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# THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY.

*Reprinted from "A Voice to the Faithful."*



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# THOUGHTS FOR THIS DAY.



## CHAPTER I.—UNION WITH CHRIST.

How or where a believer is united to Christ is a subject of the greatest importance and interest ; for though in the marvellous grace of God, the portion of the believer does not depend on the extent of his faith, or his estimate of Christ, and God has secured a portion for him according to the consummation of His own will in Christ; yet the believer only enjoys, according to the extent of his faith; and his strength and ability to walk and to please God, is necessarily according to his acquisition ; hence it is of all importance that we should by faith accurately enter into the portion which God has given us in His Son. Every ignorance connected with it has a corresponding weakness, as indeed every apprehension seen by faith, and made good by the power of the Holy Ghost, is followed by a corresponding strength. This of itself is surely sufficient to induce every saint earnestly to search the scriptures in order that he may obtain the divine idea about

every blessing which is conferred on us, and our apprehension of every blessing must depend on the certainty, vigour, and vividness, of our assured union with Christ. Hence the point for us now to ascertain and apprehend is, how and where we have been united to Christ.

There are three distinct periods, in one of which, it is variously alleged we are united to Christ. First, it is said, that we are united to Him in His life on earth; secondly, in His death; thirdly, in His resurrection. First, then, let me ask, could I be united to Christ as He was down here on earth? He was the Holy One of God; holy in His nature, as well as in His walk. Could we, then, be united to Him; we who are more unholy within, than even in our walk? How could union take place unless we had dropped our evil nature, and had His nature imparted to us? Could this have been during His life here below? If it could; if there could be union with Christ during His incarnation, then it must be before the sacrifice for sin had been made. If He has, as some have said bridged over the chasm between man and God by His incarnation, where then is the judgment on the sinner? and what the need of a sacrifice and atonement? or where would it find a place? Is the sinner to receive of Christ's holy and immaculate nature, without judgment being enacted for the sinner? Could God

introduce the sinner into an entirely new nature, without executing the judgment under which the sinner lay? Where is the righteousness of God, if this would be so? if He can set up a sinner in the highest condition; without any sacrifice, and only because His blessed Son came into the world in the likeness of sinful flesh? It could not be. No one believing in the atonement will for a moment assume, or entertain the idea, that we could be united to Christ in His incarnation.

But, secondly, it is said that we are united to Christ in His death. Now the Lord states in John xii. that unless the corn of wheat dies, it abides alone; thereby setting forth that He must undergo death, or He would abide alone; and if any could have been united to Him before His death, it would not be added, "*but if it die, it brings forth much fruit.*" This the Lord said as descriptive of things relating to Himself; unless He died, he should abide alone. He was here on earth entirely unique, manifested in the flesh, capable of feeling and suffering anything which man, the creature, could suffer. He was here in the weakness of humanity; but in no sense chargeable or liable to the judgment resting on man, either by birth, or as yet vicariously; and hence He intimates when His hour was come, that there remained but one way for Him to relieve man of the judgment resting on him; and

that was, by dying. If this could be accomplished only through His death, it could not have been through His incarnation, though His incarnation is the means thereto; that is to say, if He were not in the flesh, He could not have died, but then He must die, or He would abide alone: there could be no union with Him before His death. But here comes the question, are we united to Him *in* His death? Now union with Him in death would be subjecting us to all the severity of the judgment. It would be assuming that we could endure the wrath of God, which fell on him; and if this judgment had fallen on us who deserved it, how could we have escaped? If we were ever under the judgment of God; we could not have escaped from it; that is, if the judgment had been carried out, which surely it was, in the cross of Christ. And if we had to undergo it in company with Him, where is the substitution, in virtue of which we should escape judgment? If I am united to Christ in His death, I am sharing in all the sinner's judgment, inflicted by God on Christ, and as a sinner, I never could escape; and if I did escape, it would be establishing the assumption, that God could forgive, after the judgment for sin had fallen on the sinner, after he had died under judgment. Again, if it could be so, it would be to say that I could be dragged out of the fire of judgment, because the Son of God bore me company in it. This would

not be union, but partnership ; like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. . (Daniel iii. 25.) I should be a child of the first Adam rescued from deserved destruction, and like those three Israelites, in no wise changed as to nature or life, and only a rescued one ; the first Adam state remaining just as it was. Certainly there is no union here. Union with any one is where I am a sharer of what that one is ; partnership is where I only partake of benefits flowing from association. In union with Christ, I partake of what He is ; “He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit.” If He be only a leader, like Moses or Gideon, I am not united to Him, I am only rescued by Him ; and if so, if I am merely delivered by Him, He is only a more distinguished leader and victor, than David or Gideon, and this effects no change in me, from the nature and state of the first Adam : there is no oneness of spirit with the Son of God. Nay more, if I am still in the nature and state of the first Adam, where is the righteousness of God against sin ? and what has Christ died for ? Is it only to conquer Satan, in order that his hold on man might be removed ? This is true, but if it be all, where is the judgment of God on the first Adam, the judgment of sin which is death ! The fact is, with such a notion, the death of Christ would be limited to a conflict with Satan in the power of death, and the salvation effected for man would be merely a deliver-

ance from the power of Satan, the nature and the order of being remaining just as it was ; so that if it be asserted that we are united to Christ in His death, it must either be, that we bear the judgment of sin which Christ bore, and are released by God after the judgment (which is the doctrine of purgatory), or that we are only delivered by Christ from Satan's power, and then there is no judgment of sin, but merely deliverance by the power of the mighty One. And, moreover, this deliverance is not union ; because we remain the same as to nature and order as we were before we were delivered : all of which is untenable and impossible.

It remains then that the believer can be only united to Christ in His *resurrection and there alone*. The judgment on man is death—judicial death. If judicial death alone can satisfy the righteousness of God (“the wages of sin is death”—Rom. vi. 28), then the first man must end in judgment. If judicial death is the judgment, and if righteousness is only satisfied in the exacting of this judgment, how could that man, sentenced to a judicial death, continue as an existence? If it were an ordinary death, the creature could be revived by sovereign power ; but it being a judicial death, the life *could* not be restored ; for if it were, the judgment would be foiled and righteousness unsatisfied. It is plain that judicial death can never righteously be terminated nor forfeited life revived.

If it could, where would be the judgment, for the judgment is the forfeiture of life? Remove the forfeiture and you remit the judgment: it is a simple question of righteousness. What then does God's righteous judgment involve? It involves the end of the old man in judgment, and if man died this death himself, he would be eternally lost. But God's Son comes into the world in the likeness of sinful flesh, condemns sin in the flesh, bears the judgment on man, but rises out of it. He is "put to death in the flesh, but quickened in the Spirit." (1 Peter iii. 18.) He does not revive that which was under judgment; but having borne the judgment, He rises out of it in His own life, the one solitary stem, from henceforth by, and from whom, life only can be had. "As in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive." "And if Christ be not risen, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins." (1 Cor. xv.) "He was delivered for our offences and raised again for our justification." "Wherefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ" Hence, the Lord on His resurrection stood in the midst of His disciples and proclaimed peace to them, for "he is our peace." But more than this: He breathed on them and said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." As risen, He is the last Adam, the life-giving Spirit; and the Holy Ghost is given us, to make known, in our souls, that the gift



of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. The eternal life that was with the Father is now mine in Christ. We are of His Spirit (Rom. viii. 9) who is risen above all my shame and judgment, and on ground entirely new and well-pleasing to God. So that I can say, "I am crucified with Christ [that is, I morally drop my old man in His cross]: nevertheless, I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life that I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." I have union with Christ, as He says, "Because I live, ye shall live also." "In that day [John xiv. 20, the Holy Ghost's day] ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you." And thus, in His life, by the Spirit, we have fellowship with the Father and the Son: our joy is full.

It is thus evident that the believer is not united to Christ but in resurrection, where He has risen out of everything which checked or barred the love of God. We are now, through faith, in Him, outside of the old man; so that we are free from that wherein we were held, and we are through grace "married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead." (Rom. vii. 4.) "Old things are passed away: behold all things are become new, and all things are of God, who hath reconciled us unto himself by Jesus Christ." (2 Cor. v. 17.) So that now we are of Him, and through Him, and by Him, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

## CHAPTER II.—SERVICE.

TRUE service is to Christ, who is both Lord and Master. Though we may be the "servants of the Church," the Church is not our master. We shall and ought to serve the Church, but we must take our orders from the Lord; and for His sake, and in subjection to him, serve whomsoever, wheresoever, and howsoever He may appoint. True service flows naturally from life, and is the work of love. There is no effort in it, no perplexity about it. It is whatsoever the hand findeth to do for the Lord, done readily without question. But it can only be performed in communion. If the soul is not in communion with the Lord, there can be no true service. The Lord as sovereign may and does use whom He will, taking up often the unclean vessel and instrument, and displaying His power or His grace through such. But this is not service, at least not such as the heart of any saint desires for himself. That cannot be called true service which does not proceed from affectionate and intelligent apprehension of the Master's will. An instrument is not a servant, at least not in a happy sense, though, alas! from our low condition, we are more often thus

used than in distinct communion with the Lord concerning the matter in hand.

There is, however, one thing which all can do: that is, be "*meet* for the Master's use" (2 Tim. ii. 21); and this is the secret of usefulness. Usefulness is not activity; it is not the merely being used, but it is fitness, cleanness, preparedness, and separation of heart; singleness of eye, the affections set on things above—all in fact that proceeds from the judgment and denial of self, and the dwelling of Christ in the heart by faith.

A true servant is always ready. "Here am I"—"Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do?" express his condition. He does not choose his work, but obeys his Master. If he has nothing given him to do he is quiet and patient; when he gets his Master's order, he does it joyfully without demur.

Nine-tenths, or more, of our difficulties about service are from lack of intelligence as to our Master's will. We wait and wait for some great commission, and often leave undone the thing present. We shrink from the work which the Lord Himself may be putting before us, and desire to be used in other service in which He does not require us. The consequence of this unsettled and unsubject state, is complete uncertainty as to what our proper work may really be. The large majority of saints would confess that they do not

*certainly* know what the Lord would have them to do. They would like to serve Him, and they try do so again and again, putting their hand to this and that thing without effect. There has not been the sitting at the feet of Jesus to learn His mind before the attempt at active service.

