

# WONDERFUL PRIVILEGES

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## CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP.

Acts ii. 42. And they continued steadfastly in the Apostle's doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

1 Cor. i. 9. God is faithful, by Whom ye were called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

Chapter x. 16-21. The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion (or fellowship) of the Blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion (or fellowship) of the Body of Christ? For we being many are one bread and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread. . . . Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils.

2 Cor. xiii. 14. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion (fellowship) of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.

1 John i. 3-7. That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. . . . God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.

2 Cor. vi. 14-18. Be ye 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. . . . Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate . . . and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

AS long as we are in a world opposed to God, we need Christian fellowship. Christians were never meant to walk alone and independently of all other Christians who "walk in truth." From the very commencement of Christianity, even the very first day, God provided a FELLOWSHIP, THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE APOSTLES, to enjoy together the precious things of Christ and to help and care for one another, in the midst of a hostile world, and especially the religious world of Judaism, a world which would not allow that Jesus was the Christ, or that God had revealed Himself in His own dear Son. To this very day we greatly need the help of one another, and all the encouragement that those who love the Lord can give, so as to continue steadfast and true to Him in Whom we believe, in the midst of increasing indifference to Christ and treachery or open hostility to Him.

Now what we need God has provided, namely, CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP. How good it is to read of the fine start those early converts made ; I mean the three thousand that were converted the first day that Peter preached the Gospel, the day of Pentecost, the same day on which the one hundred and twenty disciples had received the Holy Ghost from Christ at God's right hand. We read of these converts who had just repented and had been baptized after having gladly received the Word, that they "continued steadfastly in the Apostle's doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." FOUR things are mentioned here in which they continued steadfastly. And how steadfast they were ! There was no moving them, no matter what people thought nor how they

opposed. The power of God was there and enabled them to continue steadfast, and first in THE APOSTLE'S DOCTRINE. What a change this was for them ! Instead of listening to the teaching of the learned Rabbis and leaders in Jerusalem they changed completely their teachers, and sat at the feet of these Galilean fisherman and the like ! And well they might do so, for they could teach them what none of the great religious leaders of the world could teach. They could tell them of the Lord Jesus Christ from close personal attachment to Him in His beautiful pathway of service here, and could unfold all that the Lord had taught them in those three and a half years in which they had been with Him, right up to His death, and then all that the Lord had said to them during the forty days in which He appeared to them after His resurrection till they saw Him taken up from them into heaven. It was the Lord who had appointed the twelve Apostles, and no one could be in true Christian fellowship who disregarded their teaching or added to it. The Church is built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner Stone. No one who was true to Christian fellowship could support and go on with what is not in accordance with Apostolic teaching, or what has been introduced by the will and mind of man, since the Apostle's days. Christian fellowship maintains what was in the beginning, and refuses anything new as untrue. These early Christians continued steadfastly not only in the Apostle's doctrine but also in THE APOSTLE'S FELLOWSHIP. The Apostles on receiving the Spirit started the fellowship. God made them united as the heart of one man to maintain all that Christ had given them and the truth of His Person. All those who

received their teaching, came into fellowship with them and continued in it.

Fellowship has in it the idea of partnership. In the world partnerships are formed to advance and share the good of certain interests, as well as to protect them against counter-interests. Four of the Apostles before their call by the Lord Jesus had been partners together in the fishing interest, and now with the other Apostles they are bound together in a far higher partnership or fellowship to look after the interests of Christ and to "catch men" and bring them to Christ. It was, too, their business to see that nothing entrusted to them was lost, but that all the precious things of Christ and of God should be unflinchingly held in the power of the Holy Ghost for the benefit of all who should afterwards come into Christian fellowship, as well as for their own enjoyment of the same.

All that the Lord gave to the Apostles at the beginning, the Holy Ghost has never lost. They are ENTRUSTED TO CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP, I mean to those in it, to maintain and treasure in the power of the Spirit till Jesus comes. Like the holy vessels of the temple which Ezra carried through the desert, and which were carefully counted at the start of that four months' journey, and brought safely to the temple, so the SAINTS IN CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP WILL HAND OVER TO CHRIST, WHEN HE COMES, INTACT ALL THE PRECIOUS THINGS ENTRUSTED TO THEM, by the Spirit from the time of the Apostles till the end. Thanks to the care of the Holy Spirit, who indwells us, they will be found in all their value and beauty at the end. No matter what the unfaithfulness of the professing Church has been and may be in spite of the giving up of one truth and another by unfaithful Christians,



those in true Christian fellowship will see that **NOTHING IS LOST** which was entrusted to us at the beginning of Christianity, but that all is preserved in the unction and power of the Spirit till Jesus comes. Those in true Christian fellowship are **THE CUSTODIANS OF THE WHOLE TRUTH OF GOD AND OF THE PERSON OF CHRIST** in the midst of every opposing element, and, if true, they maintain it in divine power, the power of the Holy Ghost till the saints are caught up to be for ever with the Lord. The Lord will not fail to maintain a testimony to Himself till He comes, no matter how few and apparently weak His faithful saints may be.

The things of Christ are so precious, that nothing whatever ought to be lost, and God will see to it that they are preserved by faithful men in fellowship together till the end. And it is not in any formal way, as by creeds and confessions, that the truth is held, but by "sanctifying the Lord Christ" in the heart, so that He has the supreme place in our minds and hearts, and no one is acknowledged as our Lord and Head but Christ Himself.

No wonder we read that these same converts who continued steadfastly in the Apostle's doctrine and fellowship, also continued in two other things : **THE BREAKING OF BREAD, AND PRAYERS.** How could they do otherwise ? If they were true to the fellowship, they surely could not forget the words of the Lord Jesus, when He instituted the Supper : "This do in remembrance of Me." They all loved Him too much to set this aside, and young though they were in the faith, they began at once to break bread. It is the great privilege of those in true Christian fellowship so to do. If the Lord has His rightful place in our hearts, and no will is working, and no false way pursued, this

is the natural desire of every heart devoted to Him to remember Him in the breaking of bread. Not only so, but they continued in THE PRAYERS. No doubt the use of the definite article (as seen in the Greek) implies that there were definite times when the brethren came together to pray, and thus to be in holy intercourse with God, and with that holy intimacy which is the special privilege and characteristic of those who have the Spirit indwelling them. What help this gives in the maintaining of Christian fellowship and in learning to appreciate more the things that are to be enjoyed therein.

CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP IS UNIVERSAL. It is not confined to any place or country. If anyone is in fellowship in one place and has to go to another, he is still in heart and mind in the same blessed fellowship whatever part of the world he might be in, so that wherever he may be placed, if in those parts there are saints bound together in Christian fellowship and walking in truth, he would seek them out and with the aid of letters of commendation wherever he found such would find a welcome from brethren though previously unknown to them. Otherwise, he would stand alone till the Lord provided faithful saints with whom he could walk. What a merciful provision such fellowship is for us in the midst of all the confusion of Christendom to-day ! It is wonderful how God puts His saints in happy and practical touch with one another all over the world. The one Spirit Who dwells in all, knows where all are who are alike desirous of being true to God in the midst of evil, and can put them in touch with one another.

The Spirit of God has formed only ONE FELLOWSHIP for God's people, no matter how many so-called fellowships there may be in

Christendom to-day. There is ONLY ONE which all true Christians are called to, IT IS "THE FELLOWSHIP OF HIS SON JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD." Nothing less than this is real Christian fellowship and ALL CHRISTIANS ARE CALLED TO IT, that is "all who in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord both theirs and ours" (1 Cor. i. 2). God only has the right to call anyone into such a holy and blessed fellowship, and He calls all to it who own Jesus Lord and come under the saving power of His blessed Name. But, though we are all called to this holy fellowship, all do not answer to it, and do not get the gain of it. Many make or seek a fellowship according to their own ideas, and where the will of man has place, and Christ as Head and Lord is virtually shut out. How could a fellowship where man rules and has the pre-eminent place, be regarded as Christian fellowship? So whilst all Christians are called to the fellowship of God's Son, is it not evident that the great mass have not obeyed the call? Abraham was called by the God of Glory to get out from his country and from his kindred and from his father's house unto a land which God would show him, but he was long before he really obeyed the call. He lingered at Haran till the death of his father, when God came in and removed him into the land of Canaan. So often we are very slow to obey the call of God to the fellowship He has provided for us, and we go on with all sorts of religious associations and so-called fellowships which are unholy and worldly, and do not provide the help we need nor the holy enjoyment of the precious things which God has bound up with the fellowship of His Son.

THERE IS ONLY ONE FELLOWSHIP

WHICH CAN TRULY BE CALLED CHRISTIAN, it is the fellowship of God's Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, and He is THE BOND of it. The greatest conceivable things are found in it and are bound up with it. It would be terrible if any of them were lost. THE FULL LIGHT OF GOD IS THERE, AND THE GLORY OF HIS SON. Fellowship is needed lest any truth which God has given us should be lost or given up.

The Old Testament saints had not the full light of a Saviour God revealed in His own Son, as we have. Christ had not come. They could not therefore know Him as we do, nor had they His Spirit dwelling in them as we have. We find them standing alone without any fellowship, as in the case of Enoch, and of Noah and of Abraham who was called alone. David, too, and Samuel, and the prophets, especially Moses and Elijah, had to stand at times alone, though in certain cases we find a few faithful men who were like-minded. God stood with them and helped them, no doubt, but their enemies were not so terrible as ours and there was not the same need for fellowship though there were those that "feared the Lord and spake often one to another and thought upon His Name" (Mal. iii. 16.)

But when Christ, the "Man out of heaven" appeared—a Man Who was fully the delight of God and Who was and is His own dear Son, then the hatred of Satan showed itself in all its terrible character. He could not bear the sight of such a Man in the midst of men of whom the great mass were the very opposite to Christ and under the power of sin and Satan. The cross of Calvary is the awful witness to the character of hatred and opposition that Christ had to meet. But He went through it all victoriously, right through death to

resurrection and to the right hand of God and from thence He sent down His own Spirit, the Holy Ghost, to dwell in all who believed in Him.

This roused again the hatred of Satan. He had hated Christ and influenced the world to do so, now he began to oppose all who loved Christ and manifested the same spirit, and who sought to follow Him and confess Him before men. The continued effort of Satan now for nearly two thousand years has been to overthrow us and rob us of all the precious things God has given us. Hence the need of fellowship, and of walking together with all in the whole world who love Him, and who seek to walk in truth. Israel's enemies were flesh and blood, such as the Egyptians, Amalekites, Moabites, Syrians, etc.; ours are spiritual. We have to fight against "principalities, against authorities, against the universal lords of this darkness, against spiritual power of wickedness in the heavenlies" (Eph. vi. 12, New Trans.). For this we need "the whole armour of God" and to stand together with all who have it on the earth.

Christian Fellowship, through the energy of the Spirit in those who are in it, refuses to give up any truth of Scripture or any part of the doctrine of the Apostles, including that of Paul, who is the Apostle of the Gentiles and therefore our Apostle. **FOUR GREAT THOUGHTS** are brought before us in regard to the Fellowship to which God has called us: First it is the fellowship of **HIS SON**. The truth of **THE PERSON** of Christ must be guarded at all costs. **HE IS THE SON**. Alas, even preachers and missionaries have been allowed to teach that Jesus was only a Divine Man! But Christian fellowship utterly refuses such blasphemy, and holds till the end the truth of His person with love and faithfulness. Jesus is far more than a

Divine Man, HE IS A DIVINE PERSON, for He is God, and from all eternity. John the Baptist testified of Him : " He that cometh after me is preferred before me, for He was before me." Those who deny eternal punishment not only refuse the clear teaching of Jesus and of the Apostles as to this, but secretly aim a shaft at the Deity of Christ, as the Son. The terrible judgment from which He died to save us, can only be measured by the glory of the person Who sacrificed Himself. It was no less a Person than God's Son Who sacrificed HIMSELF and bore all the wrath of God in our behalf. Why should such sacrifice be necessary if the punishment we deserved was not eternal?

HOW CAN I FIND CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP in this day of confusion ? is a question often asked by godly and exercised saints. I would say to such : Ask the Lord to show it you. He knows well enough the little companies of saints in this world who, indwelt by one and the same Spirit, seek to maintain the holy things of God and the truth of the Person of Christ. All such refuse to own those who deny that Jesus is a Divine Person, or those who deny eternal punishment or the inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, and other vital truths such as the atoning value of the Blood of Jesus.

The second great thought is that of HIS TRUE MANHOOD. It is the fellowship of His Son JESUS. The Name of Jesus was given before His birth into this world. It is His beautiful human Name, and in resurrection He still has that Name for He is still Man. We read, " Jesus Himself drew near unto them." " Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them," and said unto them, " Behold My hands and My feet that it is I Myself : handle Me and see ; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones,

as ye see Me have." It was in manhood that He rose from the dead, and in manhood that He ascended up into heaven and will soon come from heaven to receive us to Himself. He will never cease to be Man.

It would be almost as serious to deny His actual Manhood as to deny His true deity as the Son. It would also be fatal to Christianity to suppose that He was ever a man like us in our sinful condition. He was Man, but not sinful man. He was absolutely holy and blessed, the full delight of God. And He is still Man, though no longer as to His condition in flesh and blood, but according to God's eternal thought and purpose, a glorified Man in heaven, and soon we shall be like Him and with Him there. The Glory of God is in His Face, for He is God and in this way we shall see God to our eternal and infinite delight.

Now we come to the third great thought, HE IS CHRIST, our glorious Anointed HEAD. He is Head of the individual and also of the Church. All truly Christian thoughts come from Him Who is our Head. The thoughts of men are being circulated by the million in the daily journals, and are lifeless. The thoughts which Christ puts into the hearts and minds of His people all over the earth, and perhaps at the same moment, are living and life-giving. No other man could take His place, and instil living thoughts into God's Assembly all over the world.

CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP KNOWS NO OTHER HEAD. If place is given to man and to preachers or man-made priests instead of to Christ, or if women are allowed to assert themselves in the meetings and take a public place, saints in Christian fellowship would in fidelity to

Christ refuse all fellowship with those who countenance such things. **THERE IS ONLY ROOM FOR ONE MAN** in the **CHURCH OF GOD** and that is Christ, and Christian fellowship can own no other. If people must have great men, they prove themselves unsuitable for the fellowship that God has called us to, the fellowship of His Son, **JESUS CHRIST**, the Church's glorious Head.

The fourth great thought is that of **LORD**. It is the fellowship of God's Son, **JESUS CHRIST** our Lord. All the power of God is in His hands. He has power to save the weakest believer and to keep us from all evil and to protect us from all the malice of the enemy. He has power to raise us from the dead or to change our vile bodies and make them like to His body of glory, yea to subdue all things to Himself.

But if He is Lord, He has **RIGHTS**, and His rights are and must be owned in Christian fellowship, so that in these days of looseness of walk and indifference to Christ, all who name the Name of the Lord are called upon to depart from unrighteousness to Him Who is Lord, to purge themselves from vessels to dishonour—that is, those who set aside the rights of the Lord and are untrue to Him. They are called upon also to “flee youthful lusts” and to “follow righteousness, faith, love, peace, **WITH THEM THAT CALL UPON THE LORD OUT OF A PURE HEART.**” All such are evidently in true Christian fellowship, no matter in what part of the world they may be. If the Church at Corinth had refused to deal with the man who was living in gross sin, they would have proved themselves untrue to the Lord, and in a fellowship which was unholy and unrighteous to Him whose Name they called upon. They



would thus have isolated themselves from all true souls in the whole world.

This brings us to THE CONDITIONS OF CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP as presented in 1 Cor. x. 16-21. "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion or FELLOWSHIP OF THE BLOOD OF CHRIST? The bread which we break, is it not the communion or FELLOWSHIP OF THE BODY OF CHRIST? For we being many are one bread, and one body : for we are all partakers of that one bread." Every time we come together for the Lord's Supper and sit down at His Table, we have before us in the "cup of blessing which we bless" the thought of His Blood, of His precious life given up for us. It was a life more precious than that of all human lives put together. Indeed every human life but His has been and is naturally sinful, and consequently has been forfeited by God. Death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. But His life was the delight of God and could not be forfeited as if it were sinful, but it was laid down for us ! In the giving up of His precious life God held our sinful life as ended in judgment and gone from His holy eye for ever, for He died for us. If then we are in the fellowship of His Blood, how could we desire to continue the life of sin which once we lived and which was brought to an end before God when Jesus died ? If we are truly in the fellowship of His Blood, we shall live to God and not to ourselves, and walk in newness of life. There is, too, the fellowship of His Body. His Body was for Christ a precious vessel in which He could do the will of God, and was never tainted by sin. It was given for us, and in that very Body He bore our sins. Surely if we are in the communion of the Body of Christ we shall hold our bodies just

as vessels for the will of God. Then, too, there is another thought, "We being many are one bread and one body." That is a collective thought, as we find in the same Epistle, "Ye are the body of Christ." If Christ personally as to His Body is in heaven, His mystic Body is on earth, His own Assembly and that in order to express Christ in the place from which He has been cast out. Christian fellowship therefore is on holy lines, to encourage in saints the continuation of the life of Christ down here and as "one body" to be here for the will of God.

There is no place there for the world or for idolatry. The two worlds, God's and Man's, cannot be joined together. "Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils." "What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness and what communion hath light with darkness?" Separate Christians love and pray for all His own, though they cannot walk with all. Worldly Christians are straitened or narrowed up in their own bowels or affections, because they are unequally yoked together with unbelievers or worldly Christians.

THE COMMUNION (OR FELLOWSHIP) OF THE HOLY GHOST is a most important thought, for all true fellowship is dependent on the Spirit, Who if ungrieved is the power of it, thus we may have FELLOWSHIP WITH THE APOSTLES whose fellowship was "WITH THE FATHER AND WITH HIS SON JESUS CHRIST." In the presence of a hostile world we may be like the Apostles in holy intimacy with divine Persons. Thus the most wonderful things conceivable are bound up with Christian fellowship and are open to all who obey the call of our

faithful God "to the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord."

What a holy help is Christian fellowship for our households, and specially for our children who, baptized in that blessed Name, are brought up in the courts of the Lord's house and have the interest and prayers of all in Christian fellowship under whose holy influence they are privileged to come.

No society or guild could ever come up to the fellowship to which God has called us, where the full light of God is, and all the precious things which are bound up with the Father and the Son in the power of the Holy Ghost who dwells in all those who are called to this holy fellowship. What joy for Christ when He comes to be greeted by the whole company brought by the Spirit together into true Christian fellowship and made ready to meet the Lord in the air, and be for ever with Him! May we all be faithful to Him, and thus be found in happy and holy fellowship together when He comes.

1. Joyful we, with one accord,  
Worship Thee, the Risen Lord,  
To Thy love our hearts respond,  
In one common holy bond.
2. We in fellowship unite  
With Thy saints who walk in light,  
In the light of God made known  
By Thyself His Blessed Son.
3. Yes, in harmony divine,  
By the Spirit we combine  
Now to strike the deepest chord,  
As we praise Thee, Glorious Lord.
4. Has the world refused Thy Name,  
Poured on Thee contempt and shame?  
Outside all that world are we,  
Linked eternally with Thee.

5. All the pure in heart who call  
On Thy Name, O Lord of all,  
Own, with joy, before Thee now,  
Lord and Christ indeed art Thou.
6. In Thy Face what glories shine !  
All the power of God is Thine,  
Thou hast sent the Spirit down  
Here to dwell in all Thine own.
7. Now in perfect peace we see  
Death's dread power annulled by Thee,  
And in Resurrection might,  
Life beyond it brought to light.
8. In the brightest heavenly scene,  
Life where man had never been  
Till Thou, Lord, as Man didst come  
Us to bring to Thy bright Home.
9. Soon wilt Thou put all things right,  
Bring in Day divinely bright,  
And, what joy such thoughts afford !  
Prove that God has made Thee Lord.

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# THE PRIESTLY SERVICE OF CHRIST.

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Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same ; that through death He might destroy (or annul) Him that had the power of death, that is, the devil ; And deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage. Wherefore in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful **HIGH PRIEST** in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation (propitiation) for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted (Heb. ii. 14-18).

We have a great **HIGH PRIEST**, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God. . . . We have not an **HIGH PRIEST** which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities ; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need (Heb. iv. 14-16).

Christ glorified not Himself to be made an **HIGH PRIEST** ; but He that said unto Him, Thou art My Son, to-day have I begotten Thee. . . . Thou art a **PRIEST FOR EVER** after the order of Melchisedec. Who in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared ; though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered ; and being made perfect, He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him ; called of God an **HIGH PRIEST** after the order of Melchisedec (Heb. v. 5-10).

Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to

make intercession for them. For such an **HIGH PRIEST** became us, Who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens . . . the Son, Who is consecrated for evermore. Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum : We have such an **HIGH PRIEST** Who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens ; a Minister of the Sanctuary, and of the true Tabernacle, which the Lord pitched and not man (Heb. vii. 25-28 ; viii. 1, 2).

But Christ being come an High Priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect Tabernacle, not made with hands . . . neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own Blood, He entered in **once** into the Holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us (Heb. ix. 11, 12).

Having, therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the Holiest by the Blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh ; and having an High Priest [lit. a Great Priest] over the House of God ; let us draw near (Heb. x. 19-22).

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**T**WO great thoughts run through the Epistle to the Hebrews, namely, that of **THE VICTIM** or **SACRIFICE** and that of **THE HIGH PRIEST** and **HIS PRESENT SERVICE OF LOVE** which He is now carrying on on High for us. For He ever liveth to make intercession for us.

And first I would speak a little as to the **VICTIM** and the **PAST SERVICE OF CHRIST ON THE CROSS**, when He died for us and shed His blood to atone for sin. That work was perfect, and the value of His atoning Blood unspeakably great, indeed it is only fully known to God Himself. It speaks of a life given up for us, a life of greater value than the lives of all

human beings put together, the life of God's own dear Son, and a life wholly devoted to the will and pleasure of God Himself. Just think of such a Blessed Person sacrificing Himself, and that for us! What amazing love! How perfect and glorious the work of redemption! One might have thought that Jesus on rising from the dead would have sat down and rested until we arrive in glory, seeing that He had satisfied God completely about our sins, so that the sins of those of us who believe in Jesus can never come up in judgment against us, nor can we ever be regarded by God as sinners, seeing that we are "sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."

But not so, our precious Saviour **MUST SERVE US STILL**. He could not rest whilst we were left in such a world of evil as this. He knew full well the character of the world, and all its evil and pride, as well as its undisguised dislike and even hatred of the people of God, and so, instead of retiring from service when He arrived in Glory, **HE HAS BEEN SERVING EVER SINCE!** It is striking the way Scripture puts it: it does not say that He ever liveth *and* maketh intercession for us, but "He ever liveth *to* make intercession" for us! **HE LIVES TO SERVE US! HE LIVES TO MAKE INTERCESSION** for those who come unto God by Him! What a precious thought! All who have His Spirit know that He lives, that He is no longer dead, but alive to die no more, but do all know why He lives? He lives to intercede for those who are deeply written on His heart of love. They are described in a beautiful way here, namely, as those "who come unto God by Him." **HE LIVES TO SEE US SAFELY THROUGH INTO GLORY**, and to support us *now* on taking

up our greatest privilege, that of approaching God by Him. This is a privilege quite special for those who believe in Christ and throw in their lot with Him in this day of His rejection by the world.

As those who are sanctified by Christ we have the privilege of coming to God nearer than any saints of Old Testament times, even as near as Christ Himself! And Jesus lives to help us so to do. Jesus is on high to represent us, and His place of nearness is our place, too, in His marvellous grace.

**HIS SERVICE AS PRIEST IS UNIVERSAL AND CONTINUOUS.** It has never been interrupted since He took His seat on high at the right hand of God, that is, nearly 1900 years! He thinks of all His own in every part of the world and has done so without a moment's interval during this lengthened period. I love to think of Him interceding or praying for every saint in this way, and even for the weakest and the most unworthy of us, even for those who are greatly hindered by the false ideas of the religious world, which rob saints of the true place of Christ as their Priest and their living Head, and rob them, too, of their place and privilege as Priests to go in to God in the holiest of all. We may approach God even nearer than the angels, yea, as near as Christ Himself! **HE IS OUR REPRESENTATIVE IN THE PRESENCE of God!** We read that He has entered heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us. In Him our High Priest we learn what our place is. He represents us there. He is actually there where we soon shall be and where we may even now in spirit enter as we appropriate Him our great High Priest. On the Cross He was



there under the judgment of God *instead of us*, but He is not in heaven *instead of us*, but *for us* and representing the place of eternal favour and nearness to God which belongs to the children which God hath given Him.

But to enjoy our holy and exalted privileges, He must save us to the uttermost, or completely, and this He is bent on doing, and HE IS ABLE TO SAVE US TO THE UTTERMOST END, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for us. He knows, far more than we do, how terribly Satan can tempt us and how great is his power, but He is far more powerful than Satan, and "in that He hath suffered being tempted, HE IS ABLE TO SUCCOUR THEM THAT ARE TEMPTED."

Let us remember that Jesus has been here where we are in the midst of a world of evil, a world far from God. He "took part in flesh and blood" because we did. One might have passed him in the streets of Nazareth in the "days of His flesh" without noticing that He was different from anyone else, holy and sinless though He was. You would have seen a man pass by you, for He was really man and had become man that He might die for men. We read, "It became Him to be made like unto His brethren that He might be A MERCIFUL (PITIFUL) AND FAITHFUL HIGH PRIEST." How precious this is! He was once like us, as being in human life, like His brethren, the brethren whom He would deliver, and who were under the fear of death. Of course, He is not like us now, but we shall soon be like Him, as He now is in Glory, and in spirit as "sanctified ones" we are like him even now. How good it is that He was once like us, and took part in flesh and blood, though not, of course, sinful flesh. If He had not

come in flesh He could never have died for us, nor have made propitiation for our sins through His precious Blood. Not only so, but when here in flesh

“ He learnt what sore temptations mean,  
For He has felt the same.”

In His present condition in Glory He cannot be tempted, but when here in flesh HE WAS TEMPTED MORE THAN ANY and “ in all points like as we are ” apart from sin. Satan used all his power against Christ to tempt Him and to overthrow Him, but all in vain. How little we know what those temptations in the wilderness were when Satan, who tempts us by “ the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eye and the pride of life,” tried by three similar temptations to get Christ under his power, but in vain. Think of those forty days when Jesus was without food, and all round Him were stones, any one of which He could have made into a loaf of bread. This Satan urged Him to do at a moment when the natural craving for bread must have been simply terrible. But all His beautiful life He had only acted as God directed and in accordance with His will and word, and He refused to leave this path of entire dependence upon God and submission to Him. We read that “ He suffered being tempted.” If He had yielded He would not have suffered, nor do we except when we yield and have to suffer the consequences of yielding. But this very fact that He suffered being tempted is brought forward to show that “ He is able to succour them that are tempted.”

How well, then, JESUS UNDERSTANDS WHAT IT IS FOR US TO BE TEMPTED ! How able, too, He is to succour us when we are tempted !

If we sin we have Him as our Advocate with the Father, and He is the propitiation for our sins (1 John ii. 2), but as Priest He would succour us when tempted so as to keep us from sin. If He Himself had yielded, He could not have helped us, but, thank God, He never did. What a pitiful and faithful High Priest we have! How well able to help us, no matter what our temptations may be, and how pitiful and considerate He is when we are tried! A man who constantly yields to temptation is not the man to help me if I am tempted. One would not go to such a man for advice and sympathy or help when one is severely tempted. No, the One to help me is the One Who never yielded—Jesus our Great High Priest Who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God. So that, thank God, “we have not a High Priest Who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities.” This is a strong Greek way of saying we have **A HIGH PRIEST WHO CAN DEEPLY SYMPATHIZE WITH OUR INFIRMITIES OR WEAKNESSES.** He well knows how weak we are, and feels for us in our weakness as no one else could do. It is not a sin to be weak. We read that Jesus Himself was crucified in weakness, and that an angel strengthened Him in His agony when tempted in the Garden of Gethsemane. It is beautiful and deeply touching, His tender sympathy for a weak one. With what love, too, He sympathizes! For He is the Son of God, and therefore the greatest possible expression of love. It is because of His great love that He lives to help us. Thus we are encouraged to “come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.” Mercy means His pitiful consideration for us; the throne we

approach is a throne of grace, not of judgment. There we can obtain all the grace and help we need to help us just at the right moment, when otherwise we should give way.

Remember He was "in all points tempted like as we are," so that there is no case of trial or temptation that Jesus cannot understand, even though in Him there never was sin nor any craving and thirst for what is evil. The result is that just when you need help, you find it.

What a service of love His is, that of our High Priest! And we read that "Christ glorified not Himself to be made an High Priest." It was God Who called Him to that high and distinguished office. Jesus did not seek it for Himself. He was called by God to this high place of honour, and who could be so suitable for it as His own dear Son? Well did God know that no one would serve us like His Son Who died for us, and Who in the days of His flesh "learned obedience by the things that He suffered."

It was a new thing for Him to obey, for before He became Man, when He abode in simple deity, no thought of obeying anyone could come in. Being Himself God there was no one to obey, but the moment He became Man He was in the place of subjection to God, to do His will, thus He learnt what obedience meant, and He always obeyed, no matter what it might cost Him. He came to do the will of God (Heb. x. 7), and God prepared Him a body in which He could do it, and He did it completely.

Yes, God chose one to be our High Priest Who in the days of His flesh knew what it was to meet the whole power of darkness in the Garden of Gethsemane as Satan sought to divert Jesus from

the path of suffering and obedience in drinking the terrible cup which the Father had given Him to drink. We read of Jesus then as "BEING IN AN AGONY" but that "He prayed more earnestly," and that "His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." No one was ever in such agony nor could be, for no one has ever had to face what Jesus faced at that terrible moment. If any of us have in our little measure known what agony means whilst seeking to do the will of God and to please Him, and have found ourselves in terrible conflict with Satan and the powers of darkness, it was that we might be conscious of the blessed support of the Lord, and have the sense of the love and power of God carrying us through and enabling us to be "more than conquerors through Him Who loved us." I am not speaking about agony because of sin, but of what a saint might suffer in seeking to do the will of God and in doing it find himself in direct conflict with Satan. But the Lord comes near at such a moment with His beautiful support. Jesus is far more than Man, He is a Divine Person and He brings in Divine power to help us against all the power of evil. Thus God becomes known as never before, and such a moment of Divine support in the greatest possible distress is never forgotten. It leaves its mark on the whole life-time of the believer. Surely Paul knew something of this in prison at Jerusalem, when, as it says, "the Lord stood by him," and later on when he was a prisoner at Rome and all alone had to give his defence before the Emperor, he says: "No man stood with me, but all men forsook me; I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge. Notwithstanding **THE LORD STOOD WITH ME, AND STRENGTHENED ME—I was**

delivered out of the mouth of the lion.” However attached his brethren might have been to him, none of them had courage to stand with him then, or at least did so. Yet Paul does not blame them for it, but prays that it may not be laid to their charge. But the Lord did not fail him. He stood by him in the one case, and stood with him in the other, and enabled him to give a powerful testimony, so “that all the Gentiles might hear.” How wonderful it is to be thus supported by the Lord! Our great Priest can never fail us. His intercession for us accounts for the way saints go through times of terrible trial. Those are holy moments when in almost agony of soul you pour out your heart to God, and find the Lord so near with His unspeakably sweet support. Surely it is good to accustom ourselves to be often in His presence in prayer and holy intercourse. He is Priest to help us in this, and He not only intercedes Himself, but He teaches us to do the same for others. This service of prayer and intercession is given to all His people. If we cannot all preach, we can all pray, and possibly effect more than another does by his preaching. It is a service carried on at the golden altar, in the very sanctuary itself. As priests we have access there. In secret we may pray as long as we have power so to do, we weary no one. But in the Assembly we need to think of others, not only as to making them hear, but also not to weary our brethren by long prayers. Surely, too, if we prayed slowly and distinctly and made more *effort to be heard* when in the meeting, there would be far more edification, and we should not, as so often, disappoint our dear brethren who love to hear the holy utterances of their brethren. Love delights to think of others in this way for their edification.

The service of Jesus as our High Priest is twofold—first to help us in our pilgrim path here, in succouring the tempted, and in sympathizing with us in our weaknesses and on seeing that we have all needed grace, so as to save us to the uttermost ; then, secondly, He serves us on another and higher line—the line of the sanctuary itself, the place of holy worship. He gives us boldness or liberty to enter THE HOLIEST, the immediate presence of God where He Himself is, and where everything speaks of Christ and is characterized by Him.

But it is the *Holiest*, there is no place more holy. How, then, is it possible that such as we are can enter there ? But we could never learn by looking at ourselves what we are in the sight of God, we must learn it by looking at our great High Priest.

We read : “ Such a High Priest became us.” No one else could be so suitable, if we would understand what we are as “ sanctified ones.” As Aaron’s sons were like Aaron and had sanctuary privileges which were only open to them as the priests of God, so it is with us. WE LEARN IN CHRIST OUR HIGH PRIEST WHAT WE ARE. He does not forecast what we *ought* to be, but what we *are*, viewed as sanctified by God’s will and through the “ offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.” HIS SUITABILITY IS SEEN IN SEVEN DIFFERENT WAYS OR CHARACTERISTICS, and they set forth what God’s thought about us is, as looked at by Him according to His Divine counsels. In the mind of God WE ARE IDENTIFIED WITH CHRIST. The words, “ Such a High Priest became us, etc.,” show in what way like Him, or He like those, He represents.

And, first, He is HOLY, for He must be at the height of God's thoughts about us which are here expressed in this way. The word "holy" is the same as in Acts ii. 27, where it is a translation of Ps. xvi. 10. : "Thou wilt not suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption." The word involves more than the nature of holiness, it might be rendered "pious" or "gracious," and expresses that He was the vessel of Divine grace. All God's sure mercies were concentrated in Him, God's Holy One, and all suitable affections towards God were there in Him. He was the perfect expression of God's favour and grace and the very embodiment of piety. But in measure every saint viewed according to the work of God in Him and the full thought of God about Him, is a vessel of holy grace. How beautiful to think of these myriads of holy vessels scattered all over the world ever since Jesus ascended to heaven and sent down the Holy Ghost to dwell in us and to be the power of our life and testimony ! What good a brother or a sister may be who is a vessel of Divine grace. How great the influence upon neighbours and those around on the part of those who cherish these holy affections towards God and are vessels of His favour and grace. The Holy City Jerusalem will have this influence when with the sweet light of God it will descend from heaven in the coming Day. The whole Church will have this influence then ; why should we not have something of it now ? If we look at ourselves we should all say that we are far from being holy or pious and gracious, but God would have us know how He regards us, according to the new work of God in us, as is set forth in Christ Himself ; God can and does look at us in this way without regarding us in our practical life down here



in which we are so conscious of being at times very different from this.

Then, our High Priest is suitable to represent us because He is **HARMLESS OR WITHOUT MALICE OR GUILÉ**, incapable of an evil thought. Such is the work of God in us, and such are we in His eternal thought about us, and as we appropriate the death of Christ we are prepared to appropriate Christ Himself, and then we are conscious of being like our High Priest, without guile. It is this that gives us freedom in entering the Holiest. What exercise, too, it produces that we may be practically what we are in God's sight—like Christ!

Again, He is **UNDEFILED**. Nothing that defileth or is defiled can enter God's holy presence where our High Priest has for us entered. If we walk in self-judgment and consider our High Priest and Representative in heaven we shall learn that we, too, are "undefiled" and "of Him" and "sanctified" by Him.

Again, He is **SEPARATE** or **SEPARATED FROM SINNERS**. Christ, by going to the Father, has actually separated Himself from sinners, and that for our sakes (John xvii. 19). Our God never mixes us up with the world or with sinners. He has separated us for ever from sinners by the death of Christ and by the work of God in us, as well as by the gift of the Spirit. If the Lord were to come to-day, and the saints were "caught up to meet Him in the air," no mistake could possibly be made. No sinner would be raised by mistake for a saint, and no unbeliever would be caught up by mistake for a believer. **THE SEPARATION IS MADE BY GOD NOW AND NOT AFTER DEATH**. Jesus knows all His own now and

never confounds us with the unbelieving and godless crowd of sinners around us. Some of them may yet, thank God, be saved and brought among us; if so, they too will be separated from sinners as much as we are. How it becomes us to make it manifest every day that we are separated by God from all who continue in godlessness and sin!

Then, our High Priest is become "HIGHER THAN THE HEAVENS," that is, He is far beyond what is physical and material. Our place of worship or of meeting with God is above the heavens. When we go to Him as worshippers, being partakers of the heavenly calling, we are higher than the heavens. Our intercourse is with God in the Sanctuary, in the light where He is. How would this be possible if our High Priest were not Himself higher than the heavens? Our worship is spiritual and the outcome of love, which is far beyond a material system.

Again, HE NEEDETH NOT DAILY TO OFFER UP SACRIFICES like the High Priests of old, for this He did once when HE OFFERED UP HIMSELF. The whole question of our responsibility was settled when Christ became THE VICTIM IN OUR STEAD. All was settled on the Cross. He is not now the Victim, taking the responsibility of our sins. As Priest on High He is outside all this, and so are we. We are as FREE FROM RESPONSIBILITY AS TO OUR SINS AS CHRIST IS, though He once made Himself responsible as the Victim for us on the Cross. No question as to our sins can ever be raised.

Lastly, HE IS "A SON CONSECRATED (or PERFECTED) FOR EVERMORE." Nothing less would suit God than to bring many sons to

Glory. He must be Son to be suitable to our calling, and the word of the oath makes the Son Priest, that we may learn in Him what we are according to God's thoughts about us. God must be loved as only sons can love Him. Christ Himself as Son is the great and glorious Pattern of it. Called into the place of sons, we are suitable to be the companions of Christ Himself, Who is not ashamed to call us brethren.

How blessed to think "we have SUCH AN HIGH PRIEST, Who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, MINISTER OF THE SANCTUARY AND OF THE TRUE TABERNACLE." What care He takes of all the precious vessels of that Sanctuary to keep us clean and holy for the service of God ! And how beautifully He supports us when we come together in Assembly that volumes of praise and worship may rise to God.

As we think, then, of our GREAT PRIEST over the House of God and of Christ Himself as "the new and living way which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh, LET US DRAW NEAR" and constantly avail ourselves of our heavenly privileges until we too are actually where Jesus Himself now is—in Heaven itself !

H. D'A. C.



## CHRIST OUR LIVING TEACHER.

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JOHN i. 38 : They said unto Him, Rabbi (which is to say, being interpreted, Master [Teacher]), where dwellest Thou ? He saith unto them, Come and see.

iii. 2 : We know that Thou art a Teacher come from God.

vii. 14 : Jesus went up into the temple and taught. And the Jews marvelled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned ? Jesus answered . . . My doctrine [teaching] is not Mine, but His that sent Me. If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of Myself.

xiii. 13 : Ye call Me Master [Teacher] and Lord : and ye say well ; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master [Teacher], have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.

xx. 16 : Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto Him, Rabboni, which is to say, Master [Teacher].

YOU will see at once from these scriptures that what I want to bring before you is that **CHRIST IS OUR LIVING TEACHER.** It is most important at the present moment that we should come under the direct and living teaching of Christ Himself.

It is quite remarkable how the thought of Teacher and Teaching runs through the Gospel of John. The Teacher is the Son of God, and there is no teacher like Him. I do not see how we can have any true part in Christian testimony unless

we are daily under the teaching of Christ. Christ has never given up teaching. The fact that He is no longer on earth but in heaven does not prevent Him teaching. It on the contrary widens the sphere. It is open to all men to learn of Him. Besides, **THE HOLY GHOST MAKES THE TEACHING OF CHRIST EFFECTIVE IN US.** It was to this end that He was given, and therefore it is said of the Spirit, "He shall teach you all things whatsoever I have said unto you."

Now this gives Christ an advantage over all other teachers, for He has put His own Spirit into us, in order that His own thoughts, His own teaching may be wrought in us. We do not look to the Spirit to teach us, but to Christ Himself personally, and in this way we come under His direct and personal teaching; but the Holy Ghost teaches *in* us, makes the teaching good in us, and forms us according to the teaching. Thus the teaching becomes part of our very being.

