christ, which has put away sin, and being introduced into His presence in the light, God has brought us into the nearness of a new relationship, that we may enjoy that which He is in Himself. We have a striking expression of the consequence of the death of Christ in the rending of the veil of the temple. The veil, which hid the sacred enclosure, was a sign that no one could draw nigh to God. It having been rent from the top to the bottom, we have now full liberty of entrance into the most holy place. The stroke which rent the veil, and made manifest the God of holiness, who cannot endure iniquity, but who must needs smite the very Son of His love, when He took our sin upon Himself—that stroke removed the guilt which would have barred our approach to Him, because sin could not appear in His sight. Thus cleansed from all guilt, the light of that presence shines upon us. The cross, which throws out into prominence all the holiness of His justice has rendered us able to abide in the presence of that holiness without spot and in joy.

All that God is has thus been manifested in the cross; and we can now enjoy God Himself as our portion according to His infinite love in Christ. Such is the basis of worship; and no one recognises as he should the glory of the work of Christ, or of the love of his God to which he is debtor for everything, who does not recognise this place as his. No one can render worship worthy of God upon any other ground. Indeed no one has rightly recognised himself as a

sinner who pretends to offer worship to God otherwise than in this liberty; for who would dare to present himself before God if all guilt had not been removed? Who would dare to place himself in the presence of God without a veil if his sin be not put away, knowing that God will not and cannot endure sin, in any manner or degree, in His presence? Who is free from sin out of Christ? On whom, of those who are in Christ, does it rest? None. In Christ sin is no longer ours, since He has cleansed us from it—cleansed us by a work which could not possibly be done a second time; the efficacy of which is at once perfect and eternal. And this alone gives freedom to the spiritual affections. For us God is perfect love, and He introduces us into “the light, as he is in the light.” But who can fully enjoy that love if there be a bad conscience? Attracted he may be; but find enjoyment he cannot. His affections cannot have free play, if his conscience reproaches him with offences against Him who loves him—if it produces fear in his soul. The heart must be free, if the affections are to be in exercise. But the work of Christ cleanses the conscience, and the heart is set free by the knowledge of that perfect love of God which He has for us, of which Christ is the proof and the fulness. The light of His holiness is thus the joy of our souls. It is in that light that we see all that we love. This relationship of God to the church, exceeding, as it does, all our thoughts, is presented to us in the most striking manner in the title—“God of our Lord Jesus Christ.” This title has peculiar significancy. When God is called the God of any one, it indicates that a tie of intimacy is formed between that person and Him who bears his name superadded to His own; it indicates a relationship based upon what God is to the one whose name He has thus assumed, and it implies a purpose to bless and honour according to that relationship. This purpose must stand. God cannot be unfaithful, and

hence the relationship becomes the source of enjoyment by faith to him whose name is added to the name of God ; at least he has the right to appropriate it as pertaining to himself on the part of God. Thus the title—"the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob"—not only indicates that they were specially the objects of distinctive blessing, but it indicates also that which God was for these patriarchs according to the revelation which He had made to them of Himself—a revelation upon which their faith could count, and which they were called to realise. God placed Himself in relationship to them according to that which His name expressed. Their spiritual privileges had this name for their character and measure. Thus God, in relation to us, is that which is expressed in the title—"God of our Lord Jesus Christ," because we as believers are one with Him, and are brought into the same relationship to God. It is thus that God reveals Himself to us, in order that we may be in relationship with Him according to the import of this title.

When this truth is understood, we can comprehend what a wondrous and glorious position is ours by virtue of this title—"God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the father of glory." For here Christ is viewed as a man, as being the head of a new family, and as having ascended to His God and our God. This God, to whom we draw near, is for us all that He is for Christ, who having perfectly glorified Him upon earth, has entered into His presence—His beloved Son—in whom we are accepted, and in whom He is always well pleased. This truth stands out in full prominence in chapters i. and ii. of the Epistle to the Ephesians. The apostle, in chapter i., prays that, the eyes of our understanding being enlightened, we may know what is the hope of the calling of God, and what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints (verse 18). He then speaks of us as one with Christ in that which he shows to be the true power and extent of that

glory; and tells us that the exceeding greatness of His power towards us who believe is according to the mighty power which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from among the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power, &c. And you [says he], who were dead in trespasses and sins, He hath quickened together with Him—raised up together, and made to sit in heavenly places in Christ, in order that He might show, in the ages to come, what are the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us by Christ Jesus. And what are the relationships which God has with Jesus Christ? What is it that belongs to Him on God's part, in justice, in love, even as a man? Who can tell the love of God towards Christ? What are His claims upon the affection of His Father? Now all that is His is ours in Him! What a wondrous place then is ours in the presence of God! The glory even, which God has given unto Him, He has given unto us, in order that the world may know that we are loved, even as He is loved (John xvii. 22, 23). These words of the Lord also will be remembered: "I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God."

The two prayers of the apostle in the Epistle to the Ephesians (that of chapter i. and that of chapter iii.) will be seen to be respectively based upon these two titles. The prayer of chapter i. is founded upon the second title, viz., that of "God of our Lord Jesus Christ" (verse 17); and that of chapter iii. upon the former, viz., that of "Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (verse 14). The first title is used in relation to glory; the second to communion in love.

The passage just cited from John xvii. shows that the communication of the glory, wondrous as it is, is but the proof that we are loved, even as Jesus is loved. What simplicity in this truth! but what love!—what divine depth even in proportion to its very simplicity!

“ I was as the first Adam ; I am as the second Adam : I have borne the image of the first ; I shall bear the image of the second.” Yes, this truth is simple ; but who could have conceived it but God ? In it we recognise the God of all grace. The names of the tribes of Israel were borne upon the breast of the high priest, as was also their judgment, according to the light and perfection of God ; but this was only a shadow, as says the apostle, of such blessings (Heb. x. 1). Therefore Paul, in speaking of the true circumcision, says, “ We worship God in spirit, and rejoice in Jesus Christ, and have no confidence in the flesh ” (Phil. iii.). We are “ in Christ.” That is our position before God. All that puts us out of this position, and supposes the need of any thing as a means of drawing near to God, puts us out of Him, and places us in Judaism, which, as a system, has been nailed to the cross, and is no better than any heathen ordinance. (See Gal. iv. 8-10.) We are in Christ, or we are out of Christ. We are one with Him, as we are separate from Him. If separate from Him, the distance matters not—we are not in union with the fountain of Life. The body separated from the head by anything, even though thinner than the beaten leaf of gold, or by a space more minute than the imagination of man can conceive, is a body without life. In Christ we are the objects of God's delight in Him, and “ we are as he is.” Out of Christ we are but objects of His judgment. Therefore are we “ heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ ;” but to follow out the glorious consequences of our position would lead us away from our subject.

But there is yet another truth connected with the work of Christ, on which worship necessarily hangs. Not only has Christ borne away our sin, cleansed us from all defilement, and made us fit for the presence of God, but, in order that we may enjoy this blessed reality, He has gained for us at the same time the gift of the Holy Spirit. Not only do we, when being

born again, receive a new nature, which is holy and capable of sentiments suitable to the position in which grace has placed us before God, but we receive the Holy Spirit, who shows and reveals and communicates to us divine things, and inspires sentiments such as they should awaken. We are strengthened by the Spirit in the inner man, in order that, being rooted and grounded in love, Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith, and that we may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the length and breadth and depth and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that we may be filled with all the fulness of God (Eph. iii. 16-19). The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us (Rom. v. 5). He takes of the things of Christ, and shows them unto us; and all that the Father has is Christ's (John xvi. 15; and xvii. 10). That which eye has not seen, which ear has not heard, which came not into the heart of man—the things which God has prepared for him whom He loves—God has revealed them unto us by His Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God (1 Cor. ii. 9, 10).