Again, how common is the complaint of Martha: "Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve *alone*?" How that little word "alone" betrayed the character of her service. If I am for His own sake serving my Lord in faith and love, I shall never complain of serving alone. Indeed all true service is in one sense alone. It is founded on individual responsibility and faith. We serve our *own*, and not another man's master. Fellowship in service, when we get it, is indeed a happy thing; but the faithful servant who has His Lord's mind, and is serving *Him*, will never murmur at being alone, or desire the mere aid of another not called to, nor having heart for, the same work. To meet a fellow-servant walking in the same line of service, and so to serve together, is very blessed, but it is rare. A "true yoke-fellow" is not often met with, nor, as we learn more of the Lord's ways and our responsibility, shall we look for it. The harvest is great and the labourers are few; and if each were doing his own work, he would not be looking for help from other servants

doing theirs. There is much misapprehension on the subject of fellowship in service. Saints give it a low place and often a wrong one. They think for instance, that they without question, may serve in fellowship with those with whom they could not have communion at the table of the Lord. They do not see that our fellowship in Christ is the first thing to be owned, and that this is properly displayed at the Lord's table. If I am not agreed with one as to this, how can I consent to sink this vital ground of communion to take up with him the lower ground of service? And yet, again, it is not *merely* because we have taken our places at the Lord's table, that we can serve together. In order to this, there must be that brotherly confidence in the purpose of heart, the walk and the ways of another, which, it is needless to say (though painful to admit), does not necessarily accompany a right church-position. This was true in Paul's day: it is true now to the true servant of God. So it is a legal heart that murmurs at a lonely path of service. Still, a true servant may mourn the activity of others; but that was not Martha's thought. She could not exactly rebuke Mary's better choice; but she was sinking under the weight of a service undertaken in her own strength, apart from faith, and unsought for by her Lord; and it was her own relief she sought, and not that Mary should share with her any blessing in the path. And this part of

the Martha character stamps the service of most of those professing Christianity in the present day. Association, human energy, direction, and organization, are all considered essential and excellent in religious effort. Mission work, evangelization, as well as philanthropic works, are in the hands of societies and committees where all individuality is swamped by the mass. It is easy to serve with and as the multitude. It is easy to be one of a committee or of a society, or to serve in a line of things made ready to the hand. It is only when a Christian is led towards a true and scriptural church position that he begins to learn, or is in the way to learn, what service really is; and this, I believe, accounts to a great extent for the accusation brought so commonly against "some" of "ceasing to be useful" when they leave the associations they had been connected with. As I said before, it is easy work in society where all is done by rule, or in any of the thousand ways in which the religious world carries on its works. But when we leave these human arrangements, and are cast upon our individual responsibility before God how to serve Him, unsupported by the arm of flesh, it finds us out where we really are, and the man whose energy under a human system has been marked, often finds himself for a time brought very much to a stand when he takes his proper place as a member of the body of Christ, and waits for the

manifestation of the Spirit as to his path of service ; but if faith be in exercise, though his path of sight and sense be shut up to him, another way will speedily be opened, and his abstinence from active service will not be for long.

If there be true dependance upon God, and purpose of heart to *be* anything or *do* anything He may appoint, there will be no lack of work to do, nor lack of joy in the doing it : for most certainly the blessing to our *own* souls in serving *Christ*, is not in proportion to the outward show our work may present, or the apparent fruits of our labours ; but just in extent as we are conscious of the guidance of His eye, and are in communion with the desires and purposes of His heart and mind. On the other hand, in those who have not learned individuality in service, there is much disappointment and consequent discontent. For one Christian who knows his path of service, and is satisfied to walk in it humbly and quietly with his Lord, there are fifty in a restless, uncertain mood, desiring activity, but ignorant of what to be at. If the true servant strikes into a service which the Lord evidently calls him to and owns, the fifty others are ready to imitate his line of things. And all this uncertainty causes the discontent and murmurings so often heard amongst saints of "lack of fellowship," "want of care for souls," "no evangelical effort," &c. ; those who murmur loudest

generally being those who have the lowest sense of individual responsibility, and the least power from God for a distinct path.

Still we must *all* confess to sad short-coming, coldness, deadness, slothfulness. But the remedy is not in "murmurings and disputings," but in self-judgment and purpose of heart to learn, and from henceforth to *do*, our work for God. All are not preachers. But all have a place in the body of Christ; and membership implies activity and life, responsibility to the Head, and care for the members. All have a God and a Saviour whose doctrine they are called to adorn in all things. All of us are living in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, amongst whom we are to shine, "holding forth the word of life."

If we be meet for the Master's use, and prepared for every good work, we shall soon find that there is no time for complaint, but that the time rather fails us to do the *many, many* things the Lord will put before us day by day, and hour by hour. We may not have to preach to great congregations nor even to small ones; but there is plenty to do besides preaching, and many a little work unseen and unknown by any but the Master Himself will get its reward in that day when every man shall have praise of God.

But the conclusion of the whole matter is, that we must be near to God in heart and conscience before we



can serve Him acceptably. Let us, then, seek for this first of all, so that our service may be as the calm and settled stream flowing from full hearts, whose highest interests are the interests of the Lord whom we love. Next, as once was said by another, "Let each find out from God what his work is, and then *do it*;" or, as Paul put it to Archippus;—"Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it." (Col. iv. 17.)

## CHAPTER III.—LUKEWARMNESS.\*

SINCE the first decline of the Church, there is nothing that the saint should more fear, than anything bordering on lukewarmness; because that is the condition of the Church characteristically when it shall be spued out of Christ's mouth (Rev. iii. 16)—when it shall forever cease to be for Him here on earth; and the moment we see anything in ourselves, tending to this lukewarmness, we should earnestly attend to His word, "be zealous and repent." To do this, would be not only to refuse and denounce all neutrality, but to be valiant for the truth. Repentance does not only denounce the wrong, but it scrupulously and earnestly asserts and maintains the right.

Now, the snare in lukewarmness is this, that there is nothing exactly to offend the conscience—there is no denial of, or opposition to, the truth; but, on the contrary, an apparent reception of it—a going along with it; but in such a partial, imperfect way, that a great deal is permitted which would have been refused, if one had been walking earnestly in the truth. There is an admission of truth. And there is an acceptance

\* From *χλιαρος* (lukewarm). Rev. iii. 16.

in general of the place in which the truth sets one, but there is no testimony to its power and control. The lukewarm one accepts the truth, and the position which the truth prescribes; but in such a loose way, that the sound is uncertain, and the distinctness and peculiarity, which would necessarily flow from an honest, earnest maintenance of the truth, is lost and frustrated. "If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?" Hence, there is more damage done to the truth than if it never had been accepted at all. If it had not been accepted, there it would have remained; and it might be said, If it were, it would produce such and such effects; but when it has been accepted, and there is no true effect, because of the looseness or lukewarmness with which it is held, then the truth is compromised, and its value and efficacy practically denied. Just as if one should accept a physician's prescriptions and yet never use them, no effect would, of course, be produced on the patient; and the skill of the physician would be more compromised, than if his prescriptions had not been accepted. The Lord says, "I would that thou wert either cold or hot"--either not accepting at all, or accepting earnestly and vigorously; for then the truth is not compromised. What could please Satan more than to see saints holding truths which produced no effect? It would be a greater exultation to him in one

sense than open infidelity, for it would tell more on believers, for thereby would be proved the powerlessness of the truth of God on the conscience. The great aim of Satan is, that the word should "bring forth no fruit to perfection." Bad enough when he can draw away and delude souls from yielding to the power of it; blinding their eyes, lest the light should shine unto them; but how much worse when he can succeed in making *saints* indifferent about the truth, making them lukewarm; causing them to treat the truth as if it were not of vital, eternal value. What could more effectually undermine the truth, than that one assenting to it, and accepting the position which it prescribed, should be as unaffected and uncontrolled by it, as if he had never heard it; nay, that he should slip into things under its cover, which he could not do with impunity, if he were not concealed under the garb of high profession? The apostle Paul warns Timothy of those who shall "have the form of godliness, but deny the power thereof;" and in every time it has been the lukewarm who have brought the deepest shame and reproach on the people of God. Lukewarm is from cold to hot, but not hot enough. It is one who asserts and accepts, but in a lifeless and indifferent way; holds on, as if there were no power of vitality in that which he holds; he has reached, but for no purpose, and has not turned it to account; in a word,

it is the slothful man who will not roast that which he took in hunting. Ham was lukewarm. (Gen. iv. 22.) He saw in the person of his father the failure and apostasy in which he was involved, and felt no shame—took no steps to check or abate it; he was not zealous for the truth and position (that of government on the earth) in which they were set. He did not deny either, but he was not governed by any due sense of the gravity and responsibility of either, and he was accursed. Lot was lukewarm. (Gen. xiii.) He was in the land, but he was not zealous to maintain the claims of God on him in that position. Had he returned to Mesopotamia, he would have been a backslider; but he did not; he retained the position, but forewent the claims that belonged to it. The children of Israel were lukewarm when they made a league with the inhabitants of Caanan (Judges ii. 2), from which all their sorrows in the land sprung, as had been predicted. For 490 years, they were lukewarm in neglecting to keep the sabbatical year, for which they were carried into captivity. (2 Chron. xxxvi. 21.) Saul was lukewarm when he saved Agag king of the Amalekites (1 Sam. xv.), and thus forfeited the kingdom. The great and distinctive mark of the weakness of even the good kings of Israel, was, that they were lukewarm; the high places were not taken down. (1 Kings iii. 2; xv. 14, &c.) It was not so much what

they had done, as what they had left undone. That man was lukewarm who said to our Lord, when called to follow Him, "Suffer me first to go and bid those farewell who are at home at my house." (Luke ix. 61.) He was lukewarm who said, "I go, sir, and went not." (Matt. xxi. 30.) All are lukewarm who, having put their hand to the plough, look back. (Luke ix. 62.) Peter was lukewarm when he separated from the Gentiles in the fear of man, and walked not according to the truth of the gospel." (Gal. ii. 1—14.) Barnabas was lukewarm when he took with him Mark. (Acts xv. 37.) All in Asia were lukewarm when they turned away from Paul. (2 Tim. i. 15.) They had not turned away from Christianity, but they took the place which the mass of saints take now—owning Christ as Saviour, but overlooking Paul's mission and the Church on earth in heavenly standing, power, and hope.

Now when the Church characteristically sinks into this indifference about truth—this open and avowed declaration of admission and acceptance of truth, without insisting on its claims and efficacy: it necessarily can no longer be in any way fit as a vessel for God on earth, and its removal from the place of testimony must immediately ensue; therefore it is in its Laodicean—its lukewarm—state, that it is spued out of Christ's mouth, as that which is nauseous and useless. If Jeremiah could mourn in his day that

there was none valiant for the truth how much more should we, when so much truth has been given us ! When the Church was first set up on earth as Christ's and of Him, it was the "pillar and ground of the truth ;" and then no lukewarmness or indifference about anything of Christ, obtained in the Church. If there had, in any degree, then indeed, all sense of its own proper dignity as the pillar and ground of truth—as of, and for, Christ here—would have been lost. And this has, alas ! been lost. We can no longer assume this dignity. But surely no saint would like to shew himself, because of his lukewarmness, unworthy and unfit for the dignity. Moreover, it is by the Spirit of truth that the Church is united to Christ the Head, and the members one to another ; and if He be disregarded, where is the power to uphold us, or to guide us into all truth ? Surely, however fair the appearance may be, however we may say, " I am rich and increased with goods," we are hurrying on to an irretrievable catastrophe.