But not only is Christ our Teacher, but **THE TEACHING IS HIMSELF.** For all that He teaches has been first presented in Himself and in His pathway here. All the principles that God delights in have been set forth in Christ. Everything that is morally right and blessed was expressed in Christ, and God will not go outside of Christ for anything. All therefore that Christ teaches His people must be the expression of Himself, and it is this that the Holy Spirit alone can teach in us. He cannot encourage anything in us that was not in Christ. The Spirit is grieved the moment we allow any thing or any way contrary to Christ. He is in perfect harmony with Christ,

and Christ in harmony with God, and the full delight of God. Thus all three Persons of the Trinity have their part in the Holy Teaching of to-day. We must not, then, neglect the teaching. We must not be content with knowing we are forgiven and saved. **WE MUST GO TO SCHOOL.** We must learn daily in the school of Christ, and from Christ Himself. He expects us to continue at school as long as we live. There is always something more He has to teach us. The great lack with us is that we are not taught. We often neglect the school. We may go to a great many Bible Readings and meetings, and yet neglect the school. We may not really be learning directly from Christ Himself. We may be avoiding His living influence over us, we may be listening to something else instead of to Him. *We all find time for what we want,* let us then **FIND TIME TO LEARN FROM CHRIST.** Mary sat at His feet, and heard His word, and subsequently did the greatest service ever done to Him when He was on earth. She chose "the good part," which was never to be taken from her.

Let us take a lesson from daily life : Suppose the case of a child who absents himself continually from school. What is the result ? He finds when the examination comes that he is far behind the others, and that it is impossible to make up for lost time. So it is with us, how can we make up for the lost hours which we gave to the world and to our own pleasure instead of to Christ ? No wonder we find to our shame that others, who had not the advantages we have had, are far

beyond us in the knowledge of Christ. May we learn then to value more the teaching of our living Teacher.

Again, I would notice that A MAN IS KNOWN BY HIS SCHOOL; it marks him. Now in the present day there are any number of schools of thought, and men like to have disciples or followers. Indeed it has been so from the earliest days. The Greek philosophers had their schools, and the Pharisees and Sadducees theirs; but all such schools of men interfere with the school of God, and are on altogether different lines from the teaching of Christ. EVERY CHRISTIAN OUGHT TO ATTEND THE SAME SCHOOL, THE SCHOOL OF CHRIST. He alone has the right to have disciples or followers, and no one can teach like Him. Of course I am not speaking of education in regard of things necessary to know in connection with our daily occupations and ordinary life here. I am speaking of the moral teaching and ideas by which we are formed as we go through life, in this we need to be taught by Christ. He only can form the mind aright. All the thoughts of the world are destructive to our souls. Their thoughts are on the line of the glory of man, and of self-sufficiency and self-importance. Such thoughts cannot edify, they can only destroy. The thoughts of the world are based on the false idea that there is some natural good in man, something he can build upon, some competency and ability to produce something for God. Whereas the teaching of Christ was exactly the opposite to all this. He teaches us to distrust ourselves, and to find our



sufficiency and competency not in ourselves, but in God. He teaches us to seek the glory of God, not our own glory. The world expects every one to listen to their thoughts, but Christ never did. **THE WORLD NEVER EDUCATED CHRIST**, but they were obliged to own that He had learnt somewhere. They marvelled at His teaching and said: "How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?" They could not put Him down as having learnt in any of the world's schools, they could not possibly claim Him as one of their number, nor could they boast that they had educated Him. Yet **CHRIST MADE MORE MARK IN THIS WORLD THAN ANY MAN**. He received His letters from another source altogether. He did not claim that it was His own teaching. He said, "My doctrine [My teaching] is not Mine, but His that sent Me." It was this that distinguished Him from every other man. No wonder the Jews marvelled, for no one ever taught like Christ. **HE RECEIVED ALL HIS THOUGHTS FROM GOD**. Consequently He made a mark in this world that can never be obliterated. He said: "As I hear I judge: and My judgment is just; because I seek not Mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent Me." **CHRIST NEVER TRUSTED HIS OWN JUDGMENT OR OPINION**, He got His judgment from God, and therefore it was always right, for He never sought His own will or pleasure, but the will of the Father Who had sent Him. Then, again, **CHRIST'S TEACHING IS ABSOLUTELY TRUSTWORTHY**, for He never sought His own glory, but the glory of

the Father. Read John vii. 18. "He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory: but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him." This explains a great deal. No wonder His followers have always trusted Him, for there is nothing false about Christ, nothing wrong. At the beginning of Christ's ministry, two disciples of John the Baptist left him and followed Jesus, so truly did John prepare the way for Jesus. And when Jesus asked them: "What seek ye?" what did they reply? "Teacher, where dwellest Thou?" They evidently had the thought that Christ was a far greater Teacher than John, and that the time had come for leaving John to follow Jesus. And when Jesus said: "Come and see," "they came and saw where He dwelt, and abode with Him that day." Thus they saw the Teacher in His own dwelling, in His own surroundings, the surroundings of love, the abode of love. **CHRIST DWELLS IN LOVE.** He dwells in the hearts of His people. The two disciples must have got an impression that day which greatly helped them ever after. And that is what the Lord does with us. He brings us to where He dwells—at least in spirit—to His own surroundings. They are altogether different from the surroundings of the men of this world. Christ dwells not like the men of the world, in hatred and strife and in pride and evil. He dwells in love, in holy love. The disciples saw where He dwelt, and they abode with Him long enough to get an impression that could never be effaced.

The word "disciple" is constantly found in

this Gospel of John. It is quite characteristic of the Gospel which presents the greatest of all teachers—the Son of God. He alone could reveal God. There were other teachers raised up of God before Christ came, like Moses and the Prophets. They taught a great deal about God and about His will for man, but none of them told what *He is*, none of them could reveal God. Only the Son could do this—He Who is in the bosom of the Father. What an immense privilege then it is to be a disciple of Christ, a scholar in His school! THE DISCIPLES OF CHRIST ARE VERY SOON DISCOVERED. The blind man in the ninth of John was discovered the same day that Jesus opened his eyes. The Pharisees said after they heard him give his testimony: “Thou art His disciple,” and they reproached him with it, whereas really they were doing him a great honour in detecting him to be a disciple. It would be well if we were as easily discovered and manifested to be Christ’s disciples. They saw there was a great difference between themselves and him. They said: “We are Moses’ disciples.” But they were only Moses’ disciples in the letter of the law, not in the spirit of it. Moses, like all the prophets, wrote of Christ, and if they had really believed Moses, they would have come to Christ. Christ embraced all the teaching God had previously given. He fulfilled the law and the prophets. He kept the law, He loved God with all His heart and His neighbour as Himself—the only one that ever did so—and then He died for us who had broken the law, and He bore the curse and suffered for us. In dying for us on the cross He revealed

the heart of God, and made known His love. This neither Moses nor the prophets could do, only God's beloved Son could do this. All previous teaching was elementary and preparatory. It presented types and shadows and promises, till the Antitype and Substance came in Christ. He is the fulfilment of all the promises, the full setting forth of God. "In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." **WHEN CHRIST BEGAN TO TEACH, ALL OTHER TEACHERS HAD TO RETIRE.** Even John the Baptist said: "He must increase, but I must decrease." **CHRIST ALONE HAS THE RIGHT TO HAVE DISCIPLES.** His is the only school that God recognizes to-day. He alone knows how to expound Moses and the prophets (Luke xxiv. 27). He alone can tell out God. No one ever taught so clearly as Christ. There was no fog round Him. All was clear, all was light. He said: "I am the light of the world: he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." And Christ teaches as clearly to-day and as wonderfully as ever He did. His pupils may be few, but they are well taught, for He teaches the soul, not simply the mind; besides, **CHRIST TEACHES FOR ETERNITY,** not like the world, only for time. His lessons have an eternal value. Their real worth will be evident in the eternal Day. He teaches with the utmost patience, and is never offended because we are so slow to understand. He takes the greatest trouble with His pupils, and never gives up anyone as hopeless. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man

therefore "that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father," cometh unto Christ. No scholars are refused, all are welcome, and doubly so because the Father has drawn them to Him. God works in people to this end, that they may come to Christ and be taught. **CHRIST'S PUPILS ARE MORE INTELLIGENT THAN ANY.** Sometimes you see quite young people saying and doing the most astonishing things. You inquire where they have learnt to act and speak in that way, and you find they have learnt at the school of Christ. They have been with the Lord and under His living influence and teaching; and Who teaches like Him?

Other people, perhaps real believers, have been with the newspapers and current literature, and getting their thoughts from such sources, or from mixing socially with the world. No wonder, then, they are in a difficulty as to how to act for the Lord when the time of testing comes. You are sure to find yourself in a fog if you get your thoughts from the world's literature and make the newspapers your food instead of Christ. But the man whose daily food is Christ rather than the thoughts of men, and who is with the Lord rather than with the world, such an one gets direct guidance and light, and has his answer when the difficulties come. His mode of action may be little understood, but that is because so few know the Lord, so few feed on Christ, the Living Bread.

✓ But **THE SCHOOL OF CHRIST IS A COSTLY ONE.** On His side the education is all free, He loves to teach us, and does it freely. But on our

side we have to pay a great deal, for we have to drop ourselves, and let our own wills go, if we would learn from Him. That is why the school of Christ is avoided. There is no room there for the glory of man, or for our own will. The will of God is taught there, not the will of man. All that naturally would make life for us has to go if we would really learn in the school of Christ. "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me." That is the only way to be a follower of Christ. There is not much difference between a disciple of Christ and a follower of Him. They are closely connected. We must learn of Him in order to follow Him. And if we follow Him we shall learn of Him. Now what is it to take up one's cross, if it is not to drop one's self, not simply certain ways and habits, but our very life. This will mean suffering and shame in this world, but the compensation of honour and glory in the Coming Day. What an encouragement to follow Him !

Let us, too, remember His own words just before His death : "He that loveth his life shall lose it ; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve Me, let him follow Me ; and where I am, there shall also My servant be : if any man serve Me, him will My Father honour." Surely the Father's honours will completely eclipse all the honours of this world.

It is not too late to go to school, the school of Christ, however old you may be, and however long you may have frittered away the time in

learning at the schools of the world. Christ's word to all is "LEARN OF ME." There only do we learn to be meek and lowly, and there only can we find deliverance from restlessness. He teaches us to take up His yoke—the will of God, and thus to find rest unto our souls.

Next I would remark that CHRIST'S SCHOOL IS MARKED BY DIVINE LIGHT AND CERTAINTY. The world's philosophers used to say: "We think," but no one could say like Christ: "We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen." In the world's schools you get opinions, not absolute certainty; not so with Christ. He said: "If any man will do His will [that is, desire to do it], he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God or whether I speak of Myself." There is the real difficulty, we may not desire to do His will. Our own wills may hinder us getting light. But the one who really desires to do the will of God, that man shall KNOW what His will is. Whilst others only *think* this or that, the Christian can *know*, he can be certain as to God's will for him here. The scripture I have just quoted gave me immense comfort when I was a youth and greatly troubled as to what the Lord's path for a Christian was. People said then as they do still: No one can be certain in this world; you cannot be sure of being in the right path, you can only do the best you can. Well, I told the Lord what they said, as I sought Him in solitude, that no one could be certain of being in the right path here. He answered me by giving me the verse I have just quoted: "If any man will [wishes to] do His will, He shall *know*, etc.," and

another verse : " If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." I then found what I wanted, and that " there is a path which no fowl knoweth, and which the vulture's eye hath not seen, etc." (Job xxviii. 7). Christ knows it, though the keenest eye in the world cannot detect it. Those who honestly seek it, find it. " They that seek the Lord understand all things " (Prov. xxviii. 5). It is not a question of great reasoning power, but of whether there is the desire to do the will of God. Such shall know. Some may have naturally very little power of reasoning, and yet understand the will of the Lord and the things of the Lord when clever people are quite in the dark. Christ can teach the feeblest mind that desires to do God's will. There are hundreds of opinions in the world, but only Christ can teach you the truth. When a lad, I asked some one a question about the Lord's things ; he replied : " There are many opinions on that subject." " But what is the truth ? " I said, but he could not tell me. There was nothing for it but to turn to the Lord Himself, which I did. He does not teach opinions, but the truth.

Often Christians when they want to know how to act, or what to do in a certain difficulty, search the Bible for a text to help them, but do not seek the Lord Himself, our Living Teacher. Consequently they often miss their way, even though they know the Bible from end to end. They do not see the principle or text that would help them. But let them first get with Christ Himself, under His present living influence and teaching, and hear His voice, then they will get the guidance



they want. Perhaps it will come to such an one in some golden scripture which shines out beyond all the rest, at the moment, and tells the mind of the Lord for him, and shows him the path the Lord would have him take. Scripture has authority and ought to have more weight with us than any other writings in the world. Scripture cannot be broken. It will stand for ever, but we need to read it in dependence on the Lord, and looking to Him for light. If we all did so, there would not be all sorts of different opinions, for we should get the mind of the Lord. He will never guide you contrary to the Bible, but it is possible to be a reader of the Bible and yet never really learn from Christ, never get His mind, and never be a disciple in the school of Christ. Never let us forget His word to us is : " Learn of Me," and that " Me " is the Person of the Lord Himself.

But often **THE WILL HINDERS A MAN FROM LEARNING THE MIND AND PATH OF CHRIST.** If we say—I will never believe this or that to be right—we have made up our minds before we pray. How then can we get light? To make up one's mind to a certain thing, and then ask the Lord's blessing on it, and guidance as to it, is not the way to be taught of the Lord.

This leads me to say that **DISCIPLINE IS NECESSARY IN THE SCHOOL OF CHRIST.** He has to break our wills in order to teach us, and this He does by chastening. " As many as I love I rebuke and chasten." " My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him." Many of the

most precious lessons ever learnt in life have been learnt on the sick bed, or when passing through some tremendous trial or affliction. A man cannot learn whilst he allows his own will to work and carry him along. Christ came to do the will of Him that sent Him, and if we would learn from our living Teacher, we must not follow our own will, and our own way. **WE MAY SPEND ALL OUR DAYS IN LEARNING OF CHRIST.** There is nothing wrong in that, it is quite right. We need to be constantly learning from Him. Wisdom says: "Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors." This does not mean that we have to neglect our work and duties here, but we ought to order everything so that we are not hindered in attending every day the school of Christ. When surrounded by evil we may learn by contrast, so that what Christ is will shine out all the more in contrast with what we find in the world. Only let us keep Him before us all the day long. **CHRIST GIVES NO HOLIDAY** so long as we are in this world, though in our folly and self-will we may often take one. Then it is all waste time, and opportunities lost. We can make no progress away from Him, and there is no true life except in following Him and learning of Him.

Again, when we come to Christ and believe on Him, we receive the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of Christ. This is a great help, for at the very beginning of our Christian history, **THE TEACHER GIVES US HIS OWN SPIRIT.** And the Spirit's great work is to teach us Christ, and

to form Christ in us. Christ says of Him : " He shall glorify Me, for He shall receive of Mine and shall show it unto you." If you walk in the Spirit, you are sure to find the path of Christ, even if all around you advise you differently from Christ, and so-called Christian teachers teach you the very opposite to the spirit and teaching of Christ. You will get clear of all that is false if you let the Spirit of the great Teacher have His way with you.

Again, **CHRIST'S TEACHING LEADS TO UNITY.** If we are taught by Him we shall all be found in the same path, and in the same fellowship. We shall walk together. His teaching is altogether different from the teaching and spirit of the present day. **HE TEACHES LOVE, AND HIS DISCIPLES ARE MARKED BY IT.** " By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another." He taught the love of God. He never encouraged His disciples to quarrel or to take part in the disputes of the world. He was no fighting man, and there was no hatred in Him. He never fought for His rights, but taught gentleness and meekness, and patience toward all men. He was never rough with any one, and He never teaches His disciples to be rough. **HE TEACHES OBEDIENCE AND DEPENDENCE,** and was the great example of it Himself. Men taught by Him become **LIGHTS IN THE WORLD.** Their influence is far reaching. If we preach the Gospel in the spirit of the world, we injure our converts. **CHRIST WAS HIMSELF THE EXPRESSION OF ALL THAT HE TAUGHT. HE IS THE**

LESSON-BOOK. "Ye have not so learned Christ . . . the truth is in Jesus" (Eph. iv. 20, 21). The principles that He teaches are first of all set forth in Himself. "If I, then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, ye ought also to wash one another's feet." It was not only what Christ said and did which ought to command us, but the *way* He spoke and acted. If He rebuked His disciples, He did it in love. They never could feel He did not love them.

THOUGH RISEN FROM THE DEAD, HE IS STILL THE TEACHER. His first greeting by Mary was "Rabboni," which means "My Teacher." Indeed the word signifies a great Teacher. It was then that He taught for the first time that the disciples were His brethren, and His Father their Father, and His God their God. HE TEACHES EVERYTHING. All the future He makes known to us, and all the principles of the world to come. He puts the glory of the coming Day into the hearts of His people. Yea, more, those who are taught by Him now will be THE LESSON-BOOKS IN THE COMING DAY. The world will learn the love of God in the myriads of saints that form the Holy City and illuminate the nations with the light of Christ. It is as we learn Christ now that we shall be able to express Him in the coming Day. May we then be greatly encouraged to learn of Him !

H. D'A. C.

## DIVINE FRIENDSHIP.

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“THIS is My commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. YE ARE MY FRIENDS, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth; but I HAVE CALLED YOU FRIENDS; for all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you. Ye have not chosen Me, but I HAVE CHOSEN YOU.”—  
JOHN xv. 12-16.

“At that day ye shall ask in My name; and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you; for THE FATHER HIMSELF LOVETH YOU, BECAUSE YE HAVE LOVED ME, and have believed that I came out from God.”—  
JOHN xvi. 26, 27.

I THINK we find in these last words one of the sweetest thoughts ever uttered by our Lord Jesus in His ministry. They were uttered just before His death. Immediately afterwards we find Him praying the Father for them, then comes His arrest, followed by His trial, and then He goes out of this world to the Father through death and resurrection. What a wonderful word to close His ministry with—  
“I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you; for the Father Himself loveth you,

because ye have loved Me." He evidently did not mean that He would not Himself pray for them, for He prayed for them immediately afterwards (chap. xvii.), but that they themselves were to have this privilege because the Father loved them. The word for love here is very striking. It is not the usual word used for love in John's writings. It indicates the love of friendship and attachment. It is as if He had said : THE FATHER HIMSELF LOVETH YOU WITH THE LOVE OF INTIMATE FRIENDSHIP BECAUSE YOU HAVE BEEN ATTACHED TO ME. YOU HAVE LOVED ME AS MY INTIMATE FRIENDS. But for these faithful disciples and the holy women who followed Him, JESUS WOULD HAVE BEEN WITHOUT A FRIEND IN THE WORLD. He did more good than any one ever known, and brought a love to man never seen before, and yet after having cured "all that were sick" we find Him saying : "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests ; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head" (Matt. viii. 20). Men received His benefactions, but they did not want the Benefactor, and after all His kindnesses He had nowhere to lay His head. The cities remained as they were in their sinfulness and unrepentant condition. They did not turn to God, nor seek the company of Him Who brought God to man. Piety found its true home in Christ. Consequently sinful and wilful people did not care to be near Him. His presence was too much for them. The presence of a godly man annoys others. Godliness is very isolating. So Christ was left

alone, and had nowhere to lay His head. The rulers came down from Jerusalem to examine Him, and declared that He did His work through Beelzebub, and the world cavilled and sneered at Him, as they do now.

It was at that moment that THE FATHER GAVE HIM FRIENDS. He gave Him the poor of the earth but rich in faith and full of love to Him. They were chiefly fishermen and humble Galilean women. But they became attached to Him and loved Him with the love of intimate friendship. Not only men but also women were attached to Him, and with divinely given intuition they found many precious ways of serving Him and of proving their friendship. They ministered to Him of their substance. Martha opened her house to Him. Mary came with her alabaster box of precious ointment just when the hatred of men rose to its height and when treachery broke out in His nearest surroundings, and by pouring it over Jesus showed how she valued Him and appreciated His love. Thus she had the privilege of comforting Jesus just when comfort was most acceptable. Nor did Jesus complain that the Father had given Him the poor and not the chief priests or rulers or rabbis. If these had come to Him they would have needed grace to drop the chief priest or ruler or rabbi before they could have become real friends for the meek and lowly Jesus. The High Priest, if he had come, would have had to own that the Urim and Thummim were with Jesus and not with the High Priest, for Jesus alone could reveal the mind of God. No, it mattered not to Jesus

that His circle of friends were chiefly the poor ; they had less to unlearn, and CHRIST COULD DO QUITE AS MUCH WITH THE POOR AND UNLETTERED AS WITH THE RICH AND GREAT. He could put His own grace into them and give them all the ability and competency they needed. He could make of them just what He wanted, and He gladly received them as His friends. John uses two different words for love in speaking of the Father and the Son. In ch. iii. 35, "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into His hand," the word signifies THE LOVE OF THE DIVINE NATURE, the love which is proper to divine Persons. The same word is used when speaking of the love of Christ to His own and of the love of Christians to one another, for as born of God they partake of a new nature, a divine nature which is characterized by love, a love which never fails.

