



COLONEL SYDNEY LONG JACOB, R.E., C.I.E.

FAITHFUL SAYINGS

BEING

A REPRINT OF SOME OF THE WRITINGS OF

COLONEL S. L. JACOB, R.E., C.I.E.

AND A SELECTION FROM NOTES TAKEN

OF ADDRESSES GIVEN BY HIM

TOGETHER WITH

A Short Sketch of his Life

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PART I

PREFACE

AT the earnest request of many, who knew and loved my father, and who have been encouraged and strengthened by the ministry, which God was pleased to give him, some of his writings have been collected and reprinted in this volume, together with a short sketch of his life written by one intimately acquainted with him in later years and greatly beloved.

The chapter headed "Apples of Gold," written also by an old friend, is reprinted here by kind permission as representative of the feelings of many, who had the privilege of knowing my father.

Suffice it to say that it is desired by this means in some small measure the worthy name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be magnified. Expression is given to this desire by the pen of the Apostle Peter in the precious words of the Holy Scriptures:

"I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance."

And

"Moreover I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance."

Look not on the servant, but on his Lord and Master, and happy, indeed, will be his portion if

it remains his privilege, though dead yet to speak, and so to stand continually as a sign-post on the road pointing the way to the true and only Source and Fountain of Life and Light until the day dawn and the shadows flee away.

To the tender mercy of our God is this volume humbly committed with the desire that His blessing may rest upon it.

A. JACOB.

BIOGRAPHICAL OUTLINE

IN issuing the following selections from the ministry of the late Col. Jacob, it is thought that a brief sketch of this beloved servant's life will be interesting to the reader.

The materials for this sketch are largely of his own gathering, being taken from a booklet which he published when retiring from Government service in the year 1900. A few other details have, however, come to hand, and, of course, the particulars of the last ten years of his life are altogether independent of that aid.

Sydney Long Jacob was the son of the then Capt. Jacob, of the Bombay army, and was born in July, 1845, at Ahmednagar, in India. With others of the family, he was sent to England in 1851, when quite a child, and placed in the care of relatives, who, after a short interval, took their young charges to Lyme Regis, in Dorset, where the eldest three children went to school. After a few years Sydney, the subject of this memoir, in company with his elder brother, was transferred to a school at St. Albans, and then to one at Taunton.

Later on, in 1858, Capt. and Mrs. Jacob left India, and settled in England. Their son was thus able to live once more under the home roof at Bath, attending Lansdowne College as a day scholar. The head master was a clergyman, and

with him young Jacob soon became a favourite. Already he showed signs of that energy and remarkable intellectual ability, which distinguished him in after life. Already, too, it would seem that some thoughts other than those of the hour presented themselves at times to his mind, but in the one thing needful the head master was himself deficient, and could give him no help.

At the age of fifteen he was confirmed. He records that he was "a good deal awed at the Confirmation service and made many mental resolutions" of future good conduct.

Pre-eminence soon marked him, and, as after-events proved, consistently abode with him. Both in the schoolroom and the playground he became acknowledged leader, so that it is not surprising to be told that, two years later, in 1862, he went up to Woolwich, there to be initiated into the early stages of what was to prove his secular career.

Of his opening experiences at Woolwich we may best let him speak in his own words:

The Royal Academy was not a pleasant place for the newly joined, as one great amusement of the older cadets was to get as much fun as possible out of the last joined, by playing all kinds of tricks on them, often in very rough and unpleasant ways. It was therefore a very pleasant surprise when a senior cadet and corporal came up to me one day, and spoke to me in a friendly manner, saying I might look on him as a friend. He ended by asking me to go to a meeting held by the Chaplain that evening. I was so touched by his friendliness that I promised to go and went. I do not think that there was anything in what was said of a character to help me, but, feeling rather homeless and lonely, my heart was tender, and I made up my mind to turn to God, and though I was in gross darkness, and did not in the least understand the heart and mind of God, I believe God had touched my heart and was drawing me to Himself. . . .

From that night I began to pray again, for I had given up

the prayers taught me in childhood, and again began to read the neglected Bible. I tried hard to be good, thinking that when I was changed God would have mercy upon me, but I found that sin was too strong for me. I cried to God for help, but I seemed only to grow worse and more powerless, and sin had dominion over me, though before men I had an unblemished reputation. Sometimes I thought I had not prayed enough, sometimes that I did not read my Bible enough, and so on, but nothing did me any good. Sometimes I would drop the effort in despair, or sometimes forget all in worldliness, but then the desire would revive again.

As we read this fragment of autobiography may we not say in the words of Scripture, "As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man."

But his spiritual struggles did not diminish the young cadet's keenness in his profession, nor his diligence and ability in mastering it. Faithful to the promise of his schooldays he became the leading cadet at Woolwich, won the Pollock Gold Medal, the Sword of Honour for good conduct, and many other prizes, eventually passing out not only first, but nearly four thousand marks ahead of the second on the list. As captain also of the football team, and winner of the cup for racquets, he showed that his religious exercises were neither the puerilities of a fool, nor the dreams of a morbid recluse.

He obtained his commission in the Royal Engineers in February, 1866, and proceeded to Chatham for his two years' course. There he soon found out the Christian officers, both senior and junior, and attended the meetings held in each other's rooms for reading the Scriptures. But his struggles continued; he seemed to get further and further from the object of his desires until he became quite hopeless. For a whole year this was his unhappy experience; discouraged and baffled in all his efforts to attain real happiness, it seemed that he must give

all up and make himself as happy as he could in worldly ways.

"The darkest hour is just before the dawn," and the dawn of a brighter day for our beloved friend was just about to break after this night of sadness and growing darkness. We will again let him tell his own tale:

. . . One evening in January, 1867, when sitting in my room by my fireside, and thinking sadly of these things, suddenly it came to me, Why, what a fool you are, you are trying to do what no man has done or can do, viz. : to make yourself good, in hopes that God will accept you ; do you not know that Christ died for sinners, yea for *sinners* ?

In a moment the gloom was gone. I knew that all was done. I had nothing to do, for my sinfulness was my claim, all else was effected by Christ on my behalf when He died on the Cross and then rose from the dead. I believed, my sins were forgiven, the judgment of God had passed for me in the death of Christ. I was justified by faith. I had peace with God by our Lord Jesus Christ. I had the present favour of God for my portion, and rejoiced in the hope of the glory of God. What a change, what joy, what blessedness, and in a moment this had transpired. Outwardly nothing had changed, but in reality all was changed, for the light of God's love had broken in upon me, and I knew that God was for me. . . .

Such was dear Colonel Jacob's "conversion," and for a time his joy and blessing were great. Both at Chatham and afterwards at Plymouth and Weston-Super-Mare, he entered heartily and decidedly into Christian work, finding his happiness in fellowship with other earnest Christians. Whenever he went home, too, he used to read the Scriptures with his brothers and sisters, and speak to them about the things of God, and his friends remember how at once he sought to give up what was not according to God's will. While engaged on fortification work at Steep Holme, an island in the Bristol Channel, he asked guidance from the Lord as to what he should

do, and then used to go to that little island from Saturdays to Mondays in order to hold services for the men engaged on the works.

During the year 1868, however, the joy of his conversion appears to have waned somewhat, and he tells us he was "more often overcome than before by sin." But before proceeding to relate his further spiritual experiences it may be well here to summarise briefly his secular career, as the reader will then be able to follow more intelligently what is subsequently narrated.

At the latter end of 1868 he sailed for India, and was posted to the Public Works Department, first in Poona, then in Bombay, and afterwards in the Punjab. There he was transferred to the Irrigation Department, and in this branch of the Service, save for the last three years, he spent the rest of his official career. In due course he had charge of each of the five circles, or districts, into which the Irrigation Department at that time was divided. He also saw service in the Afghan War, 1879-80, acting as Field-Engineer in the Khyber Pass. In 1897 he became Chief Engineer and Secretary to Government in the Buildings and Roads Branch of the Public Works Department, Punjab, remaining in this position until his retirement in July, 1900, occasioned by his having reached the age limit.

As to his commanding ability, the following Indian Press reference where, of course, his work is best known, will be read with interest. After speaking of the promise of his early years it proceeds:

Human nature is ever full of contradictions : and modest and retiring as Col. Jacob always was as far as his own merits were

concerned, no officer was ever more vigorous and forceful and pushing in official policy.

A born engineer, a natural and skilled mathematician, a writer, who expressed himself with fluency in trenchant sentences conveying no uncertain meaning: a worker of extraordinary rapidity and decision of mind, he will be remembered for the farsightedness of his views, and the courage with which he cut straight to the heart of any question before him.

Again, at the time when the South-East Punjab was visited by its greatest famine, it was Col. Jacob who directed the relief operations of that time, and how ably he did so is shown by the remarks of the Lieutenant-Governor in his review:

"he [Col. Jacob] devoted signal zeal, ability, and energy to the organisation of relief works. He was indefatigable in his attention to the control of the works, and his direction of them was marked by deep sympathy with the distressed, as well as by care for the interests of the State."

In 1869 he was married, at Bombay, to Elizabeth Petronella Selby, a lady who proved a true helpmeet in the years that followed, and whose sympathy and hearty co-operation with her husband in the Lord's service only ceased with her life. She always accompanied him in his yearly visits to India after his retirement, and shared with him, too, the labour and discomforts of the long journeys to out-of-the-way places, undertaken for the help of native Christians. During one of these yearly visits she was taken ill, and fell asleep in Jesus at the house of her married daughter at Cawnpore, January 17th, 1910.

Returning now to the spiritual exercises which Col. Jacob passed through in his earlier years, we have seen that towards the end of the year 1868

his joy appeared to wane. His transference to India did not mend matters in this respect. He did not get on as a Christian, but slowly drifted backwards, struggling hard, yet losing ground. The things of this life, he records, became entwined round his soul, and he did not see the truth of the words, "The flesh profiteth nothing." As to this period of his life he says:

I was making the very same mistake in the pursuit of holiness that I did before in the pursuit of forgiveness and justification: that is, I was seeking to do my best with Christ's help, instead of letting Him do the whole in complete dependence. Thus I went back and back, got unhappy, sought pleasure in the world, and finally gave up prayer, and tried to forget the things of eternity by enjoying the things of time: but a child of God cannot get happiness thus, and I was really miserable.

This experience of religious drift and deterioration was a long as well as a sad one. It would seem that it lasted until 1880, at the beginning of which year he was transferred, in his official duties, to Ferozepur, and there came in contact with several Christian men. But it was not to men that he was to be indebted for his full deliverance; like his conversion, this was to be effected, independently of human instruments, by the power of the Spirit of God. In later years Col. Jacob was in the habit of referring to the incident about to be narrated as the time when he came into full spiritual liberty. Once, when conversing with the writer, he asked, somewhat abruptly, "Have you received the second blessing?" The reply took the form of a look indicating doubt, and, possibly, a little shyness of a phrase connected with a particular school of Christian thought. "Well, call it what you will," said he, and then he went on to refer to that FACT "over

twenty years ago," which had left such a permanent mark on his own spiritual life. This is how he describes what took place at Ferozepur at the time referred to (1880 or 1881):

I was conscious that God was working with me, and became more unhappy. I had been in Ferozepur about a year when one day I was reading a sermon out loud. I have no notion what it was about, but I read these verses, "What king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an embassy, and desireth conditions of peace" (Luke xiv. 31, 32). The thought rushed irresistibly into my mind—"God has not twenty thousand, but myriads of myriads. I have not ten thousand, but am one poor sinful person alone. I must just surrender at discretion, and cast myself on His mercy." In a moment it was done, even while my voice faltered not in reading, and I knew I was restored and brought into favour. On what ground? The ground of my exceeding sinfulness, and God's exceeding grace, in virtue of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The insuperable difficulties were no longer insuperable, the obstacles, which seemed like great mountains barring my path, melted away, the seemingly impossible became possible.

Did this happiness pass away? Listen to our brother's own testimony:

I was free, and since then my life for more than twenty years has been a very happy one, though many doubtless think that they would be miserable, if they led such a life, but this is only because of unbelief.

It will be readily understood that if, when he was not yet in Christian liberty, his zeal and energy in the Lord's service were marked features of his character, these distinguished him no less after the emancipating experience which has just been narrated. Wherever his official duties carried him there also was to him a sphere for witnessing for his Saviour and Lord, and for helping spiritually those

around him. For many a year he always had a little service in camp on Sunday afternoons, attended, as a rule, by all the officers, both those over as well as those under him. In the same way he held meetings for the natives, and, with respect to these, it was only two or three years ago that our brother was much cheered by a young native, the grandson of one of the servants, telling him that he had listened to his addresses as a boy, the truth of them had since come home to him, he had come to Christ, and had been baptised (a momentous act for an Indian). He appeared to be leading a consistent Christian life. Col. Jacob maintained, too, the wholesome custom of family prayers, whether in station or in camp, thus creating an atmosphere of piety in the daily round seldom found under similar circumstances.

That there was opposition goes without saying, but Col. Jacob has himself stated that it was very little, and, on the part of the Government, none at all. On the other hand, the life of practical godliness, which he led, unostentatious but real, won for him the respect of his associates. This, coupled, as it was, with an honest desire, and active endeavour to further the welfare of others, which is inseparable from true piety, produced for him feelings of esteem and affection on the part of the men in his department, which were indicated by the letters he received when the time came for his retirement.

Reference may well be made here to another field of service in which Col. Jacob actively engaged. This was the native element in India. Not only were Europeans sought and ministered to in spiritual things; the Indians themselves also found in our

brother a sincere *friend* and active helper. He laid himself out very much on their behalf. He knew several Hindustani dialects and spoke them with the greatest ease and fluency. In fact, he has been known at morning readings to pray in Hindustani without himself being aware that he was doing so! He translated a great many hymns, and also composed many more, the hymn-book now used in some native Indian meetings being the result of his labours. He also wrote several books and tracts in the vernacular. But, above and beyond all this, he zealously mixed with all classes of Indians, speaking with them face to face, thus acquiring first hand an intimate knowledge of the native character and standpoint, and he was thereby able, by the grace of God, and his clear, quick brain, to meet the more intricate questions and difficulties of the educated native gentlemen, and then to open up the way to a simple unfolding of the gospel.

The severance of Col. Jacob's official connection with India did not weaken his interest in the spiritual needs of that vast country. He made a practice of visiting it each year, and spending some months in travelling about amongst the various centres where meetings could be held, or intercourse with individuals profitably carried on. This work proved to be most arduous, and our beloved brother did not spare himself wherever, as it appeared to him, there was a need or an opportunity for presenting Christ. On the many voyages to and fro, which were thus necessitated, he had daily Bible readings on boardship, as well as individual talks with his fellow-travellers, etc.

Another work in which Col. Jacob was keenly

interested was the little famine colony at Panahpur, in the north of India. Needless to say, as he was chiefly responsible for its establishment, so he watched over it with constant care, devoting his engineering skill to the reclamation and irrigation of the land, and exercising loving supervision over the spiritual welfare of the boys and girls, whom he had rescued in the first instance from death by famine, and who are now growing up to manhood and womanhood. He has not lived to see the complete carrying out of the scheme he originally formulated, but during his lifetime he was careful to associate others with himself in the general oversight, and in their hands, with God's blessing, it is hoped that the Colony will eventually prove self-supporting.

During the ten years, which have elapsed since Col. Jacob retired from the service of the Crown, he has made his home at Highbury, and has engaged in the work of the ministry at various places in London and in the provinces. Himself strongly imbued with the missionary spirit, and with no small amount of practical missionary experience, his house has been a centre where homecomers from the mission field have ever found a ready welcome, and where they have found, too, valuable help and advice derived from his own ripe experience.

In addition to his public ministry, our brother will be gratefully remembered by many, who had the privilege of being visited by him in their own homes. Anxious to turn all forms of service to account, he diligently practised this one, and always having the Lord's things before him, rather than ordinary topics of conversation, he afforded much instruction and

comfort in these face-to-face talks. He would almost invariably conclude such visits with prayer, and many have testified since his departure that it is these prayers, which stand out in their memories as specially distinguishing his personal intercourse with them.

In January, 1911, Col. Jacob left Cawnpore on a long missionary tour. He then appeared in his usual health. The journey and accompanying experiences proved unusually trying, and when he arrived at Yercand, a hill station in the south of India, he was found to be suffering from an overstrain of the heart, and complete rest was ordered. After a week's stay the journey was continued to Coimbatore, where two meetings were held, and to Ootacamund, where he was only equal to holding a few drawing-room meetings. Then he turned his face homewards, travelling to Bombay via Coimbatore and Bangalore. He embarked for England, under the care of relatives, on March 27th, and arrived safely in this country on April 12th. But his work was done; the Lord had need of His faithful servant, and after a lingering illness, borne with the same quietness of spirit as that, which had for so long characterised him, he was "put to sleep by Jesus" on July 28th, 1911.

This brief sketch of Col. Jacob's life would be indeed incomplete, if no mention were made of the lowly spirit, which consistently animated him. This was a distinguishing trait of his character. It is seldom that such a complete absence of all pretension, such readiness to give way on purely personal matters, such an entire laying out of one's

self for the welfare of others are found united with such natural energy, and commanding mental ability. We refer particularly to the last ten years of his life when, possibly, this Christian grace had become habitual through the maturing and ripening of his character under prolonged spiritual influences. Be that as it may, the spirit of meekness and gentleness (that "fruit of the Spirit," Gal. v. 22, 23) will always be associated with Col. Jacob in the minds of those, who knew him, and will constitute a precious memory, which we trust will yet bear more fruit to the Lord's glory in those, who seek to profit by his example.

As an instance of this lowliness of spirit, the following incident, which occurred during his last illness, may be narrated. He was exceedingly fond of the English collection of hymns composed by Tersteegen, Suso, and others, and often quoted them. One day, as he lay upon his death-bed, he asked his daughter to fetch the volume, and to read to him the poem entitled "The Border of His Sanctuary,"* commencing with the last part of the sixth verse:

"Shame—that all that desert journey
Nothing more could prove
Than the marvels of His patience,
How divine His love.

"Tale of weakness, sin, and folly,
Tale of wandering feet—
Tale of strength, and grace, and wisdom,
Victory complete.
Sin and death and Satan trodden
'Neath those feet at length,
In the glory of HIS triumph
Greatness of His strength."

* The whole poem should be read to properly enter into our brother's feelings.

Col. Jacob here said, referring to his past service, "This is *my* side." Then he continued by quoting from memory the first part of the sixth verse:

"Not our sorrow we remember,
All is lost in bliss—
But our shame gives deeper sweetness
To the Father's kiss."

We may conclude this brief outline of Col. Jacob's life by repeating the substance of an address given in Abney Park Cemetery on July 31st, 1911, when the body of our beloved brother was committed to the grave. The incidents recorded form a striking illustration of his habit, his readiness to make every circumstance serve as an occasion for speaking a word for his Master, and at the same time they may constitute an appeal to us (though he himself has gone from our midst), which he would desire should be ever present to our hearts.

This is what was said, after a few introductory remarks:

. . . As I looked into the grave just now, my thoughts were carried back about twenty-five years, when our brother had a very serious illness in India. During his convalescence he wrote me a letter, the spirit of which made a mark on my soul then, and I pray God that it may never leave me. That letter seemed to come from one, who had been to the gates of the grave, to whom the Lord had given "a fresh lease of life," as we say; and who had come back with a firm determination to spend that restored life entirely for Christ. How faithfully he fulfilled that determination is well known to all, especially those, who knew him in India, where Christianity has to be lived under adverse circumstances, which are unknown in this privileged country. I often think it is easy to sit at home, at a comfortable fireside, and legislate as to *how* the Lord's servants should carry on their service; but did we know the vicissitudes of their service, we would pray for them more, and criticise them less.

One sentence in that letter has helped me often during the past twenty-five years ; *and it is that sentence, which I specially wish to pass on to my YOUNGER brethren.* It ran thus :

"Soon every opportunity of following and serving a rejected Christ will have passed and gone for ever. Oh ! that, while we have the opportunity, we might seize it, and use it for His glory, who loved us, and gave Himself for us."

His opportunity has passed, and gone for ever. How well he used it we can testify with deep thankfulness to God. Yours and mine remain. The question is—What are we going to do with it? Are we going to use the remainder of our very short lives for His glory, who loved us, and gave Himself for us?

This carries me on to about twenty-five years later—a few months ago, when I had the privilege of entertaining our beloved brother at my house. On the morning of his departure he stood with his Bible clasped to his breast with both hands, and after looking at me intently for a moment or so, he said, in his usual blunt style :

"How old are you?"

"Close on fifty," was my reply.

"Well," he continued, "to look at you, humanly speaking, you have about twenty-five years to live, what are you going to do with them?"

Yes! that is the question. What are we going to do with those few short years during which the Lord may leave us down here, should He tarry?

As I look into this open grave the words in that letter seem to come home with greater power than ever to my soul. I think of the twenty-five years during which he himself carried out, in a life of devotedness to Christ, the desire he so beautifully expressed in that sentence. I pass it on to my younger brethren with the earnest prayer that it may be made, through God's grace, even a greater blessing to their souls than it has been to mine.

"Soon every opportunity of following and serving a rejected Christ will have passed and gone for ever. Oh ! that, while we have the opportunity, we may seize it and use it for His glory, who loved us, and gave Himself for us."

APPLES OF GOLD

"A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver."

PROV. xxv. 11.

IN the following notes I have wished to recall some of dear Col. Jacob's words, in the hope that, with the Lord's gracious blessing, they may bring to some other heart a little of the light and gladness they have been to my own. The verse above seems just to describe them; they were indeed fitly spoken, spoken in season, and how good they were! It is not difficult to repeat his words, many of them long treasured, but I am sadly conscious how little I can give the impression of his spirit, or of the wonderful grace of his lowly, gentle, presence; as a youth where he stayed expressed it, "There is a savour left in the house after he has gone."

The first time I saw him was at a prayer-meeting. He did not speak till late in the evening; then he knelt and said, "O God, we do thank Thee that we are so exceedingly dear to Thee." There was more which I do not remember, but those opening words were to me like the key to his life and ministry. He was then just return-

ing to India; but some months later I had the privilege of meeting and hearing him, publicly and privately, and the theme of his teaching was constantly "God loves you so much, He longs to bless you, He wants to make you happy, it is your own will that is all the trouble"; and one night, at the end of his address, he asked, "Will you put yourself unreservedly into God's hands? All you have and are? Your health? Your strength? Your usefulness?"

"Your usefulness!" That was the hardest of all; but to one of his hearers, at least, that was the beginning of a new life.

Once he told me how, as a young man, he wanted to understand the Bible, and to know more of God's ways, and he thought if he read the "Synopsis" he would know a good deal; so he bought the books, and read them through. "And then at the end," he said, "I had just to say, 'O my Father, I am only a poor, stupid child, Thou must teach me.'" He did not undervalue "helps," but he had learned that they could not take the place of the soul's learning with God.

He dreaded souls being led by others, and not having to do with God for themselves. "In the last resort," he said, "the appeal must ever be between the soul and God." I remember his saying once, very solemnly, "If you believe God has taught you anything, you are bound to act on it, no matter what any one may say. If you are mistaken, He will put you right."

He deplored assumption and the use of the terms of so-called high truth without there being real soul apprehension of them; he said, "We are like little children playing at being grown-up men and

women." He grieved over the disagreements among Christians. "There is so much to humble us," he would say, "the people who are most right will be partly in the wrong, and there will be some good even in those who are wrong."

He loved to recognise the good in others. "The youngest and feeblest Christian," he said, "knows something of God that I do not know, and I should be able to learn from him." Again, he said, "When you meet a Christian, do not begin upon the points on which you differ, see how far you can go together." "It is so different in India," he would say; "there you may be miles and miles away from all Christian fellowship, and perhaps in some lonely place you hear of one Christian. You do not begin by asking if he is with you as to outward fellowship; you are so rejoiced to meet him at all." He had been speaking to an Indian Christian about trusting God, and the native asked, "Sahib, have you ever gone without food?" He could not remember that he ever had. Said the Indian, "I was once three days without food." He said he felt this dear man had learned some lessons which he knew nothing of. He would tell of another native who prayed for some breakfast, but who said, "God did not send me any breakfast, but He sent such joy into my soul that I prayed, 'O God, send me many such breakfasts.'"

Speaking of our ways with children and young people, he once said, "There has often to be a kind of compromise; it sounds bad, but yet it seems to me this is how God deals with us, waiting so patiently while we learn, and bearing with our ignorance and folly."

He had such a wise, tactful way with strangers.

I remember an unconverted husband and wife very much afraid he might speak to them about their souls, and ready to parry him at every point. He did not attack them, but spoke of India and what was generally interesting, till presently he asked, "Did you ever hear of Chundra Lela?" And he told so simply of her efforts to find peace with God in the rites of her cruel religion that, before they were aware of it, they were listening without resentment to the presentation of the Gospel.

Another time it was a lady troubled with infidel thoughts; but he seemed to see what the real difficulty was, and dealt faithfully with her about her sins and her state before God.

Then a little maid, recently converted, asked him about a Scripture that had puzzled her; and, after answering her question, he asked, "Would you go into a shop and pay a sovereign for something that was only worth a shilling?" "No, sir," she said. "Then if you paid a sovereign for anything it would be because you wanted it very much?" "Yes, sir." "Tell me, then, what did God give for you and me?" Wonderingly, she replied, "His Son, sir." And he said, "And don't you think God must have wanted us very much to give such a Gift for us?"

Again, I remember his trying to explain the difference between the work of the Lord on high and the work of the Holy Spirit in the soul, and using the illustration of a camera. The sun illustrates the Lord up there, and the Holy Spirit works in the heart to make an impression there, just as the sensitised plate in the camera receives the picture the sun makes.

I had been ill, and Col. Jacob came to visit me,

and after a few sympathizing words, such as he knew so well how to speak, he said, "Well, you know, there has to be winter as well as summer." I think I answered that it had hardly been winter with me, and he said so brightly, "Ah! that will do; if you will only let God have His way with you, He will make you so happy you cannot contain yourself."

Twice he came to a London hotel, and after a helpful talk in a quiet corner, he said, "No one will mind, we will just have a word of prayer," and, bowing his head, he prayed just there. It seemed quite natural in him, but I do not think many could do it.

"In times of trial and sorrow," he once said, "it is not sufficient that the soul bows under God's hand; there must be exercise to understand what His meaning is in it—what is it He would teach me through this sorrow?" One day he asked me, "Has your soul had a mother?" I said I thought not, and he said, "But see what you have missed; God says He pities like a father and comforts like a mother." "Which is the happiest day in your life?" he would ask; and the various answers all being wrong, he would say, "To-day; because you know God better to-day than ever before."

He loved the Gospel of John, and often spoke of it. He pointed out that the miracles there are different from all others, in that they are signs. There are seven, besides the one in the last chapter, which is a kind of postscript to the Gospel. "In them," he would say, "the Lord is dealing with the hindrances to the enjoyment of life," and he would instance the fever—the restlessness of nature,

and the impotent man—the weakness of nature, etc. Once he said, “It was possible to live and die here, and go to heaven at last, and never to have *lived* as Scripture speaks of living.” I remember he said, “In the epistle to the Romans you do not get life in this sense, only ‘if you mortify the deeds of the body you shall live.’”

“What is the dawn of life consciously in the soul?” I asked him. He spoke of a child. “There was a time when that child only slept and ate, but one day it looked up in your face and smiled, and you saw it knew you. It is like that with the soul. For a time it can do little but rest and feed; and then there comes a moment when it looks up to God for the first time in the sweet consciousness, ‘I am known, I am loved.’ Who was the more glad the day the child knew you, you or the child?” “I.” “Yes; and who has the greater joy when you look up to God in the consciousness of being known and loved?” Oh! the surpassing sweetness of that thought. May my soul ever cherish it!

The last time I saw him we had spoken of “abiding in Christ,” and he went to have a season of prayer before going out to give an address. Just as he was leaving he said, “Here is another little thought for you about ‘abiding in Christ.’ I think it is like rhythm. You know, if you place a B and a C tuning-fork on the piano, if you touch the note B the B fork vibrates, and the C is silent; while if you strike the note C, the C fork vibrates and the B is silent. It should be thus with us—our souls should vibrate in response to the Lord, in harmony with him.”

Long ago, when I knew him first, we had been

speaking of "reconciliation," and he unfolded it a little, and then went on to dwell on his favourite theme—the blessedness of being brought near to God, in the conscious present enjoyment of His love, and of doing His will "always," as he said, "the very best for us"; and, with the glow of his words upon me, I expressed the desire that I might be in this path of knowing God's love and doing His will alone. And he said, so tenderly, "But are you prepared for it? It will not make you *persona grata* here, be sure of that." His own path was but the proof of it, a path, he would have said, I know, of infinite compensations, but one of deepest sorrow and misapprehension. And I pass on his warning. His own testimony as to his life was: "It has been one long story of my failure, but of God's faithfulness." What of ours, if this were his?

He sent a last loving message to some Christians who were gathered for a Conference: "Looking back from the gate of the grave, he had nothing to take back of what he had taught, he sent them his love, and besought them to love their Bibles, and to love one another."

His last few weeks, as most know, were spent in great weakness and weariness, all borne without a murmur. He would say often, "It is all peace, perfect peace." At first when he could bear it, he would have a portion of Scripture read to him, and one of Tersteegen's beautiful hymns which he had long loved. Thus he passed peacefully away, to be for ever with the Lord, with whom he had walked and communed here. And now that his fragrant and fruitful life has been taken from us, we can only give thanks that he is gone where

there are no misunderstandings. We miss him here, oh! so much, but rejoice that he is transplanted to the place where the river from which he lived here flows in all its glorious fulness.

ETERNAL LIFE

THE following lines, which were much loved by Col. Jacob, are reprinted here as expressive of eternal life learnt and known experimentally in Christ (1 John v. 20). May He be the portion of our hearts at all times.

ETERNAL LIFE

1. To praise Him in the dance ! O glorious day !
The pilgrim journey done—
No more press forward on the weary way,
For all is reached and won !
2. His hand at last, the hand once pierced for me,
For ever holdeth mine—
O Lord, no songs, no harps of heaven will be
Sweet as one word of Thine.
3. Lord, altogether lovely ! then at last
High shall the guerdon be ;
Thy kiss outweigh the weary ages past,
Of hearts that break for Thee.

* * * * *
4. Yet now I know Thee as the hidden bread,
The living One, who died—
Who sitteth at my table—by my bed—
Who walketh at my side.
5. I know Thee as the fountain of deep bliss,
Whereof one drop shall make
The joys of all the world as bitterness,
My Lord for Thy sweet sake.

FAITHFUL SAYINGS

6. Lord, Thou hast loved me ; and henceforth to me
Earth's noonday is but gloom ;
My soul sails forth on the eternal sea,
And leaves the shore of doom.
7. I pass within the glory even now,
Where shapes and words are not,
For joy that passeth words, O Lord, art Thou,
A bliss that passeth thought.
8. I enter there, for Thou hast borne away
The burden of my sin—
With conscience clear as heaven's unclouded day
Thy courts I enter in.
9. Heaven now for me—for ever Christ and heaven—
The endless NOW begun—
No PROMISE, but a gift eternal GIVEN,
Because the work is done.

Henry Suso, 14th Century. From *Three Friends of God*, by
Mrs. Frances Bevan.

PART II
ADDRESSES

THE LOVE OF GOD

1 JOHN iv. 7-21 ; HEB. xii. 29

SEVENTY or eighty years ago Mr. Haldane came from Scotland to the city of Geneva, and having heard of some young men there of a sceptical turn of mind, he became much interested in them and sought an interview. This was arranged and they met together, an interpreter being present as Mr. Haldane could not speak French. Mr. Haldane began by saying, "God loves Himself supremely, and all He has done is to gratify Himself." "Translate that," said he. "I cannot," said the interpreter, "it would never do." "Translate it," said Mr. Haldane sternly, and it was translated. It was God's message to these young men, and great was its effect. Six of them were brought to God, and among these were the famous Merle D'Aubigne (Author of the *History of the Reformation*) and Cæsar Malan used of God so greatly in Switzerland and elsewhere.

We greatly need the same truth presented by Mr. Haldane, and so much owned of God. When we love ourselves it is because we are selfish, but God in loving Himself shews His unselfishness. He is all that is perfect, He must love Himself, and He must labour unceasingly for the gratification of His

own love. He must have the happiness of blessing, we may have all the happiness of being blessed. Would that we understood this better.

It may however be asked, What scripture do you give for this? The answer is that God says, "My glory will I not give to another." What is God's glory which He cannot give to another? The glory surely of being the source of all goodness and blessing. He cannot be otherwise than what He has ever been. "God is Love," and He cannot but sustain that character. This is His glory. Ours is to know Him in the love and to reflect that character.

I have felt very much of late the difficulties we have in understanding God's language. He has a language of His own because He is God, and although He uses man's words, they are so changed by His handling, so enriched and wonderful have they become that they are no longer recognizable without a new power and a new inward state. Unless there is this power of the Holy Spirit, and this spiritual state, God's language is a sealed book to us though every word in it is quite familiar to us according to the language of men. To understand God we must become like little children; however wise we are we must become fools to learn. Nothing is so fatal to the understanding of divine truth as the idea that we have some knowledge, hence the Father reveals Himself to babes, and hides Himself from the wise and prudent. He speaks to the heart instead of to the intellect.

Take, for instance, the word "love." There is no commoner word, the mass of poetry, and most of the books written are on the subject of love, yet that which God calls "love" is but little understood even by the people of God, and it is a blank

to the world. So much so that the God who is love is more maligned than anyone else, and men find fault with His ways because they say they are lacking in love. Look at verse 7. This shews us that patriotism, a mother's love, and all the other human forms of love are not such as God can call "love." Love, according to God, is far higher than all these. God does not call that love which does not act through righteousness, and in which there is any selfishness or any motive save the glory of God. Man's love is greatly alloyed with selfishness, and neither righteousness nor the desire for the glory of God are necessities to that love. So different are men's thoughts to God's.

It is because of this great difficulty in the apprehension of love that there is not much about love in the Old Testament. We learn much there about righteousness, much of the mercy and lovingkindness of God, but not that God is love. In the Old Testament we only get the back parts of the glory of God. Before His face could be seen, and we could understand that God is love, it was necessary that the righteousness of God should be manifested. Love will make any sacrifice, will go to any length to gratify itself, but it can only act in the way of righteousness.

But how are we to learn love? We cannot learn what love is by what we see around us. The creation around does not manifest love; on the contrary, it is full of confusion, and those who judge by what they see are full of perplexities. There seems no clue to the mystery, and the wiser the enquirer, the more the pain, as the wise man tells us in the book of Ecclesiastes. It is because men will judge in this way that they have such hard

thoughts of God, and God, the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, is so misjudged. You and I would never endure it if we were misjudged as God is.

Verse 9 shews how the love of God has been manifested. God has sent His Son; and it shews too the object of this manifestation of love, that we may live by Him. Live when? Not by and by in heaven, but live now. How do we live? By the sense of love. There is no other way.

Verse 10 shews us what love is, that its source is the heart of God. Love is not indigenous in man. It comes from God to him. How do we see this? In the sending of His Son to be the propitiation for our sins: not to make* propitiation, but to be it, see 1 John ii. 2. It is not a past thing, it is a present blessing, which the soul enters into. A present sense of favour owing to what God's Son is as to our sins.

God is so anxious for us to enter into present blessing, but we have been always thinking that we shall get a blessing some day, and thus losing the present blessing, which is God's special thought. What assurance have you of future blessing, if you are not blessed now? Years ago we learnt forgiveness of sins, we found peace with God, we heard that Christ was coming again for us, and we began to look out for Him. Also we received the Holy Ghost. This is very right and very blessed, and yet if we stop here we lose the main blessing altogether and fail to give the joy to Christ which He looks for.

* There is only one place where to *make* propitiation is spoken of, i.e. Heb. ii. 17, New Translation. This is priestly work for the seed of Abraham and not a work for sinners as it is so often understood to be.

We must begin by being babies, and a baby is a beautiful thing; but would you have the baby remain a baby? He would very soon be a monstrosity, and this is what so often occurs with us. We started well, but soon our growth became stunted, for we did not go on to get the present blessing by which we would be matured and ripened unto perfection or full growth. This is what God wants, and for this we must be enjoying love, and by enjoying love we shall be formed in love. There is no other way.

What has God sent the Spirit here for? Not to give us what the saints had before. They anticipated the glory and all the blessings of God by faith, but present entrance into these blessings was not possible to the Old Testament saints: this present entrance is reserved for us. If we have it not, the whole point in the coming of the Holy Ghost is lost. I fear we are not sufficiently exercised as to this. May God exercise us.

What have we generally understood when we have said we were saved? Did we not mean that we were sure of heaven? But if this is all, we are not there yet. Salvation (except where it refers to the full result including the resurrection body) is something for the present, and if we are not in the possession of present power over sin, we do not know salvation. So it is with all God's blessings, they are for present enjoyment, power and use, and we have made a great mistake in relegating them to the future. This is pressed in the chapter we are considering, "As He is so are we *in this world*." These last words are added in order to press the present aspect of the blessing. Moreover, there is nothing in this chapter for faith, but all is for

the sense and consciousness of love that God may be satisfied by making us satisfied. A satisfied heart delights God.

When it says that God sent His Son that we might live through Him, what does it mean? When we are in the enjoyment of that love, which will form the delight of heaven, then it is we live. Therefore it is that life is so little understood; a dissatisfied heart does not live, it only exists. If you would live, drink in the love of God to-day. It is all present; to-morrow will take care of itself. Our place is to bask in His love to-day.

When we relegate the blessings of God to the future we can pass muster as tolerable Christians, but when we see that they are all present then we have to own with shame how little we have pleased God the Father, how little we have honoured the Son, how little we have used the Spirit. Who is it that honours the Son? Not those who merely ascribe to Him an equal place with the Father, but those, who let the love of God flow through the heart of the Son into their hearts, whose hearts are made free by that love, and who have lost the sense of distance they once had, for they know that they are before God in all the value of the Son. They dwell in God and God in them. All this is lost to the one, who puts the blessings of God into the background of the future. Alas! we are all guilty. God grant we may not be guilty of this any more. We must enjoy the love of God, if we are to please Him. It is this sense of being loved that makes us superior to the power of the world. Greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world, but this refers to the Spirit as characteristic, otherwise this power will not be known.

We have often thought of heaven as a prettier kind of earth, and the description of the heavenly Jerusalem is often taken literally, but let us get into the truth of the chapter before us, dwell in God and know God dwelling in us, then we shall know what heaven is. No one will get to heaven if heaven does not get into him. Shall it be that God takes all this trouble in order to bring us into present blessing, and we not respond? Shall we have the opportunity of rejoicing the heart of the Son and be oblivious to it? There is such a golden moment for us now, all the world is slighting God's Son; how blessed are those who, during the present period, can shew the love of the Son rejoices their hearts.

The love of God is the most real of all things, yet we may deceive ourselves and think we love Him when we do not. There is much sentimentality abroad, and we have to take good heed that we are not ensnared thereby. Because of our liability to err God graciously gives us tests to try ourselves by. It is easy to ascertain how much I love God, for my love to my brother is the measure of my love to God. When we test ourselves thus, then our love seems woefully small.

We must understand, however, that this love when present is shewn as God's love is: that is, love is intensely anxious for the best blessing of those loved; the spiritual is far more important than the natural, yet this latter is not neglected. Love, however, can only act in righteousness, though it will go to any length in order to fulfil righteous claims in order that love may have its desire.

The test is a very real one when it is a question of those to whom we are not naturally attracted;

those of different dispositions, different social position, and above all of a different race. Do we love those brethren, who are naturally most removed from us, and do we seek their good with all our hearts? Our Lord said, "By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples that ye have love one to another." Do we really show our discipleship in this manner? It is useless saying that we love the God whom we have not seen, if we do not love the brother whom we have seen.

Mind you read the scriptures aright. Often when we read, "Love one another," we say, "Why do not my brethren love me?" This is how the devil teaches us to read scripture. We are not told to get love, we are told to love. Love where we are loved, and love where we are hated. To love always and in all circumstances, never mind whether others love us or not. Many read scripture backwards. When they read "Give" they say, "Oh! that is very nice, who is going to give to me?" Do you think such people know the love of God, or get any good from scripture? Impossible. One professor said to me, "I ask because I want to give my brethren an opportunity to fulfil Matt. v. 42." I said, "Be consistent then, go about smiting your brethren, suing at the law, and forcing them to come along at your bidding in order to give them the opportunity of fulfilling the three previous verses." Alas! let us see to it that when we read, "Love ye," we do love, and when we read, "Give ye," we give, and so with everything. The one who yields all gets all; the one who keeps all, loses.

Also do not forget 1 John v. 2, 3. Love must be shewn according to the commandments of God. But what are the commandments? Are they the

ten? Surely not. They are not, Do this, and do not do that. To get these commandments we must be formed in love. Then we shall understand, not otherwise. What is love? To walk after His commandments. But what are His commandments? To love one another, see 1 John iii. 23 and 2 John 5, 6. Clever people will tell us that this is not logical, it is merely reasoning in a circle. Quite true, and an uncommonly good circle it is for those who understand it, for the rest it is necessarily utter foolishness. Explain as much as you like and the carnal will not understand, because these things are only known experimentally: to the poor in spirit it is all simple and easy.

I also read Heb. xii. 29. It seems very different to say, "Our God is a consuming fire" in contrast to "God is love," but really these statements go together. Our God is a consuming fire because He is love, because there must be an intense action both preservative of the good and hostile to the evil. Can God be indifferent to that which would hinder His love being known? Impossible. How does the mother feel towards the snake, which would bite her child? Love is a fire which many waters cannot quench, and he who understands the jealousy of love will be thankful that God is a consuming fire. He will understand it. Our jealousy is the result of selfishness, but God's jealousy is the result of absolute unselfishness. If we know the love of God, we are thankful for every attribute of His. If not, even His kindness fills us with dread.

When Jacob was at Bethel God appears to him in a vision and shews Jacob that he is the object of God's tenderest care. Does Jacob rejoice in this? No, he says, "How dreadful is this place." This

shews he did not know God, and was not at home with Him. How different was the case with Abraham, the Friend of God.

How is it with us? To have received innumerable benefits from God is one thing, to know Him, to be at home with Him, to bask in His love is another thing. Have you ever said with a saint of old who had not a tithe of the light you have?

“To Thee, Lord, my heart unfoldeth,
As the rose to the golden sun—
To Thee, Lord, mine arms are clinging
The eternal joy begun.”

When you know this you will not need to ask, as so many here are doing, What is this life eternal? You will have it, and will not need to ask What is it? Its joy will fill your soul, and you will wonder how it was you missed it before, for now you cannot exist without it.

THE SPIRIT CHARACTERISTICALLY

I COR. xii. 11-13, 25-27

I WILL tell you of a mistake I made myself for many a year, and only got clear on the subject little by little, and I press it on you because we naturally attach great importance to what we learn in our own soul's experience. Well, I used to think that whenever the Spirit is spoken of in scripture it only referred to the Spirit personally and not the Spirit characteristically. It is, of course, an immense thing to get hold of the truth that the Holy Ghost is a person, just as much a person as the Father or the Son. He is really God. The Holy Ghost is God, and He is a person. I use the word "person" for want of a better. This comes out in that part of the chapter where it says in verse 11, "Dividing to every man severally as He will." An influence could not do that. It could only be done by a divine person, who has a will of His own. Of course, His will is not like ours. Our will is a wrong will, His is right.

The Holy Ghost, according to scripture, came down to dwell on earth at Pentecost, and He is dwelling here to-day. We need to get hold of that truth very clearly. It is one of the great truths God was pleased to restore to us in the early

part of the century, and it is extremely important, but we should not stop there as we are apt to do. I admit that I read the passages where the Spirit is spoken of very differently to what I used to in days gone by. The Holy Ghost is a divine person, and He came down to earth in order that He might form Christ within us, so that might be our character, and that we might express Christ, not self. It will only take us a very little way, if we have the Holy Ghost dwelling in us, if He does not also characterize us. It would be like a householder, who had a beautiful cooking stove in the house, but the meals were daily cooked in the primitive Indian fashion on three bricks; the stove is there, but for practical purposes it might be non-existent.