If any divine quality more than another ought to characterize a member of Christ, it is to be valiant for the truth ; for he understands in himself the heart of Christ as expressed by the apostle, " I have no greater joy than that my children should walk in the truth." May we live so in His love, that it may be the joy of our hearts to walk here according to His mind in unswerving faithfulness to Him.

## CHAPTER IV.—THE LIGHT OF THE GOSPEL.

THE value of light is to display what exists; more than that it cannot declare; but if I am in the light, I shall see what exists. Hence, when the light shines, the question of interest is, What does it declare?

The light of the gospel displays all that has been accomplished by Christ. It takes its rise from the glory of God—from the consummation of Christ's work; not from the beginning of His work, but from the climax of it. The light from thence, sent of God into the soul, illuminates Christ's *whole course*, and comprises His whole work, from His first descent from the glory, to His ascension in glory. The light now is the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ; now, for the first time, light can come to us from the glory. The light declares the relation in which God is to the believer. It declares His relation to me, rather than my title to this relation. It declares God; but as it is received, it assures my heart, in the disclosures it makes of His Grace, both the way of it, and of my title to it. If I have not this light, it is evident that I cannot understand His relation to me, or my relation to Him. The light is from God and unfolds Him. The Father's heart and purpose of



love to the prodigal are disclosed. This is the object and purpose of the light, and doubtless it fixes and assures the heart in every step of the blessing; but its object is to declare the Father. It *shines into* the heart of the prodigal; but it does not *spring* there. It springs from God (See 2 Cor. iv. 6), and this it is of all importance to remember. It springs from God to declare Himself in His grace to the sinner, showing the sinner how he is elevated to the highest position, but occupying his heart with the *source* of the light, rather than with the *effects* of it on himself. If he be occupied with the effects on himself, the main object of the light is lost sight of, and the soul sustains damage and loss. Now, I am necessarily occupied with its effects on me, if I regard the light as merely a gift, like a lamp, confined to myself, rather than to declare Him from whom it springs. The mistake, and the consequent loss to souls at the present hour, is, not that they do not believe in Christ, but that they do not enjoy the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ who is the image of God. Nor is it duly proclaimed.

I suppose no student of scripture would deny, that our blessed Lord was offered to Israel to bring in the sure mercies of David, after His ascension to glory; that He was rejected in the person of Stephen, and that instead of returning to earth in glory, His servant and witness Stephen was killed here, and taken to be with

Him in glory. Up to this point, the gospel did not go beyond the fact that Christ had risen, and would return to earth in glory. He had not been, as yet, finally rejected, nor as yet, had He taken His place in heaven consequent on His rejection. He could not offer Himself to Israel, and at the same time be seated definitely in heaven. But on His final rejection by Israel, He takes Stephen to be with Him in glory; and after this, Saul is called out, and the light displays to him Christ in glory. His first acquaintance with Christ is in the glory. He sees Him there, not offering Himself to Israel, but identifying Himself with the Church. From henceforth, it is the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ. The action of it in the soul is, as Paul expresses it, "to reveal his Son in me." God now sends a light from His own glory into the soul, declaring that His Son has perfected everything according to his mind, and that from the very brightness of His presence, He can disclose to a poor prodigal the depths of His heart. The light tells, not what He will do or what He is doing, but that which *is done*—the finish, the consummation. From the climax, it issues at the command of the same mighty One who had said, "Let there be light, and there was light." It is the shining forth of the glory into the soul, disclosing the wondrous fact, through the Spirit, of the establishment of righteousness; that righteousness is the

warrant for its issue ; that God's own Son has met in judgment all that God required ; that on the cross He had endured the wrath of God, and had converted the ministry of condemnation of Mount Sinai into the ministry of righteousness from the glory that remaineth. In the one, the glory was fatal to him who approached near the mount ; but in the other, because Christ has borne the judgment and is now raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, and ascended to His right hand, God can, in His own mighty creative power, cause light to shine into the soul and disclose to it that glory is not only the place of our Saviour, but that in Him *there*, is the beginning, the birthplace of our new standing before God. There the blessed God is in the zenith of His grace toward man. He never was so till now ; and from thence it is that He sends the light into the soul. Glory either exacts from me, or it imparts to me. It exacts, if I have no link to it ; for then I must think of myself in relation to it, and this is legality ; but if I have a link to it, it imparts to me, and I am of it, and separate from all that is not of it.

The smallest ray that ever penetrated the dark heart of man since the conversion of Saul of Tarsus has sprung by the command of the Almighty from His own presence, where righteousness in all its strength is presented and maintained by Jesus Christ His Son, whose

blood cleanseth us from all sin, and who is charged with tidings of the deep purposes of God's love to us ; and the soul, in any little measure understanding this light, follows it to its source and finds itself with Christ in glory. The beginning of its acquaintance with Him is *there*, and from *this* point it learns deeply and fully all His work and sufferings, and how He opened the way for us into such a scene of light and perfection. If I look at His work from the consummation of it, I must see, in its truest and fullest light, the whole course which led up to the consummation ; therefore it necessarily follows that the glory must not only comprise the cross, but that from thence alone can I view and estimate the cross in its full magnitude. The light of this gospel, the gospel of the glory of Christ, speaks to a soul of Christ, *where* He has *finished* everything ; and where Christ is thus received, the soul finds that its first acquaintance with Him is in the glory. It is where all is *finished* that there is sure rest for it, and abiding strength, because it looks up, and sees by faith from whence its acquaintance with Him comes ; and that it is established in what God is in Himself, in relation *to* a man in Christ, and not merely in the effects of His grace *on* him, great as they are. What can establish and cheer my heart so much as the assurance of God's mind and relation toward me ? I draw near Him in proportion as I know His mind and

feelings towards me; and no message from His presence could effect so deep an assurance and joy in the heart, as the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God; for from henceforth, the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ is my portion and privilege; and this imparts such a tone and character touching everything, that not only do our light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; but we are so transformed by association with Christ in the glory, that all present things are superseded and supplanted in the heart. Everything is judged in relation to that glory which displaces and consumes all that is not *of it*, and allows only that which has been formed *in it*, and is consequently *for it*. If souls have not the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, they cannot adorn the gospel of Christ; but if they have, all that is of man is proportionately eclipsed, and Christ is testified of and expressed; while our portion in God is the unfailing joy of the heart.

CHAPTER V.—THE POWER FOR US, AND THE  
POWER AGAINST US.

AMONGST the many things which the Church of God lost, was the distinct personality of the agents for good or for evil in this world; even the Holy Ghost and Satan. So long had the minds of men vaguely apprehended the sources of good and evil, that when an action, which bespoke the personal presence of either, took place men—even christian men, were not prepared justly to appreciate it, nor to act suitably in reference to it. Therefore it is that we hear discussed the qualities of the vessel, by which God wrought the work, as though that work were a mere providential act of God; or lower still, as if it were a mere accident; the result of the presence of certain qualities in the vessel, in conjunction with the peculiarity of a certain time, or the meeting of kindred minds in other men.

Now God does work in providence, and in those very scenes too in which He Himself is about to act, for everything is in His hand; but this ought not to have hindered men from seeing that He was there working in the midst of the scenes and circumstances which He had previously ordered. And so of the

instruments He is about to use, He forms them for Himself, and for the use He is about to make of them—separating them from their mother's womb and calling them in due time.

What right-minded Christian would judge that the Reformation was only the result of the state of Europe at that time—the revival of literature, discovery of the art of printing; the gross and exceeding wickedness of the professing church; and the condition of the nations; and would not rather see, that even as God set all the Roman Empire in commotion as to a taxing (Luke ii.), in order that Jesus should be born in Bethlehem; so He ordered it, that those circumstances should all tend to the furtherance and promotion of that which He was about to do by Luther; who was himself also previously prepared for such a work? But to faith, it was God Himself who was working, Even as to John when on the sea of Galilee, he recognized the One who stood on the shore, and at whose bidding there came a multitude of fishes;—"It is the Lord." (John xxi. 7.)

It is practically important to us thus to apprehend, that in a certain action, however helped by the circumstances connected with it, God or Satan is there engaged in a direct work. For if it be God, the saint not only is to be connected with it, but, in the exercise of a spiritual mind, is to act and judge of every

thing in relation to it. This, in its way, is fellowship, which He graciously permits His people to have with Him in every work wrought by the Holy Ghost in this world. The saint, if spiritual, owns it, and it forms him and gives him a character for the time being. The instrument too is lost sight of, which is a most happy thing for the soul; and he is only in company with the Spirit of God, with others, like him, so taught to apprehend it. On the other hand if Satan be detected in a certain work here, through instruments, and as taking advantage of the circumstances there found; the saints' only course is to flee; or to resist it as Satan. "Resist the devil and he will flee from you." But where the soul has not laid hold on the direct personality of God, or of Satan in any action, it is weak to resist Satan, because Satan is not detected; man is seen, and it may be saints (alas! too often, his instruments,) are seen, and our rule of action towards them is merely founded on their being ill instructed and erring through ignorance. This is weakness, for Satan is there, and it is his way to keep hidden behind his instruments, for if detected, he has lost his power over a saint.

At the present time, all this is most important, both for the comfort and blessing of the soul, and for distinctness of action, in every way, in our path and service as saints. For in our day too, there is a dis-



tinct work of the Spirit of God, in the which we are to find our place; not because there are blessings there, or that it is a better place than others, though that be true; but because it is a distinct work of the Spirit of God; and we find our place, as well as our joy, in being there, in a spirit of *obedience*, as well as happy fellowship. The word had spoken of a cry being made which would arouse the sleeping virgins; this cry has been made; and we are in the results of it. This action of the Spirit of God, which occupies the sphere of the lifetime of any who may have lived the last forty or fifty years, is that which primarily demands the attention of the people of God. The result of this cry is very extensive; it awakens not only the sleeping wise, but the foolish. Everything in the professing church assumes a distinctness. Seeds which had lain there unproductive of results for ages; from the word of God, down to the various doctrines of men—now are springing up and bearing fruit. One only needs to look abroad to see this; there are activities abroad, which refer to what previously existed as a warrant for their being. And the saints of God in like manner refer to what previously existed as *their* warrant for their peculiar action—peculiar now, as in contrast preceded, for “they all slumbered and slept.” This is why the calling of the Church is, now at length, better understood, and the place of the Holy

Ghost abiding here; this is why the hope of the Church is being understood, and the person of Jesus more displayed to the souls of His people.

And what remains now? That we "go forth." There is the trimming of the lamps going on—and all that which it comprises, both as to personal ways and doctrine; the putting away of everything that would hinder the shining of our lights; and all that remains is now, even as at the beginning, a "going forth" to meet Him.

This is the action of the Holy Ghost in our day. What a loss to any saint if the world in any of its various forms should still hold any of His saints in sleep as to it. Saints they may be, having part in the *result* of God's counsel, but as to their life, now, *not walking* in God's counsel.