The Holy Spirit is "the unction" which we receive of God, by the which "we know the things which are freely given to us of God (1 Cor. ii. 12); by which we "know all things" (1 John ii. 20). He is the seal which God has put upon us unto the day of redemption: God has set His appropriating mark for that day of glory on those who believe. The Holy Spirit is also "the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession." He gives us the full assurance of the efficacy of the work of Christ. He imparts to us the knowledge of the position in which we are placed, as cleansed by the blood of the Saviour, and therefore without spot in the sight of God. By the Holy Spirit the love of God—whence all these accomplished blessings have flowed—is shed abroad in our

hearts. He is the originator in us of all the thoughts and all the affections which respond to this love. But He does more—He is more than all this for us. “He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit” (1 Cor. vi. 17). This is not merely an imagination, a feeling; it is a fact. The same Spirit, whose fulness is in Christ, abides in us, and we are united to Christ, as members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones (Eph. v. 30). By one Spirit we have all been baptized, that we might be one body (1 Cor. xii. 13). Not only is He the power, the link, of this union, but He gives us the consciousness of it. “At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you” (John xiv. 20). The Holy Spirit then gives us, first of all, the assurance of our redemption. Where the Spirit is, there is liberty. He reveals to us the glory of Christ as presented in the Scriptures, as He once did to Stephen, who, full of the Holy Ghost, beheld the glory of God, and the Son of man at the right hand of God. Moreover He gives us the consciousness of our union with Christ on high. We know that we are quickened together with Him, raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ. Besides all this He sheds abroad the love of God in our hearts—the spring and fountain of joy to ourselves, of pity towards this poor world, and of love to all the family of God. But I enter not into this happy consequence, our subject being worship.

Another truth of minor importance, but very precious in its place, depends upon this presence of the Holy Spirit: we are of the same body, and thus “members one of another” (Rom. xii. 5). If Christ is the Head of the body, each Christian is a member of it, and consequently united by the Holy Spirit, who forms the bond of the whole to every other member. The same Spirit dwells in each Christian; His body is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. vi. 19), and, believers being quickened and united together, they as a whole are also His temple (1 Cor. iii. 16). God dwells there by

His Spirit in a manner less palpable, but far more excellent, than in the temple of Jerusalem.

Now it is in their position according to this glorious revelation of God, and by the Spirit which He has given, in order that we might enjoy all the blessed privileges which are ours, that true Christian worship is offered to God.

Knowing what God is and what He is for us, beholding Him without a veil according to the perfection of His love and of His holiness, rendered capable of abiding in the light as He Himself is in the light, the objects of that love which spared not His well-beloved Son that we might be made partakers of it; and having received His Spirit in order that we might comprehend this love, and thus be enabled to adore Him according to the desires and affections of His heart toward us, we render Him worship responsive to the revelation which He has made of Himself in that mystery of love into which the angels desire to look, and by which He will make known, in the ages to come, the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

But there remains yet another element of our intelligent service—the character of “the Father.” God must be worshipped in “spirit and in truth,” for He is a Spirit: but it is as “the Father” that He “seeketh such to worship Him.”

To worship “in spirit” is to worship according to the true nature of God, and in the power of that communion which the Spirit of God gives. Spiritual worship is thus in contrast with the forms and ceremonies and all the religiousness of which the flesh is capable.

To worship God “in truth” is to worship Him according to the revelation which He has given of Himself.

The Samaritans worshipped God neither in spirit nor in truth. The Jews worshipped God in truth, so far

as this can be said of a revelation which was imperfect ; but they worshipped Him in no respect in spirit. Now to worship God both are needful. He is to be worshipped according to the true revelation of Himself, that is, "in truth ;" and according to His nature, that is, "in spirit."

Yet this is not all that is presented to us in this passage : in it is found another precious element of worship. The Father seeks such worshippers. It is grace which makes such now—grace flowing forth from love to themselves. Worship therefore is not rendered under a responsibility imposed by the flames of Mount Sinai, which, whilst demanding worship in the name of the holy majesty of the Lord, placed a barrier in the way of access to God, which no one could pass, under penalty of death, and which left the worshipper far off from God, trembling under the sense of responsibility, although encouraged by the benefits received from Him whom he dared not approach. No. Love seeks worshippers, but it seeks them under the gentle name of Father. It places them in a position of freedom before Him as the children of His love : the Spirit, who acts in them and produces worship, is "the Spirit of adoption" which cries "Abba! Father!" It is not that God has lost His majesty, but that He, whose majesty is far better known, is known also under the more tender and loving character of Father. The Spirit who leads us to worship the Father leads us also into the knowledge and enjoyment of all the love of God, who would have us to worship Him as His children.

The enjoyment of this love and of these privileges, God be thanked, belongs to the most simple and the most ignorant among Christians. The Christian, when once he has understood what the grace of God is, and has received the Spirit of adoption, is entitled to enjoy them without any reasoning, as a child knows and loves and enjoys his father before he can give any account of that which he enjoys. "I write these things unto you,"

says St. John, addressing himself to the little children in Christ, "because you have known the Father" (1 John ii. 13). The feeblest Christian is therefore perfectly competent for worship. At the same time it is sweet to be able to estimate and explain this relationship with God. The more we think of it—the more we examine the word on this subject—the more shall we see the import, the deep blessedness, of it. The simple fact that God is our Father, and that we possess the enjoyment of such a relationship with Him by the Spirit, is in itself an immeasurable privilege for creatures such as we are. Every child of God has this privilege in unquestioned right; but it is in Christ, and with Christ, that we possess it. He is "the first-born among many brethren." He is gone to His Father and our Father, to His God and our God. What a sweet and blessed relationship! what a family is that into which we are introduced! and how are we, who were formerly strangers to these affections and to this love—how are we to learn these things? How are we to learn what the Father is, the knowledge of whom gives birth to these affections in our hearts? It is the only-begotten Son, the first-born in this new relationship, who reveals Him unto us. Eternal Son of the Father, enjoying the infinite love of Him in whose bosom He dwelt—it is He who reveals Him as He Himself has known Him. Become man upon this earth, Jesus ceased not to be the object of the same affection—affection which, when challenged, could not remain silent. "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Nor did Christ, in anything, put Himself at a distance from this love. Upon earth, from the cradle to the cross, He was the object of it in all its fulness, and He revealed Him in whom it was found. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him" (John i. 18). Jesus, a man, but also the Son of God, in the enjoyment of the

fulness of this affection, dwells, even whilst upon earth, in the bosom of the Father, to originate and make known here below all the beauty—all the force of that affection. As man, He was the object of this infinite love, in order that we might understand it in its application to men. So He associates us with Himself in the joy of this love, and He reveals it to us as He Himself knows it. What grace in Him! and what a position for us! How does Jesus Himself, who by His death and resurrection has planted us in this blessedness, become to us an object of love, of adoration, of devotedness of heart! The very glory which is given to us is presented to us by the Saviour as a proof of this love. "The glory," said He, in chapter vii. of John, "which thou hast given unto me, I have given unto them . . . that the world may know that thou hast loved them as thou hast loved me." Such is His affection towards us, that He desires that we may enjoy the Father's love. So He renders us capable of this enjoyment by revealing to us the Father's name. "I have declared (says He, in the same chapter) Thy name unto the men Thou gavest me out of the world; and I will declare it, in order that the love, wherewith Thou lovest me, may be in them, and I in them." "Our fellowship is with the Father, and with his son Jesus." This fellowship expresses itself in adoration towards Him who is revealed, and towards Him who reveals.