We read in the thirteenth verse, "By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." This you will understand is characteristic. Now supposing I were to say the Boers in South Africa are all animated and imbued with one spirit, you would understand that easily enough. They are all of one mind, they are all bent on the same thing; heart and soul they are seeking the same object. Well, that is what we get here, "We have all been made to drink into one Spirit." What is that Spirit? It is the Spirit of Christ, that Spirit which produces likeness to Christ. What is "the Christ."* The company of Christians in Corinth, that is called "the Christ?" Why is it thus named? The Spirit had formed this company, and it was given this name that Christ might be manifested in Corinth.

* It is not meant that "the Christ" always means this. All that is meant is that this is the meaning in this passage.

It has not at all come home to us in power, that seeing that the Holy Spirit dwelling in us is a divine person there can be but one result, viz. that Christ be set forth in us; that the likeness, the lineaments, the features of Christ must be seen in us, if there be any reality in this great truth.

I feel sure that you will find this same thing running all through scripture. I will just give one or two instances, because they will help us. Take, for instance, the eighth of Romans, the last part of the ninth verse. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of His." What does that mean? Years ago I would have explained that wrongly, for we are slow to learn. What it means is this: If a man is not like Christ, he cannot claim to belong to Him. If you want to claim to belong to Christ here upon earth you must shew your likeness to Him; and if you do not, then what you say is worthless. That is very simple. We often make everything a matter of whether we get to heaven or not, but that is not God's thought. The point is where and what are you now? Not where and what are you going to be by and by. Taking it in a general way, we are very poor judges of what is going to happen to a man in eternity. Do not attempt to judge as to your neighbour in this matter. The great thing is, Do we belong to Christ to-day? and God wants us all to shew whether we belong to Him or not. Supposing a man comes to you and he has got thick lips and the crisp, curly hair that belongs to the African negro, and he says to you, I am a European. You will at once say, I don't believe you, your features betray you. Well, in the same way, unless we are Christ-like it is useless to claim to belong to Christ to-day.

I will give you another example. Turn to 1 Cor. ii. 13. "Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual." What does that mean? It is characteristic. It does not mean that the Holy Ghost dictated things to the apostle Paul as you would to an amanuensis, but rather that the apostle gave out that which had been formed in him experimentally by the Holy Spirit (there is no article in the Greek before Holy Spirit), and all ministry must be of the same character, if it is to be worth anything. First there must be the inward entrance into the truth, and then the giving out of what has been first experienced within. If not, the ministry is a sham. Of course, when the scriptures were written the writers were kept from all error, while as to our ministry we are liable to error, but otherwise the principle is the same, and the apostles gave out that which they had first learnt experimentally; unlike the Old Testament scriptures which the prophets themselves studied but could not fully understand. See 1 Peter i. 10-12.

Just one more example. See 2 Cor. iii. 17. "Now the Lord is that Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty." When you have got the mind, the thought of the Lord, you are in liberty. If you are like the Lord, you are in liberty. Was not the Lord in liberty? Whatever He had to do was not only done in obedience to the will of God, but He delighted in doing that will. This is liberty. There is no other way of liberty than that.

Mr. Darby, in his introduction to the new translation, speaks of the difficulty in the use of either the

big or the little "s" for spirit, because so often the word means both the personal Spirit, and the result of the Spirit's indwelling. I feel this difficulty much. If you put in the little "s" you are apt to lose the sense of the personal Spirit, and if you use the big "S," you leave out the inward work of the Spirit as characteristic, and the loss is immense. Please, always remember this. I sometimes wish we had no capitals because of the difficulty in their use. Be sure it is not for nothing that Bible MSS. had only one kind of letter. Two kinds are most convenient, but they may easily mislead. On no account leave out the thought of the Spirit as characteristic.

Well now, to come back to 1 Cor. xii., it says in verse 13, "By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free, and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." Now I feel a constraint upon me to say what I am going to say. The great point here is that all, whether Jew or Gentile, are made of one mind—one spirit—for the setting forth of Christ. Now I want you to weigh what I am going to say, which is this, That although we here are not a company composed of Jew and Gentile, yet in this tent * there are two quite different races, two different nationalities with different natural ideas, ways, and methods. In consequence of this I believe that we have an opportunity for the display of Christ, which scarcely any other people on the face of the earth enjoy. An opportunity, for instance, which the Christians have not in England. What have they in England? English

* At a conference in India.

Christians, in France French Christians, in America American. In America they have the opportunity, but as far as I know they do not generally avail themselves of it. The white and black races are not manifestly one in Christ. In South Africa the negroes form separate congregations. They are not one. We, in this country, of India, have a splendid opportunity of shewing out a little bit of the truth that was being pressed on the Corinthians at that time; that, no matter what the nationality, one spirit animates the whole. Let this be true, then the Jew no longer exhibits the Jew, or the Gentile the Gentile. It is no longer English and native: the natural tendencies are overpowered by a stronger power still, and instead of the display of what is national, Christ is displayed in all.

This marvellous display is unknown where all the company is composed of saints out of one nation only. Social differences are very strong, but national are far stronger. When the power of the Spirit causes one and the same display in saints nationally diverse it is a most wonderful testimony. I verily believe we are very guilty in this matter. Oh! you say, it is very difficult. Of course it is. If it was meant to be otherwise, where would the wonder be? Do not you think that I feel the difficulty as much as you do? Oh, you say, I have come across so much that is counterfeit and unreal. Be it so, this will not in the least exempt you from responsibility. We have an opportunity in this country which is, as far as I know, unique on the face of the earth. If we had really drunk of the one Spirit we would shew that one spirit animating saints both the Europeans and the people of this land. We Europeans are very guilty as to this, and will have

to answer for it at the judgment seat of Christ. I find that when an Englishman goes to France, within two years at most he is perfectly familiar with the French language, and has made many friends in the country; and so when he goes to any other country where he finds social equals and an interesting literature.

When he comes to this country it is different. There is no literature worth having, there is no society among the natives which he cares for, and often he never learns the language or gets to know the people. Nothing better can be expected from those who know not Christ, but what about us who do? Will not the love of Christ constrain us to do what the love of society and love of literature constrain the English people of this world to do when they get to another European country? Do you think that the excuses many of us offer will be accepted at the judgment seat of Christ? I am constrained to say these things. I feel that God is making me speak thus. Now that I am going away from this country, I am pressed to bring this matter home to you. Some of us may have to answer at the judgment seat of Christ about our neglect of our native brethren, because of our lack of love. We had better take heed because, believers or unbelievers, we do not want to be pulled up at the judgment seat. Surely we would all far rather be pulled up now while the remedy is possible than when it is too late.

Here then according to this passage there is one Spirit, and He is forming exactly the same thing in each. Nothing but Christ comes out of each saint who is so characterised. Could we say that this is manifested in us? Doubtless this has to be made

good in the midst of disadvantages, through all kinds of difficulties and dangers. All these things are allowed of God that we may be tested to see whether we are willing to carry out the truth in the face of everything that is contrary, just as the Lord Himself did when here. The power given us is adequate for this display.

The chapter goes on to say everyone of us is necessary to everyone else. You say, That brother is so bad; but I say, He is necessary to you. You say, Oh! but he troubles me so much, there is this thing and that thing about him. Well, that is the very thing you want. Do you think there is a single thing that happens that is not necessary to us? This world is God's training ground, and God sees to it that there is everything to exercise us, and even to rub us up the wrong way, in order that He might have the opportunity to strengthen us and make us faithful. Thus it is that our spiritual muscles are developed, and we become Christians in truth instead of being sham ones. Oh! we should be magnificent Christians in our own opinions, if there were no difficulties, no obstacles, no stumbling-blocks; but really we should only be a set of hypocrites, because we should not know ourselves. We do not know what we are till we are tried. When we have to carry out the truth of God in the midst of very difficult circumstances then we learn whether we are in the truth or not, and generally the lesson is a very humbling one. It is only when a soldier goes to war that you can tell what kind of a soldier he is. Remember then, that everyone of us is necessary to the rest. If one is a bright Christian, he is necessary; if one is only a poor kind of Christian, he is necessary also. If you try

to do without half the company you will suffer for it in your soul.

I often say to Christians in England when they talk of the one body, I do not think you know very much about it practically, for this reason, we are not tested as to this truth until we have a company composed of saints from diverse nationalities, which naturally do not amalgamate. The presence of a stray Christian or two from another nation is no test, for he has to fall in with the ways of the mass, but it is when those of another nationality are numerous enough to make their presence felt, if they walk in the flesh, then the test is felt, and it is very severe. Here in India we have this test, and we shew how poorly we have learnt the truth. How far have we advanced in the carrying out of this truth in heart and spirit? Very little. If this be so we are missing a most glorious opportunity. If we do not realise this now, then when we get to heaven we shall find out what an opportunity we had and we did not take advantage of it, and we shall see what a loss it has been. See that you do not lose this great blessing. If we have drunk of the one Spirit it will be effectual in making us overcome natural prejudices, and the testimony thus manifested will shew forth the attraction of Christ, and the power of the Spirit, more than anything else.

There is one thing more, "Whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it." This is not a matter of exhortation, it is a matter of fact. If I am in a bad way I affect you all, hinder you all. This is not the same thing as you get in Romans, "Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep." There it

is an exhortation to shew sympathy, but here it is different. If a fellow-member of the body of Christ is in a low spiritual state the other members suffer spiritually in spite of themselves. If your foot aches you cannot disregard it. Then, you say, I shall always be thinking about somebody else. All the better. If you only think of them in the right way that Christ may be glorified in them, the more you think of them the better.

There should be no schism in the body. What is schism? Schism is division. At the present time the professing Church of God is fearfully divided even in an outward manner, and any number of separate companies are seen on every side. This is dreadful, but there may be schism without outward division or separation. God wants us to be one in aim, in mind, in heart and soul, in everything. God's object is for Christ to be set forth. The Church of God has terribly sinned as to this, and the difficulty is immense; at all events, seek to carry out the truth of this chapter with the company with which you are. I do not say confine it to that, but unless you carry it out there, you will not do it anywhere else. It is very easy to love in the abstract, to love (or rather to think you love) those who are afar off, but do you love those with whom you meet day by day? Do you love those saints with whom you would not naturally associate and who rub you up the wrong way because they belong to Christ? I know these things are very difficult for us, but if we want to please the heart of Christ, if we want to enter into the love of Christ, then this is the only way. It will be made up to you a hundredfold by the sense of love that will be poured into your heart. If you will only think of

Christ and of all He went through, it will not be so difficult. If He loves you, and wants you, and walks with you, bearing with all your follies, blunders, and denseness. If He goes on with you in spite of the thousand things in which you grieve Him, is it so very difficult to walk with your fellow-Christians in the same way. Oh! but you say, I do not quarrel with my fellow-Christians, I do my best for them, but you cannot expect me to love them all; then I say, This is all worthless. You must love all, or it is of no use. Suppose a husband says to his wife, who is pleading for love, Why, what do you want? Do I not give you a house, food and clothes, all the necessities and comforts of life, and many luxuries? What else do you want? If she be a true woman she will say, I do not want things, I want love. Nothing will do but love. Surely that is simple. The Spirit we all drink of is the Spirit of love; and unless we love we know not the Spirit. May God in truth give us to know the Spirit in this way.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PRESENT BLESSING

JUDGES xxi. 25 ; JOHN x. 3-5, 28-30

THESE are two very different passages. I will speak about the one in Judges first. What was going on then is just what is going on all round us. There was no king in Israel, and every man was doing what was right in his own eyes. The same thing is happening to-day. There is no king, that is, the King is absent and invisible, and is only perceived by the spiritual, and therefore nearly everyone is doing what is right in his own eyes. When the King returns, and is on earth, He will make His presence felt very clearly. He will put down evil with a strong hand, He will not allow rebellion, and it will be no longer possible for men to do what is right in their own eyes. But this is yet future and as yet the kingdom is in mystery, and during the absence of the King all has got into almost hopeless confusion. It is not only that there is much open evil, but there is also so little knowledge of the will of the Lord that even the zealous and the earnest are continually adding to the confusion.

Why were the Israelites in such a state? They had the law, they had the Priests with the Urim and Thummim, they had the place where the Lord chose to set His name, but they were not suffi-

ciently spiritual and dependent to reap advantage from these things. The tabernacle instead of being at Shiloh has somehow or other, how we know not, got to Bethel (see chap. xx. 18, N.T.). Very little is heard about the priests throughout this book, and even on the occasion when they did wait on the Lord there was much self-will mixed up with their actions. They did what they thought was right, but they knew not the mind of Jehovah, hence the terrible condition into which they had fallen.

Yet, terrible as it was, this and even worse is the condition of the professing Church of God to-day. You may say, "Yes, I see how wrong people are." But look within and you will see the counterpart of all the wrong there is around you, in your own heart. We have not come here to run down our fellow-Christians. We are come to humble ourselves before God and to learn of Him. If we are not spiritual we shall not profit much by the guidance which the scriptures give, and unless we are humble and broken in spirit we shall go utterly wrong in our interpretations. We only understand scripture up to the measure of our spirituality and by the Holy Spirit's teaching, and if we are not spiritual we shall go astray even though we have the scriptures. I will prove this to you. Look at 2 Peter iii. 16; there, in speaking of the apostle Paul, he says, "As also in all his epistles, speaking of these things in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction." What did they do with scripture? Why, they turned it up the wrong way, and to their own destruction. It is very easy to do that if unlearned and unstable in the things of God. We

may be learned and stable in the things of this world, but this will not help us unless taught of God and established by Him. Our present spiritual condition is the measure of our understanding of the mind of God. Having been spiritual yesterday will not enable me to understand to-day. Hence it is that we see sometimes the mighty man of yesterday misses the simplest road to-day. Why is this? He is out of communion, and is seeking to interpret God by means of his intellect and not by the Spirit of God. There is no possibility of getting the mind of God merely by reading the scriptures intellectually. How differently people interpret scripture. Why is this? Because there is so little spirituality in us.

The first thing is to be poor in spirit. What do you look for as a sign of the work of God in a soul? The sign I look for is that of a humble broken spirit, a soul that is sensible of its own utter worthlessness, and with that a sense of the goodness and love of God. I have seen some people, who are not clear about a single doctrine, but I believe they are very sensible of the love of God, and I am very glad to meet with these people. Again, we meet with some wonderfully clear in doctrine, and they glibly say they are saved, but there seems to be no humility and brokenness of spirit in them. Where this is the case you may be sure they are not pleasing to God. God wants me to say, "I am all wrong, but God is right." I want to get God's mind in the matter. If you are in this condition, i.e. broken in spirit, God can speak to you. He says, Except ye become as little children ye cannot enter the kingdom of God. We must come down to enter into it in truth.

The peculiar character of the kingdom of heaven

to-day in its outward aspect is, that a fearful amount of licence is possible, and we have fallen into the snare, for we can pass current as good Christians while yet we are full of lawlessness, doing a great deal that we call good, but which is only the activity of our flesh. Hence hopeless confusion characterizes the visible kingdom to-day.

What is the real state of Christendom? Think of what India was in the days of the mutiny and of the confusion that existed then. Was it not terrible? and yet I say India in the time of the mutiny was in far better order than Christendom is in to-day. I am far more afraid of lawlessness than Ritualism or Roman Catholicism. However bad the latter may be, yet lawlessness is the thing above all others that we should be afraid of. There is a great deal of lawlessness that professes to be full of love, earnestness, and faithfulness, and many are ensnared thereby. It is a day when there is very little brokenness of spirit, very little trembling at the word of God, very little thought of obedience, though there is very much activity, and the benefit of man is very much thought of. Let us take heed that we are willing to go God's way even in doing good, and that we do not try and persuade ourselves that we can get God round to our way of thinking. This can never be.

Now, what is the Bible? The Bible is a heart-book; it speaks to the heart. And what is the gospel of John? It is just the centre, so to speak, of this heart-book. How we come to so much grief is we do not read it as if it were a heart-book, we read it critically. This will not do, but if you come with a humble and a broken heart to find a satisfaction you have failed to get elsewhere, it will tell

you of the One who alone can satisfy, and in the company of that One you will find your heart's desire. Have you read it thus, and have you found the One of whom it speaks, and has He satisfied?

John speaks essentially to the heart. Once we know rest of conscience by the finished work of Christ then we want to know the person of Him who has given us this blessing. He is the Son of God, and it is especially in this gospel we learn Him thus.

The early chapters of the epistle to the Romans are to shew us the way to get rest of conscience through the righteousness of God, but eternal life of which John speaks is all for the heart, and even the epistle to the Romans, though it begins by leading to rest of conscience, cannot stop there, it goes on to teach of love, for we do not know God until we know love, and God must ever, therefore, lead us on to know love. Never think that you have found the goal until you are grounded in the sense of God's love.

Who are the sheep mentioned here in John x.? How am I to know that I am one of the sheep? A sheep here is one that hears the voice of the Son of God and follows Him. Have you heard His voice? You say, I know my Bible from beginning to end. This is quite possible, and yet you may never have heard His voice once in all your life. This voice is an inward thing, and can only be heard by those, whose ears are opened to hear. Their state is such that they can hear now that which they could not hear before, and they prove it by following Him. Follow Him where? To the place where He has gone. Where is that? He has gone out of this world unto the Father, and you follow Him

into this out-of-the-world condition of things to the place where He has the pre-eminence. The pre-eminence of love. It is not an outward thing. Outwardly all may be unchanged, and yet inwardly all be different because you are changed and belong to a new sphere; in the sense of your soul you are outside the old.

"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me." This is characteristic. Do get hold of the present tense. Some people say, Do you believe that "Once saved for ever saved?" I say, I don't like it put in that way, for that is not the way in which the scriptures speak; and, dear friends, you will soon be led into error if you do not adhere to scriptural ways of expression. I see no comfort in this book for the man, who says, "I the one who is in touch with Christ *to-day*. I see no comfort in this book for the man who says, "I did believe once," but I see every comfort for the man who is connected with a living Christ *to-day*. I see nothing for the man who says he had something yesterday but has not got it *to-day*. The whole point is that God is speaking about *to-day*. The question is, Are we His sheep *to-day*? If you are, what happens? Why, you are hearing His voice *to-day*. Not the voice of scripture only that everybody hears, but that inward small voice that only His own hear. No one else hears it, but you hear, and you are attracted. You say, "There is no one like that One who is speaking to me. He wants me, and I must follow Him. There is no one like Him. Even though it goes against father, mother, children, my best interests here, I must follow Him."

It is a thing for *to-day*, not for *to-morrow*, and everything is his, who is in that place *to-day*, while

there is nothing for anybody else. More and more it comes home to me how much all that the scripture speaks of is for to-day. A person says, Don't you believe in the eternal security of the believer? Of course I do, but how am I to know I am a believer unless I am believing to-day? God does not want to comfort a man in carelessness, to encourage him in a bad, wrong, proud, self-satisfied condition of soul, God would humble not comfort him. God cannot tell that man that he is all right. But if you want God to-day there is everything for you. God's day is to-day. Who are the sheep of the Son of God? They are those who are hearing His voice to-day, and following Him to-day. He set their conscience at rest by His work on the cross. That settled the question of their sins, but that is not enough. We need something for the heart—we want company. The whole point in scripture is that God wants to satisfy Himself by giving His creatures the enjoyment of Himself as revealed in His Son Jesus Christ. If your heart is not satisfied, you have not got as yet that which is in God's heart for you. You may say, I have the forgiveness of sins, I have justification, I have this and that, but it will not do. Have you got the satisfaction that the knowledge of the perfect love of God gives? If not, do not rest. You have not received as yet that which God gives. Supposing you marry a wife, what do you want? You want her to be satisfied, don't you? With what? With your love, and not with a fine house, fine furniture, position in society, etc.? No, not if you are a man. You want her to be satisfied because you love her and she shares your heart and all that is yours. God wants you to be satisfied because He loves you. And why is it we are such poor

Christians? Because really we do not know this, and, therefore, not being attracted by the love of God's Son, we are always hankering after something or other in this world. That we are Christ's sheep is proved by the fact that we hear His voice, and can go on in quiet confidence and rest while all is in confusion around us. There is no other voice for us because His voice is heard, and we must go after Him because there is none like Him. We must have Himself, He has won our hearts.

We must, I believe, be careful to avoid definitions, but we are very fond of them. God's word always deals with characteristics, while we want definitions because we are carnal. Definitions will not help us. People continually ask, Do tell us what this eternal life is. I say, When you have eternal life you will know well enough what it is. Until a person gets possession of a thing, and knows it experimentally he will never understand it. This is true in natural things. There was a blind man to whom some friends tried to explain the meaning of colours. When they had finished they asked him as a test, What is red like? He replied, It is like the sound of a trumpet. Poor man! how could he know? He had never seen colours. So with us, no amount of definitions will help, but get the blessing and then you can recognise what it is by the characteristics thereof recorded in the scriptures, but for these characteristics we should not be able to say what it was we had received.

For instance, take up "Born of God." "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God," and again, "Whosoever is born of God does not commit [practise] sin." If these two characteristics are found in us then we are born of God. These

characteristics prove it and are most useful for the encouragement of God's children, and for the detection of all counterfeits and imitations.

Here also it is a question of the characteristics of the sheep. A sheep is one, who hears the voice of the Son of God, and follows Him. If this characteristic is not found in me, what is my claim to be a sheep founded on? God challenges us. Can you take that place? We need the boldness of faith, and the confidence, which the sense of being loved inspires. No amount of explanation will shew you what a blessing means unless you are in the blessing itself. Once you are in the power of the thing then fixing the right name to that thing may help you, and you will see the place it has in the mind of God. Definitions do not do any good, they cramp and narrow the soul, and lead us into many errors; but get the blessing, and then your heart will be enlarged.

We are always wanting a cut-and-dried method of arriving at the point God would lead us to without the exercise of soul which is so necessary, and without real vital contact with the Son of God, and this cannot be done. In these matters men try to deal with things as wise men deal with them, whereas God's way is to be like a little babe. You ask a babe, What is an apple? "Oh!" it says, "very good," but that is no definition. It says again, "It is very sweet, and I like it very much." Well, that little child, who has eaten several apples knows much better what an apple is than all the wise men in the world, who have never eaten an apple, but only reason about it from its shape, colour, etc. Be like the child. Give it a fruit, what will it do? Why, begin to eat it at once.

Do not reason about God's feast but eat, listen to Wisdom's call in Proverbs ix. She says, "Eat and drink abundantly, O beloved." Then when you have done this you will get the enjoyment and strength you lack. There will be plenty of time to get the right name by and by; at all events, see that you get the thing.

All blessing is obtained by contact with the Son of God. We get nothing really apart from Him. He has no intention of giving us anything in order that we may go away and enjoy it apart from Himself. He will give you everything with Himself, but nothing apart from Himself. It is like the case of Ruth's next of kin. He would have liked the possession, but would not marry Ruth, so he got nothing. If we have not Christ we have nothing. That is the point we want to ascertain, Is it Himself that is before me? With many of us it is not Himself who is our object. We want to be sure of getting to heaven by and by, and in the meantime we want to get as much comfort down here as possible. We do not want to taste of heaven now. We say that we want heaven by and by, but we prove the falsity of our claim by seeking to gratify the flesh (though, of course, we are very respectable people, and would not like to do anything wrong). What is profession of this kind worth? It is neither flesh, fish, nor fowl. It is a dreadful kind of thing, an abomination to God. God has got everything for the man that wants Christ to-day, but nothing for anyone else.

I said to a little boy one day, "Which is hotter, the sun or the moon?" "The sun," he replied. "How do you know?" I asked. "I read it in a book," was his reply. Now that is how we would

fain learn the things of God. We read about them in a book. Well, I said to him, "You go and sit for a couple of hours to-morrow in the sun at mid-day" (it was in the hot weather), "and see if you do not get some better way of knowing that the sun is hot than by reading about it in a book." My advice to you is, Do not be bothering about definitions, but go and bask in the sunshine of the love of the Son of God, and let that warm you. The beauty of it is that His love must have vent, and, therefore, He cannot do without me, while I am so needy I cannot do without His fulness, so that we are just suited to each other. When the sense of that love permeates your soul you will then know what eternal life is, but no amount of definitions will help you a bit. May God give us the childlike spirit that must abide in the presence of God's Son and must have Him. The one who has this spirit will find that he has everything.

One word more. It says in John x. 6, the disciples did not understand the things which Jesus spake unto them. Why was this? They were still Jews, still attached in heart to the things of the flesh, and while in that condition they could not understand these things. Alas! that so many of us Christians are only Jews (practically), hence we do not understand.

When the Spirit had come then a change came over the disciples (yet even with them it was not in a moment but gradually). Jesus had died, and they loved Jesus supremely, and they learnt that the death of Jesus had broken their links with that which was down here. Not only the links with bad things, but with good things, even with the very best, i.e. with the Jewish system. They were de-

lighted to have their place with Him outside. In heart they were outside, because He had gone outside. They were glad when they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His sake. I am so glad, said the apostle Paul, that I have lost everything, and I count it all but dung that I may win Christ. It was not only that he lost what was material. He lost his reputation, his honour, and all that men glory in. He was looked upon as a lunatic and a fool, but it was his delight to suffer shame for the sake of Him to whom he had gone out. Every one of us has to go out, so to speak, if we are to share with him, for He is outside all the range of things ordered by man. If you do this, you will seem a fool according to the wisdom of men.

What has Christ to offer us here? His path was one of shame and loss and reproach down here, and He can only offer to those who follow Him the same kind of path as that which He Himself had. He was cut off and had nothing, so it will be with us according to the measure with which we follow Christ. But in this losing we gain everything, and in retaining we lose everything. This is one of God's strange paradoxes so difficult to the wise, so simple to the childlike in spirit. If you love your life you lose it. If you hate your life you keep it unto life eternal. Alas! we are most unwilling to let go our honour, our position, our place. A man says, "I have always been an honourable man, I am not going to stand reproach." Then I say, "You must be content to be without Christ, that is all." Surely you cannot accept such loss. You must have His blessing no matter at what cost. Well, every blessing in this book is yours if Christ is yours to-day. Do get hold of that. The test is not in that which

is told us about the past, or about that which is to come, but the test is this, What is my attitude towards God and His blessed Son to-day. That is what God wants us to get hold of. The world is morally exactly the same as it has been all along, and therefore you may be certain that all that applied 1,800 years ago applies now. There has been no change in the world, and most certainly there has been no change in God and His truth. If, therefore, there was perfect satisfaction for those who followed Christ, then there is the same now, and if there was reproach for the disciples then there must be so now. Once we are spiritual then what is written in this book becomes the living voice of God to our hearts. God wants us for Himself. However much we may lose in this world there is infinite gain to be found in the Son of God, but the only way to get it is by following Him and having Him as the object of our hearts.

PROPHECY AND THE DAY STAR

2 PETER i. 19-21

PROPHECY has its place, and a very important place; but blessed as it is there is also something better. A very large portion of scripture, as we know, is composed of prophecy. Now what is the object of the study of prophecy according to the mind of the Spirit in this passage. "We have a more sure word of prophecy," or, "word of prophecy confirmed," "whereunto ye do well that ye take heed as unto a light that shineth in a dark place." The light, or the lamp, is the light of the truth as to what God is going to do with the world, and how He looks on it at present.

What are you going to study prophecy for? There is a wrong reason and a right reason. I may be curious, or I may want to pass as a knowing person, therefore I would like to know what is going to happen. Such are very wrong reasons. The right reason is when we want to be with God in the matter, and to understand what is according to God, and what is contrary to God, as to all that is around. We cannot understand these things unless God teach us; otherwise we have an altogether wrong idea of the bearing of things. We need to comprehend what it is that He will spare and what it is on which His judgment will come, so that we may be in correspondence with Christ in all these things. Judgment is hanging over

the world, and we want to be morally apart from it, and according to the mind of Christ during His absence. This world is contrary to Christ. It has cast out Christ, and judgment is coming down on it. God is going to judge this world in righteousness by that Man whom He has appointed, and we want to have His mind about the whole matter. Christ is going to reign, and He is going to smash up all that is contrary to Himself.

Prophecy teaches us how He will deal with the things of the earth upon the earth in order to abolish all rebellion and self-will, and will instead establish that which is according to the mind of God. We are walking through a vain show, a scene in which man is magnifying himself, and making himself great on the earth. We want to be on God's side, to judge now what He judges, and to cling to that which He upholds. To be like Abraham on the heights of Mamre, where he had communion with God, who called Abraham His friend. To him was revealed the fate of Sodom, and he knew it would be destroyed before Lot did. Lot was in Sodom, and had not the mind of the Lord about Sodom as Abraham had.

Now what is this better thing, better than the understanding of prophecy according to the will of God. "Until the day dawn." What day is this? It is no outward day. Until the day dawn for you. I do not think it is the rapture at all. I will tell you what I think it is. Recollect that the day-star arises *in your heart*. It is something in your heart, and not anything in the world. The light of prophecy is to tell us what the world is, its end, and what God is going to set up in its place. But more than this, there is such a thing as the day dawning

in your heart. That is something deeper and more blessed even than the light of prophecy, for it is Christ known, not as He is revealed in prophecy as God's King who must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet, but as One in heaven. As He is in Himself in His own person. Prophecy will teach us what He is going to do, but when the day dawns we shall be led in spirit away from the earth altogether to the place where Christ is, then it is that over and above His acts we value Him for what He is: the heart attracted to Himself because of what He is in Himself apart from the benefits we derive from Him. The attraction to Himself for His own sake outside the order of things which is down here is what is doubtless meant by the day star arising in the heart, and in this way Christ is known in a far deeper manner than He can be by the study of prophecy.

Prophecy is most useful for the dark night of Christ's absence as it is a lamp in this dark place, throwing a measure of light on what is around, but when the day dawns it is a far greater brightness to the soul, and there will be an entrance into the love of Christ in a way that is impossible while only prophecy is known.

Let me then ask you, Do you know Christ as the Day or Morning Star because you are attracted to Him away from this present scene. There is nothing that will please the heart of Christ so much as being wanted for His own sake. When you find that He Himself is infinitely beyond all His gifts, and He is the desire of your heart for His own sake; then, I say, the day has dawned for you, and the day star has risen in your heart.

GOD'S DELIGHT IN BLESSING

LUKE xv. 11-32

WHAT we are presented with here is not a picture of something for eternity, but for time. A picture of something to be known and enjoyed now. God does so want to bring us to His own Son, and where He is there is the Father's house.

It is the action and the joy of the Father which are in view, nevertheless the Father employs His servants in fellowship with Himself in this blessed work of putting on the best robe.

Who are the servants? Are they not Peter and John and Paul, whose ministry the Father is still employing to make us to know His will? For instance, How should we know the truth as it is in Jesus (Eph. iv. 20-24), if it had not been for the apostle Paul (though, of course, it is all of God)? What is this truth? It is that of new creation. Old things have passed away in Christ (the old self along with these old things), and new things have come to pass, for God has reconciled us to Himself for His own good pleasure.

If we turn to the ministry of the apostle John we do not find the truth put in the same doctrinal way as in the writings of the apostle Paul. He gives us the truth in the way of its characteristics. For instance, the Lord says, "If the Son shall make

you free ye shall be free indeed." The truth as to the person of the Son apprehended in the soul makes us free by making us suitable to the Father. Thus it is that the Son gives us the freedom of the house.

In John xvii. you see the Son about to leave this scene, but before He does so, He puts His own into the Father's hands to have the same place with Him which the Lord Himself had. They are so dear to Him that nothing short of this can satisfy Him. He prays "that the love wherewith thou hast loved Me may be in them and I in them." This unspeakable love cannot but render the objects of its love suitable for its own presence and delight. Love is inexorable in its demands, and though it must fulfil the claims of righteousness yet it will go to any cost to make good its own desire.

Many are continually asking, "Do tell me what eternal life is?" I can only say, Get hold of the truth of the Father's love, and the truth of the Father's house as known in the Son, and you will know what eternal life is. It must be enjoyed in order to be known.

The best robe is not what some of us thought it to be, viz. justification. True, God justifies the ungodly, but if that were all, it would only be a clean robe put on a dirty person. He is clean outside, but he is not clean within, but God could not justify the ungodly unless He meant to complete the work, and unless He were going to make him to be what He begins by counting him to be, a righteous one. Thank God that nothing short of our being with the Father according to His own desire will ever satisfy Him.

We begin by learning justification, that God counts

us to be what we are not. This is our side, and it is a great blessing when we learn it. We learn that we are sinners, the judgment of God rests on us. We ask, How can a man be just with God? And it is great joy when we learn that God has justified us. Our sins are gone to rise no more against us in judgment.

But after this comes up the question of our state. We find a bad state within, and this troubles us dreadfully. We do not learn this all at once, but step by step. Then we see that it is not self-improvement which is the goal, but that self has to go in order that that which is new, the work of God, may come in its stead. That which was self is then no more self once we are really in Christ, i.e. subjectively. Of course, there is no other way of realizing practically the truth but this, only sometimes we accept the doctrine while knowing not the power thereof. Such acceptance is purely nominal. If we are in Christ, i.e. of His order, we are no more in Adam, and we reckon ourselves dead unto sin and the Spirit is that which is characteristic of our new state before God and not the flesh.

Here, however, it is not put doctrinally but in a simpler and more easily understood manner. The point is, I must get to the Father, all blessing is there, therefore I must get there.

It never entered into the prodigal's mind that it was possible that he should become more to the father than if he had never sinned and had never left his father's house. I think, too, it is a long time before it ever enters *our* mind that we are far more to God than if we had never sinned.

How slow, too, we are in learning that the Father gets far more out of us than we from Him. Yet

it is so simple. It is more blessed to give than to receive, and He, the Blessor, must get more than we who are blessed.

What is the theme of this chapter? Is it not the gratification of God Himself, His unspeakable delight in blessing? Oh! how happy it makes God to do this. If we only saw this better we should better apprehend the character of the blessing, for we should see that God blesses us for His own satisfaction and joy, and how much this will do towards making us at home with Himself. His unspeakable love will make it such joy to be consciously in His presence. Do you find it hard to realise this? Does not the mother get more out of the baby than the baby gets out of the mother? Does not this help you?

Moreover, what He does for me must be commensurate to the value which He sets upon His Son. We know God so very very little. What we generally call love is not love at all. It is pity, kindness, mercy, etc., that we see, but God wants us to see that He cannot do without us. Have you ever said, "The Father loves me so much He cannot do without me." I believe that most of us see this much, that God is very good and kind, but what we do not see is this; because God is love, and I am one whom He has linked with His Son, therefore He cannot do without me, and heaven would not be heaven for Him if He could not have me there.

If you get hold of this truth you will not have any difficulty in understanding eternal life. You know the story of the mother whose daughter went astray. The door was never closed for many years, and one night the girl came back and found the door was ajar. She said to the mother, "How was it

that the door was not closed to-night?" The mother replied, "That door has never been closed from the time you left us; it has always been left ajar for you. All these years I have been waiting for this moment." So God cannot do without His children, He must have them with Him. He is so happy in blessing them. We are defective in everything, but the special point in which we are most defective is in the sense of His love. What does God's Son deserve? Everything. Then that is the value of what God gives to you. He must lavish everything on you.

What is the best robe? It is not something put over us to hide our nakedness as clothes do, but God's clothes are inside; it is Christ formed within. It is the divine nature formed by divine love, that which is altogether new; His own workmanship for His own pleasure. He enjoys Himself by making us capable of enjoying what He enjoys. You see that this is something which goes far beyond justification.

If you want to gratify the Father's heart you must enter into this love and enjoy it, and the more you enjoy it the more He will be pleased. I have heard a story of two children to whom two kittens were given. One had one and the other the other, and they loved them much, but one day one child was seen crying over her kitten. Why was this? she was asked. Her answer was as follows: "Oh! the kitten that Bobby has whenever he strokes it is so pleased and it purrs; but my kitten, no matter how I pet it, it will not purr, and never seems pleased." How many of us are like that kitten? we do not show our pleasure in response to the infinite love of God shewn to us. Is it not sad that

we should be so ungrateful for this love? If you want to give satisfaction to God you must be like the kitten who purrs. You know what pain it gives you parents when you find that your child thinks you do not love it, and are not doing the very best for it. How often have parents to feel this pain, and sometimes when two children are treated alike one is so pleased and bubbles over with joy, while the other is glum and dissatisfied, and his conduct pierces the father's and the mother's hearts?

What then is the fatted calf? The fatted calf is the Son. It is God's feast of joy in His own Son. Nowadays a rich man often makes a feast for a number of poor people, but he does not sit down and share it. He does not make it for himself. He does not say, "Let us eat, and be merry."

It is the Father who gets the most joy of all, and no one enjoys the feast as much as He does, and how little we enter into His joy. Self is so fearfully predominant.

Take the Lord's supper, how much do we enter into this? Very little, I am afraid. The Lord's death is generally looked at from the side of our need, but this is not to eat the Lord's supper as we should. The Lord's supper is feeding upon the love of Christ, delighting in Him for what He is, not delighting in His gifts, but in Himself. If we really eat the Lord's supper we are with Him in happy liberty, and are perfectly at ease with Him. You wanted Him for Himself, and now you have Him your heart is satisfied.

The elder son was further away from the father than even the younger son was when he was in the far-off country. This is the worst place of all: to be positionally near, while in reality to be very

far off. We are often deceived thus, and think all is well when all is wrong. He shews when he speaks. This is what we all do, as it is written, "By thy words thou shalt be justified and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." We may be in the most blessed place nominally and in reality have nothing because we have never touched divine love at all.

When the elder brother said, You never gave me a kid that I might make merry with my friends, he shewed what was in his heart. He wanted to make merry away from his father. There is no happiness to be found in this way.

The people said to the disciples, Why does your Master eat and drink with publicans and sinners? The disciples might have answered, Because it makes our Master so happy, and it makes God so happy to bless.

When we repent we say, I am all wrong, I must let God come in and have His way, and this it is that makes God so happy, for then He can come in and bless.

I am sure we shall all find it a very blessed thing to get a real taste of this love. There is a very great lack here, and the sense of being loved is something better than all the intelligence in the world.

When we really have a grasp of this love we shall find the joy thereof such a strength and power. What is so powerful as love? There is a well-known story that an eagle carried off a babe on to a high mountain. Among those who witnessed it, and sought to save the child, was a sailor. He, with others, tried to scale the cliff, but even his head swam, and though he climbed further than the rest, yet he had to return. When this happened and all

seemed hopeless, lo and behold the mother started up, and in some wonderful and semi-miraculous manner clambered up the cliff, clinging to the ivy or whatever there was. Up and up she went while all gazed on her with awe till she reached the eagle's eyrie and brought back her child safe and sound. If this is what love will do in natural things, what will not divine love do? What will not God who is love do? And above all, He will cause us to have the best robe, and thus to be formed in love ourselves. There is no real power save that conferred by the sense of love.

Faith is that with which we begin, but we must go on to love; and how does faith work? By love, and by love only.

THE HOUSE OF GOD

GOD has always had in His mind and heart to have a house for Himself to dwell in. God must have a house for Himself, for this is one of His chief ways of blessing by coming to dwell in (which is best of all) or with His people.

It will be helpful to us if we trace in the scriptures from the beginning God's thought about His house. The Old Testament is full of the truth of the house of God. There is not much of it in Genesis, but you get Jacob saying, "How dreadful is this place; this is none other but *the house of God*, and this is the gate of heaven." Gen. xxviii. 17. Doubtless Jacob understood but little of this, but he spoke prophetically for our sakes.

In Exodus the children of Israel learn in the song of Moses, "Thou hast guided them in Thy strength unto Thy holy habitation"; and we have God saying to Moses on the mount, "Let them make Me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them." From that time onwards the truth of the house of God is inseparably bound up with the history of the people of God. When the house was in its right order there was blessing on the nation, but when the house was slighted or abused then judgment and trouble came upon the people. Every faithful servant of God had a zeal for the house of God.

When king Hezekiah came to the throne, he called

together the priests and the Levites and said to them, "Hear me ye Levites, sanctify now yourselves, and sanctify the house of the Lord God of your fathers. . . . For our fathers have trespassed and done evil in the eyes of the Lord our God, and have forsaken Him, and have turned away their faces from the habitation of the Lord. . . . Wherefore the wrath of the Lord was upon Judah and Jerusalem, and He hath delivered them to trouble, to astonishment, and to hissing as ye see with your eyes." Then they cleansed the house that the wrath of the Lord might turn away from them.

During the time of the captivity, though the house was practically non-existent, for it had been burnt down, yet Daniel, even at the risk of his life, must in praying look towards Jerusalem; where to faith the house still stood, see 1 Kings viii. 44-48, though he knew that for so doing he would be cast into the den of lions, and he might have avoided this by praying in secret. Thus he shewed how dear to him was the place in which the Lord chose to set His name, however desolate it might be.

When Zerubbabel, Jeshua, and the remnant of Israel came back from the captivity in their weakness they at once began to be occupied with God's house. They set up the altar as their protection, and then they laid the foundation of the house. But alas! opposition daunted them, they ceased to build, and sorrow and trouble came upon them. Why was this? We are not left to conjecture, for it is written, "Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, consider your ways: Go up to the mountain and bring wood, and build the house, and I will take pleasure in it, and will be glorified, saith the Lord. Ye looked for much and, lo, it came to little, and when ye brought

it home, I did blow upon it. Why? saith the Lord of Hosts. Because of Mine house that is waste, and ye run every man into his own house," Hag. i. 7-9. But directly they began to build the Lord's house the prophet was commissioned to say, "From this day will I bless you."

How then was it when the Lord Jesus Christ was on the earth? Did He, because He was spiritual, make light of the earthly house of God? We find that He could not bear to see that material house desecrated. You see Him (speaking with reverence) more moved on that occasion than at any other time, driving the people out of the house with a scourge of small cords and pouring out the changers' money and overthrowing their tables with the words, "Make not my Father's house a house of merchandise," and the disciples remembered that it was written, "The zeal of Thine house hath eaten Me up."

Then again we know that in the age to come there will be a material house of God once more, and the prophet Ezekiel gives us a great deal of detail about that house which will be very precious to God as the house of God was in the days of the tabernacle and temple of old.*

Why was this house so dear? It was a shadow of good things to come, a figure or picture of a very blessed reality, and it was very dear on this account. Thank God, we have that of which this house was the figure, and if the figure was so dear, how much

* It sometimes puzzles some to understand how, when there is no material house now, that there can be a return to a material house in the millenium. The explanation is that the present period is unique, and though chronologically it comes before the millenium, yet as to its blessings it is essentially spiritual, and it belongs to new creation, and to the eternal state, and therefore morally is after the millenium.

more dear the reality. God in His grace has been pleased to educate us by pictures and figures, and they are an immense help to us as long as we do not take the figure for the thing signified. The law only had a shadow of the things to come. The real habitation of God was not yet present, though this was a picture, and even as a picture it was exceedingly dear to the heart of the Lord, and to the heart of every faithful follower of the Lord, and it was meant to be so. I have heard of a daughter, who always dusted her mother's picture herself, and would let no one else touch it, because it reminded her of her mother.

Simeon, the well-known evangelical clergyman at Cambridge, had the picture of Henry Martyn hung on the wall before him, and he used to say, "If ever I feel inclined to trifle the one whose portrait is there seems to say to me, 'Don't trifle, life is too solemn for levity.'" And I say this house of God under the law, though it was only a shadow, was very precious, and we shall benefit exceedingly, if we closely study all the instruction on the subject given to us in the Old Testament. I am sure we lose very much by not studying the types; all the Old Testament is written for *our* learning, and is exceedingly helpful for those who learn the spirit thereof and are not carried away by the letter into legality and idolatry, and see the difference in the dispensation.

I say it solemnly that the Old Testament is very much neglected by most of us, and our souls suffer in consequence. No person can expect to prosper in his soul if he neglects the Old Testament, which is the divinely given book of illustrations of the truth of God.

Under the law, the house was a figure of something to come. Now that thing has come, but still we have got a figure, though we have got the reality as well. The temple is gone, we have no earthly figure of that sort at the present time. Men may build a house of brick or stone and call it the house of God; thus showing they have lost the divine idea. What then is the figure in these times? We, who are assembled here,* are a part of that figure—just a tiny portion. The visible company of the professing people of God forms the house of God, but that is the figure. The reality is invisible, but only the spiritual have that. Nevertheless the figure is a very important thing. Look at a man. What do you see? You say you see him. No, you do not see him, you see his figure, the real man is invisible. A man could not speak to you except he had a body, but the body is not he. That which dwells in the body is far more important than the body. The body will pass away, but the man will remain.