This is the larger sphere of action of the Spirit of God in these days, but there has been another, within that sphere, where we have, not the Spirit of God only, but an active work of Satan to destroy the testimony God purposed to raise, and to rob the Church again of those truths He had been re-teaching His saints the last forty years. Where, may I ask, are *we* in reference to those two activities? Is what God has been teaching us about Christ so precious to us, that we must let everything go but this? Are the truths we have learned these last forty years so important to us, and to the Church of God, that we

dare not let them be imperilled, nor give them up? And have we seen God, by His Spirit, again active for the preservation and maintenance of these truths; and have we co-operated with Him in this action? There may be a settling in our souls of what is right and what is wrong; but it is not merely this that we shall have to seek, but having personally to do with God, in that which He is doing, so that our souls have faith in Him as to our place in, and connection with, it. If we have this faith, we walk with Him; we have a calmness which merely settling the right and the wrong never could give. The soul, too, by this, arrives at the settlement of questions by a safer rule, for it judges of them from the place it is in. We walk with God, and in His light we see light.

It is not merely a question of truth committed to us there is but the sovereign and faithful grace, of help given, after complete ruin had come in. The arm made bare bespeaks, to the spiritually minded, a presence with us, which, though it was always true, comes with a greater sweetness and preciousness now, because it tells us of a love and purpose which nothing could turn back.

May His saints know this love and presence, and walk in it; and may we love the way, and have our hearts in it, rough though it be. He trod it—the Blessed One, and the Holy Ghost abides and leads in the way too. May we know and love and seek fellowship with Him!

## CHAPTER VI.—HOW TRUTH IS PERVERTED.

THERE is nothing in the history of the Church, or of souls, more grievous than the fact that truth can be so perverted that the name of it only is left, and often so much so, that the name stands for the very contrary to that to which it was originally attached. It has often been said that Satan will spoil what he cannot hinder, and hence we ought to be more careful to assure our hearts from the word of God of the idea which belongs to and characterizes the names of doctrines received by all Christians. The true and scriptural names are retained, but when we come to examine what these names stand for, we find that they do not represent the ideas given to them in scripture. They really are perversions of the truth. Man's ideas have been adopted as exponents of the truth, instead of the ideas set forth in the word of God.

We must in this day own that the prediction of our Lord has been verified, namely, "The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, until the whole was leavened." The leaven is the introduction of an element which has extended the original thing un-

naturally. The human idea is this leaven, and it has so added to the original and divine teaching, that the doctrine now called in Christendom after the scriptural name, bears little or no resemblance to the doctrine to which the same name is attached in scripture. This is very serious ; and it is not from outside that this evil occurs. "Of your own selves (Acts xx.) shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." If there were no perversion of the truth, there would be no disciples except disciples of Christ. No man would attain to any distinct leadership, "for one is your Master, even Christ." It is very important to see, that if the truth were not perverted, there could be no leadership but in Christ ; and that it is in the perversion of truth that disciples are drawn away. The effect of the simple maintenance of truth is to draw to Christ. John the Baptist proclaimed the truth ; and his disciples, in adopting it, forsook him to follow Christ ; and in this day, it is a well-known fact that, as godly earnest ministers have pressed truth, the simple and devoted among their followers have left them, in order that they might follow the truth more perfectly than the instruments, through which they had first learned it ; and doubtless, if every godly minister would discard everything not scripturally true, then the faithful would cease to be ranked under the leadership of men. One may

ask, How is it that godly earnest men do not discard everything not scripturally true? I answer, Because they are guided by conscience and not by the word of God. By their consciences they are calmed into the assurance that they are doing the best for the general good; and this they seek. Now it is the word of God which alone should guide me, and my conscience ought not to be satisfied, unless I am assured that everything I teach and adhere to is scripturally true. To say that this or that is the definition given to any doctrine by the most devoted man, is really no warrant to my conscience. Such comments may help me to understand the doctrine, but I am bound to understand it in the light of scripture, before I teach it. Scripture must be my guide, and not my conscience or the comments of my brethren. The teacher receives his gift neither by man nor from man: he is gifted of the Lord, and he must not only be conscientious, but he must be enlightened according to Christ's mind, before he can be the organ of that mind. If every minister of Christ now-a-days set himself sedulously to ascertain from scripture the true meaning of any doctrine, as there set forth, divesting his mind from the definition and interpretation into which it had swollen, he would soon find that he had escaped from a mass of confusion, and that an unerring light had now shone in on his soul and mind.

But it is not only from making the conscience umpire that earnest men suffer ; there is another snare, which is still more difficult to expose. Perversion of the truth is always to suit a practical state. It is the lower order of practice which, when there is conscience, leads to a lower order of truth, or a misplacement of the order, because it matches the state and quiets the conscience, and the lower order of practice is confirmed and perpetuated by the lower order of truth. Now, when any one attempts to form an idea of a truth from his own practical observance of it, or seeks to make it practicable, of course he shapes the truth to his practice, instead of demanding that his practice should conform to the truth. Man, as is natural, likes to leave out from a doctrine that which makes it impossible to man in nature, and to substitute something under the same name, and thus deceive the conscience with what is possible for man without self-sacrifice. To follow truth now, I can only do so in the Spirit, outside nature ; this is the starting-point. Now, if I wish to accept a truth, and at the same time to save myself—in a word, to escape the edge of it—I necessarily alter it in such a way that I may feel I retain the doctrine, without subjecting myself—my nature—to death, by the acceptance of it. Peter savoured of the things which be of men, and not of the things which be of God, when he said to the Lord

“spare thyself.” The real difficulty to the simple acceptance of truth is the annihilating exaction it makes on nature. And whenever a truth is said to be held without this exaction, we may be assured that some modification or alteration of the truth has been adopted, in order to spare oneself. Strange and peculiar are these modifications and alterations. Faith is a unity, and can only lead in one way. Every truth, truly apprehended by faith, must lead directly in the same way. It may be differently in measure seen, but the same measure produces the same result. If Mark returns from Pamphylia (Acts xv. 38), it is because the truth exacted too much from him. If Peter refuses to eat with the Gentiles (Gal. ii. 11), it is because he would spare himself; the truth of the gospel, for which Paul contended, exacted too much of him. Demas cannot bear the exaction of the truth. (2 Tim. iv. 10.) If Timothy knows and follows Paul’s doctrine, he must also know and follow his “manner of life.” If the doctrine be truly held, the manner of life will be an exemplification of it. If a man say (as has been said) that the Church, the body of Christ, is in heaven, and speaks of Jesus as being here (with man as man), he so entirely misplaces the truth, without denying it, that to hold this doctrine imposes on him no self-death here, and his conscience is lulled, and the truth lost. For if the body of Christ is in



heaven, I am not responsible to walk here on earth as of it ; and if Jesus, who is really in heaven, and known here by the Holy Ghost, is put on a level with us in the flesh, Christianity is reduced to a mere human thing, and the truth, that now, through the Spirit, we are united with Him in heaven, and from *thence* receive of Him, to fill our place in the body here on earth, is lost. Could there be a greater perversion of truth than that the Church, the body of Christ, is in heaven ? The truth is, that it is *from* heaven, but *on* earth ; yet many earnest conscientious souls accept this perversion as the truth ; and the consequence is, they have lost the truth, and with it the effects which are produced by the truth. Each truth produces its own proper effects ; hence, if you lose the truth, you must lose the effects of it.

Again ; another will so accept and explain the unity of the Spirit, that all Christians can be received as united, because professors of the same life, though they are connected with systems and orders of things most opposed to one another ; so that the unity of the Spirit is practically reduced to the socialism of a club. Again, others, with more light, will contend that similar opinions, with soundness in faith, and holy walk (that is individual propriety), necessarily places in the unity of the Spirit. Then the Spirit is only a common bond for separate and distinct units, and not

the unity of the body of Christ, where each is affected by the other, and is necessarily a guardian of the other ; for it is the Spirit (who baptizes the whole into one) who must be considered, and not the individual, as to what he holds or does. He may neither hold what is wrong or do what is wrong, and yet his association may grieve the Spirit of God ; the unity be denied, and the body suffer. The unity of the Spirit makes the body of Christ one, because the Holy Ghost is one. We are all baptized by one Spirit into one body, and where He is, there must be an abnegation of everything unsuited to Christ. The thing which, by no possible means, could injure one naturally, becomes vitally dangerous, when in the unity of the Spirit. As a man, I may not suffer from the bad habits of my associates, unless they seduce me into like ones : not so in the Church of God ; “ A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.” I may not suffer as a man, because I hear vain babbling in the society that I resort to, at least, I may not be morally degraded by it, or unfitted thereby to be a good member of society ; and yet it is so in the Church ; and a man cannot be a “ vessel unto honour,” unless he purges himself from such things. To bid an ordinary “ farewell ” to a man who brings not the doctrine of Christ can in no wise injure or affect me naturally ; and yet, as in the fellowship of the Spirit,

if I do so, I am partaker of his evil deeds, and necessarily disqualified for church association. (2 John.)

The natural mind cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God ; they are foolishness unto Him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. If the natural mind receives it, or knows it, it is not of the Spirit of God. The unity of the Spirit cannot be maintained truly, but as there is a distinct dissociation from and exclusion of all that which is contrary to the Spirit Himself, and in conjunction with all those who are walking in the Spirit. We are exposed to perversions so long as we are babes. To raise us to maturity is the aim of all ministry, as it is written (Eph. iv. 13, 14) : " Until we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ : that we be no more babes, tossed to and fro, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, for a method of deception " (as it may be more freely translated.) The force of the passage is, that if I am not matured in Christ, I am exposed to human sleight ; which, by cunning craftiness, grows into a method of deception. It is man's work and way of escaping the edge and power of the truth, and it ends in systematized error.

CHAPTER VII.—WHAT IS POWER, AND HOW  
ARE MEANS TO BE USED ?

To the earnest and true-hearted servant of Christ no question can be of deeper interest than, What is power, and how are means to be used ?

It is not only in the first part of the question that importance lies, for many are assured that power is of God ; many can say, " Twice have I heard this, that power belongeth unto God " (Psalm lxii. 11), who cannot reply to the second, which is really the one which exercises the heart before Him, and in which we all so fail. Let us search and see how means may be used, consistently with the assured sense that power is of God only.

It is very instructive to mark how the servant of God in every age used means ; and if before the death of Christ, while the first man was still recognized, we can trace and discover how the means were in abeyance to the power—nay, that they were always (when the servant was walking with God) so disproportionate to the power that the source of the power was not clouded or obscured by the means, but the contrary—how much more now !