It will be easily seen how the work of Christ is the foundation of all this blessedness, whether in order to introduce us without spot and without fear into the presence of the God whom we adore, or in order to place us in the relationship of children towards the Father. It was after His resurrection that Christ could say, "I ascend to my Father, and your Father; to my God, and your God." Then it was that He could say, "Go to my brethren." Now the Spirit which He gives from on high answers to this blessing: He is "the Spirit of adoption," as He is the Spirit of liberty, be-

cause we are "accepted in the Beloved," and we enjoy a redemption which has made us "the righteousness of God in him," and therefore placed us in God's presence without a spot or stain of defilement.

Thus we have reviewed, at least in principle, the great foundation truths of Christian worship. Perfect in Christ; united to Him; brought into the presence of God, whose love and holiness are manifest without a veil; as children beloved of the Father, and objects of the same love with Christ the first-born, we worship together according to the power and affections which the Spirit, who has been given to us, inspires. We worship the God of glory, whose presence is the stay instead of being the terror of our souls. We worship the God of love, whose will it is that we should be perfectly happy in Him, that He Himself might enjoy our happiness, Himself finding more joy in it than even we ourselves. We adore our Father with endearing confidence in His kindness, which blesses us with all spiritual blessings, and counts the very hairs of our head while thoughtful of all our present need. We adore Him for that which He is in Himself. We adore Him for that which He is to us, the children of His house for eternity. We thus present ourselves in sweet communion before the same Father—our common Father—as His beloved children: so that brotherly affections are developed, and, the joy of each being reciprocally the joy of all, multiplied praises ascend to God. Hence we see in the New Testament, that, while indeed the consciousness of this relationship must necessarily be individually realised in order that we may enjoy it together, yet at the same time the Spirit constantly associates us, and uses the words *we* and *us*, when speaking of Christian affections and feelings. The Holy Spirit shedding abroad the love of God in our hearts—it could not be otherwise.

But the effect of the presence of this "one Spirit" goes yet much further. Not only does He give us the

consciousness of being in Christ—of being perfect before God, according to the efficacy of the redemption which Christ has accomplished—not only does He witness with our spirits that we are the adopted children of the Father, but He gives us also the consciousness of being but “one body”—the “body of Christ,” and “members one of another.” The church, which God has newly-created in Christ—that “one new man”—the redeemed who have been “all baptized into one body,” offering worship in “the unity of the Spirit,” necessarily offer it as but “one body,” and that “with all the saints.” They are the “habitation of God through the Spirit,” and that Spirit uniting them all in the unity of the body of Christ, adoration ascends on high towards God, who formed them to be but “one new man” in Christ. If Israel as a whole was represented by the priests who officiated in the tabernacle, the faithful now who render direct worship to God do it in the unity in which they are all “one body in Christ.” In this worship there is more than brotherhood. There is unity, not of nation, and not only of family, but of the members of one body, formed as such, and indwelt by one Spirit. This is the endowment, privilege, and position of the church, which is baptized into “one body in Christ,” the Head being ascended up on high, in order that the members of the body may render worship freely and with joy before God, by that unction which descends from Him.

Let us state some of the practical effects which flow from these truths.

First, it is evident that worship is the privilege only of the children of God. Being offered “in spirit and in truth,” and being offered to Him who cannot admit sin into His presence, they, and they alone, who are washed in the blood of the Lamb, and who have received the Spirit, can draw near to God to adore Him. That a man who is not converted should render worship to God is simply impossible; for “without faith it is

impossible to please God." Such an one may be blessed in temporal things. He may perhaps ask such a blessing, and be heard. God may have tender compassion for him, as a poor sinner; but as yet he knows not God—as yet he has not the Spirit—as yet he is not washed in the blood of Christ; and therefore it is utterly impossible for him to worship God. That he thinks he can draw nigh to God is but the proof that he is ignorant of what he is in himself, and of what the God is whom he thinks to serve. Who can enter into the sanctuary save he who is sanctified? Who can address himself to a Father as such save a child? Worship moreover being offered on the unity of the body of Christ, and by the Spirit which has formed this unity, and which dwells in the body as in a temple, he who is not of the body is necessarily excluded. To suppose that a person who has not the Spirit can be a member of this body is to deny its existence, its end, and its nature; for if a man who is not converted can enter into the presence of God, and worship there, there is no need that there should be either a body in which God dwells as in a temple, nor is there need of redemption, which is the basis of every thing. Why should there be a redeemed people, if the worldling can serve God in His presence? Wherefore adore God by the Spirit, if he who has not the Spirit can adore just as well? Worshipping in common supposes persons united in one body by the same Spirit, and that each can say, *we*, in sincerity, when addressing God. A hypocrite may be present—he will be a hindrance in the worship; but its validity will not be thereby destroyed when the worshipper says, *we*, in truth, in the name of all. It is believers who worship God.

To render true worship to God supposes that a soul is set at liberty, and is free to draw near to God, in virtue of the efficacy of the work of Christ. If a person who loves God, and who has no other hope than the work of Christ, is timid in drawing near, it is

right to encourage him ; but if such an one has no real knowledge of the efficacy of the work of Christ, he will be ill at ease even in drawing near to God, because God's presence will communicate to him rather the conscience of sin than of the joy which that presence inspires to him who enjoys it in the peace which Christ confers. Nevertheless in such cases of doubting and trembling, right affections often precede the being set free, and are more true to Christ than the reasoning of the mind ; but this state of soul is not the normal state of worship. To be conscious in the presence of God—purified from all sin by the blood of Christ—in the light as He is in the light—such is the position of the true worshipper. This is the standing of the believer in Christ ; and in order to worship truly, this standing must be known and enjoyed. Sometimes bad teaching neutralises this liberty, although the soul all the while in its secret communings with God cries “Abba ! Father !” As a principle however, whatever allowance be made by charity for these cases of ignorance, true worship supposes that we can draw near to God without fear. This freedom of access is a necessary and absolute effect of the complete and triumphant work of Christ, of which every true believer has the benefit ; but it is the presence of the Spirit which enables us to realise it.

How delightful to be able thus to adore God ! What a source of joy is He whom we adore ! How great the blessedness of finding oneself in His presence, no cloud between Him and us—no tinge of fear, because no vestige of sin ! Being made “the righteousness of God in Christ,” the presence of God becomes but an inexhaustible spring of happiness for that new nature which He has given us, and which finds its enjoyment in Himself ! What joy to be able to express one's acknowledgements, to render to Him one's thanksgivings, knowing that they are acceptable to Him ! What a blessing to have His very Spirit, the Spirit of liberty

and of adoption, as our power of worship—as the inspirer of praise, of confidence, and of adoration! What joy thus to worship in unity, as members of the same family and of the same body, sensible that this joy is a joy common to all; knowing that those whom we love are infinitely precious and acceptable to the Lord, and that they all find their pleasure in praising Him who is worthy—the God who is the source of all our happiness—the Lord, who gave Himself for us, in order that He might be our eternal portion!

