

A WELL OF WATER.

JOHN iv.

NOT only has God wrought for man by Christ, in the accomplishment of the work of redemption, He has also wrought in man by the Holy Spirit revealing Christ through the word, thereby imparting to him eternal life, and a nature that is divine. In addition to this, also, and distinct from it, He gives the Holy Spirit, as the strength of action and the spring of joy, proper to this divine nature.

Mark the circumstances in John iv. under which this is unfolded. Virtually rejected by Israel, instead of being received, the Lord is obliged in sorrow to turn His back on Judea, to which He had come in grace from God. But this is only the occasion for the manifestation of such grace as was never seen before. A woman of

Samaria, evidently ruined even in human judgment, meets Him alone at the well of Jacob, where Jesus sat, wearied with His journey. He asks a drink of water : and thus, not as Messiah only, but as Son of God, in the matchless glory of His grace, which was above the need of all adornment, He stoops, in order to open up an avenue to her heart, and that He might disclose to her the secret in those wondrous words—"If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that speaketh to thee, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." But she knew it not. What did she know of the *law* of God? As to the *gift* of God, who had ever heard of such a thing? Human religion is incapable of rising to such a thought—of knowing God; nor can He ever be known save in Christ His Son. This she had not yet learned. She knew not the glory of His grace who thus stooped down in love to win such an one as she; making her little gift of water the occasion of that gift of living water, of which he who drank should never more thirst. It was a new sound to her—this "living water"—the "gift of the Spirit," which, quite distinct from "being born of the Spirit," specially shines out in this gospel.

The woman, unprepared for such a display of divine grace as God thus giving, the Son thus bowing, and the Holy Spirit thus becoming the divine source of refreshment for the heart, falls back upon tradition—the constant resource of nature in this world—"the well of our father Jacob." It was an effort to escape

from that which was too vast and deep and divine for her to take in—even the immeasurable grace beyond all promise (which is at the best but measured grace)—in which the Son of God had come down to meet the lost and guilty state of fallen man. But Jesus patiently bears with her ignorance, and says to her, “Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again ; but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst.” But more than this, “the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life.” It was a new privilege, only appropriate in the ways and counsels of God when the Son came. It is not merely a new nature that is here referred to (this had always been); nor even the fact that it could be now spoken of in the full character and value of eternal life in the Son. But more than this, there is the *power* of this eternal life, symbolized by the well of water, an unending flow, connecting the soul of the believer with the source, and giving him to know the full joy of grace. This is what our Lord speaks of when He says, “Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again ; but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst ; but the water that I shall give him will be in him, a well of water, springing up into everlasting life.”

For Adam in innocence, made upright by the hand of God, there was no such thing as craving after a food he did not possess ; he was incapable of the thirst in question ; he enjoyed the goodness and wisdom of God

in countless good things around him. He sins, he falls ; and, along with the knowledge of good and evil that he acquired, there came in this desire for what never could satisfy. And this is the condition of every fallen being—stirring him on, through hope, to activity in a lost world, in order to gain something, or be somebody.

Jesus comes and gives, not only eternal life, but the “living water ;” and there is at once an adequate object for the heart, which there never was before, with fresh power to enjoy it. God Himself come down, not as merely adapting Himself to man’s ruin, nor meeting man’s need, but proving and displaying Himself, and giving the fullest scope to the resources that are in Him ; “shedding abroad his love in our hearts, by the Holy Spirit which is given us,” and “sending forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.” So that now, if our hearts are not satisfied with Christ, it is because, still occupied with self and the world, they are not taken up, by the power of the Spirit, with the things of Christ ; not satisfied with Him alone, they are still hankering after that which is but trash—earthly and carnal. It is not enough to have these things merely as a matter of testimony : our own soul’s delight must be in them, by the power that He has given us. Then, there will be no thirsting again, when in spirit we enjoy Christ. But there will be still hope, as a power for activity rightly called forth and exercised in a ruined world ; for we have, in Christ revealed to our faith, the perfect object

for a renewed heart; and we ourselves are blessed, according to the perfectness of His finished work, so that conscience, as well as affection, can be at perfect rest. At the same time, we are in the body, in the midst of the old creation, so that we have in hope, a blessed spur to the activity of love.