Well, there is to-day an outward figure, and that outward figure is called the house of God. Thus 1 Tim. iii. 5, 15, "If a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the Church of God?" and "That thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God." Now that is the outward thing, yet that outward thing is the house of God, and very important it is, nevertheless there is a deeper thing, and that is the spiritual and invisible thing. All this that we see is temporal, it is only the things not seen which are eternal.

The outward thing can be seen; the inward cannot. We must not despise or think lightly of the

* At a conference in India.

outward, but we must give the full place to the inward and invisible.

Roman Catholics and Ritualists confound the two, as if they were one and the same, and we are not free from the same error, for we are apt to see no assembly but the outward and visible company. This is a great error. On the other hand there are those who say, "The Church is invisible, and there are true believers everywhere," as an excuse for going anywhere, and associating with anybody and anything they like. This is pure lawlessness, and is worst of all.

The same kind of thing often happens in other matters. Take baptism: many attribute to the form all that is said of it on the supposition that it is the sign of an inward reality. This is very evil. It is gross legalism. Many others, especially in this country of India, say, What matters the form? belief in the heart is everything. I believe, and am not going to be baptized. This is very evil also. It is pure lawlessness.

Now turn to 1 Peter ii. 4, 5. "To whom coming as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men but chosen of God and precious, ye also as living stones are built up a spiritual house." Here we have the reality. If this passage is true of us what have we done; to what or to whom have we come out? I do not mean with what saints have we fellowship? That is an outward thing. But in our souls have we come out to share the lot of a rejected Christ? A number of stones piled together do not constitute a house. So it is we have not only to be saved, but to be builded together by God. This is divine work with divinely formed material. For this there must be Christ formed

within, and there must be the strong attraction to the Christ of God, drawing away from the world, and making us willing to share Christ's rejection, and to take the outside place of shame and reproach. He will then be more to us than Naomi to Ruth or David to Ittai. The world does not want Him, the mass of so-called Christians do not want Him. Alas! even the majority of converted souls are satisfied with His gifts, and know not the sweetness of sharing His reproach. This is the sad feature of the day, and great is the dishonour to His name in consequence. The question, therefore, for us is, Has Christ been formed in us, and have we been made willing to come out to the rejected One because of what we find in Him? If so we shall know what it is to be built up a spiritual house, to be made part of that spiritual edifice in which God takes up His abode. It is a spiritual thing, and must be made good in our own souls. We must learn it in the power of the Spirit of God. The proof that we have learnt this truth is that we share the rejection of Christ because He has won our hearts, and we cannot do without Him.

As regards the outward thing it is a different matter. Everyone who is called a Christian has certain great privileges, but he has the consequent responsibilities, and so with every outward position. Everyone in any position has the privileges thereof, and he must bear the responsibility too. Everything outward only has its value if it is an outward expression of an inward reality. If it is not this it is hurtful and a sham.

Do not let anything satisfy you short of having the spiritual reality as well as that outward thing, and remember that no outward position can give

you the truth inwardly. It is true that the right inward condition may, yea must, lead to a right outward position, but we cannot reverse the order. Men hope to produce the inward by adopting the outward. We have all been more or less affected by this snare, but it will not do. The more blessed the place the worse for us if we are there in a carnal condition, and unless we are prepared for suffering with Christ, unless willing to share His rejection, the sooner we get out of that position which professedly is connected with His reproach the better, for we shall only hinder others and be there for our own hurt. It was in the presence of Christ that Satan entered into Judas.

It cannot be too much pressed on us that the real thing is the invisible and spiritual, and that the inward reality must force us into every visible place or position, or all will be wrong. That is, an inward power must force a saint to take the place of an evangelist, or of teacher, or of one who takes the oversight. An inward reality must force us into fellowship with those, who are in the place of reproach. If it is not so, every apparent advance we make will only be so much condemnation upon our head. It is a solemn thing to take a prominent place among the people of God. Woe betide us, if we *put ourselves* forward. We must go forward if the Spirit of God forces us, but we ought never to seek prominence. If one seeks it for his own exaltation, it is the worst of sins; better to do anything than that.

I beg you to weigh the matter before God. It is of the deepest importance.

I must, however, speak a little more of the outward, visible, responsible thing. It is God's house and

God dwells there, therefore we ought to have an exceeding zeal for it and an intense longing that the arrangements of that house should be, as far as is possible, in a day of ruin and confusion as now, according to the mind and will of God. This is not a matter of our progress as separate individuals (though our individual spiritual state must tell very much upon the corporate condition); but it is in connection with our corporate responsibilities, with our worship, our waiting on the Lord together, and together seeking the interests of the Lord, our discipline, our order, and all such things as these. Do not despise these things for they are matters of great importance, and the spiritually minded man feels an intense interest in the house of God, and all that is connected with it, even as Christ did in the earthly house, and he will labour incessantly for the well-being of that house because it is God's house and God's honour, and the honour of God's Son is connected with it.

Do let God have His own way in His own house. The first thing then to be done is to find out what is God's way. We can only find out God's way if we are spiritual. We cannot ascertain what is right by looking up the texts bearing on it. Many think this can be done, but if this could be done, then all that is necessary would be a good verbal acquaintance with the scriptures, a good memory, sound common sense, and good reasoning powers; and there would be no need of spirituality, of exercise of soul, of dependence on the Spirit, and of a deep sense of one's own nothingness. No, this will not do. To arrive at spiritual conclusions we must be spiritual. You may have the Bible at your fingers' ends and not know the truth.

The ruling characteristic of God's house is holiness, and we ought to be deeply exercised as to whether we are in accordance with the holiness of that house, and also as to whether our spiritual associations and ways are suited to Him who dwells in that house.

I will read a passage. "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? and what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. Having, therefore, these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." 2 Cor. vi. 14—vii. 1. Here we have mention of God's dwelling-place and of the holiness of associations in consequence of connection with it. The apostle is speaking of outward results when he says, "Be not unequally yoked," etc.

Have you a zeal for the house of God, and are you exercised about the matter? There are great sins committed. One is that men have set their own rules and regulations in the house of God. This is a great evil. Fancy man presuming to do such things instead of being in awe of the holiness of God's house. Now who is it that has done this

sin? You may say that good men have been thus guilty equally with bad, that Roman Catholics have most deeply sinned in this while Protestants are guilty too. Well, go further and own that your own heart is just as bad. You need never look outside for any sin. There is no sin ever committed but that you can find the counterpart within. Do you know that you were born with a Roman Catholic heart? What is Roman Catholicism? It is a religion marvellously adapted to suit poor fallen man according to his natural ideas. It is perfect for this, and, therefore, in spite of its unblushing effrontery and wickedness it still seduces millions. Yet remember whenever we rest in an outward form we are practically Roman Catholics in heart. Whenever we take the Lord's supper in a formal way, because we say it is right to take it on the first day of the week, we are before God Roman Catholics.

Yet bad as that is there is something even worse than this. It is a man refusing to be subject to man's rules and regulations, not in order to be subject to God, which is very blessed, but in order to do his own will. This is the worst thing of all. Man practically making himself God. Such an one may look down on the superstitious souls in bondage, but there is more hope for them than for him. The worst of all is when every man does that which is right in his own eyes. This is the acme of wickedness. Eve was tempted with the idea of being as gods, and since then man is continually aspiring to this: to choose for himself and plan for himself; of course, he has many reasons for what he does, and he does not say that he is doing wrong, but he does his own will and calls it right.

These two things, men assuming on the one hand

to make rules for the house of God and men casting off every yoke to do their own will, are devastating and ravaging the house of God to-day. If we want to do right we must be broken in spirit, because of the intense pride of our hearts. We have to say, God is right, I am only a fool; God must do it all. God must arrange, God must plan, God must order, or all is wrong. We must be brought down that we may be lifted up. There is no way of being exalted except that of being abased first. Down we must come. The lower we get the higher we are. The more we lose for Christ the more we gain. The more we taste of death for Christ the more we shall enjoy life.

Then there is another thing: that is that you must consider your brother. You cannot do anything just because you have liberty to do it. You may have liberty to eat meat, but if your eating makes your brother offend then you must not eat meat lest you make your brother to offend. You use your liberty in this way, and you forego this or that, even though quite lawful if it causes your brother to offend. You think very much of the welfare of your brother, if you are in the truth of the house of God; and you forego many things you might otherwise do, because you want to profit your brother. You abstain from using your liberty in certain cases, though you maintain that you have this liberty. There is a great lack in this respect. One often hears, "Why should I not do so and so; I see no harm?" Still, if it harms your brother, do not do it. Abstain, unless you have a command from God. This tenderness for your brother may seem to hamper, but it will bring a rich reward.

It was fifteen years ago when we had our first

Conference at Umballa. One Indian Christian was present, now you see a great many present, and the lot of the English Christians is irrevocably bound up with their lot. The thing is done and it cannot be undone. Some have said, "Why did we not go our own way?" But what is done is done, and we must accept the fact that our lot is bound up with theirs. If their state is good we shall prosper, and if their state is bad we shall suffer. Remember that you cannot help it, do what you will. As long as I have been here I have laboured among the people of this land as well as I could, till sometimes my own children have said to me, "You love the natives more than you love us," while the Indian Christians have often thought that they were not loved at all. That is the peculiarity of God's things, they will be either our blessing or our scourge. A blessing if we accept them from God, a scourge if we refuse or neglect what God lays on us. The only thing to do is to rise to the responsibility and to accept it while feeling our utter feebleness, our own utter insufficiency for it. We must accept our responsibility, each one according to his measure, or we shall suffer for it in our own souls.

There are a number of Indian Christians among us for better or for worse, and you have got to make the best of it. A measure of the truth which God has given us has been widely spread in North India, and we have to see that souls are cared for and nourished in the truth. Of course, this responsibility is not a thing to be taken up lightly, but it is not a thing to be left alone. It needs to be taken up in the fear of God, and in brokenness of spirit.

There is nothing on the face of the earth so beautiful as men from two nationalities, with diverse ways, opinions, and tastes, who have naturally little in common with each other, united in one common bond, by the one Spirit, and this one Spirit creating common joys, common feelings and tastes, and binding all together in one blessed fellowship in the house of God. Where all the company are of one nationality only, little of this is known; and we in India have an opportunity of shewing the power of the Spirit in a way altogether unique. I know the difficulties and I know the blessing of it, and I warn you not to be neglectful and to think that you can treat the matter lightly. Find out for yourselves what God wants of you. Accept your burden, and your burden becomes your gift (see Psalm lv. 22 and see marginal reading), your sorrow will become your joy. But if you refuse and say, "Am I my brother's keeper?" you refuse God's gift, and you refuse that whereby God wants to bless you richly in your soul.

We do not as children of God remain units. We become welded into a whole, whether as the house of God, or the body of Christ; and you cannot separate yourselves from that in any way according to God, or say, My brother is responsible for himself. You are welded into one whole. That is the truth of God. The view that some of us practically take is just this, that we are like a number of shot brought together in one box. We come together at will, and separate if it does not suit, but this is not the Church of God at all. Put that box into the fire and the shot will be fused into one whole. That is more like what the Church of God is.

Responsibility is a peculiar thing. Do what you

will you cannot get rid of it. The most irresponsible act of our lives was when we were born. Since then we are tied down in every direction by responsibility though utterly unable to fulfil it, and the only thing to be done is to accept our responsibilities in brokenness of spirit rolling the burden on to Christ. You see God makes us responsible for what is absolutely impossible, and He wants us to accept the burden looking to Him, then He fulfils that which we could not do, and brings blessing out of that which otherwise would only be a curse. Blessed be His name.

FREEDOM

JOHN viii. 30-36

"If the Son shall make you free ye shall be free indeed." We will look a little into this matter of freedom. It is said some believed on Him, and the Lord says to them, "If ye continue in my word then are ye my disciples indeed." Now that is not the way some of us would have spoken. Some of us are very fond of that expression, "Once saved for ever saved," but it is not a scriptural expression and therefore to be avoided, and, moreover, it has obtained with some a very false idea attached to it. Practically with some it has come to mean that if some time or other, by hook or by crook, you can get yourself to believe or fancy that you believe that you are saved, then you are safe for ever, and no matter what you do nothing will upset this. Well, such an idea as this is certainly not the gospel of God. It is perfectly true that when God begins a work in a soul God will go on with the work in that soul for ever, but the only test of reality is continuance, and if you do not continue, you have no ground for saying you are saved.

"He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved." Some say, Oh! that is said to the Jew. True, it is so: but it is as true of you and of me as of the Jew. Do you understand scripture so little as not to see that while there is a present

salvation there is also a salvation which is future; see, for instance, 1 Thess. v. 8, 9. Who are the people who get this? Are they the ones who prove their reality by continuance or the reverse? The passage is as true of me as of the Jew, and I say, If I remain to the end I shall be saved. Does this disturb me? Not at all. I know God has wrought in me, and I know that He will continue to do so. I am quite at rest about it. If, however, a professed believer turns away, and does not endure, but lives in sin, can we say that it is sure to be well with him? Never. The proof of reality is continuance. The proof that it is going to be well with you at the end is that it is well with you to-day. There is every comfort in scripture for the man who is connected with Christ to-day. I believe we do not half enough press the living present reality of God's blessing, but rather try and rest on the past.

The whole of the first epistle of John is on this point. Its object is to lead real souls into a deeper enjoyment of the love of God and of all that which that love has provided, and also to expose unreality, and to prove the hollowness of that which is not in touch with God and with His Son to-day. If Christianity is a reality, then it is for present power and enjoyment. Christianity is not something to get a man to heaven by and by, while in the meantime he lives for earth and earthly things. It is to make us know heaven and the things of heaven to-day. "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." That will be the result, but how are we to get this freedom?

Those present when the Lord spoke did not understand this. They said, "We are Abraham's seed, and have never been in bondage to any man. How

sayest thou then, Ye shall be made free?" Jesus tells them the plain and naked truth. "Whosoever committeth (or practises) sin is the servant of sin." How exceedingly plain and yet how solemn. He cannot be free who is a servant of sin—a slave of sin. So simple that a babe can see it at once, and yet we could not find it out. It was necessary for God's Son to come from heaven to teach us this truth, and even now the mass of Christendom knows it not.

What is sin? It is the action of self-will. The creature asserting itself against the Creator by assuming the right to do what it thinks fit. What the man does need not be anything that people would call wrong, but if the will of poor fallen man is in action it is sin. Doubtless you may not like to offend against the rules of society, or to do anything which men would condemn, but you may desire to have your own will, that is the essence of sin. It is not freedom to think you are free. Let us take an extreme case. A man who drinks thinks himself a jolly fellow, and that he is in bondage to no one, but when he wants to give up drinking he finds he is a slave. So it is with us all in everything, while we thought we were free we were in the most terrible bondage to a greater power than ourselves. So it was with the apostle Paul. He says, "When the commandment came, sin revived and I died . . . the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin."

The servant does not abide in the house for ever, but the son does abide for ever. This is not a contrast between the servant and the eternal Son. The question is, Are you a servant or a son? If the former you must go, but if the latter you remain.

What is the great point in being a son? It is likeness. The son must take after the father. Now I ask, Who is your father? I wish to press it home. I say you must be like your father. God will not allow the relationship unless you can shew likeness.

The Jews said, "Abraham is our father." But the Lord will not allow this for a moment. He admits the natural connection, for He says, "I know that ye are Abraham's seed"; but He adds, "If ye were Abraham's children ye would do the works of Abraham." He insists on likeness being essential, and He goes on further and says, "Ye are of your father the devil." Why? Because there was the terrible likeness stamped on them. Is it not a solemn thing that day by day and hour by hour we are shewing our parentage? What is God? God is love. Well, then, to be like God we must be formed in love, then we are sons. If not, we make the claim, but it will not be admitted. Is this not a solemn matter? But remember there is no other way of freedom but by sonship, and we cannot be sons of God but by divine generation, and the divine nature, which results in likeness.

Do not think, Shall I get to heaven by and by? Ask yourself this, Am I right to-day. He who is right to-day is right for eternity, but he who is wrong to-day is wrong for eternity. To-day is the day of salvation, not to-morrow. Many think, Oh! to-day is the day for getting it; this is true, but that is not the meaning here: it is the day for having it, the day for enjoying it, the day for shewing it. We shall not talk about salvation in heaven, there will be nothing there to be saved from. Salvation implies danger, enemies, etc., and there will

be none of these things in heaven. I, however, want to press on you the value of "to-day."

People generally take up these things quite in the wrong way. They put everything off to the future, and thus they get rid of present responsibility and miss present enjoyment. With God it is the present that is pressed. How is it with us to-day? Let us ask ourselves, Are we free to-day? Are we sons to-day?

What is the sense of sonship? Why, that God's love is streaming into our souls. "Oh!" you say, "He loves me so much I cannot do without Him. I want to have His company, I want to walk with Him. I want Him to-day, I want Him all the time; I cannot do without Him. He is so good, and He loves me, He wants me; He cannot do without me. It is so blessed to know His love."

You cannot get liberty in any other way than this, for God must be supreme. He is free because He is love, and He must be sovereign in love. If you have the divine nature you are free, because you want what God wants, but if not you want to walk in your own way, and do not love God's way, and you are not free. What will the freedom of eternity consist in? Why, in God having His own way, and all delighting in that way. Well, the freedom of eternity is the freedom of to-day. Forgiveness of sins will not make us free. Justification will not make us free. For freedom we must be formed by love. To be free we must walk in God's way and enjoy so doing. It must be a willing thing, a thing of the heart. It is not freedom to do a thing while not liking to do it. For freedom I must love to do it, and find it my delight. How was Christ free? Because He found it a delight to do the will of

God. (*See* Psalm xl. 8.) What made it a delight to Him? "Oh! My Father is love, He is so good, His way is perfect." Nothing else is freedom. Whatever God my Father does must be best for me, and the best also for everybody else connected with me. He wants the best thing for me, He loves me so much. Nothing is freedom short of this. How does the Son make us free? He brings us to Himself, He lifts us out of ourselves, He renews us within so that we love to dwell with Him. He makes us to share with Himself, He seeks to absorb us with Himself that we may delight in Him, and it may become grief to do what is not according to His will, because in so doing we lose the conscious joy of His presence, which forms our life. We walk in the light of His presence, and His love gives exceeding joy to our hearts, and the bonds fall off, for there are no bonds in love. Sonship is through love, and love carries freedom with it. Is Satan free? No, he is the greatest slave of all, because he is a stranger to love. Is he who grumbles or frets free? No. Is the one who feels wronged free? No. Christ was free, for He took all things from God. (*See* Matt. xi. 25.)

Remember, therefore, that it is the Son, who makes us free. We would all like to be free, but none of us can make ourselves free. No power of man can make us free. Money will not set us free. The payment of our debts will not set us free. You may be in the power of an earthly tyrant and yet be free. You may pride yourself on your freedom and be a poor slave. May God give us to understand this blessed freedom.

Freedom is the consequence of the work of the Son within us, it is the result of divine power acting

on us inwardly, whereas we are always thinking of circumstances, but alteration of circumstances does not effect anything *for God in our souls*. Another thing that we are most unwilling to believe is that the state of things is as bad as the scriptures make out. It is hard to believe that our hearts are deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, it is hard to believe that Satan is the prince and god of this world. It is hard to believe the state of things described in 2 Tim. iii. 1-5 is a true picture of the state of Christendom to-day. It is hard to believe that the best things of the natural man will not do for God, so that they that are in the flesh cannot please God. It is hard to believe that only Christ will do for God, and that what is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God. Yet these lessons have to be learned, and when learnt we thank God for teaching them to us in order that we may condemn that which God has condemned, that God may be free to work out His will in us, and bless us according to His mind and purpose.

What is God's purpose? It is that we should be conformed to the image of His Son. This is the work He begins now, and it is divine material formed within, formed in love. The work is done by the Son, and it is like growth; we are not conscious of growing, but we grow. So with the work of God's Son, if we are with Him, and we let Him have His way, and we do not fight against Him, He will work in us, and though we shall not be conscious of the work going on yet it will be manifested by its results. Moses was in the presence of God, and when he came out his face shone. He did not know that it shone, but others could not help seeing it.

This is how God's work is done. It is like the growth of fruit, and not like the manufactories of man, which are carried on with great noise. Put a seed in the ground, it grows and grows, yet the growth is noiseless, almost imperceptible, and yet so real. It drinks in the dew of heaven, it extracts nutriment from the soil in which it is set, and it grows. The sunshine and the storm alike aid its growth, the rain and the wind and the heat are each good for it. Thus it is you will grow in the divine nature, if you will let the Son have His way with you. You will not have to do anything. It will all go on of itself, and it will be real solid work, and not like a piece of electroplate. Men take a vessel of brass and put it through a certain process, and it becomes coated with silver, but inside it is just as much brass as it was before. But God's work is from the inside, and it acts by displacement. In electroplating the silver does not displace the brass. If you scrape off the silver you come to the brass, that is the way man works, he seeks to cover up the old thing by civilisation, by education, by rules and regulations, but the old thing is there all the time, and the affections are untouched. God's way is quite the reverse. He forms new affections within by the revelation of His love in His Son, and displaces the old affections by the new which He has formed.

What is the character of the old affections? They all centre in self. One may be what the world calls selfish, another may be devoted to his family, his country, or even for the race of man; but if that is all, in the sight of God self will still be the object, for in the new affections Christ is the centre, for God cannot form affections, which have not that

supreme object before them. Thus it is that God makes free. We are not free unless the new affections cause us to delight in the will of God.

I will give you an illustration. I once had an old "chaukidar" (watchman), to whom I said, "You are getting rather old for night work, and if you prefer, I can give you day work instead. Now tell me what you would like?" He replied, "I want to do whatever your honour wishes." I said, "You need not mind telling me what you would really like, for I really want to meet your wishes." His answer was, "I really like what your honour likes." "Now," I said, "look here, I want you to let me know what you have got in your inmost heart." "Well then," he replied, "if your honour really wants to know what is in my heart, that which I have never told anyone, that which I really desire above everything, it is this—that I like best what your honour likes best." When we can say this in our hearts to the Lord then we taste the sweets of freedom. If in some little measure we can say, "Oh! God is so good, I am quite sure He is doing all things well: I am sure of it, because He gave His Son, and I would not have it otherwise than according to His will for anything; I am certain that His way is perfect, even when I cannot understand," then we have begun to enjoy true freedom.

But this cannot be done in the flesh. It is not stoicism, nor is it resignation, it is really being made a sharer with God's Son in spirit in resurrection. It is not effort, the Son of God produces it. His desire is to have us for Himself for His own joy and delight. Can you say, "The Lord must have me for His surpassing joy," then you have made a great stride towards freedom.

I have not much more to say, but I hope I have said enough to make you see what a wonderful thing this freedom is. Of course, it is a very difficult thing to speak of. I fear none of us have more than a glimpse of its blessedness. We have thought, "Ah! Christ has died for us, we believe on Him, and we know that we are going to get to heaven by and by," and there we often stick for years: but as for getting to heaven now, and getting the joy of heaven as a present reality, most of us know very little of it. Can you say to the Father, "I know that Thy commandment is life eternal?" Unless we enter into this now we have not reached Christianity as yet. How much of heaven have we tasted? This is the measure of our Christianity according to God.

We say we want to get to heaven eventually; but, alas! most of us want as much of this world's good as possible while we are on earth. I must acknowledge this is what we have all done over and over again, and it is a terrible thing. Babylon is the mistress of enchantments. She is so clever, such a witch, such a conjurer, that she often persuades us that we are uncommonly good Christians when we are absolutely living for the world. She has got a golden cup full of her enchantments, and by her fleshly piety she takes us in fearfully. Do not say, Yes, I know other Christians are thus enticed, but I am free from her snares. Not at all, you are no more exempt from her enchantments than anybody else. You need not look outside for evil, you will find it all in your own especial company and in your own heart. Have you not read, "Till the whole was leavened?" It is divine love alone which can expel the other affections and

lusts that are in the heart, and nothing but their expulsion by this love will bring us into freedom. It is divine nature and divine material; all divine work from beginning to end, and it must work by expulsion. A strong affection crowds out lesser ones, so divine love must expel all those things that are contrary to God's will. There is nothing unnatural about it. It is not monasticism, not is there anything morbid about this love. If you have it you will love your wife and your children a great deal better than you did before, only now the love will be true love instead of the selfish love of the past.

There is nothing in divine love to make you walk about as if you were a mediæval saint with a halo round your head, and too good to think of what is down here. You will be interested in all you meet, but in a new way. You will be longing for Christ to have His good pleasure in them. Never was there such a natural* man in the world as Christ; there was nothing forced about Him. There was nothing in Him for the smallest child to fear. He always did what was in His heart. He had nothing to hide as there is often with us. He was always natural. All was spontaneous with Him. Wherever He went He was always the same. He could say, "I am altogether that which I say." What came out of Him was just what was in His heart. He was the most natural person that ever walked this earth, for there was no effort in anything He did.

The ascetic is not so. With him all is forced and strained. It is all very different. Look at the Lord. He could go into the Pharisee's house and be just

* Of course this does not refer to fallen human nature, nor even to Adam's nature unfallen.

Himself; He could be before the king or ruler and be Himself; if with publicans and harlots He was just Himself. In every company and amidst every variety of trying circumstances He was always the same; just Himself, because He walked with God, and God was with Him. He always knew the will of God, always did it, and was always happy in doing it. There was absolute freedom with Him, because He was always dependent, and He had no desire but to do the will of God.

May we, too, learn the joy of finding our pleasure in the blessed will of God.

RICH AND POOR

MATT. xix. 24-26 ; 2 COR. xii. 9

NOW I think it must strike anyone when he gets a glimpse of what God's thoughts for the believer are, what high thoughts God has about him! We exclaim, "Oh! this is absolutely hopeless. It is impossible." Well, that is perfectly true. It *is* impossible. The impossibility and the hopelessness of being what God wants us to be is the beauty of it. It stamps the matter as from God. If it were only very difficult indeed, there would be no encouragement, at all events, for ordinary people like ourselves, and it would only be a human thing after all. One or two especially earnest and devoted people with extraordinary natural powers might be able to attain to it, but the mass would have to give it up and say, It is too hard for us.

But, thank God, it is absolutely out of the power of man altogether; and therefore, if done at all, God must do it, and is not that a comfort to you, and to me? Remember that it is not difficult but *absolutely impossible* for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God, and yet *every man* is rich naturally. Yes, it is perfectly true that we are all naturally rich, for every one of us has an uncommonly good opinion of himself, and is therefore a rich man. Yet it is impossible for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God; no one enters there till he is

stripped of all, and is rich no more. Then, when stripped of everything, he finds he is really rich, whereas when he was rich he was really poor. This is God's way, and it is wonderful in our eyes. Take the convicts in a jail, or take the man, who is a drunkard in rags, still he thinks well of himself, and makes excuses for himself, till God strips him.

It is a great thing to see that what Christianity brings in is divine from beginning to end. God has to do it all. Nothing of man comes into it at all. Who is the best off, the one who has most of what we call the natural good qualities? Not at all. The greatest hindrance to arriving at the point of blessing are the qualities men admire. "That which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God." That one is best off, who most quickly learns that he has nothing of his own but his sin, and that he has no strength to be any other than what he now is, struggle how he may. Therefore the more wicked I see myself to be, and the bigger the fool I recognise in myself, the better it is for me and the better for God, for then, and not till then, God can work. As Billy Bray said, when asked how it was he got on so well, "It takes most people such a long time to learn that they are fools, and I knew I was a fool to start with." But we think so well of ourselves that we struggle and fight for years and years rather than come down to this: we think if we do we shall forfeit blessing, whereas it is only then that blessing can come, for not till then can we belong to the company of the "blessed poor" spoken of by the Lord in Luke vi. 20. The difficulty is not in our badness, in our helplessness and need. The whole difficulty lies in this that we fancy we have resources, and will

not abandon this idea. It is easier to give one's body to be burned than to realise nothing is our own but our sin. Once we come to know this all is easy, then God does the rest, and the impossible is brought to pass.

But till we come to this no blessing can come, for it is impossible that God should give His glory to another. Did He do so, He would cease to be God. He cannot hand over His place to you; He cannot give you the credit that belongs to Himself alone. Blessed be God, He must have the glory. Therefore it is that God must smash us to pieces in order to bless us, because only thus can He be glorified in His Son, and it be seen that He alone is worthy. Man is worthless, he is done for, there is not a single good thing in him at all. God has set him aside and begun again in a new Man according to His own heart, and when God works in us all is well, not otherwise.

Well, I know that you have an answer ready for me. You will say, "Then I am not responsible." "Oh! yes, you are, you are responsible all the time." You say, "This is not logical, not according to reason." But you are mistaken. Take God's word in its simplicity, accept it all, give each part its due weight. Accept all that is said about God's sovereignty. Accept all that is said about man's responsibility. Do not shirk either. It will prove to be perfectly according to reason, only that reason is of such a high order that man's reasons cannot reduce it to reason. Man is out of joint, and he will not understand till he gets into joint again. In the meanwhile we have to accept the truth like a little child would; then all will be simple, for we shall then be the subjects of divine power, and find

that our badness and our foolishness are just the occasion that God desires that He may come in with His divine power. God has everything for the one, who takes his place as a poor one before Him.

God grant we may all hear the Lord's voice saying to us, Blessed poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. What is the kingdom of God? What are the kingdoms of men? Kingdoms where men have sway, and, therefore, all is wrong. The kingdom of God is where God has sway in grace according to His love, and all is blessedness there. Therefore let Him smash you up and break you to pieces. You will find this the road to blessing. The reason why we have to be so smashed up is because we are something, and this something hinders blessing. "Nothing" cannot be smashed up, "nothing" cannot be squashed, "nothing" cannot be humiliated, "nothing" cannot be put down lower, "nothing" cannot be hurt. Oh! if we were only nothing to be made nothing of. If we would only let God come in in this way, and make room for all His blessing how happy He would make us.

Look at the cross on the one hand, and the glory on the other. Christ Himself was cut off and had nothing, therefore we have the answer to the cross in the glory. This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes.

JOY

LET us look a little into the subject of joy as spoken of in the writings of the Apostle John.

"He that hath the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled." (John iii. 29.) Now that is the joy of John the Baptist, and very beautiful, unselfish joy it is. A wonderfully beautiful joy, for he had not the best place, and he knew there were others, who would have a deeper joy; still it was intense joy to him to hear the Bridegroom's voice. There was no jealousy about it, he delighted in the blessing he had, and in the thought that others would have a better place still. It is a very sad fact that at least half the sorrow that there is in the world is because of the blessings of others. This sounds very strange, but if you look into the matter you will see that it is true. The thing, which troubles most people and causes the most discontent and murmuring, is that some one else is better off than themselves. Oh! the misery caused by this envy and jealousy. If you take up one of the Indian papers, you will see it full of letters complaining because some one is better off than the writer is. In contrast with this it is very beautiful to see the unselfish joy of the Baptist.

Now we may have a far higher joy set before us, and yet we may have little or no enjoyment of it. We will come to our proper joy presently, but first wait for a moment and contemplate this unselfish joy. My mind is so taken up with it that I do not like to leave it, for I do see every day how the fact that some one has a better thing so often spoils a thing before delighted in. But there is no need to look outside for evil, for there is not a single evil that you find in the world that you will not find among ourselves. And there is no evil in the world that you will not find an answer to in your heart. The selfishness, oh, the terrible selfishness of our hearts, how it comes in! What damage it does. There is not a day but it comes in to hinder the cause of Christ.

"These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." (John xv. 11.) Now see the beauty of the Lord Jesus in speaking thus so that His joy, the joy of the eternal Son, who became flesh and dwelt among us, that His joy might abide in us and that our joy might be full. Now this is a joy much deeper and greater than that of John the Baptist. What is this joy? It is the joy that came to the Son from the knowledge of the intense love that the Father had for Him, and His desire in these chapters is to put His own into His place, that there might be the same sense of the Father's love that He had, and that thus their joy might be full. Now I want to say a warning word. I think some of us are over-zealous in some matters. For instance, some Christians, if they see a person saying the Lord's prayer, at once tell him he is all wrong and not spiritual. They take him beyond

his depth, and make him legal, and in result he often breaks down altogether. If you take a Christian beyond where he is in his own soul, the result will be disaster. A snake for instance does not cast one skin till there is another ready to take its place. If a person gets a sense of the blessing spoken of in these chapters he will not be able to help seeing that dispensationally this prayer is in some measure out of place for him. If, however, he has not reached this in his soul, you will take him beyond his measure and damage him.

As a matter of fact most of us have not got beyond the title, "Our Father, which art in heaven." The question is have we got up to it, for it means a great deal? If I know God as my Father in heaven I shall not have a single anxiety about myself, because I know that my Father is looking after me with tenderest love, and has a thought for everything concerning me down here. Even this will not take us to the end of this wondrous title. It goes far beyond this, it includes the truth that the Father will take care of all the interests of His Son on earth. Look at Matthew xvi. and xviii. This is the title used there, and therefore all that is revealed there is involved in that title. The title taken by the divine Person is always the key to the revelation.

Now is it not true that a great many of us have not got up to this title much less got beyond it. Can I say to God that not only have I not got a single care, not only do I know that He will perfectly care for my interests, but also that I am sure that He will look after the interests of Christ down here, so that I can rest about Christ's interests

as well as my own because He is the Father in heaven.

When, however, you come in your soul to the title "The Father," then you have more even than what is stated above. That something more is that you have entered into what the Father is to the Son, and what the Son is to the Father outside the interests of this world, outside of everything that goes on down here. It is only where we enter into this love and this joy that we know a higher title than "Our Father which art in heaven."

John xvi. 23, 24 is, however, sometimes brought forward to shew that this prayer is not meant to be used by us. The argument is this, the Apostles had up to that time asked nothing in His name, that prayer is not in His name; therefore as all prayer henceforth is to be in His name this prayer must necessarily be dropped from the time of His death. I think, however, that those who use this argument do not understand the force of the passage, nor have they understood what asking in the Son's name involves.

The Apostles of course had not asked in the name of the Son up to the time of Christ's death: but to ask in His name is not the tacking on of certain phrases at the end of the prayer. It is right enough to say, For the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ," "but to ask in the Son's name is much more than this. It implies a state of soul, and is not a matter of words. When you pray in His name, it is not yourself at all, it is Himself who asks. You are lost, you are gone. That prayer must be answered in full. There is no other condition necessary to such prayer as this. When you pray in the name of the Son, it is

the Son asking through you. How can it but be answered. If, however, you say to me, Would you like all *your* prayers answered thus? I say, God forbid! I could not imagine a greater curse. Look at 1 John v. 14, "If we ask any thing according to His will, He heareth us." That is another matter, that is not asking in His name, but that when we ask according to His will He hears. This is very blessed, but it does not rise to the asking in His name. So also Phil. iv. 6, 7. This, too, is very blessed, but does it mean we get all we ask? Certainly not, that would be the worst result. We get a much better thing. We get the peace of God which passes all understanding. No one can ask in the Son's name but as identified with the Son. The speaker is gone, and there is nothing but the Son, who is speaking and acting in him. Thus it is that it is not the words, which are said, which constitute asking in the Son's name, but a state of soul in which you are lifted outside yourself by the knowledge that you are here as the Son was, and loved with the same love wherewith He was loved.

If you really want to get on and rejoice the Father's heart you must have this joy. This does not mean that you will have no sorrow; on the contrary, you may have very difficult circumstances indeed in your pathway here, but you will be so lifted up above these circumstances by the Father's love that your heart will be filled with joy. This is not patience or resignation, it is fulness of joy, an infinitely higher thing, the same joy the Son had from the sense of the Father's love.

But why is the next word about loving one another? Because the sign of all signs of this

joy being made good in us is that we love one another: that we have the deepest longing for the interests of God's Son in one another. If now there was only something of that among us how it would stop ten thousand things that continually happen among us. Mind you "one another" means "one another." It does not mean certain special Christians, it includes all. But you say, So-and-so is not nice. Well, if you can only love the nice ones how do you differ from the world. You must love the nasty ones as well as the nice ones, if you are to carry this out; and you will not be able to help yourself. If this nature is in you you *must* love all the family. You do not try to, the love comes of itself. You must love.

Well, it was the joy He had in His Father's love which kept the Son amid all the ignominy and the shame of His sorrowful life down here. The love of the Father filled His heart and He does long for us to have this joy. (See John xvi. 19-24.) How full these verses are of joy. He says, Ye shall weep. Why? Because you love Me and you will weep for My absence, but your sorrow will be turned into joy because you have Me back again, and far nearer than I ever was. The Son has not gone further away by going to the Father, on the contrary He has come much nearer. He is a great deal nearer now than when the disciples handled Him with their hands, and when John leaned upon His bosom. There is a far nearer place for you, if you will have it. Those were the figures, you may have the blessed reality figured by that handling and that leaning. How marvellous, the Father Himself loves you, not pities you, nor is gracious to you, but He can find His joy and

pleasure in you. It is the same delight that He, the Father, found in His own Son. It is so blessed, so wonderful. There is nothing which can be compared to it. It is outside all the sorrowful circumstances of earth. This love takes us to the place where none of these things ever come: the place of the infinite love of the Father to the Son, outside all the failure and the strife down here, and the sense of this love fills your soul while you walk down here. Alas! how very little we know, it is such a very wonderful joy. Then He goes on, "Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full." It is identification with the Son, the promise is absolute. There is no condition there except that you ask in the Son's name. These truths are so blessed and we lose so much by refusing entrance into them. The world seeks to rob us of this joy by presenting what will allure the flesh.

The Lord wants us to challenge ourselves about this, whether we know anything about this deep joy. It is the wonder of wonders that, at the present time, while yet in the body, and walking in the scene of His rejection, we should have the same joy that the Son had when He walked through this world of sorrow.

In 1 John i. 3 and 4, the Apostle tells us that he declares to us that which he had seen and witnessed of the eternal life, which was with the Father in the eternity passed, and was manifested unto them, the Apostles, in time. The Apostle declares this that we may have fellowship with them, and their fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. This it is which will give you fulness of joy. It will be the part fulfilment of the prayer given us in chapter xvii. In verse 11 it is the

blessed fellowship of the Apostles with the Son in His fellowship with the Father. They were brought into this blessed fellowship. In verses 20 and 21 we are brought in. "That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us." This is a lifting out of all that is of ourselves, there is nothing of human nature here, nothing even of Adam unfallen, but a new order altogether. All brought to the same blessed fellowship of life and affections; one aim, one desire filling all, the same love permeating all and bringing all into the same joy.

This love is altogether unique, it is not a thing of earth at all. The Apostle will not call that love which is not of God, nor will he allow that any one can love, who is not of God. (1 John iv. 7.) Even a mother's love is not love according to John. Just as the brightest light that you can make upon the earth, if held up before the sun, becomes a black spot; so it is that a mother's love is no love in the presence of the infinite love of God made known in the Son. We all know that God is very good to us, we are thankful He has blotted out our sins, but how little we know of love. This alone will give fulness of joy. This alone will bring you into a fellowship where there is no failure, and no breaking down. This fellowship is in the light, there the Father is fully expressed in the Son, and there it is that the love of the Father is known in contrast with all that is of the world.

"I trust to come unto you, and speak face to face, that our joy may be full." (2 John 12.) "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth." (3 John 4.) Now this shews what was the practical outcome of that love in the Apostle.

The sense of the love must manifest itself thus. The Apostle had a great joy in his children and he longed to be with them that his joy might be full. His love came out thus. He would be with them for his own joy. Love seeks the company of the loved ones. Yet this was not the love that allows a person to go on with evil. "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth." His joy was in the truth, and in seeing his children walk in truth. It is not the false love, which acquiesces in that which is not of the truth in order that Christians may be pleased. In both these little epistles we see those, who have to be resisted. It is the love, which is founded on the truth; and which, while it must love, and cannot help loving, yet must act according to truth. This is love that we walk after His commandments, and this is the commandment that, as we have heard from the beginning, we should walk in it. Those, who love thus will have much sorrow, but their joy will superabound above all the sorrow, for in the midst of the sorrow they will be filled with joy. It will happen to them as is said in Isa. xliii. 2, death will prove to be their life, their sorrow, will turn into joy and that which threatens to consume will only consume that which hinders their entrance into the life of joy eternal. No lesser joy than this can the Father give to His own seeing He has to express by this joy His delight in His own Son.

THE MARKS OF A TRUE TEACHER SENT FROM GOD

I WANT to speak to you of the marks or the character of a true teacher sent from God. I will speak to you in a personal way, though it is not exactly what I passed through personally, I wish to portray the way in which a real seeker after God will be led, and when I look back upon my own past life I find I was led upon lines somewhat like those about which I am going to speak to you.

Imagine then a seeker after God. He wants to know what he has to do, what way he has to go; how he is to act, how he is to get blessing. Thus I look around, and I want to know who will show me any good, not something to enable me to get on in this world, but something that will set me right with God. I am sinful, and I want someone to help me in this condition. I look around and I find no one to help me. What am I to do? I want to know someone, who has come from God and can help me. Being in what is called a Christian land I naturally turn to the teaching of Christ. What do I find there? I turn to and read from the Sermon on the Mount, "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful:

for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God."

"Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven."

"But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. . . . Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

I would like you to read very carefully the fifth, sixth, and seventh chapters of the Gospel of Matthew. I find that every person admits that they are most excellent teaching. Now this Man has one of the first marks of a true teacher. His teaching commends itself to every moral sense that I have.

The next thing I find is that I want something more from a teacher than to tell me what is right. Does the teacher himself carry out what he teaches? That is a most important point. The true teacher must himself walk in the way he teaches to others. I remember some time ago hearing a person, who talked so nicely, that I said I should like to go and see him at home. But then I heard that his life was very different to his teaching. Of what good is that? Now let us ask about this wonderful Teacher,

who taught these wonderful things that I read to you. How did He live? Thank God, He lived all that He taught and more. He said, "Pray for your enemies." What did He do? When His enemies nailed Him to the Cross He prayed for them, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." When they crowned Him with thorns, and when they spat upon Him, He bore it in meekness.

He taught men to trust in God, and when the devil tempted Him (after He had fasted forty days and was hungry), to use His own power and convert the stones into bread, He was not moved from the path of dependence upon God. He said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God." He tells us to be kind to those, who treat us badly, and when He was going to a village that treated His messengers badly His disciples wanted Him to call down fire from heaven upon them, but He rebuked them saying, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. The Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives but to save them."

Now I find that everything this blessed Teacher taught He did, and more, in His blessed life of love down here in this world. He met all the ignominy and shame and contempt, all the malice and ingratitude of men, shewing all the time grace and kindness, meekness, goodness and truth, never getting into a passion, He went on unweariedly with all His works of love and goodness. I find in Him not only a Teacher, who could teach wonderful words, but who also lived a life more wonderful than His teaching.

Now I look around at other of the world's great

teachers. I find great names, Confucius, Zoroaster, Mahomed, Krishna, Buddha, Gautama. I find in their teaching beautiful words. But you will not find in all their teaching anything like the teaching of Jesus Christ. Suppose I take the testimony of a man well-known, Professor Max Müller, who did so much to make English people acquainted with the literature of the East. Well, what does he say? Why he says, no one in his senses would dream of comparing the Bible with the Sacred books of the East, they have a jewel here or there, but the Bible is all jewels throughout. Now I see these teachers, and I enquire as to their lives. Some lived good lives, and some horrible lives, but I do not find anyone, whose life was like that of the Lord Jesus Christ as I desire to follow Him.

Well now, when I take the teaching of Jesus Christ, then the more I try to carry out what is enjoined in the sermon on the mount the more I find how utterly unlike it I am.

I appeal to you, if you have ever tried to follow a code of morals (and every one of us has some code or other), whether you did not find yourself incapable of attaining it. Jesus said, If you look on a woman to lust after her you have committed adultery in your heart. Are we able to follow His teaching? There is something in us that makes us unable to follow His teaching. There is no power in fallen man to enable him to carry into practice the true teaching. I need, therefore, that my teacher should be something more than a teacher, and much more than an example. I need a Mediator, one who will bring God to me or me to God, so that I, a poor helpless person, may find my sins blotted

out, so that I can have to do with God. Such a person is Jesus Christ: not only do I find in Him a perfect Teacher, and an example in Himself of all that He taught, but that He came into this world to die for sinners, to reconcile men to God in His own body on the tree.