The perfection of all this will be known only in heaven. But Christian worship is the realisation here below—in weakness, without doubt—of that which will constitute our eternal blessedness. We have the privilege now of feeling ourselves for a little while separated from the world, withdrawn even from the work of faith, in order to enjoy that state of things in which Christ will see all the travail of His soul and be satisfied. I repeat, worship is now offered in weakness, but it is in truth through the Spirit, and therefore on the principle of the unity of the whole body. It may be there are but “two or three” present; but, being assembled in the name of Jesus, He who is the centre and bond of all the members is found there; and, being offered through His Spirit, we are necessarily, and in love, bound up with all the other members of His one body. “We comprehend with all saints,” be the number of those uniting together what it may, “the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge.” The truth that spiritual life is cultivated in private, abides in undiminished force; but it is called into exercise before God in all the common joy of the church. I believe there will be in heaven itself an individual joy and communion with God, which will be known only to him who is the subject of it. This precious truth, I think, is taught in that which is said to the Church of Pergamos: “To him that overcometh will I give a white stone, and a name written thereon, which no one knoweth saving he

that receiveth it." I add that the ability actually to enjoy worship in communion depends upon the maintenance of the inner life ; for how can we enjoy worship, if God is not known and enjoyed in the soul ?

I add these few words, lest any should suppose that the joy of fellowship may lead to a neglect of the individual secret hidden walk with God. This is far from my thought : if the latter be not maintained, either the worship will be cold or the joy will be carnal. The true blessedness of worship depends upon the presence of the Holy Spirit, and therefore upon the spiritual condition of those who are present as taking part in it, save so far as the sovereign goodness of God interferences.

These observations lead me to refer to a very important principle, namely, that the Holy Spirit is the energy, the sole living source, of all that takes place in worship, so far as it is genuine. This principle indeed is true universally—it is true of all the exercises of spiritual life. We live by the Spirit. We walk by the Spirit. We worship in spirit and in truth. It is the Spirit who contends against the flesh. It is the affection of the Spirit which is the expression of the whole of the inward Christian life. But in Christian worship, the members of Christ being united together, the Spirit acts in the body. All that which is real and blessed comes from Him. Sovereign in action, but acting according to the spiritual capacity of each, He uses this sovereign power in order to express the feelings which are suitable to the assembly before God, to nourish and strengthen them by His grace. That which takes place ought to be according to the spiritual capacity of the assembly, raising it up however in the tone and spirit of worship, and leading it into the sensible enjoyment of the divine presence. It is thus that the Holy Spirit acts, for He acts in man, but according to the energy and grace of God. When Christians are thus met together as members of Christ's body, each acting in his place through the Spirit, the opportunity is presented for the exercise

of the gifts of the members, which are for the edification of the body. I say "of the body," because evangelization is necessarily addressed to the world; that is, an assembly which has worship for its primary object is the occasion, by its very nature, for the exercise of the gifts which tend to the edification of the body, although such exercise be in no wise the object proposed.

This is clearly established by the fourteenth chapter of 1st Corinthians, which speaks in the most express manner of the exercise of gifts, when the assembly is gathered, and gives directions as to regulating the order of such exercise. This is easily understood. The assembly being formed as the body of Christ, and the Spirit acting by the members of this body, the body edifies itself by that which is furnished by each member according to the gift which is distributed to each, the Spirit guiding all, in order that it may be for edification. But the principal matter is to draw near to God Himself. The exercise of gifts is but a means: the joy of love in the presence of God, in worshipping Him, is our eternal aim. Gifts will cease in heaven, as also the ignorance which needs instruction, and the slothfulness which renders exhortation necessary. Worship will (thank God) never cease. Under the law the service of the priest was more excellent than that of the Levite. The Levite served; the priest drew nigh to God according to the anointing which he had received. In the use of gifts we are Levites: in worship we are priests. Moreover, he who through the Spirit takes part in the worship itself does not do so on the ground of having a gift, which is in general a faculty given of God to act among men. At the same time it is the measure of spirituality which gives the capability of being the organ of the assembly. The Spirit then acting in spiritual men—in order to express the spiritual affections of the assembly—is the mode in which worship is rendered to God.

We have remarked, as every Christian admits, that

the sacrifice of Christ is the necessary and fundamental basis of all Christian worship. We know that it is by means of this sacrifice alone that we can draw nigh to God, whose demands could only be met by its divine perfection. But this is not all the relation which exists between worship and the sacrifice of Christ. Christ having opened to us this new and living way through the veil, that is to say, His flesh, we have full liberty to enter, through His blood, into the most holy place. But is that all? Do we forget the precious sacrifice, when once we have entered by virtue of its worthiness? No. It is there that we recognise it—it is there that we learn to appreciate its full value. Before entering we might measure the value of the work of Christ by the need into which sin had plunged us. But now, happy, brought into communion with God, tasting the sweetness of His love, instructed in His thoughts and affections, we measure—what yet surpasses all measure—this work of Christ, by the grace of God, which it unfolds. Instead of seeing in it only that which the sinner sees, all-precious as such perception is, we see in it that which God sees in it. In the enjoyment of peace by virtue of this sacrifice—in spirit already in heaven—we contemplate its value with the eye of God, and are nourished with all its perfectness according to God's estimate. For these thoughts and this vision are given to us by the Spirit to sanctify us—to bring our hearts into harmony with the mind of heaven. We see also in the offering He made of Himself, how great has been the love of Christ for us.

The death of Christ has such a value in God's sight as to constitute, so to speak, a new claim on the affections of His Father. Thus, He who, as only-begotten Son of the Father, was all His delight before the world was, could say, "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life that I might take it again." His devotedness to the glory of His Father was in this act seen to be absolute. All that belonged

to the moral development of that glory was therein accomplished at the cost of Him who suffered. All that mysterious evil, by means of which Satan had sway in this world, and by which misery, death, and condemnation had entered, was turned to the manifestation of the glory of God. The righteousness, majesty, and love of God, irreconcilable in the midst of sin, were, through the intervention of Him who consented to be "made sin for us," thrown out in relief by sin itself. On the other hand, if we consider the personal perfection of Christ, His devotedness to the will of His Father, His love, obedience, submission, sacrifice of all, even to life itself, in order that the Father might be glorified, and that those whom He loved might be saved—His perfect patience—His confidence in God which never failed, even when He was forsaken, all found united in the cross; and then to think who He was, and that it was for us He did and suffered all—what a value ought His death to have in our sight! Add to all this the power of Satan overcome; death destroyed—made even a gain for us; the veil removed from before the presence of God; a perfection, beyond the possibility of a taint, introduced into the whole wide universe, which it fills with peace and light, and of which it has made us the heirs; and, more than all, the perfect enjoyment of the love of God! What moral worth, then, has that cross, by which all is consummated, however feeble may be our ability to proclaim it—however feeble our hearts may be as vessels to contain the sentiment it inspires! Our adoration necessarily links itself with the cross. There the God whom we adore was glorified; without it His glory could not be fully displayed. There it is that we have learnt what God is.