But now, mark the connection between this power of the Spirit and divine spring of joy in the soul, with worship—that which goes up from the heart, not that which comes down.

“Our fathers,” says the woman, “worshipped in this mountain” (for she had her opinion, and a very decided one); “and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.” Thus, in the presence of the rejected Son of God, not only false systems, but even that which, as a partial revelation, had its warrant from God—not only Samaria, but Jerusalem itself—is blotted out by a word, from being the centre of divine worship, that the Son might abide—the Son of God. “Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship; for salvation is of the Jews.” The presumption and ignorance of Samaria are judged. Nor does He disguise the advantage of the Jews, when speaking in the midst of their rivals, and Himself rejected. What grace! He does not slight the line of honour. “Salvation is of the Jews.” But He does say, “The hour

cometh and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth ; for the Father seeketh such to worship him.”

None but a possessor of eternal life, is competent to worship ; but even so it is in the power of the Holy Spirit given. Thus it is one who, not only having the Son has life, but who also has the Holy Spirit as the spring of joy within, and owns the Father. There is no other worship that is now acceptable. The Father seeks none other. He does seek souls. Joy ever seeks communion ; and now that the Son of God has come, and put away our sins, and given us eternal life, and the power of drawing near in the spirit to the Father, it is the necessary character of the truth, that there should be *communion of joy*, and consequently *communion of worship*. There is ample provision for common praise in the gathering of souls together—not merely the blessing of each where it is, but now, for the first time, the singling out in this world, and the gathering together—the seeking, as it is said here, of the “true worshippers,” that they might pour out their thanksgiving and adoration in common, as having one Spirit, uniting them to the praise of God’s grace, separate from all that are not true worshippers. Hitherto worship had been mingled, and there had been no attempt to *single out and join together*. But “the hour cometh and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father.” None other worship than this, will God allow. And I beseech you that have to do with others:

in responsibility, never let your children (even though unconverted)—on the score of curiosity, or any other reason of a natural sort which may possibly be found—have anything to do with the false worshippers of the world (Exodus x. 8-11).

I admit that grace enters where you could not, ought not to go. For sin does not hinder grace. But, I beseech you, let none suppose that grace means tolerating or dealing lightly with evil. The Holy Spirit strengthens in good, as He is the energy of blessing, and gives delight in it. Thus He is the only real power against evil in this world. What are the music, and the architecture, and the ritual of Christendom, but the bringing back of the very substance and means of idolatry—Jewish forms—which the apostle discerned in Gal. iv. ; which are now actively increasing and advancing, till the awful close, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not His gospel? (2 Thess. i. 8.) Are we not saved to worship now, and this in spirit and in truth?

I beseech my brethren in Christ, on the other hand, that it may be their heart's joy, when assembled for the purpose, *to rise up into worship*, and not to content themselves with merely speaking about it. Beloved, worship is not talking about it. We do not come at such times to expound or enforce the matter (this may be all very well at another season); but Christian worship is the outflow to God, of hearts that have seen the

Son and the Father, and found their joy and satisfaction by the Holy Spirit in them. The heart which has every want satisfied in Christ, cannot but praise in fellowship with all that are thus blessed. Nor can it be content with any leader, save the Holy Spirit acting sovereignly in the assembly, by whom He will. Christian worship always has for its central object, the Son of God revealing the Father, and necessarily supposes the special gift of the Holy Spirit, as the power in us of enjoying God, and of praising Him adequately. It is only for those who know the Father. Nor is occupation with ourselves and our privileges, properly speaking, worship. Even edification, however precious, is not worship: it has the saints for its object, and not the Father and the Son. The proper aim of *worship* is our common praise going up to God; of *ministry*, the grace and truth of Christ coming down; and so building up the saints. Even thanksgiving, though a real part, seems to me the lowest form, of Christian worship; and for this reason, that it is not so much the expression of our joy in God, as in what He gives *to us*. Now, though this abides, and it is right we should ever feel what He has done for us and given to us, we are entitled, as His children, and are so richly blessed as Christians, that we may yield our hearts to the Spirit's revelation of what our God is in Himself, and so rejoice before Him. All has its place, and room is left for the state of souls, and the actual guidance of the Holy Spirit.