This is a tremendous thing. I find that this wonderful, remarkable, extraordinary Person actually died for me; died in order that I, at a distance from God, might be brought to God, so that I might meet with a loving welcome, and find, like the prodigal, my past all blotted out, and that I am reconciled to God. I receive a loving welcome, the best robe, a ring on my finger, shoes on my feet, and the fatted calf killed. The Father says, "Let us eat, and be merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost and is found." Then I find my teacher is my Mediator, and my Redeemer, and I am reconciled to God. I find nobody else, who can do that. Neither Buddha, Krishna, Mahomed nor any of these teachers could do that, whatever else I can find in their lives when it comes to this they are left far behind; Jesus Christ alone will do for me.

But I find I want still more than this. I am even yet powerless. How am I to live a holy, pure and unselfish life in this world? I want power, and power is just the thing I cannot acquire myself. Supposing I say, "I'll never do wrong again." That will not do. We shall never set ourselves right that way. Paul says, "I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead. For I was alive without the

law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died." He found he was powerless to keep the law or the code of morals, which his conscience thoroughly approved. The more conscientious you are, the more you will find how powerless you are to do good, and that evil is present with you.

Therefore this teacher of mine, who is my Exemplar and my Redeemer, must also be One who will give me power. Thank God, Jesus does give me power. He, the last Adam, became a life-giving spirit. He says, "The dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live." Living for self is not living. "She that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth." Jesus said, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." Paul could say, "I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me." Jesus Christ gives me power to live. He puts the Spirit of God into my soul.

You remember that at Pentecost Peter said, "This Jesus hath God raised up whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear."

Now I have found not only a Teacher, an Exemplar, and a Redeemer but also a Life-giver. Now I can understand things I could not understand before. I have a new power in me which is more powerful than the old evil nature. I do thank God that the blessed Lord Jesus Christ is the Giver of the Spirit, the Giver of life. Now I know God, I know His love, I know He is for me, and all

His thoughts towards me are thoughts of mercy and blessing. I live, because I live to Him. It is not that I always do right. I still need to confess my sins to Him. Nevertheless, my whole life is changed. I have a new life. Oh! how I thank God for Jesus Christ.

Well now, having found that, I have taken a great step, so to speak, on the way. I find I needed a power, and a life which I had not got naturally, and I find all this in that blessed Teacher, Jesus Christ. But I want even more. I find I am surrounded with temptations and difficulties and many snares, and I have many enemies, not only men and women, but evil spirits, i.e. spiritual enemies. Satan and his hosts are against Christ and His people. Therefore I not only need a Teacher, an Exemplar, a Redeemer, and a Life-giver, but I want the support of that Person all along the way. Now this also I have in Jesus. He is my Shepherd, He guards and He keeps me. He is my blessed Head in heaven. My High Priest, for He represents me before God. He is my Advocate with the Father. He intercedes for me that I fail not, and if I fail His intercession restores me. In fact, He undertakes to look after me every step of the way. How great then is this Blessed Teacher. He is not now on the Cross, though He did die on the Cross, but He is a living Man in the glory, and He has sent down His Spirit to dwell in me. Still He has not done with me. He is caring for me every day. He hears my voice, He shepherds me. Grace and mercy follow me all the days of my life, and I have every reason to trust Him for every stage of the way. Not that the Christian life is an easy one. God loves us too much to let the Christian

life be an easy one. He piles difficulties on us in order that we might find how much we need the support of Christ all along the way, and thus we learn to know that blessed Person.

Therefore I say beginning with Him as Teacher I find Him my Exemplar, I trust Him as my Redeemer, I know Him as the One who gives me life, and I have Him as my support all along the way.

But even that is not enough. I need to get satisfaction for the heart. Man is such a wonderful creature, he has been made in the image of God, and nothing will satisfy Him but that which is divine.

God has been pleased to set forth the Blessed Lord Jesus Christ, not only in all these ways which I have enumerated, but also as the supreme object of our affections, because He is the Object of the Father's affections.

Thus I have learned that God the Father has set His love upon me, that Jesus His Son has set His love upon me, and, strange to say, I am essential to their happiness. Love surpasses every other quality. Where you love you want the company of the loved object. Many people illustrate the Gospel of Jesus Christ somewhat in this way. Let us say there is a very poor man, he is sick, penniless, and out of work. A kind person comes along and finds him employment, having been very kind to him and providing for all his need. Now he says I have found you a nice appointment. I have set you on your feet, now go your way happily.

That is not in the least like the Gospel. The Gospel is this. God never sends us adrift to make our own way. We are essential to His happiness. The wonderful part of the Gospel is this, that I a poor worthless thing, horrible sinner that

I am in myself, He has taken up, and taken such pains with that I may be His for ever. He died for me to cleanse me. He lives for me, He loves me so supremely that I am indispensable to His happiness, and He Himself is coming for me to take me to Himself, to live for ever with Him.

Jesus Christ said, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." "Where I am," is the great theme in the Gospel of John. In John 17 He prays, "Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given Me be with Me where I am that they may behold My glory." "With me where I am." Dear fellow Christians, He wants us. He cannot do without us. We are necessary to His happiness. Does not this make your heart run over with thankfulness? Now I have got all these six things in Him, and I say that He has left all His competitors far behind. No one could honestly compare Jesus Christ with any of the world's great teachers, Confucius or Buddha, Gautama, Mahomed, Krishna or anybody else. He is absolutely supreme in His excellence. All before Him must vanish as the stars before the rising sun.

There was a time when I longed to disbelieve all these things. I was very anxious to be a sceptic because I felt the sting of sin. I should have been very glad to believe that Christianity was based upon fable, but when I read infidel books their bias was so evident, their arguments so false, I

could not in decent honesty accept them at all, and I felt that as they had not better arguments than these they were but deceivers. Then I turned again to Christ, and found how blind I had been, and how fully a poor sinner could trust that blessed Person.

Now then I have found that this wonderful person, who is my Teacher, my Exemplar, my Redeemer, my Life-giver, my Support all along the way is also a Satisfying object for my heart. But He is even more than this. I needed to know that my Teacher was so great that He could not only take up my case, my helplessness and my need, but also everybody else's. In fact, I wanted to know whether He could deal with the need of the whole universe, and so deal with all the sin and evil which had come in, that sin should not be able to lift up its head again. Well this also I find in Him. John the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ, when he saw Him pass by said to his disciples, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." Yes, although God, He became a Man, humbled Himself and laid down His life, shed His blood in order that He might purge the whole universe of sin. God has committed to Him the task of setting everything right. This world belongs to God, and God has no intention of giving it up to the devil. God is going to get the whole world set right. He will fill the earth with righteousness, the heavens being full of righteousness also. This wonderful Person has shed His blood, and He has gone up on high far above all heavens. What for? Why, that He might fill all things? Everything, the whole creation is going to be brought into subjection to Him, everyone is going to own Him as Lord. Under His mighty power all will have

to bow to Him. God is going to fill the new heavens and the new earth with Christ, so that God can dwell there, as it is written in Rev. xxi., "Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them and be their God, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."

How blessed is it then beginning with the enquiry for one to teach me, to find a Teacher who leads me on step by step, and as I go on I find that He is greater and greater than I ever imagined. A Teacher, who not only teaches the truth, but who has lived it out in the midst of the greatest difficulties. One who laid down His life to redeem *His people*. One who gives them *His Spirit*, and thus is their Life-giver. Then He sustains them all along the way, and He Himself becomes their Object, their satisfying Portion. Then greater still, I find that He is sufficient to satisfy the heart of God. He is sufficient to bring the whole heaven and earth into subjection to Himself, and when He has done that He will hand over the kingdom to God even the Father that God may be all in all.

Therefore I say in my soul's experience He has led me to see what a wonderful Person He is, and what an abominable thing it would be if I did not put my trust in Him, and seek to be in this world for Him.

There are a great many people now attacking Christianity. Well, thank God, the more they attack Christ the more His perfections are seen. The sad thing, alas! is that there are so many who are

called Christians, who are not real Christians, and both from within and from without these enemies are pressing to the attack. A powerful argument in their hands is this, that we Christians are so little like Christ. If we were like Him it would be such a standing miracle before men that they would be obliged to confess that Jesus Christ is far more than they thought Him to be from reading the Bible. Nevertheless, nothing is more pitiful than to see a Christian ashamed of Christ and of His cross. A real Christian has the utmost confidence in Christ, and he is quite sure that Christ will triumph completely.

The Bible is quite clear as to the defection that would take place together with a departing from the truth. In 2 Timothy third chapter we read, "In the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." Therefore we have not the least fear when we hear that men are turning away from the faith, and that false teachers are seeking to undermine the faith of Christ, only it makes us keep close to Christ. We know that the world will not be converted to God except by the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Some perhaps are hindered by what they see in the lives of Christians, and we are sorry for this, but I say to you; be honest. I desire myself to be honest. I say if you are honest you will see that, there is nothing in heaven or earth like the

Lord Jesus Christ, for one reason which alone will suffice an honest person. This reason is that He rose from the dead. He is a living man in the glory of God; you will find that there is but one Man, who will satisfy the necessities in which you find yourself as a sinful man in this world, and therefore you are bound to believe on Him. If you do find this I beg of you to have the manliness to own Him, because if you do not, it will cost you infinitely more to reject Him.

As to those who are Christians in name I appeal to you. Are you real Christians or not? Have you received the Holy Ghost? Have you been born again? If so, you have found what a blessed thing it is to be a Christian, to know the Blessed Son of God.

But there are some people, who call themselves Christians, who complain of Christianity. They thought by becoming Christians they would improve their circumstances. Oh! this is a horrible thing when men become Christians for the sake of worldly gain. One such Christian does more harm than a hundred heathen. Be real. Christ never came into this world that His people might get gain in this world. When one said to Him, "I will follow Thee," He replied, Are you prepared for it? "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head." It is a very real thing to be a Christian. You will find the power of the world and the devil against you, but you will also find the power of God for you. That is why the early Christians turned the world upside down. But alas! most of us who are real Christians are half-hearted followers of Christ, and the mass of Christians have the name without the reality. Do

not let this, however, hinder you; if you have never come to Christ, come to Him now. If you have come to Christ, then live to Him. Is He the supreme object of your heart's affections? He is so worthy. He is so wonderful. Be a real follower of Christ. Follow Christ with all your heart. He has said, "If any man thirst let him come unto Me and drink." He will satisfy. I long with all my heart to see men, who will be true to Christ, seeking nothing from the world, but longing supremely to live for Him, who died for you and rose again. There is nothing better in this world than to be allowed in some little measure to suffer for Christ. See you lose not this honour.

PART III
COLLECTED WRITINGS

FASTING

FASTING is often mentioned in Scripture, not only in the Old Testament but also in the New, and, evidently, it has an important place in the believer's life, for it is one of the three things which the Father will specially reward, when rightly done (see Matt. vi.). The lack of it seems to involve great absence of spiritual power (see Matt. xvii. 21), whilst it is often mentioned in connection with special occasions of drawing near to God. Surely, then, it is highly advisable to enquire what fasting really is, according to God. May God help us in this enquiry.

The dictionary meaning of the word, which gives us the ordinary current use among men, is "Abstaining from food, chiefly on religious grounds." Christians generally look at it either as literally meaning this, or as self-denial in various shapes, culminating in denial of self as a whole, i.e. a refusal to know or to pity ourselves, or to care for self; or else as abstention from natural means of doing the service God may give us to do, as when David refused Saul's armour, or Ezra refused to ask for the king's escort, but betook himself to fasting and prayer. It is not denied that most of these thoughts are true as far as they go, but God's thoughts are not our thoughts, they are exceedingly wonderful. What does He say on the

subject? It is remarkable that He tells us both what it is not and what it is. He says:

"Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew My people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins. Yet they seek Me daily, and delight to know My ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God: they ask of Me the ordinances of justice; they take delight in approaching to God.

"Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and Thou seest not? Wherefore have we afflicted our soul and Thou takest no knowledge? Behold, in the day of your fast ye find pleasure, and exact all your labours. Behold ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness: ye shall not fast as ye do this day, to make your voice to be heard on high. Is it such a fast that I have chosen? A day for a man to afflict his soul? Is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? Wilt thou call this a fast and an acceptable day to the Lord?

"Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? When thou seest the naked that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh." (Isa. lviii. 1-7.)

(The verses following should also be read.)

Now, the solemn part of this is that it is spoken of those who professedly delighted in drawing nigh to God and doing righteousness, and were very scrupulous in outward observances. These are told that their literal fasting and outward show of sorrow were all vain and that their hearts were wrong.

Then comes the remarkable part of the address, for, after being told what fasting is not, they are told what it is, and, strange to say, it is not negative, as we should expect, it is positive. In other words, it is true philanthropy.

Now, we cannot understand why many should

speak of philanthropy as if it were a bad thing. Undoubtedly the term (like every other term God uses) has been sadly misused, but the remedy for this is not to say philanthropy is worthless, but to show the true philanthropy.

Twice is the word used in Scripture. In Titus iii. 4 it is translated "love (of God, our Saviour) toward man," and, in Acts xxviii. 2, it is translated "kindness." So far from philanthropy being worthless, it is what every true Christian must have. He must be a follower of Christ, and have the spirit of Christ. Now, what did He do? Never could anyone show such love to man as Christ did. God was in all His thoughts, but He laid Himself out completely for the service of man. "The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto [to be served] but to minister [to serve], and to give His life a ransom for many."

When we think of fasting in connection with the Lord, His forty days' fast before He began His ministry generally comes to mind. But the great point for us is that all His ministry was one of fasting. For, while His whole soul went up to God in the devotedness and obedience of purest love, He entirely spent Himself for man, never thinking of nor caring for Himself, having no leisure so much as to eat, blessing all, seeking all, serving all, doing good to all, and thus, in perfect self-renunciation, showing forth the love in the Father's heart for man.

Yet so little did He appear unto men to fast that they called Him a self-indulgent man, a gluttonous man and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. He was free to go everywhere, to the house of the Pharisee, though He got no real wel-

come; to the house of the publican and the degraded of the earth; but always to give, always with grace seasoned with salt, always in utter self-abnegation to glorify God and to do good to men.

What a life of fasting His was, everything for God, everything for man, nothing for self. And yet so different was His life from man's thoughts that they did not understand that He fasted at all. In this, as in all else, He carried out all He taught in Matthew vi. and elsewhere.

What about the apostles? They were to fast when the Lord was taken away. Were they arm-chair disciples and critics, or did they utterly spend themselves for man in the service of Christ? Surely the latter.

We have not very much about the lives of the twelve, but that of the Apostle Paul is brought before us in detail, laying bare the very secrets of his heart. Oh! how he fasted, as witness 1 Cor. iv. 9-13; 2 Cor. iv. 7-15; vi. 3-10; xi. 24-29, and numerous other passages. Yet, in spite of his marvellous labours, devotion, love, and self-denial, he did not lack accusers, who went so far as to accuse this Christ-like man of walking disorderly, (see Acts xxi. 24). He was made all things to all men if by any means he might save some, and to do this he kept under his body, and brought it into subjection, yet still many found fault with him, saying he was not a true apostle and detracting from his character continually.

He did nothing ostentatiously, he sought no credit, he wanted nothing in the way of honour from men, he suffered the loss of all things in faithfulness to Christ as he served the saints, and brought blessing to sinners. Yet he was a most practical man. See

how he acted on board ship, how he encouraged them all. See him on the island gathering sticks. Had he fasted according to men he would have stood apart with austerity and severity, and let them do these things. But his was the true fasting, which only those whose eyes are open could recognise as such, for he anointed his head and washed his face (figuratively speaking), and thus appeared not unto men to fast. He cared infinitely more for the souls of men than their bodies, yet he did not forget the body, but reached the soul through the body. (See Acts xx. 33-35.)

Let these examples teach us what true fasting is, viz. to be so constrained by the love of Christ as to lay oneself out in true devotion to man, and thus be a true follower of Christ. Let no one say that these things are not up to the Christian level. The glory of God and the blessing of man are indissolubly linked together. They are intertwined in all the life of Christ, in the lives of the apostles and of the saints. They cannot be separated. Glory to God implies blessing to man, and real blessing to man only goes along with the glory of God. Some think they can do good to man and leave God out, a terrible blunder. But it is no less a blunder to think we can glorify God and leave man out. The measure of our love to God is our love to our brother, and sentimentality is of no use in this connection. Downright whole-hearted devotion to the good of man, *in accordance with the will of God*, is what is so much needed in the present day. Knowledge there is in abundance, and there is no lack of eloquent speech. But lives burning with love to God and man are very, very rare, and from this lack we are perishing.

Yet few recognise such lives if they meet them. Most look for external demeanour, something that will appeal to men in the flesh, whereas the true fasting will appear not to men to fast, he will hide what he does, he will be simple, natural, cheerful, unaffected, hearty, loving, kind, and practical. He will not let his left hand know what his right hand does, that is, not only will he seek no credit from man, but, more important still, he will give no credit to himself. He will give up all, be servant to all, seek the good of all, but will say (and think) "I have done nothing, there has been no sacrifice, all has been grace and love to me all along the way." Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things, never fails because there is no self-seeking in love, all, all is for God and, being for God, is therefore for man who is made in the likeness of God.

May God raise up those, who truly fast in this manner, for fasting is not a negative thing, but love in activity.

“THY BROTHER . . . FOR WHOM CHRIST DIED”

LET us say to ourselves, softly and tenderly as such a name requires, “My brother . . . for whom Christ died.” (See Rom. xiv. 15.) “My weak brother . . . for whom Christ died.” (See 1 Cor. viii. 11.) I may destroy him, I may cause him to perish; I who am to love him as Christ loves me, and be willing to lay down my life for him.

Am I my brother's keeper? Assuredly. And where is my brother? Where is he not? Do not I meet him daily, in the train or in the 'bus, in mart or street, in private houses and in public places? Do I watch for him, do I rejoice when I find him, do I love and care for him, do I long for the opportunity to minister to him as the Lord enables?

We shall not soon forget how in Edinburgh in 1902 a beloved Persian brother stood up before some three hundred of us assembled for prayer in that city, and spoke to us with tears and broken utterances on the words, “Even thou wast as one of them.” (Obadiah 11.)

As he read, “But thou shouldest not have looked on the day of thy brother in the day that he became a stranger; neither shouldest thou have rejoiced over the children of Judah in the day of

their destruction; neither shouldest thou have spoken proudly in the day of distress. Thou shouldest not have entered into the gate of my people in the day of their calamity; yea, thou shouldest not have looked on their affliction in the day of their calamity . . . as thou hast done it shall be done unto thee; thy reward shall return upon thine own head!" and as he owned how guilty he felt himself, surely many of us who heard felt very guilty too.

The sectarian spirit is so subtle, so universal, it is by no means easy to be clear of it. How readily do we think, and speak, of *our* fellowship, *our* company, applying these terms to a few only of God's children, and knowing nothing of really priestly service on behalf of all those for whom Christ died. If Christ died for them, how dear they must be to Christ; does not this cause the *divine nature in us to yearn after them with deepest longings?* For whatever there is of Christ in them, shall we not unfeignedly rejoice, delighted to recognise the common bonds we have together in Christ. If, on the other hand, we see any defect (and who has not many), shall we not lay ourselves out to do anything we can to help them, lovingly and graciously with tenderest care; not harshly or in a spirit of superiority, but in a spirit of meekness, considering ourselves lest we also be tempted.

How terrible it is that we can destroy, or cause to perish, our brother. Do not say, This does not mean this or that; think of what it does mean, rather than the reverse. Surely it means this much, if not more; a wasted life, that might have been fragrant with Christ—a missing of the mark which God desired for him, a grieving of the heart of the Christ who died for him. Who can measure all this?

And perhaps I caused it, without meaning it, for I was unheeding, and thought only of what pleased myself, so I did what I wished, and did not consider my brother for whom Christ died.

But this is not the Spirit of Christ. He would not offend His Jewish brethren though He Himself was free (Matt. xvii. 27); He would bear the storm Himself that His disciples might be spared (John xviii. 8). Blessed Lord, who is like Thee? Grant to us of Thy Spirit. Let us be willing to give up anything of our own, if we can by so doing help, or prevent from stumbling one for whom Christ died. "Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling-block, or an occasion to fall in another's way." (Rom. xiv. 13.) As we pass through this world, and behold its dainties, let us put a knife to our throats seeing we are men given to appetite (see Prov. xxiii. 2), for surely we would not for our own gratification do aught that might stumble our brother.

Moreover, seeing that if one member of Christ suffer, all the members suffer with it: or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it: surely we should have the deepest care one for another that, at all events as far as in us lies, we should prevent schism in the body.

We cannot dissociate ourselves from the whole that bears Christ's name—we are part and parcel of it, and must share in the honour or the shame, the sorrow or the loss. If we were in a ship that was going on to shipwreck, could we save even ourselves by locking ourselves up in a little cabin and taking great pains to try and keep that in order? To whom God has committed much,

from them He will ask the more; and what He has given, He has given for the blessing of all; and great is the loss in the present day, because so seldom is the truth taken by those, who have it, to those, who have it not.

Freely we have received, freely we must give, and everyone who has is a debtor to him that hath not.

God loved, and so God gave. He gave His all.

Christ loved, and this love brought Him down to a sin-defiled world to seek for those whom the Father gave Him out of the world.

Paul loved, so he was made all things to all men that by any means he might save some, though the more he loved the less he was loved.

Is this easy? No, it means a path far more narrow than the legal separatist ever dreams of, and no one can tread that path save he, who is gripped with the almighty constraining love of Christ, and being thus set free, is compelled by that same love to deny himself, to lose his life for Christ's sake, and to yearn after others in some little measure as his Master did before him.

Let our brother be whom he may, let him be called by whatsoever name, be he morally well or spiritually diseased, let us ever remember that he is our brother for whom Christ died, and as such is entitled to our deepest regard, our fondest love. If this be not, where is that proof that we are disciples of Christ?

Many and diverse are the conditions of our beloved brethren for whom Christ died; many are young and tender; many ignorant and ill-instructed; many sick and sorry, weary and heavy-laden; many scattered, driven away, lost and perishing; many

lame, halting and stumbled. Oh! do not say they are wilful. Have we tried to help them, have we with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing with them in love, not in a patronizing way, or in a spirit of superiority, sought to heal and restore, to teach and to build up, that we may seek to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace?

Mark the tenderness of that man of God, Paul: "We were gentle among you, even as a nurse [nursing mother] cherisheth her children: so being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted to you . . . our own souls, because ye were dear unto us . . . Ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged everyone of you, as a father doth his children. . . . When Timotheus came from you to us and brought us good tidings . . . brethren, we were comforted over you in all our affliction and distress by your faith: for now we live, if we stand fast in the Lord." Do read these two chapters (1 Thess. ii. and iii.), they are so beautiful. Read 2 Cor. vii., and see his exultation in a single point of obedience by some of his naughty children, though much was still wrong. Read his address in Acts xx., his remarks in Phil. iii. 18, 19, and mark his tears even for the enemies of the Cross. Are we contemptuously to dismiss the thought of our brother with the remark, "He is in system" (very few of us are out of system, if not something worse). They are our brethren for whom Christ died.

Oh! God, melt these stony hearts of ours. Cause us (while indeed we seek to be disciples in the sense of Luke xiv., because we have tasted Thy love in Christ, in the great supper that Thou hast spread,)

in our dealings with our brethren, who in spite of evident defect may still be more Christ-like than we are, to reflect some tiny portion of the tender grace which Christ shows every day to us, even, remembering that Christ died for them, and loves them as He loves us.

TO LABOUR IN VAIN

WHAT a marvellous thing it is that the Spirit of God should have put into the mouth of the Lord, speaking prophetically, such words as these: "Then I said, I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain; yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God." (Isa. xlix. 4.) Blessed Lord, didst Thou even stoop to this, that Thine unspeakably blessed work should seem to be all in vain? Oh, wonderful grace.

Of course we know that the labour was not in vain, but all the eternal ages will be needed to bring out the meaning and blessedness of that wondrous work; still in appearance for the moment this work seemed in vain. May the sense of this grace sink deep into our hearts.

How many the lessons we may learn from the deep pathos contained in these words. We will only allude to a few.

We see first how mistaken are human judgments, how misleading are appearances. How dangerous it is to attempt to judge the work of others or even our own work. We are utterly incompetent to do this, for we know but little of God's plan and His ways for working out that plan, for these are past finding out; we know so little of the hidden springs in the hearts of man which are all important in determining the value of the actions.

How greatly needed the injunction to judge nothing before the time till the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness and will make manifest the counsels of the heart, and then shall every man have praise of God. (1 Cor. iv. 5.)

We may be assured that times without number it will be found that the apparently worthless is most valuable, and the apparently most splendid work of no worth.

We learn also not to be discouraged. All we need to ask is, are we where the Lord would have us be? Are we doing what He has set us to do? If so be of good cheer, dear discouraged worker, even though your work seem an utter failure.

Every servant of the Lord in downright earnest knows well the discouragement of the apparent wreck of that which he is doing. The lowly and the humble are specially prone to this discouragement, but the proud and self-satisfied know it not. Yet God does not want us to be discouraged, even though all appear to be in vain. He knows we are poor things, yet He has called us to put our hand to the plough, knowing we should oft make crooked furrows and imperfectly plough up the soil. Yet knowing this He chose us, He put the work into our hands, and, failure though it seem, yet our labour is not in vain in the Lord. Ours to do His bidding, His to give success or failure, but even the failure is no failure, it is part of the ways of God to bring about His purpose. There is a need—be for all the trouble—the ruin, the break up, the fiery trial, the bitter tears. Therefore let the tired, weary, baffled worker look up and take courage and count upon the Lord, all will be well.

Only let him who is pleased with himself and his work, and who judges that of others, tremble, for the first shall be last and the last first. He putteth down the mighty from their seats and exalts them of low degree.

Go on then, my fellow-workers, fear not, press forward, the result will be blessed, the Spirit of God is in you, He is working out in you and by you something of God's great plan for the glory of the Son, and the tearful, plodding sower and the joyful reaper will assuredly reap together, and many a one who has done nothing will have done much, and many who think they have done much will find how little it is. The barren bears seven and she with many children has waxed feeble.

Blessed Lord, may we thus learn the gracious lessons that Thou art so patiently teaching us; may we learn of Thee who art meek and lowly in heart, and when all our work seems breaking up, be able (in humility, confession of sin and self-judgment, but with deep thankfulness) to say, "Even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in Thy sight."

WOMEN AND CHILDREN NOT COUNTED

ONLY on two occasions did the Lord command that all His people should be counted, once before the journeyings in the wilderness (Num. i. 1-4), and once on the plains of Moab, preparatory to entry into the promised land (Num. xxvi. 1-4), but in each case only the males were to be counted, from twenty years old and upward, *all that were able to go forth to war in Israel*. What are we to learn from this?

First, to look at the question literally, we see that *every man* was expected to go to war; there was universal service in those days, and any holding back was strictly judged (Judges v. 23; xxi. 8-10). The women and children were loved, nourished and cared for, but the men were to fight the battles of the Lord.

Through the wilderness the armed host had to encamp round the tabernacle of testimony (containing the ark of testimony and the tables of testimony), they had to guard it when stationary or on the march. Fighting was not the business of the wilderness, but fighting there had to be in order that they might move onward.

In the land they had to fight first to take possession and next to maintain possession. To belong

to God's army it was necessary to be an able-bodied man, able to go to war. Women and children could not fight, on the contrary, they needed to be protected. Therefore, in the Lord's host, only the men were counted.

Now, what are *we* to learn from this? Surely that we are to long to be *men*. Of course, it is not now a question of sex in this matter, a sister may be a man of God (2 John, 10). And in Romans xvi. where we get a list of God's mighty men (corresponding to the mighty men of David's army, 2 Sam. xxiii.), we find that a large number of them are women. Therefore, it is not a matter of sex, but of spiritual strength and of growth. Every child of God should desire to grow and be strong for the Lord, for it is written, "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong."

But how are we to grow and become men? It is explained in Heb. v. 12-14. These Hebrew Christians ought to have become able to teach, but had to be taught again the elements of the truth, they were unskilful in the word of righteousness, and were babes, whereas those who are grown up are those who *by reason of use* have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. They did not answer to Christ in glory.

Here is the secret, it is a universal law that powers unexercised are soon lost, while by use and exercise these powers are increased and there is growth. Is not this the secret of much of our stunted growth, our lack of spiritual strength and discernment. Does not this account for the way we hang so much on others, blindly accept leaders, follow the multitude? Unless we make use of what God gives us for the good of others, unless there

is exercise every step of our path, unless we are weaned from dependence even on the best of men (Isa. xxviii. 9), how can we learn, how grow, how become strong? It is impossible. We must learn to find Christ sufficient.

Yet how many of us have thought that to settle down, and make ourselves comfortable, while we keep from gross evils and are regular at services and meetings is all that is desired, and that to fight the battles of the Lord belongs only to the few. This is clerisy, and it is found everywhere, not only where it is accepted in principle, but also where in principle it is strenuously denied. "To him that hath shall be given," "he that watereth shall be watered also himself," "much increase is by the strength of the ox," and "blessed are ye that sow beside all waters, that send forth thither the feet of the ox and the ass."

Again, it is indeed most important to be separate from evil, but what is true separation from evil? It is emphatically *not* the separation of the monk and the nun. True separation from evil is Christ-likeness which moves about amongst our fellow-men, but is altogether of a different spirit from that of this world, with other motives, desires and ambitions. Thus it is written, "He that loveth not his brother *whom he hath seen*, how can he love God whom he hath not seen," but what about our brother who lives in our street, our neighbourhood, and whom we have often seen, but we have never done anything to show our love to him? Will it do at the judgment-seat to say, he was not "of us," and therefore we were justified in ignoring him. We are bound to shew love to him, how have we done it? Truly we have reason to be humbled

to the dust, for we have not neighboured our brother, and if our excuse is, "Oh, he is all wrong," this will only make our own case worse, for the need was all the greater. "If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn to death, and those that are ready to be slain; if thou sayest, behold, we knew it not; doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? and he that keepeth thy soul, doth he not know it? and shall he not render to every man according to his works? (Prov. xxiv. 11, 12.)

We cannot grow unless we use what God gives us, what He gives to one he gives for all. As surely as in nature a limb used grows strong, and a limb unused becomes useless, so in spiritual things, if we are to (as we should) grow up to manhood to be men in Christ, and if we are to earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints, so by use in the setting forth of Christ from day to day among men are we to gain appetite, or otherwise we shall not desire the sincere milk of the word that we may grow thereby unto salvation. It is those who have purified their souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, who are thus addressed. (See 1 Peter i. 22, ii. 2.)

Services and meetings are, of course, most useful if rightly used, but there must be assimilation of truth, there must be deep exercise, there must be the bringing of the truth into use for the benefit of others. There must be faithfulness to God, but also love for *all* saints and the seeking the good of *all* men, if while being children in malice we are in understanding to be men (1 Cor. xiv. 20). Here again the subject is the edification of others. Therefore when services and meetings are made the end

before us instead of a means towards the end, they become a positive hindrance, just as undigested food does. We cannot be true to Christ and not do good to men; we cannot do good to men unless we are true to Christ.

May God then teach us how best to profit by that truth which He brings before us, how to assimilate it, and how to bring it into use first for God's glory, and then for the good of others, how to shew love to all our fellow-Christians, those who agree with us and those who do not, but especially those whom we have seen (i.e. live round about us), and how like Christ to be in true heart separation to God while seeking the good of all. Only thus can we grow up to be men, and be of those who are counted as able to go to war and share in the conflict that must go on until all enemies are put under the feet of Christ. Till then may we go on unto perfection (i.e. full growth), gaining real personal knowledge, each one for himself or herself, of Christ in glory.

THE TWO IDEALS

IN the beginning God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." What did He mean? It is perfectly certain that He did not mean that man should become like God in omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence. He had no thought that man should become God, or share in Deity; that was of necessity an impossibility. Nor did He mean that man should be independent, self-contained and self-sustained, as God is. This, too, is impossible for the creature. God must ever be God, and the creature be the creature, i.e. dependent, subject to God, sustained by Him. What, then, did He mean? Well, we may be quite sure that God had the Man Christ Jesus in view when He said that. And what God proclaimed in purpose was to have in man the perfect answer to what would be seen in God when it pleased Him to take His place among the creatures as the firstborn of all creation (*see* Col. i. 15), when He took the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men (*see* Phil. ii. 7). God never had any purpose but Christ; no one ever satisfied God but Christ; He is the Man of God's counsels, and the Man after God's heart. If man, then, is to be Godlike, that must be the pattern.

How marvellous was the Lord as a Man here. What is the first attribute of Godhead? Inde-

pendence. What was the special object lesson in the Son incarnate? Dependence. He came to do the will of God, never His own will. Dependence, dependence, dependence every step of the way. The more we study His life, the more marvellous it seems. Nor does He ever leave this place, having once taken it. It might, indeed, seem so, for it is written, "When all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all" (1 Cor. xv. 28). May we then logically conclude that Christ was subject as a Man on earth, will be subject again when the ages of trial are over, but is not so in the interval between the two? Impossible. Verse 27 is the answer. Moreover, the whole of Scripture makes it evident the Lord Jesus Christ always carries out the Father's will, not His own (though it is His own, too).

It is not difficult to understand the apparent paradox, for in the millennial reign it might seem as if He were reigning independently, but the climax of *manifested* subjection afterwards shows that this was not the case. Even in the height of His government He is always doing the will of the Father. We get, then, this marvellous fact, that God-likeness in man means an attribute which seems the opposite of God-head, viz. perfect and absolute dependence in the highest sense of the word. God is perfect as God, and for God-likeness man must be perfect as man, and for this absolute dependence is necessary; then it is God can do with him the utmost that is possible, and raise him to unimaginable heights, through, in, and with the God-man, Jesus Christ. And this is what God will do in each individual chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and

without blame before Him in love; and not only so, but all these individuals will form one perfect living organism, the Church of God, perfectly dependent in and united to Christ, the Head; and each item thereof will be in most perfect harmony with every other item, each preserving its individuality, but all without a jarring note in the whole, because of the perfect dependence of each member on Him, who is the life of all. Then it is that God's ideal will be fully reached. Man will be in God's image and likeness, and can have full dominion in consequence; and thus there will "be glory in the assembly in Christ Jesus, unto all generations of the age of ages." (Eph. iii. 21.—See New Trans.)

This is God's ideal and purpose, and He will bring it to pass. There is, however, another ideal set before man. It might seem at first as if the two ideals were not so very diverse, yet they are as far apart from each other as Satan is from Christ.

This other ideal is found in the words which the serpent said to Eve: "Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." (Gen. iii. 5.) We must remember, too, that the Hebrew word *Elohim*, herein translated "gods," is the same as elsewhere in these chapters translated "God," which makes it more bold and blasphemous still.

We have seen what God meant by what He said in the matter of God-likeness, let us now enquire what the serpent meant by what *he* said. Now, it is quite plain that the serpent did not mean that Eve (and others) would be exalted in this way beyond himself. If others were to become as gods through his teaching, how much more must he, who knew good and evil, and incited them to this knowledge, be as "gods"? *In a sense*, what he said was true

(see Gen. iii. 22), and, indeed, God speaks in Scripture in a limited sense of others beside Himself being "gods," as in Psalm lxxxii. 1-6; but how different this sense to real Godhead, and also to the blessing which He had in His mind.

The serpent Satan sought to be like God by independence. He would have his own way; he was proud and refused to be subject; he thought he knew best. Independence is the prerogative of God alone. Satan claimed to be like Him, and incited man to follow the same line, and to claim his independence also, seeking happiness in his own way, though the serpent knew what his dupes did not—that the only effect of listening to him, and following his advice would be that man would become like Satan, though he would not attain to Satan's station, and would rather be his slave. This, then, is the other ideal. To be as "gods" means to be like Satan, though even that ideal could never be reached, for even the greatest man that could be after the flesh will owe his greatness to Satan, the dragon, who will give him his power and his seat and great authority, and this only for three and a half years. This, then, is the highest which can be reached in following that ideal, and this by one man only (for a brief moment before his miserable end) out of untold millions. What about the rest?

Yet, strange to say, nearly all the world seek after this latter ideal instead of the first; and alternately the nations, who have professedly accepted Jesus as Lord and Head will openly apostatize, and, without shame, will follow Satan's ideal, by breaking into full revolt and independence. He that sitteth on the heavens will laugh them to scorn, and will know how to bring them down.

Fellow Christians, let us see to it that we are on God's line, and love the dependent pathway, and dread independence above everything else in this world. There is only one thing to be exercised about, and that is—What is the will of God? and then, knowing this, to follow it at all costs, no matter what the apparent consequences may be. A word of caution is however necessary. Dependence means dependence *on God Himself*. Independence is independence of God Himself in self-will. Now, strange to say, often we hear Christians, otherwise well taught, use the word independence as meaning to be independent of men (whether these men are saints of God, singly or corporately, matters not).

Now, of course, there are minor degrees of dependence in the world, as children to the father, a wife to her husband, a servant to his master, a subject to the king, etc.; also, we have to be subject to the elders, yea all are to be subject one to another, to hear the church, and so on.

But in one and all the same principle applies. We must obey God rather than man. Therefore, if anyone to whom we would otherwise have to be subject tells us to do anything contrary to God, whether that someone be father, king, saint, elder, or church, we have to answer, whatever its cost and whatever we may have to suffer for it, "We must obey God." Individuals may go wrong, saints and teachers may go wrong, the whole professing Church (and, how much more evil, any section thereof) may go wrong, and has gone wrong. To be an overcomer is to hear what *the Spirit* says to the Churches, for we must obey God, and God never abdicates His throne.

The final appeal is therefore invariably between God and the individual soul. Let us be humble

and broken in spirit, let us wait much on God, let us be willing to hear all that others may say, and give it all attention, let us make no haste, and cry earnestly to God to teach us His way. But when all is said and done, if it seems to us that what man wants us to do can only be done by disobeying God, then let us take the path we see to be right, and with deepest humiliation cast our way on the Lord, looking to Him for vindication when cast out by men as evil—He will not fail us (see Luke vi. 22, 23). Only thus can we follow God's ideal, which is Christ, the Christ of God, the ever subject and dependent One.

OMISSION

HAVE we sufficiently noticed the *unity* of Matthew xxv.? To have a measure of dispensational truth is good, for without this it is difficult to understand the Scriptures; but if our smattering of dispensational knowledge causes us to lose the force of any passage, our loss is great indeed.

"Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." (Rom. xv. 4.) If this was true of the Old Testament, how much more is it true of the New.

Very seldom indeed is Scripture quoted by the inspired writers for dispensational teaching, but almost invariably for moral application to those addressed. We must endeavour, therefore, to seek the *present* benefit of every Scripture, remembering there is a voice to us in all.

In Matthew xxv., there are three parts or parables, just as in Luke xv. In both chapters a strong family likeness exists between the parts, so that the three in each case make one whole.

The theme of each part in Matthew xxv. is plainly "*Omission.*" The foolish virgins *omitted* to take oil with their lamps; the wicked servant *omitted* to use the talent entrusted to him; those condemned as "goats" *omitted* to minister to the Lord by *omitting* to minister to His brethren in

their necessities. If the interpretation of this last part belongs to the time when the heathen will all have heard the Gospel of the kingdom, does that make similar omission on *our* part any less displeasing to God? If the heathen with their little light will be treated so severely for neglect, what can we with our much light expect, if we do the same? Dispensational knowledge should drive the application home to us with tenfold power, instead of leading us to say, "It does not apply to us."

In these three parables there is a beautiful order. In the first, the lack was the oil, i.e. the grace of the Holy Spirit. Nothing can possibly compensate for this. What is the worth of profession and outward form if *that* be lacking? Therefore in the forefront of this great parable of the Kingdom we see how fatal it is (though professedly we await the Bridegroom) not to have the inward reality, which the Holy Ghost alone can give.

In the first part, the Lord says, "I know you not," and the door is shut; in the second, the unprofitable servant is cast out into outer darkness; while the third part is the most terrible of all, for there many are cast into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

The punishment in the first case is awful; in the second case the mere omission to use the talent entrusted brings a still severer punishment; while the failure to show mercy to, and to minister unto the Lord's brethren is the climax of all. Such is the lesson of this great Kingdom parable, showing how it is not enough to keep from evil, but that the lack of positive good, or the failure to carry out our appointed functions, brings about this awful and irremediable loss.

But to apply this last more closely to ourselves. Every gospel takes up this question. The Lord says, "He that receiveth you receiveth Me, and he that receiveth Me receiveth Him that sent Me" (Matt. x. 40; see also verses 41 and 42). Again, "Whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in My name, *because ye belong to Christ*, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward." (Mark ix. 41; see verses 37 and 42.) See also Luke ix. 48, and John xiii. 20. Now, if this be true, have we not all been guilty? The reception is not confined to the Lord's servants, but includes all His people. Let us consider first the *servants*. Have we not often, not only neglected such, but even repulsed them? Have we not often insisted that they must follow a certain line, if we are to listen, forgetting that God is Sovereign, and that He will use whom He will? Strange are God's ways, for He, who used the mouth of an ass, can, and does, take whom He will to deliver a message. Does this mean that we make light of evil? Surely not. Yet it means we are always to be ready to recognise God's instrument whoever it be. If we can solve the difficulty by working on sectarian lines, and warning off those, who join us not, we can dispense with the greater part of our exercises of soul. Again, have we not sometimes ministered to the necessities of some of the Lord's servants, and afterwards, when they have viewed some difficult question differently from ourselves and been ostracised in consequence, suddenly cut off further supplies, indifferent as to whether these servants lived or died? Will not the Lord take note of these things?

If we think not merely of the Lord's servants

but of the Lord's brethren in general, the case is stronger still. Sectarianism blights the affections, selfishness limits our outlook, pride despises others. How little it often is to us that this one *belongs to Christ*. Yet how much it means to our Lord. "Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the *least of these* My brethren ye did not to ME." What will He, who will speak thus to the heathen, say to us with all our blaze of light and truth?

Let us take heed, for these are not matters to be lightly set aside with the parrot-cry of "looseness." These are words of sobriety and truth spoken by the Lord, and they will abide when heaven and earth pass away.

After speaking thus of the negative side, let us deal for a moment with the positive. Great is the joy of the faithful, who have had understanding of the Lord and His ways, and have recognised Him in His people, and have ministered to Him in spite of obloquy and reproach. The wise who had the grace of God in their hearts, and really longed for the Bridegroom will share in His rejoicing; the good and faithful servants will enter into the joy of their Lord, and how great that joy will be; while those, who have ministered to the Lord will have all the joys of the Kingdom, yea, and more also.

Beloved children of God, let us be exercised about these things. If we are not faithful in the truth of the Kingdom, what use to talk of the Church? If we do not show practical love to the children of God as such, what proof is there that we have any love of God in our hearts at all?

Blessed Lord, make us really true to Thee. It is a great honour that Thou allowest us to

serve Thee; teach us how to save our lives by making us to love to lose our lives for Thy sake, and gladly to offer ourselves a willing sacrifice to Thee, to be at Thy beck and call, as glad, happy bondslaves of love.

SERVICE

IT is a remarkable thing that as a rule sins of omission trouble us far less than sins of commission, yea oftentimes trouble us not at all. Yet how serious they are.

Is it a light thing to rob God? Yet have we not all robbed God and thought little of it? Is Malachi iii. 8-12 any less true now than in the day in which it was written? Do we still not withhold from God His due?

Two of the Lord's most important parables, the parable of the "Talents" and that of the "Pounds" are on this most important point. What did the wicked and slothful servants do in these cases? They did not squander what they had received, but kept it most carefully, and returned it to the owner. Is that so great a fault, surely it was nothing more than a little culpable negligence? But what does the Lord say? "Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." How solemn this is.

The fact is that the moment we come in faith to God, believing that He raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, we also, for salvation, confess with our mouths that Jesus is Lord. (*See Rom. x. 9.*)

What does this confession involve? Surely nothing less than this, that we belong to Jesus as our Lord, that all that we are, and all that we have are His

absolute property, for him to dispose of at His will. He has a right to us, we are His bond slaves, and our freedom and our joy are the ability and permission to do His will.

Have we accepted this from our hearts? If not, have we not robbed God, yea, and robbed ourselves of the joy and blessing, which might have been our portion?

But all are not called upon to go out and serve, all are not preachers. Quite true, but all are called upon to own the Lord's claims over them, and He has the supreme right to command and we the right to obey. Yet how often do we hear, "Oh! I could not do this or that." Why not? Surely if the Lord called you to it you would be ready? And if the Lord has not called, why think of it at all? Only let us be exercised about this matter, His will is perfection, then let us be ready to do that will, whether it be to stay at home or to go forth; to work with our hands, to do the most menial offices gladly, or to preach or to teach as He pleases, and according to the ability He gives.