But it is the other word for love I want to speak about, the word we get in ch. v. 20 : "The Father loveth the Son, and showeth Him all things that Himself doeth." Here the word signifies THE LOVE OF FRIENDSHIP. "The Father is attached to the Son," or loves Him with the love of an intimate friend, as we see in the next clause : "and showeth Him all things that Himself doeth," for He was His Friend.

But the amazing thing is this : THE FATHER INCLUDES IN HIS FRIENDSHIP THE FRIENDS OF HIS SON. The Father saw how the disciples befriended His Son in this chilly world, and He took them into His friendship and circle of love, and so He does still.



The Lord does not say : The Father Himself loveth you because I have loved you, but "because you have loved Me." "You have been attached to Me," "You have loved Me with the love of friendship." He owns the love the disciples had shown Him, and how they had come round Him as friends when otherwise He would have been alone. It is true that **THEY DID NOT CHOOSE CHRIST, BUT CHRIST CHOSE THEM** (ch. xv. 16), and we know that those whom He chose were drawn to Him and given to Him of the Father, yet the Lord loved to look upon His disciples as those who had befriended Him in a world that hated Him, and who loved Him with a true and intimate love.

**THE PRESENT IS A GRAND OPPORTUNITY OF SHOWING OUR FRIENDSHIP TO CHRIST AND OF ATTACHING OURSELVES TO HIM.** You may say : How can we do this, seeing that Christ is no longer in Galilee but has gone to the right hand of God ? But if we own the friends of Christ and attach ourselves to them just because they are His friends, He will take it as done to Himself. "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me." Christ is more usually found amongst the very poor and amongst those of no account in this world. We prove our love to Christ by the way we love such, even if they are found in a garret and in the poorest condition of life. If their spirit is the spirit of Christ, then if we love Christ we shall love them. They are evidently the friends of Christ, for **HIS FRIENDS ARE KNOWN BY**

THEIR LIKENESS TO HIM; and surely if they are counted worthy to be the friends of Christ, they are worthy to be our friends. Though Christ is personally in heaven, yet He is morally here in those who have His Spirit and breathe His Spirit in their life and walk down here. Thus we have a golden opportunity of proving our love to Christ by the way we show our friendship to those who, no matter how humble and lowly, are characterized by Christ.

And here I would say how important it is to show that we *are* Christ's, and that we love Christ, and are happy in the company of Christ. If I show that I am far more at home amongst my neighbours who know not Christ or amongst the ungodly people where I work than I am in the company of the Lord's people, I could hardly expect the love of friendship from those who are attached to Christ, however much they might pray for me. If they walked with me when thus careless and worldly, they would soon be as worldly as myself, and they would themselves lose the friendship of Christ. We read, "The friendship of the world is enmity with God," and "Whosoever will be (that is, desires to be) the friend of the world is THE ENEMY OF GOD." What a striking contrast this is to being THE FRIENDS OF THE FATHER, as we are permitted in grace to be if we prove ourselves the friends of Christ in a world that has cast Him out, a world that despises those who walk in His steps and manifest His Spirit. More serious still is the word, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ" (that is, with the love of friendship),

“let him be Anathema Maran-atha.” A real curse or Anathema belongs to such, and will be executed soon, for “Our Lord cometh,” as the word Maran-atha signifies. What an awful thing it would be when Christ comes for His friends, and they are caught up to meet Him in the air, if any of us are left behind for the judgments coming on the earth, and that, because we loved the friendship of the world and despised the friendship of Christ! Do we blush when His Name is spoken of in the world, are we ashamed to own Him, or to be seen walking with the poor who love Him? Let us take care lest He refuses to own us as His friends when He comes to take them to Himself. Men glory in being connected with some great personage in this world, or in being his intimate friends. Do we glory in being the friends of Jesus? Are we proud of Him or are we ashamed of His Name? **JESUS WILL HAVE THE SAME FRIENDS IN GLORY THAT HE HAS IN THIS DAY OF HIS REPROACH.** He will soon come and take up His rights and reign over all the nations. He will come as King of kings and Lord of lords, and He will come with a **BRILLIANT ESCORT**, with an intimate circle of honoured friends, but they will be **THE FRIENDS THAT SURROUNDED HIM IN THE DAY OF HIS SHAME.** It is a costly friendship now, for it means the scorn of the world, but we shall be amply rewarded in the day of His glory. The sweetest thing on earth is intimacy with Christ, the friendship of Christ. Now is the time for showing love to Jesus, when most show Him hatred or indifference. He will

have plenty of love in the day of glory ; it is now that He needs it and loves to have it, when but for His friends no one would love Him in this world at all. The greatest honour we could have on earth is to be known as the friends of Jesus, and that because we love His own, however poor, and are not ashamed to walk with them if they walk in truth. We love their society just because they love Him. We drop the social, the society of this world, and own THE NEW SOCIETY which the Holy Ghost has been forming now for 1900 years, that of the friends of Jesus. If we cannot walk with Jesus in Galilee as in days when He was on the earth, we can change our circle of friends and walk with the friends of Christ and enjoy that society which knows no death, and be in a friendship which is eternal. If we do so, the world will isolate us, but Christ will own us, and so will all who love Him.

In a day of trial like the present, and in times of pressure, a true friendship is invaluable, and where can we find it except amongst those who love Christ and surround Him day by day? How needful too to strengthen the friendship by being careful to cherish the love of Christ and to allow nothing to come in to hinder the friendship, or to bring in grit and ill-feeling amongst the friends. There is great need of the binding power of cement, THE CEMENT OF DIVINE LOVE. If we remove the cement, the structure will fall. It is a poor thing to be found quarrelling and back-biting or to be envious and jealous of one another, it is like taking the cement away from the wall. It leads to break-up and trouble. Love cements.

THE HOLY GHOST IS THE SPIRIT OF FRIENDSHIP. He cements us to Christ and to one another, and forms a bond that cannot be broken in spite of Satan's continual efforts to break up the friendship. Thus we have A TRIPLE FRIENDSHIP—that of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, Who dwelling in believers and binding us together forms THE FRIENDSHIP OF THE SPIRIT, a friendship which is unchanging and eternal.

CHRIST NEVER LOST A FRIEND. His love was such that He could not let them go, though they often failed, and had to be rebuked for their quarrelling. They were rebuked in love, and so were never lost. "Of those whom Thou gavest Me I have lost none." "Ye are they that have continued with Me in My temptations." Judas was never a friend, and the Lord never called him a friend. In the passage, "Friend, wherefore art thou come?" it should be translated 'companion.' Judas was never attached to Jesus with the love of a friend. He was the friend of money, not of Jesus. He might pass as a friend, so that the psalmist could prophetically speak of him as "mine own familiar friend (lit., "the man of my peace") in whom I trusted." But Jesus was never deceived as to him. Long before His death Jesus said: "Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?" The Lord waited till Judas had gone out, and then He said to His dear disciples: "YE ARE MY FRIENDS . . . I HAVE CALLED YOU FRIENDS." What an honour to be called the friends of Jesus! May we prove ourselves worthy of the name. Christ

might treat Judas, or any other professor, "as though he had been a friend or brother" (Ps. xxxv. 14), but He is never deceived. He knows all who are true, and He knows "who will betray Him," and so should we in measure, if we were in the power of His Spirit.

Surely the greatest conceivable honour in this world is to be the friends of Christ, and remember, **HIS FRIENDS IN THIS WORLD WILL BE HIS FRIENDS IN THE NEXT.** He will never change His friends. His friends in distress are His friends in glory. They will all be there to a man, for **HE HAS SECURED HIS FRIENDS AT THE COST OF HIS LIFE.** "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down His life for His friends." To make certain of having us, He died for us! What a lesson for us to die for our friends rather than lose them, no matter how perverse and self-willed they at times may seem to be.

It is beautiful that He should call us friends, but we must not forget that **HE WAS THE FIRST TO LOVE.** We should never have loved if He had not "first loved us." Where, indeed, should we have been if He had not loved us, and proved Himself to us **THE FRIEND OF FRIENDS** and pre-eminent in love?

How beautifully this is set forth in the Lord's Supper, **THE SUPPER OF FRIENDSHIP!** There we call Him to mind in the breaking of the bread, and recall how He gave His life for His friends. There we, as it were, declare our fidelity to Him and to His friends with whom we break bread, **THE FRIENDS OF THE TESTIMONY,** and we renew or strengthen the bonds of

friendship by fresh thoughts of His love in dying for us, and so get drawn more closely in love to those for whom He died.

Another way He proves His friendship is that HE CONFIDES IN HIS FRIENDS. "I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you." Christ keeps nothing back from His friends; He *opens out all the secrets of divine counsels*, and of the Father's love. Whatever the Father gave Him for man, He made known to His friends. Thus He proved that He really counted them as His friends. He did not doubt them. He trusted them. LOVE IS NOT SUSPICIOUS. He knew their love and trusted it.

This brings me to notice that CHRIST'S FRIENDS ARE UNDER HIS COMMANDING INFLUENCE. As He says: "Ye are My friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." It is so in the world. The student is commanded by his professor, he is full of him, adopts his thoughts, his ways, his manner of life, he thinks there is no one like him. So with the soldier: he is commanded by his general, he glories in him, carries out his orders, is inspired by him. The socialist is commanded by his leader, he believes in him, follows him. How much more should it be so with the friends of Christ? Yea, it is so, or they would not be His friends. His friends are known by the way they adopt the ways of Christ, walk in His steps, breathe His Spirit. They do not take up the slang of the world, they speak like Christ, they do not live in evil, for Christ did not. They do not hate, for

Christ never hated. They love, for Christ loved. They do good, for Christ did good. They fear God, for Christ did. They keep separate from the world, for Christ was separate. He was not of the world. They love the friends, for Christ loved them and served them. Christ did not doubt the friendship of His disciples, He delighted in it, but in saying "If ye do whatsoever I command you," He showed them the holy lines on which they alone could prove themselves His friends. True friendship, it has been said, consists in having the same likes and dislikes, and so it is in Christianity. If we let our mind roam in evil and delight in pride and worldliness, where is the friendship of Christ? If we harbour unkind thoughts against our brethren, where is true friendship? If we are overbearing and self-important, what is there friendly in that? If we want to distinguish ourselves by our learning or in any other way, we hinder the friendship. The friends rise above all the distinctions you find in the world, and learn to love as friends, as Christ loved us. "This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you." Commanded by His love we love one another. A FRIEND IS GREATER THAN A PREACHER, though of course one would expect that the preacher of Christ would be also a friend of Christ; but he might be self-important or overbearing, and in that measure hinder or even deny the friendship. The friendship of a brother in Christ is far beyond the friendship of a natural brother who knows not Christ. The latter may be no brother at all, but live in hatred. In the



friendship of Christ we rise above all distinctions of nature and of home into **THE FRIENDSHIP OF ETERNITY.**

No one was ever so lonely in this world as Christ. He had no home here, but He had His friends, and **HIS FRIENDS WERE HIS HOME.** He dwelt amongst those who loved Him. It is so still; the only place for Christ to-day is **THE HOME OF DIVINE FRIENDSHIP** where He is loved and where His commandments are kept. The Spirit is ever leading true souls into that Home. Properly it belongs to heaven, but actually His friends are still here on earth united into one body by the one Spirit. They will soon be translated to glory. The Lord is drawing His friends closer together, and the world is drawing its own together into godless associations where Christ is not. When **THE FRIENDSHIP IS RIPE FOR GLORY**, the Lord will come and take His friends to Himself and into the proper Home of Divine Friendship—the Father's House. How soon we may be there!

**THE FRIENDS ARE WELL KNOWN IN HEAVEN** and should know one another on earth. "Greet the friends by name" shows they are distinguished. Diotrephes was not a friend, for he loved to have the pre-eminence in the Assembly and cast the brethren out. How different from the Apostle John, the disciple whom Jesus loved with divine love (ch. xxi. 7) and with the love of friendship (ch. xx. 2). Lazarus also was so loved (ch. xi. 3, 5). Peter also, when twice challenged by Christ as to his love, replies each time: "Thou knowest that I love Thee as a

friend " (or, I am attached to Thee), using not the word which Christ used for love, but the word for friendship. Whereupon Jesus uses Peter's word the third time ; " Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me (as a friend) " ? to which he replied with sorrow that he should have been apparently doubted : " Lord, Thou knowest all things ; Thou knowest that I love Thee," and still clings to his own word indicating the love of an intimate friend. And it was true. The matter of his denying Him with oaths and curses was only a sad incident in his pathway, it was not his characteristic. His characteristic was that he was a friend of Jesus. Jesus knew it and had only questioned him that he might thoroughly judge his failure, and then He trusts him with the feeding of the flock so precious to Christ. Jesus knew His friend and trusted him.

How blessed then to be recognized as the friends of Christ, and, as being attached to Him, to be **THE FRIENDS OF THE FATHER** ! He loves us and counts us in the circle of His friends because of our attachment to Christ. No words can express the value of the Father's friendship.

**THE FATHER LISTENS TO HIS FRIENDS AS HE LISTENS TO CHRIST.** They have free access into His presence for holy and happy intercourse, and are **ALWAYS WELCOME.** There, too, they pray freely for the interests of Christ and for the needs of His people whether temporal or eternal, and **THEIR PRAYERS ARE ALWAYS HEARD.** Owing to their prayers He may stop a war, or deliver from internal strife. He loves His friends, and will

not allow them to be tried beyond what they are able. He listens to their intercession for this groaning world, and shows mercy to prayerless men through the prayers of His friends. A man may be very busy, his shop crowded with customers, but his son or an intimate friend comes in and gets his ear at once and before anyone else. So it is with us when as the friends of Christ we approach the Father. He counts us as His friends, yea, we are His dear sons, and have liberty of access beyond any of His creatures. The Father delights in having us near Him in holy love and in intimate friendship. We find ourselves far above the strife of nations and the confusion of this world, enjoying our own proper and holy portion—THE FATHER'S LOVE, THE LIFE AND JOY OF THE HOLY FRIENDSHIP IN THE FATHER'S HOME.

May we learn, then, to value the friendship, and to "let brotherly love (brotherly friendship) continue." It leads to the Father's House. Let us beware of belittling the friends of Christ or despising them. Let us encourage our children to come into the friendship, to come to Christ, and into the circle of His friends, that they too may enjoy the sweetest portion of eternal ages—DIVINE FRIENDSHIP.

H. D'A. C.



# OUR VALUE,

or,

## Christ's Estimation of His People's Devotedness.

Lev. i. 3-9. If his offering be a burnt sacrifice . . . he shall put his hand upon the head of the burnt offering; and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him. And he shall kill the bullock before the Lord: and the priests, Aaron's sons, shall . . . sprinkle the blood round about upon the altar. . . . And he shall flay the burnt offering, and cut it into his pieces. . . . But his inwards and his legs shall he wash in water: and the priest SHALL BURN ALL ON THE ALTAR to be a burnt sacrifice . . . a sweet savour unto the Lord.

Lev. xxvii. 1-15. When a man shall make a singular vow (or devoteth anything by a vow), the persons shall be for the Lord according to thy estimation (valuation). And thy estimation shall be of the male from twenty years old even unto sixty years old . . . fifty shekels of silver, after the shekel of the sanctuary. And if it be a female . . . thirty shekels. And if it be from five years old even unto twenty years . . . the male twenty shekels . . . the female ten shekels. And if it be from a month old even unto five years old . . . the male five shekels . . . the female three shekels. And if it be from sixty years old and above . . . a male fifteen shekels . . . the female ten shekels. But if he be poorer than thy estimation, then he shall present himself before the priest, and the priest shall value him; according to his ability (means) that vowed shall the priest value him. . . . When a man shall sanctify his house to be holy unto the Lord . . . as the priest shall estimate it, so shall it stand. If he will redeem his house, then he shall add the fifth . . . and it shall be his.

**W**HAT a striking difference there is between the thought of atonement and that of valuation! The same price was paid for all of us who believe in Jesus—namely, His precious Blood, but we are **NOT ALL VALUED ALIKE** when it is a question of our actual devotedness to Christ or our capability of being devoted to Him. The same precious Blood was shed to make atonement for us all, and as His own blood-bought ones we have **ALL THE SAME VALUE**. We are **ALL EQUALLY ACCEPTED IN THE BELOVED** (Eph. i. 6). All who have, so to speak, put their hand on the head of that wonderful burnt offering, Christ Himself, Who gave Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour, are equally in all the value of that offering which has been accepted for them to make atonement for them. To put the hand on the head of the offering expressed full identification with it, so that I can regard myself as in all the value of that burnt offering before God, and thus as accepted and taken into favour for ever. Only God Himself could fully estimate the value of that offering when Christ through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, and laid down for us a life of incalculable value, a life that was the constant delight of God, and a striking contrast to the lives of the great mass of human beings who have lived and died for their own glory. The Scripture says their glory shall not descend after them. But **THE LIFE OF JESUS CAN NEVER BE FORGOTTEN, NOR HIS PRECIOUS BLOOD** which is the proof that His holy beautiful life was terminated and given up in sacrifice for all who

believe in Him. No blood had the value that His Blood has, and **THE SAME PRICE, HIS PRECIOUS BLOOD**, was paid for the least believer as for the greatest. He loved us all equally when He died for us, and He loves us still and ever will. We are all His dear brethren, and all God's dear sons are loved with the same love. On the ground of that precious Blood, God can receive all who repent and believe in the Lord Jesus, however wicked or self-righteous they may have been.

In **THE SIN OFFERING OF JESUS**, when He was made sin for us, God put us out in judgment in the death of His Son that He might bring us in, in all the value of **THE BURNT OFFERING**, and accept us for ever as "**SANCTIFIED THROUGH THE OFFERING OF THE BODY OF JESUS CHRIST** once for all" (Heb. x. 10).

The sin offering was wholly burnt, outside the camp of Israel, expressive of the wrath of God in judgment. The word for 'burn' is the same in Hebrew as that used for the burning of the wicked city of Jericho. But the burnt offering was burnt as a sweet savour offering on the altar of burnt offering in the Tabernacle court. The word here for 'burn' is that used for the burning of sweet incense. It is the life and Person of Christ that give such value to the offering and to His precious Blood, for "the Blood is the life thereof," so that there is no blessing withheld from those who avail themselves of the sacrifice, however guilty they may have been. When the great men of this world who despise the sacrifice of Christ and the atoning virtue of His Blood, go out never to return or to be seen in God's universe of bliss, all the redeemed, all who have trusted in that same Blood, will go in, into all the wonderful blessing that God has

prepared for them. What glory then will be given to God, and to the Lamb, through Whom all this could be brought about !

GOD RESERVED NOTHING in order to have many sons in Glory, for He gave what was more to Him than anything in the whole creation, He gave His only-begotten Son. So also CHRIST RESERVED NOTHING in order to have us as His brethren and His bride, HE GAVE HIMSELF for us ! What more could He give ? But as the Father and the Son reserved nothing so too THE HOLY GHOST RESERVES NOTHING. He dwells in us who believe and teaches us to devote ourselves to God without reserve from the very beginning of our Christian life. It is the measure in which we do so that makes us practically valuable to God.

In this way, CHRIST VALUES US ALL DIFFERENTLY, AND ACCORDING TO OUR DEVOTEDNESS TO HIM. The more we grow in grace, and make progress in the knowledge of God, and the more we are formed in Christ, the greater our capability of devotedness to Him, and our practical value in His service and testimony.

From the very start of our Christian life we have some value. We read : " And if it be from a month old even unto five years old, then thy estimation shall be of the male five shekels of silver, and for the female three shekels." So THE YOUNGEST BELIEVER HAS HIS VALUE. He may be worth five shekels or three, according as he is strong or weak in his Christian constitution. The thought of male and female must not be taken to mean a brother or a sister, but as indicating a strong vessel for Christ or a weak one. Some young sisters may be spiritually stronger and of more value than brothers of a similar age in the



divine life. But even a very young one, only a month old in the things of Christ, has more value than Christless millionaires in the world who, if totally ignorant of Christ and giving Him no place in their lives, have no value at all. The silver shekel speaks of redemption (see Num. iii. 45-51). The youngest Christian is regarded as one of "the first-born ones" redeemed to serve the Lord for ever. Surely the earliest thought that the Spirit instils into a new-born soul is to devote itself wholly and unreservedly to the service of Him who died for Him and rose again. This thought of NO RESERVE is what the Holy Ghost in us ever keeps before us. He is never satisfied till we come to it fully. An old brother, who looking back feels how much he has failed in devotedness to Christ wrote some fifty years ago in the freshness of early love :

O Lord, take all I have,  
I nothing now would save,  
For all is Thine ;  
Take, Lord, my life and health,  
Whate'er I have of wealth,  
My time, my goods, myself,  
For Thou art mine.