But is the glory of the cross a glory which dazzles us, and which forces us to a distance by its very greatness? Quite the contrary. Christ hung upon the cross for us—in our stead, as the very lowest from among the children of men. "His visage was marred more than

any man's." His cross is the expression of tender affection towards us—of love stronger than death. He loved us even unto the end. He undertook to render us happy in the presence of the Father. He counted nothing too dear to Him that He might accomplish this end. And His heart, perfect in love, rests on those whose cause He has undertaken. He has associated them with Himself. He, who had need of nothing, has need of us. "I go to prepare a place for you," said He; "and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am there ye may be also." "Whom seek ye?" said He, in the garden of Gethsemane; "if ye seek me, let these go their way," that His word might be accomplished; "of those whom thou gavest me I have lost none." He gave Himself for us. "With desire," said He, "I have desired to eat this passover with you, before I suffer; for I will eat no more thereof until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God." As the Passover was Israel's memorial of the deliverance out of Egypt, so the Supper is the memorial, not only of our deliverance, but, moreover, of the love of Him who has delivered us. If Jesus attaches value to our remembrance of Him—if He presents Himself to us with so much tenderness in the memorials of His dying love, that love at the same time produces in us the very deepest affections—affections which are connected with what is most exalted in the grace of God, and which express themselves in the adoration of the heart. We can understand then that, although worship is offered in various ways, by hymns, by thanksgivings, in the form of prayers, in praise, &c.—we can understand, I say, that the Lord's Supper, as representing that which forms the basis of all worship, is the centre of its exercise, around which the other elements that compose it are grouped. The worshipper is thereby reminded of that which is the most precious of all things in the sight of God—the death of His beloved Son. He recalls the act in which the Saviour has

testified His love in the most powerful way. Other considerations add their weight to those which we have just presented with regard to the Lord's Supper. The worshipper eats in the house of God, as the priests ate of the things with which expiation had been made; he enters with spiritual affection into the perfection of that expiation—of what Christ has been in the accomplishment of it. "He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him." I apply not this exclusively to the Lord's Supper, although the most vivid expression of it.

The Peace-offering presents, with the Passover, the most lively images of the true character of the Lord's Supper. The former was a feast consequent upon a sacrifice. In the latter, Israel fed upon the sacrifice, the blood of which was their safeguard against judgment. In the former, the partakers were God, the priest who officiated, the priests, the worshipper, and those who were with him. The fat burnt upon the altar was called "the food of God." This expresses the full satisfaction of God in the sweet odour of the work of Christ. The priest who offered the blood had his part; that is, Christ partakes in the joy of those that are His, through the efficacy of His death. The other priests eat another part. They represent Christians in general. Lastly, the guests of him who makes the sacrifice represent united worshippers. Thus God Himself has His part in the joy; so has Christ; so has the church in general; and lastly the assembly which participates therein. This figure of the Peace-offering is realised in a manner more precious in the Supper. Through faith we feed on, and are nourished by, that holy victim already offered, the sweet savour of which ascends to God. Christ has His joy in our joy. We share in it with all the church. Already in spirit in heaven, our hearts dwell on that which has given us title to enter there—on that which will be precious above all to our souls when we are there. United in one body, we show forth

the death of Jesus, which is the foundation of our salvation, "until he come," and we are for ever with Him on high, where remembrance will be lost in the immediate presence of Himself. The praises and thanksgivings of the worshippers are necessarily associated with the acceptance by our God, in heaven, of the sacrifice of Christ. - This is ever true as to the heart; but the Lord's Supper is the special definite expression of the fact. In the Old Testament, this truth is expressed in figure in a remarkable manner. In the Peace-offering, if any one ate the flesh of the victim on a day which was too far removed from that on which the fat was burnt upon the altar as a sacrifice to God, instead of being communion it was a sin. In the case of thanksgivings, a man might eat of the flesh only on the same day: in the case of a voluntary offering, on the morrow also. The joy of the worshipper, expressed by his eating of the sacrifice, must be in immediate connection with the offering made to God, otherwise it was profane. In general therefore the flesh was to be eaten the same day; and even where greater energy of piety, indicated by presenting a voluntary offering, gave more force to this association, the repast on the morrow was not really separate from the sacrifice.

Reflection upon the truths we have been considering will show the importance of the Lord's Supper in worship, whether we view it in connection with the sacrifice offered to God, as the foundation of all our relationships with Him, or in connection with the affection and the devotedness of Christ for us—the two themes which form the sphere of the spiritual affections that are exercised in worship. But there is another point also connected with it.

We have seen that the Holy Spirit—being the source, the power, and inspirer of all true Christian worship, the unity of the body formed by Him, and in which He acts—necessarily holds a prominent place in the worship which He produces in its members so united. Love,

which is the soul of it, is defective in one of its most perfect forms, if conscience as to this unity is wanting. The presence of the Holy Spirit produces the consciousness of this unity, of which He is the author and the bond. Now, considered in one aspect, the Lord's Supper is the expression of this unity. We are all but "one body ; for we are all partakers of that one bread ;" or, as in the original, "of that one loaf." If the bread broken represents, on the one hand, the broken body of Christ, the unity of the bread represents, on the other, the unity of His spiritual body. As the Spirit embraces all saints, so do the hearts of believers. Thus, "When I knew," said the apostle, "your love unto all saints." And again, "That ye may comprehend, with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge."

How sweet to find oneself united to "all saints," wherever they may be, in the unity of the body of Christ, as members together of that body, according to all the privileges which attach to it by reason of the love of Him who "nourishes and cherishes" it, as a man does his own flesh ! How sweet to feel through the Spirit one's union with all that are Christ's, accompanied with the thought, so full of joy, that all those dear to us, as belonging to Him, are cherished by His constant love ! Thus it is that intercession connects itself so intimately with worship, properly so-called, being inspired by the affections which are generated by the Holy Spirit. The petitions made by worshippers for grace for themselves, are scarcely further removed from worship, because the consciousness of what we owe to God, which is expressed in worship, necessarily produces the desire of glorifying Him, and of receiving the grace which alone can render us capable of doing so.

With regard to the Supper, we find indeed that not only does it form the prominent feature of the religious exercises of believers, but that, with this end in view,

they were wont to unite in the occasional and solemn assemblies. Thus, we read, "they continuing daily with one consent in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house" [margin, at home]; that is, in their private houses, in contrast with the temple. Again: "They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers."

It appears then that the early believers partook of the Supper even daily, and that, being still Jewish in many respects, they diligently frequented the temple; but then they had in their houses, in remembrance of Christ, this special service, as to which He had said, "Do this in remembrance of me."

In the twentieth chapter of the Acts we read: "And upon the first day of the week (the resurrection day), when the disciples came together to break bread." This passage implies that this act, though others might accompany it, was the object of their meeting.

It has been supposed that the "breaking of bread" might apply to something beside the Supper, since there is proof that they made a meal at the same time. There is no doubt as to the meal. Christ instituted the Supper at the time of His own last evening's repast; and at first the disciples partook of a supper at the same time that they broke bread; but "the breaking of bread" had a character proper and distinctive to itself, even as it had its formal appointment. Not to perceive this when it was celebrated is what the apostle calls "not discerning the Lord's body;" and in the Epistle to the Corinthians he corrects this abuse. The passage shows that they came together to eat; but alas! their feast had at Corinth set aside the spiritual service, and some came to take their surfeit in eating and drinking, and left the poor in want. The Supper was not observed in their private abodes but in a building common to all, and every one brought "his own supper," and the service had entirely lost its character as the

Lord's Supper. The passage plainly shows that they came together in order to eat, and that they supped together in the common place of meeting, but that the Supper of the Lord was the avowed object of the meeting. To maintain this last institution in all its importance, the apostle ordained that the repast, which previously had accompanied the Lord's Supper, should be separated from it, that so they might come together in the spirit of devotion, and not bring down chastisement upon themselves.*

The two grand elements of Christian worship are the presence of the Holy Spirit and the remembrance of the sacrifice of Christ, which is commemorated in the Supper.