But may we not run unsent? Surely, and this is very serious. But not to run when sent is very serious too, as Jonah found: not to trade where God gives the means is very serious, as the servants will find who hide their talent in a napkin.

Every gift is given for use, nothing is given for selfish enjoyment. Unless shared with others it becomes worthless, being shared it is soon doubled. Is it for nothing that God has given us in England such abundant light, truth, and gift above that given to other nations? Can this mean anything less than that we should give that light and truth to those, who have it not?

But do I want all to go abroad? God forbid. Only that we all may do the will of the Lord, whatever that may be, without a murmur or dispute, but with gladness of heart: only that as we think of the multitudes we may be moved with compassion towards them, as our blessed Lord was moved; only that there may be the principle of equality with us, our abundance being a supply for their want, just as when the case is reversed, their abundance may meet our need.

Nevertheless, fields are white to harvest at this time, and from different parts of the world there do come cries for help to gather in that for which others have sown and laboured patiently. The reaper has much less arduous work than the ploughman and the sower, but both will rejoice together.

Thus may we be exercised about our sins of omission, as well as about those of commission. Let us have the true spirit of a servant as in Psalm cxxiii. 2, the spirit of a disciple, as in Luke xiv. 26, 27, 33, the spirit of the good soldier of Jesus Christ, as in 2 Tim. ii. 4, and all to please Him, who redeemed us by His precious blood that we may find our supreme joy in being free to do His blessed will.

We have but this one little life to serve Him in the place of His rejection, and how great the loss if we live for self instead of living to Christ. God grant we may not miss the mark as to this.

AMBITION

AMBITION is especially the sin of the great, and the greatest of all wrongs are due to it. Satan transgressed by reason thereof, and his followers still pursue with eagerness the same course, seeking greatness by following the desires of their own hearts.

Yet there is such a thing as laudable ambition, for in three places in the New Testament the Greek word which means "To be ambitious" (though not so translated in any English version known to us, save in the margin of the Revised Version) is used either by way of exhortation or as a pattern. We propose, therefore, to enquire briefly as to the ways in which it is right to be ambitious.

First, in 1 Thess. iv. 11, 12, it is written "That ye study (*lit.*, ambitious) to be quiet, and to do your own business [or, mind your own affairs—N.T.], and to work with your hands, as we commanded you; that ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing [or, of no man—N.T.]."

What a lovely ambition, and, withal, within the reach of the lowest. No need to be kings, or of the great of this world, to follow this injunction; but how it would change the Christian world if Christians would only obey it.

David was sent for while he was keeping his father's sheep in order to be anointed of Samuel.

Amos was a herdsman and a gatherer of sycamore fruit, and the Lord took him as he followed the flock, and the Lord said to him, "Go prophesy unto my people Israel." To the shepherds following their flocks by night, the word of the Lord came at the birth of the Saviour.

How beautiful it is to see God's people going on quietly and faithfully in whatsoever estate they may be found. These give no trouble in the Church, they desire no human greatness, they are contented with their lot, they interfere not with others, though ever willing to shew others a kindness, and they are ready to give to him that needs. On the other hand, what appalling trouble has been caused by those, who do not interfere with the affairs of others, and meddle with that with which they have nothing to do. Malice, envy, backbiting, slander, and speaking evil of others behind their backs come in here, and fearful mischief is wrought.

"These six things doth the Lord hate, yea, seven are an abomination unto Him: a proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, an heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, a false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren." (Prov. vi. 16-19.)

He, who is ambitious on the line enjoined by the Apostle in writing to the Thessalonian converts, will be kept from these seven sins hateful to the Lord. Alas! for lack of following this injunction, how many (yea, even religious leaders of reputation) have fallen into these great snares, and it has to be said, "How are the mighty fallen!" O God, give to all Thy children this beautiful ambition, which characterizes the weak only!

Secondly, in 2 Cor. v. 9, 10, it is written, "Wherefore we labour [*lit.*, are ambitious], that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted* of Him. For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ; that everyone may receive the things done in the body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."

This is what Paul and his companions did. And it is written that all of us may have the same blessed ambition, for we all must be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ.

What can be more important, what more worthy of every redeemed soul, than to walk ever in view of the judgment-seat of Christ with a passionate desire to be well pleasing or agreeable to Him? He is our supreme Lord. All rights were His because He is the Creator; but by redemption He has set us free that we may belong to Him by the strongest of all ties. We are infinitely loved, and we have been blood-bought that He might acquire special rights over us in order to bless us beyond measure.

Woe betide the soul, who lets any man, or set of men, interfere between the Lord and his conscience; and double woe will be to him, who seeks to come between the Lord and any other soul. The Lord will make short work of such.

It is of course true that we have to be subject to human authority—to kings and rulers, to parents, masters, spiritual guides, elders, and to the Church (*see* Matt. xviii. 17, etc.), but never to the superseding of the Lord's authority. Whatever men may say, and however specious their arguments, if they ask

* Accepted should be more literally translated, *well pleasing to* (R.V.), or *agreeable to* (N.T.).

us to do what is not agreeable to the Lord (as far as we can tell, for we are poor things), then we have only to reply, "We ought to obey God rather than men," and accept the consequences.

In Roman Catholicism the priest comes between the Lord and the believer; but, alas, the principle of Rome extends far beyond Roman Catholicism. Excommunication and boycott and fear are brought to bear in Christian England to force men to stifle their consciences, and to submit to men rather than obey the Lord, and not fear the consequences of so doing.

Beloved fellow Christians, let it be our passion to be agreeable to Him, no matter what it entails. Cannot the Lord comfort even here on earth? Is there not a hundred-fold for him, who suffers loss for Christ, even in this present time? Is it not worth everything for Christ to come in to that soul and sup with Him, and for that soul to sup also with Himself?

It is well to say to the Lord, even with tears, "Lord, I am such a poor thing, let me not be deceived, let me not miss the road, let me hear Thy voice, let me understand and know Thy will. Make me willing to suffer anything rather than turn aside from Thee, Lord." But it is not well, because we are such poor things, to follow any man, or set of men, however great, wise or clever they may be, saying, "What else can we do?" No; let us in the sense of our utter weakness and insufficiency launch out freely, trusting in the all-sufficiency of Christ, and refusing man and all his pretension, if we cannot say the Lord hath so commanded.

We shall soon be before the judgment-seat of

Christ. What shall we care for men's censure then? Therefore let us go on now trusting in the Lord, letting everything else go to the winds, that we may be agreeable to Him. O God, make this to be our ambition!

The third occasion of the use of the word is in Rom. xv. 20, 21: "So have I strived [been ambitious] to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation: but as it is written, To whom He was not spoken of, they shall see; and they that have not heard shall understand."

This ambition is mentioned as personal to Paul, and in the full sense in which it applied to him it cannot apply to many of us, but as all Scripture applies to us *all*, and nothing is told us by way of gratifying curiosity, therefore there must be a sense in which we profit by these verses.

Even at the present time there are many places where the gospel has not penetrated. True, there has been a wonderful opening of the world to the gospel of late, and there are not now many countries where the gospel has not entered at all. Still there are vast tracts in many countries where none have ever heard of Christ. We may say we are not called to engage in such pioneer work. Well, so be it; but you can bear up with all your sympathy, your prayers, and with your carnal things those whom God has called to these arduous labours. In how many cases has new ground been opened up by many, who have given up their lives to the cause, e.g. in the case of the Congo-Balolo Mission.

Many, who are not generally called martyrs because disease cut them off rather than the sword,

are none the less martyrs, and have literally laid down their lives to open one place or another to the gospel of Christ. Dr. David Livingstone was truly one of these, also the Hon. Keith Falconer, and many others. Probably we know some who are attempting such arduous work, and facing the inevitable dangers. If not, we can easily discover such. What are we doing to help them?

We can thus have a little share in this beautiful ambition. May God incline our hearts thereto.

Although the above work is very difficult, and beyond most of us, save by way of fellowship with others, there is a minor sense in which we may have a tiny share in the same ambition. Not many can go to strange countries, but at our doors, and even in Christian England, are many souls as dark and as ignorant of the gospel as the heathen, among the educated and the rich as well as among the poor. Now if you go to some of these, who sit in darkness, and who have never been spoken to personally about their soul in any wise, you will be doing in your very tiny measure what the Apostle did in his mighty measure. God, moreover, is the God of measure, and looks on us according to what we have, and not according to what we have not. May we be faithful in little, and God will bless that little and give us more. Let us not get the sentence pronounced on us which was pronounced on the servant, who hid his one talent in the napkin.

While, therefore, we must earnestly seek to be ambitious on the first two lines spoken of here, let us not neglect the last. God grant in that day we may give an account with joy and not with grief.

VAIN RELIGION

THANK God for the Epistle of James! It is not as a rule much thought of; it contains none of the great truths and doctrines of Scripture; we do not go to it to learn the deep things of God, or the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory; yet we can only neglect it to our loss, for it fills a most important place, and never more so than at the present time, when there is so much talk and little action, and when practical everyday righteousness in the dealings of man with God and with his fellow-man is so little regarded.

Now James takes up the practical side of life in the sight of God and man, and insists upon the fact that, whatever we hold or whatever we say, it is all of no use unless our lives are right. Talking will not cover our defects in action, nor soundness of doctrine unfaithfulness in every day life. If a man's life is not right, nothing is right about him. The righteous Lord loveth righteousness. It is impossible to cheat Him.

We read "What does it profit, my brethren, though a man *say* he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you *say* unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful for the body: what doth

it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone." (Chap. ii. 14-17.) What could be more simple, more practical? Some are slow to understand doctrine, but here is something all can understand. Let none say it is low truth. It is *indispensable* truth—which no man can do without. By all means let every Christian seek with all his heart to get hold of heavenly truth, but never to the exclusion of the simplest earthly side of things. Gold and diamonds are far more valuable than iron and earth, but if we had to choose the one or the other of these pairs and could not have both, we should choose the earth and iron, for these we must have or die. The others are luxuries.

Heavenly truth and the truth of the Church will be known at best by the few, but all true Christians have a sense of sin, and know that Christ died to save us from it. They have a desire to be free from sin and to know Christ's saving power, otherwise they are not Christians at all in reality. But it is possible to be a giant in knowledge, and yet, like Balaam, to have the heart set on covetousness and not know the grace of God at all. It is possible to be exalted to heaven and yet to be cast down into hell at the end.

The apostle says: "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain." (Chap. i. 26.) And again, speaking of the tongue, he says: "Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be." (Chap. iii. 9-10.) It is not enough to bless God. We

must bless man also. It will not do to boast of zeal for the Lord (a Jehu can do this, and, in a measure, truthfully) while the actions may shew that self is at the bottom of all that we do. The royal law is this, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," and to have respect of persons is to commit sin and to be convinced of the law as transgressors. Is there no word for us in this to-day? Should we not be bowed with shame to the earth, when we think of the back-biting and evil speaking that take place by Christian against Christian, behind the backs of those maligned, and without giving them an opportunity of clearing themselves, while the defects of those in ecclesiastical agreement with ourselves are glossed over as of comparatively small account? Surely these things ought not to be. "So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty. For he shall have judgment *without mercy*, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment. (Chap. ii. 13.)

The great lack for the day is not high truth, beautiful though it be, but the simpler truths which are daily denied in practice while high truth is contended for in words, and beloved children of God, who are seeking in their feeble way to follow Christ with all their hearts, are often condemned as practically unfit for the company of any Christians, because they cannot repeat a certain shibboleth!

"Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom. But if we have bitter envying and strife in our hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth." (Chap. iii. 13-14.) Practically righteous we must

be, upright, loving, pure, truthful, kind, meek, lowly, gracious, faithful, unselfish, scrupulously honest, and with the fear of God in our hearts, if we are to answer to the description of those whom He has redeemed from all iniquity to purify unto Himself, a peculiar people zealous of good works.

What then is pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father? It is "to visit the fatherless and the widow in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." (Chap. i. 27.) Not the visiting of the fatherless and widow alone, and not alone the keeping of self unspotted from the world, but both to go concurrently. The first alone would be merely philanthropy without Christ, the latter alone would be monasticism, also without Christ, while the two together would shew something of Christlikeness: holiness combined with self-sacrifice for the sake of all, who have need upon the earth.

But if one err from the truth, what then? Are we to have done with him? Not at all, we are to leave the ninety-nine good ones the rather, and seek this one until we find him. Is it separation from evil to occupy ourselves with the ninety-nine, whom we think are right, and leave the lost sheep? Not at all, it is not the Lord's way, and they, who act thus, will eventually be found with, say, one sheep whom they think right, while the ninety-nine to whom the Lord has sent them are straying in the dark mountains, and the Lord will require the flock at the hand of those shepherds. (See Ezek. xxxiv. 10.) What does James say? Let the one who converts him "know that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins." (Chap. v. 19-20.)

Truly we should be less keen to see the faults of another, did we acknowledge that in such a case we were responsible to restore him. We should then perhaps bow to the word, "Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge. There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgeth another?" (Chap. iv. 11-12.) "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much." (Luke xvi. 10.)

The characteristic of the last days is to have a form of godliness, and to deny the power thereof. May we therefore judge ourselves and humble ourselves before God, may we repent of our sins in the ordinary everyday life, remembering that our Lord takes note of everything, and He will judge every man according to his works. Reality He will have, and we need also to insist on reality with ourselves. We are not here as judges, but as redeemed saints, who are to carry out practically in this world that for which they are redeemed, viz. God-likeness in the midst of a sinful world, whilst remembering all the time what poor things we are and how liable to err we are ourselves. Then the sense of the grace shewn to us daily will make us show grace to others, while we are strict towards ourselves.

May God keep us from the shame of those, whose religion is vain while their mouth has spoken great things.

IMPERIALISM AND SOCIALISM

THERE are two great perils confronting men in every land, but especially in the lands, which are called Christian, for they are greatly aggravated by a corrupt Christianity. Both will rise to a head before the end, each in its turn, and the real character of each will be manifested before they are put down for ever. In the meantime each is growing, each is an enemy of Christ, though they are also deadly enemies the one to the other.

The first is Imperialism, which wears a grand majestic air. It is robed in purple, great and grand are its schemes, and brilliant its promises of honour and glory for its votaries. In its hands are all the rewards, which this world has to give. It is allied with religion; it would not demean itself by throwing that off. The priests of religion are in its high places. Its name is Babylon—imperial Babylon, with all its glories; religious Babylon, with all its religious honours and reputation; commercial Babylon, with all its luxuries, its arts, and its sciences. All that this world can produce is in her hand. Grandeur and greatness are hers. Well may the men of this world be proud of her. She is like a lion in her strength.

The other peril is like a spectre stalking through the land. If Imperialism is like a lion, Socialism is like the serpent, with its venom, its ominous

hiss, its menacing aspect. Imperialism would lift up man to his highest possible greatness; all the glories of this world shall shine for him. Socialism would drag all down; and in her desire to bring down the great, and produce equality in all men, would involve all in one common ruin, and equality would be obtained by oneness of degradation. Socialism is allied with irreligion and infidelity; it sets its face alike against all authority and all religion. Not but that Socialism, too, makes many promises and has great schemes; yet, while Imperialism has its baubles, its delights for the flesh and the eye and its pride of life, Socialism has only its dreams, the awakening from which must be to its horror. Still, be it the one or be it the other, both must utterly perish that the Kingdom of the Son of Man may be established and the knowledge of the glory of the Lord may cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.

But why mention these things?

We neither go in for the one nor the other of these evils. We (writer and readers alike) are eminently respectable. We are separate from all that has been spoken of. Can we not thank God that we are not as other men are? We are not Imperialist or Socialist. These shall perish and go to their doom, and we shall be caught away to our bliss and our glory. Thus are we, alas, often apt to yield ourselves to our snug self-congratulation, forgetting that it is possible for us to be all we say and yet, after all, come in for the scathing rebukes which our Lord uttered to the Pharisees, who thought themselves righteous and despised others.

Undoubtedly the full issues of good and evil must be worked out to their ultimate result, the horrible character of this and the beauty of that in the midst of the evil must be fully developed; but

What is the Christian's place in the midst of it all?

Is he not to be here as Christ was? We agree that we are very respectable, we speak the truth generally, we pay our debts, we bear not false witness against our neighbour, the law of the land has no terrors for us. We bear a good character, we do also some good works, we give somewhat of our substance (generally taking care to leave sufficient to have all we really care for for ourselves), we are regular in our attendance at our services. What more could any one ask for, then? We know our Bibles better than most Christians—the mysteries are open to us. Are we not ready, also, to instruct those who will place themselves under our instructions? Is not the Gospel preached, too; can sinners not hear, if they will? If not, it surely is not our fault; have we not done all that could reasonably be expected of us? Maybe, we are strictly orthodox. Maybe, we quickly get rid of those, who think otherwise than we do. Maybe, we tithe mint and anise and cumin, and have a narrow opening through which a man must pass, if he would be with *us*. It is their fault, is it not? not ours; why can they not conform?

Is this to be of Christ?

Is it thus we can walk as He walked? Is this anything like His walk? Is this anything which will act as an antidote to the terrible power of the world, Imperial, Socialistic, or what not?

To speak after the manner of men, the power of Christ lay in this—He was intensely dependent upon God, His meat was to do His will; He burnt Himself out for God and for man, self-forgotten, self-empty, self-abased. Yes, for *God* and for *man*. There cannot be the one without the other. Are there not the two great commandments, Godward and manward? Was not the law within His heart? By the olive they honoured *God* and *man*; the vine by its wine cheered *God* and *man*. He who serves Christ in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost is acceptable to *God* and approved of *man*. The two go together. Woe be to us if we divorce the one from the other. He, who is true to God alone, does good to men; and he who truly does good to men is the only one, who is true to God.

How did Christ meet Imperialism?

He received not honour from men. He refused to work miracles to suit his own ends, saying, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God." He refused to pander to the prince of this world, saying, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve." He refused display, saying, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." He would not be made king. He loved the low place. He emptied Himself. He would take nothing save as the Father's gift. He interfered not with Cæsar; on the contrary, He said, "Render therefore unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's"; but He wanted none of these things. He would not call down fire from heaven. He would not do signs to satisfy curiosity. He would not even defend Himself. What power had Imperialism to touch Him? None whatever!

How did Christ meet Socialism?

He gave His all. He was the last of all, and the servant of all. Who so rich as He? And He lavished it all on others. Who so poor as He? He had to ask to be shown a penny when He needed to see it. He had nowhere to lay His head. He did not lay up treasure on earth. He was anointed to preach glad tidings to the poor, to set the captive free, to break every yoke. He was true to God first, and He spent Himself for man. He sought not His own things. He lost. He suffered. His sleep was forfeited; there was not time to eat in peace, for He was the servant of all, who needed Him. Never was He too wearied to do the will of God, or to serve man. What power had Socialism upon such a one? None. Socialism has no power against those who follow in His steps.

How are we to meet Imperialism and Socialism?

There is no other way than the way of Christ. These cannot be met by Acts of Parliaments, by authority, by words of command; nothing but the life of Christ in His people has any effect. But, it may be asked, will not these things come to pass whether we act in one way, or in its opposite? Surely these two evils will come to pass, but why? Because of the pride and selfishness of us Christians. A dispensation ends when God's people have no longer any faith to utilize the power God puts at their disposal, then is the Christian dispensation drawing to its close. Those with most light feed themselves and feed not the flock; the servants oftentimes eat and drink and beat their fellow-servants, and thank God they are not as other men are. Can God use such?

The end will surely come, and that swiftly; but if we are truly following Christ in these ways the blessing will not fail us. We shall be blest, and made a blessing; but if not, our light and our knowledge will do us no good, yea, rather will enhance our condemnation.

God grant we may truly follow Christ in refusing honour from men, while spending and being spent for men according to the will of God; and it may be that God may grant us a little reviving in this the day of great weakness.

THE LOSING SIDE

*What could have been done more . . . that I have not done . . . ?
Wherefore . . .*—Isa. v. 4.

*I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in
vain.*—Isa. xlix. 4.

*They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute,
afflicted, tormented; . . . and . . . received not the promise.*—Heb.
xi. 37-39.

I have suffered the loss of all things.—Phil. iii. 8.

All forsook me.—2 Tim. iv. 16.

THERE is to-day a losing side; who is willing to be on that side?

The God of Scripture is evidently on that side. He created the glorious angels, and one of the highest, probably the very highest, rebelled against Him, and drew away a great company of angels with him.

Some other intelligent beings were created by Him, and in some way we know not have become demons, unclean spirits, who are all around us, and are so numerous that a legion of them attended one single man.

God created the world in which we live, and the morning stars sang together and the sons of God shouted with joy; but how soon all was changed. The enemy entered this fair creation, and man turned against God, and to this day man believes that God is a hard God, and that the way to be happy is to live in self-will.

After probably nearly 1700 years of trial God

had to sweep away the whole human race by a flood except one family.

He told that family to replenish the earth; their answer was the building of Babel that they might not be scattered.

He chose a family and a nation, did all that He could for that nation, and His name was blasphemed among the heathen through that nation.

He sent His only Son, saying, they will reverence My Son, and they took Him, and killed Him, and cast Him out of the vineyard.

He exalted His Son to His right hand, and sent down His Holy Spirit, and set up the Church to display Christ on earth, and behold that which to-day bears the holy name of Christ, has become mystery, Babylon the Great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth.

No one is so maligned as God, but God is patient. He is willing to wait for vindication till His whole plan is accomplished. Are we willing to be to-day on the losing side with God and to wait His time?

Christ outwardly is on the losing side to-day. He who is called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Father of Eternity, the Prince of Peace, came into this world, and instead of the world bowing down in adoration they saw and hated both Him and His Father. At first many were attracted to Him, they thought that through Him they would attain their carnal desires; but He was not the hero they looked for, He was meek and lowly in heart. He would not suit them, He would not put Himself at the head of the Jewish nation, throw off the Roman yoke and sit upon the throne of David. The great ones of earth kept aloof from the first,

the poor, who at first flocked to Him, fell off. He had not where to lay His head. He was finally left with a few obscure followers, who loved and clung to Him though they could not understand Him, and these at the hour of His direst need forsook Him and fled, and as a malefactor He was held up to scorn and execration. The God in whom He trusted did nothing to save Him, and the bitter cry broke from Him, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Who could have dreamt that this should be the end of His life on earth, that man should thus cast out the Creator-God who came in flesh to bless man in grace and truth.

Since that day of crucifixion the world has seen Him no more.

Also, although He has been exalted to glory and has sent down the Holy Ghost, while He Himself is unceasingly labouring to create Himself anew in the hearts of His own, yet how poor the visible result. No sooner has a testimony been formed by the Spirit, and committed to man than man has corrupted it, and now the last days of the Church on earth are reached. The last special action of the Spirit has taken place, and those who professedly received this testimony have failed even more grossly than their fathers, and it only remains for Christ to take His place as the one faithful and true witness, and to stand outside at the door knocking, if so be one here and one there will open to Him.

Yes, Christ is to-day on the losing side. He is patient, and can wait for vindication till he has carried out the whole will of God. Are we willing to share in the patience of Christ?

The saints, who are true, are ever on the losing

side, from the time when righteous Abel was slain by his brother to the time (yet future) when they will overcome by the blood of the Lamb, and the word of their testimony, and love not their lives unto the death.

The saints of old were on the losing side (with rare exceptions for a moment). They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword; they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented (of whom the world was not worthy). They wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.

These were evidently on the losing side in this world, though it was the time of the earthly calling. Can then those, who have the heavenly calling, be otherwise than on the losing side to-day, if they be true? Is it not true to-day that only those, who lose their lives for Christ's sake can save them?

Man has ever failed, wolves have entered the flock from without, elders have arisen and spoken perverse things. Power and strength in this world have ever been on the side of the majority, and the minority must suffer. It is not pleasant to be cast out to-day any more than of old, but blessed are ye when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of Man's sake. Can the present time be an exception? Impossible. Can the last testimony prove any better than the former ones? Impossible. God's true saints must be content to be on the losing side to-day. They must be the persecuted; theirs is no power to persecute, they are the feeble few, they must suffer, they must be condemned by human

tribunals, they must to-day be classed among the evil-doers. It is the day of God's patience and of Christ's; there is a silent heaven overhead. They must be content to say: "We are poor, we are feeble, we are of no account, but we must obey God rather than man. We would fain shew love and kindness to all men, but we must obey God."

Such cannot use the rod of authority, the only rod they know is the rod of priestly grace and loving ministry. They will never persecute, they will suffer and be content to be on the losing side to-day, knowing that the losing side to-day will be the winning side when Christ gets His rights, when the first shall be last and the last first, when every table shall be turned, and when those spoken evil of to-day will be with Christ in glory in that day.

Again we ask, who is willing to be on the losing side with God and with Christ to-day?

THE DIFFICULTIES OF UNBELIEF

INTRODUCTION

IT is stated that a man once asked his friend, "Pray what is your religion?" He answered, "The religion of all wise men." Again he was asked, "Pray what is that?" He answered, "Ah! that is what wise men never tell."

This doubtless may be very pithy and facetious, but is it really the mark of a wise man that he refuses to discuss quietly the matters relating to the invisible world around us and to eternity?

It is alas! only too true that men's fiercest passions have been aroused in discussing such matters, and strife, and even foul murders have been the result. It is also true that it is not wise to speak of these things in heat or excitement. Is it not however possible to speak of them quietly, calmly and deliberately, and are not these matters of such infinite importance that we should be glad to get all the help in them that is possible, and if a friend or a neighbour has had any experience in these matters, and can tell us of the way in which he has found comfort and peace of mind in view of the great change, which must come to us all sooner or later, shall we not listen to him and weigh calmly what he says?

No man is wise unless he is sensible of his own ignorance. Such an one will realize that there is

no one from whom something may not be learnt, and he will refrain from judging until he has heard the whole matter. Impatience and unwillingness to listen to others is a proof of lack of wisdom.

This treatise is an attempt on the part of one who, having experienced much comfort, peace and joy in his own soul from what he has learnt of the invisible, desires to tell others of the blessing which he has received, simply asking that what is put forward may be read and calmly weighed without prejudice, seeing that the matter is one of infinite interest to us all.

CAN GOD REVEAL HIMSELF?

It will be assumed that we all believe that there is a Supreme Being, whom we call God, that He made us and that we belong to and are responsible to Him. Atheists are few and far between, even if there are in truth any real atheists.

There are doubtless a certain number of evolutionists, but evolution can merely carry us back a few steps more than we thought necessary at first, and does not at all help us to understand the beginning or origin of things, and the most fervent believer in evolution must admit the existence of a Supreme Being with whom all things originated.

The great question is, Has God been pleased to reveal Himself to us His creatures in a way more definite than by the creation around, so that we can understand whence we came and whither we go in a manner, which is quite impossible by the use of our senses, or by the exercise of our reason?

It is very evident that the power of our senses

is very limited, and that they can only be used for investigating that which is of the material creation around us. They cannot tell us whence all originated, nor can they tell us the goal that is before us. They cannot penetrate the unseen, nor search out the secrets of that which is not material. Also, as to our reason, it is clear that it is a most untrustworthy guide, for no two men think quite alike, and when men try and learn the secrets of their being by the aid of reason, they are like the blind vainly groping to find an unknown way, they arrive at no definite conclusion themselves, still less are they able to give any assurance to others.

Yet, unless we have a revelation from God, we have nothing but our senses and our reason to guide us, and thus we are indeed unhappy, for as to the most important matter of all we are hopelessly in the dark.

But has God left us in the dark? To assume that He has so is not the way of the wise, for they assume nothing. To commence by assuming that God cannot or will not reveal Himself and His thoughts to us is to beg the entire question, and is therefore the height of folly. Many, also, pride themselves on the name of "Agnostics," or "those who do not know." They say that they know nothing of the unseen world around. Did they stop there, sympathy and pity might be felt for them, but they do not. In nearly every case they do not content themselves with saying, "*we* do not know," but they go on to say "you do not know, and no one *can* know that which we ourselves do not know." Where is the consistency of this? If a man confessedly knows nothing of the unseen, how can he tell what another may know? By saying

that no one else can possibly know that which he has not learnt himself he has left the ranks of the wise, and done that which he so heartily condemns in others, viz. made a most tremendous assumption without the least particle of proof. If he be a real agnostic let him stop when he says, "I do not know," and let him admit his ignorance as to what any other person may have learnt, otherwise he only condemns himself by the position he takes up.

On the other hand, there are those, doubtless comparatively few in number, but still to be numbered by tens and hundreds of thousands, who do heartily believe that God has and does reveal Himself; and they do not believe this because of something which they heard, may be, at their mother's knee, and because it is something in which they were born and bred (there are of course millions of this description, but such a belief is of little or no value, it is mere credulity), but because they have gone into the matter for themselves. They believed originally the testimony presented to them, but having so believed they received an inward witness to the same, which has wrought a mighty inward change, and they can therefore testify to the truth of that, which they have received, because they daily and hourly experience the comforts to which they testify. They can say with their Master, "We speak that we do know, and we testify that which we have seen."

Surely the wise man, hearing of many such cases, and seeing too how real the change that is often wrought in those, who thus bear witness, will not begin by rejecting this evidence without investigation and put it all down to imagination, superstition, or fanaticism; he will calmly investigate the matter to ascertain as far as possible whether these people

have any ground for their faith. Moreover he will not be turned aside because some professors have in these matters been guilty of extravagance. A wise man in looking into a matter weighs not the worst arguments in favour of the case, but the best. He knows that the best things have been abused, and that there are sure to be spurious imitations of every good thing. If he finds a certain number of cases, which are real, this is enough to prove that there is such a thing as a genuine article, even if there be much imposture as well. In fact, a counterfeit is a proof of something real that is counterfeited.

WHAT IS THE REVELATION REFERRED TO?

The revelation referred to is found in the Scriptures, usually known as the Bible, which was as they believe written by holy men of God, who wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. While many are open enemies of this book, and denounce it as an imposture, while others calling themselves friends, yet posing as critics, seek to cast doubt upon the inspiration and authenticity of the book, while many call it true with their lips, but by their ways deny its truth, there are those, who with all their heart and soul accept it as the truth of God, and put their whole confidence in it, and say their present happiness, and their future welfare depend entirely on the truth written therein. To all the arguments brought to bear upon them they answer, "We have proved what is written, for having tested we find it true; it has brought peace to our guilty consciences and rest to our weary hearts. We have found a satisfaction we never knew before, and the longer we live the more blessing we find from that which is therein revealed. How then can we listen

to any of the arguments brought against the truth of that in which we find our daily joy and strength?" There is in truth no neutral ground to take on such a subject, the book comes to us with such pretension, the ground taken up by the writers is such, that if it is not written by the inspiration of God it is an imposture.

How frequently does the expression, "Thus saith the Lord," appear in the book. One of the chief writers says, "Which things also we speak not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth"; and again, "If any man think himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord." Another says, "We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth and the spirit of error."

And not only is this the case, but the Lord Jesus Christ Himself said, speaking of the Old Testament, "The Scripture cannot be broken," and quoted Scripture with the words, "It is written," as the end of all controversy.

The ground therefore that is taken up by the writers should cause us to accept the book in its entirety, and to bow unreservedly to what is written therein, or else in all consistency we should merely look at it as a purely human production, and that a most erroneous one, because it makes such unbounded profession, which cannot be sustained. It is useless to say that the writers were good men though mistaken when they said they were inspired. There is something very wrong about a man who makes such grave statements if they are unfounded. The exceeding cunning of many of the present at-

tacks is seen in the argument that the book is a very good and valuable one, though in no wise inspired. This line of argument is taken up because it is perceived that the wholesale condemnation of the book would prove the argument to be utterly false, and many, who now listen to specious arguments, would revolt from the coarser ones altogether. The work of the enemy is better done by the insinuation of a mistake here, and a doubt cast on the narrative there, than by direct attacks, and thus the way is paved to go further. We, however, who believe, say that, while admitting small errors by the copyists, which errors are found by comparing different manuscripts to be very trifling, admitting also mistakes in translations, yet we are convinced that we have by the grace of God the Scriptures in their integrity, and we rely upon them absolutely as containing the whole truth of God.

It may be asked how we can say this seeing that fallible men put the Scriptures together, and they may easily have omitted some portions, which were inspired, and have put in some that were not.

It is granted that this not only might, but assuredly would have been the case unless God had distinctly overruled the action taken. The history of the professing Church is a very sad one, and there was much that was very wrong done at the Councils where the Canon of Scripture was discussed, nevertheless we are convinced that the same God, who gave the Scriptures has taken care that they should be preserved to us in their entirety. We have proved them in a thousand ways, and found them all sufficient. Not an error arises, however novel it may seem, but there is the Scripture ready to expose and refute it, not a difficulty nor a trial

arises, but it is fully provided for in the Word, and though written so long ago that it would only be a curious book of antiquity, if it had been a human production, yet it is perfectly fresh and powerful and applies perfectly to all the circumstances of the day as well as it did to those of 1800 years ago.

If on the contrary we look at the writings of the early Christians, such as those of Ignatius, Clement, Origen, Chrysostom and Augustine, we see no such pretensions as marked the writers of Scripture, we find ourselves on different ground altogether; with much that is nice we find also much that is puerile and defective, and see at once that a chasm of infinite width divides the one set of writers from the other. It is like stepping off a dry stone pavement on to a morass when the Scriptures are left, and the writings of men of old, pious yet uninspired, are taken as a guide. In the first case there is something far above us, which we feel ourselves incapable of judging, but which judges us while in the second we feel we are dealing with fallible men, superior it may be but still like ourselves.

Surely it is worth while that the book which comes to us with such pretension, and through which many profess to have found so much blessing should be carefully studied by us all that we may see whether after all we may not find there the blessing of blessings which we most really need. Instead of this so many are content with reading something about the Bible instead of the Bible itself. How often has the writer of this book been met with the remark, "Oh! the Bible is full of contradictions, and mistakes," yet when he has asked to be told of some of these he has been answered,

"Oh! I do not know the Bible well enough to point out these mistakes, but this or that person has gone into the matter, and found out many mistakes." This is indeed to condemn a witness unheard, yet it is only too common. If the reader be one of those, who has come to a conclusion in this way let me intreat him to read the book slowly, carefully and impartially in all humility of mind, owning his ignorance, and with prayer (any other way of reading it will be in vain): then he may come to see that his hastily drawn conclusions have been utterly erroneous.

THE DIFFICULTIES OF UNBELIEF AS REGARDS THE STORY OF JESUS CHRIST

We hear a great deal nowadays about the difficulties of belief, yet it never seems to strike those who enlarge on these difficulties what difficulties there are on the other side, viz. that of unbelief. It is possible that one side of a question may be very difficult, and yet the other side may be far more difficult, or even impossible.

As an instance, try and conceive God, an infinite being existing unchanged from eternity, and the subject is so difficult that the mind cannot grapple with it, but abandon this thought and try and conceive of God as not existing from eternity, but as having a beginning, and we at once see that this alternative is utterly impossible, and that the first idea must be correct in spite of its difficulty.

It is believed that if the matter be calmly and quietly considered by those, who have felt the difficulties of believing that it will be found that the difficulties of unbelief are greater by far.

It is impossible that in a book like this much

can be said on the subject, but a few of these difficulties will be lightly touched upon. It is believed that the question will repay further investigation.

The great difficulty of unbelief is that connected with the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the theme of Scripture, and around whose Person all the testimony of Scripture revolves.

Jesus of Nazareth is a historical Personage, no one doubts His existence, but how are we to account for Him, if the testimony of Scripture is not correct?

Every one who calmly reads the accounts of Jesus of Nazareth in the Gospels must be conscious how utterly different He is to himself, and to every one else whom he has ever seen or met. He must recognise unselfishness and love, righteousness and holiness, meekness and lowliness combined with a sense of infinite greatness the like of which was never seen before, and never will be seen again among the sons of men.

Is the story of Jesus true? If so we must accept him as Son of God and Revealer of the Father, the Giver of life and the Source of all blessing. We must in this case accept the Old Testament as inspired of God and then we shall have no difficulty in accepting the New, for it is the Old at which special cavil is made. To say that we believe Him to be what He is said to be, and yet to allow that He made mistakes, and that His knowledge was bounded by the knowledge of the men around him is a quibble, which no honest man would accept for a moment.

It may however be said that the history is only based upon facts, and not to be fully relied on, and that there is exaggeration in it. Even so the difficulty is not lessened by this supposition.

Who were the apostles that they should invent such a character as this, a character so utterly different from that of all the great men the world has ever seen, and yet so infinitely beyond them? For this invention to have taken place, even if more or less founded on fact, is to suppose a greater miracle wrought on behalf of these deceived, or deceiving men, than to accept the narrative as it is as inspired of God. There never was any one like Jesus Christ, and it is altogether out of human power to have invented such a character shining out from the twelve, who accompanied him as something altogether different from them.

If any one will calmly and honestly weigh the matter he cannot but be convinced that the history and character of the Lord Jesus is that upon which the truth or falsehood of Scripture turns, and will also see that *let him adopt any hypothesis he pleases*, still the difficulty of unbelief will be far greater than that of simple belief in the gospels, as the inspired narrative of the life of the Son of God incarnate, and when once a man has in simple faith accepted this much he will have no difficulty in accepting the other parts of the Bible as inspired. Once accept wholly and unreservedly the truth as to the person of Jesus Christ, God's Son, and all the other difficulties will vanish. If this is not accepted then it is a matter of absolute indifference whether the rest of Scripture is accepted or not. The morality of Scripture is useless apart from the truth as to the person of the Eternal Word, who became flesh and dwelt among us.

And not only is the above the case, but can it be imagined that a few illiterate persons should invent the story that Jesus was God manifest in

flesh, and that when He, who was goodness incarnate came into the world men should hate Him, spit upon and crucify Him. It is very difficult to believe that anybody could have invented such a story, and still more that it should find acceptance, if not true.

Moreover the gospel narratives are all emphatic on this point that He was not only crucified, but also that He rose from the dead. The resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ is the fact upon which the gospel hangs. If then He did rise from the dead, the narrative is doubtless true, and Jesus is indeed the eternal Son of God, who is really all that He professed to be, else why did He alone of all men rise from the dead. If on the contrary He did not rise from the dead there is the unaccountable difficulty to get over that a few ignorant men should palm a lie off upon the world, be *filled with* the utmost enthusiasm on the subject, be willing for the sake of this lie to endure scorn, contempt and torture, yea and give up their own lives to carry out their deception. If the narrative is true, and they received supernatural power for the carrying out of their mission, the matter is simple, but if not it seems impossible to make a hypothesis which will account for the known facts. Let the reader test this for himself.

DIFFICULTIES OF UNBELIEF IN CONNECTION WITH THE HISTORY AND PROPHECIES OF THE BIBLE

The writers of the Bible were nearly all Israelites, and yet it is most remarkable that they, in narrating the history of their own nation, record a history full of sin and shame, of defeat and suffering, which came upon them because of their unfaithfulness, and disobedience of the commandments of God. From

the beginning of the world never was it known of historians writing the history of their own nation in such fashion. The writer remembers being very much struck when as a boy he read a history by a French writer. To his astonishment Cressy, Poitiers and Agincourt were very much slurred over while there was much more elaborate mention of victories of the French over the English about which English histories are altogether silent, or else they occupy a very little space in the record.

Can any one believe that a series of writers of any nation writing at different times, and under a variety of circumstances, should be unanimous in showing up the sin of their nation and the consequences thereof unless the hand of God was upon them making them to write in this way? Never.

And not only is this the case but the Bible is full of prophecies, it lays itself open to be found out incorrect by freely descanting on the future. The future of great empires such as Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, etc., is freely spoken of, the downfall of great towns such as Tyre and Sidon, Nineveh, Babylon, etc., is mentioned with much circumstantial detail, much is told us about many kingdoms and kings, while as for Israel and Judah, Jerusalem and Palestine the details are innumerable. In the case of the book of Daniel so vivid are the details that some of the chapters, notably the eleventh, seem like reading history rather than prophecy, so much so that critics have laboured, and are labouring incessantly to prove that the book of Daniel instead of being written by one, who was a contemporary of Nebuchadnezzar was written about the time of the Maccabees! The attempts of these critics have recoiled on their own heads, and again

and again statements made by them as to inaccuracies in the book have been found false, and those made in Daniel to be true.

Facts have been very unkind to the critics, for alas! for them, no sooner do they prove to their entire satisfaction that some historic statement is not true to fact, as for instance, the story given in Genesis xiv. or the accounts of King Ahasuerus or the existence of Belshazzar and Darius, than clay tablets or monumental or other records from Egypt, Assyria, Babylonia, and Persia spring to light to give the critics the lie. Do they blush and with shame confess their error? Not a whit. No sooner are they proved wrong with one hypothesis than they patch up another which is demolished in its turn. Who reads now the works of Hobbes, Tom Paine, or Voltaire? Practically no one. It needs but a short time and the works by which the Bible has been triumphantly proved to be full of error are relegated to the waste-paper basket, while the Bible is more read than ever, finding great numbers who rely on it with the utmost assurance as the written word of God. Will Welhausen and the modern critics fare any better?

The Lord Jesus Christ appealed continually to the prophecies about himself as a proof of His mission; the Apostles did the same. These prophecies are in great detail. If not true, how easy it would be to prove that Jesus is not the Christ; but if true, then the conclusion is irresistible that the book is given by the inspiration of the Spirit of God, and that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, the One of whom all the prophets from Moses to Malachi wrote.

Alas! how few comparatively will take the trouble

to look into these things, infinitely important though they be. How often, as before remarked, has it been said to the writer, "Oh! the Bible is full of mistakes, I cannot believe it." And when the writer has asked "Kindly show me some of these mistakes," the answer almost invariably is, "I cannot point them out, but I read a book, which showed conclusively it was all wrong." Is that the way to examine such a question as this? To condemn a person without giving him a patient hearing is a crime even in the eyes of worldly men; yet there are men all the world over, who are ready to condemn the book, which purports to come from God without taking the trouble even to read it over once carefully.

As regards prophecy, and the truth of the Bible the history of Israel alone would show any candid man the truth. How literally have all the fearful evils spoken of in Leviticus, and Deuteronomy and in the prophets come to pass. Let any one read these prophecies, and then read a history of the Jews, and see whether the prophecies are not divine utterances. Scattered about, persecuted and hated, yet the nation has been preserved, and not become mingled with the other nations, and indications are very clear that in a short time the other prophecies about the nation, which are yet unfulfilled will be fulfilled, viz. that the Jews will return to their land in unbelief (though there will be a believing remnant), suffer troubles even greater than the awful troubles of the past, and be rescued by the appearance of the Lord Jesus from heaven. The other Jews will be brought from all quarters of the globe, while the ten tribes now lost to sight but seen of God will also be brought to the front, and reunited

to the Jews, and made one kingdom, which will be the chief of all the kingdoms of the earth, while Jerusalem will be the world's centre. These prophecies are doubtless definite enough, and yet there are clear indications that the beginning of the end is now not far off. The proud Gentiles, who now think that they can divide the world among themselves have to meet God in judgment, and the poor despised and persecuted Jew must become the head of the nations of earth.

DIFFICULTIES OF UNBELIEF IN CONNECTION WITH SCIENCE

This may seem a strange heading to many, for are we not constantly told that science has shown that the Scriptures are very erroneous? yet if looked at fairly and honestly the justice of the heading will have to be admitted.

The Scriptures of course are not given to teach us science, but on the other hand true science will never contradict the Scriptures when these are rightly understood. It must, however, be remembered on the one hand that a wrong construction may be put on the meaning of Scripture, and on the other many things have been asserted by scientific men to be facts, which later on have been found not to be so, while as to deductions, many put forward with the greatest confidence have been found false.

There is no branch of science which has been considered more adverse to the claims of Scripture than geology, yet is it not remarkable that leading geologists, such as Sir William Dawson in England and Dr. Dana in America, should be firm believers in the inspiration of the book of Genesis? Is it not absolutely impossible to imagine that Moses should

have written an account of creation more than 3000 years ago, and not have made hopeless confusion of the subject unless he had been inspired of God? How could he, unless God had taught him, have written as he did? There are other accounts of creation in the tablets of the Assyrians and the Scriptures of the Hindus, yet they are full of nonsense. How was it that Moses could keep clear of fable when his contemporaries are full of it? Had he been uninspired the first dawn of scientific knowledge would have utterly discredited what he wrote.