In a way this was good, whatever element of self confidence and ignorance of his own heart it might betray, yet it shows that the thought the Holy Spirit gave him so early in life was to give the Lord his whole heart and to SERVE HIM WITHOUT RESERVE. A young ironmaster connected with a great iron firm wrote many years ago to a dear young Christian friend : " You will probably be with Christ before I am, but whether I go first or you, all will be well and I am 'learning to follow Christ without reserve.' " The same week he was in a pit examining a patent, and seeing there would be an explosion, told his man to go up the

ladder first, whilst he himself, too late to escape, was caught by the flames and horribly burnt and died in a few hours! How happy that his one thought had been to follow the Lord without reserve!

We see, too, that there is room for growth in the divine life, so that between the ages of five years to twenty years in the Christian life the value increases to twenty shekels or ten shekels according to one's spiritual strength. It is a wonderful thought that Christ takes notice of this increase in value and estimates us accordingly. What splendid progress Timothy made in this way, and how valuable he ultimately became to the Apostle Paul!

But there must be no settling down as if we had reached the goal. As Paul puts it: "Not as though I had already attained either were already perfect; but I follow after . . . I press toward the mark for the prize." For verse 3 shows that the normal value from twenty years old to sixty in Christian life is fifty shekels if a male, i.e., one of spiritual vigour, and 30 shekels if a weaker vessel. The object of ministry and the work of the Spirit in us has ever in view that we should "all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." Then only can we come to the full value that Christ has in His mind for us. Surely men of spiritual stature and value are more needed now than ever in the Church's history.

Growth in years does not necessarily mean growth in grace. It is possible that some older brothers and sisters have so little grown in Christ that they have only the age and value of babes. It is of little account that others value us highly if Christ Himself does not.

Then it is possible, alas, to **DECLINE IN VALUE** as in the case of Demas who loved this present world and left the company of the apostle. We read of the male from sixty years old and above having the value of only fifteen shekels or in the case of a weaker one, the female, only ten shekels. This I think points to decline, to the tendency in us as we get older to settle down in comfort and enjoy ourselves at our ease, and give up active part in the testimony and in the Christian conflict. Such declension might even lead as in the case of Judas to actual apostasy, though of course in his case, he never was truly devoted to Christ, but to money, and this ruined him.

Normally the Christian **NEVER GROWS OLD** or according to the type, above sixty, but is spiritually stronger and stronger, and his last day is his best. Look at the Apostle Paul for instance. He proves himself at the very close of his life of the greatest value and able to stand alone before the emperor and to witness boldly for the Lord. The Apostle John, at a great age (perhaps one hundred), wrote that last and wonderful Gospel which specially presents the Person of Christ, God's only-begotten Son. Surely his value had increased rather than decreased, and his devotedness to Christ was as fresh as ever. Caleb, too, at eighty-five, was as strong as at forty years of age, and expelled the giants.

Certainly in Christendom generally decline and decay have come in and even open apostasy, but in the midst of it God has His devoted and faithful servants, who have no thought of giving in or slackening off, but rather desire to increase in devotedness to Christ, and to reserve nothing.

The question for most of us is, not **HOW MUCH WE DEVOTE TO CHRIST**, but **HOW MUCH**

**WE RESERVE.** The real hindrance to our spiritual progress lies in what we reserve. Many have given up much for Christ, such as their business or their profession, and perhaps people said of them that they had made great sacrifices for Christ, yet all the time they may have held something back. Perhaps they were unwilling to **SACRIFICE THEMSELVES** or what was to them **THEIR VERY LIFE**.

Now in the case of the burnt offering, the offerer had to flay the bullock and to "cut it into his pieces." This was to bring to light the inward parts. All this speaks of Christ the only absolutely spotless victim. He could open, as it were, His inward being, His innermost thoughts to God and show there was nothing reserved, as when on the cross He called out: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" He opened His bosom to God, if I may so speak, to show that there was in that bosom **NO PART DARK**, nor anything in His inner life and thoughts to give God a reason for forsaking Him. His whole life and being had ever been devoted to God without reserve. In the case of the burnt offering, the inwards and legs were washed with water, in order to make them typically what Christ was actually—perfectly clean and pure. He was what He said, and said what He was. (See John viii. 25, New Trans.) "I am altogether that which I also say to you." It is good to search our hearts and see whether we are allowing anything false or foolish and which grieves the Spirit and prevents Him having His way with us. "Search me," said David, "and know my heart, try me and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Ps. cxxxix. 23, 24).

**THE SKIN OF THE BURNT OFFERING** was

given to the priest (Lev. vii. 8.), no doubt for clothing. The first mention of a thing in Scripture gives the clue to its meaning, and God clothed Adam and Eve with skins. The beautiful outer life of Christ so perfectly in correspondence with His inner life, is the moral dress with which the Holy Ghost delights to clothe the Christian priesthood. When there is nothing held back in our hearts, and no false way, priestly service is our holy joy and without effort we can worship God and delight ourselves in Him.

The skin of the burnt offering was the only part of the burnt offering that was reserved. The skin of the sin offering, typical of the outer life of the sinner, his external clothing, as also the whole victim, was burnt under judgment outside the camp. Man's outward appearance cannot really hide from God what he really is, and is no true clothing: no matter how respectable he may seem to be, every bit of him must go in judgment, and for us has done in the cross.

The blood of the burnt offering was sprinkled round about the altar, and then we read that, the parts of the victim having been placed on the altar, "the priest shall BURN ALL ON THE ALTAR, to be a burnt sacrifice, an offering made by fire of a sweet savour unto the Lord."

What infinite delight for God to see HIS SON OFFERING HIMSELF TO GOD WITHOUT RESERVE! But the offering was for *us*, and we are in all its value before God. We are identified with it, and as believers have put our hand on the head of the offering as it were, and have thus made ourselves one with it in the eyes of God. But ought we not to do more? As to ourselves, OUGHT WE NOT TO PUT ALL ON THE ALTAR and devote *ourselves* wholly to God, and

thus be IN ACCORD WITH THE WHOLE BURNT OFFERING OF CHRIST? If He gave all for us, and we delight in His so doing, is it consistent for us to reserve and hold back anything which we ought to let go in order to be wholly a delight and pleasure to God the rest of our lives? The most joyful people on earth are those who seek to reserve nothing and allow nothing false and evil below to give the lie to the profession of godliness above. Would we really like to think of Christ putting all on the altar of sacrifice to God in order to have us in infinite blessing with Himself, and at the same time be consciously reserving something false or wilful in our inner life? If we put our hand on the Head of the Offering as identified with it in all the blessing His sacrifice brings to us, ought we not also to make it evident to God that in mind and heart we are in full accord with that holy offering, and would keep nothing back that ought to be surrendered? Does not the Holy Spirit in us continually prompt us to put all on the altar? Our life should be, like a whole burnt offering, WHOLLY DEVOTED TO GOD. Surely, "with such sacrifices God is well pleased." Then it will be evident, to those who appreciate Christ, that we are clothed, as it were, with the skin of the Burnt Offering, Christ Himself, and that we resemble the One Who gave Himself for us. As Paul says: "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."

The Hebrew verb for "making a singular vow" is used elsewhere in Scripture for "doing wondrous things," as in Ps. lxxii. 18, and surely no offering was ever so wonderful as that of Christ Himself, and wonderful, too, would be our testimony if we were wholly devoted to God.

It may be that we feel ourselves to be poorer than the valuation that Christ has made of us (Lev. xxvii. 8). And if so, no doubt we feel it is our own fault. An Israelite who was poor had probably neglected to look after the inheritance that God had given him, and thus had not reaped the fruits of the ground as he might have done. Is it not so perhaps with many of us? We have had immense advantages, have heard precious ministry of Christ, have been to many Christian meetings, but have not gained by all these privileges because we neglected prayer and that exercise of soul which our spiritually richer brethren have gone through that they might really turn to profit the precious things they have heard and that they might be made good in their souls. Alas! how many brought up in Christian homes with all the light of Christ around them, have neglected their souls and have not followed the light, but have occupied themselves with temporal things and even worldly and evil things, and are in consequence, even if converted, much poorer than others as regards their knowledge of Christ and the means they ought to have of serving Him and devoting themselves to Him!

Well, thank God, it is not too late, we can GO TO THE PRIEST and tell the Lord, that we are poorer than His valuation of us, and that our means are small, and that we are to blame for our spiritual poverty, that it is owing to our neglect of the privileges by which we have been surrounded and that, perhaps, from our childhood upwards. This frank confession touches the heart of the Priest, of Christ Himself, and HE WILL VALUE US AFRESH and ACCORDING TO OUR MEANS and in this way we are encouraged. We find it is not too late to put all on the altar, and to devote

ourselves body and soul and spirit to the Lord, without reserve. Then it is we **MAKE RAPID PROGRESS**, and it may be come to the valuation which He had previously put upon us but which through our neglect we had not been able to answer to. He may even give us some gift for service ; we shall be, as doubtless we all desire, of far more value to Christ than ever in our lives, and a greater blessing to others. It is no honour to be a poor brother spiritually. May we seek to be rich toward God and thus able to devote much to Him !

The thought of **THE BURNT OFFERING HAS A GREAT PLACE IN SCRIPTURE**, and blessing always flows from it when rightly offered. The **FIRST MENTION OF A BURNT OFFERING** was when Noah came out of the Ark. He built an altar, and offered burnt offerings, and the Lord smelled **A SWEET SAVOUR** and said in His heart, "I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake." Also He **BLESSED** Noah and His sons and established His covenant with them.

Again **ABRAHAM** when called to take **HIS SON, HIS ONLY SON, WHOM HE LOVED** and **OFFER HIM FOR A BURNT OFFERING** on a certain mountain, **OBEYED** and got to the point of stretching out his hand and taking the knife to slay his son, when God intervened out of heaven saying : "Lay not thine hand upon the lad . . . for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing **THOU HAST NOT WITHHELD THY SON, THINE ONLY SON FROM ME.**" Then on seeing a ram caught in a thicket by its horns, he offered it up for a burnt offering **IN THE STEAD OF HIS SON**, and called the place **JEHOVAH-JIREH**, "the Lord will provide." How wonderful is God ! "He spared not His own Son, but



delivered Him up for us all," but He excused Abraham the terrible sorrow of sacrificing *his* son and provided a substitute, and He blessed him and his seed and confirmed His promise by an oath. How great is the blessing that comes from the burnt offering! Abraham had not withheld His only son whom he loved, and proved beyond dispute that he loved God more than anything, and would do His will whatever the cost.

Again in Exod. xxiv. 5 we read that **YOUNG MEN OFFERED BURNT OFFERINGS** at the time when Moses told the people all the words of the law and sprinkled the blood, which typified atonement, on the altar, on the book of the covenant and on the people, and immediately after the nobles of Israel had the privilege of seeing God and eating and drinking in His presence.

Again, in a day of Israel's utter weakness and bondage to the Philistines, **SAMUEL** offered a sucking lamb for **A BURNT OFFERING WHOLLY UNTO THE LORD** and cried to Him. The Philistines drew near to battle, but **THE LORD THUNDERED WITH A GREAT THUNDER** and they were completely routed and smitten and dared not invade Israel's coasts during Samuel's days.

**DAVID**, too, offered burnt offerings at the beginning of his reign on the glorious occasion of bringing the Ark to Zion; also at almost the end of his reign when he saw the sword of judgment, through his own failure, about to fall on Jerusalem the city of God, he cried to God to judge him and his house instead of the city, and at God's word built an altar and offered burnt offerings, at his own expense, and thus **SAVED THE CITY** from judgment, and chose that very spot as the site for Jehovah's temple! What marvellous grace! And all on the ground of the burnt offering!

Then, after having got together for JEHOVAH'S PALACE more gold and silver and precious stones, etc., than ever known before or since, he summoned all Israel and called upon them to bless the Lord, and thousands of burnt offerings were offered. At the same time Solomon was anointed king, and "sat on the throne of Jehovah instead of David his father," and thus ended David's remarkable reign.

SOLOMON also at the beginning of his reign went to the brazen altar and OFFERED A THOUSAND BURNT OFFERINGS and *in that night* GOD APPEARED TO HIM and said, "Ask what I shall give thee." He asked for wisdom, and became the wisest of all men.

We read, too, that HEZEKIAH AFTER RESTORING THE TEMPLE AND THE SERVICE OF GOD, gathered all Israel together and that WHEN THE BURNT OFFERING BEGAN, THE SONG OF THE LORD BEGAN and all the congregation worshipped and the singers sang, and the trumpeters sounded until the burnt offering was finished, and the king and all present bowed and worshipped. The people likewise consecrated themselves to the Lord and brought innumerable burnt offerings.

Lastly, we read in Ezra iii. 3, how the children of Israel returned from Babylon began well, for they BUILT THE ALTAR OF THE GOD OF ISRAEL AND OFFERED BURNT OFFERINGS in their fear of the people of the countries around them, and thus sought THE PROTECTION OF THE LORD. Safe indeed are those who are protected by the sacrifice of Christ and seek to be in accord with it.

Not only so, but one truly devoted to the Lord sanctifies HIS HOUSE FOR THE LORD, and excludes the world from it and desires Christ to

be honoured there, and Christ values it in the measure in which he does so.

Yea, he may even redeem his house, adding "one fifth" of the value. He can thus make it "his own" but to hold only for the Lord Who entrusts Him with it. In doing so, the Lord will gain still more, and the house will be known like that in Bethany of old as RESERVED FOR THE LORD. What an honour! May the Lord help us to devote all we have and are to Him, and to serve Him without reserve!

It is a serious moment. The Lord is coming, godlessness and apostasy are increasing on every side. What an opportunity for us to devote ourselves fully to the Lord, allowing no dark spot within and hating every false way. Thus shall we shine as lights in the darkness for the benefit of all around—living witnesses to Jesus until He comes. May He help us so to do for His Name's sake!

### WITHOUT RESERVE.

*Tune* : ("Let there be light.")

What love to give Thy Son,  
O God, Thine "only One,"

Without reserve!

To send Him from on high,  
Upon the cross to die,  
As sons to bring us nigh

Thyself to serve!

And, Lord, Thy love untold  
Could not Thy life withhold,

Must lay it down,

That we from judgment free  
Might give ourselves to Thee,  
And ever with Thee be,

Thy joy and crown!

That we with Thee might live,  
O Lord, Thy love could give  
Thy precious blood !  
Thyself Thou couldst not spare,  
For Thou wouldst have us there,  
Thy Home of love to share,  
And dwell with God.

And now that precious Blood  
Poured out before Thy God  
On Calvary's Tree,  
Demands us as Thine own,  
To serve Thyself alone,  
Nor ever Thee disown,  
Nor turn from Thee.

May we, Lord Jesus, serve  
Thyself without reserve  
As bought by blood,  
Thy spirit calls that we  
Should, thus, devoted be,  
A sacrifice like Thee  
And live to God.

H. D'A. C.

## THE BRIDE OF CHRIST.

Revelation xxii. 17 : And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. xix. 7 : The marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready, and to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white : for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.

Verse 9 : Blessed are they which are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb.

xxi. 9 : Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. And he . . . showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God : and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal.

Verses 1-3 : And I saw a new heaven and a new earth . . . and the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband, And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God.

**I** WANT to call your attention, with the Lord's help, to THE BRIDE OF CHRIST, and that from five different points of view : (1) The Bride in her EXPECTATION of the coming of the Bridegroom ; (2) The Bride in her PREPARATION for the marriage ; (3) The Bride in her EXALTATION at the marriage supper ; (4) The Bride in her ADMINISTRATION as the holy

city in the coming day ; (5) And lastly, the Bride in REST AND SATISFACTION in the eternal state, when the new heaven and new earth have come in.

And first let us look at the Bride in her EXPECTATION OF THE RETURN OF THE BRIDEGROOM. "The Spirit and the Bride say Come." This beautiful demand for Christ to come, is owing to the sweet way in which He presents Himself at the close of this book : "I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the Churches." Even in Glory He still retains His beautiful human Name of JESUS ! It was the Name given to Him when He became Man and was born into this world—the Babe of Bethlehem. It was the Name whereby He was known in His blessed service here amongst men, when He preached in Galilee and healed all who came to Him. He bore this Name on Calvary's cross when He died for sinners. And when He rose from the dead in triumph and glory, His disciples identified Him as the same Jesus Who had so loved them and blessed them when here in human life, the life He laid down for us. He was risen to die no more, in a new and eternal condition of manhood, Man for ever, and still, blessed be God ! with the same precious human Name—JESUS ! Yea, when He ascended to the right hand of God and sent down the Holy Ghost, the testimony of the Holy Ghost through the Apostles was, "THIS JESUS hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses", and, "God hath

made THAT SAME JESUS Whom ye have crucified both Lord and Christ". Then, in His last word to us, through His beloved disciple John, He speaks of Himself as: 'I JESUS'. It means, 'Jehovah the Saviour'. The faithful and merciful Jehovah, the God of the Old Testament saints, has become Man, and thus has come near to us, yea, nearer than any man, near enough to die for us, to save us, and to bless us as no one else could do. There is no name attracts a child like the Name of Jesus, and to the most aged Christian there is no name so sweet as 'Jesus'.

" 'Tis just Thy Name of Jesus wins a child,  
And bears him on all through the desert wild;  
The aged lisp that Name with dying breath,  
And prove its sweetness in the hour of death!"

Then Jesus further adds: "I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning Star". He is the root of David, for He is God, and He raised up David to be a type and figure of Himself. He is the offspring of David as born of Mary, to fulfil all the promises made to David as David's Son, Who is to sit on David's throne and bring in a kingdom which should have no end. Soon will Jesus rise as "the Sun of righteousness with healing in His wings" and will set up His kingdom in Glory over this whole earth, but to us He is THE BRIGHT AND MORNING STAR. The great service of the morning star is to announce that the sun will soon rise. It is only seen a little before the dawn, and disappears soon after the sun is risen. Christ is

to His people the Morning Star, the trusty har-  
 binger of the day, and will come for us before the  
 Day dawns and take us to Himself in the air,  
 that we may come with Him when He comes to  
 reign. Well may we ask : WHAT RESPONSE  
 IS THERE TO THESE SWEET WORDS OF  
 JESUS ?—The Spirit and the Bride say, COME !  
 The Holy Spirit Who dwells down here in us who  
 believe, is ever faithful to Christ Who sent Him.  
 He must testify to Christ, and He produces in the  
 hearts of His own, true love to Christ, and a  
 longing for His return. The Bride is the Church  
 seen in her faithful love to Christ the absent  
 Bridegroom. The Spirit has formed it and indwelt  
 it from Pentecost till this day. It is the Spirit  
 that produces the longing for Christ and that  
 engages His people with Christ's interests until  
 He comes. THERE ARE TWO CHARACTER-  
 ISTICS OF THE BRIDE IF FAITHFUL TO  
 CHRIST : (1) She is occupied with His interests  
 in His absence ; (2) She longs for His return.  
 Take an illustration : A soldier is called up to go  
 to the war. He is engaged to a loved one in the  
 town where he lives, and has a business which  
 is much opposed by others who hate him.  
 He entrusts the business to his loved one  
 and urges her to look after it in his absence,  
 and to be ever expecting his return. If she  
 was a true bride how she would take up his  
 interests in his absence, and promote them in  
 the midst of all the opposition to them ! How,  
 too, she would keep her heart true to the absent



loved one and eagerly watch for his return ! What joy for the soldier, and what satisfaction for her, if on his return from the war he found the business had prospered wonderfully in spite of much opposition, and that she had been faithful and true to him ! So it will be with Christ if, when He comes, He finds those who are true in their love to Him and in their devotedness to His interests in a world which opposes and hates Him. How sad if the soldier found his business had gone down to nothing, and his betrothed one had left him and fixed her love on another ! So it will be with the false professing Church or Bride, that is the whole Christian profession, called in Scripture "the great whore", which has set its heart on the world and courts its approval and has none of that love to Christ which marked the beginning of Christianity. Christ will utterly refuse it, as we see in Rev. iii. : " I will spue thee out of my mouth ". But Christ has His true ones in the midst of all that is false, though they are hidden and little known. It is they who form the Bride, the true Church. Amongst such the Spirit is working, gathering up the hearts of those who belong to Christ and enabling them to unite in one heartfelt cry : Come ! And surely every one who thus responds to Jesus encourages others to do the same : " And let him that heareth say, Come ! " If this is so with us, His interests will be paramount, we shall love what He loves, and live where He finds His present Home, amongst those who love Him, and keep His word, and walk

in truth. What joy to be found thus when He comes ! Now let us consider—

**THE BRIDE IN HER PREPARATION FOR THE MARRIAGE.** For after the Lord has come into the air, and the saints have been caught up to meet Him and be for ever with the Lord, then after a short period, in which terrible judgements are poured out on this earth, will Christ return to set up His kingdom in power and glory. But before this will take place in heaven the marriage of the Lamb, as to which we read : “ And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia : for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to Him : for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready ”.