But in this worship the affections which are connected with all our relationships with God are developed. God, in His majesty, is adored. The gifts even of His providence are recognised. He, who is a Spirit, is worshipped in spirit and in truth. We present to God, as our Father—the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ—the expression of the holy affections which He has produced in us; for He sought us when we were afar off, and has brought us near to Himself, as His beloved children, giving us the Spirit of adoption, and associating us (wondrous grace!) with His well-beloved Son. We adore our Saviour-God, who has purged us from our sins, and placed us in His presence without spot; His holiness and His righteousness, which have been so marvellously displayed in our redemption, being to us a source of joy which passes not away; for, through the perfect work of Christ, we are in the light, as He Himself is in the light. It

* The apostle does not suggest the idea of examining themselves whether or not they should partake, but in order that they might partake aright, that is, in a proper spirit. The Supper being the expression of the unity of the body, not to partake of it is to excommunicate oneself. No one had an idea that a Christian would do such a thing with regard to himself.

is the Holy Spirit Himself who reveals to us these heavenly things and the glory which is to come, and who acts in us so as to produce affections suitable to such blessed relationships with God. He it is who is the bond of union between the heart and these things. But in thus drawing out our souls, He makes us feel that we are children of the same family and members of the same body ; uniting us in this worship by means of mutual affections and feelings, common to all, towards Him who is the object of our worship. Jesus Himself is present in our midst according to His promise. In fine worship is exercised in connection with the very sweetest recollection of His love, whether we regard His work upon the cross, or whether we recall the thought of His ever fresh and tender affection for us. He desires our remembrance of Him. Sweet and precious thought ! Oh ! how joyous to our souls, and yet at the same time how solemn ought such worship to be ! What sort of life should we be careful to lead in order to render it ? How watchful over our own spirits ! How sensitive as to evil ! With what earnestness should we seek the presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit, in order to render such worship suitable ! Yet it should be very simple and truthful ; for true affection is always simple, and, at the same time, devout, for the sense of such interests impart devoutness. The majesty of Him whom we adore, and the greatness of His love, give solemnity to every act in which we draw near to Him. With what deep affections and thankfulness should we at such times think of the Saviour, when we recall all His love for us—abiding through Him, in the presence of God, far removed from all evil, in the foretaste of our eternal blessing ! These two great subjects, about which Christian worship is occupied, viz., the love of God our Father, and the love of the Lord Jesus, in His work, and as Head of His body the church, afford slight changes in the character of worship,

according to the state of those who render it. At times the Lord Jesus will be more specially before the mind: at times thoughts of the Father will be more present. The Holy Spirit alone can guide us in this; but the truthfulness and spirituality of our worship will depend upon the state of those who compose the assembly. Effort in such things has no place. He who is the channel of worship, let it be observed, should not present that which is proper and peculiar to himself, but that which is truly the exercise, through the Spirit, of the hearts of those who compose the assembly. This will make us feel our entire dependence upon the Comforter—the Spirit of truth—for truthful service to God in communion. Nothing, however, is more simple or more evident than the truth, that the worship which is rendered should be the worship of all.

There is another observation which the consideration of Scripture would suggest, viz., how much the worship will be affected by all that grieves the Holy Spirit; every impediment therefore even in an individual will make itself felt if there be spirituality; for we are there as but “one body.” It is of the utmost importance that this delicacy of spiritual feeling should be cultivated and maintained, and that we should not habituate ourselves in worship to but little sense of the presence of God and of the power of the Holy Spirit. If there is true spirituality—if the Holy Spirit fills the assembly with His presence—evil of every kind is quickly discovered; for God is a jealous God, and He is faithful. A single Achan was discovered at the commencement of the history of Israel—a single lie in Ananias in the beginning of the church's history. Alas! what things afterwards occurred in Israel! And what things afterwards took place in the church without any one having even the consciousness that evil was present! May God make us humble, watchful, and true to Him, and enable us to bear in mind that His Spirit abides with

us, in order that we may be able to render spiritual worship! It is by the Spirit's powerful testimony to the efficacy of the work of Christ, that we can abide in the presence of God, without blame and full of joy, and thus present to Him worship which is a witness before the angels of heaven to God's gracious and unfathomable love; and which presents to God Himself the most acceptable proof of the efficacy of that work which takes from us all fear in His presence, and which opens a channel, otherwise eternally closed, for the outflowing of that love in which He finds His delight.

The privilege of being able to render worship to God is granted to two or three gathered together in the name of Jesus. Disciples are so gathered, when it is the power of His name known amongst them as the common tie, which is recognised as the principle of their assembly. Jesus, in accordance with His promise, is there as the joy and strength of their common service.

The Lord said to Israel, "In all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee" (Ex. xx. 24). Again, it is said (Deut. xii.), that they should offer their offerings in the place which He would choose to set His name there; which had its definitive accomplishment at Jerusalem (1 Kings viii. 29). But now God is known in the blessedness of His presence, where two or three are gathered together in the name of Jesus. There Jesus Himself has said, He would be in the midst of them. Sweet encouragement for the feebleness of His people! If there were thousands of disciples gathered in one place, how great soever the encouragement given by such a work of the Spirit, the presence of Jesus Himself—the most precious of all things—is vouchsafed even to two or three of the least of those that are His, if it is truly in His name that they are met. Let it be only His name in which it is done. The fleshly pride which loves to make much of a gift, and would claim lordship over God's heritage—human arrangement which would seek to avoid simple depen-

dence upon God—the narrowness which would welcome upon the ground of peculiar views—none of these is the name of Christ. Those who unite in the name of Christ embrace in heart and mind all those who are His—all the members of His body; they embrace them in the principle upon which they are met; otherwise it would not be in His name that they were united; for one cannot exclude from the power of His name those that are His. His heart embraces them; and we are not united according to His heart, if in principle our assembly does not embrace them. Clearly His name does not embrace the world, nor sin, nor that which denies the truth which that name reveals.

The name of Jesus unites in one those that are His. He that gathers not with Him scatters abroad.

Christians are bound to maintain holiness and truth, and to make constant progress towards the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. To hinder this, and to seek to fashion souls according to the mould of particular views, tends towards the destruction of practical unity.

Nothing but spirituality, subject to the word and regulated by grace—in a word the guidance of the Spirit of God—can in certain cases discern between that which is a step forward, and that which is the insisting upon some private view. For the spirit of the world, which is opposed to progress in divine things, and to that which presents more of Christ, will stamp with the name of “particular views” all that which tends to make our responsibility to Christ deeper and more felt; and a spirit of sectarian narrowness will treat as progress all that makes much of its own notions. Moreover, supposing an assembly of worshippers is truly founded upon the basis of the unity of the church of God, if the mass of the assembly is not in a state to bear that which would be a true step in advance, it is useless to insist upon it; to do so would tend to division rather than to progress. Such was the case of the Corin-

thians. The apostle had to nourish them with milk. They were not able to bear stronger food.