The writer once made a challenge, which he would repeat here. Let the first chapter of Genesis be re-written by any man or set of men in the world, the very cleverest and best informed if possible. Then after twenty years let it be placed alongside of the original, it will be assuredly found that the original more than 3000 years old will be seen by all to be more correct than that written but twenty years ago.

Let the reader read carefully the opening chapters of Genesis, the 26th, 38th, and 39th chapters of Job, the 104th Psalm and pronounce whether it was not impossible for any man thousands of years ago to have written them save by the inspiration of God. Let but the reader be honest in this matter, and he will have to admit that what is so often rashly concluded as a positive proof of the non-inspiration of Scripture will be found a positive proof of its inspiration. Thank God that although "the world by wisdom knows not God" and "not many wise men are called," yet some leading men of science in all its branches are devout believers in the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures, and

declare that they could not have been written by any human wisdom.

DIFFICULTIES OF UNBELIEF IN CONNECTION WITH
THE PRESENT POWER OF THE GOSPEL

We are not, however, left merely to the Scriptures themselves, we have also a witness to the power of the Gospel contained in the Scriptures in the lives of those, who believe it. For more than 1800 years has the Gospel been on its trial. During all this time there has been a company of witnesses, who have testified to its mighty power. By it they have been purged from a guilty conscience, by it they have found satisfaction for the heart. The mighty ones of earth have contended with the Gospel, they have slain and tortured its votaries, they have done all they could to obliterate the Scriptures, and to leave not one copy on the earth. Thousands have gone to the burning stake or to the torture-room rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer for the name of Jesus Christ. Thousands have borne witness to the power of the truth contained in Scripture, thousands do bear witness to this to-day. Liars, thieves, adulterers, slanderers and murderers have felt its mighty power when God has spoken to them through it, and turning to God, confessing their sins, have become changed men and women. Many who have been outwardly religious, moral and orthodox, have found that its words have searched them out, convicted them of sin, and have felt obliged to own themselves poor lost sinners deserving of God's wrath just as much as those, who have sinned in a way manifest to all; they have come to God through Christ and

have acknowledged to receiving a blessing, which is to them as life from the dead.

By the mighty power of God to-day numbers are finding the words of that book to be morally the means of giving sight to the blind, the making of the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak, and of healing sin-sick souls. What religion could never do, what education is powerless to accomplish, the Scriptures when brought home to the conscience are doing day by day. Old men and little children, matrons and girls, learned men and ignorant, come forward in numbers and thank God with all their hearts and souls for the Christ of God of which the Scriptures speak, who is to them the one supreme Object of belief, and the Joy of their hearts.

There has been a wonderful increase in human knowledge of late years, marvellous the discoveries of science, extraordinary have been the inventions; were the apostles and prophets such clever and wonderful people that they could invent out of their own brains that which could minister to an accusing conscience in a way altogether out of the power of the wise men for the last nineteen hundred years to equal? Surely if that, which they proclaimed and wrote was their own, it would have been surpassed over and over again? On the contrary no one can produce anything like it, our enemies themselves being judges.

Are we not all conscious of being something more than the beasts? Do we not know that our existence will go on after that mysterious thing called death has come to pass? What can science do for us as regards the future beyond death? What help is education in these things? Thank God, He has lifted the veil for us in the Scriptures,

and told us of the One, who has overcome death, and brought life and incorruptibility to light through the Gospel. Reader, you will search in vain through the regions of science, you will call on the wise men of earth in vain to give you what you can only receive through the ministry of poor ignorant fishermen and other apostles, viz. a sure and certain hope of eternal blessedness through the resurrection of Jesus Christ together with present joy in acceptance through and association with that blessed One, who died for us, and who lives for us for evermore; and apart from whom the future at best is but a leap in the dark.

Again, is it not true that even those, who scoff at the Bible, and at what is contained therein, really do in their hearts believe in its power, else why are they so ready to sneer at the shortcomings of those, who profess faith in Christ? Why does the world expect so much more from the one, who is a professed believer than from others? If an agnostic, deist, theosophist, unitarian or even a careless nominal Christian falls into sin no special surprise is manifested, but if one, who has made a decided profession of Christ does so, how much is said about it. Does not this show that much is expected of them?

Again, go into the back slums of our large towns, amongst the wretched, the hungry and forlorn, who is it that you find labouring there to relieve the distress? Ask them why they do it? In almost every case is not the answer, "We have believed in Jesus Christ, and He has sent us"? How should this be the case if the Scriptures are not inspired, and Jesus Christ is not the Son of God, risen from the dead?

Go into the heart of Africa where every step has been gained by the laying down of the lives of those, who went before, whom do you find labouring for the good, temporal and spiritual of the poor negroes? Are they not believers in the Lord Jesus Christ? Is it not the same all over the world? Are not the believers those, who are in the forefront in caring for the burdened, the sorrowful and the afflicted, the downtrodden and the ignorant? They make many mistakes, they may often quarrel when they should not, and they have many defects, yet will they not readily acknowledge that the failures and the defects are their own, while everything good in them is due to the Lord Jesus Christ, the Saviour, and to the Scriptures, which tell of Him.

Again how can we account for the wonderful living energy in the Scriptures to-day. Instead of being an old antiquated book, written so many years ago, do we not feel when we read it that the Author is One, who knows our inmost being, and knows our hearts in a way that we do not even know ourselves? Do we not feel instinctively that it is a book for all time? and that while all other books grow old this maintains its freshness? Why is it that thousands treasure it as they do nothing else? Why was it that Sir Walter Scott, who was such an omnivorous reader when he lay dying, said, "Read the book," and when asked "What book?" replied, "There is but one book, the Bible."

Why is it that when the realities of death stare men in the face they want to hear its words? Why do even careless souls put its texts on the tombstones of those they love?

Why on the other hand do men hate it so? Why are so many straining every nerve to prove it false, why do they show so much bias and prejudice towards it? Is it not because they feel its power so much, and it wounds them so that they would fain get rid of it.

How often has the writer of this seen men proclaim it untrue, yet wince under its knowledge; and the infidel who has called him a superstitious fool has ended the interview by saying "I wish I were you."

Again, though it be but a poor argument, yet it is an effective one. If the unbeliever is right in what way is the believer worse off than he? While if the believer is right woe be to the unbeliever.

How much we, who do believe in the Scriptures and in the Lord Jesus Christ of whom they speak, long that we could shew those who know Him not, whether they be sceptics or merely nominal believers, who know not the power of the Gospel something of the peace, joy and blessedness that comes from the real knowledge of Christ Jesus as a living Saviour in the glory of God.

CONCLUSION

It will be a great joy, if what has been said here will cause any reader, who has hitherto rejected the Scriptures as unreliable to reconsider the question calmly and quietly, or if it causes any, who hitherto have been merely nominal believers to see the intense importance of the matter, recognising the worthlessness of merely nominal assent to that which if it is worth anything, demands the whole allegiance of the heart as well as of the intellect.

The question is one which admits of no neutrality,

for if God has spoken it is self-evident that He expects it to be obeyed, the Gospel in fact is presented to all nations for the *obedience* of faith. Also if Jesus is indeed the eternal Son of God and Lord of all, and if His death be not a mere martyr's death but a death whereby the infinite love of God is made known and His rights vindicated: if our sins could not be expiated by anything short of this Sacrifice, then it is surely the height of madness and of folly not to believe with all the heart and soul? Surely the gospel of God as revealed in the Scriptures is worth everything or nothing? Either it is the very truth of God, or else it is a vain invention of man, and if it is convincing that man could not possibly have invented it any more than men could have set the sun in the heavens, then let there be no neutrality, but let the whole allegiance to our hearts be given to the blessed Son of God, who was and is still rejected by the world at large, but who has been set by God at His own right hand in glory, and who is coming again to have His full rights in the world, and to reign over all.

It should be understood that God can take no counsel with man. It is evident that being God He must do that which He considers right, and must work all things after the counsel of His own will, and it is quite hopeless to fight against His will. At the same time God is love, and His will is that which is the very best of all possible things for His creatures, and blessed is he who bows to that will. If it be asked, How are we to know that God is love seeing that there is so much misery all around? the answer is that this is a time for faith and not for sight. We who have but puny minds, who are acquainted with but one globe, which

is but a speck in the universe, and whose knowledge of the past is but as it were of a moment, are surely incompetent to judge of God, who has the whole universe in the hollow of His hand, and before whom past and future are alike spread. Beside, to all the difficulties, the apparent contradiction, the sorrows we see there is this answer, unsatisfactory doubtless to the one, who would argue with God but perfectly satisfactory to the simple: God gave His Son, He gave His all in so doing, and seeing He has done this He has proved Himself to be love, and therefore we can trust Him to be fully justified in all His dealings in the day when all results are made manifest.

Could puny complaining man be in God's place for a single day, and see all the rebellion and wickedness, the hypocrisy and pretence that goes on in the world, would he not sweep the world out of existence at once? Yet God has gone on in patience with rebellion for all these years, if so be that man will repent and turn to God, but it is a necessity that this should not go on for ever, and God must eventually arise in judgment on all, who oppose His will.

In the meantime the gospel of His grace is going out to all mankind offering not only a present pardon, and a prospect of future blessedness, but a present satisfaction for the heart in the knowledge of that blessed One, whom to know is life eternal. God has nothing higher, nothing better to offer than that which He is now offering in the gospel, for those who receive the gospel know that God has undertaken their cause, and will assuredly carry out His blessed purpose concerning all who believe, for they must be conformed to the image of God's Son and

share His blessed lot to all eternity. What more could God offer than this perfect likeness to the perfect One in whom is all God's delight.

It is doubtless very humbling to be told that we are naturally, even man in his best estate, poor lost sinners, and that do what we will we can never make ourselves acceptable to God; in fact that our condition is so desperate that nothing short of the death of God's Son could be of any avail as a remedy.

Man in the pride of his heart would fain consider himself an exalted creature, though strange to say civilised man thinks little of the rights of the uncivilised, and the nations, who have the power, grasp the countries of the weak without scruple. Is not the real reason of the dislike of many to the gospel and to the Scriptures generally that man is really shown up to be the being he is? Other writings exalt man and make much of him, but God's book plainly tells us that he will not do for God, and that there is a Man of another order exactly the opposite of the first man, and that in this second Man is all God's delight and the first must make way for the second, and for those, who are associated with this second Man, Christ Jesus.

Christ is the centre of all God's counsels, the delight of God's heart. Men crucified him, God has exalted Him and the crucial question for the moment is, are we on the side of those, who rejected Him, or on the side of Him, who is rejected? All fall into the former class, heathen, sceptic, deist, or nominal Christian, who have not from their hearts believed on Jesus Christ as Saviour, and owned Him as their Lord. We have not to make ourselves fit for God, we could not do so. All He looks for

is a confession of our guilt and need, and a turning from our own resources to Him, who gave His Son for us. All the rest is His work, He receives, He heals, He guides, He brings to glory. It is not that there is any weakness in Him. He must have His own way and therefore if kindness and gentle admonition will not serve their purpose He will chastise, and may be this chastening will be very severe, but whatever it be it will be in love in order that the desired end may be accomplished; and He will not fail, for He will assuredly carry out in the best of all possible ways that which He has set Himself to do. We need not therefore fear that having come to Him through His Son we may yet be lost, because we shall not hold on. God gave His Son, is the answer to an accusing conscience, and God gave His Son is an answer to all our other fears. With that overwhelming proof of love before us there is nothing that need be feared, all we have to do is to trust Him.

Only let us see to this that we do not neglect so great salvation, because if we do, let us be assured of this that the God, who forsook His own Son on the cross where He was the Sin-bearer, will never pass over the sins of him, who refuses or neglects that sacrifice, and stands before God to answer for his own sins. Alas! for such, for them there can be no hope seeing that they have turned their backs on the only One in whom there is any blessing for poor guilty, sinful man.

May God grant that every reader of this little treatise may have his eyes opened to see the love of God as manifested in His gift of Jesus Christ, and that He may commit himself wholly to Him. Then assuredly he will find what a blessed thing it is to

belong to Christ, and that the Scriptures are the very word of God upon which he can wholly rely knowing that when all else fails they will prove a sure rock and resting-place for time and for eternity.

ON GIVING

Introduction

GOD is known to us as a giving God. In giving His Son Jesus Christ, He has given His all. All else could have been given by Him without cost, but this gift cost Him everything. "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also, freely give us all things." (Rom. viii. 32.) It is better to give than to receive, and the character of God comes out in this boundless liberality of giving. He is always giving; He giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not. He is kind to the unthankful and the evil.

So with our Lord. He came to earth as a Giver, He gave Himself, His life, His all. He was always giving, never sparing Himself. He loved to give. He said to the woman of Samaria, "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith unto thee Give Me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water." He came in the blessed character of God as a giving God. He did not ask anything from man, He gave all to man. He went about doing good, healing all that were oppressed of the devil. He spent His strength and gave His life in proof of the love and goodness of God, shewing out in what an unstinted way God gives.

This being so, seeing that believers are told to be imitators of God, as dear children, and that the Church is here to set forth Christ in His ways on earth, it is manifest that believers must be here in the same character of givers, for unless they are so, the character of God and of Christ is belied, and we are proved false witnesses of Christ. "Freely ye have received, freely give," is what the Lord said to His own. The disciples, who were to go out without money, were yet to shew boundless liberality. The widow, who cast in two mites, her all, is most highly praised: while the Apostle Paul, in speaking of giving, quotes the strong language of the 112th Psalm, "He hath dispersed abroad; He hath given to the poor; His righteousness remaineth for ever." (2 Cor. ix. 9.)

These, and many other instances, which will occur to every reader, shew how God gives, how Christ gave, how believers should give; and that while of course the spiritual must ever be of incomparably more importance than the earthly, and the moral than the material, yet the giving necessarily includes material things, and care and thoughtfulness for others in matters pertaining to this life. (*See* James ii. 15, 16; 1 John iii. 17; 2 Cor. ix. 7, etc.)

Now, if this is understood, we shall be kept from two dangers:—

The first is that we should think everything of the earthly and the material. In this case we shall sink into mere philanthropy (falsely so called; for the love of God to man, spoken of in Titus iii. 4, is the real philanthropy) and shall not be here in the character of "sons of your Father who is in [the] heavens" (Matt. v. 45, N.T.) at all.

The second is that we should imagine that we

make everything of the spiritual and moral, while we are indulging ourselves, instead of living self-denying lives. This would be to deceive ourselves, for we have to make to ourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, for he that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much; if we have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to our trust the true riches? And if we are not faithful in that which is another's, who will give us that which is our own? (See Luke xvi. 9-12.)

This little treatise will be mainly occupied with the material side of giving; but this is not because it is considered the more important—far from it—but because our behaviour on this point often affords an indication of our real character, according to the above quoted words from Luke xvi.

Will the reader, therefore, kindly bear this in mind, so that it may not be said the spiritual side is neglected or made light of.

The Commandment for Israel

Let no one think that it is legal to enquire into, and to profit by the requirements of the law. Does not the Apostle Paul write, "Say I these things as a man? or saith not the law the same also? For it is written in the law of Moses, etc." (1 Cor. ix. 8), and he founds an important truth on it.

In Rom. viii. 4, the object of our deliverance is said to be "That the righteousness [or 'righteous claims,' New Trans.] of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit." Again, love is the fulfilling [or 'fulness'] of the law. (Rom. xiii. 10; Gal. v. 14.) If, therefore, as Christians we have the spirit of love,

we may exceed, but we shall not fall short of, the law.

Now it is commonly thought that because of the mention of tithes, therefore the Israelite had to give a tenth only; but this is a mistake, he had to give *far more*. Every step of his pathway as a farmer and agriculturist (which is what most Israelites were), had to be marked by giving.

The following may give some idea of what they had to give, though it does not pretend to be a complete list by any means:—

(1) A tithe or tenth, both of grain and fruit, was the Lord's (Lev. xxvii. 30), i.e. it was to be given to the Levites, who again gave to the priests. (Numb. xviii. 21, etc.) The tenth of the herd was also to be similarly given. (Lev. xxvii. 32.)

(2) Another tenth (which must on no account *be confounded with the above*) *had to be reserved* to be eaten in the place which the Lord chose to set his name there. (Deut. xii. 17-19; see Deut. xiv. 24-27 for the provision when the distance to the place was great.) It may be asked whether a tenth of the increase was not a great quantity for these occasions, but it should be remembered that the Israelites was three times a year to go to the place the Lord chose, viz. at the passover, the feast of weeks, and that of tabernacles. The stay on each occasion would not be much less than ten days (the passover with the feast of unleavened bread lasted eight days, and so did the feast of tabernacles, but as to the feast of weeks no mention of a period is made), so that from twenty days to a month each year would be thus spent, and not only were they not to appear before the Lord empty, but also it was to be a time of rejoicing and of giving to

the stranger, the fatherless, the widow, and above all to the Levite (Deut. xvi. 11, 14, 17); so that the tenth would not be at all too much for this purpose.

(3) Then besides these, there was a third tithing which took place every third year. (Deut. xiv. 28, 29.) In this case the amount was to be laid up within the gates for the purpose of supplying the Levite, the stranger (who is never to be forgotten), and the fatherless and the widow, within the gates.

These three sets of tithes would alone amount to between a fourth and a fifth of all the produce, but this is far from all, for we have also the following:—

(4) The fields were not to be fully reaped nor gleaned; nor was all the fruit to be plucked from the trees. These were to be left to the poor and the stranger. (Lev. xix. 9, 10.) Also all were at liberty to pluck corn and fruit in the fields or vineyards. (Deut. xxiii. 24, 25.)

(5) The fruit of trees was not to be taken for the owner in anywise till the fifth year. (Lev. xix. 23, 25.)

(6) The firstlings of all clean beasts were to be sacrificed to the Lord. (Numb. xviii. 17.)

(7) The firstborn of men and of asses to be redeemed. (Numb. xviii. 16; Ex. xiii. 13.)

(8) Every seventh year they were not to sow, nor to eat what grew of itself. (Lev. xxv. 4.)

(9) On the seventh year every debt was to be released, and the Hebrew slave was to be set free and liberally furnished with all good things.

(10) Besides the above there were the offerings for sin, for trespass, and for uncleanness, even when it was involuntary.

It may, of course, be objected that in some of these cases, notably in the second case mentioned, the owner himself partook of the part reserved. This is true, but it is only what happens continually with the Christian to-day.

He has to help in the provision of a suitable place to meet in, and for the proper upkeep thereof, that all may be done decently and in order, and he will help as to this those, who have no means, but he himself will benefit, though the expenditure is for the Lord.

So when he attends conferences, and helps to entertain others; when either individually or with his brethren he lays out of his substance to enable other saints to get together for prayer and reading of the word, or to get to the gospel, is it less giving because he shares with them?

The thoughtful reader will be able to see what is analogous to the different cases stated, so that each one has its counterpart in the Christian's life here on earth, and all the detail given is full of meaning.

Those best able to judge in the matter calculate that the godly Israelite would thus give one third or more of his total produce for the year, as a matter of course as his ordinary duty, before he even began to give for voluntary offerings, free-will offerings, thanksgiving offerings, vows, etc. etc. Nevertheless, there were occasions, such as at the building of the tabernacle, and the provision for the temple, when the people offered most abundantly, with a willing heart, free-will offerings to the Lord. (Exod. xxxvi. 5; 1 Chron. xxix. 14, 17.)

It may be asked, How was it possible for them
to give so much?

The explanation is simple. It was because in so doing the Lord would bless them in an extraordinary manner, while if they withheld, they would forfeit the blessing and instead receive a curse. Thus there would be this standing miracle, that those who gave away in great abundance would be far better off than those, who refrained from so doing, and it would be proved by practical demonstration that "There is that scattereth and yet increaseth: and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty." (Prov. xi. 24.)

A vast number of passages might be quoted to prove these assertions, but a few must suffice.

"When the land remained unsown the seventh year, in the sixth year it brought forth a supply for three years" (Lev. xxv. 20, 22). Thus there was positive gain by obedience.

In their liberality the Lord would bless them in all their works. (Deut. xiv. 29, xv. 18, and xvi. 15.) See, too, what happened in Hezekiah's time. It is written, "Since the people began to bring the offerings into the house of the Lord, we have had enough to eat, and have left plenty: for the Lord hath blessed His people; and what is left is this great store. (See 2 Chron. xxxi. 8 and 10.)

See what happened in Haggai's time, chapters i. 2-11, and ii. 14-19, while no passage can be more to the point in its downrightness than Mal. iii. 8-18. Thus it was that God made Israel to be an object-lesson of the blessedness of obedience and of willing offerings to the Lord, and also of the governmental retribution which followed disobedience and selfishness. (See as to this Jer. xxxiv. 12-22.)

Have we not

much to learn

by these things? Assuredly.

It will, however, be objected, that firstly we are not under the law but under grace, and secondly we are a heavenly, and not an earthly people, and that our blessings are of another order.

To the first of these objections the answer is exceedingly simple: Let it be fully granted that we are not under the law but under grace, then surely grace, when really understood, will exceed law, even as the Lord not only loved His neighbour as Himself, but far more than Himself, and He is our Model, while our commandment is not the legal one, but the commandment of love, which makes the fulfilment easy instead of difficult.

As to the second the reply is: Assuredly the Christian is heavenly, and has a heavenly calling; therefore, as the heavens are higher than the earth, so the one with a heavenly calling will surpass, by far, the one that has only an earthly calling, in all that is good.

Moreover, while the Christian is heavenly, yet he is still upon the earth, and, therefore, being in the place of God's people on the earth, he is subject to the government of God in this world. This government is a theme which fills the Old Testament, the first three Gospels, the Epistles of Peter, and the Revelation, and is frequently referred to in the rest of Scripture, and it should be fully understood that the Christian comes under God's government. Grace in no way upsets it, but confirms it, though it turns His government into blessing for those who, being chastened, humble themselves before God and are subject to the Lord.

It is the Apostle of grace who writes: "Be not deceived, God is not mocked; whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap" (Gal. vi. 7), and

again: "He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully" (2 Cor. ix. 6). And even of human government he says: "Rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power, do that which is good and thou shalt have praise of the same: for he is a minister of God to thee for good. But if thou doest evil, be afraid, for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is a minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil." (Rom. xiii. 3, 4.) Strange as this sounds in the face of the cruelties of rulers to God's people, there must be profound truth in it. "Behold, the righteous shall be recompensed on the earth: much more the wicked and the sinner." (Prov. xi. 31.) "Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him; for they shall eat the fruit of their doings. Woe unto the wicked, it shall be ill with him, for the reward of his hands shall be given him." (Isaiah iii. 10, 11.)

*The heavenly calling and the government of God
on the earth*

If, then, we take into account these two things, the heavenly calling of the Christian, and also the fact of his being one of God's people on the earth under the righteous government of God, which rewards the righteous and punishes evil, we see that:

- (1) The tendency of all godly, righteous conduct is to bring about a result in blessing even in the present time. "Godliness is profitable unto all things, *having promise of the life that now is*, and of that which is to come." (1 Tim. iv. 8.) "Children obey your parents in the Lord: for this

is right. Honour thy father and mother, which is the first commandment with promise; *that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest live long on the earth.*" (Eph. vi. 1-3.) Surely this quotation from the law is not without much meaning.

Again another quotation from the Old Testament: "For he that will love life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile. . . . For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and His ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil," etc. (1 Peter iii. 9-13.)

So with giving, there is the same tendency to present reward: "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again." (Luke vi. 38.)

(2) While the above is perfectly true, and should never be overlooked, yet there is something higher than receiving the reward in a material way, so the Apostle Peter continues the passage above quoted by saying: "But and if ye suffer for righteousness sake, happy are ye . . . for it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well-doing than for evil-doing." (1 Peter iii. 14-17.) That is, that while the natural consequence of the well-doing is the present result on the earth, yet, owing to a higher law coming in, there may be a far higher blessing in being allowed to suffer for Christ for well-doing, and, doubtless, if we are spiritual and heavenly minded, this is the result we shall covet: viz. that all reward shall come in a spiritual way. This was true even in Old Testament times, for

even those, who had an earthly calling were called upon to suffer, while we read of those who were tortured, not accepting deliverance *that they might obtain a better resurrection.* (See Heb. xi. 32-40.) How much more, then, will this be true of those with a heavenly calling.

Thus it is that while the tendency of a godly walk is always towards prosperity on the earth, and God will assuredly reward His servants abundantly, He cannot be any man's debtor, yet the material may give way to the moral, the natural to the spiritual, and blessings in the kingdom at the present time to blessings in the kingdom in the future, for the righteous may even be called on to die early for the Lord's sake. Let us, therefore, not forget the righteous government of God, while our hearts are at the same time coveting the best things, without desiring that our blessings should take an earthly shape.

It may, however, be asked,

What is our experience?

When we look back, can we not often see that losses in money matters, expensive illnesses in our households, and other similar things have been due to our withholding more than was meet, and God has been speaking to us about it? Few there are, who have had no such experiences. This is not said in order that we may judge others because of their trying circumstances—such conduct is altogether wrong—but that we may judge ourselves.

It might, however, be well sometimes, if we acted as did a Christian merchant, who, having given a certain sum to a work of the Lord, heard directly after of a great loss in his business. He at once

sent ten times the sum he had sent before, saying, when asked his reason, that he did not wish to be deprived of his money without the opportunity of doing well with it.

Thus, while it is distinctly evil to sit in judgment on others, and we need to avoid legality in our judgments, even of ourselves, yet we appeal to the reader whether it is not true that he can distinctly trace the government of God with him all through his converted lifetime, and whether in the matter of giving, as in everything else, he cannot clearly see that he who saveth his life loses it, and that he, who loses his life for Christ's sake is the only one, who saves it?

Not, of course, that we are to give for the sake of reward, still less from dread of punishment; love, and love alone, should be the motive, and the coveted reward should be the approval of Christ and increased appreciation of Him. Nevertheless, all these things are written for our instruction. "Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the Lord." (Psalm cvii. 43.) Who, therefore, will not love to take heed to that which is written for our instruction, and to trace the Lord's hand all through his life, whether in approval or in chastening, while keeping himself in the love of God and praying in the Holy Ghost, so that it may not be the legality of a slave, which characterises him, but the freedom of a son under the commandment of love?

Let us now return to our subject and ask,

What are we to give?

Well, we wholly belong to the Lord; we are bought with a price; we have been redeemed with

the precious blood of Christ, and set free, so that it is but natural that the apostle should say, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." (Rom. xii. 1, 2.)

We cannot, as it were, ransom ourselves by giving up our property. Ourselves, our lives, our souls, our all is His, and this is not a hardship or bondage, but freedom and an unspeakable privilege, transforming what would otherwise be worthless into that which is extremely precious and valuable in the eyes of the Lord of glory, thus giving invaluable opportunities of being, doing, and suffering that which shall be found to honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ. Let no Christian make the great mistake of thinking that money is the chief thing to give. Far from this, it is the least: we are not our own, nevertheless it is our privilege to yield ourselves to God as those that are alive from the dead and our members as instruments of righteousness unto God. How blessed! God does not want our things, unless we own the Lord's rights over us, but when we have done this He allows us to use our all in His happy service. Even in doing good to men, kindness, sympathy, thoughtful, tender service and, most of all, love, will go much further than money; how much rather, then, does God look for the moral beyond the material. With him the motive is everything, the material thing nothing, so that one may give all one's goods to feed the poor and yet give nothing, and a poor

widow may give two mites and the value thereof be unspeakably great.

We are the Lord's, therefore let it be a privilege to own His blessed rights over us, and count it all honour not to live for ourselves, but to Him who died for us and rose again. Thus it will be our happy service to hold ourselves and our families, our gifts, our talents, our opportunities, our positions, our time and our money at His disposal for Him to do as he will with them, and it will then be a joy to us when we are able to serve Him in any way he pleases. Thus Caleb received Hebron for an inheritance, because he wholly followed Jehovah, God of Israel, and he drove out the giants therefrom (Joshua xiv. 12-14, xv. 14), yet very soon after this same city is taken from him and given to the priests (Joshua xxi. 11). What a privilege for Caleb!

It is an immense thing to see that all we are and all we have, the natural and the spiritual, are the Lord's, yet we must not think that all is done when this is acknowledged. The whole of the land of Canaan was given to the Israelites, yet it had to be conquered in detail. Though we as a totality have died and are risen with Christ, yet we are still to mortify individually our members which are upon the earth." (Col. ii. 20, iii. 1-5.) It is one thing to accept a principle in the abstract; it is another thing to work it out in detail bit by bit in daily life, for in so doing we shall often meet with strong resistance, even with regard to matters where we expected none, just as it is incomparably easier to say, in the abstract, "We are altogether sinful," than to confess a single sin in particular.

Hence the necessity of going more into detail.

To whom are we to do good?

We are to love all (1 Thess. iii. 12), to pray for all (1 Tim. ii. 1), to do good to all (Gal. vi. 10), to love and to succour our enemies (Rom. xii. 19-21), and to be kind to the unthankful and the evil (Matt. v. 43-48). At the same time we are specially to do good to the household of faith, and to love our brethren as Christ has loved us, which means that we are to be willing to lay down our lives for the brethren. (1 John iii. 16.)

How much this means! It does *not* mean that we are to love a special company of Christians with whom we are personally associated, or those with whose views we are in agreement, but that we are to have this special extraordinary love for all the family of God, even when they care not for us, as one said of old, "I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved." (2 Cor. xii. 15.) Anything short of this is sectarian.

Thus also we are to love and do good, in a lesser degree, to all, irrespective of social position, worth, nationality, or any such distinction. Only thus can there be the setting forth of the character of God and of Christ.

One thing, however, needs to be borne in mind, that it is the needy who should be helped, not those who can and will recompense us here on earth. If we desire to be recompensed at the resurrection of the just, we must seek out the poor, the maimed, the halt, and the blind, as did the Lord Himself (Luke xlv. 12-14, 21); the principle is that we cannot have rewards from men as well as from God the Father (Matt. vi. 4).

There is a very striking verse in Scripture which says "He that oppresseth the poor to increase his riches, and he that giveth to the rich, shall surely come to want." (Prov. xxii. 16.) This is startling, for it links oppression of the poor with giving to the rich, yet how common is this latter, even among those who would be horrified at even the suggestion of the former sin. Is it not true that the amount of giving to and the feasting of the rich are one great cause why we can give so little to the poor?

Then, while the poor and the needy, the widow, the orphan, *and the stranger*, are mentioned over and over again as those to be especially thought of, Scripture is very emphatic in mentioning the Levites in the Old Testament, and those who minister in spiritual things in the New, in a very special manner as those, who are to be thought of and provided for. So much is this the case that it is very much pressed by the Apostle Paul, that as the Gentiles were partakers of the spiritual things of the Jews, therefore it was their duty to minister to them in carnal things. (Rom. xv. 27.)

If any one ministers spiritual things *to us*, it is our bounden duty to see his need is supplied in temporal things. This should be looked at as simple honesty, just as it would be to pay our baker's bill, but, besides this, there are many ministering to those, who are too poor to help them, or, may be, are unwilling to do so, then it is the privilege of those who have, to minister temporal things to such. The Levite takes the first place among those who are to be helped.

It may, however, be asked,

Are we not to discriminate?

Assuredly we are to discriminate. How, otherwise, are we to give to the needy? This often means patient investigation, and requires time and patience. It is much easier to give a trifle to one with a pitiful story than to make careful enquiry and then to give liberally or not at all, according to the real need or the reverse.

It seems, however, a strange thing to some, among whom is the writer, that there is little or nothing said as to discrimination in giving in Scripture, save that we should not give to the rich but to the poor.

Scripture seems to enforce the most lavish giving, and never seems to give a caution, such as, "beware lest you pauperize, or give to unworthy objects, encourage lazy people or those who take up ministry for inadequate reasons," etc. It even goes so far as to say, "Give to every one that asketh of thee." (See also Luke vi. 38.) Why is this?

The writer has thought about this very often, and the only solution he can offer is this—that we are naturally so selfish, so cautious, so glad of an excuse for not giving, and for spending on ourselves, that it would not have done to have put in any caution. We should probably have fastened on it as a leech, and made this a convenient reason for not giving on all possible occasions. Even 2 Thess. iii. 10 seems not to be an injunction to others, but a word to the man, who did not like to work (because, apparently, he believed in the near coming of Christ), that in all consistency he should not eat either.

As a matter of fact, as our resources are of course strictly limited and not unbounded like God's, therefore we have to discriminate in order that as stewards

we may do the best we can with that which is our Master's.

Responsibilities, however, are not to be disregarded.

As to these the Scripture is very emphatic; we must provide things honest in the sight of all men; we are to owe no man anything save to love one another (Rom. xii. 17, xiii. 8), or, as the saying is, "we must be just before we are generous." This is most important; we cannot give while just claims on us are not settled.

In this connection we should remember Mark vii. 9-13, and the strong censure the Lord passes on those, who said that a man might relieve himself of the claims his parents had on him, if he chose to give the money for religious purposes.

A man's family has the first claim on him, and that not only his own house, but other relatives as well. If he do not provide for them he has denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel. (1 Tim. v. 8.) See also verse 16, and the importance of not letting the Church be charged.

All this is most important, for alas! not only the Christian public, but those, who profess to be real Christians as well, think little of letting their parents and near relatives be chargeable to the Church, while they themselves live very comfortably, but make the frivolous excuse that they cannot afford to support them. Maybe this excuse will not be found valid at the judgment-seat. Nothing will excuse such. If the parents are in want, it is the plainest duty of the children to take in such, and share and share alike. Even more distant relatives in need should not be neglected, as is so often done.

Strange to say, the heathen often put the Christian

to shame. In India the writer has seen a man on a very moderate salary take in, besides his own large family, two widows of two brothers, each with a large family, without any ostentation or thought of merit; and cases of lesser magnitude are of the commonest occurrence.

God never meant the family to be superseded in this world, nor to give to the Church the work which rightly belonged to the family. Any weakening of family ties is to be greatly dreaded as a sign of the final apostasy. All other giving must take place after the needs of those, who have the ties of relationship, have been met. This is emphatic, and no work or service for the Lord so-called should set it aside.

It may then be asked, if we are to provide for our needy relatives, and to be such liberal givers,

How is it to be done?

The answer to this is, mainly by simplicity of living and by self-denial.

There are little touches here and there in the history of Israel, which tell of the beautiful simplicity of the lives in those days. We see Boaz, a mighty man of wealth, talking in all simplicity to the reapers, eating bread and parched corn among the reapers, and sleeping on a heap of barley at the time of harvest, and then when we compare this with our complex civilisation and the vast number of our fancied needs we are astounded. Surely it would be an immense thing, if we Christians would be as simple as possible. Simple in our food and in our raiment, in our furniture, and in our comforts, and without luxuries, simple in movements, manner of life, and in all our ways. It is the varied

character of modern life, which makes it necessary for people to work so hard, and yet have so little to give away after all. We look at one another, and what one has we crave for, and instead of seeing what we can do without, we think of what we can have. Thus we act and react on one another in making our lives more complex, we increase our cares, our work, our anxieties, and are less and less free to serve the Lord.

Pray do not misunderstand. The Christian is not to be an ascetic or a recluse; godliness (or piety) owns that every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving, "for it is sanctified by the word of God and freely addressing Him" (1 Tim. iv. 4, 5, N.T.), "and that God has given us richly all things to enjoy." (1 Tim. vi. 17.) Hospitality is enjoined, marriage is honoured, and family ties maintained. A good report of those that are without is a commendation, and a simple, unaffected life is shown to become the people of God, a life with nothing morose or unnatural about it.

Nevertheless, though this is the case, the same Scripture, which speaks so much of godliness, says "having food and raiment, let us be therewith content." (1 Tim. vi. 8.) It is not that there is anything wrong in having this or that, but that the servant of God wishes to be as free as possible to serve his Master to the best advantage. "No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier." (2 Tim. ii. 4.) He has resources and joys in the power of the Spirit to which the worldly man is a stranger, and it is a pleasure to him to deny himself, to serve the Lord,

to do His will, and to be a giver. It is not therefore a hardship, but pleasing to him to live a simple life, to keep under his body, and to bring it into subjection, to be moderate in all things, to seek that his house and household may be simple and orderly, all for this same end that the Lord may be more efficiently served. It has been well said, "If our business or our possessions, be our object, we make them as large as we can; if they are our burden, which we have to carry, we make them as small as we can."

In this connection it is well to take heed to the words of the apostle, "But this I say, brethren, the time is short (or more correctly 'straitened'), it remaineth therefore that both they who have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep as though they wept not; and they that rejoice as those that rejoiced not; and they that buy as those that possessed not; and they that use this world as not abusing it; for the fashion of this world passeth away." (1 Cor. vii. 29-31.)

If, too, Elisha could say to Gehazi in the days of the earthly calling of God's people, but in view of the low condition that prevailed morally all round, "Is it a time to receive money and to receive garments," etc., what would the Spirit of God say to-day on this subject?

See, too, Revelation xviii: The sin of that foul thing Babylon merely is that she has glorified herself and lived deliciously; she says in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow. She magnifies and enjoys herself just as if Christ were not rejected.

If the prophet Amos could write in chapter vi. 1-6, as he did in that day, what would God say to us now?

God grant we may never forget that Christ is rejected and that *all that is in the world*, the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life, are not of the Father, but are of the world, and the world passes away and the lust thereof, but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever. No wonder it is written, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." (1 John ii. 15-17.)

It may now be asked, Is it desirable to

give proportionately?

i.e. to set aside regularly on each occasion of receiving one's income a certain portion to be used in the Lord's service.

If by this it is meant that by giving a proportion we can, as it were, purchase the right to do as we please with the rest, then certainly this is a great mistake. All that we have we only hold in stewardship, so we cannot do this.

This being understood, the matter is certainly worth consideration. It cannot be dismissed contemptuously by the remark that it is legal. Legality is a matter of the spirit and motive of a thing, and not one of outward action. We may refrain from such a course and be full of legality, and we may do it without being legal.

Some have an idea that all order, method, arrangement, in the things of God are illegal, they are said to savour of system, and be evil. This is a great mistake. Is God the author of confusion? Is not the whole creation of God, excepting where sin has marred it, the perfection of method, order, and arrangement? Does not every heavenly body

keep its course and time exactly, so that the best timepiece that can be made must often be tested by these bodies, and no one dreams of suggesting that the difference that is found is due to the star being incorrect in its transit.

Perfection of order is of God, and system is God's plan. It is only when man makes a system, which interferes with God's system, and shuts out the action of the Spirit, that it is wrong. It is right to plan, if it be in subjection to the will of God. (See James iv. 15.)

We apportion out our income to the various items of expenditure without being legal. Is it legal to give a daughter a dress allowance? Why should it be legal to put aside a proportion at each time of receipt of income for the things of the Lord.

Granted that if our whole heart and soul were aglow with love, zeal, and devotedness to the Lord, we should not need any such thing. Then in order to serve the Lord to the best advantage, we should seek that all that we have, and all that we are, should be kept in the best possible condition for the Lord. Our eating, our drinking, our waking, our sleeping, would all be regulated for this supreme object. We should do like the Apostle Paul (1 Cor. ix. 26, 27), and there would not be the slightest fear of any self-indulgence on our part.

The writer, in 1868, met in Bombay a servant of the Lord, now departed,* who, being unmarried (1 Cor. vii. 33), lived with extreme frugality for the Lord's sake. Being very talented, he could easily have been rich if he chose, whereas he lived on a few shillings a month, yet without any ostenta-

* The late George Bowen.

tion, asceticism, or display of poverty, and with perfect cheerfulness. Those that were helped by his ministry often sent him presents, sometimes very valuable ones; he thanked them and quietly gave them away to others, and he kept nothing. Such an one had no need of such action: but take ordinary people like most of us, especially those who are married and have families, as most of us have. Is it said in vain that he that is married careth for the things of the world that he may please his wife, and the wife for the things of the world that she may please her husband? Unless, therefore, a portion is regularly set aside, and the rest alone is looked upon as the allowance for the ordinary needs, it will generally be found in practice that *uncommonly little is left for giving.*

It is true that all we have is the Lord's, and that we are only stewards; nevertheless certain matters are left to our discretion. The Apostle Paul, in 1 Cor. ix., discriminates between what he might do and what he did do. He also says that all things are lawful, but all things are not expedient.

If all was rigid and fixed, there could be nothing but of necessity, and therefore there would be no real giving at all. This would be to contradict Scripture, which says, "Not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver (2 Cor. ix. 7), and the Christian would become a machine, and the work of God rendered of no avail.

It may be perfectly legitimate to buy another coat or dress, yet if the old ones are made to last double the time, in order that the extra amount might go to feed the hungry and clothe the naked, is it not well? If self-denial (usually so called) has no place, then why the frequent injunctions

to give all through Scripture, and the promises of reward? And it may be laid down as an axiom that unless we set apart a proportion at the moment we receive, with ordinary Christians our powers of giving will be greatly reduced. This or that will come up until, with all the will in the world, little will be left to give.

There is also the consideration of the following Scripture: "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come." (1 Cor. xvi. 2.)

It may be said that this is special. This is admitted, but it is written for our learning and instruction, and not merely as a matter that concerned the Corinthians only, and we can see a principle here, that of laying in store, week by week, *as the Lord prospers*. If it is legal to put aside a proportion, then this was legal, but the contention is absurd; it is no more legal to put aside for the Lord's work, than it is for the house rent or your children's education. Both are legal, if done in a legal spirit; neither, if done as to the Lord, in righteousness and love.

It is strongly recommended, therefore, that whenever our income comes in, a proportion be put aside, and that whenever our income rises to let the first part of that increase go for the Lord's service. Those who have tried it can testify how helpful this plan is, how there is no bondage connected with it, and how greatly their powers of giving have been increased thereby.

If it be asked what the proportion should be, the answer is, "Every man as he hath purposed in his heart." (2 Cor. ix. 7.) Nothing can be laid

down, but it will be found that the pleasure and luxury of giving increases with the giving, and, as again and again we wait on the Lord about the matter, which we are bound to do under these conditions, we long to give more and more; so that we have heard of a case where one who began by giving a tenth ended by giving nine-tenths.

Thank God none are excluded from this. Every Christian is naturally a giver; rich and poor are alike to give, all will covet to give. None will say, "We are told that Christians are to give, why do they not give to me?" but rather the very poorest will not fail to claim his right to deny himself, and to give to the Lord, as was the case with them of Macedonia. "How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality . . . this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God." (2 Cor. viii. 2-5.)

Of course, as before pointed out, if after the proportion fixed on for the moment, prayerfully before the Lord, has been set aside, it should please the Lord to ask for any further proportion or the whole, then let us thankfully give, for all is His, and we can trust Him. We acquire no legal rights by laying aside a proportion.

Let us affectionately exhort the reader to be a cheerful, liberal giver, and if he has never given the plan here mentioned a trial, let him try it for a while, and see whether, as so many have found, it does not increase his freedom, his joy, and his power of helping others to a far greater extent than he ever imagined it would, by the grace of God. Those, who have had experience of a thing,

are more competent witnesses than those, who have never had any.

Other Questions

As to any other questions that may arise, such, for instance, as to whether one should lay up for one's family, they can only be settled by each one individually waiting on the Lord and receiving special guidance from Him. For his guidance he will find on the one hand such Scriptures as "I have been young and now am old, yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread. He is ever merciful and lendeth, and his seed is blessed" (Psalm xxxvii. 25, 26); and on the other hand, "I will not be burdensome to you: for I seek not yours, but you; for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children." (2 Cor. xii. 14.) Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. One thing is, however, clear, that if a man does not make provision for his family, such as a prudent man of the world makes, *and in consequence spends more upon himself than he would otherwise be able to do*, expecting the saints to care for his family, and thus throwing them as a burden on the Church, then he is neither acting in faith, nor in an upright, godly manner. Such conduct can unhesitatingly be condemned as unrighteous. If he has faith to spend in the Lord's interests, not only what he would naturally do as a Christian, but also over and above what he would save up for his family, well and good, but without faith it is impossible to please God, and counterfeit faith is worthless.

In any case it is well to take heed to the words of our Lord: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures

upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal; for where your treasure is there will your heart be also." (Matt. vi. 19-21.)

"So is he that layeth up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God." (Luke xii. 21.)

"Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that fadeth not, where no thief approacheth neither moth corrupteth." (Luke xii. 33.)

What are we told by the prophet Isaiah that fasting means: "Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh." (Isa. lviii. 6, 7.) Because this is in the Old Testament, is it any the less true to-day?

What does the King say to the righteous when He sits upon the throne of His glory, and all nations are gathered before Him? "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was an hungred, and ye gave Me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave Me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took Me in: naked, and ye clothed Me: I was sick, and ye visited Me: I was in prison, and ye came unto Me. . . . Verily, I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My

brethren, ye have done it unto Me." (Matt. xxv. 34-40.)

Is this not written for our learning? Does the fact that dispensationally this applies to the nations after the Church has gone make us think that there is no application to those, who in the present day succour or neglect the witnesses of Christ? If we think this, our dispensational intelligence will only be a curse to us. We do well to remember that whatever the dispensational interpretations may be, yet in every passage there is an application to the saints quite apart from the special dispensational meaning. We have lost much by not understanding this.

It is most remarkable that in the vast number of Old Testament Scriptures quoted in the New (omitting those, which personally apply to Christ), all but a very few are quoted for present application, though dispensationally they belong to a future day. We do well, therefore, to remember that *all* Scripture is written for our learning, so that we may profit by all. (See Rom. xv. 4, and 1 Cor. x. 11.)

Caution

Just a word of caution seems needed here. All that is said in this treatise is from the point of view of the giver. Some may, however, read it, who are poor and are given to. Now all such must clearly understand that they cannot say, Why do not the saints give to me? They have to do with God, and God alone, as to their need, and not with their brethren. Are you poor and needy, now is the time to shew your trust in God? You are fasting, you have not that which seems necessary,

then anoint your head, and wash your face, that you appear not unto men to fast; thus shall you have a reward of your Father in heaven. (Matt. vi. 16-18.)

How much more, then, is this true as to the servant of Christ? The servant of the Lord can never say, Why do you not minister to me? Yea, he will long to be like the Apostle Paul, who, while insisting, "that they who preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel," as to principle, yet adds, "But I have used none of these things." It will be his joy if he can, as far as possible, "to make the Gospel of Christ without charge"; he will be greatly afraid lest he should hinder the Gospel of Christ.

It is not meant that it is wrong for the servant of the Lord to take from others for his support. Not so, even the great Apostle did so at times, but he will see that, generally speaking, it is the happier thing when he can make the Gospel without charge, though he will continually wait upon the Lord, get his directions from the Lord, trust in the Lord, learn how to be abased and how to abound, and be ready to labour at a secular calling, if the Lord desire, or not to do so, if the Lord will. He will not look to his fellow-Christians but to the Lord, and he will be confident that the Lord will supply all his need, and the needs of those dependent upon him, and will not let him lack any good thing.

It is doubtless far more difficult to earn one's living in foreign and poor countries, and to serve the Lord as well, than in England, and, *if called* to give up the secular calling for this purpose, let it be done in faith without fear. Where the Lord calls, he will sustain. It is He who has said, "The labourer is worthy of his hire," and He, as Master,

will see that he gets it, but the labourer will never look to those to whom he goes in order to get. His confidence will be in the Lord alone.

Dear servant of the Lord, suffer a word of exhortation. You are in a prominent position, you will be carefully scanned—your ways, your dress, the way in which you spend your time, the class by which you travel by train or steamer will all be observed. If you have a house, the way in which it is ordered, the style in which you live, will all be taken keen notice of. If married, the behaviour of your wife and children, their dress, their ways, the management of the household, yea, little details will all be noticed. This is pre-eminently the case as to those, who have no means of their own. It is useless to say this should not be. It is certain that such things will be; how carefully, how circumspectly, then, should you walk, lest in any way the gospel of Christ be hindered, or His truth belittled. Men will certainly look to you to be practical exponents of the truths which you proclaim. They will judge of the truth very much more by the life you lead than by the words, which you speak.

What heart-searchings, what exercises of soul, will you then pass through, for fear lest in any way you stumble any. If found fault with, you will be patient; if criticized you will weigh the criticism without anger, in the sanctuary. You will long to give no offence in anything, that the ministry be not blamed.

But you may say, I thought this was on the subject of giving, and, lo! you speak of fasting and suffering. Quite so, this is all part of what God gives to you, and a very rich part it is, for

this is the way God takes to make you luminous, a practical exponent of what you teach. He will take care of you and yours, never fear, but He wants you to be occupied with the more important things, and to leave to Him the burden of supplying all your need in this world.

Conclusion

How glorious, then, is our privilege of being here in this world to set forth Christ, to be here for Him in a poor, needy world with our hands full of blessing. He "gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." (Titus ii. 14.) Again it is written, "This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly that they which have believed in God may be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men."

If we have the truth given to us, the only way we can prove that we have it is by a more Christ-like life than those, who have it not, for the Kingdom of God is not in word, but in power, and it is only by well-doing that we can put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.

When the Apostle Paul was confronted by earnest yet false apostles, deceitful workers, he was able to point to his life, and shew how he surpassed them all, and when he speaks of Jannes and Jambres he can say, "But thou has fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, long-suffering, love, patience, persecutions, afflictions."

Again, when he bids farewell to the elders of Ephesus, he ends by saying "I have coveted no man's silver or gold, or apparel. Yea, ye yourselves

know that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me. I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

God grant that we may take heed to all these things, and that none of us may forfeit the birthright of every Christian to be ever receiving from Christ, and setting forth the grace of Christ in our pathway through the world where He was, and still is, rejected.

We close with an account of an American child, related by the late Dr. Boardman, of America.

Our Lord took a child and placed him in a seat of honour at His side, as the true type of greatness. He has set before me a child as a marvellous example, so marvellous that I cannot refrain from letting you share with me the lessons He teaches by her.

This girl is now thirteen and a half years of age, and has given, in the eighteen months since she was twelve, eighty-two dollars in money to send the gospel to those who have it not.

"She must be rich," do you say?

Not so. Look at her! The clothes she has on are her own handiwork. She spun the yarn, wove the cloth, and made them up with her own hands. She is not worth a penny in the whole world.

"Somebody else must have given her the money, then"; is that your thought?

No; she earned every cent of it by her own hard work.

"Surely, then, she must live where everything favours her, where employment is plenty and wages are high."

Nothing of the kind; all the other way. She lives in a little back-country neighbourhood, where employment is scarce and wages very low.

"The child certainly, then, must have given her whole time to earning the money. She could not have had anything else to do."

Mistaken again. Her mother is a poor widow, almost blind, and quite lame from rheumatic affection. There is in the

family an aged grandmother, entirely helpless, bowed double with toil and years, whom they support; the three—grandmother, mother, and daughter—comprise the household, and the child is the mainstay.

A GIRL FARMER

They have a little rough, hill-country farm of twenty acres, which has to be cultivated and kept up, and a cow to be milked and fed. The little girl has therefore on her shoulders the work of a woman in the house, and of a man out of doors.

She helped, while her mother was able to do more than she can, do now, to spin and weave coverlets, carpets, and cloth, to purchase their little farm, build their house, maintain the family, and keep out of debt. They owe no man anything but love. With all this she has gone to school in a little district school-house what time she could.

Are you filled with wonder as to how she could earn so large a sum of money in so short a time, with so much besides to do? I am sure I was, and do not yet cease my amazement. The way in which it was done was indeed more surprising than all the rest. She snatched what time she could after school, to pick berries in their season, and before school in the morning she carried them four miles on foot to a village and sold them. By this alone she gathered thirty dollars in a single season. She worked for wages in the hayfield, and earned something by that.

Another employment by which she earned money, I hate to mention, because you will think it so hard. Nevertheless it must not be kept back. Moreover, I remember working in the days of my childhood at the same kind of toil, and it really was not half so hard as you might think. It was gathering stones out of the field and laying them up into a wall as a fence.

Of all her devices, however, that which shows the child-woman most was this. On their little farm stands one lone little sugar-maple tree. As the spring season drew on, and sugar-making time came, she took a gimlet and bored into the tree, and inserted a cut goose quill as a tube or "spile," so called, for the sap to run through and drop into a dish which is placed underneath, that she might take it and boil it down in syrup and sugar to sell and get money. The neighbours seeing this, kindly gave her the use of six other trees on their lands, and tapped them properly for her with augur and spile. Out of the seven sugar maples she drew quite a quantity of golden syrup, and turned it into money for the darling object of her heart.

IS SHE TO BE PITIED?

"Well, she must be large and stout for her age," do you say?
No; she is slight in form and bent already with toil.

"Poor child!" do you exclaim, "how hard! Oh, how I pity her!"

Yes, indeed, she works hard, but your pity you may keep for those who know not her delights. The Lord has filled her with gladness in Himself such as it never entered the heart of those who do not know Him in His fulness to conceive; and He has taught her His own grand secret, that "it is more blessed to give than to receive."

One who knows and loves her well says, "I am sure the world does not contain a happier child than this same hard-working little girl. Look upon her and she smiles brightly; give her a word and she laughs out. She is full of happiness."

One day in the spring she jotted this down in her journal:

"... It is warm. We may have a run of sap. I would turn the sweet into the sweeter. Verily, there is nothing so sweet to me as to give for the gospel."

"The words of the Lord are spirit and life,
Oh, how I want to send them forth?"

Some rhymes written by her, homespun like her garments though they are, yet tell the story. It seems she had been chided for what she was doing as carrying the thing too far, and so justifies herself in reasoning rhyme. First comes a glance at what is doing in the nations to make the Lord known, and at the bondage of the multitudes who know Him not. Then she ejaculates her deep desire that the work may be carried on, and then asks herself:

"Shall I pray only with my tongue?
My hands, my feet, must also pray:
Each power of mind must work this way."

Then, after accepting the Apostle's injunction to remember those in bondage as bound with them, as rightfully applying to herself, she speaks of the Saviour's example in giving Himself for sinners, and then asks:

"Should I account it much to do,
To earn the dimes and give them, too?
We spend our pence for vainest things,
Which not one drop of comfort brings:
True joy attends the smallest gift
Bestowed from love to Christ.

Some say I make a great ado :
It should be great : Christ thought so, too ;
He *commanded* us to send
His word to earth's remotest end,
If Him we love, we'll Him obey,
And work and give while it is day ;
Nor loiter till the time is past,
And then regret our wrong at last.
Oh, let us wisely fill each hour,
By *doing* all that's in our power
To show our Saviour's dying love !
Then rest with Him in realms above."

Behold this child ! The Lord sets her in the place of honour that we may see how like Him she is. With her there is no seeking after what she shall eat, drink, or wear, but an earnest desire to save those who are lost.

WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN?

THE MEANING OF THE TERM

THE word Christian is only used three times in the Bible. In Acts xi. 26, it is written, that "the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch." The other occasions where the term is used are Acts xxvi. 28 and 1 Peter iv. 16.

By the word Christian, in this book, is meant, the people of God during the present time, since the death, resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the coming of the Holy Ghost; and before the second coming of the Lord. These people of God are, in Scripture, generally called brethren, disciples, or saints, though these terms are not confined to those saved during the present dispensation. The word Christian, however, may be used in a double sense; we may apply the word to those alone, who are true Christians, i.e. to those, who are born of God, and have forgiveness of sins, and in whom the Holy Spirit dwells; or, we may use the word in a general sense as applying to all baptized people; and in this latter sense nearly all the inhabitants of Europe and America, as well as some in other parts of the globe, are Christians. Now all these latter, except the few who are real Christians, are indeed Christians in responsibility, and have immense privileges; yet this will only make their doom the more awful, unless

they repent and believe before it is too late. It is written: "That servant which knew his Lord's will" [i.e. the nominal Christian] "and prepared not himself, neither did according to His will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not" [i.e. the ignorant among the heathen] "and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more." (Luke xii. 47, 48.)

The object in view is to seek to unfold something of the blessings, privileges, and responsibilities of the true Christian; yet, if it should be, that you, my reader, are one of those, who merely have a name to live, while they are dead; then in this case, I beseech you, ere it is too late, to think what a terrible thing it is to have the name of Christian, and yet to be really without God, and without hope in the world. "Be not deceived, God is not mocked, for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap; he that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption, and he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." (Gal. vi. 7, 8.) It is written: "How shall we escape if we neglect" [merely neglect] "so great salvation." And again: "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." (Heb. ii. 3; x. 31.) Turn to God while there is yet time, call upon Him while He is near, while the door of mercy is yet open. He is merciful and gracious. He will not cast you out, but receive you with infinite love, blot out all your sins, make you His child now, and afterwards receive you to glory; all in virtue of the merits and death

of His Son Jesus Christ. But if you do not turn, then be sure that He who spared not His own Son on the cross, but forsook Him, will assuredly not spare you; but will cast you for ever out of His presence into the lake of fire, where there will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

EFFECT OF THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST, AND COMING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

We will now look into some of the blessings enjoyed by the real Christian. But in looking into this matter it must be clearly understood that it is only since the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ and the coming of the Holy Ghost that Christian blessing has been unfolded. Even the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, while on earth, did not unfold these blessings. He said: "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" (Luke xii. 50.) And again: "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth." (John xvi. 12, 13.) The Apostle Paul too, quoting from Isaiah lxiv. 4, says: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." Thus far the prophet Isaiah. But the Apostle does not stop here; he adds: "But God *hath revealed* them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. . . . Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things

which are freely given to us of God." (1 Cor. ii. 9-12.) That is, that those things which the prophet declares could not be known in Old Testament times, we are expressly told, are to be now known since the Holy Ghost has come. Exactly the same testimony is given by the Apostle Peter in his first Epistle, chapter i, verses 10 to 12. From these Scriptures we see plainly, that the Christian position is only unfolded in those writings of Scripture, which were written *since* the Holy Spirit came down at Pentecost, i.e. in the Epistles.

We shall see more of these mighty changes, which were wrought in the position of the believer since the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and the descent of the Holy Spirit, as we proceed; for all the Epistles are full of this subject. It is only natural that it should be so; for it was absolutely necessary that man should first be thoroughly tested, to see if he could produce works acceptable to God, before God should shew forth the riches of His grace. Why even now, after God has patiently tried man for the 4000 years from the creation of man, to the crucifixion of Christ;—tried him innocent; tried him as left to the light of his natural conscience; tried him for 1400 years under law, with a God-given religion and government, under the most favourable possible circumstances; tried him, too, by His own Son come down to us in infinite grace and love;—still the mass of mankind are so mad in their folly, as to think that naturally they can do works acceptable to God, and absolutely refuse to bow to the truth that the best works of man in his natural state, are abominable to God,—as is set forth by the verse: "They that are in the flesh *cannot* please God" (Rom. viii. 8). If then this is the

case even now, in spite of God's patient dealings with men; in spite of the fact that we crucified the Lord of glory, who came to us in infinite love; in spite of the clear and unmistakable testimony of the truth of God on the subject; how much worse would it have been had the full grace of God been revealed before man had been fully proved, and the full enmity of his heart brought to light. The result would have been that grace would have been far more despised than even it is now. God, the infinitely wise and good, is sure to be right in all His ways; and we can adore Him because He has acted just in the way He has, and that it was just at the right time that He sent Jesus Christ (see Gal. iv. 4). We can clearly recognise how impossible it was that the present fullness of blessing should have been set forth before the work of Christ was complete and Jesus Christ had come. Let us beware then of making the mistake of looking for the proper Christian blessing in God's revelation, before the death of Christ. It is because so many do this that they remain in bondage and darkness, and at a distance from God; though God would have them in the light, liberty, and nearness of a son's place. Let us then, with all humility, look into the question of the Christian's blessings, ready to accept all that God gives us, with the deepest thankfulness and reverence, recognising that it is no question of our own merits—for we have none, being simply, as looked at apart from Christ, hell-deserving sinners—but a question of the value of the work and person of our Lord.

FORGIVENESS OF SINS

In our natural state we are all sinners, for we are all ungodly and enemies of God (see Rom. v. 6, 10); and we are utterly incapable of doing anything to please God, as has been already shewn. As a rule, when a person is asked the question: "Are you a sinner?" He replies glibly: "Oh! yes, we are all sinners." But what does he mean by this? Merely that we all sometimes do wrong. This, however, is not at all the meaning of the word sinner, as used in God's word. He whom God calls a sinner, is one who is alienated from God, and all whose works are hateful to God, and therefore, one upon whom the wrath of God abides. And unless you, my reader, are willing to bow to this truth that *naturally* you are a God-hater, and that your very best works are nothing but a mass of sin, it is useless for you to proceed further with this book. No one will ever understand the grace of God, who does not accept the hopeless and utter ruin of man as a child of Adam. And unless he sees that he needs just as much to repent of his religious deeds, his charities and his good works (so-called), as he does of his so-called sins (for all are alike sins, before God); he cannot be saved. For to be really blessed, we must just come to this—that all that we have done, and all that we are, is nothing but sin.

If you, my reader, have come to this, then blessed be God, you will gladly embrace the grace of God, and you will never, in all eternity, be able to measure the extent of the blessing which God gives you in and through our Lord Jesus Christ. The Gospel preached to sinners, is the Gospel of forgiveness of

sins (see Luke xxiv. 46, 47; Acts x. 36-43); and the moment the sinner believes the message thus presented to him, he is forgiven; and learns that Christ, having borne the punishment due to his sins, God will therefore never bring up those sins in judgment against him. The Apostle John says: "I write unto you little children, because your sins *are forgiven you* for His name's sake." (1 John ii. 12.) The Apostle Paul says: "Giving thanks unto the Father which *hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light . . . in whom we have redemption* through His blood, even the *forgiveness of sins.*" (Col. i. 12, 14.) Any one who will take the trouble may find many more such passages. He, therefore, who has come to God through Jesus Christ, is no longer, what God calls, a sinner. He is a forgiven person. His sins are put away once and for ever. He used to be an enemy, afar off, but he has become a forgiven person, in close relationship with God. New responsibilities doubtless arise from this moment; but his old responsibility as a child of Adam has ceased for ever. But some one may say: "Yes, I know that my past sins are forgiven, but it is my present and future sins that trouble me." Ah, you have not learnt the truth of God on the subject. You have not, what Scripture calls, a perfect or purged conscience. (Compare Heb. ix. 8, 9, with Heb. x. 1-14.) You do not know this simple truth, that when you had not committed one sin—for you werē not then born—God had so completely settled with Christ the question of your sins, that it is utterly impossible for Him to bring up a single sin against you in judgment. (This truth is of course for believers only; as a propitiation Christ died for

all, but the Scriptures which speak of Him as a Substitute and as bearing our sins apply to believers only, i.e. to those who accept the truth of His having made propitiation.) You cannot have settled peace till you learn this important truth. But when you have learnt this, you will know with joy what it is to be perfected for ever (as to the conscience) through the blood of Christ. Heb. x. 14, John v. 24 (revised version), and 1 John iv. 17, are also most distinct in saying that the believer shall not even come into judgment (i.e. for acceptance), for as Christ is, so is he in this world. Think of this, my reader, that if you are a believer in the Lord Jesus, it is as impossible for you to be judged for acceptance as it is for the Lord Jesus to be thus judged. Thanks be to God for His unspeakable grace.

Doubtless a difficulty will arise in the minds of many, viz. that if the Christian is once and for ever a forgiven person, then what about the sins committed after forgiveness is received? This difficulty will be considered in the chapter, which speaks of the individual responsibilities of the believer, i.e. chapter x. Another class of objectors will doubtless say: "Then if a believer is sure of glory, it is only necessary to believe, and get forgiveness, and then, ever afterwards *we can live as we like* without fear of consequences." This objection is as old as the Gospel (see Rom. vi. 1). And it is invariably met with wherever the true Gospel of God's grace is preached, from those, who neither know God nor the grace of God. It proceeds either from legalists, who understand nothing of the ruin of man, nor of God's remedy, and are entirely ignorant of the fact that with forgiveness of sins, God implants a new

nature, with its new desires, etc., and that therefore it is impossible for the believer to desire to go on in his old way, or else it proceeds from lawless people, whose only desire it is to be free from the dread of hell in order that they may fearlessly live to their own lusts. In either case, the objectors betray themselves by their own words; for they shew that they have no idea of the hatefulness of sin, and assume that punishment is the only thing to be dreaded; so that directly the dread of punishment is removed, all restraint is gone. Nothing more need therefore be said here to answer such objectors; for they have no part or lot in Jesus Christ, and He will Himself deal with them in judgment when He comes again. Such an evil objection can by no possibility proceed from a humble and contrite heart (for such alone God receives and forgives), which hates sin far more than the punishment of sin; and would care nothing for a forgiveness and salvation, which still left one shut up to walk after the desires and thoughts of the natural heart. His object is salvation from sin, how then can he walk in sin?

JUSTIFICATION AND SANCTIFICATION

The believer is not only forgiven, but he is also justified—that is, accounted righteous. And blessed be God's name, God is righteous in doing this in virtue of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness in the passing over of the sins which were done aforetime" (literal

translation) "through the forbearance of God; to declare I say, at this time His righteousness: that He might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." (Rom. iii. 23-26.) This shews us that before the death and resurrection of Christ, it was only righteously possible for God to pass over the sins of the Old Testament believers, in virtue of what He was going to do; they could not be justified, for Christ had not died. But now, since the resurrection of Christ, blessed be His name, we who believe are not only pardoned but justified. One man may forgive another for a sin against him; but no man can justify another; you may forgive a thief, you cannot justify him. But God does justify the sinner who believeth in Jesus. It is as if we had gone to the bar of judgment, had been proved guilty and utterly without excuse; and yet, in some wondrous way, had been able to quit that bar, not only acquitted, but even without a stain on our characters.

A forgiven criminal could never feel comfortable in the presence of his judge, nor even of honest men. But, blessed be God's name, we are not only forgiven criminals and sinners; but justified—i.e. we are positively accounted righteous; and therefore, we are at peace with God, and can feel comfortable in His presence; as it is written: "It was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him, but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on Him, who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification. Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand,

and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." (Rom. iv. 23-25; v. 1, 2.) This is even more strongly put in the verses: "He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." (2 Cor. v. 21.) "Of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us . . . righteousness." (1 Cor. i. 30.) "Giving thanks unto the Father which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." (Col. i. 12.) How clearly these verses shew us, that not only is the believer pardoned, but he is positively counted righteous, and therefore fit for the presence of God Himself. But remember, my dear reader, this is not in virtue of anything he has done, or will do; but simply and solely in virtue of the grace of God, and the work of Christ. This truth is again very clearly brought out in the Old Testament types of the sin offering, and the burnt offering. (Lev. i. to vii.) In each of these offerings the offerer laid his hand on the head of the innocent animal that was to be offered; and the meaning of this laying on of hands was that the offerer was thus identified with the victim. There is, however, this great difference between the offerings. The carcase of the sin offering was treated as a cursed thing, and burned without the camp, shewing that our sin was transferred to Christ, and He was made a curse for us (see Gal. iii. 13); while the burnt offering, which was wholly burnt as a sweet savour to God on the altar, shews that the acceptability of Christ is transferred to us who believe. To put it in simple language, Christ took our place, was treated as we deserved, that we might have His place before God and be treated as He deserved. No wonder then, that the believer can

enter with boldness into the holiest, i.e. the very presence of God, through the blood of Jesus. (Heb. x. 19.) No wonder that the poor sinful prodigal is received so lovingly; is clad with the *best robe*, the ring, the shoes, is given the son's place, and seated rejoicing at the Father's table; seeing that in doing all this, God is only shewing forth to all the inexpressible delight He feels in the work and person of Jesus Christ, His Son. When we can measure God's estimate of Christ, then we can measure the blessings, which belong to every one, who comes to God through Christ; for the one is the measure of the other.

Reader, have you ever learned, not only that God has forgiven you, but that He positively delights in you, in virtue of that which He sees (not in you, mind, but) in Jesus Christ? He, who has not learned God's delight in the reception of the sinner and in making him fit for His presence, has at best learned but a half Gospel. Alas, alas, that it should be thought a mark of humility to stand afar off, under the shadow of the darkness of Sinai and the law, and to cry out to God not to take vengeance on our sins, neither on the sins of our forefathers, but to spare us, and not be angry with us for ever! and to refuse the light, warmth and gladness of the Father's house, and thus to wound the Father's heart, and to cast a slur upon the work of the blessed Lord Jesus. Alas! that it should be thought humility to make God a liar. For mark all this, my reader, that everything that is here said, is the proper and normal possession of every Christian: i.e. it is mine, just as much as it is the Apostle Paul's, for it is solely in virtue of what Christ is, and what He did, and has nothing whatever

to do with our walk and Christian attainments. And he who says: "Well I have not got this blessing," practically says (from unbelief), that he has not got the Christian's place at all.

But the Christian is not only justified, he is also sanctified; he is a saint (mind, Scripture does not say, as men do, that a few dead Christians are saints, but it says on the contrary that *all* living Christians are saints). This may startle some who are accustomed to the usual theological expression, that justification is an act done at once, and that sanctification is gradual and progressive. It is not of course denied that there is such a thing as gradual sanctification, i.e. increasing holiness of walk in him, who by abiding in the Son, grows from a little child into a young man and from a young man into a father in the family of God (see 1 John ii. 13; Eph. v. 26). This growth is a matter of deep importance, and God forbid that we should make light of it. Nevertheless, it is boldly stated that the Christian is said to be in Scripture, according to the ordinary use of the term, a sanctified one, or saint: by which is meant, not one especially holy in walk, but one set apart for God, by the call of God. The Apostle Paul, after enumerating a terrible list of sins, goes on to say: "And such were some of you; but ye are washed, but *ye are sanctified*, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." (1 Cor. vi. 11.) In the second verse of the Epistle he writes to them that *are sanctified* in Christ Jesus, called to be saints. This last expression is not quite clear in English. In the Greek it is plain enough "saints by calling"; i.e. by the call of God. In Heb. x. 10 it is written: "By the which will" (viz. the will

of God) "we *are sanctified* through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." The Apostle Jude also speaks of believers as "sanctified by God the Father" (verse 1). And it must be borne in mind, that Jesus Christ is our Sanctification, as well as our Righteousness. (1 Cor. i. 30.) This sanctification will be better understood by our Lord's words: "For their sakes I sanctify myself that they also may be sanctified through the truth." (John xvii. 19.) It is evident that the Lord could not be *made* holy, for He ever was holy; but He was set apart as the Holy One for a special purpose: and so believers are set apart as sanctified ones, or saints; not by holiness of walk, but by the call and will of God, though the result of this sanctification should be, indeed must be, holiness of walk. Any one, who will take a concordance, and look up the word "saints," will find that in the Acts and the Epistles, believers are called saints more than fifty times, and that the word is always applied to all believers, and never to certain special believers, whose walk was more holy than that of others. Moreover, God never calls believers sinners. On the contrary Scripture says: "When we *were yet* sinners" (Rom. v. 8); plainly implying that we are not so now. The passage in 1 Timothy i. 15, which is sometimes referred to, is spoken by the Apostle Paul of himself and in it he refers to what he did in his unconverted state. It is therefore very evident that God's people are sanctified ones or saints, and not sinners in His sight.

Objectors will assuredly say: "Then you make out that you saints never sin?" Not so. The common definition of a sinner is one who sometimes sins; and if so, then it is naturally assumed that

a saint is one, who never sins. But, according to God, a sinner is not one who *sometimes* sins, but one who *always* sins, who never does anything but sin, for he is an enemy of God and an unbeliever, and as such, reprobate unto every good work. (Titus i. 16.) He is not reconciled to God, and therefore all that he does is sin (see Prov. xv. 8; xx. 4, 27). The saint on the contrary is reconciled, and can please God (see 1 Thess. iv. 1), though, alas! he does not always do so; for in many things we offend all. (James iii. 2.) Thus we have seen on the unmistakable testimony of Scripture that all real Christians are justified, or accounted righteous, and made meet for glory; they are also sanctified, or made saints, by the will of God, through the offering of Jesus Christ and by the Holy Spirit.

THE HOLY SPIRIT

The real Christian has also the gift of the Holy Spirit, according to the words of the Apostle Peter, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is unto you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." (Acts ii. 38, 39.) It cannot be too distinctly understood that this gift of the Holy Spirit is not the new birth, but something more. It is a peculiar blessing belonging to the believers of the present time, i.e. since the day of Pentecost. It was not possessed by Abram or Moses or any of the Old Testament saints. The Holy Spirit acted in creation (see Gen. i. 2 and Isa. xl. 13); and ever since the creation of Adam every good thing

that any one has ever done, has been the work of the Spirit. Every Old Testament saint was born of the Spirit, as is clearly proved by John iii. 3-6; for without this new birth it would be impossible for them to enter into, or even to see, the kingdom of God. Scripture is careful to distinguish between the work of God, and God's dwelling among His people. Thus we are told that God visited Adam in the garden of Eden; but He did not dwell there. But after the children of Israel had been redeemed by blood, and by the power of God out of Egypt (all their history is a type for us), then God said: "Let them make Me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them." (Exod. xxv. 8.) And after the tabernacle was made He dwelt among them (see Numb. v. 3, etc.). Just in the same way, although the Holy Spirit was ever working among the people of God in all ages, yet He did not come down to dwell in them until the day of Pentecost. It was impossible indeed that He should thus come, until redemption was accomplished, and until Jesus Christ had been glorified after completing the work which He came to do. "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive: *for the Holy Ghost was not yet given because Jesus was not yet glorified.*" (John vii. 37-39.) "Nevertheless I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you." (John xvi. 7.) "And I will pray the Father, and

He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever." (John xiv. 16.)

These passages shew us, without the least doubt, that the Holy Spirit did not, and could not, come to dwell here until the Lord Jesus had entered into glory. Indeed, the two wonderful facts of Christianity are these: first, that a Man is seated upon the throne of God, this Man is of course the God-man Christ Jesus; and second, that God the Holy Spirit, as a consequence of the first fact, has come down to dwell in God's redeemed people on the earth. In Acts i. 5, it is written: "John truly baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." The second chapter of the Acts describes how the Holy Spirit came down on the day of Pentecost; and we cannot have it too deeply impressed upon us that the great fact that took place on that day, was not the speaking with tongues, nor the conversion of 3000 persons, *but the coming of the Holy Spirit to dwell with us for ever*. If the presence of the Holy Spirit had been dependent on our faithfulness, we should have driven Him away long ago. But, blessed be God, His presence does not depend on this, but on the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ at the right hand of God, and therefore it is said, "He shall abide with you for ever." What an unspeakable blessing it is that the Holy Spirit dwells in all of us who are true believers, and will never leave us, but will conduct us safely to share the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Men often say, "Do not grieve the Spirit or else He may leave you." God says "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption" (Eph. iv. 30), that is, do not grieve the Spirit

because He will never leave you. Oh! how different are God's ways and God's thoughts to man's ways and man's thoughts.

If it be asked, When is a soul sealed by the Spirit? the answer is that Acts x. 34-48 shews clearly, that when a soul receives God's testimony as to forgiveness of sins through a once crucified but now risen Saviour, at that instant that soul is sealed by the Spirit. Reader, have you received this testimony? Are you as certain that your sins are forgiven as you are of the existence of the sun in the heavens? for anything short of absolute certainty is not believing God. Then the Holy Spirit will assuredly have sealed you, by coming to dwell in you for ever, and the result of this sealing will be that the Spirit will bear witness with your spirit that you are a child of God, and will teach you to cry: "Abba, Father." (Rom. viii. 15, 16.) Alas! the fact that the majority of prayers are addressed to Almighty God, shows unmistakably the sense of distance left in the minds of believers; for he who is sealed by the Spirit cannot but pray to the Father. How sad then it is that the title, "Our God and Father," which is the one invariably used in the Epistles, should be so seldom heard. Reader, how do you address and think of God?

It is impossible in this short treatise to enter into all the marvellous blessings, which accrue to the Christian through the indwelling and presence of the Holy Spirit. There is only room to say a little more on the subject.

The sealing of the Spirit, and the Spirit within us as the power of sonship, have been already pointed out. The Spirit is also "the anointing" (2 Cor. i. 21), in virtue of which we belong to a

holy and to a royal priesthood (1 Peter ii. 5, 9), and by means of which we are preserved, if we listen to His teaching, from all false doctrine and the seductions of the many anti-Christ's that there are around us. (1 John ii. 18, 27.) The Holy Spirit is also the earnest of our inheritance (see Eph. i. 14 and 2 Cor. v. 5), i.e. the sample and sure pledge of the glory of Christ of which we shall be sharers. The Holy Spirit unfolds Christ to us in a twofold way; He brings to our remembrance all that Christ was when on earth (John xvi. 26), and makes known to us His present and His future glory (John xvi. 13, 15). Through the coming of the Holy Spirit, the bodies of those in whom He dwells become temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. vi 19). The Holy Spirit is the power *in* us, by which Christ can dwell in our hearts by faith; that we being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend, with all saints, what is the breadth and length, and depth and height; and to know the love of Christ that passeth knowledge, that we might be filled with all the fullness of God (Eph. iii. 16-21). The Holy Spirit is given to us that we may know the things that are freely given to us of God (1 Cor. ii. 12).

In fact, though we get every blessing (including the gift of the Holy Spirit), in virtue of the work of Christ, yet it is only by the Holy Spirit that we are able to enjoy these blessings, and it is only through Him that we are enabled to walk in the power of these blessings through a world that has cast out our Lord. Let us then ever thank God with fervent hearts for giving us His Spirit, but let us not be guilty of the mistake of asking God to send His Holy Spirit, seeing

He is already here. David in another dispensation could rightly pray: "Take not thy Holy Spirit from me"; but we cannot pray this prayer without unbelief. Before the coming of the Holy Spirit the Lord may tell His people to pray to receive Him (Luke xi. 13); but now that He has come, He is given, as we have already seen, to those who accept His testimony as to forgiveness of sins through a risen Christ. The great fact for us now is that He is here; let us then yield ourselves wholly and unreservedly to His guidance and teaching, ever recognising the fact that He is here, and dwelling in us, who believe.

DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

It is written, that "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin" (Rom. iv. 7, 8); and he whom God calls blessed must be blessed indeed. And yet there is a still greater blessing than that Christ died for my sins, viz. that He died for *me*; so that not only are my sins put away once and for ever—so completely put away that God will never remember them again;—but also I myself, as a natural man, —a child of Adam, have ceased to exist, *as to my old state* before God. It is written "I am" (or more correctly "I have been") "crucified with Christ: 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." (Gal. ii. 20.) Thus there was an end of the natural man Saul, and it was Christ, who represented the new Paul before God. What was true of the Apostle Paul, is true of

every true Christian before God, however mean and feeble he may be; for it is not the reward of faithful service, but the free gift of God to all, who come to Him through Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul may have entered far more deeply into the meaning of the truth than you or I; but, if we are real Christians, it is as true of us as it was of him, for it is written: "If *any man* be in Christ, he is a new creature" (or rather "creation"): "old things are passed away; behold all things are become new; and all things are of God." (2 Cor. v. 17-18.)

And here it is well to sound a note of warning. There is nothing more common than to hear many saying when a truth is presented to them: "Oh! I don't feel that," and then, by reason of their experience, to reject the truth. To do this however is very wicked, for it is practically setting ourselves up above God, and is the very essence of pride. True humility accepts as truth all that God says, and rejoices in the blessings: while pride and unbelief cavil, and cannot enjoy the blessings because God is not believed. This is very specially the case as to the last quoted passage, for experience will say: "Oh! I don't feel that the old things have passed away, that all things are new and of God." Faith on the contrary, says: "I know it to be true, because I believe God." And the knowledge of the blessings thus received by faith cannot but give great joy. Those, who are ignorant of God and His ways, are always ready with the cry of pride whenever they see any one accepting with simplicity the blessings, which God thus freely gives, and rejoicing in them; but in truth those, who accept are the humble ones, and those who refuse to do

so, the proud ones. The secret of refusal is undoubtedly pride; for the utter depravity of the natural man is not accepted, and some good is still looked for within; and until this truth is accepted it can never be known what it is to be "in Christ," and not "in Adam," at all. When, however, by the grace of God, a soul is brought to accept the truth, not only of his having sinned, but that he is so corrupt, in his Adam nature, to the very core, that he could not be improved (see Rom. viii. 7, 8), and that the only thing to be done to him was judicially to set him aside altogether by the cross of Christ, and to put him out of God's sight;—then, and not till then, will he be able to rejoice in the blessed truth of being no longer in Adam but in Christ. Thus he learns that not only is he forgiven and not condemned, but also that the ~~very~~ one who committed the sins has judicially ceased to exist before God. In Rom. i. to v. 11, the question of *sins* is gone into, and complete forgiveness and justification brought to light; from chap. v. 12 to viii. 39, a new subject is entered on, not that of sins but *sin*, i.e. it is no longer the sins I have committed, which are in question, but the corrupt nature, which committed these sins. For my *sins* there is forgiveness; for the corrupt nature there can be no forgiveness, it is therefore judged and set aside altogether. The old man (i.e. the corrupt Adam nature) is crucified and buried with Christ (baptism is the symbol of this burial), Rom. vi. 3-6; and we, who believe, who were dead in trespasses and sins, are now alive unto God: "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God

sending His own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned " [i.e. set aside] " sin in the flesh." (Rom. viii. 2, 3.) So that now, we who have believed on Christ, are entitled to reckon ourselves dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Rom. vi. 11.) We shall indeed have to carry the corrupt nature about with us, but we are entitled to reckon it a corpse; we know that God has set it aside; and we are no longer subject to it, for we have been made free by the Spirit of God that we may walk in newness of life.

It may be that the subject of this chapter may seem difficult to the reader, and it is true that many, who know forgiveness of sins, are quite ignorant of this further truth, and think that the latter part of the seventh chapter of Romans is an expression of proper Christian experience, instead of being the experience of one in bondage and not yet delivered; while in the eighth chapter we get the experience proper to the Christian. I beseech you, my reader, not to rest satisfied till you have learnt for yourself from God the meaning of being "in Christ" and not "in Adam"; of being delivered and not in bondage; of being in the Spirit and not in the flesh (Rom. viii. 9); of having died with Christ and being alive in newness of life. All this is a matter of unspeakable importance, and until we enter into its meaning we shall make but little progress in spiritual life.

The difficulty lies in this that in order to enter into this truth there must be the practical acceptance of death with Christ in the power of the Spirit of God, and this is the last thing that we are naturally willing to do. We cling to the belief that we can

improve, school or regulate the flesh, and it is only after repeated struggles, the character of which is described in Rom. vii., that a soul is ever made willing to accept deliverance through death, i.e. to die in the sense of his own soul in order that he may be alive unto God.

The so-called holiness by faith is really holiness without dying, and therefore not the real thing; but it is accepted by many because we all would like holiness without having to accept death. We dearly long to cherish the *best things* of the flesh and to avoid the application of death to them in the power of the Spirit of God.

I beseech the reader earnestly to ponder these things, for it is by the non-acceptance of this truth that growth is often stopped for years, and also many never learn it at all.

In the Epistle to the Colossians, another step in advance is shewn us, for we are not there merely alive unto God, but "risen with Christ." (Col. iii. 1.) The Epistle to the Ephesians goes further still and says: "He hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." (Eph. ii. 6, 7.) Not yet "with" Christ Jesus, but "in" Christ Jesus. That is, God has united us to Him by the Spirit, He sees us in Him, and where He is, is our place; for we are "in" Him. There is a beautiful illustration of this in Joshua iii. and iv. Twelve stones are set in the midst of Jordan where the priests' feet had stood, the waters of the Jordan roll over them, and they are lost to sight for ever. These twelve stones, one for each tribe, show how in God's sight the old man is crucified, dead and buried with Christ. Then twelve other stones are taken out of the same

spot, and set up in Canaan to be a memorial unto the children of Israel for ever, thus symbolizing resurrection with Christ, and being seated in heavenly places (our true Canaan) in Christ, so that in the ages to come God might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness towards us through Christ Jesus. (Eph. ii. 4-7.) What wondrous truths these are; our old state judicially passed away for ever before God, and we ourselves separated by death and resurrection from the very place of doom—that world to which we belonged—and brought into a new sphere where all things are new, and all things are of God! In the body of course we are yet in the old creation, and as such we groan in sympathy with a groaning creation around (Rom. viii. 23); but how blessed to know that while in the body we are not of the world, but are sent into it as Christ was sent into it, to be in it as He was in it; for spiritually in very deed and in truth, we are as far separated from it as death and resurrection with Christ can make us.

What a wondrous and blessed truth this is, and yet how little known; and even when presented by the teachers whom God has raised up, how few will accept it. Alas, that the reason for this should be such a sad one; it has been well said that forgiveness of sins never separated a man from the world, but if once the truth of death and resurrection with Christ be really accepted, not as mere doctrine, but as a deep practical reality, then it cannot but sever him, who has this blessing, from the ways of that world, which crucified the Lord of glory. Alas! separation from the world's ways, *especially from the religious ways of the world*

(and these are more hateful to God than anything else of the world), is just what so few are willing to accept. The Abrahams are few, the Lots are many, and therefore it is that so few know and enjoy the blessings and privileges, which really belong to every Christian. Resurrection with Christ can only be practically enjoyed when we are severed from the world; remaining in it, not to enjoy it, but to testify against it that its deeds are evil (John vii. 7); for it is written "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own, but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." (John xv. 19.)

Reader, remember that the twentieth century Christian world, as it is called, is but the world after all, governed by the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh and the pride of life: and if you are not willing to be hated by it, rest assured that you will never while on earth enjoy the power of resurrection life with Christ. May God grant that you may see such beauty in Christ that you will gladly embrace the offence of the cross for His sake, and be able to 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 unto me, and I unto the world." (Gal. vi. 14.) You may have to suffer down here, but you will receive a hundredfold even in this present time, and the joy of Christ will cause you to rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory even in this world of sorrow.

SONSHIP, LIFE, AND ETERNAL LIFE

When the prodigal was trudging homeward the thought in his heart was, "Oh! if I can only get a servant's place"; and indeed the creature could naturally, even if unfallen, never look for anything higher than to be servants of the good God and Creator. What a privilege to be allowed to serve God as our Master, doing our work under His watchful eye and tender care. How wonderful then that the heart of God cannot be content without giving His redeemed ones the place of sons. No wonder the Apostle exclaims, "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the children of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not." (1 John iii. 1.) How little we know the heart of God, how little we enter into His delight in the Gospel, how little we understand that the Gospel not only meets man's need, but the need that God had. He needed a way to make known the riches of His love and grace, and seeing these could never be displayed by creation, therefore He permitted (we cannot say He caused) sin to come in, that His heart might be fully manifested in the Man Christ Jesus, and to those, whom He has predestinated that they should be conformed to the image of His Son that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. (Rom. viii. 29.) And, oh! blessed thought, these brethren are entitled to know now, what all the world will know hereafter, that the Father loves them with the love wherewith He loved His Son. (John xvii. 23.) Reader, do you know what it is to be a son, not merely an adopted

son, but a son in the fullest sense of the word? Many who know a little of the subject, do not get further than this, that God has adopted us. But the Greek word "*huiothesia*," which is translated "adoption" (see Rom. viii. 15, ix. 4; Gal. iv. 5; Eph. i. 5; these are the only places where the word is used except Rom. viii. 23, where it has another meaning and applies to the redemption of the body) means the full place and privilege of sonship rather than that of our word adoption. When we speak of adoption we mean one, who is not really a son, he has not the inward nature of his adopted father. But we who believe are not only born of God, as it is written, "As many as received Him, to them gave He the right to become the children of God, even to them who believe in His name; which were *born*, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but *of God*" (John i. 12, 13); but they also have the Holy Spirit dwelling in them to give them the inward sense of relationship (Rom. viii. 15, 16; Gal. iv. 6, 7), and to make them inwardly one with the Father and the Son. (John xiv. 20.)