Now when does the Bride make herself ready ? Surely it is at **THE JUDGEMENT SEAT OF CHRIST**. The Scripture says : “ We must all appear (that is, be manifested), before the judgement seat of Christ ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad ”. And again, Rom. xiv. 10 : “ We shall all stand before the judgement seat of Christ ”, and verse 12 : “ Every one of us shall give account of himself to God ”. It is then that the righteous acts will all come to light of which the Scripture speaks in Rev. xix. 8 : “ To her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white :

for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints". The word is in the plural, 'righteousnesses' or 'righteous acts' of saints. The fine linen, clean and white, will manifest all that has been of Christ and for Christ, all that will meet with the approval of Christ in that solemn day when **THE WHOLE OF OUR LIFE WILL COME INTO REVIEW**. Serious though that day will be, don't think that we shall be frightened, for it will not take place till we have been raised from the dead, or changed and glorified. We shall no longer be in mortal bodies with the flesh in us with all its inclinations to evil. We shall be in the very image of Christ Himself, and our very bodies will be like to His body of glory. We shall have 'boldness in the day of judgement' because 'as He is so are we'. We shall be "clothed upon with our house which is from heaven", and our very bodies will show that we belong to Glory. Then, too, **ON THE JUDGEMENT SEAT WILL BE THE ONE WHO GAVE HIMSELF FOR US—OUR ADORABLE SAVIOUR**. We shall be manifested before One Who loved us enough to die for us and bear our judgement on the cross, and Who alone is our righteousness and title to Glory. It will be no question then of our title to heaven, but of our title to reward for faithfulness and righteousness in our walk down here. The righteous acts of the saints are the fine linen with which the Bride is arrayed. It is not quite the same thing as the 'wedding garment' of the parable in Matt. xxii. 11. There the wedding

garment is the free gift of righteousness effected for us in the death of Jesus, and belongs to all who believe in Him. But here it is righteousness coming out practically in us, in righteous acts down here, and manifesting that we are righteous before God. It is indeed likewise all of grace, for we read, 'to her it was granted' that she should be thus arrayed, and yet the acts are looked upon as hers. Nor is it exactly the same thing as 'the best robe' in which the prodigal is said to be clothed (Luke xv.). There it is the beauty of Christ wrought in us by the power of God's Spirit so that Christ is formed in us and characterizes us. Here are **THE BEAUTIFUL ACTS OF THE SAINTS ALL BROUGHT TO LIGHT BEFORE THE JUDGEMENT SEAT OF CHRIST.** He alone knows their value, and He so loves us that He will forget none, not even a cup of cold water given in the name of a disciple. He will surprise the saints by what He noticed in their service and life of love. "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, **YE HAVE DONE IT UNTO ME**" (Matt. xxvi. 40).

He will also faithfully manifest the evil we have done or the wrong acts, and with the utmost justice, for He is the 'righteous One' and **HIS VERDICT IS ABSOLUTELY TRUE** and **TRUSTWORTHY.** Also His love could not make any mistake in His judgement of those for whom He died.

It will be manifest, then, that we were in

the thoughts of God before the world was, and the objects of eternal counsels before sin came in, chosen in Christ before the ages of time, and marked out to be God's sons in glory, holy and blameless and before Him in love, suitable companions for Christ Himself, and all in His image and likeness. He will make it manifest how that sin came in and that no sooner was man created than he fell into ruin, and that redemption was necessary if God was to carry out His wonderful plans. It will come out in all its wonderful meaning what God did in sending His Son to die for us and effect redemption through His blood. Then He will show us what we did before He found us in all our misery and sin ; He will show us how He found us, and saved us, and gave us His Spirit that we might live for His pleasure here. Then He will give us to see exactly what we have done and how we have walked since His precious grace reached us. All the private acts of our life will come into review, acts which show so clearly the inward feelings and thoughts of the heart. He will not do this with a view to our condemnation, for there will be nothing about us then to condemn, we shall then be entirely like Him, holy as He is holy, righteous as He is righteous. He will do it to magnify His grace in our eyes. Surely we shall never know how great His grace is as we shall know it then, when our whole history is opened out before Him with the utmost detail. Every act brought to light will bring to light also His marvellous grace and mercy. If He shows us

how we failed and why we failed, He will at the same time show us what He did when we failed, how He sought us and brought us to repentance and restored us. It will come to light how He lifted us up when we were fallen, and how some of those falls which caused us so many tears and brought us low before God were allowed or used of God to preserve us from falling in a still more terrible way.

THOUGH IT IS THE JUDGEMENT SEAT OF CHRIST, HE WILL NOT JUDGE US AS IF WE WERE CRIMINALS, but rather make manifest all our acts and ways in the presence of God's love and in connection with His wonderful acts and ways towards us. He will not regard us as sinners, for as such we died when Christ died for us ; He will regard us as like Himself, whilst at the same time manifest what in our lives was pleasing and what was not. He will show us where we lost and where we gained, what brought pleasure to God and what did not.

I do not think He will expose us before others, but rather to ourselves, and that too to magnify His grace and love which never failed us, however much we failed Him, but served us until the end. It will all come to light, where we have misunderstood and failed our brethren, and where they have been wrong in their treatment of us. We shall not begin eternity with false thoughts about our brethren, nor will they have false thoughts about us any more. ALL MISUNDERSTANDING BETWEEN BRETHREN WILL BE

SETTLED FOR EVER, never to be revived. If I have been hard on my brethren and have misjudged them, He will show me exactly how I failed even when I thought I was standing for the truth; and so it will be with them, if they have treated me in a similar way. He will vindicate those who have really stood for God in the Spirit of Christ, and He will show where we failed to do so, and perhaps thought we were standing for God when all the time we were acting in self-will and deceiving ourselves. It will be a searching moment which none can escape, but His grace and love will carry us through. What an incentive to live and walk now for the pleasure of God, seeing that soon all the beautiful and righteous acts of the saints will come out in the fine linen, clean and white, with which the Bride will be arrayed! May He give us all grace so to do!

This brings us to the third part of our subject:—

THE BRIDE IN HER EXALTATION AT THE MARRIAGE SUPPER. The waiting time is over and “the marriage of the Lamb is come”. Very little is said about it, but it is evidently a scene of ecstatic delight and joy. The Bridegroom, Christ Himself, has got His Bride at last after all this time of waiting, and the Bride has Christ, who gave Himself for her! Surely the joy is too great to describe and will amply compensate for all the suffering here. One thing is specially mentioned: “He said unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb.” So we see that besides the

Bridegroom and the Bride there are **DISTINGUISHED GUESTS** at the supper which is held in honour of the marriage. Who are they? They are not the Church, for the Church is the Bride whose marriage is being publicly celebrated. They are the saints of the Old Testament days, the saints who belonged to God from Adam to Christ, and who, having died in faith, are raised to see Him in Whom they believed, and be with Him and take their part in heavenly glory and blessing. They must be distinguished from the Bride, the special company gathered out of this world since Jesus died and rose again. Any others, too, who die for the testimony after the Church is taken to heaven, will be raised again and doubtless be amongst those guests. Who could count the vast company of privileged ones who form the Bride, or the myriads of saints who are the happy guests who have the honour of being invited to the greatest feast ever held, the supper which celebrates the marriage of the Lamb. At that supper will be present, either as the Bride or as invited guests; **THE WHOLE COMPANY OF HEAVENLY SAINTS REDEEMED BY THE BLOOD OF THE LAMB.** Amongst the guests will be Abel, and Enoch, and Noah, and Abraham, and all who ever looked for Christ to come and whose faith was in Him. They, now raised from the dead and glorified, will have their part in the joy of the marriage supper. But nearer and dearer to Christ than all will be the Bride that was



attached to Him in the time of His rejection. What joy for us to be there ! Still more, what joy for Christ to have us there, for He it is Who brought it all about !

Now let us look at THE BRIDE IN HER ADMINISTRATION. Shortly after the marriage supper, John sees her in the form of THE HOLY CITY, JERUSALEM, DESCENDING OUT OF HEAVEN FROM GOD, HAVING THE GLORY OF GOD. As a city she represents the new administration, or system of politics, which will make the whole world happy and all the nations sing when Christ comes out of heaven and we come with Him to reign over this earth. This Holy City descending from heaven sets forth THE ONLY BEAUTIFUL POLITICAL SYSTEM that this world will ever know. THE ADMINISTRATION WILL BE PERFECT. This is shown by the fact that the number 12 occurs twelve times in the description of the city, if we include the height of the wall, which is a multiple of twelve. The number 12 indicates in Scripture perfection in administration. The glory of God and the full light of Christ will beautifully illuminate all the nations by means of this transparent or translucent city of pure gold, whose light is like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal. The wounded nations will be healed by the leaves from the tree of life which is within the city and yields twelve manner of fruits, new fruit every month. All the groans and sighs of this poor down-trodden world so long oppressed

by sin and Satan, and the proud will of man, will be hushed, and will have a marvellous answer in that Day of joy. The myriads of saints that form this heavenly city will radiate all the love and goodness and grace of God for the benefit of all the nations. It will be **THE MOST BEAUTIFUL LUMINARY EVER SEEN IN THE HEAVENS**. In this way Christ Himself will express all that God is, and that through myriads of saints, through whom this beautiful light will pass unhinderedly for the good and blessing of every human being. For the first time since the fall of man there will be **UNIVERSAL GLADNESS**. All the good of God will be distributed through these pure rays of light, and remove the self-will and unbelief and hardness of heart against God, and produce **UNIVERSAL PRAISE** to Him Who has been so long dishonoured by this world. There are twelve gates—that is, perfect access to the City on every side, just as Christ to-day is accessible to all men. **THE CITY IS OPEN FOR THE BLESSING OF THE WHOLE WORLD**. Every precious trait of Christ is there set forth in the precious stones, and the exceeding beauty of Christ is seen in every gate, for the twelve gates are twelve pearls. Seven things are excluded, for the Holy City is absolutely **EXCLUSIVE OF EVIL** and of everything that could come between us and God. There is no temple therein, nor are there great natural lights there. There is no place for the pride and greatness of man. The throne of God

and the Lamb is in it, and the pure river of water of life flows from it, bringing life wherever it goes. This millennial scene of unparalleled glory is, however, only introductory to a still more wonderful order of things when the present heaven and earth will pass away and a new heaven and a new earth come in.

This brings us to consider the Bride from the fifth and last aspect, namely, **THE BRIDE IN REST AND SATISFACTION IN THE ETERNAL STATE.** The heaven and earth are entirely new, nothing like them has ever yet been seen. The Holy City, however, is there, but with a new character of administration, for she is a **NEW JERUSALEM.** Her service will no longer be as in the millennium, to subdue evil and soothe a sorrowing and groaning creation with the love of God. There will be no evil to subdue, no groans to hush. Surely her new service will be to distribute through eternal ages all the blessedness of God for the constant delight of the universe. She is characterized as "Coming down from God out of heaven" in all she does, and she is viewed as **PREPARED AS A BRIDE ADORNED FOR HER HUSBAND.** She has lost none of her beauty through the long millennial reign, and is prepared and adorned for her Husband. Christ is no longer to her the Bridegroom, but the Husband with Whom she will be in rest and satisfaction for ever. This is what she is to Christ. She has, too, a wonderful place in reference to God, for she is **THE TABERNACLE OF GOD**

whereby God will be eternally with men and will 'tabernacle' or dwell with them, when "they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God". How beautifully and tenderly will He wipe away all tears from their eyes, and death, sorrow, crying, and pain will be no more. The godless are left with Satan in the lake of fire, and all the godly are with God. Nearer than all will be the Bride, the Tabernacle of God, in which He will come near to men and tabernacle with them. We shall enjoy through all the ages the nearest place to God of all the families of blessing. What a hope is ours! May we live and walk in the power of it until we are there!

H. D'A. C

# THE ASSEMBLY OF GOD.

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BEING NOTES OF AN ADDRESS,  
REVISED AND ENLARGED.

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I Cor. x. 14-17, 21, xi. 20-26, xii. 1, 7-21, 27, 31,  
xiii. 1-3, xiv. 1-6, 15-19, 23-26.

**W**HAT I want to speak about is **The Assembly of God.** The Corinthians had failed to see its true character; hence the question is raised in xi. 22, "Despise ye the church of God?" The Church or Assembly is the most remarkable organization and company of people ever found down here. It is built by Christ Himself, and is God's Assembly. It is a more wonderful Assembly than the Congregation of the Children of Israel in the wilderness, and has far greater privileges than Israel, even when the Cloud of Glory rested on the Tabernacle, round which they were encamped. No other nation ever had Jehovah's presence in their midst, as Israel had. But the Jewish system was typical of a far greater one. They never could have **the Real Presence** of Christ in their midst, as it is our privilege to have. They had the *type* of it, and it was very glorious, but we

have the *antitype*, which is far greater. Surely the Christian system must be far greater than the Jewish. If they had the Cloud of Glory, we have what answers to it and far surpasses it, the presence, the real presence of a living, heavenly and glorified Christ in the midst of His own. The religious world has counterfeited it, and all sorts of false ideas about it are to be found to-day. What is our privilege to have is not the superstitious idea of the real presence in the Bread, nor is it the presence of a Christ dying on the cross, for no such Christ exists now, and 'Christ after the flesh' can be known no more; it is a **Living Heavenly and Glorified Christ**, whose presence is realised in the midst of His own, and who cannot fail those who love Him, and who seek to be faithful to Him, and who are truly gathered to His Name.

In 1 Cor. xi. we have presented to us the congregational side of things, the coming together of the saints "in assembly" to eat the Lord's Supper.

But before that, we have in chapter x. **the Preparation for the Supper**. There are brought out **the Conditions of Christian Fellowship**, the claims of the Lord's table. There must be faithfulness as regards the fellowship. We cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. Christianity

arose in the very spot where idolatry was, for Corinth was a grossly idolatrous city, there was no hiding of their shame, it was a terrible state of things. Into that city came the Apostle with the preaching of the Son of God. There sinners were converted and Christianity was established. Christ was written in the hearts of believers, and they became the Epistle of Christ. And now, if they were to enjoy Christian privileges, it was absolutely necessary that they should refuse and shut out what was contrary to Christ. Otherwise the Christian fellowship would be compromised. The world has cast out God's Son, and will not look at Him, nor have anything to do with Him. Oh that all young people would remember that! And it was under such circumstances that God called people out, and made them, so to speak, go in for Christ, go out to Him, and cast in their lot with Him. What bound them together was God's Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, despised and rejected on earth, but honoured and glorified in heaven. And what greater bond for fellowship could we have? I would rather be in Christian fellowship, with the light of God's Son, even if I were the poorest and most unknown upon earth, than I would be the greatest and most popular man in the world and have no true knowledge of God and of His Son, Jesus

Christ, our Lord. Many of the world's greatest men have not the faintest idea of what God has effected in sending His Son, nor have they any idea of that amazing world of Glory which God is about to bring in by Christ. How little men think that after the world-wide act of putting out God's Son on Calvary's cross, God not only raised Him from the dead, but has formed a fellowship, the fellowship of His Son, to protect as it were His interests in a world opposed to Him and that we may enjoy all the blessed fruits of His work in dying for us! But this fellowship has its **Conditions**, namely, that we are true to His death, **in Accord with His Death**, and do not seek to live in the world out of which He has died. Are we trying to find life where Jesus found a cross and a grave? "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion (fellowship) of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion (fellowship) of the body of Christ?" Yes, it is the fellowship of His body and of His blood, and therefore we must be true to the death of Christ. This is what we express in taking the cup, etc., that we are in accord with the death of Christ, in the fellowship of His death. There is not a single point of agreement between Christ and the world. I must then associate myself with



Christ. If He has actually gone out of the world, then I must go out morally, for the Christian cannot associate himself with the world. Christ has been cast out by it as worthless, and we are cast out with Him. Of course, morally or in spirit He never was in the world or of it, though in body He was in the world as being down here on earth, in the days of His flesh. He took no part in the politics, religion, or pleasures of this world. He was always outside, and we are called to go out to Him, outside "the camp," bearing His reproach. In this 10th chapter we get the absolute necessity of our being true to the death of Christ. He does not say: *Ye ought not*, but "*ye cannot* drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons." It is impossible to drink the two at one and the same time. It is impossible to be sitting at both tables at the same time, to be feasting on and enjoying the Lord's things and at the same time to be feasting on the things of the god of this world. Which cup, then, are we to drink, and which table are we to partake of? Christian fellowship, then, involves intense separation. But what makes it so sweet is, it is the fellowship of His death—His blood, His body.

That leads us to the next chapter, where we get **the Coming together in Assembly**, to

**partake of the Lord's Supper**, and where we look in a special way to have **the Presence of Christ**. The Lord gave us this great privilege in the night in which He was betrayed. He gave it then to the disciples, but He gave it again from heaven to the Apostle Paul, as he himself tells us: "I received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you." All this shows the importance of the Supper in the eyes of Christ. How wonderful that in the very world where Jesus has been cast out, God should by His divine power make it possible for us to come together. And the Lord encourages us to do so. "This do in remembrance of Me." He as much as says, "I count on your remembering Me, and I give you this simple means of calling Me to mind." In Acts xx. we find that the disciples were in the habit of coming together on the first day of the week—the resurrection day. They start the week in this beautiful way by coming together to break bread. They come *together* for it. They do not take it alone by themselves, each one alone in his own room. There must be at least two or three, for it is a collective act—"the bread which *we* break." That involves our being *together* to take the Lord's Supper, and the Lord encourages us to come together. But in so doing we have to take care not to despise the Assembly of God. Not

that a few people, who meet together in a town, could call themselves the Assembly of God, however true and faithful they might be. It is impossible to get "the whole Assembly" together now as they could be brought together in Corinth, for the Lord alone knows those that are His, and where they all are. But even a few faithful Christians, coming together, belong to the Assembly, and to despise any of them, is to despise the Assembly of God, to which they belong. And even though only a few may come together in the holy love of Christ, we may count on His presence, if seeking to be faithful to Him and if He is given His rightful place amongst us as Head. He could not stay away from such, He must come where the holy love of His brethren, for whom He laid down His life, demands Him, and looks for His presence in the midst. And it has a transforming effect on those who realise His presence. I count on your interest and attentive consideration, for the subject is a great one:—The Assembly of God. The world has its great Assemblies, its Parliaments, etc., but however great they may be in man's eyes, they are infinitely small in God's sight, compared to the Assembly of God, or a little number of those who, with the light of what the Assembly is, meet together to His Name, and take the Supper in the fellowship of His

death in order that in the place where He was cast out, they may call Him to mind, and have His real presence in their midst. There never was such an Assembly on earth, nor ever will be, like the Assembly of God. When the world definitely told God at the cross that they would not have His Christ, God as it were answered: "I'll have Him on earth in the Assembly, in the very world where He has been cast out." And in spite of all the power of Satan, the Assembly is still here, and has been here 1900 years. Again and again, amid all the political strife and conflict, and the ever-increasing opposition to Christ and the truth, God makes it possible for His people to come together according to His mind, and the presence of the Lord is guaranteed to even two or three, who are truly gathered to His Name. It is most important then to come together in the spirit of self-judgment, and in the love of Christ. The Corinthians were evidently careless as to this, and therefore the Apostle says: "Despise ye the Assembly of God, and shame them that have not?" They did not apprehend the august character of the Assembly, and were misbehaving. The rich had their food before the others, and slighted the poor. It needed an Apostolic Epistle to teach us as to the Lord's Supper and that it is not a time for feasting or taking an ordinary meal. This

could be done at home: "Have ye not houses to eat and drink in?" No, the object of the Lord in giving us the Supper is, that we might remember Him, in that which brings before us His precious and blessed love. "This do in remembrance of Me." We do not remember Christ or call Him to mind in the same way in which we may call to mind a dear relative who has died. There is no present living link with them. We cannot speak to them or love them, though we may love their memory. We remember what they were, but we do not know them now. They are gone. We have only the memory of them. We have them no longer. But this is not so with Christ. When we call Him to mind in the breaking of the bread, He comes to our mind—not a dead Christ, but a real living, glorified and heavenly Christ is present to us, and that in a profoundly blessed way. It is not so with the dead, however much we may have loved them. They cannot livingly come before us. Death separates us from them, and them from us. But Christ is a *living* Man, for though He died, He is risen again. It is His Supper, and **He is Host, and Head, and Chief**—a dead Christ does not exist. You may think of Him as having died, and it is the great thought expressed in the Bread and Wine—His Body given for us, and