On the contrary, when it is a return to a judaizing spirit, which would compromise the gospel, the apostle refuses to stop (Heb. v. 12, 14; vi. 1-4). The energetic wisdom of the Spirit of God is needed by the church. It is not the intention of God that she should be able to do without it, or be exempt from dependence upon Him who gives it.*

But I desire to revert to the foundation of the subject of which I treat. What I have said relates to the assembling of the children of God for worship. Sweet and precious privilege, to anticipate that which will be our eternal employ in heaven! There our worship will be perfect. There all the church, in its completeness, will be assembled to render worship in the midst of the general assembly on high. There, without distraction and without fear, worship will be its eternal joy, in the perfect favour of God. What a privilege, even here below, to close the door for a moment upon all the distractions of this nether world, and by the Spirit to satisfy the desires of the heart in rendering to God the thanksgiving which He is worthy to receive, and which, in His grace, He has breathed into our souls!

I would notice a few more passages which may help individuals to seize the true idea of worship. The first is Phil. iii. 3: "We are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." We may remark that the question here is not about sin, or the flesh, but of "confidence in the flesh;" that is, about the religion of the flesh, which is altogether as evil as its lusts; for, after all, religiousness is but one of them, though

* I have said this much concerning things which are but accessory to my subject, because they refer to difficulties which are constantly occurring in the Christian's path. My remarks are applicable only to an assembly based upon the eternal foundation of the unity of the church of God; if that is compromised, there is no ground for any union at all, according to God.

covered with the veil of works and of holiness. The touchstone of the religion of the flesh is that it does not tend to the glory of Jesus, or that it does not glory only in Jesus. It can be much occupied in good works; it can be without reproach as to conduct, can have much of self-denial, much of piety, plenty of humility, can talk much of the love of God; but while pretending, perhaps, to found its services upon His love, it will be conversant rather with that love of God which is in our heart—with our love to Him, and not with His love to us. It may be asked, "But if all these things can exist in a person, and be nothing but the religion of the flesh, how can we discern the true circumcision?" Scripture tells us "it rejoices in Christ Jesus." Nothing is easier than to judge as to these things, if Christ is our all. The fact that He is so, makes us feel, without hesitancy, that all this religiousness is of the flesh, and yields its help to that which destroys Christianity from its foundations. Is another mark desired, by which one can judge of this religion of the flesh with all its pretensions? It does not hold the Head; that is, he who has confidence in these religious acts of the flesh, never has the consciousness of his own union with Christ. He knows not what it is to be raised up together with Him, and made to sit together with Him in the heavenly places. He knows not what it is to be a member of His body—bone of His bone, and flesh of His flesh—one spirit with the Lord. Such an one will, perhaps, recognise this as true for the church, in an abstract manner, for the religion of the flesh can be orthodox, but he has not faith to recognise it as true of himself. Faith is an individual thing, and it places him who possesses it in the enjoyment of the object which it regards, or under its effects. Col. ii., as well as the chapter cited above, judges all the fair but specious appearance of fleshly religiousness. The Lord, in His addresses to the Scribes and Pharisees, judged it in its grosser forms.

Another thing which marks carnal religion is, that however apparently elevated be its piety, it accords with things which are not of heaven ; it seeks not, in every respect, "things above," which is the characteristic of one who is dead and raised up together with Christ (Col. iii. 1-3). The religion which is of the Spirit serves God in spirit, and has no confidence in the flesh. The religion of its forefathers, even though it may be true, is not held by the true "circumcision" on the ground of having received it from natural progenitors. It confides not in its zeal, nor in any devoutness which it can offer to God, nor in its love to Him. It rejoices not before God, save in Jesus Christ alone. The soul that has truly learnt that it was dead in sins, but that the Saviour has come down, and been made sin for us, and has died for us, and been raised up for us, knows in God's sight but one sole thing ; and that one sole thing, which it puts forward, in which it rejoices, in which it glories before God, on which it knows that God has placed all His delight, is Jesus Christ. One cannot fail to observe how this practical description of the true circumcision, that is, of God's people, who are truly set apart for Him, and who are dead as to the flesh, connects itself with the great foundation principles upon which, as we have already seen, the true Christian stands in the service which he renders to God. Let us bear in mind, also, that it will profit nothing to mingle carnal religion with that of the Spirit. The flesh of the Christian finds in such a course its aliment. The effort of the adversary, at the commencement of the church, was not to substitute the law and circumcision in the flesh, in place of Christ, but to add them. But the apostle saw clearly, by the Spirit, that were this admitted, all was lost. Make anything else an essential, and Christ shall profit you nothing. The Christian is one with the Head—one with Christ ; let in the least thing between them, and the body is a corpse. The work of Christ is not sufficient, if anything is to be

added. And not only so, but thereby the Christian standing is completely swept away. For then, instead of being in Christ, happy in God's presence, by virtue of a work already accomplished by the glorious Saviour alone—instead of being “complete in him,” “accepted in the beloved,” man has still to seek means of rendering himself acceptable to God—he has still to find a way by which he may present himself before Him. Under such circumstances, the Word declares, “ye are fallen from grace.” The nature of Christianity is thereby changed. It is virtually denied, though professed in word. The truth of the gospel is lost.

May God grant us to have “no confidence in the flesh,” but “to rejoice in Christ Jesus.”

It may again be asked—“But is it not possible to maintain these truths in all their height, and yet still to be carnal?” I answer, doubtless; but when this is the case, the flesh takes the form of licentiousness, its real character, and not that of religiousness. The flesh is very pious, when it acts the pious, for it always desires to rejoice in itself.

There is another passage which formally applies to things on earth, but which beautifully exhibits the spirit of worship. I refer to Deut. xxvi. In type, Canaan represents heaven. Israel, arrived in Canaan, enjoyed the promise. Read the chapter. The worshipper, already come to the good land, which God had given him as an heritage, presents himself with “the fruits of the land.” This is what we have to offer to God, even the grateful and joyous effusions of hearts filled with heavenly blessedness. For, in spirit, we are in heaven. We are in Christ, who fills it with His glory and his perfections, and we dwell in the love of God Himself, who has introduced us thither. Holiness, and love, and joy, characterise the land. They are the fruits which grow there spontaneously, as are the thanksgivings that arise in the hearts of those who are there through redeeming power.

The worshipper professed aloud that it was God that had accomplished everything for him. It was thus he presented himself. This acknowledgment was due to God, since Israel was indeed there through His faithful, sustaining grace; and there would have been failure in recognising His true position, if He had not come as an unconditional debtor to God's grace. Is it then that He forgot His own wretchedness? No. But He was in it no longer; and it served to exalt the greatness of His deliverance. "And thou shalt speak and say before the Lord thy God, A Syrian ready to perish was my father, and he went down into Egypt, and sojourned there with a few, and became a nation, great, mighty and populous: and the Egyptians evil entreated us, and afflicted us, and laid upon us hard bondage: and when we cried unto the Lord God of our fathers, the Lord heard our voice, and looked on our affliction, and our labour, and our oppression: and the Lord brought us forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm, and with great terribleness, and with signs, and with wonders: and he hath brought us into this place, and hath given us this land, even a land that floweth with milk and honey. And now, behold, I have brought the first-fruits of the land, which thou, O Lord, hast given me. And thou shalt set it before the Lord thy God, and worship before the Lord thy God." All this applies, in spirit, to the Christian. He was the slave of Satan, and miserable in himself. God looked with compassion on his affliction, and delivered him with "a mighty hand." He has rescued him from this Egyptian world, and made him an heir of glory in the heavenly places. Already seated there in Christ, has he nothing to offer? Does the heavenly land, which the Lord our God hath given us, produce nothing which we can offer to God, in testimony of the value of His gifts—in token of the sense which we have of His goodness? The Israelite, redeemed by God, was constituted a worshipper. He addressed God directly,

rendering to Him the worship which was His due—the fruit of a heart happy in His bounty.