Where the word "*teknon*," a "child," is used, the affection which the child receives as the object of the Father's heart, is rather in view; whereas where the word is "*huios*," a "son," the thought is the full privilege and honour of sonship and of being an heir. The Apostle Paul uses both terms, while the Apostle John uses the first only, though unfortunately in our English translation the words "child" and "son" are often transposed. One of the great objects for which the Lord Jesus came to this earth was to reveal the Father. This truth is especially brought out in the Gospel of John; and

apparently before He left the cross, the desire to reveal the Father's name, *in the manner which could only be done after His resurrection*, was especially on His heart, for it is written (apparently of the thought of Christ upon the cross), "I will declare Thy name" (i.e. the name of Father) "unto My brethren." (Ps. xxii. 22.) Therefore His first message to His disciples when He rises from the dead is, "Go to My brethren and say unto them I ascend to My Father and your Father; and to My God and your God" (John xx. 17); thus showing them that they now possessed the same relationship as Himself. Mark, you never get the expression, "Heavenly Father," or "Our Father which art in heaven," either in the Gospel of John or in the Epistles, but only in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. This expression refers to an *earthly* people looking up to God their Father in heaven, and it was used by Christ to see if the knowledge of God as their Heavenly Father, would produce fruit from the heart of man, who had been so unfaithful under law. But like every other remedy it would not answer. Christ must die, nothing else would help sinful man. Therefore Christ has died and risen and gone up on high, but from henceforth the people of God are a heavenly people, because Christ is in heaven, and God is not called Heavenly Father, but our God and Father, for we are in Spirit connected with Him in heaven in the place where the Son is.

Gal. iv. 1-11 is clear in shewing us the son's place could only be known and enjoyed since the work of Christ was finished, and the Holy Ghost had come. It is not only the new birth that is needed, but also the indwelling of the Holy Spirit

to give the enjoyment of sonship, and therefore the place, privilege and liberty of the son's place could not be enjoyed before the day of Pentecost, and we look in vain for it in the Old Testament. How then can we take the Psalms as the expression of proper Christian worship seeing that they express the feelings of those, who were under law and bondage, although they are of course perfect utterances under those circumstances. The Christian, however, is not under law; he has the liberty of sonship, and when he voluntarily puts himself under law, as alas! is done by the mass of Christians of every sect and denomination, he grieves the Spirit, and wounds the loving Father's heart. The law is holy and just and good, and it is perfect as a rule for man in the flesh, but Christ has redeemed them, who were under the law, and if we now, that Christ has risen, return to the law, with its rules, religion and ordinances suited to man in the flesh, but found utterly powerless to help him because he is a sinner and incapable of being helped, we return to that which the death of Christ has set aside, and thus practically say that Christ died in vain. (See Gal. ii. 20.) The whole of the Epistle to the Galatians is connected with this matter, and how sternly the Apostle deals with this great sin. How sad then is the present state of Christendom, where law, bondage and distance are taught as proper Christian position and experience, and where the liberty of the son's place is almost unknown. Reader, will you accept God's liberty, or will you, in order to please men, put yourself under the yoke of the commandments and traditions of men (see Matt. xv. 9), and thus remain in bondage? Will you not come out from all that is of man to rest

fully on the infinite wisdom, love, and power of the Father?

Just one more thought before the subject is closed, and that is, to beg the reader to beware of the evil thought that is now so prevalent, viz. that of the so-called universal fatherhood of God. The Apostle John says that the world does not even know the children of God (1 John iii. 1); he also speaks of the children of God and the children of the devil (1 John iii. 8-10), showing clearly that he knows nothing of this universal fatherhood. The Lord Jesus says the same thing (see John viii. 44). In fact the universal fatherhood of God entirely upsets the whole truth of Christ's mission and work, for we are most distinctly taught that He came to redeem us *out of the world*. (John xvii. 6; Gal. i. 4.) Reader, beware that you are not led away by such an evil doctrine which so terribly dishonours the truth of God, having just enough truth in it (see Acts xvii. 29) to make its poison very deadly. With the question of being a child of God and knowing God as Father, the truth of eternal life is intimately connected, for present eternal life is the knowledge of the Father in the Son, as it is written, "These words spake Jesus and lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify Thy Son that Thy Son also may glorify Thee: as Thou hast given Him power over all flesh that He should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given Him. And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent." (John xvii. 2-3.) The Old Testament saints were born of God, but life and incorruptibility were only brought to light by the Gospel. (2 Tim. i. 10.) It was

only by the appearing of the Son that the power and the character of life from God were made known. The Lord said, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." (John x. 10.) This more abundant life is evidently eternal life. It is only the Apostle John, who brings out the truth of present eternal life, elsewhere in the Scriptures it is looked forward to in the future (Rom. vi. 22); though we find much in the Epistles of the Apostle Paul about life as a present thing.

Life in Scripture never means mere existence, but always implies health, strength, and joy, just as the word is sometimes used by those in depressing circumstances, when they say, "We do not live, we exist" (see John iv. 50-53; 1 Thess. iii. 8); and mere spiritual existence, such as is seen in the man in Rom. vii., is not therefore called spiritual life. Life is found in the eighth chapter, where it is written, "The Spirit is life, because, of righteousness." No one can be said to have life in this sense unless he has the Spirit, although a work of God may possibly have commenced in his soul, and if so, he will never be lost.

Moreover, although the Spirit is life, yet in thinking of life, we must not look within, but at Christ, as it is written, "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection" [or rather mind], "on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead and your *life* is hid with Christ in God. *When Christ, who is our life*, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory." (Col. iii. 1-4.)

The thought here as to our life is not its security, though of course it is secure, but where and in

whom it is, viz. in Christ in heaven. The sphere of our life is not earth, but heaven, and all its springs, its strength and enjoyment come from there, though as to our bodies we are on earth as pilgrims and strangers.

So in Gal. ii. 20 the Apostle Paul says, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me: and 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." Here Christ lives in him, and yet evidently the whole Epistle shews he is not occupied with Christ within, but with Christ in glory.

No one can really take the Apostle's words to himself till he has also accepted death with Christ in his own soul as his portion here, and is content to derive his spring of life from the glory instead of from the earth as he used to do.

Eternal life is commonly thought to be eternal security, i.e. it is made equivalent to the expression "never perish," whereas it means infinitely more. It doubtless includes eternal security, but to whittle down its meaning to this is miserably to lower God's thought on the subject.

Eternal life carries our thoughts back to the time when the Son was alone with the Father before all creation, and it is manifested in the Son of God made flesh. (1 John i. 1-4.)

Nothing connected with the eternal life is temporary; very much was done by our blessed Lord in infinite grace for our redemption, and all He did was of course always perfect, but *eternal* life is connected with the life, which He had with the Father before the world was, which He manifested here according to the writings of the Apostle John. He died, rose and went to the Father and sent down

the Holy Spirit that we might have and know eternal life as a present possession. (John xvii. 1-3; 1 John v. 13.) While in all other writings eternal life is looked on as future, in the writings of John it is shewn as a present possession to be known and enjoyed now. Eternal life is in the Son (not in Christ, though the Son and Christ are the same Person, yet Scripture carefully distinguishes the eternal relationship of Son from the official title Christ), and if we may use very homely language without irreverence, it may be said that "eternal life" is for us the home life of the Father and the Son, which is now ours since we are children of the Father, and this home life can now be known and enjoyed as a present blessing by the power of the Spirit of God. This life is necessarily outside the things of time and sense, the communion of the Father and Son are all in all there. It must be experienced to be known, no explanation will convey any meaning to the soul, who has not experienced a glimpse of it for himself.

It is not possible in this short compass to give further explanation of the subject. I can only entreat my reader to earnestly study and pray over the writings of John, especially chapters xiv. to xvii. of the Gospel and the first Epistle. It will afford unspeakable joy to get a glimpse of what it is to be with the Son in the place where He is, and to have the Father and the Son making their abode within. See John xii. 26, xiii. 8, xiv. 3 (do not relegate all this to the future for, whatever more it may have, it has certainly a present application), and xiv. 23.

But do not make the mistake of thinking that because you know you are eternally secure that

therefore you know you have eternal life. Many know their eternal security, who have not the faintest idea of the wonderful blessing called eternal life, but because they think that eternal life means no more than eternal security they are no more exercised on the subject, and perhaps go through their whole life without having the least apprehension of the wondrous joy there is in the present knowledge of eternal life.

May God exercise your heart about it, my reader, and may you find the fulness of joy there is to be found therein.

MEMBERSHIP OF CHRIST

Hitherto we have only been considering the individual blessings of the Christian. We have now briefly to look into his corporate blessings in virtue of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. One object of the death of the Lord Jesus was to bring all the children of God into one unity. He has done this by the descent of the Holy Ghost, whereby the scattered children of God have become the one body of Christ, "for as the body is one and hath many members, and all the members of that one body being many, are one body; so also is the Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." (1 Cor. xii. 12, 13.) This is the wondrous mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God; by which He willed to make known His manifold wisdom to the principalities and powers in heavenly places, viz. that the Gentiles, who were before without hope

and without God in the world, should be joint heirs, and of a joint body and joint partakers of God's promise in Christ by the Gospel. Christ has abolished in His flesh the enmity between Jew and Gentile, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in Himself of twain *one new man*, so making peace (see Eph. ii. and iii.).

This is the wondrous truth now revealed, that a Man has so glorified God on the earth, that God has glorified Him and set Him on His own throne at His right hand, and the Holy Ghost has come down to unite believers to that glorified Man. The Lord Jesus Christ is the Head of the church, His body, and we who are indwelt by the Spirit of God are the members. Oh! what a wondrous privilege to be members of Christ. Reader, are you a member of Christ? Do you recognise that while men speak of being members of this or that church or society, Scripture only speaks of membership of Christ? What can be a closer bond to Christ than this? What can be a closer bond with other believers? Do you think you can improve upon this? How near we are to Christ, members of His very body, part of Himself, so that He can say to Saul, who was persecuting His people, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" (see Acts ix. 4). This is a blessing which belongs peculiarly to the present time since the descent of the Holy Ghost. It is as the risen Man, that Jesus Christ became the Head of the body, and it was the baptism of the Holy Ghost that formed the body of Christ on earth. The Old Testament saints, blessed though they are, do not share this privilege, nor do they form a part of the church. They are the friends of the Bridegroom and rejoice to hear His voice

(John iii. 29); but they cannot form part of the body of Christ; for the church, as this body, was only first formed at the day of Pentecost, and will be complete on the day that the Lord calls the sleeping and living saints to meet Him in the air. (1 Thess. iv. 15-17.) What can be nearer than the body? Then let us accept these truths with deepest reverence and thankfulness, and praise the Lord for His infinite grace.

Besides belonging to the body of Christ, the Christian also forms a part of God's house, God's habitation, God's temple. "Ye also as living stones are built up a spiritual house." (1 Peter ii. 5.) "Whose house are we." (Heb. iii. 6.) Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God: and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief Corner-stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth into a holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." (Eph. ii. 19-22.) "Ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be My people." (2 Cor. vi. 16.) Reader, have you recognised what it is to be a living stone of God's house, that spiritual house in which God dwells? Do you know what it is to form a part of God's habitation, God's temple? Or do you think that a building built of stone is the church of God, the house of God? If you do, you will never understand the truth of God's spiritual house, and you will lose much.

Besides the blessings that have been here mentioned, the Christian is also a sharer in the kingdom,

though this is not a blessing peculiar to the present time, but is shared with believers of other ages. It should be clearly understood that "the kingdom of heaven" does not mean heaven, neither does it mean the church. It means a kingdom on earth, though ruled over from heaven. The prophets all spoke of this kingdom, foretelling its glories during the reign of Christ. "Many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths; for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And He shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more, but they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the Lord of hosts hath spoken it." (Micah iv. 2-4.) This kingdom in manifested glory, power and righteousness, has yet to be set up. If the people of Israel had accepted Christ as the Messiah, the kingdom would then and there have been established in power, but owing to their having rejected Him, therefore the kingdom in power is postponed until such time as Israel repents. And we have instead the kingdom in tribulation and patience (see Rev. i. 9). The secrets of this kingdom are unfolded to us in the thirteenth chapter of the Gospel of Matthew, for Jesus said to His disciples, "It is given unto you to know *the mysteries* of the kingdom of heaven" (verse 11). The parable of the sower is the introductory parable, showing how

the seed would be sown throughout the world. After this come six more parables, each beginning with the words, "The kingdom of heaven is like." These six parables are divided into two sets of three each. The first set of three, viz. the tares, the mustard seed and the leaven, were spoken to the multitude outside the house, and give us the outward aspect of things, telling how sin would be introduced and spread. The second set of three, viz. the treasure hid in the field, the pearl of great price, and the drag net, were spoken to the disciples in the house, and they tell us the inward aspect of the kingdom in God's sight, and cheer us by shewing us Christ's extreme delight in that which He sees within the kingdom in spite of all our failure. Blessed be God, although we have so grossly failed in all that which was committed to our responsibility, yet the purpose of God and the work of Christ can never fail, and this is therefore our comfort and our joy.

THE HOPE

Hitherto what has been written about are all present possessions; the Christian (who knows the Christian's place) does not hope for forgiveness of sins, or for justification, for he is forgiven and he is justified. He does not hope to possess the Holy Spirit or to be made a child of God, for he knows that he has received the gift of the Holy Ghost and that God is his Father. He knows that he has eternal life, he knows that he has died and has risen with Christ. He knows that he is a member of Christ, and forms part of His body. All these marvellous blessings are his already; he

does not pray for them, he thanks God for them, and he cannot ask for that, which God has already freely given him. He has received all these blessings by simple faith, for God's word does not tell us to ask for them, but says that they are given to every one that believeth; and in the prayers recorded in the Acts and in the Epistles never are any of these things asked for, for the simple reason that every real Christian has them, while every unsaved soul will have them directly his pride is broken, and he comes as a beggar to God through Christ, to receive all these things as the free gift of God.

How sad a thing it is that among the millions, who call themselves Christians, so few should be in the conscious possession of those blessings, which are the common possession of every true believer in the present age, and that it should be thought humility to go on asking for that, which God has already given to every soul, who has come to Him through Jesus Christ alone. In addition, however, to all these present possessions, the Christian has a most blessed and glorious hope.

It must, however, be most clearly understood that "hope" in the word of God, never means *an uncertainty*, but on the contrary always *the certainty* that the thing hoped for will be possessed, although not possessed at the present time. "Hope that is seen" [or possessed] "is not hope: for what a man seeth" [or possesseth] "why doth he yet hope for." (Rom. viii. 24.) Although therefore Christians are already blessed with *all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus* (Eph. i. 3), yet they enjoy them at present in mortal bodies, and in a sphere of sin, sorrow and death, and in consequence they, having the first fruits

of the Spirit, groan within themselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body. They cannot but do this, because the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now (Rom. viii. 22, 23), and above all, because they are living in a judged world in which their Lord and Master has been rejected, and of which Satan is the prince (John xvi. 11), and god (2 Cor. iv. 4); and how can they but feel deeply the way in which Christ is rejected and hated?

Doubtless there are many that deny this, and think that the world is growing better, and look for the conversion of the world by the preaching of the Gospel. But those, who think thus, have not learnt that God is now not dealing with the world as such, but He is gathering *out of* all nations, a people for His name (Acts xv. 14) to be the body of Christ. God can save *out of* the world in virtue of the atonement of Christ, but when God the righteous Governor of the universe, begins to deal with the world, then it must be with the most terrible judgments. The death of Christ has a double aspect; He suffered at the hand of God, "Thou hast brought Me into the dust of death," and the result of this is, unmixed blessing to all who are willing to have blessing (see Ps. xxii., which is all blessing as the result of Christ's death); but He suffered also at the hand of man, and the result of this must be the most awful judgment upon the world, which murdered Christ, and upon those who belong to the world, because they have not severed themselves from it by judging themselves and it, and laying hold by faith of that blessed One, who is now at the right hand of God. To-day is the day of grace, i.e. the acceptable year of the Lord. But this must be

succeeded by the day of vengeance of our God (see Isa. lxi. 2, lxiii. 3-6, lxvi. 15; 2 Thess. i. 8, 9, etc.). Then will come to pass that which is written, "Because I have called and ye have refused; I have stretched out My hand and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all My counsel, and would none of My reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon Me, but I will not answer; they shall seek Me early but they shall not find Me. For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord: they would none of My counsel: they despised all My reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices. For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them." (Prov. i. 24-32.)

Reader, bear in mind that just as the cross of Christ assures us of perfect forgiveness, if we accept its shelter now, so the same cross declares in the plainest manner, that God will not, cannot, let off the sinner, who refuses this great salvation. It is one and the same cross (combined with the resurrection of Christ), which reveals both the righteousness of God, and also God's wrath from heaven against all ungodliness. (Rom. i. 17, 18.) Blessed be God that before this awful time comes to pass upon the earth, the Christian will have left this scene, according to the promise, "Because thou hast kept the word of My patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world to try them that dwell on the

earth." (Rev. iii. 10.) The Lord Jesus Christ is Himself our hope (1 Tim. i. 1). He Himself is coming for us, that we may be with Him for ever. (1 Thess. iv. 13-18.) Death is in no sense the Christian's hope. Death, as the penalty for sin, is altogether passed for him, and he will never see death (John viii. 51); death (or rather sleep, as the Scripture always terms it), as the decay of the natural faculties, may indeed come to him, if Jesus tarry; but it is distinctly written, "We shall not all sleep" (1 Cor. xv. 51), and therefore there is no need of our dying, and we shall not die if the Lord come during our lifetime. If death should come, we know that "to depart and to be with Christ is far better" than to abide in the flesh (see Phil. i. 23, 24).

It is the personal coming of Christ, which is always held out as the Christian's hope. Death, if it occurs, is an individual thing, but the coming of Christ is the beginning of the fulfilment of the full purpose of God, when Christ shall see the travail of His soul and be satisfied, and all the saints will be satisfied also, because they will awake with His likeness (see Isa. liii. 11; Ps. xvii. 15; Phil. iii. 21; 1 John iii. 2). The manner of this coming is thus told us, "The Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thess. iv. 16, 17); and again, "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the

trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory " (1 Cor. xv. 51-54). Bear in mind, it is only the believing dead, who are raised, the rest of the dead sleep on in their dishonoured graves one thousand years more (Rev. xx. 5), and with them (the believing dead) only the living believers are caught up; the world goes on as before except that the acceptable year of the Lord will be over, and the day of God's vengeance with all its terrible judgments will then begin. The Christian's just hope is then the personal coming of Christ, when Christ shall see the travail of His soul and be satisfied, and the Christian will be like Christ, and be with Him for ever.

With Christ, he and all saints will ascend to the Father's house. It is there that the Church will enter into the full sweetness and blessedness of what Christ is, and of what His work has done. He will present her to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing but holy and without blemish. (Eph. v. 27.) She will satisfy and delight His heart far beyond all the glory, which He will acquire as Head of all things, just as the headship of Adam over all earthly creation was as nothing compared to her, who was bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh. The Christian, as a part of the Church, will come *with* Christ when he comes to execute the vengeance of God's wrath upon the earth (Rev. xix. 11-21); for Christ is coming *with* His

saints to judge the ungodly (Jude 14, 15); and when Christ, who is our life shall appear then shall we also appear with Him in glory. (Col. iii. 4.) The Lord Jesus has been the despised and rejected of men upon this earth. God will take care that He is fully glorified in the very scene of His rejection. His saints have been rejected with Him, they must be manifested in glory with Him too, for He shall come to be glorified in His saints and to be admired in all them that believe (2 Thess. i. 10). The world will then know that God sent His Son, and has loved us as He loved His Son (John xvii. 23), when it sees the Church sitting with Christ upon His throne (Rev. iii. 21), and sharing His glory (John xvii. 22). Oh! what joy to see Christ so glorified in the world where He is now so neglected and slighted. Reader, is this your desire and your hope? Not only will the Church share in Christ's reign over the earth, but in Christ's headship over the whole universe of God's creation (Eph. i. 10); for the Church is His body, the fulness of Him, who filleth all in all, and most intimately connected with Him in all this glory. (Eph. i. 22-23.) In all this manifested glory it is rather the reign of Christ for one thousand years than the eternal state that is spoken of. At the end of this reign, the wicked dead will be raised to receive their final sentence, the earth will be burnt up, and heaven and earth will pass away, and there will be new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. (2 Peter iii. 10-13; Rev. xx. 1-5.) But the eternal state will not diminish, but only increase the Christian's blessedness, and as part of the body of Christ, he will never lose the nearness and close association with Christ, which is his portion for ever,

and by reason of which he is the most blessed of all the creatures, which inhabit the whole universe of God. Reader, does not your heart burn at the thought of all this blessedness? Will you not say with the Apostlé, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out?" Praise, O, praise Him continually for His wonderful goodness!

INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITIES

Hitherto the Christian's blessings have alone been spoken of, yet it must be clearly understood that all his blessings have their consequent responsibilities. As a child of Adam, his responsibility was to keep the law of God; on this ground he was wholly lost. But blessed be God, Christ came to seek and save that which was lost, and when found and saved, he who was lost, is brought as a Christian into an altogether new position, and he has become possessed of all the blessings we have spoken of. His old responsibility as a child of Adam ceased, but new responsibilities based on his new position, blessings, privileges and relationship, sprang into existence. All positions and relationships in the natural life have their attendant responsibilities; thus the wife is responsible to act as a wife, because she is a wife; the master as a master, because he is so; and the servant as a servant, because he is a servant. Even so it is in the things of God. The law came to the sinner, and told him to act as if he were not a sinner; but grace does not act like this, grace takes up the sinner, and giving him a new life and position,

brings him into new relationships, before it ever demands (or will accept) anything from him; but afterwards it tells him to act according to what he has now become. The law tells a man to act according to what he is not; but grace first gives a new life and new place before it speaks of acting in accordance with them. Thus the law expects something unnatural, i.e. holiness from the sinner; but grace only expects the Christian to act according to what he is, and this is but natural.

The Christian is forgiven, justified and saved from self, sin, Satan and the world; he is responsible, then, to act as a forgiven, justified and saved man. He is responsible to confess Christ openly before men, for it is as true now as ever, that whosoever shall be ashamed of Jesus and of His words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also will the Son of man be ashamed "when He comes in the glory of the Father with the holy angels." (Mark viii. 38.) He who does not openly confess that Jesus, having saved him, is now his Lord, has no right to expect to be owned as a Christian. Also, being a saved man, saved from self, sin, Satan and the world, he is responsible to walk no longer according to the will of the flesh, but according to the will of God; for what is the use of a man saying "I am saved," if he is still acting according to the thoughts and desires of his own heart. He is merely a self-deceived man, for "to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey, whether of sin unto death or of obedience unto righteousness." (Rom. vi. 16.) The Christian is dead unto sin (see Rom. vi. 2-11, but alas! how few even know the meaning of this expression) and alive unto God. A new and holy

nature has been implanted in him, and God's Spirit is in him, he is therefore responsible to walk in holiness and obedience. This was impossible while he was under law; but it is now possible, for grace has made him alive with a new life.

Does the Christian then never sin? Alas! he does, for he still carries about with him the old corrupt nature; but now *he need not sin*, and while he walks in dependence, *reckoning* himself dead to sin, and abiding in Christ he will not sin, but directly he ceases to be dependent (and alas! how soon does pride come in), he sins. The creature has no right to do his own will in anything, and when the Son of God became man, and dwelt among us, it was not that He might do His own will, but the will of Him that sent Him. Thus He was the perfect pattern of all that the creature should be. To act in self-will is sin, but alas! how common it is for Christians to say, "Is there any harm in this or that?" How the very question betrays the heart, for it shews that the questioner desires to act according to his own will, only he is rather afraid of doing so. The Christian is told that whether he eats or drinks, or whatsoever he does, to do all to the glory of God (1 Cor. x. 31); and before he does anything, he should see, not if there is harm in it, or not, but that it is to the glory of God.

Does this seem, my reader, to be bondage? If so, be sure it is because you have not learnt that true liberty is to be made free from everything and everybody, to do the will of God alone; and anything else is bondage. The only true liberty is to find enjoyment in doing the will of God. But a man may say, "How am I to know the will of God?" Well, if any man will do (i.e. is willing

to do) His will, "he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God." (John vii. 17.) There is no way whereby an unwilling heart can learn the will of God, but if a soul be but willing, the Holy Spirit acting through the word of God, will always show him the way wherein he should walk. The word of God, as applied by the Spirit, is the perfect rule for all circumstances; and be sure that when we do not know what to do, it is not because God does not shew us, but because our hearts are not willing, and the only thing to be done is to confess this as sin to God. The Christian is dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, how then can he be subject to the "touch not, taste not, handle not" of men's commandments? (Col. ii. 20-23.) Men, wise after the wisdom of this world, seek to school the flesh by such means; as witness the temperance societies, purity societies, etc., on all sides; but they have not understood that they are only trying what God has Himself tried for 1500 years by means of the law, and the result was that those to whom the law was given, were worse than the heathen around. God did not do this in order that *He* might learn the character of the flesh, but that it might be manifested to us.

The Christian is risen with Christ; then instead of grovelling in the world, and seeking the good things of the world like those who are of the world, let him seek the things that are above where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God; let his mind be set on things above, not on things on the earth. (Col. iii. 1-4.) Let him bear in mind that if he minds earthly things, he is an enemy of the cross of Christ. (Phil. iii. 18, 19.) The Christian is seated in heavenly places *in* Christ Jesus (Eph.

ii. 6); he is joined to the Lord by one Spirit (1 Cor. vi. 17); he is therefore responsible to walk through this world as a heavenly stranger. He is not put there, as so many think, to enjoy himself; he is put here to be in the world as Christ was. As the Father sent Christ, so does He send us into the world (John xvii. 18); so that we being in it, are not of it; and moreover we are put here to testify against it that its deeds are evil. (John vii. 7.) Testifying at the same time to God's grace, which yearns over sinners that they may be saved and enjoy the precious fruits of Christ's work.

Reader, are you seeking to walk as a heavenly man through the world, and does your walk testify to the world that its deeds are evil? Does it point sinners to the glorified One at the right hand of God? The Christian has received the Spirit of God, he is responsible to walk in the Spirit (Gal. v. 25), listening to His teaching and guidance, letting the Spirit have full sway over his mind and heart, not grieving Him by independence and self-will, but through the Spirit mortifying the deeds of the body (Rom. viii. 13); so that the Spirit may be free to take of the things of Christ and present *them to him*. *The object of the Spirit is to unfold to us the beauties and glory of Christ, but directly we walk in self-will, He has to stop this work in order that we may judge ourselves for our self-will; for He cannot unfold the glories of Christ to a self-willed child.* The Christian is a child of God, and he is responsible to show forth the character of his Father in the world. He is called upon to be as Christ was in the world, to do well and suffer for it, to bear reproach and scorn, and to love and bless those, who act wrongly towards

him; indeed to be the exponent of the Father's love and grace in a Christ-hating and Christ-rejecting world. (Matt. v. 43-48; Peter ii. 19-25.) The Christian has eternal life, he is made a partaker of that life, which from eternity was with the Father and was manifested in the Son in the world. He is responsible to shew out that life, by abiding in the Son and walking as He walked (1 John ii. 6), in dependence and obedience, in grace and in truth.

But it may be asked, Who is sufficient for these things? How can any one possibly walk like this? Well, be sure that God will give us no lower standard or model. Our standard is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and in Him we get a pattern, which delights the heart of God. How then did He walk? Why, every deed, every word, every thought of His was perfect; in nothing did He fall short of the glory of God, not a single word had ever to be recalled; all, all was as perfect as God is perfect. What folly then on the part of those poor self-deceived creatures, who talk of attaining to sinless perfection. Do they walk as Jesus walked? And if not, why talk of sinlessness? "If we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. (1 John i. 8.) And the Apostle James says in the most positive way, "In many things we offend all. (James iii. 2.) If this book falls into the hands of any, who think that they have thus attained, or who are pleased to hear people speak of this attainment, let them reflect on that absolute statement of the Apostle, and may God open their eyes to their true state. At the same time, beware of the abominable error of saying that the Christian must sin. God has made the fullest provision for him, so that he need not sin, and when he

does sin, it is because he chooses to sin, and not because he need have done so (see 1 Cor. x. 13, and James i. 13-15). The Christian is never shut up to sin; he must therefore confess his sins, and own that they were committed of his own free will.

Many think that Romans vii. gives us proper Christian experience, and that every Christian finds it true of himself, and has to say, "the good that I would I do not, but the evil that I would not that I do." But this is not proper Christian experience at all, it is the experience of an *undelivered, self-occupied man, under law*; in contrast with Christian experience proper, as shown forth in the eighth chapter of that Epistle. Note how in the seventh chapter it is all "I, I, I"; while in the eighth chapter it is all "the Spirit, the Spirit." In the seventh chapter the undelivered soul is seeking with all his might to keep the law, and all is failure; in the eighth chapter the delivered soul has learnt that what the law could not do God has done, viz. that the sentence of condemnation has been passed on the old man, i.e. on sin in the flesh, and that he stands before God, in Christ, no longer in Adam; and that the Spirit of God who ever directs him to Christ is the power of a new life, so that he need no longer be defeated, but be a conqueror.

Reader, if your experience is that depicted in Romans vii. bear in mind that it is the experience of a soul in bondage and undelivered; and do not try and comfort yourself with the thought that it is only what must be expected. Alas! that so many should rest satisfied with such a state and be full of self, instead of being full of Christ. The proper attitude of the Christian is to be occupied with Christ in glory, and to be changed into the same image

from glory to glory, by gazing at Him. (2 Cor. iii. 18.) If, however, the Christian does sin, does he lose his sonship or his eternal life? Has he ceased to be what the word of God calls a forgiven soul? Not so; for as we have seen before, all these blessings are given to him unconditionally and eternally. What, then, has he lost? Well, he has lost his joy, and his communion, or his fellowship with the Father and the Son is broken. The Father will not give the joy of His company to a naughty child, and therefore directly sin takes place, the joy is gone until the sin is judged and confessed, but the *relationship* abides eternally. The only place where forgiveness is spoken of in the Epistles, as necessary for the Christian, is in 1 John i. 9, where it is not a question of salvation at all, but of *fellowship*, and we are told that if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. That is, the joy of fellowship cannot be restored without self-judgment and confession. And bear in mind, confession of sin is a much deeper thing than praying for forgiveness, which latter is generally done without exercise of soul at all; and when God tells us to confess our sins He means it, and does not mean that we should merely ask forgiveness. The Christian's relationship as a son of God is eternal; his eternal life is eternal; his forgiveness as to the eternal judgment of God is also eternal. But he does, as we have seen, need daily forgiveness for the maintenance of fellowship with the Father, and the way to get this is by confession of the sin or sins committed. All sin must be confessed to God. If committed individually, then confession must be individual. If committed corporately, then confession should be, if possible,

corporate as well as individual. If man, as well as God, be wronged, then confession (and restitution when necessary) to man, as well as to God, should be made. (Matt. v. 24.) But beware of asking in a general way for forgiveness of sins, and of general confessions of sin than which there is no more certain way of deadening the conscience and hardening the heart. The devil dearly loves to hear people calling themselves miserable sinners, and making general confessions, knowing how well it serves his purpose. The publican said, "God be merciful to me a sinner," and went down to his house justified; but thousands weekly call themselves miserable sinners over and over again, but do not go to their houses justified; and thus Satan soothes souls, and carries them down the cleaner side of the broad road to hell, telling them all the time that they are not like the proud Pharisee, but humble like the publican.

If however the Christian, when he sins, does not confess to God, but goes on in his sin, then what happens? Well the Father cannot cast him off, because he is His child, and the Father has given him to Christ, and is pledged therefore to bring him home in safety; for "whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified." (Rom. viii. 30.) He cannot therefore cast him off, but being a holy God, neither can He let him go on in sin. Therefore He must chasten him down here; "for if we would judge ourselves we should not be judged. But when we are judged we are chastened of the Lord, *that we should not be condemned with the world.*" (1 Cor. xi. 31, 32.) If we are bastards and not sons, then we may go on without chastisement, because there is the judgment to come; but if we are really sons, then He

must deal with us now, because, as we have before seen, we shall not come into judgment for salvation at all (see Heb. xii. 5-11; also John v. 24).

Let no one think that sin in a child of God is a light thing, or that the chastening of the Lord is light; far from it. Sin in a child of God is far more terrible than sin in the sinner, and there is no anguish so painful on earth as the anguish of a real but rebellious child, when the chastening hand of God is breaking down his stubborn and rebellious will. Christian reader, hasten to judge yourself in order that the loving Father may not have to take His rod and chastise you. No chastening seemeth for the present to be joyous but grievous, nevertheless *afterward* it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness *unto them which are exercised thereby*. (Heb. xii. 11.) If however, my reader, you are living carelessly, and yet without chastisement, then tremble, for you must be a bastard and not a son, and your judgment will take place hereafter, and you will perish eternally, unless you quickly turn. But if, reader, you are a real Christian, yet one who trembles at the responsibilities of your new position, then hear the voice of God saying unto you, "Fear not"; that which is impossible with men is possible with God. All power is stored up for you *in Christ*, "He giveth more grace, wherefore He saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble." (James iv. 6.) Christ's strength is made perfect in weakness. (2 Cor. xii. 9.)

The more you feel your weakness, the more you distrust yourself, the more you feel obliged to look to Christ in everything, and for all things, the more will His strength be manifested, and His

name glorified in you. Rejoice evermore; greater is He that is for you, than all that are against you; greater are the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, than Satan, the world and self; you shall be more than conqueror through Him that loved you. How blessed to know that God is your Father, who loves you with infinite love, and is leading you with infinite skill through all the difficulties and temptations of this present evil world, to His house above. Cast then all your care upon Him, for He careth for you. In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving make your requests known unto Him, and the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep your heart and mind by Christ Jesus (see Phil. iv. 6, 7).

CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITIES

Yet as there are individual responsibilities, so there are also corporate ones; for the Christian is not only saved, and a child of God, but he is part of an assembly, society, or body, which is called the Church of God. Seeing that the Lord Jesus died that He might gather together in one the children of God which were scattered abroad (John xi. 52), we cannot act independently, without sin. Many tell us that the Church of God is invisible, but you will find nothing about an invisible Church in Scripture. On the contrary the Church is always a visible thing in Scripture; for before Christ died, the children of God were scattered, i.e. invisible; but Christ died to end that state of things, and to make the Church the one visible witness for Himself on the earth; the Church was to be the light of the world; and like a city set on a hill that *cannot*

be hid. An invisible witness, an invisible light, an invisible city, is a contradiction of terms, and if the Church be invisible it only shows how completely it has failed in its purpose, and how truly it is (*as far as committed to man*) in an utter state of ruin. We read, "the Apostles went to their own company," "of the rest durst no man join himself to them," "certain men crept in unawares," "false brethren unawares brought in." Now men cannot join an invisible thing, nor can deceivers creep into an invisible thing. The disciples were told, "receive ye one another as Christ also received us to the glory of God" (Rom. xv. 7); and again "put away from among yourselves that wicked person." (1 Cor. v. 13.) Now no man, or set of men, can receive or put out from an invisible thing. The Apostle wrote letters to the Church at Corinth, etc. Now letters cannot be written to that which is invisible.

In his days there was a known company called the Church at Corinth forming a part of, and having in every respect, the same rules as the whole Church of God. In 1 Cor. v. 12, it speaks of a "within" and "without"; because those within were a definite known company gathered out of the heathen, and these were all addressed as saints, forgiven people and children of God; there might be, and doubtless were hypocrites and false professors here and there among them; but that did not affect the general character of the assembly, as an assembly of God. How different is it all now. We now have the huge but corrupt churches of Rome and Greece, in which the church is the world, and the world the church; we have national systems, which fly in the face of God (for He has made one Church out of the

believers of all nations), they bind together the believers and unbelievers of a nation in one common national system; and we also have voluntary systems of the various denominations, in which believers, and sometimes many unbelievers, are joined together by voluntary agreement. Besides this we have societies, whose name and purpose is legion, for every conceivable thing under the sun. Alas! where in all this is there the least recognition of the Church or Assembly of God? Where is there an assembly where there is room for every believer, who is seeking to walk in holiness, and yet no room for any one but God's children (though it is possible of course that hypocrites may accidentally creep in)? Where is there an assembly where the word of God is the only rule, instead of having a set of rules culled more or less out of the Bible? Where is the presence of the Spirit of God so owned that He is not systematically quenched, but has liberty to act in worship and prayer through whom He will? Where are those alone recognised as ministers, who are seen to be ministers by their works, instead of ministers being those ordained of men?

Alas, we have walked in our own ways, and followed the devices of our own hearts, in all these things. We have rebelled against God our Father, and Christ our Lord, and we have so deliberately rejected the Holy Ghost, as the Jews of old rejected the Messiah. When Christ was in their midst they were still praying for the Messiah to come, and even so are Christians now praying for the Holy Ghost, apparently ignorant that He came at Pentecost to abide with us for ever, and that consequently He is still here, although He is so terribly grieved by our sins, and although He is quenched on every

side, by the rules and the systems of men which make one man a mouthpiece of the Holy Ghost, and forbid all others to open their mouths, at least without man's permission. Thus man usurps the Lord's place, and it may be said of the Church of God, that from the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it, but wounds and bruises and putrifying sores. And where are those that sigh and cry for all these abominations? Alas! many think that as long as souls are saved, nothing else need be troubled about, and that which is needful to salvation is generally called essential, while that which is for the glory of God is called non-essential! Surely the Lord has a controversy with us for this, and it must be a source of great weakness in the Church, on account of which we should be deeply exercised.

The Christian, as we have seen, is a part of the house, habitation and temple of God, and he is also a member of Christ: and as the habitation of God is holy, and Christ is Son over His own house, therefore we are called upon to stand apart from all iniquity, for it is written: "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? [i.e. unbeliever] and what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. Wherefore come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and

will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. Having therefore these promises dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." (2 Cor. vi. 14-18, vii. 1.) Until the Christian therefore, as a part of God's temple, separates himself from unbelievers, he will not be in the enjoyment of sonship.

Alas! the union of saved and unsaved, in one common religion, is the crying sin of Christendom. The children of God should be united, but union at the expense of truth is worse than useless, and God does not tell us to seek unity, but to endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit (Eph. iv. 3); Christ did not merely pray that we might be one, but that we might be one in the Father and the Son. (John xvii. 21.) Every other unity and oneness is but hurtful, for it shuts out from the eye the only unity and oneness which God can recognise.

The Christian is a member of Christ; this is the only membership owned in Scripture, alas! that this bond should be practically set aside by the societies and sects of man's framing. It is as if a man were to say, the joints of my body are not well joined together, I will make a better joint by tying them together with string. We should think that man a lunatic; but what about those, who think with their churches and societies to bind more closely together those whom God has made one with Christ and with each other by the Holy Ghost? The Christian is therefore responsible to stand apart from every union, society, church, etc., made by men, that he may own nothing but the one body of Christ. This is just as much his responsibility, as it is that of the husband to know no woman

but his wife. He cannot however walk alone, because he is part of the body of Christ, and therefore he must own that union, though he holds aloof from the unions of men. Being a member of Christ, how can he become a member of the associations of men? At the same time he should abhor the independency and looseness of those, who profess to be unsectarian, and yet go anywhere and everywhere as suits their fancy; or where, as they think, good is being done. He cannot therefore belong to a world church, or to a national church, or to a sect, but he seeks to follow righteousness, faith, love, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart, and endeavours with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering and forbearance, to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

As this will involve going outside the camp of men's religious systems, it will entail also the bearing of Christ's reproach. (Heb. xiii. 13.) He will be esteemed narrow-minded, bigoted, sectarian, and will be despised and disliked, but he will enjoy the company of the Lord Jesus in a way which he can never do within the camp. Reader, is that company so sweet to you that you are willing to suffer reproach for it? As part of that which is the body of Christ, the Christian is responsible to keep himself unspotted from the world. No sin can be greater, than for one professing to form part of Christ's body, to glorify himself and live deliciously; see the terrible judgment on Babylon, who saith in her heart "I sit a queen and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow." (Rev. xviii. 7.) It is a sad thing when the Christian seeks glory in the place where his Lord met with nothing but dishonour and shame (see 1 Cor. iv.

7-14). There is not space now to enter further into the corporate responsibilities of the Christian as belonging to the kingdom, than to say that as such, he needs to stand aloof from the prevailing lawlessness, and to bow to the authority of Christ alone. The Christian enjoys all the privileges of the kingdom, and how great these are we can see by comparing Christendom with heathendom. It is this which makes his responsibility so great, and which will make the judgment of the lawless so terrible.

CONCLUSION

There now only remains to say a few words in conclusion. This is but a slight and imperfect sketch. But if it has but the effect of causing some heart to turn to Christ as it thinks of the marvellous blessings which are freely given to us of God in Christ Jesus; if it should but awaken some soul to a deeper sense of the responsibilities which flow from the new position, blessings and privileges of the Christian, then it will not have been written in vain. Doubtless, some of the things that are said, will appear strange to some of the readers; but let me beg of you not to reject what is written because it is strange. We are commanded to prove all things (1 Thess. v. 21); and how can we prove them? The word of God is the alone test. It is written of the Bereans "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so." (Acts xvii. 11.) The Apostle Paul, in leaving the disciples at Ephesus, had no one to commend them to but "to God and the word

of His grace." (Acts xx. 32.) The Apostle Peter, in like manner, appoints no successor, but writes his Epistles, that we may be mindful of the words, which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandments of the Apostles of the Lord and Saviour. (2 Peter iii. 1, 2.) The Apostle John says, "We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the Spirit of truth and the Spirit of error." (1 John iv. 6.) In a similar way, all these Apostles tell us of the errors that were abroad, or were coming in. The Apostle Paul says, "The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables." (2 Tim. iv. 3, 4.) The Apostle Peter warns of false teachers, and tells of scoffers that will come. (2 Peter i., iii.) The Apostle John says, "It is the last time, and as ye have heard that anti-Christ shall come, *even now* there are many anti-Christ; whereby we know it is the last time" (1 John ii. 18); and again, "Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard *from the beginning*. If that which ye have heard *from the beginning* shall remain in you, ye shall continue in the Son and in the Father." (1 John ii. 24.) And yet again, "This is love, that we walk after His commandments. This is the commandment, that as ye have heard *from the beginning*; ye should walk in it." (2 John 6.)

Let me then entreat you, my reader, earnestly to examine the truth of God for yourself, that you may see if these things are so. It is better to trust in the living God, than to put any confidence

in man. The meek He will guide in judgment, the meek He will teach His way. Fear not to trust Him wholly and unreservedly; the path of faith is a strange path, a path impossible for flesh and blood, for sight and sense, and only possible in the power of the Spirit of God; nevertheless the footprints of the Lord Jesus are there, and you shall have His company, and the sweetness of His presence in a way that they shall never know who tread the beaten paths marked out by men's theology and men's systems. Do not believe those who tell you the Bible is a difficult book. It is the book sent by the Father for His children; it is very simple, for He knows our frame and He reveals Himself unto babes. It is true, of course, that there are innumerable differences of doctrine abroad, but the reason is, not that the word of God is not simple, but it is because of the pride and insubjection of the heart, which makes the many come to the word of God with preconceived opinions, in order to find what they want, instead of coming with the deepest submission to hear what God has got to say.

Let me beg of you to weigh everything in the presence of God, and in the light of His truth, and not to reject it because it is not called orthodox, nor what is held by those amongst whom you live. Whatever is of God is worth everything; and the greater the difficulty in being true to it, the greater the blessing to those who hold to it, and are valiant for truth. It is quite true that the truth of God may cause separations in households. It was so in the Lord's time; it has been so ever since, notably so in the Reformation, and it will be so now; for Christ has plainly told us that He does not bring peace, but a sword; and that a man's

foes shall be they of his own household. (Matt. x. 34-36.) It is quite true, that for the truth's sake, men may hate you, and separate you from their company, and reproach you and cast out your name as evil for Christ's sake, but great shall be your reward in heaven. (Luke vi. 22, 23.) We cannot serve God and mammon. If we are of the world then the world will love his own; but if we are not of the world, the world will hate us. If we want the world's friendship it can only be at the cost of being guilty of spiritual adultery. (James iv. 4.) The word of God will test everything in that day when the Lord will bring to light the counsels of the heart. Oh! let it test everything for you now. Do not say "I may do anything that is not forbidden by it." Not so, this would imply that you know everything in it, and such a way of acting will lead you into many errors. The only safe way is to insist on a "thus saith the Lord" for all you do. This may seem slow and narrow-minded in this go-a-head twentieth century; but Christ will be ever with you, and the joy of the Lord shall be your strength. Every trial and sorrow shall be stepping-stones to lead you into a deeper knowledge of Christ and of His love. God will set before you an open door and none shall shut it, and though your path will be lonely here, yet by and by you shall go out no more, and the approval of the Master shall sound unspeakably sweet to your ears and repay you a thousandfold for all that you may have to suffer here. May the Lord in His grace grant that it may indeed be thus with you.