But, observe, the Saviour does not speak simply of

worshipping "the Father." He tells us that "God is a Spirit; and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth." Assuredly Christian worship is not formal; yet it is not the less real because it is spiritual. There are occasions when the Holy Spirit directs the worship especially towards the Son, and there are occasions when the Father is more prominently before the assembly. These varieties give tone and character to the worship. Form is blind to these differences, and would blot them out. Nor can they be appreciated, but by the Spirit's teaching, by whom God's love is shed abroad in our hearts. And not only so, but we also joy in God as God, because we know that His whole nature and moral being—majesty, light, love—have been so perfectly vindicated and satisfied as to our eternal blessing in Christ Jesus and His cross, that there is nothing in Him that does not righteously range itself for us now and for evermore. Undoubtedly our Father is God; but it is well to distinguish *nature* and *relationships*. Most needful it is that we should know this near relationship of *Father*, which John tells us characterizes the very babes of the family of God. But it is of the utmost importance also to know, that it is the triumph of redemption, to set us in peace with God as such, and to make us boast in Him, now that all His nature can act for us in Jesus, yea, in us by the Spirit.

Thus, while delighting that He is our Father, we must not lose sight of our deep and perfect rest in God as

such (1 Pet. i. 21). Where the heart has not submitted to God's righteousness, there is more confidence in the relation of "Father," than in having to do with "God." There is a depreciation of the work of Christ and His glory : a defectiveness in the faith and state of the heart, betraying itself in a lack of liberty and fulness in worship, as of course too in practical walk ; for these things hang together. Let us take heed : " we receiving a kingdom that cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear, for our God is a consuming fire ' (Heb. xii. 28, 29). For " Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth therefore unto him, without the camp, bearing his reproach. For here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come. By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips confessing his name. But to do good, and to communicate, forget not : for with such sacrifices God is well pleased " (Heb. xiii. 12-16).—(*Abridged, with permission of the author, from "Kelly's Lectures on the Holy Spirit."*)



“WITH THEE IS THE FOUNTAIN OF LIFE.”

Who is that weary man, so lone and pale,
 Beneath the shade that falls on Jacob's well?
 A lowly pilgrim, from the noon-tide heat,
 He sitteth there to rest his aching feet.
 No more he seems: but heavenly hosts attend
 And wait on Him, where'er His footsteps bend.
 They looked with wonder when they sang His birth,
 The greatest marvel ever seen on earth.
 That humble man is Israel's promised King,
 Though for His head a crown of thorns they'll bring.
 Yes, He Immanuel is, The Eternal Word,
 Of heaven and earth, of men and angels, Lord—
 The Eternal Son hung on a woman's breast,
 The mighty God* beside the well takes rest.

My soul, tread softly! for 'tis holy ground;
 No finite mind can this deep mystery sound,
 But worship and adore the wondrous love
 That could the blessed God so freely move
 Towards thee, a sinner, and an enemy!
 Yes, Lord, Thou hast revealed this grace to me.
 But see—a woman comes, unconscious, who
 Sits by the water, and as careless too.
 He asks to drink, and coldly she replies,
 Yet gazes on the stranger with surprise;
 For there was something in His eye and tone,
 That ever marked Him as the Holy One.
 Ah! didst thou dream, poor sinner, that for thee,
 Thus faint and weary, He's content to be;
 That for the joy of giving thee to know
 The living fountains from His heart that flow,
 The garden's agony, the cross, the grave,
 He'll suffer all, His guilty ones to save?

* Isa. xl. 28.

But thou *didst* know the grovelling heart was won ;
 And found a treasure, ere the setting sun,
 Thy happiest hour, thou couldst rejoicing tell,
 That hour of noon, which brought thee to the well,
 Alone with *Jesus*, from His lips to hear
 What drew the publicans and sinners near,
 The gracious words for which our spirits yearn.
 O blessed Lord ! we too would sit and learn,
 And drink abundantly, yea, drink for ever,
 Pleasures of pure delight from God's own river !

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