Faith always has to do with God, to whom power belongeth, and not with means ; and hence I may pass over Abraham, for his life properly was one wholly of faith, and he passed through the deepest exercises known to the heart of man, reckoning on God only, apart from any means. And this is, as I may say, one's private history and walk with God. Jacob, on his return from Laban's house, has got out of *faith*, and is full of means. In the wrestling, he is taught the power of God, and that if He be for him who can be against him ? Every devoted saint knows that God's resources are outside and beyond the means he could use, and has found it so ; but when the servant of God testifies of Him to His professing people, the means are used to express the power. The servant is himself an instrument ; and it will be seen that, while he has full confidence in the power, he, in proportion as he is in spirit with God, makes a very secondary account of the means. Moses is not eloquent. Aaron supplies the deficiency, because Moses considered it one, but it is the rod of *Moses*, used in faith, which is the means to manifest the power of God. With that rod he stretched out his hand over the waters of the Red Sea, and that simple movement—that very insignificant means—effected the mightiest of results. He was not thinking of the means, but of the power ; and this is faith always. The power is

most before the soul when the means are most insignificant. Moses failed, grievously failed, and forfeited the land, when in Numbers xx. he made much of the means. God had directed him to "take the rod, and to *speaĳ* unto the rock, and it shall give forth his water ;" instead of which he smote the rock *twice*, and said, "Hear now, ye rebels ; must *we* fetch you water out of this rock ?" He spoke unadvisedly with his lips ; he failed to sanctify the Lord in the eyes of the children of Israel. The more God is with His people, the smaller and the simpler are the means used. Jericho fell down after it had been compassed seven days. The only means used were, that the people "shouted with a great shout." Ai, on the contrary, is only reduced by an ambuscade. Means were used, but of no honour to the prowess of Israel ; and, though ordered of God, not declarative of His intervention. He graciously delivers, even after failure, but He does so without conferring honour on *themselves*, or open favour from *Himself*.

We see in the book of Judges, when "Bochim" (see chap. ii. 1) represented the state of Israel, that the means used for the people's deliverance from time to time were not honouring to man, though they were made to accomplish the desired end. Ehud's knife (chap. iii.), Shamgar's ox goad, Jael's nail and hammer, Gideon's pitcher, are means imparting no

distinction to the users of them ; yet they were effective, and rather obscured than exhibited the power by which deliverance was effected. The greater the failure, the less can God honour His people personally. How could He ? But He delivers ; and while He does so, He will make use of means in no wise honouring to us, and yet, at the same time, not openly indicative of His intervention. When there is Nazarite separation, as in Samson, there is personal strength ; and the jawbone of an ass—very insignificant means—will accomplish great results. But when, as in Samuel, there is *prayer*, a simple and unequivocal turning of the heart to God only, then the Lord Himself acts for His people in marked intervention : “ And as Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel ; but the Lord thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Philistines, and discomfited them.” (1 Sam. vii. 10.)

Now I turn to the Apostle Paul, the pattern of all them who shall believe on Him to life everlasting, as our example. If any one has meditated before God on the examples I have furnished from scripture, he cannot fail to see that the more faith and holiness in walk there is, the less the visible means, and that the means never, even in appearance, assume the place of the power, except when God cannot connect His

power with the state of failure in which His servant or His people are found. Paul glories in what Moses deploras, even that he has not personal power; "in bodily presence weak, and in speech contemptible." He glories in it, because he would not have the faith of the saint to stand in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God. He actually takes pleasure in infirmities, that the power of Christ might be fully manifest, as entirely apart from any co-operation which human effort could contribute to it. And hence he will judge of others, not by their speech but by their power. He reminds the Corinthians that he personally sought and derived nothing from the flesh, when first he preached to them; and if he in his preaching disallowed the flesh and its co-operation, how could they venture to glory in it? He says, "I determined to know nothing among you but Jesus Christ" (a known living Person truly); but as to this scene, a crucified one; and he adds, "I was with you in weakness and in fear, and in much trembling (1 Cor. ii.)—the very opposite to any exhibition of human ability or sensationalism. For he continues, "My speech and preaching was not with persuasive words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power."

When he would restore the Galatians to the true ground of the Spirit, he not only insists (chap. i.) on



the nature and order of his conversion, as being from God in His Son; but he reminds them that he did not minister among them in any carnal power, but on the contrary, "Ye know," he writes, "how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first." These statements are very conclusive, and establish that the more we are in the power of God's Spirit, the less shall we seek or use the co-operation derived from the flesh. Man in mind and body is the earthen vessel; the instrument for Christ's service, which, when *simply* given to Him, He uses. But my faith ought not to be in the exertion of either one or both, but in the Spirit of God. Nay, the more faith I have, the less value shall I place in any bodily or mental exertion. This would not prevent me from being always assiduous, while it would check excitement, and disallow anything that would promote it. Nay, it is well known that there cannot be general assiduity where there is even occasional overtaking; for there cannot be any accelerated action without a correspondent reaction. Now where there is power, earnestness is always apart from anything sensational or excited. See the earnestness of a physician by a sick bed; of a good father expostulating with a beloved but wilful son. The sense of power and the greatness of the stake at issue, when together, impart earnestness and gravity. The greatness of the stake at issue

*without* the sense of power to meet it, must, when there are right feelings, provoke undue declamation and impassioned expression to supply the sense of power, and this in proportion as the former exists without the latter. The means of expressing the power are reduced and uncalled for, according as the power is felt to be possessed. Hence, wherever there is an assured sense of being led by the Spirit to any place or work (as for instance Paul to Philippi), there would be a waiting on God and a discountenancing of any questionable publicity. One would go on quietly, assured of God, in the mind of the Lord, though unknown and unheard of. Alas! now-a-days no room is left for the option of God's Spirit; but the flesh is actually fostered and given a place to, at the very time that the truth and grace presented, condemn it, and invite the soul to safety in Christ from the judgment on it.

Let the saints, I repeat, be assured that as there is faith and holiness, so will there be a consciousness of God's power by and through very insignificant means; and it will be found that it has not been a long excited sermon, which has been blessed to souls, but some little word guided by God's Spirit, which has carried to the heart the germ of life.

## CHAPTER VIII.—THE IMITATION OF TRUTH.

THE more fully and distinctly truth is circulated and accepted, the more must it be the device of Satan to counterfeit it, and then beguile souls from that (the truth) which alone sanctifies unto God. If truth were not known and accepted, the counterfeit would be useless; but in proportion as the true and the real is valued, so does Satan seek to counteract it by an imitation; for if souls are led away by the imitation, under the idea that it is the truth, the conscience is lulled, and they are a prey to the serpent. They are not only unsanctified, but they are led astray, under Satanic influence. We ought not to be ignorant of his devices. It is plain that as a truth prevails, and souls through the power of it are delivered from darkness and the power of Satan, the enemy must not only oppose the circulation of it, which he does in the first instance; but we find that he also institutes something bearing a resemblance to it, in order to deceive souls, and lead them into his snare; while under the impression that they are adhering to the right. The children of Israel were forbidden to make any similitude (Deut. iv. 15—20) of God. Man's similitude could not rise higher

than man himself. Satan from the first beguiled man from the worship of the true God unto the worshipping of demons, and the idols were only the representation of the ideas which were sanctioned by the demons.

We have to do with the simple fact, that as truth was presented and effective, so was it an object to Satan, not only to oppose it, but when it had gained acceptance, to set up a counterfeit, in order to create a diversion. The apostle in 2 Timothy distinctly warns us, that as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so would there arise teachers in the last days who would resist the truth, after the same fashion. By imitating the truth of God, they would withstand it. Hence, it is the duty of the faithful to be prepared for the counterfeit of every truth which has obtained acceptance and influence, and just in proportion as it has. And this with the conviction that Satan does not resort to this device until every other opposition to the truth has failed to check its progress; so that the very existence of the counterfeit is proof positive that the truth has been effective. Satan's most daring act will be seen in his setting up Antichrist—a counterfeit of Christ as Messiah and King—man in the temple of God, shewing himself to be God. "Many (says our Lord) shall come in my name, saying I am Christ, and shall deceive many, and if it were possible the very elect."

Well then, as assured that there will be, and is, an effort of Satan to rival by imitation the truth which through mercy has most effect in our day, let us, as prepared for it, consider how we may detect the counterfeit. The proper and simple way to be preserved from any counterfeit is by accuracy of knowledge of the true. If a banker has accurate knowledge of a true note, he is able to discover any discrepancy. The first great thing is to be assured of possessing the truth—to “continue in the things thou hast learned, and hast been assured of.” This is really the course for oneself; but one has often to point out and expose to others the counterfeit; and therefore it is well to bear in mind that the counterfeit always gives the prominence to man. Satan always uses man as his instrument for contravening the purposes of God. Man being made in the image of God, Satan finds him his best adapted engine for circumventing God, and diverting from His ways and mind. Man is thus made the rival of God, and Satan is the energy by which this terrible evil is carried out. Hence, wherever man is made prominent, the spiritual can at once pronounce that it is a counterfeit, in whatever specious way it may promise good results, and therefore to them it can have no value. Secondly, there is another mark, which is not so easy to describe or expose—one which is practically seen in the magicians of Egypt, in that they

could not turn the dust into lice by their enchantments (Exod. viii. 18), though they had been able to imitate Moses and Aaron up to this point. I believe it to be simply this—that even as this miracle, being the creation of life, marked the “finger of God,” and precluded the imitation of the false prophets; so no genuine expression of life will ever be found to flow from a counterfeit. There may be a great appearance and assumption of power and devotedness; but in the activities there will be found no moral power, nothing really of the life of Christ.

It cannot be denied, that every truth which has obtained a place, has been imitated. Popery is but a huge glaring imitation of the Church of God; and every order of the world assuming to be Christian is also an imitation, and hence a counterfeit, because it is not the real thing. The more even the idea of a right thing obtained, so has there ever sprung up the counterfeit of it. The subject is too wide to pursue it here; but let us notice one of the counterfeits existing at this very hour, respecting a truth lately revived among the saints.

The truth that “where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst,” has now for years been a word of strength and blessing to many; and they have, by faith in God, walked in and acted on it, thereby learning and knowing the presence of

Christ, by the power of the Holy Ghost in their midst. This could not be without the setting aside of man, and the bringing in of the power of the Spirit of God, which is the membership and unity of all saints, i.e., the body of Christ. It could not be a mere retreat for oneself; it must, because in the Spirit, connect us with all that is of the Spirit, by whom we are all baptized into one body. It could not be a mere meeting for convenience; and its end, the edification of the two or three who had met together. The real thing (the fundamental principle of the Church,) which the word sets forth, ensures and confers wonderful blessing; but the saints, knowing the real thing, are separated from the flesh in the power of the Spirit, by whom Christ's presence is known, and by whom they are baptized into one body. Now this simple truth, from which the greatest and most blessed results flow, is constantly imitated; and the proof that it is imitated is, that none of the blessings which, as fruits, flow from the real thing, are ever known or manifested by the imitators. It will be found that it is their own conscience, or comfort, or something of their own, which is their object, and not the *One in the Midst*; and thus the gathering together bears the one sure mark of a Counterfeit—even that *man is uppermost, and not Christ*; while the other mark can also be observed—even that though they apparently have taken a great and a true step, in ac-

cepting and adopting the great fundamental principle of the Church of God, yet that there is no advance in moral power, in the realities of life; nor any increase in the knowledge of Christ's mind, and His interests on earth. Nothing is more painfully manifest than the fact that many saints, who have avowedly sought to walk for God on earth, never advance in the knowledge of Christ or His ways. Scripture is read and dwelt on, but always with reference to one's own state, where there is conscience; and never, I may say, with reference to Christ's interests and thoughts, and hence there is no progress in the knowledge of Himself. A glance at the writings of the most earnest will authoritatively confirm this statement.