His Blood shed for us—but no sooner do you think thus of His love in death, than you have Himself in life before you, for He lives, and loves us still. He does not leave us comfortless, He comes to us (see John xiv. 18), and we realise the truth of His words: “At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me and I in you.” He speaks to us in the Supper, in the Bread and in the Cup. In an astonishing way you realise He is Host and He gives you the Bread. In this way the saints in the meeting come consciously under the influence and love of Christ Himself. It is not only the thought how much He *has* loved us, that is before our minds, but how much He *loves* us. The love is there, for Christ is there, and His presence commands the meeting. You are not taken up with anyone else in the meeting, but with the Lord Himself, though not exactly as Lord, for as Lord He is on God’s side, but rather as Christ, the Church’s Head, and as Firstborn amongst many brethren. He is pre-eminent as Head and on our side, one with us. His proper title in the Assembly is Head. His love to the Church is connected with “Christ,” the Church’s Head. In the Supper He asserts His pre-eminence in love, and when this is recognized we reach Him as Head, and we come consciously into His Assembly, and

have the sense that we derive from Him. We read Aaron's sons "ministered in the priest's office in the sight of Aaron." He was not Lord over them, but Head, and the Antitype is found in Christ and the Assembly. We see a picture of the place Christ has as Head in the midst of His own in John xx. The message, "Go tell my brethren," etc., had gathered them together on the first day of the week. They locked the doors to keep out what was opposed to Christ, and they had the **Real Presence**, for Jesus came and stood in the midst! It is symbolical, and teaches us to shut the door against religious evil and whatever is opposed to Christ. If the doors had not been locked to keep out Christ's enemies He would not have been there. If you let in the Jew, you must not expect Christ. If you want, that is, a religion after the flesh, and a meeting which pleases the flesh, and which suits man as he is, and which the world can approve of, or if you put man in the centre as head and leader, then don't expect a heavenly Christ in the midst. Christian privileges cannot be shared with the world, nor will Christ take any other place than that of Head in the midst of His own. It must have been a wonderful thing for two or three to come together at any time in a place like Ephesus or Corinth, for example, to get away thus

from all the philosophy and the workings of the human mind, and there to find Christ in their midst, as gathered to His Name. Being a Divine Person, He can make His presence realised in Australia and in Scotland at one and the same time. There may be hundreds of meetings on the Lord's Day for the breaking of bread all over the world, at one and the same time, and His presence be felt and known in all. So, too, when we all are caught up to meet Him in the air, no one will be lost in the vast Assemblage that greets Him there; *every one* will have His eye, His heart, His greeting, for being more than man, He can take in all, at one and the same moment, as only God can do. No general could do that; an army might see him and greet him, but he could not take in every individual soldier, at one and the same time, and greet them, and assure them of his approval, and individual interest in them. This Christ alone can do. So, too, He can make His presence felt wherever, in the wide world, there are two or three faithful ones gathered unto His Name. We find, too, in John that He showed them His hands and side. This identified Him, as the very same Jesus, who died for them, and at once He took His place as Head amongst them. What other place could He take? So the breaking of the bread identifies Him to us, for no one



else ever died for us, and He is pre-eminent in love ; He naturally takes His place as Head and Host. No disciple ever took the initiative when Christ was amongst His own. The disciples never, for instance, said : “ We are going into Galilee. Wilt Thou come with us, Lord ? ” Christ was always Head and Leader. They looked to Him to take the initiative in all things. So we, when we meet to break bread, expect One Blessed Person to be present, and lead, and cast His influence over all, so that all come under His mind, not the mind of one another, but of Christ. It is not a dying Christ but a dead Christ that is set forth in the Supper. The Bread and Wine present the Body and Blood apart the one from the other. The Bread speaks of His Body given for us, that Body which was never defiled by sin, given for us, that the man, who was under judgment, might go in judgment in the death of Christ, that all that we were as sinners might be removed for ever from the eye of God. Then the Cup speaks of the New Covenant in His Blood and of the will of God established. This brings in the love of God in the gift of His Son, and expresses the terms of the New Covenant, established in His precious Blood, namely, that God is always towards us, in eternal and unchanging love. It all depends on the unchanging love of God.

The New Covenant does not depend on us but upon God, whose love is made known, in the gift of His Son for us, and is eternally the same.

In Chap. x. we are **shut out** from the world and its god, and in Chap. xi. we are **shut in** with Christ, who rallies His own by the Supper, which sets forth His death where He comes to us, as we call Him to mind, and His commanding presence is, as it were, secured in the breaking of the bread.

Now comes the question as to who the company are, who have this privilege? Chap. xii. opens this out, and speaks of that company as "**The Christ.**" How wonderful to be allowed to sit with some of those who form part of that company which God calls "the Christ" and to receive the bread from such and pass it on to people who can be called "anointed"! Verse 12 says: "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." There is no company like it, nor ever has been on the earth—a company of people who are characterized as anointed, so that they can be

spoken of as "the Christ" and as forming "one body," and whatever their natural distinction might have been, who are marked by "one Spirit" on which they have all been made to drink. All kinds of people are brought together, but every distinction vanishes; not only is Christ the pre-eminent One in their midst, but the sweet fragrance of the Anointing is on the saints, whether slaves or freemen. What Assembly could be like that? No House of Commons or Lords, no Assemblage of kings and princes, dukes and earls, etc., could come near them for blessedness, and for the fragrance of Christ. That is the way to look at a saint: not at his clothes or position or poverty, but as having the Spirit and love of Christ. Can saints be called poor, when they have a Spirit which money cannot buy, and light which the finest school of education could not give? There, too, are **Spiritual Manifestations** and divine operations, and all kinds of gifts, so that saints can speak and utter things that never could come into the mind and heart of men of the world to say, and that, too, with a power which is of God. Am I then to despise such an Assembly, even if there were only two or three together, and they the poor of the earth? Are not His people my people? Does not Christ come into their midst? That

central place they leave for Him to occupy. They have taken up the scorn and shame of His Name, and He takes His place amongst them, for He cannot deny love, the love that must have Christ. A little company like that can give me what unconverted relatives cannot give, for they give me Christ. And Christ in their midst takes the conduct of the meeting, **The Gifts are Exercised under His Control**, and saints are edified. The Church learns in Christ, her Head, how to worship and sing to God. She would not know how to do so otherwise ; she is not equal to starting such a service. It would be too great a burden. It is Christ who leads, Christ who sings. And who would want immediately after taking the Supper to hurry away if he thought Christ was there ? Who knows what He may say to us at such a moment ? He is the Son, and He can tell us of the Father, and lead us in the praise of God fully revealed and made known. He loves to celebrate God and to carry us with Him in the celebration. "In the midst of the Assembly will I sing Thy praise." It is literally : "will I celebrate Thee," or "make Thee my Hymn." What a wonderful Hymn for the Church ! **God is the Hymn**, and that fully revealed by the Son ! How wonderful to think of Christ for nearly 2000 years

singing in the midst of the Assembly God's praise! And how specially can we look for this when we come together "in Assembly" and call Him to mind in the breaking of bread! Thus we may have Christ speaking to God in praise and leading us in so doing, or speaking to us from God, and unfolding the Father's precious things. But you perhaps say, How does He do it? He sings in the Assembly, and by the Assembly. He attaches Himself to our praises and uses one and another in so doing.

The manifestations of the Spirit are very **varied** and very remarkable. They can be found nowhere else; only where the Spirit is, and where Christ is. No duke or high-born person who has not the Spirit of God, can speak like one who is "filled with the Spirit." No man naturally, however great, can "speak as it were oracles of God," nor open out the deep things of God. We cannot look for a word from God in the great assemblages of this world, but when a few who belong to God's Assembly come together "in Assembly," the most wonderful and precious unfoldings of the mind and will of God may be given to one, who is under the control and guidance of the Spirit, and subject to Christ Himself. And where a meeting is under the control and guidance of Christ you will find both unity

and variety. Varied may be the gifts, but it is the same Spirit, varied the administrations, but it is the same Lord, varied too the operations, but it is the same God that worketh every thing in every one. It is not a place for fighting and disagreement, as in the House of Commons and other great assemblies, but one and the selfsame Spirit divides to every man severally as He will. In nature there is great variety ; no two leaves of a tree are alike, no two faces, no two sheep ; still more so is variety found in the gifts and manifestations of the Spirit. And all are needed, we are **all indispensable** one to another, and **all dependent** one on another. No one has the right to say, " I am an independent Christian," " I am not of the Body," and no one can say to another Christian, " I have no need of you." Just as in the human body, even the members " which seem to be more feeble," are necessary. The Corinthian Assembly was spoken of as " the body of Christ, and members in particular." Thus Christ could express Himself in Corinth by means of His Body, for they formed the Body of Christ in that town. May the Lord then preserve us from ever " despising the Assembly of God," or any two or three of the Assembly who may come together in His Name and according to His word and will !

But great and varied though the gifts may be, there is something greater than gift, and that is the **Love** behind the gift, and without which Chap. xiii. says, "I am nothing." Love is the divine nature, and is the measure of the man. The man is far greater than his gift, and if I have not love, scripture says, "I am nothing." All ministry, if it is to be for edification, must proceed from love. Stephen had a wonderful gift, and confounded all the schools of thought in Jerusalem. "They were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake." Then when brought before the Council, his wonderful gift came out in the remarkable way in which he gave, without preparation, the whole history of the Children of Israel, and how they had rejected every servant that God ever raised up. He convicted the greatest leaders of religion on the earth, so that, unable to answer him, they rushed upon him and stoned him. But the last stone that crushed him to death brought out something far greater than his gift; it brought out *the man* and the *love* that was there, for he cried out with his dying breath, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." He had spoken to them, not only with remarkable power and gift, but with love, divine love, for the divine nature had been formed in Stephen by the Spirit of God.

He would not have them perish because of him, and he prayed for them because he loved them, and could not hate them, nor be bitter against them. Thus love is greater than gift. That is why the 13th chapter comes between the 12th and 14th.

The 14th is still the continuation of the subject of the Assembly when come together "in Assembly" (Chap. xi. 18), that is, in Assembly character. The great thing is that everything should be for **Edification**, and the Apostle says, "Covet to prophesy." Prophecy brings God in, and is "to edification, exhortation, and comfort," and "the secrets of the heart are made manifest," so that an unbeliever, or a simple Christian, coming in, will have the sense that "God is in you of a truth," that is, that God is there among the saints. It is the climax: **God is there in His own Assembly**. What meeting could be more wonderful than that in which God is? God's presence might be so felt that even an unbeliever might fall down on his face, and do homage to God and own God is amongst us. Many years ago, when exercised about these things, and as to my own position, which then was in a system established by the will of man, I asked a friend to go to a small meeting in the same town, where a few faithful Christians were



meeting in the Lord's Name. I was so circumstanced that I was unable to go myself. On coming back I asked him how he got on ? He replied, "I don't know what to say. I never was in such a meeting in my life. One thing I can say, and that is that *God was there!*" Now, that was exactly what I had been looking for. I had been reading over and over again these closing chapters in Corinthians, which describe the coming together of the Assembly, and I felt where saints were rightly gathered, there would be the sense that God was there in their midst. How wonderful to be where God is and where He makes His presence felt ! How subduing to the flesh. There everything is to be for edification : no confusion, no disorder, and the women silent, though in spirit they may worship even more profoundly than any. The great thing is that all should be subject to Christ, then everything will be to edification. If each mind and heart is held by Christ, He will lead this and that one as He pleases. A brother who is naturally talkative would have to distrust himself and be quiet unless given a word from the Lord, whilst a brother who is naturally silent may be given a sweet word for the benefit of all. But each must give His word as directed by Christ ; even if the Lord only gives him one thought, he must

start with it, and it may be the Lord will give him more. When I was a youth, I was acquainted with a certain debating club, which was ordered much on the style of the House of Commons. Any one who wanted to speak on a debate had to get permission from the chairman, who was called the Speaker. Sometimes when a man had finished speaking, several would rise and try to catch the Speaker's eye, in order to get permission to speak, and whoever got the Speaker's permission, then went on. But one thing the Speaker did not do—he did not give the man the words to say, nor direct his thoughts. It is not so with Christ. Whilst every one must, as it were, watch His eye, and be subject to his mind and will, the brother who is given the privilege of edifying the Assembly is given words and thoughts as subject to Christ. For Christ takes charge of the mind in the Assembly. He does not expect us to initiate thoughts, but to derive them from Him and to learn from Him. He gives impulse to the Assembly, joins Himself to us, and attaches Himself to our praises, and moulds our thoughts, and thus in the midst sings praise to God. Whatever part any one may take in the meeting, all is to be done for edification, so that in blessing God it should be so done that the simplest person,

one who is not equal yet to his place as priest, "he that occupieth the room of the unlearned," can "say the Amen" at his "giving of thanks." It is the privilege of the whole congregation to say "the Amen" and thus to identify themselves with the thanksgiving or worship of another. The simplest soul ought to be able to say the Amen to the profoundest prayer, and would do if he were in the Spirit, and if all were ordered by Christ. I was once in early life breaking bread in a village meeting, and a very poor, aged man gave thanks in a way far beyond anything I had ever heard. He took us in to God in a wonderful way, and with the liberty of one who was more at home with God than with man. I could not possibly have prayed such a prayer myself, but he carried me with it, and I, though only a child in the things of God, was able to say 'the Amen,' profound though the prayer was, and I was edified. How wonderful that a few poor people who are perhaps quite unknown in the world, can meet together and have the Divine presence, and realise it, so that there is nothing which can be compared to it on earth! They have entrance into the Father's heart and the Father's love, and the Father's thoughts and purposes, and they sing the Father's praise, Yea, they gaze without a veil on the glory of

the Lord, and they all are changed into the same image from glory to glory. They pass as it were another mile-stone, and have gone from glory to glory. How wonderful that in a day of weakness we may still have the love of Christ and the presence and glory of God, and the love of the saints wherever Christ has His true place!

*May the Lord give us to know more of these blessed things for His Name's sake!*

H. D'A. C.



## CHRIST'S LAST LETTER.

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And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write : These things saith THE AMEN, THE FAITHFUL AND TRUE WITNESS, THE BEGINNING OF THE CREATION OF GOD : I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot. . . . I will spue thee out of My mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich . . . and knowest not that thou art . . . poor, and blind, and naked : I COUNSEL THEE to buy of Me GOLD . . . WHITE RAIMENT . . . EYESALVE. . . . As many as I LOVE, I rebuke and chasten : . . . REPENT. Behold, I stand AT THE DOOR, and knock : if any man hear MY VOICE, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me. To him that OVERCOMETH will I grant to SIT WITH ME IN MY THRONE, even as I overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne. He that hath an ear . . . hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.—REVELATION iii. 14-22.

IT is evident that we are in the last days of the Church's history on earth, and that the Lord will soon come to take His own to be with Himself, before God's judgments are poured upon the earth. If so, we are in the days of Laodicea, and we ought to pay very great attention to Christ's last letter to the Churches, namely, that written to Laodicea.

The SEVEN LETTERS given to John to write, as found in these two chapters (Rev. ii. and iii.) were addressed to seven actual Churches in Asia when John was an exile in Patmos, and in his old age. But the state of things found in them at that time represented the state of things that would mark the professing Church during the

seven stages of her history on the earth, and give us seven different successive phases and characteristics which would mark the Church during the whole time, now nearly 1900 years. But only one phase is prominent at one time, though the last four exist concurrently at the close (for the Lord's coming is found in all four), so that one phase does not cease to exist when another becomes prominent.

HE PRESENTS HIMSELF IN A DIFFERENT AND SUITABLE WAY TO EACH CHURCH OR ASSEMBLY, according as He saw what would help in that condition of things. Also in each case HE GIVES A PROMISE TO THE OVER-COMER. I want specially to speak about Laodicea, but will first look a little at the others.

1. To Ephesus He presents Himself as "HE THAT HOLDETH THE SEVEN STARS IN HIS RIGHT HAND, WHO WALKETH IN THE MIDST OF THE SEVEN GOLDEN CANDLE-STICKS." In this He alludes, as in most of the presentations, to the vision in the first chapter, and it is most suitable to the state of things which met Christ's eye in Ephesus, and which marked the Church generally, in the last days of the Apostle John. There was NO LONGER THE FRESHNESS OF FIRST LOVE, that love when Christ was simply everything to them. The works continued, but not the love. Now to help them, He lets them see Him as holding the Seven stars in His right Hand, and that everything depended upon Himself and the holding of His powerful right Hand. He was supreme and absolutely essential to them. Without Him there

would be no light at all. Then, too, He was "walking in the midst of the Seven golden candlesticks." He was examining the light, for they were responsible to be light bearers, and they had greatly failed in this respect, so that if they did not repent, the candlestick would be removed. There was nothing to be done but to get back to Christ, and to that early love when Christ was everything to them, and in all their thoughts, and the one Object of their life.

There is no expectation of all returning to the happy state of things which was at the beginning of Christianity, but there is a grand promise to the OVERCOMER—He should EAT OF THE TREE OF LIFE which is in the midst of THE PARADISE OF GOD. What Adam never ate of, he should partake of in a higher and better way, he should have Christ in all His blessedness, not in an earthly paradise, but in the paradise of God Himself. Infinite eternal blessing for those who return to first love. And here I may notice that in each case He addresses the angel of the church, that is the mystical representative of the assembly to which He writes. In the angel we have what morally represented the Assembly in the eye of Christ.

2. To Smyrna Christ presents Himself as THE FIRST AND THE LAST, WHICH WAS DEAD, AND IS ALIVE. It was the persecution age which followed the fall of the Church from first love, the age when under heathen emperors Christians suffered ten terrible persecutions, the last one lasting ten years. That dear aged servant of the Lord, Polycarp of Smyrna, suffered

martyrdom when over ninety years of age in the presence of an infuriated populace. How beautifully does Christ present Himself at such a time to suffering saints! He is the First and the Last. Christ was the first to have to do with the Christian, and He is also the last. Satan may persecute and kill, but he is not the last, he can do nothing after death. The Christian is then with Christ and outside Satan's power for ever. He is entirely in the hands of Christ, who will raise him from the dead and glorify him. Then, too, what is death to a Christian who knows that CHRIST WAS DEAD AND IS ALIVE? It is only a friend to open a door of escape, that we may go and be with Jesus. Death is not the end, for Jesus lives, who once was dead, and He will bring all His own out of death for ever to live with Him in eternal glory. What comfort, too, to know that however terrible the tribulation, it cannot last more than the "ten days," that is, there is a limit to all the testing, when trial will be over for ever, and we shall be with Christ. Death has no horror for those who know that Christ has been into it and has robbed it of its sting by bearing the judgment in our behalf. Besides, the persecuted saint has this sweet promise from Christ: "Be thou FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH, and I will give thee the CROWN OF LIFE." Surely "the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." Further, the OVERCOMER shall not be hurt of the SECOND DEATH, the death of judgment, the lake of fire.



3. In Pergamos is represented the state of things in the Church which followed the persecution age, when the Church accepted the patronage of the world and allowed the Emperor Constantine, who was born at York, to be the head of the Church and to preside at a Christian Conference in A.D. 325, though himself unbaptized, and still holding the title of Pontifex Maximus, the leading heathen priest in Rome.