Thus the spirit of grace and of love was shed abroad in his heart, and he enjoyed all in simplicity and with gladness. Inviting the desolate and the stranger to partake with him of God's goodness, he made them also happy. "And thou shalt rejoice in every good thing which the Lord thy God hath given unto thee, and unto thine house, thou, and the Levite, and the stranger that is among you. When thou hast made an end of tithing all the tithes of thine increase the third year, which is the year of tithing, and hast given it unto the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, that they may eat within thy gates, and be filled; then shalt thou say before the Lord thy God, I have brought away the hallowed things out of mine house, and also have given them unto the Levite, and unto the stranger, to the fatherless, and to the widow, according to all thy commandments which thou has commanded me; I have not transgressed thy commandments, neither have I forgotten them." Pure in walk, maintaining the holiness of God, and carefully preserving that which was hallowed for Him from being profaned, he could, from his heart implore a blessing upon all the people of his God, and ask that it might rest upon the whole state of things, in which God had placed them. Here was the memorial of a tie between God and His people.

In examining also Deut. xvi. we shall find, in the directions given for the celebration of the feasts of the Lord, an unfolding of the spirit in which they were to be observed. These directions furnish, in measure, an instructive contrast between the states of soul which the different feasts respectively inspired.

At the Passover, when the Israelites celebrated the fact of their having been spared, the joy of the other feasts was not found. Doubtless, they recognised the deliverance accomplished, but the unleavened bread,

type of purity and simplicity of heart, is called "the bread of affliction;" they had gone out of the land of Egypt "in haste" to save themselves. How could they think of tarrying there to perish! Such was their haste, that they "took their dough before it was leavened," and made their escape. In commemorating their deliverance after they had reached the land, it was remembered by them as a deliverance—an escape; and thus every one turned in the morning, and went to his own tent. Thus it is also with the believer. It is grace to be delivered, but so long as there is barely the consciousness of deliverance, and deliverance from such ruin—from slavery—holiness is felt as a requirement, and this is not the joy with which the Holy Ghost afterwards fills the heart. We may see the purity of Christ, demanding that the leaven of sin be entirely put away; we may be thus in a true position of heart; deliverance was needful for such slaves; holiness is obligatory—without it no one shall see the Lord; we may have a solemn feeling of the grace which has saved us—of the truth—of the profound reality and need of that sacrifice, the blood of which has stayed, at our threshold, the sword of the holiness of God; but all this, however salutary and however needful, is not joy; it is not communion. Every one retires apart by himself.

In the feast of Pentecost, prefiguring the gift of the Holy Spirit, there was joy; a voluntary offering was presented to God, according to the blessing which the Lord had vouchsafed. There was joy in communion. They raised up the downcast heart of the widow, of the orphan, of the Levite, and of the stranger. They rejoiced before the Lord their God, in His presence, where He had set His name. They recalled the thought that they had been slaves, but it was while enjoying their freedom before God, who had shed abroad His blessing upon the people whom He had set free. Here again, we find the true spirit of worship. It will be noticed that they offered according to the blessing of the Lord.

The feast of Tabernacles went a little farther: they rejoiced in like manner, and the joy diffused itself over others, whose heart God would lift up. The spirit of joy and of peace still characterised the worshippers gathered together in the presence of their God; it marked the communion which is the effect of that presence, and of His people's drawing near to Him. But the feast, the spirit of the feast, was to be kept up during all the seven days; "thou shalt rejoice," it is said; for now they are in the full consciousness of the rest of God. The ingathering of the corn-floor and of the wine-press was complete. In full and abundant enjoyment of all the fruits of the land—in the rest of God, they celebrated the bounty of Him who had given them these things, not according to the blessing He had given them, but because the Lord their God had blessed them in all the works of their hands. This feast is typical of the rest which Israel shall enjoy from all their toils in the age to come; but for us, doubtless, the accomplishment of it will be in heaven. Yet now, in so far as we realise our portion, we anticipate that joy; and we bless God accordingly.

I will next direct the reader's attention to the fourth and fifth chapters of the Revelation.

In chap. iv. 8, we find the four living creatures ascribe to "the Lord God Almighty," the glory of all that which He is in His holy and eternal majesty: This ascription of praise leads those who represent the glorified saints, in their character of kings and priests, to take their crowns from off their heads, to leave their thrones, and to fall down "and worship Him that liveth for ever and ever." They are thus more exalted morally, in appreciating and recognising the glory of Him to whom all majesty belongs, than by being clothed with the insignia of their own glory. They are more exalted in employing the measure of glory, which had been conferred on them, only to exalt His, than by bearing it before the armies of heaven, or the inhabitants of the

earth. That which characterises us in drawing near to God, is more excellent than that which distinguishes us from His creatures. The crowns by which these elders were distinguished from their fellow-creatures, were the symbols of a real glory, because it had been given them of God ; but to esteem this glory as nought, save as an offering, because they understood the more excellent glory of Him who had loved them, and who was placed far above them, was certainly a position more exalted, than highly to appreciate it, and to clothe themselves with it in sight of those who were beneath them. The object was more excellent—the spirit of a higher order ; for they thought no longer about themselves. They were really exalted Godward, although He alone was glorified. Their attitude and act exhibit the perfection of the creature's state and position, viewed as such before God. Another element, however, enters here, in order to make the picture complete—an element, the existence of which is pre-supposed in what I have just said, and which is plainly presented in this passage. Precious privilege for us that it is so ! It is, that these twenty-four elders, representatives, as I have said, of the saints, as kings and priests, possess the understanding of what it is which makes the Lord worthy of praise : “Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power : for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.” The Lord is the source and final end of all that exists. That which He is, and the fact that He is worthy to receive all glory, because of the manifestation which He has made of Himself, is what we see to be the subject of the homage rendered by the saints to God—the Creator.

Chapter v. has redemption for its subject. The elders worship the Lamb that was slain, as worthy to take the book of the ways of God in government, because He has redeemed them. Here again, the recognition of the glory which will result in the official dignities of the redeemed, and in the dominion confided to them, is

apparent in the praises addressed to the Lamb by the heavenly saints. Their praises are directly addressed to Him who is the object of them. The prayers of saints accompany them. The praises of angels, not directly addressed to the Lamb, are called forth by the adoration of the saints. Lastly, all that inhabit the universal creation of God, together celebrate, in chorus, the glory of God most high, and of the Lamb, with the "Amen" of the living creatures; direct adoration of the Lord being proper to the twenty-four elders, who are also characterised by intelligence as to the foundation of the glory of God, as manifested in His acts of power and of grace. We may observe here, that these passages do not present God in the character of Father—but as Ruler and Sovereign. This is in accordance with the character of the book.

I cite these various passages, not as giving us the precise revelation of what Christian worship is, but as furnishing many precious elements, to enable us to seize the thought of worship in general. The Psalms furnish other examples, only we must bear in mind that God is there also presented as Governor of the earth, and not as Father of His beloved children who participate in His nature of love. In our proper position, we adore "the Father in spirit and in truth," in the sweet confidence of being the children whom He loves, while at the same time we overlook not any feature of His Majesty.

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