The easiest things, apparently, to imitate, involve the most serious consequences if they be imitated. It was easy to imitate the holy anointing oil, but to do so entailed death on the offender. (See Exod. xxx. 38.) The seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, might use the same words as Paul, but with what fearfully different results! (Acts xix. 14.) Hence the simplicity of any proposition of divine truth does not put it the more within the reach of man. Satan's object is to divert the soul from the great and divine consequences which flow from true and accurate obedience; and he effects this by inducing man to make the attempt in a natural way—without faith—without the intervention of the



power of God. Now, it is a fact, that we hear of Christians meeting for breaking of bread when it suits any given number to do so, without any reference to others in the same place; so that it is not uncommon to find two or more of those meetings in a very small place, each in independence of the other, as if there were no common bond or baptism between them. What is this but imitation? In one sense the imitators would be far better off if the truth which they imitate had never been presented and adopted, seeing that thereby an opportunity has been given to Satan to lead into this sad and disastrous imitation. I say it is sad and disastrous, because the leaders of the imitation withstand the truth, attracting and diverting souls by the counterfeit, and thus debarring them from seeking and finding the real and the true. And while they may be constant readers of the scriptures, they are "ever learning, but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." There is no truth of greater importance in this day, than this fundamental principle of the Church, and therefore there is none more imitated, and thus more used to perpetuate and accomplish the enemy's work. When this truth is known and adopted in the Spirit, there is a daily deepening in the counsels and interests of Christ. The Church, as His body, is fully comprehended in that membership which is alone true, even the Spirit Himself. There is through the

Spirit, which is the unity of the body, a distinct claim on and link to every saint on earth ; and a daily increasing sense of responsibility and encouragement too ; so that the more truly in the Spirit any fraction walks, the more ability is there to help all others, and the more they are helped, even as it is with the natural body ; when any part of it recovers from a lengthened debility, there is a re-invigoration of the whole. But when it is only the imitation that is adopted, then, as I have already said, there is never a thought above man, either in the preaching of the gospel, or ministry to the saints. Man's good is alone insisted on and sought ; there is no rising into communion with Christ, in His interests, and the range of them, through the Holy Ghost on earth.

## CHAPTER IX.—LEGALISM AND LAWLESSNESS.

**THERE** are two courses of action apparently contrary one to the other, but which nevertheless spring from the same root—even the flesh. One is legalism, which I may describe as the effort to shape oneself to given laws or rules ; the other is lawlessness, in which one's own will determines everything. In legalism the occupation is necessarily with oneself. Seeking to urge oneself into conformity to law, self is before the eye, and satisfaction is felt, according as there is conformity to a given standard. Legalism must always give the flesh a place, for if there were no flesh, there would be no law. The Spirit acts according to God, and against His fruits there can be no law. If the flesh be dead there is no need for law ; for he that is dead is freed from sin. But it is not of doctrine I would speak here but of practice. The moment legality is sanctioned, it must be with reference to that which needs to be made subject ; hence, law has relation to the flesh, and the flesh to the law ; and this is just the evil of legalism—even that it addresses the flesh, and gives it a standing. And this is not christian, because as christians we are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit ; therefore the flesh

has no standing, and in the Spirit we exhibit the fruits of the Spirit, against which there is no law.

Now lawlessness, though apparently opposite to legalism, springs from the same error ; even from a misapprehension of how the flesh is regarded before God. Neither with the legal nor lawless is it treated as having been crucified with Christ, and because grace confers what the law exacts, the flesh assumes that it is irresponsible, and acts according to its will ; and this is lawlessness. The carnal mind becomes the arbiter and leader on every point. Self, like a primeval forest, is allowed to grow and do as it lists. In neither case is the flesh treated as a thing to be mortified—set aside—because crucified in the cross. Where there is most conscience, legality obtains ; but where there is most intelligence in the natural mind, there lawlessness rules. Nevertheless, the legal man, because of weakness, is often lawless, for if he be not up to and according to rule, he must be so, even against his inclination ; hence legalism is no safeguard against lawlessness, because of the weakness of the flesh ; and it becomes plain that there is no true deliverance from the flesh but as I walk in the Spirit.

The Galatians were legal—the Corinthians were lawless. The Galatians, no doubt, conscientiously felt that the flesh intruded and trespassed upon them, and in order to check and frustrate it, they resorted to re-

strictions and were in bondage to rules. Having begun in the Spirit, they were seeking to be made perfect in the flesh. They had ceased to walk in the Spirit, and they essayed to control the flesh by descending to carnal methods ; and thus gave a place to the flesh, which was in itself a victory to it. Instead of disallowing it from the high eminence and control of the Spirit of God (for if we walk in the Spirit, we shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh), they fostered the very thing they wanted to check, because they thus gave it a recognised existence. The great truth is, that being alive in the Spirit, I disavow the right of the flesh to rule : in a word, that I am crucified with Christ ; for if I live after the flesh, I shall die ; but if I, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, I shall live. The legal man makes himself, and not Christ, his study and object, and his satisfaction is according as he succeeds in bringing himself to the adopted standard.

Now the Corinthians were lawless. They were richly gifted. The Spirit had bestowed on them very imposing gifts, and they virtually said, "The Spirit's gifts are everything—the flesh may do as it likes ;" but the moment the flesh is let do as it likes, then it is not dead, it is alive, and it is lawless ; and they that are in the flesh cannot please God ; nay, it breaks out and betrays itself in many forms. If I am walking in the Spirit, I do mortify the deeds of the flesh ; for the flesh

cannot maintain itself in the Spirit's province. I might be largely gifted by the Spirit like the Corinthians, but this is not walking in the Spirit. When in the Spirit I am first controlled myself; but this is not all. As I walk in the Spirit, I am interested and watchful that other saints walk also according to Christ; while in lawlessness the reverse is the case—I am wilful myself and I connive at the wilfulness of others.

Let us trace a little in 1 Corinthians how the apostle exposes lawlessness at Corinth. First in chapter i., he notices how they are in the flesh; because they are following their own will, in choosing leaders. And in chapter iii. he plainly tells them, that they are babes in Christ, being carnal, and walking as men. But having shewn how wilful they were in their own walk and ways, he then in chapter v. shews how utterly indifferent they were of the conduct and character of those who came to the Lord's table; nay that they were so leavened that they went to law with one another before the ungodly; they were not under law to Christ, they did as they chose; it ran into their domestic relationships, so that it was necessary to tell them, Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called. They went to idol temples and ate things offered to idols; they ate their own supper at the Lord's Supper. Every one had a psalm, &c., in the assembly. (1 Cor. xiv. 6.) Lastly, they had among them some who say

that there is no resurrection of the dead! Alas! to what a lawless state had they come! The doctrine and power of the Spirit was accepted without the great truth of the crucifixion of the flesh! The result is, the *worst* practice, for the knowledge of the Spirit's gifts and power, unless I am walking in the Spirit, only leads to lawlessness; it leads to boasting in the flesh. If I am walking in the Spirit, the flesh is forced into death before Him. The Corinthians were not legal, they did not check the flesh at all; they gloried in the gifts of the Spirit, and allowed the flesh to please itself.

These two forms of evil, which appeared so soon in the history of Christianity, have produced strange combinations in Christendom. You will find one lawless in *choosing* a leader; and then easily submitting to certain rules, as if he were quite a legalist. You will find another avowing legalism, and yet very wilful in personal habits and ways. One glories in what he can make of himself—for instance, a teetotaller; the other, is gratified by the acts of his will; thus in both cases there is plainly self-satisfaction. Legalism is in man in the flesh, when there is conscience. Lawlessness obtains when there is a release from law, if the flesh is allowed to act. Hence Paul urges "only use not your liberty for an occasion to the flesh;" and Peter, "as free, but not using your liberty as a cloke of maliciousness." The true ground of liberty or freedom from evil

is, that I am dead to the law, by the body of Christ. If the old man has been crucified, there is no room for legalism or lawlessness; and hence the danger of relaxing the claim of the law, for it is not that God has relaxed His claim, but that which the law addresses has been crucified, and therefore it is neither to be impaired, nor left at will, but to be *mortified*.

Now in these last days, we are warned that there is the form of godliness without the power thereof, and then it is that lawlessness is most marked. "Men are lovers of their own selves, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God." The mystery of godliness, if viewed by faith, necessarily sets man aside here. Hence the apostacy endeavoured to contravene the effect of true godliness, by introducing penance and self-denial of an extreme kind. The mystery of godliness is great, and its effects distinct, in the setting aside and repudiation of the flesh because of association with Christ. Instead of bowing to the mystery of godliness, the apostacy from the faith was marked by severe impositions on the flesh, which, so far from setting aside the flesh, gave it a distinct place by avowing it as capable of correction. This has ever been the rule so long as God is admitted to have a claim, and I am in that nature which of itself resists His claim—there must either be law for that which is not subject, or there must be lawlessness. Indeed the former, legalism, paves the way for lawlessness.



This we see in the case of the Colossians (though I cannot enlarge on it here), where there was a mixture of Judaism and philosophy. It was the will of the flesh, and this is sin, and sin is lawlessness.

The great evil of Cain was in devising for himself a way to propitiate God. He was not at first lawless, but he was not subject to God's mind, and wherever insubjection creeps in, no matter how heavy and exacting the restrictions, then there is a giving rein to one's mind; and the next step, as we see in Cain, is utter lawlessness—no restraint whatever. This downward course is traced for us in Jude. We read, "They have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core." First adopting self-restrictions; then acting for self-advantage; and, eventually, in open rebellion. Thus the legal, in the long run, become lawless; they find their restrictions accomplish nothing, and then they are thrown overboard, and lawlessness ensues. The one who imposes the severest restrictions, as king Saul (1 Sam. xiv. 24), is the selfsame one who lapses into open wilfulness.

The sum of the matter is this: that beginning in the Spirit does not preserve from legalism, as we see in the Galatians; and the knowledge of the Spirit's power and place in the assembly does not preserve one from lawlessness as with the Corinthians; nay, that the

standing of grace tends to lawlessness if the flesh be not mortified, because if under grace we are not under law; the flesh must be disallowed, because ended judicially in the cross, else there will be legalism where there is conscience, which eventually lapses into lawlessness because the flesh is wicked and wilful.