Very suitable, then, is the way Christ presents Himself at this stage of the Church's history—**HE THAT HATH THE SHARP SWORD WITH TWO EDGES.** If they did not repent, He would come to them quickly and fight against them with the sword of His mouth. The sword of the Word which, properly speaking, was to be used against sinners, would have to be used against themselves unless they themselves used it in self-judgment and true repentance. They were dwelling where Satan's throne is, in the place of honour and worldly glory. Pergamos expresses the thought of a citadel or tower. The Church, no longer persecuted, was seeking a place in the world. They ought to have been content with being a separate people in the midst of the nations, closely united together, but taking no part in national interests, politics and wars, whilst known for their kindness and willingness to serve anyone and to do good to all; instead of this, they sought to make Christianity a national religion, and they sank down to the level of the nations. People were baptized wholesale, and heathen temples and feasts were turned into Christian ones. All this has made it much more difficult for the true

Christian, for he has now to stand apart from so-called Christian nations, whereas in the first days he only had to stand apart from the heathen. But there were faithful witnesses even in the Pergamos state of things, and one of them, Antipas (whose name perhaps suggests that he was 'against all'), suffered martyrdom for his faithfulness. True saints still held fast Christ's name and did not deny His faith. But the error of Balaam (worldly association) was found taught in the Church, and also idolatry, and there were those who taught pretended sanctity with evil practice.

Very sweet is the promise to THE OVERCOMER—He should EAT OF THE HIDDEN MANNA. He should enter, in spirit now, and fully in the future day, into what Christ was under the eye of God in His whole pathway of humiliation and reproach in this world. Very little is said of the first thirty years of Christ's life on earth, except that He pleased God. But His pathway of humiliation is all known to God, and is to be given as a special delight to the overcomer. He is, too, to receive THE WHITE STONE of Christ's special approval (in contrast to getting the approval of the world), indicating His entire acquittal by Christ Himself. What holy sweet enjoyment for one who has refused association with the world and has sought to follow in the steps of Christ once humbled here! What holy joy to know Christ in glory as the One whose pathway here he had sought to walk in! What a tender holy link with Christ Himself! In the stone, too, he finds "A NEW NAME WRITTEN, WHICH NO MAN KNOWETH SAVING HE

THAT RECEIVETH IT," some expression of Christ's own satisfaction and delight, a secret known only to himself, conveying a name by which Christ alone would know him.

4. Now we come to the Thyatira period of Church history ; for the Church, not content with dwelling where Satan's throne is, sought a higher place still. Having gained the favour and approval of the world, she must be the ruler of the world. Hence began the papal system, in which the Pope obtained a place above the kings, and the Church assumed the place of teacher and began to rule the world. The Church was never meant to teach, but to be taught by Christ, and by those whom Christ gives to the Church as teachers, and whom He alone can enable so to do. But Jezebel had got inside the Church. In the case of Israel of old, when Ahab married the heathen wife of that name, idolatry was introduced and Israel was speedily ruined by the heathen queen who cruelly persecuted the saints who stood against it. But far worse was the state of things when Roman Catholicism was in power. Idolatry was introduced in the worship of the Mass, and of the virgin Mary, and of images, and with that a persecution of the saints far more terrible than that under the heathen, the greatest possible cruelty marked the way they tortured and put to death the faithful saints. She taught spiritual fornication, so that the Church turned away from her love to Christ, to whom she belonged, and fixed her love on the world. Very suitable, then, is the way Christ presents Himself to the Church under such circumstances : " These things,

saith THE SON OF GOD, WHO HATH HIS EYES LIKE UNTO A FLAME OF FIRE, AND HIS FEET ARE LIKE FINE BRASS." Christ takes His place as Son of God, Son over God's house. This would keep the faithful, and would recover some who had entirely forgotten the place that belongs to Christ in the House of God. As Son of God, too, He will rule the nations with the 'rod of iron' according to Psalm ii., when all the kings will own Him. The Church was seeking to rule now, instead of waiting till Christ reigns. Christ's eyes "like unto a flame of fire" penetrated into everything. Nothing escaped His notice. "He searcheth the reins and hearts," and "His feet of fine brass," undefiled and undefilable, are presented in striking contrast to all the defiling condition of things in the Roman Catholic or Thyatira period of Church history—that is, in the Middle Ages, up to the time of the Reformation. But Popery, though not the prominent phase, goes on side by side with other phases till the end, for the Coming of the Lord is brought in here and in all the last four letters. Moreover, there is a division made between the first three Churches and the last four, in that the words "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches," are no longer put at the end of the letter, but before the promise to the overcomer. Christ now separates the faithful, the 'you' or 'the rest,' that is, a remnant, from all the others. Judgment would fall on this Jezebel or Romanistic state of things, and great tribulation. Jezebel had not repented, though space for repentance had been given her,

and piercing judgment would come upon her in consequence, also her children would be killed. The faithful remnant are encouraged to hold fast till Jesus comes, and there is a wonderful promise to **THE OVERCOMER**. Christ would give him **POWER OVER THE NATIONS**, and he should **RULE THEM WITH A ROD OF IRON**, for when Christ reigns the saints will reign with Him, that is, "If we suffer with Him." But the present moment is one of suffering and of waiting for Christ who is to the faithful, **THE MORNING STAR**, the assurance that night will soon be over and that Christ's day is about to dawn. Any moment Christ may come and take His own to Himself, that they may come with Him when He comes to reign. Bright and glorious hope!

5. Next comes the Sardis period of the Church's history, when the prominent phase that met the eye of Christ (though Romanism still continued) was that of Protestantism. It was the outcome of the *Reformation* under *Luther* and other men whom God raised up as a witness against Rome. But faithful though many were, and glorious though the moment was when men separated from Rome, when the Bible became again an open book for all to read, when the Word of God began to have a place it had not had for centuries, and when the Gospel and justification by faith were freely preached, yet this state of things soon lapsed into cold formalism and mere Protestantism. It is well described by the words: "I know thy works, that thou hast **A NAME THAT THOU LIVEST**, and art **DEAD**." The way therefore in which Christ presents Himself to this Church

or state of things is most striking and instructive :  
“HE THAT HATH THE SEVEN SPIRITS OF GOD AND THE SEVEN STARS.” Now if Luther and the Reformers had more fully understood the meaning of these words, and acted upon them, they would have separated not only from the glaring evils of Rome, which they did, but would have left behind the whole clerical system of that church, and would have been content to have CHRIST AS THE HEAD, and to own Him as having the seven stars, as the One that has supreme authority in the Church, and they would have looked to Him to take the initiative in everything, and would have given Him His proper place in the midst of the Assembly. They would have seen that He has “the seven Spirits of God,” the fulness of the Spirit, and that Christ alone is competent to order and bless in the Assembly without any human ecclesiastical arrangements. They would have returned to what was at the beginning, to that simple state of things when the saints were content to have Christ in Heaven as their Head, and the Spirit acting for Him here in the saints on earth. Man-made ministers interfered with the free action of the Spirit and with the prerogatives of Christ as Head and as being everything to His own Assembly. Forms of prayer were still continued, many of them simply translations from the Latin prayer book of the Roman Catholics. Thus the Spirit was shut out from Christian worship. Very soon the state of things was practically death. There was lack of spiritual power, things were ready to die. If they were not watchful, Christ would come

upon them as a thief and would treat them as the world.

But there were a few names even there "which have not defiled themselves," they should walk with Christ in white, as those who were practically righteous. To **THE OVERCOMER** He promises **THE WHITE RAIMENT**, they should be publicly justified. Yea, more—"I will not blot out his name out of **THE BOOK OF LIFE**, but I will **CONFESS HIS NAME BEFORE MY FATHER, AND BEFORE HIS ANGELS.**" Many names of professing Christians in the carelessly enrolled registers of man would be struck out if inspected by Christ, but theirs would be retained, yea, they will even be confessed before His Father, who would welcome such with His own precious love, and also before the angels whose privilege and service it has ever been to minister "to those who shall be heirs of salvation."

6. The sixth period of the Church's history is marked by the return of some (if it be only a little remnant) to the bright state of things which was at the beginning of Christianity, to the freshness of that first love to Christ when Christ was absolutely everything to the saints. It is well called Philadelphia, "brotherly love," for when saints return simply to Christ in holy love, they are sure to find His brethren.

Very suitable is the presentation of Christ to this Assembly: "These things saith He that is **HOLY**, He that is **TRUE**, He that hath **THE KEY** of David, **HE THAT OPENETH, AND NO MAN SHUTTETH; AND SHUTTETH, AND NO MAN OPENETH.**" There was a remark-

able work of the Spirit of God nearly 100 years ago in the midst of the coldness and deadness of Protestantism, and far and wide over the world the saints became affected by the presentation of Christ as the Holy and the True. It led to the desire to answer to Him in this character, and to their separating from the unholy associations, religious and otherwise, with which they were connected, and returning simply and truly to Christ Himself apart from all the religious systems which the will and mind of man had formed. They left all the ecclesiastical associations, no matter how time-honoured, and were content to have Christ Himself alone as Head and Light and Lord. They met in His Name alone, in holy fellowship together with saints in all countries, shutting the door against evil and refusing all who disowned His Name and who detracted from the glory of His Person as Son of God. They were prepared, if necessary, to stand alone in a place rather than acknowledge ecclesiastical associations which virtually shut out Christ as the Living Head, and which hindered the liberty of the Spirit. People said they would lose all opportunity of doing good, and that they would find no sphere of usefulness by so doing. But THEY SAW THE KEY IN THE HANDS OF CHRIST, the key to all the treasures and resources of the kingdom and of God. Everything was in the hands, not of the clergy, but of Christ the Heavenly Administrator. They soon got the sweet approval of the Lord: "I know thy works: behold I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept



My word, and hast not denied My Name. Behold I will make them . . . to know that I have loved thee." Without claiming to be Philadelphians, they found AN OPENED DOOR, opened by the Lord, and that no human power, nor that of Satan, could shut it.

The Lord greatly honoured them, and gave them opportunities of serving Him far and wide, and the sheep of Christ soon found there was food amongst these despised saints for the whole flock of God. Yet outwardly to human eyes there was LITTLE STRENGTH. There was no great show, and the world had little idea that anything was going on. In some respects it was so even with Christ Himself, in His path of dependence here on earth. The world little knew what He was doing, and despised the little handful of disciples that gathered round Him. But to Him the porter opened, as we read in John x. He did more with that handful of disciples than the world has any idea of. So these Philadelphian saints, little though their strength might be or seem to be, KEPT CHRIST'S WORD and DID NOT DENY HIS NAME. They treasured His Word, all that He told out of God, the whole Christian revelation, and all that Christ revealed of the Father and of His purposes of love. All had been recovered to them by Christ who alone had the key to the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and who alone could recover the precious truths the Church had long lost. Not only so, but like Ezra of old, who took the greatest care of the sacred vessels of the Temple which he brought from Babylon to Jerusalem, so these

saints kept and treasured the Word of Christ, and would not let it go. Besides this, they did not deny His Name. That Name was of little account all around, where man had place instead of Christ. But the Name of God's Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, the Name of the Holy One and the True, of Him who alone had the Key, and who had the unique distinction of having been into death for us and of having conquered it, and Who now lives to administer all the blessed results of His work in dying for us. In His Name it was that these saints met together, to His Name alone they gathered together, nor did they deny it by carelessness of walk or by meeting in other names than that of Christ.

More than this, they "kept the word of Christ's patience," instead of asserting themselves. They waited for God to vindicate them in His own time. Christ Himself is waiting, and they would wait too. They had the approbation of Christ Himself, and that was enough for them. They had it too from Christ, that the day would come when those who pretended, like the Jews, to a divinely ordered system of religion handed down from the beginning, would be made to come and own that they were wrong, and that Christ loved those who had kept the Word of the Holy and the True. **THE LOVE OF CHRIST IS THE CHURCH'S SWEETEST PORTION**, and it belonged in a special way to them. Whatever the trials of the present moment of patience, they should not be exposed to the trial that was coming upon the whole world. They did not belong to the world when they were in it, and they should

be taken out of it before the terrible trial comes. Nor would it be long, the time of waiting—"Behold I come quickly": only let them continue steadfast, "HOLD THAT FAST WHICH THOU HAST, THAT NO MAN TAKE THY CROWN." They had gone back to what was at the beginning of Christianity, to Christ Himself and His precious love, and they were not to let go what they had.

The promise to THE OVERCOMER is very precious and in striking contrast to the place they had in the eyes of men down here. "I will make him A PILLAR IN THE TEMPLE OF MY GOD, AND HE SHALL GO NO MORE OUT." Insignificant he had been in the eyes of the ecclesiastics of this world; he should now be a pillar, indeed he had been a pillar and support in God's temple before, if only men had had eyes to see it. And if outside what man called the Church, he should never again have an outside place, he should be inside and go no more out. Further—"I will write upon Him THE NAME OF MY GOD." What an honour for one who had no name here, the Name of the God of the long despised Jesus is stamped publicly upon Him. Morally he had borne that Name here. Yea, more, he who was outside the city life and politics of this world, whose politics were in heaven and centred in Christ, was to have written upon him "THE NAME OF THE CITY OF MY GOD, NEW JERUSALEM, WHICH COMETH DOWN OUT OF HEAVEN FROM MY GOD," thus involving a very special place in the political system of the Coming Day. Lastly is added this sweet word from Christ—"AND I WILL WRITE

UPON HIM MY NEW NAME." It is a name quite unknown to men who, like the Jews, have a religion according to the flesh ; it is a Name Christ has taken as dead to this world where the false Church is at home, but as risen and living in another and a heavenly scene, a scene of glory where the natural man cannot enter at all. The overcomer is publicly identified with Christ and bears His new Name. He had known it here, he bears it there. Blessed is the association with Christ all through—"The temple of MY God," says Christ, "the Name of MY God," "of the City of MY God," "MY new Name." Wonderful compensation for faithful and suffering saints !

7. But whilst this bright and true condition of things so pleasing to Christ, no doubt continues in some way till Christ comes, and in saints well known to Him, though perhaps few in number, yet THE LAST and prominent phase is that of LAODICEA. The last state of Christian profession is that of LUKEWARMNESS. "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot : I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will [or am about to] spue thee out of My mouth." It is a condition of things quite NAUSEOUS TO CHRIST and will be utterly refused in the end, when Christ comes. He is about to treat them so, but there is just time for any true souls in it to hear the word of Christ in this HIS LAST LETTER. They were not cold exactly, not infidels or avowed apostates like the Mahomedans. They still kept up the Name of Christ, and there were some works, but there was utter HEARTLESSNESS.

I have no doubt this marks the time in which we live, and therefore I would call special attention to these **THE LAST WORDS OF CHRIST**, written to meet the need at the last moment before He comes. For whilst the Thyatira (Roman Catholic), Sardis (Protestant), and Philadelphian condition of things still continue side by side till the Coming of Christ, the prominent mark of the moment is found in Laodicea.

Most instructive and helpful is the way Christ now presents Himself to this Church or state of things as represented in the angel: "These things saith **THE AMEN, THE FAITHFUL AND TRUE WITNESS, THE BEGINNING OF THE CREATION OF GOD.**" Christ was not "yea" and "nay," He was not one thing one day and the very opposite the next. He was **THE AMEN** to all God's thoughts for man. Whatever God desired man to be, whatever pleasure God wished to find in man, that Christ was. He fully pleased God, fully answered to all that God would have man to be. He never failed to please God, but gave Him the greatest possible delight as man. Every grace was there in divine perfection and in Man! He never said 'No' to God, but always 'Yes,' for He came not to do His own will, but the will of Him that sent Him. Not only so, but having died for us and risen again, He gave us His own Spirit, the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of Christ, **THE SPIRIT OF THE AMEN**, to dwell in us who believe. He did this that in the Church too might be found the Amen to all that God would have man to be, so that God might have His delight in men. But alas! we have utterly

failed, and can only know how greatly we have failed by looking at Christ the true "Amen." He is, too, **THE FAITHFUL AND TRUE WITNESS**. He never falsified His testimony, but was true to God all through. We who have His Spirit ought also to have been a faithful and true witness in the absence of Christ, but alas ! how we have falsified the testimony by joining with the world ! He is, too, **THE BEGINNING OF THE CREATION OF GOD**. Nothing built on Christ could ever break up, but man is so utterly corrupt that he would spoil any creation in which he had a part. Christendom, as Christ sees it to-day, must break up, for it is built up on the pride and will of man and not upon Christ, and everything in us that is not Christ will have to go.

Laodicea is marked by **GREAT PRETENTIOUSNESS**. "Thou sayest I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing," and also by **GREAT IGNORANCE OF ITS TRUE CONDITION**, "and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." Laodicea is said to mean "the judgment of the people," and it is just this that marks the present day, when every man claims a right to a vote, and thinks his own judgment is as good as that of any one. Saints get under the influence of what is around, and assert themselves, and their own judgment, and spoil their testimony by pretentiousness. Christ was the very opposite to all this ; He did not trust His own judgment, nor had He one. He said, "As I hear, I judge : and My judgment is just ; because I seek not Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me."

“ My doctrine is not Mine, but His that sent Me.” Self-opinionated saints have spoilt many a meeting. How often have we exposed ourselves by our pride and self-importance, or by our ambition and vanity, or by our un-Christ-like ways without being aware how naked we were in the eyes of Christ and to those who are near Christ. I hope none of us would say: “ This letter does not apply to me, for I am in Philadelphia.” To say so would be to prove we were in Laodicea. It is right to desire to answer to the state of things in Philadelphia, but do we not feel how greatly we ourselves have failed, how careless and worldly and self-indulgent we have been, and that in many ways we have been greatly affected by the general Laodicean spirit? Let us be thankful, then, that the Lord has written us a letter to save us from such a state of things.

And first He gives **FRIENDLY COUNSEL** (for the Greek expresses this) to buy of Him **GOLD** tried in the fire, for He would have us rich with the well-tested righteousness of God which is found alone in Christ. But we must *buy* it. It costs us something to get it, for we must give up all thoughts of our own righteousness or worthiness, and find righteousness, not in ourselves, but in Him who died for us and rose again. Well for us if Christ can say to us what He said to Smyrna: “ I know thy poverty, but thou art rich.” The self-righteous man exhibits his poverty, he has no sense of having been enriched with Christ. He would have us to buy **WHITE RAIMENT** from Him, that we may be clothed. Nothing is so simple, and yet nothing so conspicu-

ous, as white raiment. It is Christ in His simple and beautiful life coming out in us. "The fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints." How kind of Christ to come as a friend and give us this friendly counsel ! He sees our nakedness and that of the professing Church, and He would have us clothed, and He is ready to clothe us with Himself. EYESALVE, too, to anoint our poor blind eyes, He is ready to supply, in order that we may see. The eyesalve is the Holy Ghost who, when ungrieved, loves to give us the sight of unseen and eternal things, and of the glory of Christ which the world knows nothing of.

But not only does Christ give friendly counsel, He even speaks of HIS LOVE ! "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten : be zealous therefore, and repent." How precious to find Christ speaking of His love in such a state of things ! There were those He loved there, and He shows His love by rebuking them and disciplining them like children. How thankful we ought to be for His rebukes, and that He should chasten us and watch over us, instead of leaving us to our own foolish ways. May we listen to His loud call which the present terrible calamities seem specially to enforce : "BE ZEALOUS therefore, and REPENT." All over the world Christians are feeling that the Lord is calling us to repentance. May we heed the call !

Now let us notice THE ATTITUDE OF CHRIST — "Behold, I stand [have taken My stand] AT THE DOOR, and knock : if any man hear MY VOICE, and open the door, I WILL COME IN TO HIM, and will SUP WITH HIM, AND HE



WITH ME." Christ has been forced outside the professing Church as it is to-day, for He could not own it as Christian. He has taken His stand outside and continues loudly knocking. It is for us to hear His voice and open the door. May He give us all grace to do so ! and He will come in. What a favour ! Yea, He will sup with us. He will link Himself up with us and with all our interests. He will be our guest ! More than this, for He adds : "AND HE WITH ME." He will bring us to His own Table and make us feast with Him. There we find a much wider circle than our own, we find Him surrounded at His Table with all the dear saints for whom He died. He loves them all, and has never failed one. There, too, we find that all the Father's things are His, and that He loves to bring us into them. I cannot unfold the beauty and meaning of these words, but every one who opens the door will find it out for himself.

Lastly comes THE SWEET PROMISE TO THE OVERCOMER : " To him that overcometh will I grant to SIT WITH ME IN MY THRONE, even as I ALSO OVERCAME, AND AM SET DOWN WITH MY FATHER IN HIS THRONE." It is as if Christ said : " I will treat him in the same way as My Father treated Me—I overcame, and My Father gave Me a place on His throne ; if you will overcome, I will give you a place with Me on My throne. You were with Me in suffering, you shall be with Me in Glory, you shall sit with Me in My throne." What a promise ! " He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the Churches."

'He that hath an ear' is thus freely invited to hear the Spirit's word not only to Laodicea but to Philadelphia and to all the Churches. May we have the opened ear, for then all these precious things are open to us to hear and to get the good of.

H. D'A. C.