The great evil among us is the Corinthian, owning and receiving the truth in the natural mind; seeing and admitting that the Spirit has the power and the right to rule; enjoying His gifts too: and yet with all this a manifest license to the flesh—a reigning as kings, and many other glaring expressions of self-will. It is from the more enlightened that the truth receives the greatest damage if there be not a practical power coincident with the possession of it. And there cannot be this practical exhibition of it, unless by walking in the Spirit, where alone the flesh is mortified. No amount of restriction will be true testimony, and there can be great intelligence and acknowledgment of right principles without true rule—the rule of the Spirit, who always manifests Himself by mortifying the flesh, and thus displaying His own fruits, against which there is no law.

## CHAPTER X.—THE CROSS OF CHRIST.

THE cross of Christ is owned and believed in by every Christian, but peace and practice depend on the extent of the soul's apprehension of it. It is such an all important doctrine, that there can be no profession of Christianity without the acknowledgment of it in some form, and possibly there is no truth which has been so continually and so strangely perverted, or one of which only a very partial and insufficient measure has been accepted.

It is with the hope of awakening souls to its importance, by pointing out how they suffer from those perversions and limitations, that I here attempt to consider the subject, for if what the cross has effected were clearly seen, all the limitations, as well as perversions of it, would be exposed.

The cross has two aspects: one with regard to God, the other with reference to the believer. The former necessarily embraces the most, and from overlooking this aspect of it, has arisen serious misapprehension of the truth. When the blessed Lord came into the world, John, His witness, looking on Him, says, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the

sin of the world." This was plainly with reference to the altered position in which all things here would be placed by the Cross of Christ. Sin had entered on this scene, but the Lamb of God would take away the sin from this order of things, from the world. We can hardly estimate the extent of the work here devolving on the Lamb of God, or the effect of it. It comprises the removal by sacrifice of that which was contrary to God and offensive to Him. It is not that God annihilates everything here and works elsewhere; but that He, through the sacrifice of the Lamb of God, can reinstate everything now under judgment, in an entirely new order and degree, and that in righteousness because of the sacrifice. The cross enables Him to continue His creation in a new order. If there had been no cross, there must be judgment on the creation as it stands; but now, peace having been made by the blood of His cross, God can by Him reconcile all things to Himself, whether things on earth or things in heaven. Surely we little apprehend the greatness of the work, or the effect of the cross, unless we see the extent of the judgment, and how everything was involved in it. If the soul grasps the extent and severity of the judgment, with what wonder and satisfaction must the eye rest on the cross, and see judgment so borne there—peace so made—that God can reconcile all things to Himself. If the

fall of Adam has occasioned the universal judgment, if from that point one traces the widespread deluge of death and distance from God, with what rapture and praise can we behold the cross, and there see, not only the tide of judgment rolled back, but exhausted,—all its demands met—and now God at liberty in righteousness to reconcile all things to Himself! Do souls really regard the cross in this singular and unparalleled scope? From the moment of Adam's sin until the cross, there was no rest for God on earth. He did not forsake His people, for His glory ever sought a place among them, but He had not a sabbath here; nor could He, until His Son, our Lord, could say, "I have glorified thee on the earth, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." How little do we regard the cross in this light! Even as that one great moment when God according to His own mind is at liberty to deal with the world, so that He can reconcile all things to Himself. In the history of the universe, there is nothing so great and admirable as the cross. It stands forth pre-eminently as the dawn of an eternal day to this world. If at Adam's fall the sun went down at noon-day, at the cross, Jesus went down into the depths of blackness and darkness—combated all their strength and despoiled them, and inaugurates for us the endless day of heavenly glory.

But more than this: the cross of Christ has enabled God to reconcile us, who hitherto were alienated and enemies in our mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled. It is through the cross of Christ that God is enabled to reach the prodigal; for there, the distance between God and the sinner was repaired; the judgment resting on man was there borne by the Son of God. He took away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. God Himself rends the veil from the top to the bottom; there is no longer any obstruction to His dealing with man, once under judgment; because, the judgment being borne, grace can reign through righteousness. Who can estimate what the cross has effected for God? So great was the effect that our Lord declares (John xiii. 31), when Judas went out, "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in Him." God was glorified in the fulness and completeness of the answer now rendered in the cross to all His claims. Thus the sin of the world has, through the cross, redounded to the glory of God. The Son of man is glorified in the cross, and God is glorified in Him. He has done the will of God and finished His work. If the ruin be great, the reparation, or the manner in which it has been repaired, is unaccountably greater; the free gift is beyond all comparison greater than the condemnation.

Now let us see what the cross effects for the

believer. When Adam sinned, he fell under the judgment of death. Dying, he must die! Nothing can relieve of this judgment but substitution. The judgment must be borne; the righteousness of God requires it. Man, who is under it, cannot be relieved of it but by another bearing it. It cannot be cancelled or overlooked. Righteousness demands judgment, and if man falls under it he cannot or could not rise out of it; and if God recovered him out of it, He would compromise the righteousness of His own sentence. Man cannot in righteousness be exonerated but by one, not chargeable with his guilt, bearing the judgment of it. This Christ did on the cross. "He was made sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." He bore the judgment in His own body on the tree. Our old man was crucified with Christ, that the body of sin might be destroyed. There was no way of rescuing us but by undergoing the judgment—and this is the cross. Christ would ever have abode alone if He had not died on the cross. The Son of man must be lifted up, otherwise eternal life could never have been given to us. There was only the one way by which we could be saved. Without the cross there could be no escape from judgment, no entrance into life. The blessed Son of God spent thirty-three years here, and after all, He says, in reference to Himself, "Unless a corn of wheat fall

into the ground and die, it abideth alone." He had not up to this brought any one to His own ground before God. There is judgment on man, and there can be no righteousness until that is removed. The blessed Son of God goes down into the depths of judgment. The cross opens a way out of the dungeons of eternal torment, into the rest of the Father's house. The cross has not only secured the way of escape for man: but on it has been crucified the old man, that the body of sin might be destroyed. I do not see the cross truly if I only see it as opening a way of escape for me and yet allowing that in me to escape which has incurred the judgment. This is one of the general limitations in the effect of the cross. The ending of the old man may not be denied, but it is not insisted on as important to the understanding of the cross. In Romans vii. it is the will of the flesh, the law of it working in the members, that one cries to be delivered from; and not, as is often supposed, the works and sins of the flesh. Both are removed in the cross. "If Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin." The cross opens the door of escape for me from the state in which I am; but it does not admit the continuance of that state. That state has been judged. What is judged cannot be continued. The moment that by faith I see my escape from judgment, because of the cross of Christ, that moment I am, because of



that same cross, set on entirely new ground, even as *fruit* of Him who died, and I must leave my old man behind, crucified; so that I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me. If I do not accept this, I have limited the cross, and in fact have assumed that I can be freed by Christ's work on the cross from the judgment which rests on the old man, and yet be allowed to retain that which caused the offence. In short, that I escape through substitution the penalty for my offence, but that the state in which the offence placed me may continue. In effect, that a man may be saved through the intervention of another from the penalty under which he lies—for forgery, for instance—and yet he may retain the position acquired by it! Righteousness requires that not only the full penalty be paid, but that there should be a discontinuance of the state of offence; in fact the offending state must cease. The cross effects all this, and the one who truly understands it, can say with the apostle, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified to me and I to the world." Here the question of sin is not alluded to, but everything which in any degree was unsuited to God. The cross had cleared all away, and in this the apostle gloried. Some speak of the cross now-a-days as if it were something to allow the offender to remain as he

was ; as if it were a continual sacrifice, continually answering for an offending state which is not set aside and thus there is no real peace. Again, others see that the cross has removed their sins before God, and rejoice in it ; but they do not see the extent of the action of the cross, either with reference to God or to themselves ; and hence in practice, while they would place the cross in faith between themselves and their sins, and know that they must not return to them, and that they are freed for ever from them, yet they can sanction and enjoy many carnal things, and the world, just as if there were no cross at all. And, alas ! some (possibly believers) wear the cross as an ornament to decorate that (the old man) for which the Son of God bore it. There is no more painful perversion than this. If Christ died for me, I am bound by every good and right feeling to lay aside that for which He died, and which needed His death. Without that death I could not be delivered from judgment ; but how dreadful to retain the condition for which my Saviour was judged ! Nay, I must now hate my own life ; and I may well do so, since through faith I have the life of the Son of God.

May we increasingly know that the cross of Christ is the power of God, and the wisdom of God.

## CHAPTER XI.—THE ABSENCE OF CHRIST.

THE Lord, knowing that nothing would so peculiarly affect His own on the earth, as the fact of His going away, records for us fully in John xiii. to xvii. how He will provide for us during His absence from this scene, and our journey through it. He knew every feeling and need which could be awakened by the blank; and reckoning on our faithfulness and affection He provides accordingly; and consequently, as there is faithfulness and affection for Him, as one known, so is there an understanding of the gracious and marvellous provision for His absence in these chapters. But, as there is indifference and denial of His absence, so are they unappropriated and inapplicable. I do not propose to comment on these chapters, but simply to draw attention to the fact of Christ's absence, and some of the consequences of it. Nothing betrays more the meagre nature of our love to Christ than the little practical sense we have of His absence. The true evidence of how we have valued any one, is the extent of blank we are conscious of in the absence of such an one. If we can go on as usual, it is very clear the presence was not necessary to us; but accord-

ing to our value of the presence is the greatness of the blank caused by absence. Now nothing can fill or repair the blank but that which has caused it. In simple language, the blank which is caused by the absence of any one can only be repaired by the presence of that same one. And hence, if I feel the Lord's absence and the blank here occasioned by it, nothing can repair that blank to me but His presence. And consequently, as His absence is felt, so is His presence sought. The latter proves the genuineness of the former. The disciples had known Him as present with Him, and they at once felt the blank and loss which His absence entailed. And to them, every word that He said which indicated how the blank would be repaired was of all importance. Saints now have never known Him down here personally, as the first disciples did, but they, according as they know Him, have at every turn the painful sense that He is not here, and as this sense is deepened and sustained, so is there in them a retreating from things as they are here, because His absence is so felt. It is as we know the blessedness and the power of His presence now, that we feel the blank and desolation caused by His absence. His absence is a fact, and He repairs the blank, assuring us that He will not leave us comfortless, but that He will come to us. Now this coming *to* us does not mean the same thing as His

coming *for* us. The coming *for* us, is when He comes to receive us to Himself, that where He is, there we may be also. His coming *to* us is by the Holy Ghost to repair the blank of His absence. If I feel the absence of Christ from this scene, and if my heart be truly set on Him, nothing can make up, or repair for me, this grievous blank, but His coming *to* me—His manifesting Himself to me; and this must be by the Holy Ghost. Hence, if I feel the absence of Christ, my only resource is the Holy Ghost, who is on the earth, sent down to manifest to me the absent Christ. What a relief to a true and faithful heart! How simple it is that nothing can repair absence but presence; and if we do not feel the absence of Christ, it is but too evident that we have never yet known Him as present with us. Where is there a heart for Christ, in a day like this, which does not feel that it is vain to hope to find Him even in things avowedly dedicated to Him? The fact is, souls are satisfied with relief of *conscience*, and there stop, instead of going on to the satisfying of the *heart*. Nothing but his presence, as we see in the case of Mary Magdalene (John xx.), will satisfy the heart; no amount of gifts or communications will do for the heart. Nay, all these *only* intensify the desire of the true heart to have His presence. If gifts or communications would make up for the presence, then they are greater than the

presence. This cannot be; nay, their value consists in being expressions of that presence, which is the more desired, as it is by these expressions kept fresh before the heart and mind. The moment my heart delights in the presence of Christ, it is unsatisfied elsewhere; and then His coming to me by the Holy Ghost is my relief and comfort here. And here it is that I first begin to find my true place for Him on the earth. If I do not feel His absence, I do not value the reparation of it. Christ's absence is not felt; the Holy Ghost's presence is proportionally not regarded; and this is the real state of Christendom. My true place for Him here begins with loving Him; for it is as I find Him satisfying my heart that I am led and empowered to occupy the place here which pleases Him—one in fellowship of the Spirit.

But as I am satisfied with Him, I am in heart dissociated from everything not of Him. Nothing ministers to my heart where He is not; and where this is so, I begin to realize that He is not only absent from the place in which I walk, but that He has been rejected from it; refused a place in it; so that I am not only isolated here because of the blank of His absence, but I am also repelled from association with things here because He has been refused His rightful place. His absence affects *me* in the place; but His rejection makes the place fearful, and separates me

from every work and way of man, because of the guilt of His rejection and consequent judgment of this world. If it were merely a question of His absence, things would remain unaltered to me, only with this feeling—that none of them could fill up the blank. Nay, the more lovely and attractive they were naturally, the more would they evoke desolation of heart, because inviting my admiration where the one object of my heart no longer was. The order of nature and scenery indeed remains unaltered, but the fact that none of these things ever could revive His presence—nay, that as His presence is enjoyed by the Spirit, they are all in abeyance—closes the eye to them. The creation remains in all its native beauty, but it never can repair the blank of Christ's absence, and the spiritual one *knows* it to be so; and that it is, with the eye closed to everything here, and the heart absorbed in Him, that one enters, through the Spirit, into the joy of His presence. The works of nature cannot repair the blank of His absence; but the Holy Ghost alone can and does. My prospect is Christ's coming *for* me; in the interval I know His coming *to* me by the Holy Ghost.

I need not add more, but nothing is clearer than that, if the absence of Christ be not fully apprehended, there is really no power to walk here for Christ, because there is no acknowledgment of the Spirit, who

can only fill the blank and lead us here according to His mind. Consequently there must be unhallowed mixture and divers false efforts to make up for the absence of Him who is the sole fountain and supply of all our blessings.

Oh for a true heart for Him! Nothing but His presence by the Spirit could then satisfy our hearts here, and every other thing would only have its relative value.



## CHAPTER XII.—IS IT PERFECTION OR “THE BEST THING GOING?”

THE great evidence of the impotence and defectiveness of our nature, is the inability to reach perfection in anything, and the attempt to gratify the desire for it only leads to the discovery of our inability, so that the desire, commendable in itself, when fostered, grows into the worst of vices, either avarice or insatiable ambition. Nothing exposes more the imperfection of our nature than the simple fact that the more nature is ministered to, and the more that which is suited to it is superadded, the greater and deeper is its sense of the vanity of everything, as Solomon expresses it, “All is vanity and vexation of spirit.” This is the result of every fresh acquisition. There is, therefore, no reaching perfection in nature, and this fact gives colour to a very grievous mistake, into which saints in every age have fallen, namely, to be satisfied with imperfection in the things of God; not that they are regarded imperfect in *themselves*, but the idea is, that as we have not, we are not to reach the summit or perfection of any truth, though it be revealed, and though it be our calling.

The first and simple thing to admit is, that every

line of truth has its summit or perfection, and then any point below this must be imperfection. No one acquainted with scripture can doubt this. Canaan was evidently the summit of the exodus from Egypt. The fatted calf in the father's house is without doubt the summit or perfection of the reception accorded to the prodigal ; paradise to the thief ; glory to Stephen ; the heavenly place in Christ Jesus to the saint now. The second thing is to aim at this, the summit of each line of truth, and to refuse to be satisfied with any point *below* it. If I admit that every line of truth has its proper summit, and if my aim is to reach that summit, then though I may be far away from it practically, yet I am upheld in my endeavours to reach it by the Spirit of God, who always works *from* the summit, because He is there ; and I am thus preserved from adopting the qualifications and limitations of the truth, which my fellows have accepted. The purpose to be satisfied with nothing imperfect, and the attempt to be content with "the best thing going," are two very different things, and have a very different effect. In the former I honour God who has called me to perfection ; and though I have not reached the perfection practically, I will accept nothing that qualifies it, and I look to Him to lead me on, knowing that I am already apprehended in Christ Jesus. With the latter I refuse the leading of God's Spirit, and I hinder it by accepting

that which limits the truth of God to a point below His mind. The constant excuse for defects individually or ecclesiastically is, "We cannot expect perfection here;" but this is an argument for putting up with imperfection, without any attempt to emerge from it, but the Spirit of God does not remain inactive, or content in imperfection. No doubt, He deals with us in the midst of imperfection; but where would He lead us? Surely to perfection, to the summit of every truth. The proof of apostacy in every age was the quiet way the people of God condescended to a limitation of His truth, and resigned themselves to it, as if it were a virtue; and afterwards, when there was a recovery of some of that which had been neglected—in other words, a reformation—it was regarded as an era *par excellence*. I am not disapproving of the revival, I commend and rejoice in it; but if souls are by it deluded from seeking perfection, then I must say it is a dangerous snare to them. If it be right to recover truth at all, surely it is more so to recover it perfectly. The argument for recovering it in part, applies still more to the recovery of it wholly. I do not deny that there is imperfection everywhere; but the extent of imperfection ought never to reconcile me to it. If I am on God's side, I refuse everything that is imperfect, though I be surrounded on all sides with imperfection; I do not resign myself to it, but through

grace I turn aside from it, as it is manifested to me. It is not the question with me whether I shall ever reach perfection here; but I seek this and nothing less, and my purpose, God helping me, is neither to sanction nor connive at any imperfection in doctrine or practice, but to expose and disallow it in word and deed; and the more faithful I am, the more will it be disclosed to me, and the more shall I be enabled to reach the mind of God. The history given in Psalm cvi. is in principle the history of Christendom. There Israel is reminded that no single line of blessing did God ever propose or mark out for them, that they did not limit or qualify. "They forgot his works, and waited not for his counsel; they despised the pleasant land, they believed not His word."

In dealing with the things of God, we have too much forgotten that they are God's and not ours. Man cannot obtain perfection in anything, and we must be content with imperfection as to human things. But God does obtain it in everything; and hence, one of the worst moral symptoms in the present hour is the attempt of saints to go on with things which in the secret of their hearts they disapprove of and condemn; and all simply with this excuse, that they see nothing better, as if seeing nothing better were any reason for remaining connected or involved with that which is not truth, though it be a part of it. Really one has not

the truth until one has in faith reached the summit of it. The summit of it is its crown ; and until the soul has been led by God's Spirit to see the point to which it reaches, one cannot speak of knowing it. The mistake which many true men have made, is in confining truth to the extent of the practical knowledge of it. To see by faith the summit of a truth, and to rest satisfied with this light or vision, without seeking to reach it practically, would be saying, "I have plenty of corn and cattle, but I am starving." Surely the abundance of food is nothing unless used ; but it is quite another thing to place me spiritually (I am there naturally) in the state of ravens who have neither barn nor store-house, or like an emigrant in a wild country, acquiring provision according to his own labour. The Spirit gives me faith to see the abundance God secured for me, but then I must rise and partake of it ; and as I appropriate it, I understand and walk in the blessedness of it. What is the cause of the darkness in souls on any point of truth ? It is not that they know nothing of it, but that they have not as yet laid hold by faith of its summit—its proper finish. Saints as a rule know something of every truth, but rarely, if ever, do they reach the summit of any. Truth in grace reaches down to man, but comes from God, and hence Christ Himself is the truth. I can touch the line of it, and even enter on

it, without feeling the extent of its exaction on me; but as I proceed and see how it connects me with God, I am sensible that man and nature must retire, and this is the real check to the acceptance of truth's summit. Let us take any truth generally accepted among saints in the present day, and thereby test the correctness of these statements. Take the parable about the father and [the prodigal in Luke xv., will any one say that the feeding on the fatted calf in the father's house is aimed at by every one who knows that he is an accepted son, or that he is looking for it now as the proper and only completion of the truth he has tasted? If saints were feeding on those unequalled joys, little would the world and its things be thought of. Does every believer in Christ aim at possessing that "water that I shall give him," of which it is said, "he that drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst, but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up unto eternal life?" The commencement of this line must be touched by every believer, but how many see the summit or completion of it? Does every one who believes that the child of God is born of the Spirit, see and maintain that such an one is a temple of the Holy Ghost, and that the Church is the habitation of God through the Spirit? Does every believer in the death of Christ accept and insist on the crucifixion of the

old man, and that if Christ be in us, the body is dead because of sin ; that hence we are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit ? Does every one assured of being quickened with Christ know, or expect to know, that he is now seated with Him in heavenly places ? Does every one who believes in the power and blessing of God's Spirit assent—yield himself to the truth, that the flesh profiteth nothing, and that no man understandeth the things of the Spirit of God, but the Spirit of God that is in him ? All these truths are for the most part accepted and received by believers ; but where, I ask, is any one of them enjoyed or taught among us, speaking generally ? Where is it insisted on that the life of Christ is our life ? Forgiveness is preached through the sacrifice of Christ, and perfect assurance of pardon before God ; but where is it pressed as the summit of this truth, that it is His life which we now as forgiven ones, possess, and should walk in here ; “the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me, and gave himself for me ?” (Gal. ii. 20.) Where is it believed and enforced that man was ended judicially before God on the cross ; and hence, every one believing in Christ must hate his own life, that for which his Saviour was judged ? Is it not plain that if either of these truths were grasped to their summit—their perfection, from whence the Spirit of God propounds them—there

would be a marked deliverance from the restlessness of spirit and worldliness of habit, which degrades the Christian to the level of the man of the world? The fact is, sad, bitterly sad as it is to feel it, that the most in many cases, that can be said of earnest men in this day, is that which was said of the king of Judah; "he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, but not with a perfect heart;" or as is said of another, "not like David his father."





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